

# COASTAL BLUES

## Background note



*For a summary of all case studies associated with this research, see our publication 'Coastal Blues: Tourism under Blue Economy in India'. Full case studies and other documents are available on our website*

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## CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

EQUATIONS' work on coastal tourism has spanned a few decades, starting in the early 1990s. In the last 5 years, understanding the importance of the changing narratives of coastal commons, we have continued and re-oriented our work to reflect this change.

Our research takes the lens of environmental justice, and centers small-scale fishworkers, who we believe are the primary stakeholders with regard to the oceans. In his examination of environmental justice theories, David Schlosberg states that understandings of environmental justice in theory are often focused on distributional justice (equity in distribution of benefits and harms), but that movements are often talking about environmental justice in three ways - distributional justice, recognition of the diversity of affected communities, and participation in the political processes around the creation and management of environmental policy (Schlosberg, 2004 Autumn). Keeping this plurality in mind, we clarify our own position on environmental justice for this work. Specifically, when we say 'environmental justice', we mean, firstly, distributional justice, i.e. that poor and marginalized communities must not bear the burden of environmental harms. We believe that fishworkers are the primary stakeholders in coastal and marine space, and therefore their needs and aspirations must be prioritized in the development of these spaces. Moreover, we also take environmental justice to mean democratic decision-making, and therefore, that fishworkers should have a key role to play in the decision-making process around coastal and marine development.

Our work around the Blue Economy model of development began as a consultation in 2016, where civil society organizations and fishworkers' movements in India unpacked the plans for coastal development proposed under the Sagarmala programme. In 2018, SNEHA, an organization based in Nagapattinam and working on the rights of small scale fishworkers, initiated a study to document the implications of Blue Economy model of development on small scale fishworkers in the Indian Ocean Region. This study was initiated collaboratively, and has brought together more than 25 civil society organizations from 5 countries - India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand and Indonesia. The collaborative team encompassed organizations, researchers and activists working on diverse disciplines, including fishworkers' rights, fisheries, conservation, global capital and finance, transport and shipping, tourism and others. The group also includes national, regional and state-level fishworkers' unions from the 5 countries

The objectives of the larger collaboration were

- to enable the process of evolving an alternate ecosystem (network of systems) of policies, institutions, people centric jurisprudence at the regional level for the cause of coastal communities with a special focus on small scale fisherfolk and women, by generating knowledge from a people centric perspective
- to promote a platform for the voice of the Global South, which seeks to challenge the dominant discourse of development that has not only failed to respond to needs of the people, but resulted in loss of right over resources and loss of livelihood of coastal communities and large scale damage to the environment.

As one of the steps towards this process, the collaborative team organised '*Independent People's Public Tribunal on the Implications of Blue Economy*' in each of the 5 countries, as

well as at the international level, with eminent jury members. Submissions to the Tribunal jury included case studies, testimonials and research papers on different themes.

As a part of this collaboration, EQUATIONS has undertaken this research to critically examine 'Tourism under the Blue Economy' framework, looking more closely at the ground realities of how this framework has impacted fishworkers. For this, we have looked at ocean-based tourism development in India in the last 5-7 years. Specifically, we aimed to answer the following research questions:

- 1. In what ways are ocean-based tourism being developed under the Blue Economy framework in India?**
- 2. What policies and plans guide tourism development along the coasts and in the waters of India, and how have they changed under the influence of the Blue Economy?**
- 3. What are the impacts of these policies and plans, and of tourism development on coastal communities, particularly fishworkers?**

To answer these questions, we have worked closely with fishworker unions, citizens' groups and other civil society members to undertake this research, which has been published as -

- 1. Background note on Tourism under Blue Economy in India**
- 2. Three case studies in**
  - a. Kanniyakumari and Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu**
  - b. Dharavi Bet (Gorai-Manori-Uttan) in Maharashtra**
  - c. Digha-Mandarmani in West Bengal**
- 3. Note on Blue Flag certification**
- 4. Working paper on cruise tourism**

This background note lays down the larger understandings and approaches of tourism under the Blue Economy, and acts as a supplement to all the other abovementioned publications.

Our research has been presented at two Independent People's Public Tribunal on the Implications of the Blue Economy - the East Coast and Indonesia, and written case studies submitted to the West Coast tribunal.

All the research is available on our website, and a summary booklet is also available in print. For any other query related to the work, you may email us at [info@equitabletourism.org](mailto:info@equitabletourism.org).

Since the concept of the Blue Economy, and the privatization of coasts within it are an on-going process, all of our research will also be constantly evolving.

## INTRODUCTION - THE BLUE ECONOMY

*“You need to have dil [heart/courage] to go into the sea”* said one fisherman to us, perhaps summarizing humanity’s entire relationship with the sea. For millennia, the oceans defined the frontiers of human civilization. Although human history is about 300,000 years old, sea-faring began only 6000 years ago (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2001), and we still tell stories of the early sea-farers with awe. We talk of the cleverness of the Egyptians, the bravery of the Vikings, the resourcefulness of the Chinese. Our imaginations are filled with the wonderment of the ocean, the romance of the Titanic, the stories of Sinbad the sailor, adventures of treasure islands, the amazement of creatures that live in the depths of the ocean.

Despite our 6000 year history, even today, it is said that we have only explored 10% (National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, US, 2018) of the world’s oceans. And yet, we depend heavily on the oceans - for our food, for livelihood, for transportation of goods, for rest and leisure, for research, for money, for stories and for spirituality. For a country like India, with a coastline of more than 7,500 kilometres, with many major cities located along the coast, and millions of people dependent on the ocean, oceans have a huge significance. And not just for India, globally it is estimated that about 40% of the world’s population lives within 100 kilometres of the sea (The Ocean Conference, 2017). Oceans provide livelihoods to more than 200 million people involved in fishing, and contribute \$3-6 trillion annually to the world economy (The Ocean Conference, 2017).

Oceans are often perceived as a limitless resource, and some believe that the oceans have even more to offer in terms of resources and money, and that these resources have not been exploited enough. In the last decade, led by small island countries, whose economies are often based almost entirely around oceans, global international bodies started encouraging increasing extraction of ocean resources. Thus, was born the idea of the ‘Blue Economy’.

The concept of ‘Blue Economy’ was first introduced during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held at Rio in June 2012, also called the ‘Rio+20’. During Rio+20, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), highlighted the need for a Blue Economy on the same principles of the Green Economy but modified to suit the needs and circumstances of countries whose resource base is marine (The future we want, 2012). Initially, the Blue Economy framework was articulated as a way of decoupling socio-economic development from environment degradation, and to promote development through sustainable utilization and development of ocean resources, national and gender equality, employment for all and good governance.

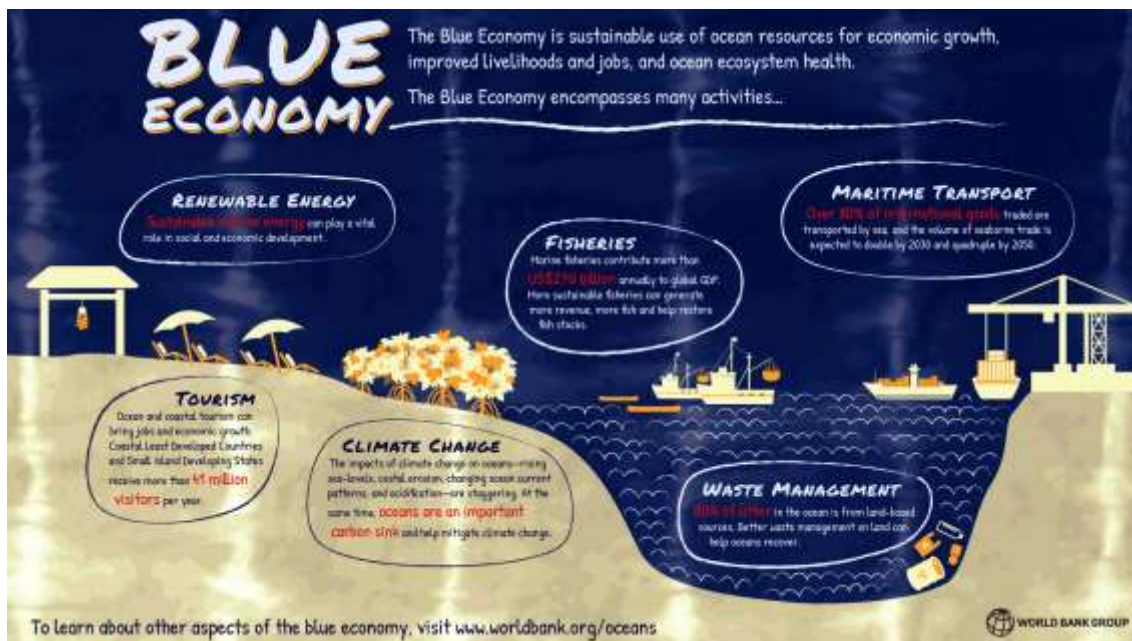
But soon the concept was adopted by other UN bodies, and most notably, by the World Bank (WB). The World Bank’s adoption of this idea came for instance, through a multi-donor fund called PROBLUE, worth USD 5 billion, to be used for management of fisheries, marine pollution, development of oceanic sectors like tourism and maritime transport, and for management of seascapes. (World Bank, 2020). The World Bank’s adoption of this framework gave it a strong economic impetus, and this economic base currently forms the fundamental aspect of the Blue Economy framework.

The WB's narrative of the Blue Economy also talks about the need for environmental sustainability and improvement of livelihoods. According to the WB, the 'Blue Economy' is a concept *“that seeks to promote economic growth, social inclusion, and the preservation or improvement of livelihoods while at the same time ensuring environmental sustainability of the oceans and coastal areas.”* (World Bank, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017)

The World Bank and other UN bodies and governments that support the idea have encouraged countries to increase investment in ocean resources, and align it to the framework of the Blue Economy. Different countries choose to adopt the framework in different ways, but the World Bank states a few criteria for projects to qualify as components of a blue economy

- *provide social and economic benefits for current and future generations*
- *restore, protect, and maintain the diversity, productivity, resilience, core functions, and intrinsic value of marine ecosystems*
- *be based on clean technologies, renewable energy, and circular material flows that will reduce waste and promote recycling of materials.*

Essentially, the Blue Economy claims to move beyond business as usual and to consider economic development and ocean health as compatible propositions.



World Bank infographic on Blue Economy

Since it was proposed in 2012, the Blue Economy framework has been receiving wide support and acceptance from different international forums. Along with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth, the World Ocean Council-International Business Alliance for Corporate Ocean Responsibility (WOC), the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Conservation International, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and others, have supported this idea. The list here shows the range of actors and interests that are vouching for the Blue

Economy - corporate interests, conservation organizations, UN bodies and inter-government alliances - have all come out in support of the framework.

Glaringly missing in the discourse, however, are representatives of small-scale fishworkers, the primary stakeholders with regard to the oceans. Contrary to the acceptance shown by other international organizations, the World Forum for Fisher Peoples (WFFP) has remained strongly critical of the Blue Economy and stated that the Blue Economy model constitutes another form of ocean grabbing (World Forum of Fisher Peoples, 2018).

Fishworkers around the globe state that the narrative is simply a way of 'bluewashing' what is essentially a way to "*Expand, Explore, Exploit*" ocean resources. As growing research shows, the concept of 'Blue Economy' has largely been a way to systematically increase investment in ocean-based industries with the aim to take industrialization farther and deeper into our oceans.<sup>1</sup>

One of the key ways in which the Blue Economy is promoted is through sectoral investments. This is done through expanding existing industries like shipping, fisheries, aquaculture and tourism, while also finding ways to systematize and encourage investment in new industries like deep sea mining, carbon trading and others. In our research, we specifically look at tourism as one of the sectors being promoted under the Blue Economy in India.

## **TOURISM UNDER BLUE ECONOMY**

One of the industries envisioned within the Blue Economy framework is 'Tourism'. Over the last decade, travel and tourism has become an important part of the lives of many young, urban people. With bike trips in the Himalayas to discover oneself, luxury cruises to escape the monotony of daily lives, adventuring, honeymooning, and bachelorette trips, young people have taken travel to the next level. Popular culture has honed and hyped the potential for travel to build and rebuild relationships, explore creativity and excitement, and sometimes escape difficult experiences. But unlike what is often portrayed, travel does not impact only the traveller.

Travel and tourism is a structural socio-cultural and economic phenomenon. It is introduced into, and impacts, the lives and livelihoods of local communities in the "destination". Further, it brings about several changes to the local environment. The development of tourism can have both positive and negative spin offs. It has the potential to contribute directly to the economy by increasing government revenues, generating employment and demand for goods and bringing in foreign exchange. On the other hand, it can also produce a multitude of adverse impacts on the social, cultural and economic fabric of the landscape and could also have several impacts on the ecology of the area.

Tourism is also a major source of revenue for big corporates and governments. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world right now - the World Travel and Tourism

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the impacts of the Blue Economy on fishworkers and other coastal communities, see *International People's Tribunal on the Impacts of Blue Economy* at <http://blueeconomytribunal.org/>



Council states that in 2018, tourism generated \$8.8 trillion to the global economy and provided jobs to 319 million people (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018).

Under the Blue Economy framework, 'tourism' has been pitched as a way to ensure economic benefits, environmental conservation and poverty alleviation. According to a senior scientist in an international conservation organization, one of the proponents of this approach to tourism, "investing in ocean health is synonymous with generating ocean wealth", and he argues strongly for equating tourism and conservation. He states that "travelers are willing to pay a premium for a room with an ocean view, and words like 'pristine', 'remote' and 'unspoiled' are frequently assigned to amenities like beaches, coral reefs and panoramic seascapes". Equating this traveler's idea of the 'pristine' with actual conservation of the ocean, he talks about "million-dollar reefs", reefs that can generate revenue of more than 1 million per square kilometer through activities like diving, snorkeling, glass-bottom boats and wildlife watching (Brumbaugh, 2017).

This articulation of tourism under the Blue Economy imagines a picturesque situation where tourism increases economic benefits, ensures conservation of our natural world and improves the livelihoods of local communities. However, contrary to the harmonious, win-win situation being visualized, as pointed out earlier, research has shown that tourism has serious negative impacts both on the ecological landscape of a place as well as on the lives and livelihoods of the communities living there. Mainstream tourism has often completely altered the physical, ecological and social environment of a place. Tourists consume on average 5-10 times the water that residents use (Gautam, 2016), and also generate large amounts of garbage (Dasgupta, 2018) and plastic pollution (Udayashankar, 2018). In Goa, the inequality over sharing of water resources (Tourism Concern, 2012) means that households get only limited water supply. Shimla faces a water shortage situation every year, which got particularly acute in 2018 (Times Travel Editor, 2019). Places like Mahabaleshwar and Kodaikanal have tourist numbers that far exceed the population (EQUATIONS, 2011). The destruction and loss of lives due to the massive floods in Uttarakhand in 2013 has largely been attributed to unplanned constructions of roads, hotels, shops and multi-storey housing in the fragile mountain slopes (Bidwai, 2013).

Moreover, in the coastal space, the interests of small scale fishworkers are often in direct conflict with the interests of the tourism industry. Tourism is known to have pushed local communities out of landscapes traditionally used and managed by them, and further worsened livelihood options. Over the years, tourism development along the coast has taken up much of the coastal and marine commons, leaving little for fishworkers.

Take for instance, the life of Shanthi (*name changed*), a tea-stall owner on a small beach in a tourist town in Tamilnadu. Once, the beach was a thriving fishing village, with 50 families, including Shanthi's, living here permanently. Shanthi used to earn her income from catching and selling crabs and small fish. In 2014, private tourist companies started showing interest in the area. Soon, a private water sports centre came up, two government guest houses were added, a couple of new resorts came up, and the remaining land was sold off to other builders. Of the original one kilometre stretch of beach used by fishworkers, only about 100 metres of beach still remains. As Pluemarom points out (Pluemarom, 2012) -

***“While income and jobs created by tourism are counted, the losses that occur in other economic sectors or in public services as a result of tourism development never appear in the calculations. An appropriate cost-benefit analysis....would state how many farmers, fisher-folks, and non-tourism workers and entrepreneurs would have to give up their economic activities as a result of tourism development, and how much income would be lost from non-tourism activities.”***

Tourism is also positioned as a way to generate employment, as it is claimed to be a labour-intensive industry. The 2019 World Tourism Day was also dedicated to this, highlighted as ‘Tourism and Jobs: A better future for all’. During the event, the General Secretary of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), stated that *“the true potential of tourism, both as a creator of jobs and as a driver of equality and sustainable development, is only just being realized. Providing decent work opportunities and contributing to developing professional skills are at the heart of this.”* (UN World Tourism Organization, 2019). Along similar lines, the development of tourism under Blue Economy is positioned as a driver of jobs for coastal communities.

And even though tourism claims that it creates employment, often these opportunities come loaded with risks. Higher paying and secure jobs are limited by particular skills and training, and fishworkers and other local communities find inclusion only in the margins of tourism. Not only are the jobs available badly paying, they are also highly precarious. In the COVID-19 crisis, tourism workers were some of the first to lose their jobs and they were provided almost no support from either the tourism industry or the government. (Udayshankar, 2020). In the case of Shanthi in Tamilnadu, the homes of the fishworkers had been evicted from the beach many years ago, but Shanthi had persevered by adapting to tourism. She set up a small shack that serves tea and food for taxi drivers, hotel staff and sometimes tourists. But even this is precarious as she says that in the last year, the authorities have been pressuring her to move the shop to make a ‘cleaner view’ for the resorts.

In this context, with a growing focus on increasing investment in marine tourism through the blue economy framework, it becomes important to understand what are the real consequences of these developments on the communities living in these spaces and on the resources that sustain them. India is one of the nations that has made commitments to develop tourism under the Blue Economy. With a long coastline, coastal and marine tourism in India under the Blue Economy is being given an increasing push.

But how seriously are the impacts of the tourism industry taken within the sustainability narrative of the Blue Economy? Is tourism under this framework really a radical shift to carefully thought-out, environmentally conscious, community-led operations that keep socio-political and ecological contexts at its centre? Or is it simply old wine in new bottles, furthering the inequalities, injustices and undemocratic decision-making that has plagued the tourism industry in India?

Our research indicates that the current imagination of tourism under the Blue Economy does not acknowledge the social, environmental and political costs of tourism. Rather, what we see on the ground is an inextricable relationship between infrastructure development and tourism.

REALITY

NARRATIVE



Illustration of infrastructure in coastal spaces.

The Blue Economy is primarily concerned with the economics of wealth generated from the ocean and coastal areas, and large infrastructure development in marine and coastal areas is a catalyst for global investment. Tourism projects also take this same form and shape - focused entirely on large investments, mostly through infrastructure development. This form of the tourism industry does not acknowledge the customary rights of governance of coastal communities to the coastal and ocean commons, nor does it recognize that tourism ventures are created by displacing fishing and other communities. In this imagination, the Blue Economy sees fishworkers and other coastal communities as simply 'service providers' to tourism. It creates a fundamental change of communities identities from being 'rights-holders' to simply 'job-holders'. Dr. Aparna Sundar validates this idea saying (Ali, 2021) -

***“The people from the communities go from being rights holders to job holders at best and most of the time, not even being job holders but job seekers. Not only do they undermine the traditional rights of fishing communities, but they are premised on the weakening or undoing of hard won legislations that gave communities some form of protection.”***

## MARINE TOURISM IN INDIA - SELLING TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER?

Tourism contributed 9.2% of India's GDP in the year 2018, and reportedly created more than 41 million jobs (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). India ranks 34<sup>th</sup> out of 136 countries (World Economic Forum, 2019) in tourist footfalls, with nearly 11 million foreign tourists visiting India in 2019 (Ministry of Tourism, 2019). There are no clear statistics on how many of these tourists visit beach destinations, however, coastal tourism forms a significant part of India's plans for tourism development. Surrounded by ocean on 3 sides, with a coastline of ~7,500 km and an Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.1 million sq. km., investors in India stand to gain significant monetary benefits from the Blue Economy framework.

In 2014, India signed on to the 'Declaration of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) on shared principles for innovative, developmental and sustainable tourism in the Indian Ocean region' in Seychelles. Among other things, the Seychelles Declaration committed to "*an optimization of benefits for tourism from the ocean resources under the aegis of the IORA Indian Ocean Blue Economy concept*". The countries, including India, made the declaration that the "*Indian Ocean Blue Economy promises development in various marine sectors and should enhance the potential for tourism activities and services in the region*". (Indian Ocean Rim Association, 2014) The Declaration, which in many ways defines the Indian Ocean countries' framework of adoption of the Blue Economy, is focused entirely on "optimization of benefits" and says almost nothing about the sustainability of tourism or about the rights of traditional fishworkers and other coastal communities. Evident from this Declaration is that the focus of tourism development in India is on increasing investment and enhancing tourism activities, but without any indication on what will be done to ensure that tourism does not compromise the rights of traditional fishworkers and environmental sustainability.

Unsurprisingly, like at the international level, traditional fishworkers and civil society members in India are also calling this present wave of development under the Blue Economy an "occupation" of the coast (Programme for Social Action). All along the coast, villages are populated by people who are directly and indirectly dependent on fishing and other coastal livelihoods. India has more than 3200 fishing villages, where nearly 10 lakh fishermen are involved in active fishing. In addition, almost 7 lakh people are involved in allied activities such as making and repairing fishing nets, curing the catch, peeling, as labourers etc. Fishing in India is still largely done using traditional fishing methods (91.3%) and a large percentage of fishworkers are still below the poverty line (61%) (Ministry of Agriculture and CMFRI, 2012). These communities, therefore, are some of the most marginalized in the country, and it is their lives and livelihoods that are in direct conflict with tourism.

With an increasing interest in "sun and sand" tourism, the tourism industry is looking to find areas on the coast as close to the sea as possible, each of them vying for the "room with an ocean view" and to find beaches that are "pristine" as discussed in the earlier section. But these same stretches of the Indian coastline are traditional fishing commons, the place that fishworkers have used for generations to store their boats, repair their nets, dry their catch, auction their fish etc. Commons are also important for other coastal communities who use the beaches for social meetings and bonding. Women gather on these common grounds to

discuss the events of the day, men play cards, and children play in the sand. Beaches are fantastic football grounds, after all!



Beaches are used by fishworkers to store boats, dry nets etc.

But the ideas of 'pristine' promoted by the tourism industry imagines beaches as a single use system with sand and water, designed only for tourists. With the interests of tourists taking priority over small-scale fishworkers in India, both national and state governments have begun processes of pushing out fishworkers from these commons to make way for this ideal of the 'pristine'. This pushing out has been happening in two important ways - changes in coastal governance through laws and policies, and implementation and expansion of tourism projects along the coast and in the water.

### **Coastal governance systems changed to aid corporates**

Changes in the governance structure of the coasts has been fundamental to the implementation of coastal development, including tourism, under the Blue Economy in India. The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification was initially brought about in 1991 as a way to safeguard coastal spaces and ensure that the livelihoods of traditional fishworkers, and coastal commons were protected. It declared 200 m from the High Tide Line as a No Development Zone, put in place 'hazard lines' to demarcate disaster prone areas on the coasts, prohibited several activities in inter-tidal areas and other ecologically sensitive areas and regulated the withdrawal of groundwater and discharge of wastes. It also acknowledged the claim of traditional fishworkers and provided for

retaining their access to and control over the coastal commons. Taken together, these measures regulated and restricted 'development' activities in coastal areas, and was seen as a barrier by the real estate, infrastructure and tourism industry to gain access to these spaces.

However, this protection did not remain untouched for long. The CRZ notification of 1991 has been amended nearly 25 times since it was brought in, most recently in 2019 (Narayanan, 2015). In 2010, after a report by a committee chaired by MS Swaminathan, the Coastal Zone Management notification was tabled in Parliament as an attempt to replace the CRZ notification. However after heavy protests from fishworkers around the country (Sridhar, et al., 2006), the notification was allowed to lapse. Instead, it was recommended by a second committee also chaired by MS Swaminathan that the CRZ notification be made stronger, violations be monitored and curbed and that a separate Island Protection Zone (IPZ) notification be passed for the island systems (Expert Committee on Coastal Zone, 2009). As a result, a new Coastal Regulation Zone notification, as well as the Island Protection Zone notification were passed in 2011. However, fishworkers and civil society pointed to several flaws in the notifications passed in 2011 (Rethinam & Chakravarty).

However, in 2019, another new CRZ notification was passed, which further diluted the protections given to the coasts. The concessions to the tourism industry provided through these dilutions to the tourism industry is plain as day. Among the dilutions that have taken place, a few key ones that directly benefit the tourism industry are -

- a. reducing the no-development zone from 200 metres to 50 metres, thereby allowing construction of beach shacks, toilets and showers and other 'temporary structures' on the beach;
- b. allowing for "eco-tourism" activities in eco-sensitive areas;
- c. dilution of regulation on groundwater withdrawal and waste discharge, thereby making it easier for hotels to continue to pollute the oceans and deplete existing freshwater sources.

The 2019 Notification takes no notice of the years of violations and the failure of regulatory bodies to enforce the CRZ regulations in any substantial manner. The tourism industry has seen the CRZ regulations as a barrier, but more recently, even government departments have begun to clearly talk of the CRZ as an 'issue' to be solved for tourism development<sup>2</sup>.

But the changing of the coastal governance system has been happening well before 2019. Even though the Coastal Zone Management Bill was allowed to lapse in 2010, the idea of replacing a 'regulatory model' with a 'management model' was brought in through the back door. In 2010, the World Bank started implementation of a pilot project called the Integrated Coastal Management Project (ICZMP), with the stated aim of moving away from the 'regulatory model'. The ICZMP was implemented in 3 states of India, and

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<sup>2</sup> According to meeting minutes of the National Steering Committee for Swadesh Darshan on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017, "On the issue of CRZ, the representative from MOEF informed that they are working on the revision of CRZ notifications....The notification has provisions for relaxation in laws related to development of tourism related activities/infrastructure in the coastal zone"

created a parallel system of management by creating a national-level body called the Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) which was made responsible for moving the country into the 'management model' that the World Bank preferred. Under Phase-I of the ICZM project, 3 states were chosen - West Bengal, Odisha and Gujarat - with different para-statal bodies being given the responsibility of coming up with management plans for the coastal stretches selected under the project. (World Bank, 2010)

After the lapse of the Bill in 2010, there was no legislative support to this process, but the project continued nevertheless (EQUATIONS, 2009). Meanwhile, the existing state-level Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA) had also been tasked with the preparation of Coastal Zone Management Plans for each state, and an Integrated Island Management Plan for the two island systems, Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. While these Plans were supposed to be comprehensive development plans that take into account ecological and sociological factors, in reality, they have often simply been used to develop coastal infrastructure, which also directly and indirectly supports tourism. This infrastructure has been in the form of sea walls, watch towers, public utility centres, walkways for tourists etc.

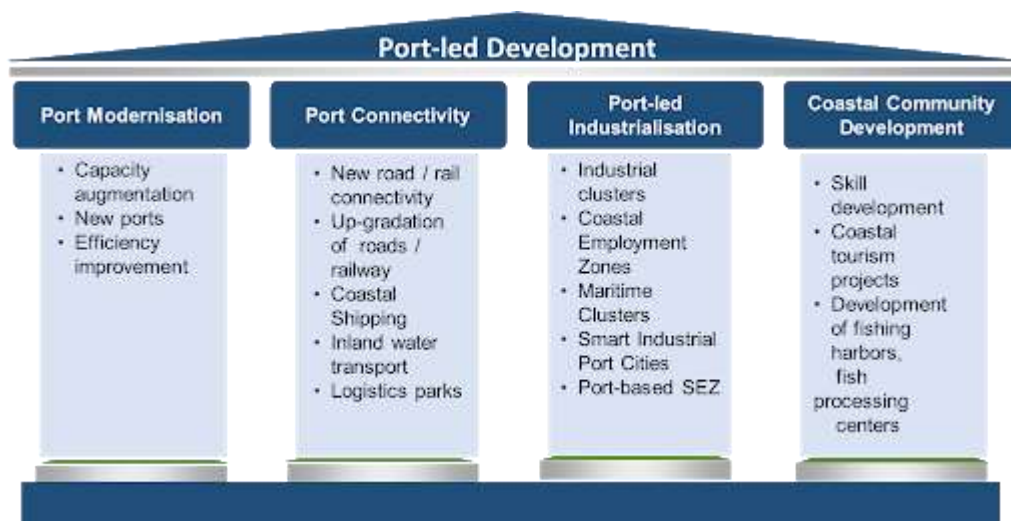
In 2019, the World Bank started the support of another project called 'Enhancing Coastal and Ocean Resource Efficiency' or ENCORE. The project document describes it as an "eight-year Multi-phase Programmatic Approach", essentially to extend the approaches under the ICZM project to other states and union territories. During Phase I of this project, 7 states and 3 Union Territories will be involved (Society for Integrated Coastal Management, 2019). As with the ICZMP introduced in 2010, this project, which is essentially an extension of the same project, has not consulted fishworkers, nor is there any legislative backing to the project.

As mentioned already, all of these changes have been highly undemocratic and have been slid in through back channels, without adequate consultation with citizens. They have been brought in through executive notifications, and despite strong criticism from fishworkers, civil society and environmentalists, who have pointed out the social and environmental costs of these changes in coastal governance. Along with the changing governance of the coasts, several project and schemes have also been pushed by successive governments for the promotion of ocean-based tourism.

## Projects and schemes to further coastal tourism development

A major way in which the “occupation of the coast” has been through a multitude of government funded projects and schemes at the national and state levels that have led to de-facto changes in the use of coastal spaces. Some of these schemes, particularly those in relation to tourism are looked at briefly below.

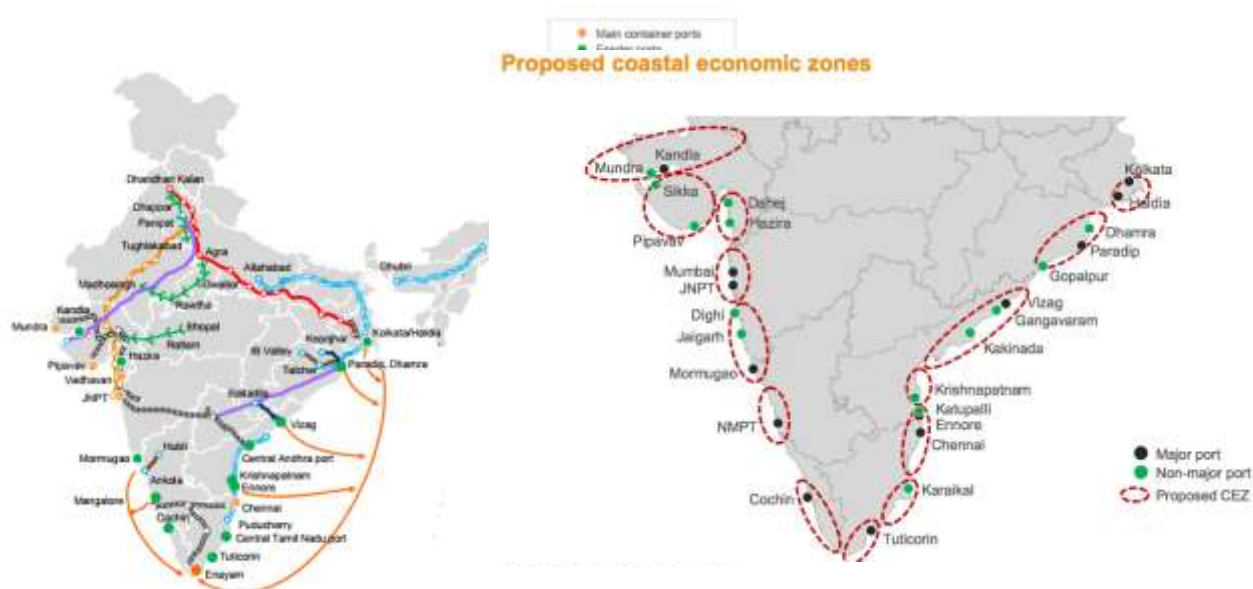
In 2016, the government of India launched the ambitious ‘SAGARMALA’ plan, with the main objective to ensure “port-led” development, through 4 pillars. The plan identified 4 pillars - Port Modernization; Port Connectivity; Port-led industrialization and Coastal Community Development.



From Sagarmala Perspective Plan 2016

Under SAGARMALA, the entire coastline of India is envisaged as heavily industrialized through major and minor ports, manufacturing clusters, and harbours for deep sea fishing. These are further connected inwards through a network of inland waterways, railways and roadways. More than 150 projects have been identified with infrastructure investment of Rs. 4 lakh crore and investment in industry of Rs. 7-8 lakh crore. (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, 2016).





CEZs and transport networks as proposed by Sagarmala Perspective Plan 2016

Several industries form a part of this port-led growth, one of them being tourism.

***Tourism has been placed under the pillar of “Coastal Community Development”, which envisages that coastal communities will become labour for the industrial clusters, deep sea fishing and tourism.***

For tourism specifically, several different projects have been identified under the SAGARMALA perspective plan -

- Development of Coastal Circuits under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism
- Port and lighthouse development
- Beachfront development
- Development of infrastructure for promoting Cruise tourism

The development of the different components of ocean-based tourism in India has been briefly discussed below.

### ***Coastal tourism***

From about 2015, plans to increase coastal tourism have been underway. In 2014-15, the central government launched the major tourism-related scheme called 'Swadesh Darshan' to promote tourism in India. Swadesh Darshan is a scheme to develop 'tourism circuits' in different states. A 'tourism circuit' is a group of destinations that are frequently visited by tourists as part of the same trip, or are similar by theme (such as 'Ramayana circuit, eco-tourism circuit'). One of these is the 'coastal circuit', under which 11 different stretches of the coast have been chosen for development of coastal tourism. The Ministry of Tourism has invested a total of more than Rs. 770 crores in the coastal circuit

alone (Ministry of Tourism). Many of the locations chosen are existing tourism destinations, like Benaolim and Colva in Goa, and Shiroda and Tarkarli in Maharashtra.

Contrary to the way the Blue Economy has been projected and promoted, an examination of the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) submitted by the states for Swadesh Darshan shows that there is little examination of the social and environmental costs of tourism or any solutions to fundamental problems that already exist in tourism in the chosen destinations. Much of the investment has been used only for infrastructure development - building toilets, drinking water, lights and promenades on the beach. This has been explored more in the case study in Tamilnadu.

Additionally, in 2015, the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships identified 13 lighthouses to be developed as tourist attractions. (Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships). Reportedly, the plan includes developing the “land adjacent to these lighthouses” as hotels and resorts, thematic restaurants and other facilities to attract tourists (Press Trust of India, 2015). The Sagarmala Perspective Plan also proposes redeveloping old ports. Under the Sagarmala plan, several city ports like Mumbai and Chennai are proposed to be shifted out of the city for reasons of congestion and high land prices. As new ports develop, and old ports are expanded, it is proposed to redevelop them as commercial and tourism areas in the model of the Tel-Aviv port. Additionally, ports and harbours are being developed as areas for shopping and entertainment for cruise passengers (Bose, 2018), site visits are being organised to ports (Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2017), areas close to ports are being developed as maritime complexes (Indian Ports Association and AECOM, 2017) and beachfront development is planned in harbours (Sharma, 2018).

Another component of the tourism development along coasts in India is beachfront development, implemented both under Sagarmala and also under the ICZM project mentioned above.

### ***Beachfront development***

In 2018, the Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) - the body created under the ICZM project launched a new project called the Beach Environment and Aesthetics Management System (BEAMS). This project is purported to be a way to ensure “clean beaches”, with the proposal to develop beaches to meet the criteria of ‘Blue Flag’. The ‘Blue Flag’ program is an ecolabel awarded by the Foundation for Environmental Education in Finland, and supported by a variety of UN organizations, that certifies beaches that fulfill certain criteria. These criteria include water quality, waste management, environmental education on beach ecosystems for visitors, are safe for visitors (for example, with lifeguard presence and flags for tide) and are barrier free for persons with disabilities. (Blue Flag, 2018) Experience from Blue Flag beaches shows that the label is largely to attract tourism and it pushes out local communities.

The certification poses several concerns for India. The ‘Blue Flag’ certification assumes that beaches are single-use systems, meant for ‘visitors’ who come there for sports and recreational activities (Blue Flag, 2018). This very Euro-centric approach to the ‘users’ of the ‘beach’ is completely blind to the use of beaches for life and livelihood. It imagines

the beach as an empty space where 'visitors' come to engage in leisure. Hence, all of the criteria for 'beach management' are completely focused on 'bathing water quality', and accessibility and facilities for beach "visitors". Beaches in India are traditionally used by fishworkers to anchor boats, store and repair nets and clean and dry fish. Also, coastal communities use it as a space to gather socially. Many beaches have temples, churches and mosques where we go to pray. Blue Flag criteria will not allow for any of these uses.

The Indian government is well aware of the use of beach space by traditional fishing communities. However, SICOM under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has chosen to adopt this tourism approach in its project and completely delegitimize the rights of coastal communities, especially fishworkers, to their commons. To get the Blue Flag label, central and state governments have been constructing promenades, fences, and putting lights and CCTVs. Fishworkers and other coastal communities that use these commons have not been consulted in these projects that will affect their lives and livelihoods. On 11th October 2020, the MoEFCC announced that 8 beaches in India have been awarded the Blue Flag certification for this year. (Kumar, 2020). These are:

- Shivrajpur (Dwarka, Gujarat)
- Ghoghla (Diu)
- Kasarkod (Karnataka)
- Padubidri (Karnataka)
- Kappad (Kerala)
- Rushikonda (AP)
- Golden beach (Puri, Odisha)
- Radhanagar (A&N Islands)

A further 6 beaches had been originally identified in 2018 (PIB, 2018) -

- Kovalam (Chennai)
- Bhogave (Maharashtra)
- Bangaram (Lakshadweep)
- Eden beach (Pondicherry)
- Miramar (Goa)
- Tajpur (West Bengal)

While coastal tourism is an existing industry in India, and is being expanded in these ways, a new form of ocean-based tourism becoming increasingly popular, globally and in India in the last decade, is cruise tourism. The Sagarmala project also aims to capture a larger share of this kind of tourism.

### ***Cruise tourism***

While cruises have possibly been a part of tourism since the late 19th century, cruise tourism has grown exponentially in the last decade, from 17.8 million passengers in 2007 to 25.8 million passengers in 2017. (Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association, 2018). To capture this growing market, India has been bringing in infrastructure and policy changes to promote cruise tourism. Several relaxations have been provided, including that "to

allow foreign flag vessels carrying passengers to call at more than one Indian port without obtaining a license from the Director General of Shipping for a period of 10 years". (Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways, 2009)

In 2017, the first international cruise docked in India with the blessings of the Ministry of Shipping. The Sagaramala newsletter described the event with glowing praise (Ministry of Shipping, 2017) -

*"The dream of making Mumbai, the 'Gateway to International cruise in India', was realised with the arrival of 'Genting Dream' - a brand new 18-Deck ultra-luxurious cruise liner from Germany. On its maiden voyage, this behemoth recently docked at the Mumbai Port.... At the Mumbai Port, over 1800 passengers waited with bated breath and undisguised excitement. It was, after all, their first International voyage, from an Indian port."*

Since then, cruise tourism in India has been increasing multi-fold - in the fiscal year 2017-18, 138 cruise ships called on ports in India, with 1.76 lakh passengers. (PTI, 2019). And more ports are being developed for cruise ships.

While the impacts of cruise tourism have not been well studied in India, globally, the social, economic and environmental costs of cruise tourism are well established. Each cruise ship can carry between 3000 and 5000 passengers. (Cruise Mapper, 2015). These ships are extravagant, running not only fine-dining restaurants, casinos and multiple swimming pools, but some of them even having entire amusement parks with go-karting, rock-climbing and roller-coasters in them. As you can imagine, environmentally, cruise ships are basically "floating cities", and are huge guzzlers of fuel. (Elsmoor, 2019). Reportedly, in the UK, local environmental groups have demonstrated that a single cruise ship emits particulate matter equivalent to 1 million cars. (Higgins-Desboilles, 2020)

Additionally, cruise ships often fly "flags of convenience", meaning that they register in countries like Liberia, Panama and Bermuda, which have little or no regulation, allowing them to not only evade tax but also have exploitative working conditions. And as if all this is not problematic enough, cruises add almost nothing to the local economy. As one article points out - "*Cruise ships are notorious for depositing thousands of tourists in crowded cities who, Prof Agarwal says "spend very little, look around the place for five or six hours with a packed lunch, and then go back on board for dinner."*" (Bloom, 2020).

Cruise tourism did take a major hit with the COVID-19 pandemic, with ships like the Diamond Princess and others seeing major outbreaks of the virus. But the cruise industry has been working hard to salvage its reputation and looks poised to restart operations as soon as it can. (Financial Express, 2020)

Apart from the above, there are other plans in the pipeline as well. In the Budget for 2017-18, the Central Government announced the creation of 'Special Tourism Zones' anchored on Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) in partnership with state governments. (Mishra, 2017). The scheme has not been implemented yet, but there plans to continue public-private partnership

as a model of governance for tourist areas has been seemingly continued in the draft National Tourism Policy. (Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

Many of these projects are being brought in an undemocratic manner, without public consultations and in some cases without any project documents being made public, and in direct contradiction to the demands of citizens. Fishworkers, other coastal communities, and civil society organizations have all been left out of the conversation around these policies and projects. Even as all these changes are taking place, the government has taken no account of the impacts of such developments on coastal communities.

What we have from the tourism component of Blue Economy is a capital intensive model of tourism that brings with it several negative impacts of displacement, loss of access to resources, dilutions of environmental norms and dilution of labour laws among other things. By definition, a capital intensive, investment heavy model of tourism, is structured and designed to exclude marginalized communities like fishworkers - completely contrary to the rhetoric for tourism that promotes local involvement and maximizing benefits to the local communities.

***But alternatives are possible - of a people-centred approach to tourism with environmental sustainability and democratic decision making as key principles.*** What we need is a re-imagination of tourism that recognizes the customary governance of coastal communities to their commons and allows for participation of fishworkers in decision making and ownership of the tourism. It is also important to acknowledge that tourism is sensitive to several external factors like natural disasters, the state of the global economy among others. The pandemic, which severely affected the tourism industry is a case in point. So we need to firmly place tourism as a means of additional source of livelihood (not a primary one). Fishing and allied activities have to be linked to the tourism industry and not sacrificed for the sake of tourism.

Coastal and ocean commons are not just a 'physical resource base' to stake claim and share - it is not a pie that can be cut up into neat little slices. So we will need to replace this current model of tourism under Blue Economy with models that acknowledge commons as community and not as marketable products.

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