

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE OCEANS

19-20 JULY 2016 | THE CAPITOL HOTEL TOKYU | TOKYO, JAPAN

SESSION ONE: FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Photo credit: Nick Hall

Gökova Bay Community Conservation Project

Akyaka, Muğla, Turkey

1) What is the focus of this project?

The Gökova Bay Community Conservation Project is aimed at positioning local fishing communities at the forefront of marine biodiversity conservation. The core approach being adopted is a participatory marine resource management model designed to engage a wide range of stakeholders in monitoring, evaluation, and program design. This model ensures that local fishermen both have a high level of ownership in the project and are the drivers of the new management process.

2) Which organizations and other partners are involved?

The lead organization is the Mediterranean Conservation Society (MCS), which was established in 2012 by a group including local fishermen, academicians, and well-known CEOs and business people concerned about the sustainability of marine resources and biodiversity. The main driving force behind the group is the creation of best practice examples of Marine Protected Area (MPA) management that include all co-management parties and ensure the initiative is led by the local community.

MCS has approximately 150 members, 10 of which work on a full or part time basis on different projects, and there are also 20 volunteers supporting MCS activities. The local community of fishermen and fisherwomen are important MCS partners.

3) What activities or tools have proven successful in building capacity?

In order to build the capacity of local communities to enforce and monitor designated no-take zones, MCS provides marine guard training modules that combine theoretical knowledge and practical training. Training spans topics ranging from protected area patrolling to boat safety, from marine biodiversity assessments to public awareness raising strategies. Local fishing cooperatives choose the trainees for the program, selecting experienced fishermen with the most intimate knowledge of both the fishing grounds themselves and the illegal activities that need to be addressed. MCS provides the tools and resources needed to ensure that each community marine guard unit is fully equipped to effectively enforce and monitor no-take zones.

Local fishermen have also been empowered to monitor and report illegal fishing activities to government authorities, thus closing the gap between local knowledge and enforcement authority. For the first time,

local communities and national authorities are now working in full cooperation and actively sharing innovative ideas on how to further adjust and improve the sustainable management of local fisheries.

The project has regularly briefed government officials, including managers, about the positive outcomes of enhanced monitoring, using detailed catch records to show results such as increasing fish biomass and the rising income of the local fishing cooperatives. This boosts government support for the co-management initiative by clearly demonstrating how effective enforcement is key to the success of MPAs. As a result, many government officials are now defending MPAs as a crucial tool for sustainable ocean management. Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture purchased a new vessel in order to strengthen their enforcement capacity, and MCS has been training the Ministry's staff to employ an organized surveillance scheme involving community rangers.

Recognizing the importance of taking both a collaborative approach to marine management and a gender inclusive stance on improving socioeconomic conditions in the region, in 2013 MCS initiated a project aimed at supporting over 70 fisherwomen in the Bozburun-Datça Area of Gökova Bay. This project has forged links between the fisherwomen in this area, who work in predominantly poor and challenging conditions without many forms of social security, and provides spaces in which they can discuss common challenges, such as overfishing and the subsequent declines in income. The network also helps its members to locate and use sustainable, environmentally-friendly fishing gear and supports their active participation in the cooperative governance of local fisheries. The fisherwomen have been given training in sustainable fishing, labor rights, women's leadership, and microcredit. While this cooperative is notable for many activities and achievements, perhaps most noteworthy is its success as a women's group in a largely male-dominated society.

4) What challenges have been experienced, specifically related to maintaining a focus on capacity building and/or replicating the project in other areas?

At the very beginning it was difficult to establish trust between the government and local community members as they have never before entered into such a cooperation. However, once the participatory management system started working, the collaboration was welcomed by all parties and the local community were recognized as respected field partners able to effectively intervene in illegal fishing and other infringement cases. Similarly, wearing a uniform and obeying certain communication and surveillance rules was challenging for some fishermen, who have been independent throughout their lives. After commencing their community marine guard duties, the fishermen soon realized that in order to administer authority over the public, and be recognized as an extension of the Coast Guard, they had to follow strict protocols.

5) What are the next steps for the project?

The next step for the project is to prepare and sign a co-management protocol with government stakeholders. MCS is already working with the Fisheries and Aquaculture General Directorate with a view to replicating the project in other areas. It is hoped that these new areas will be declared in August 2016.

