

Two Days National Seminar on Knowledge Sharing of Coastal Ecology and Fisheries in Gujarat and India *Issues of Equity, Justice, and Participative Governance*

The world's population surpassed 8 billion in 2023, and this rapid growth has intensified anthropogenic pressures on the environment, leading to escalating risks for both ecosystems and human societies. The marine ecosystem plays a crucial role in human survival, and marine habitats have a vital role in sustaining life on Earth (Barnes and Hughes, 1999). Among the diverse marine habitats, the coastal waters occupying 7% of the oceanic area gains immense significance for their high productivity supporting rich fishing grounds (Pauly et al., 2002).

India, while possessing less than 0.25% of the world's coastline, has a disproportionately high coastal population. An estimated 211.93 million people live in India's 76 coastal districts, accounting for roughly 17% of the national population (Sharma & Khan, 2023). Additionally, nearly 250 million people reside within 50 kilometers of the coastline, placing immense stress on marine and coastal ecosystems while heightening exposure to climate change impacts, industrial encroachments, and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

There are legal and Governance aspects to ecology and marine fishing and fishing communities. The management of India's coastal zones is governed primarily by the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, first issued in 1991, and most recently revised in 2011 and 2019 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The CRZ Notification 2019 introduces liberalized norms allowing for more construction and tourism-related development, including in ecologically sensitive areas, under the guise of "ease of doing business." Under this framework, all coastal states are required to prepare and implement Coastal Zone Management Plans (CZMPs) that demarcate CRZ areas and determine permissible activities. However, planning and regulatory inconsistencies, exclusion of community lands and customary rights, and non-transparent public consultations have drawn widespread concern.

In the above context, the Centre for Culture and Development, Vadodara, is organising a two-day seminar that aligns with India's commitments to Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement, and constitutional values of equity, justice, and participation, while responding to an urgent and growing ecological crisis. It seeks to ensure that coastal development is sensitive to coastal ecology and the traditional fisherfolk communities that live there and sustain them. The coastal development does not come at the cost of the most marginalized, and that law and policy become instruments of justice, not displacement.

The seminar aims to critically examine the issues of coastal ecology, coastal development and the fisherfolk living on the coast line of India. It aims to scrutinize existing legal and governance mechanisms and their adequacy to recognize the customary rights, ecological knowledge, and socio-economic vulnerabilities of coastal communities. It aims to chart pathways for a just transition that can ensure both environmental sustainability and social justice, particularly in the context of climate change, displacement, and coastal industrialization.

Papers are invited from the academicians, researchers, grassroots leaders, practitioners, students, representatives of community-based organizations (CBOs), civil society groups, and local cooperatives who are working in the fields of environmental studies, social sciences, fisheries, environmental justice, livelihoods, and governance or those working with coastal and fishing communities or interested in coastal ecology, just transitions, and community rights. The interested people can send their papers on the following major themes and sub-themes.

Themes and sub-themes of the Seminar

1. Coastal Ecology and Environmental Degradation

- ✓ Ecosystem that protects marine life - sustainability and threats: Coastal ecosystems – (mangroves, estuaries, intertidal zones, and coral reefs),
- ✓ Ways and means of supporting marine biodiversity, buffering against climate impacts, and sustaining fisheries-based livelihoods.
- ✓ Development, large-scale infrastructure (e.g. thermal power plants, desalination units, and tourist infrastructure) and human habitat and marine pollution.
- ✓ Climate change, rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and changes in oceanic conditions pose risks to India's coastal ecology – and its responses.
- ✓ The status of ecological integrity – impact on marine life, the socio-cultural and economic fabric of traditional communities and the coast.

2. Fisheries Livelihoods and Economic Exclusion

- ✓ Small-Scale and Artisanal Fisheries, Coastal Livelihoods: Status, Challenges, and Threats.
- ✓ The expansion of industrial fishing fleets, mechanized trawlers, and export-oriented seafood industries – conflict of profit and development, economy and societies,
- ✓ Social systems and discrimination – role and impact on the development and well-being of communities,
- ✓ Visible and invisible labour in fishing and fishery industries: communities and women in particular are involved in post-harvest processing, vending, and unpaid labour,
- ✓ Recognition, Rights, entitlement and issues of inclusion and exclusion:
- ✓ The traditional and customary rights of coastal communities (e.g. use of creeks, drying grounds, beach space for landing boats) – needs and challenges,

3. Policy and Legal Frameworks – CRZ, CZMP, CRA and Beyond

- ✓ Multiple changes in regulating coastal development, the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Coastal Zone Management Plans (CZMPs) – who is favoured?
- ✓ The CRZ 2019 Notification and the recent CZMP processes - concerns about public consultation, transparency, and inclusion of community-based knowledge.
- ✓ Mapping techniques and procedures – concerns about customary land and marine use practices, especially in local languages and formats accessible to fisher communities.
- ✓ Violation of Rights and Legal recourse: legal complexity, concern about access to justice, institutional apathy, and political favours.
- ✓ Growing demand for a comprehensive **Coastal Rights Act (CRA)** similar to the Forest Rights Act (FRA) – providing a legal safeguard rooted in ecological justice and customary tenure.

4. Participatory Mapping and Community Rights-Based Approaches

- ✓ Use of participatory mapping and data creation, a tool for asserting community rights and making invisible livelihoods visible in policy processes.
- ✓ Role and responsibilities of fisher cooperatives especially those led by women and youth, in democracy and participation in governance,

- ✓ Role and responsibilities of coastal monitoring networks comprising community volunteers, legal experts, and environmental researchers in just and inclusive coastal development,

5. Pathways towards Just Coastal Transitions

- ✓ The notion of a “just coastal transition” implication and impact in coastal development, planning, implementation and accountability,
- ✓ Rule of law and Judiciary in the context of coastal area – recognition of traditional rights of coastal communities, restoration of ecosystems, safeguarding democratic spaces for decision-making,
- ✓ Development of inclusive climate resilience strategies and concerns of vulnerable groups (women-headed households, migrant fish workers, and landless fishers),
- ✓ Developing sustainable blue economic policies that go beyond profit metrics to include ecological sustainability and social equity.
- ✓ Policy recommendations: do they match the ground realities?
- ✓ Coastal life and governance in the process of transition – role of participatory research, local leadership, inclusion, lessons learnt, and opening pathways for dignity, resilience, and regeneration.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION:

Conference Date: 20 - 21 February 2026

Timeline:

Submission of Abstract: **10th October 2025**

Notification of Acceptance: **30th October 2025**

Submission of Full Paper: **15th January 2026**

Abstract/Synopsis: Word limit: 300-400 words (Must include: Title, objectives, methodology, key arguments, and expected contribution)

Full Paper: Word limit: 4,000-5,000 words (including references). Should be original, unpublished, and based on sound academic/research standards. Referencing style: APA (7th edition)

SUBMISSION & CONTACT:

Please submit abstracts and papers via email to: **ccdseminar@gmail.com**

For queries, contact: Dr. Kanchan; **ccdgujarat@gmail.com**
