

# Myanmar | Sustainable Coastal Resources Management

Country	Myanmar
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Project	Gulf of Mottama Project (GoMP)
Duration	2015-18 (Phase I), 2018-21 (Phase II)

## Overall context

Located in the southeast of Myanmar, the Gulf of Mottama (GoM) is one of the most important and unique intertidal mudflat ecosystems in the world. The coastline of the GoM spans 3,000 km; it links the three southeast regions of Myanmar and receives water and sediments from the three rivers.

## Problem statement

Lack of management and uncoordinated governance of these coastal natural resources have led to overexploitation, resulting in massive decline of fisheries stocks, decrease in SBS populations, habitat destruction, and inland salinity intrusion. These multiple impacts and threats increase the vulnerability of coastal rural communities, especially fishers, who seek other livelihoods options and income generating opportunities.

## Proposed solution and key messages

Overall Goal: The unique biodiversity of the GoM is conserved and sustainably developed to benefit human communities that depend on it. Specific Objective: The implementation of the GoM Coastal Resources Natural Management plan has been supported and results in improved livelihood security for vulnerable women and men in targeted coastal areas of the Gulf of Mottama Project (GOMP). Sustainable management of natural coastal resources, in particular to stop illegal fishing

**«Lack of management and uncoordinated governance of the coastal natural resources have led to overexploitation (...) and increase the vulnerability of coastal rural communities.»**

## Objectives and milestones

To support existing local fishery law to be more effective and to contribute to stopping the overfishing and illegal fishing. The local governance on natural resources management is coordinated effectively, and the awareness of the values of GoMP is raised. In order to ensure the use of Coastal Natural Resources is sustainable and well-managed, and biodiversity is conserved, the aim of the project is to seek effective support of the Department of Fisheries (DoF) in the development and implementation of Gulf of Mottama Coastal Natural Resources Management Plan (CNRMP) and the sustainable and functionality of Fishery Development Association (FDA).

## Target audience

The Bago Region and Mon State Department of Fisheries (DoF) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and Irrigation, General Administration Department (GAD) under the Ministry of Union Government Office and Fishery Development Association (FDA) are sittings in the driving seat to get the expected change of project.

The project has planned to continue supporting a series of interrelated changes and strengthening the Coastal Natural Resources (CNR) governance that enables local ownership and sustainability by locally own and sustainably implementation.



The Joint Patrolling team burning illegal fishing nets on the mudflat

## **Partners and Allies**

HELVETAS Myanmar, being the lead agency, leads and implements the project advocacy works, which is to advocate the Bago and Mon regional/state governments on illegal fishing and co-management of natural resources. The advocacy plan has been developed jointly by all consortium members of the project such as HELVETAS, NAG - Network Activity Group, IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature, and BANCA – Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association in consultation with the Fishery Development Association (FDA) and Myanmar Fishery Federation.

## **Approach**

The Gulf of Mottama Project (GoMP) is facilitating the revision of the current local fishery law of Mon state and Bago region in collaboration with the State/Regional Governments, Department of Fisheries (DoF), General Administration Department (GAD) and the Fishery Development Association (FDA) that consists of local fisherfolks.

The regional fishery law allowed fisherfolks to organize co-management zones. Project advocacy works include facilitating the functioning of self co-management zone.

The project advocacy intervention used the insider route that organizes the dialogue meeting with decision-makers and presentation of the finding advances of research study and stories.

The project has been collecting the stories of people (see annex), which serves as evidence to lobby the decision-makers and to draw the attention of media.

The project's advocacy work includes the attempts to convince or to get the recognition of the Department of Fisheries (DoF) on increasing the number of Co-management zone.

## **Achievements**

- Two fishery partnerships were formed with the strong participation of fishery-related stakeholders, led by regional/state ministers and directors of the Department of Fishery (DoF).

- One co-management area was successfully initiated. And there is a plan for an extension.
- The community, the local Fishery Development Association, and government departments have jointly prepared a local natural resources management plan.
- Five Fishery Development Associations (FDAs) were successfully organised in the project's eight townships, which have been recognized by the state and regional government.

### **Lessons Learned**

- The project's team members do not have a shared understanding of advocacy process/strategy and there is a lack of theory of change and influence tree for the advocacy objective/topic.
- The project advocacy action doesn't include dealing with corruption issues and that adversely affects the advocacy momentum. Patrolling activity related to corruption that effects to weak collaboration and preparatory works in patrolling and lost confidentiality.
- Advocacy strategy needs to take into consideration physical and reputational risks among others. The illegal fishing nets were the property of big fisherfolks (the owner of fishing vessels) who are closely associated to or gains the backing of some of the influential parliamentarians and party members of winning party, National League for Democracy. Their fishing nets have been destroyed (see below case study). This threatens the security of project staff.

### **Next steps**

The project will organize an advocacy workshop to capacitate the collaborators on the advocacy concept and to develop an advocacy strategy in consultation with respective team members and stakeholders. The project will organize a workshop on the reflection of Conflict Sensitive Project Management to ensure any future advocacy activities are conflict-sensitive. The project continues supporting the patrolling activity of the Department of Fishery (DoF) and Fishery Development Associations (FDAs). The project will support in reviewing the Fishery By-Law, especially to redefine the definition of illegal fishing net and fishing tender, which could allow the formation of District level Fishery association.

## Myanmar | Success Story

The Fishery Development Associations of Mon and Bago (FDA) prepared their own action plans with the assistance of the project, which has been submitted to the Department of Fisheries in 2018. The first action plan, which includes the patrolling activity to monitor illegal fishing, was not approved by the Department of Fishery. They are not aware of the new fishery law. Another challenge is that the cost for one patrolling trip is between 300 to 800 USD, which is unaffordable for them.

The leaders of the FDA didn't give up and they collected some small money within their own groups and requested the GoMP to collaborate for joint patrolling. The GoMP team facilitated a joint meeting and a capacity building training on ways of SMART patrolling in the GoM area.

After this, the FDAs together with the Department of Fishery started making a patrolling plan with all relevant departments involved, including a cost estimate.

During the first joint trip, the patrolling team observed some of the illegal fishing nets along the mudflats in Bilin area and they made the fishermen aware that this kind of fishing was illegal and detrimental for the fish stock for the all the fishermen in the GoM area. Some of the illegal fishermen ran away to Bago region. With this experience, the FDAs and DoF decided to prepare a joint patrolling with Bago region. In this arrangement, over 30 local fishermen, four fishery department officers, four administrative department officers, and six police officers actively participated in the joint patrolling, which was organized at the start of the fishing season. This time, the patrolling team found over six km of small-mesh fishing nets along with the mudflat areas and two illegal fishing boats which were used for these fishing methods. As soon as they found the nets, both government officials from Bago and Mon decided to destroy all the nets to prevent further fishing with these nests in the GoM area. The total value of the fishing nets was more than US\$ 50,000.

The state and regional government minister and department of fishery director made a media interview and gave official news to the general public that they will organize more similar actions if they found other fishermen along the GoM coast. The local and government official media published this news in both newspaper, journal, TV channels and other social media.

Because of this surprise joint patrolling action, most illegal fishermen don't dare to use these illegal nets, because they know if they are caught the nets will be burned and the loss is too high for them.

The major success of this joint activity is a better understanding and trust between the small fishermen families and government department officials. Consequently, the small fishermen are willing to work with government officials and the department officials are more likely to work directly with the fishing communities on other issues as well. The economic benefit is that some of these small fish species will now quickly grow to a bigger size, increasing the fish stock in the GoM area and thus the income of the fishermen.