

On behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India a public consultation was organized on the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) at the Valsad Panchayat Office Hall at Valsad on 24 February, 2010.

Around 80 participants including fisherfolk, fisher federations, NGOs, political representatives, scientists from the coastal districts of South Gujarat shared their viewpoints. Dr. Shriji Kurup, Programme Coordinator, National Consultations, CEE Bangalore and Mr.M.S.H.Sheikh from Brackish Water Research Centre (BWRC), Surat chaired the proceedings.

The majority viewpoints shared were as follows:

1. All CRZ violations must be identified and punished. Most of the CRZ violations occur because of the lack of transparency of clearance of CRZ projects and EIA reports. Hence, all CRZ projects must undergo public hearing and all documents related to CRZ clearance like draft and final EIA and CRZ maps must be put up for public information and posted on the websites.
2. Latest CRZ maps with ground verification must be completed and published. The base maps must be reviewed at least over every 2-3 years for changes in shoreline and HTL limits. HTL mapping must be physically verified.
3. Salinity levels must be considered to demarcate the extent of CRZ areas in estuarine and backwater conditions. This is important to conserve brackishwater and estuarine biodiversity and important fish breeding areas.
4. Local committees with representation of local community members must be formed to monitor CRZ activities. This would also support local and State administration. Government must clearly communicate their policies in the local language and seek the fishers opinion in framing policy decisions, even in case of setting up of industries. Gram Sabha should be included in the process of decision making.
5. Traditional and customary rights of the fishers in the coastal and marine area must be protected through a legislation on Fisher Rights must be made as on the lines of the Tribal and Forest Dwellers Act. Seaward space till 12 nm should be exclusively reserved for fishing community. There must not be any restriction on fishers and coastal community to construct their houses within 200-500m of the CRZ areas. Fishers should have the right to coastal and marine resource just like farmers have right to land for farming. Proper documents should be provided to fishers related to their identity, house ownership, land records etc. Insurance coverage should be provided to fishers, just like “tax holiday” is provided to industries. Emergency service for fishers and seasafety is required.
6. Fishers generate a lot of foreign exchange for the Government. Fisheries development can lead to sustainable development rather than rapid industrialization in coastal areas. Fishers also protect the coastal ecosystem and marine resources. Their activities help in better conservation measures. They should be trained and considered part of the coastal and marine ecology

conservation team. They should not be discriminated and considered as integral to the development of the coast.

7. There must be an exclusive Ministry for Fisheries. The department of fisheries must be working independently and more representation of MLA and MPs from fishing community must be ensured to protect Fishers rights. Most fishers feel that fisheries is a neglected sector in India and has to be given more attention in order to develop coastal areas and fisher community.
8. Pollution due to industrial effluent discharge is a major issue in South Gujarat coast, especially in the Mindhola and Tapi estuary as well as in the coastal areas of Daman and Diu. This has led to health concerns and damage to fish breeding, fish growth and subsequently resulted in low fish catch. No permission must be given to dispose treated effluent into the estuarine zone which is a natural habitat of fish breeding. Industries should recycle and reuse the effluent waters instead of discharging into the sea. Tests like toxicity tests, bio assay etc. must be carried out and results published. Industries pollution must compensate and fund for restoration of the ecosystem and damage caused to coastal community. No construction activities for commercial purposes must be permitted in CRZ.
9. Pollution monitoring agencies like Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) must carry out their activities efficiently and take strict action against polluters.
10. Oil pollution from oil and gas surveys, offshore oil production, oil terminals, pipelines, ships, ports and single point mooring (SPM) activities are very high in South Gujarat sea. This has affected the marine and coastal ecology. The source for major oil spills in this area is usually not found out. Around 200 kms. Coastline of South Gujarat, Daman U.T. and Maharashtra are affected due to heavy oil spill. There are no oil spill contingency plans and resources available. Only the coast guard is responsible for monitoring such activities on the sea, which is inadequate. Therefore, the seaward side upto at least 12 nm. must be brought under CRZ. The seaward side may be categorized as CRZ V and regulations brought in to control pollution, effluent disposal, reclamation activities and proliferation of ports and oil terminals. Monitoring of marine pollution must be done periodically.
11. Offshore drilling (like in case of ONGC) must be closely monitored for oil spillage. Such companies should not restrict fisher boat movement and fishing activities in the sea.
12. Near shore waters should be protected and promoted ecologically for increasing fish breeding and healthy marine food web. Just like there are programs for conservation of "Tiger" in the forest, similarly there must be programs and policies for "Fish conservation" and fisheries must be promoted. Currently, fishes are migrating deeper into the sea due to nearshore pollution load.
13. It must be recognized that fish are dying because of increased pollutant load and subsequently leading to decrease fish catch. The contaminated fish can cause health hazard in the local population and consumers. The next generation and young children are especially vulnerable to in taking of contaminated fish and biomagnifications of toxic substances. No compensation for fishers is given because of fish stock decrease due to pollution. This discrepancy must be recognized and polluting industries made to pay.

14. Mining of sand, limestone, clay from the coastal beaches and rivers must be stopped. Sand mining has led to affecting the water table in coastal areas as well as triggered salinity intrusion. There are numerous cases of illegal sand mining in estuarine areas of Ambika, Purna, Kaveri, Aurang river, Mindhola and Tapi estuary. Stone blasting must be stopped.
15. Coastal erosion is also a major problem in South Gujarat. Erosion rates between the Mindhola and Varoli estuary is almost 10m/year. Such changes must be surveyed periodically and local community resettled and rehabilitated. Many farmers have lost their agricultural land due to erosion aspects. Erosion also reduces the water availability in coastal aquifers and increases the salinity intrusion. Migration of coastal communities due to environmental degradation is a potential problem in South Gujarat and hence CRZ regulations must lead to protection of the habitat and livelihood of the coastal community. 70% of people from Bilimora and Gadevi village have migrated because of the coastal erosion.
16. Coastal protection structures like seawalls have triggered coastal erosion in villages of Machiwad of Navsari district. Instead of physical structures; bioshields must be promoted.
17. Tectonic activities in South Gujarat region must be studied, especially in the coastal areas. There are already visible hydrological and ecological changes due to developmental pressures, industrial activities in South Gujarat coast.
18. All mangrove patches must be declared as reserve forest or no development zones. The mangroves must be protected from illegal cutting. Mangrove areas must not be altered for any other use. Mangroves also help in protection against tsunamis and storm surges.
19. Measures must be taken to protect coastal community from impact of sea level rise, natural disasters and incidences of storm surges.
20. Man-made coastal issues in South Gujarat are usually triggered due to reclamation of seaward side; effluent discharge into estuary areas; blocking of flow of water in delta regions; illegal mining from rivers; dredging activities resulting in high turbidity conditions; proliferation of ports, oil terminals, chemical industries; pipelines; coastal erosion due to heavy infrastructure construction including seawalls; oil pollution in sea due to oil refineries and from ships like oil tankers. The new investor's summit promoted by the State Government should be checked for intruding into the coastal space and fishers rights.
21. An ecosystem approach to coastal management must be undertaken to conserve and protect the coasts.
22. There should be an exclusive "Fisheries Court" on the lines of "Consumer Court" to deal with the various violations of the CRZ and punishment of polluters. Fishers can get easy access to justice because of this provision.

Report compiled by:
Dr. Shriji Kurup