

## Lakshadweep Marine Research and Conservation Centre Lakshadweep

### Background of the organisation:

The Lakshadweep Marine Research and Conservation Centre (LMRCC) was formed on 16 January 2008, the International Year of Coral Reefs. The organisation was established by a group of young islanders, and it is the first organisation in Lakshadweep that has a primary focus on community based marine conservation. The vision of LMRCC is to achieve “A sustainably progressing Lakshadweep where marine ecosystems are healthy and well managed”.

### Objectives:

The main objectives of the LMRCC are:

- To develop as a centre of excellence in marine research and conservation.
- To conserve the flora and fauna of Lakshadweep through community participation.

### Where we work:

LMRCC is registered as a society and its office is situated in Kavaratti, the capital of the U.T. of Lakshadweep. Currently, we work in Kavaratti, Agatti and Pitti Bird Sanctuary. We organise sea turtle and bird surveys in the uninhabited islands of Bangaram, Thinnaka, Parali and Suheli.

### Activities:

#### *Pitti Bird Sanctuary Conservation:*

Pitti Bird Sanctuary is the only oceanic tern nesting sanctuary in India and the only protected area in Lakshadweep under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act (1972). The main economic activity of pole and line tuna fishing in the islands is directly dependent on the existence of terns. We work closely with the fishing community to reduce the threats to these birds on the island.

#### *Marine Turtle Conservation:*

Lakshadweep has a significant population of the endangered green and hawksbill turtles. Increasing tourism and fishing activities in the islands have started to have negative impacts on the turtles and their habitats. We work with the local community, school students, fishermen and the Forest Department to reduce the threats to these ocean ambassadors through education and awareness programmes.

#### *Environmental Education:*

Lakshadweep follows the school curriculum of the neighbouring state of Kerala, and this denies the island students a chance to learn about their immediate environment, the coral reefs. We have



developed educational resources on coral reefs and their conservation under our SEACOLOGY funded programme, which students are encouraged to use along with their existing curriculum. An Environmental Education programme for conserving the Pitti bird sanctuary is operational in two islands with financial assistance from ATREE's Small Grants Programme. This education programme has been well received by the schools and the local community.

*Fishermen Empowerment Programme:*

We work closely with fisherman associations in islands by providing technical and scientific advice on matters of coastal development and livelihoods issues. We also help them to voice their concerns at national platforms by linking them with national organisations in the country.

*Lakshadweep Dive Club:*

This initiative is organised to provide a common platform to scuba divers from Lakshadweep and also involve them in marine conservation. Divers can collect valuable data which will help in reef conservation; they can also teach tourists the value of coral reefs and make them supporters of conservation.

*Networking:*

LMRCC partners with many local, national and international organisations for marine conservation. We work with TAG-India, Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN), the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Dakshin Foundation, TREE Foundation, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Reef Watch Marine Conservation, CARESS, SEACOLOGY, PADI Project, AWARE Foundation, WWF India, IUCN and the Department of Fisheries, Environment and Forests of the Lakshadweep Administration.

**Support for the organisation:**

Most of the activities of the organisation are supported by voluntary contributions from members

and interested groups. We have received financial assistance from, ATREE, SEACOLOGY and the Department of Environment and Forests, U.T of Lakshadweep.

**Role within the network:**

As a member of TAG, we see our role to include:

- Acting as the Lakshadweep focal point of TAG, and to organise collaborative research, conservation and advocacy programmes for sea turtle conservation in the islands.
- Strengthening the network by training local groups from the Lakshadweep Islands to carry out sea turtle conservation activities in their respective islands.
- Coordinating a local network in Lakshadweep to strengthen the objectives of the national network.

*Benefits from TAG:*

The diversity of organisational partners in TAG will provide an excellent platform for learning from each other's experience.

The lack of media attention to Lakshadweep often sidelines conservation issues in the islands; the network will therefore provide an excellent platform to make the voice of the islands heard by national and international audiences.

*Contributed by Jafer Hisham, Chief Executive Officer, LMRCC.*

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