



**Plastic Check Post to Improve
Marine Environment -
Ramanathapuram (Tamil Nadu)**

Innovation (District)

Marine litter, especially plastic is a major cause of pollution and deterioration of marine environment. In the coastal area of Ramanathapuram District of Tamil Nadu an innovative initiative of a plastic check post is established and operated by the community through Eco-Development Committee. Ramanathapuram District, one of two aspirational districts of the Tamil Nadu, is home to South Asia and Southeast Asia's first Marine Biosphere Reserve (also a Ramsar Site).

Around 2 crores of 'tourists visit Rameswaram every year and after the opening of the Rameswaram-Dhanushkodi-Arichanmunai Road, there is a large influx of plastic waste in the marine environment'.

Significances of the area

- The Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park and Biosphere Reserve is located in the region. It is the first Marine Biosphere Reserve in South and South East Asia. It was declared a Ramsar Site in 2022.



- The Gulf of Mannar is considered a “Biologists’ paradise” with over 4,223 species of flora and fauna. The Gulf of Mannar is endowed with a rich variety of marine flora and fauna as it includes ecosystems like coral reefs, rocky shores, sandy beaches, mud flats, estuaries, mangrove forests, seaweed stretches, and seagrass beds.
- ‘Sea dugong, Dolphin, Whale Shark, Sea cucumber, Sea Horse, and Olive Ridley turtle are important species found here. In the year 2021-22, 23,500 Olive Ridley Turtle hatchlings were released.
- World’s richest marine biodiversity is found here which is of global significance.



Objective

- The opening of a new road from Rameswaram to Dhanushkodi and a large number of tourist footfall (around 2 Cr.) led to a huge amount of plastic deposition.
- Accumulation of plastics in sea instantly is critical as there is a narrow stretch of Sea shore in the Dhanushkodi area, causes the plastic to immediately reach the sea.
- As Olive Ridley Sea turtle lay their eggs on the shoreline, plastic and other marine debris hinder the health of the turtles.
- Plastic causes degradation of Marine ecosystem and acts as a major threat to marine flora and fauna.
- 'Micro plastics entering the Human Food Chain is a public health hazard'.

Initiative

The Plastic check post watchers check all the vehicles for plastics and collect them and replace them with an eco-friendly cloth bag given by them to the tourists. An Environment fee of Rs 20/ four-wheel vehicle is charged to make the initiative sustainable. The plastic

collected is recycled and used for road construction. The check post is innovative and unique in many ways such as community-based governance, linking livelihood and Biodiversity conservation, etc.

Strategy

The initiative of 'Community operated Plastic Check Post is visible action and demonstration which has led to sustainable environmental protection, behavioral change and promotes alternatives to plastic. The main features of initiative are:

- Community-based Governance - check post operated by Eco Development committees.
- Application of 'Polluter Pay Principle' - Environment Fee charged to keep the area clean.
- Waste to Wealth Approach - Shredded plastic is used for road construction.
- Convergence of Livelihood and Environment Conservation- many green jobs are created.



- In line with 'LiFe' Initiative - Focus on behavior change by adopting the eco-friendly way.

Impact

- The revenue earned from environmental fee and sale of plastic garbage is more

than the expenditure incurred towards clothbags (alternative to plastic), wages and restoration activities.

- The initiative is an alternate livelihood for fisherwomen by way of deployment of SHG members in the seashore area, in cleaning and in stitching of yellow cloth bags.

- A clean environment attracts more tourists
- Clean sea shore area of Gulf of Mannar improves the scenic beauty of the southern tip of India. It will give a better experience to the tourists.
- Plastic-free coastline and the ocean protects marine fauna and prevents marine

- animals from getting trapped in plastic, getting injured or dying.
- Fishermen get healthy fish catch and their fishing net is not getting damaged due to plastic entrapment.
- A total of around 18,000 Kg of plastic waste was collected during a period of 8 months starting from January 2022.

