

## *Dynamite fishing is still a common practice*

Apart from this immense biological diversity, coral reefs are also of high value for fisheries, coastal protection and nature-based tourism. But these values are in serious danger of being lost. Scientists estimate that 19% of reefs have already been destroyed and another 35% could be lost within 10-40 years as a result of over-exploitation, coastal development, tourism pressure, marine pollution - and destructive fishing practices.



Tun Sakaran Marine Park was established in 2004 in recognition of its extraordinary natural features and high biodiversity. But for many years before it was gazetted, fishermen had been using fish bombs here. Despite the risk of fines, imprisonment and personal injury some fishermen choose this method of 'fishing' because it is quick, easy and brings in a large 'catch' in a short time. Even now, bombing continues because of the cunning tactics used by the fish bombers to avoid being detected or caught.

### **Making a difference**

The aim of the project is to bring an end to fish blasting and to promote recovery of coral reefs that have been degraded or destroyed as a result of this practice. The drive to stop fish blasting will be through a combination of education, enforcement and community engagement.

The long term impact of fish bombing is often not fully appreciated and the general perception is that the sea and reefs will continue to provide for daily needs forever. The outreach and awareness element of the project will focus on explaining and demonstrating the consequences of destructive fishing on biodiversity, food security and economic development. The project will use a combination of techniques, including a reef guardian scheme, to enhance detection and reporting of fish bombing. We will also work with and assist relevant authorities to improve surveillance and successful prosecution of fish bombers.

### **Conservation in action**

Repairing reefs on a big scale is very difficult and expensive, but small steps can be taken to make a difference. The Marine Conservation Society and Sabah Parks are demonstrating 'conservation in action' at key sites in the Marine Park by

making and setting up 'coral frames' in bombed areas. These specially-designed units have been designed and tested by Seamarc Ptv from the Maldives. They are made from reinforcing bars which are readily available locally and are easy to handle and get into the water. The frames are stable when placed on the seabed due to their shape and because water flows through them. As the corals grow and spread out the frames provide excellent hiding places for fish.



Taucher bringen einen Korallenrahmen auf einem verwüsteten Riff in Position

Project implementation started in June 2011 with surveys to select restoration sites, development of protocols for surveys and monitoring and baseline surveys of current coral cover and fish populations. 70 'seeded' coral frames have been deployed at 2 sites.

Before in fall 2011 70 'seeded' coral frames have been deployed at 2 sites for demonstration purposes, volunteers have been trained in the production technology and handling under water has been practiced. In the future this work will be carried out by fishermen from the region. For this they receive special trainings and are paid on a daily basis for their work.

An action plan was discussed in detail to document further detonations and to coordinate measures. This plan is available now and will be executed in 2012. The educational program to

inform the fishermen of the region about the impact of destructive fishing is now completed.

**Period:**

since December 2011

**Funding:**

13.000 GBP

**Project partner:**

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