

Myanmar designates first marine areas protected by local fishing communities

June 8 2017, by Frank Momberg



Credit: Fauna & Flora International

Myanmar Department of Fisheries celebrates World Oceans Day by designating Myanmar's first Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs).

Myeik Archipelago, once a haven for biodiverse coral reefs, seagrass areas, mangroves and pristine beaches, has experienced a dramatic decline of its fisheries in the last decade due to overfishing and illegal fishing practices such as near-shore trawling and dynamite fishing that led to the destruction of coral reefs. The decline of [fish](#) stocks has had a serious impact on the livelihood of local fishing communities who are competing with large-scale industrial fishing operations.

Over the past three years, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) in collaboration with the Fisheries Department has undertaken comprehensive marine ecosystem assessments to identify and prioritise the remaining intact marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs, for conservation and sustainable local fisheries management.

On World Oceans Day, the Myanmar Fisheries Department is inaugurating the country's first three Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) to protect some of the most diverse coral reefs and marine habitats in the Myeik Archipelago.



Credit: Michangelo Pignani/FFI.

This is the first time in Myanmar's history that long-term management of

[marine areas](#) has been granted to local fishing communities. These communities receive exclusive fishing rights, while taking responsibility for protecting local marine habitats and biodiversity.

"The designation of LMMAs managed by the fishing communities of Thayawthadangyi Island and the Langan Island group will not only protect diverse coral reefs and important fish and crab nursery grounds, but also support local livelihoods," says Robert Howard, FFI's marine programme adviser in Myanmar.

The fishing communities will manage their local marine areas through zonation for sustainable local fisheries as well as no-take zones for the most important [coral reefs](#), which serve as nursery grounds.



Credit: Michangelo Pignani/FFI

According Frank Momberg, FFI's Myanmar Country Director, "Experience from other countries such as Indonesia has shown that LMMAs with no-take zones for critical fish nursery grounds can lead to a recovery of fish stocks within two years and improve local fisheries through spill-over from the no-take zones into the surrounding coastal waters."

According to U Zau Lunn, FFI Myanmar's Marine Conservation Director, "Exclusive fishing rights for the local communities and collaboration with the Fisheries Department and the Myanmar Navy on law enforcement will ensure that LMMAs will be spared from destructive and unsustainable fishing practices such as near shore trawling and light boat fishing."

Provided by Fauna & Flora International

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