



Collective mending a fishing net at the Fisheries Cooperative Society, Fort Kochi

Understanding Solid Waste Management in Kochi

In the second year of the India-Australia Collaboration for Circular Plastics in India, the research team, comprising Development Alternatives, Institute for Sustainable Futures – the University of Technology Sydney, The Energy and Resources Institute, and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, has undertaken extensive stakeholder consultation interviews to identify barriers and opportunities to advance a circular economy for plastics in India. The purpose of this project is to contribute to a roadmap of actions that can be undertaken to help drive change towards a circular economy for plastics, particularly, concerning public policy, business models, and community and industry initiatives.

As a part of the project, our team visited Kochi in Kerala on the 27 and 28 June 2022 to engage with multiple stakeholders and understand the process of solid waste management in Kochi, interact with the fishing community, and develop a business case for an existing circular business model.

On the first day of the visit, the team interacted with Mr K J Sohan, Cochin Corporation Councilor of the Fort Cochin Co-operative Society Ltd and the Kudumbashree Ennakulam Branch Office representatives, namely, Member Secretary, Ms Danny (Block Coordinator), and Ms Sudha (a member of the Haritha Karma Sena - a local solid waste management organization) to understand the solid waste management system in Kochi and the role of both the city corporation and the Haritha Karma Sena. Through discussions, challenges and enablers were identified. Also, a possible cluster development was considered for further discussion regarding seafood, and waste-to-wealth enterprises.



Meeting with Kudumbashree representatives from the Ennakulam Branch Office

On the second day, the team visited the Fort Kochi Fisheries Cooperative Society and the Mahatma Gandhi Beach to engage with the local fishing community on environmental issues, such as waste utilisation, fishing nets, and other socio-economic factors affecting the communities. Mr Raphael, the fishermen group head at the Fort Kochi Cooperative Society explained how the fishing nets are manufactured, mended, and also reused/recycled to make a new net. He also explained how the entire fishing group works together and what other issues they face as a community. Interestingly, Mr Raphael also mentioned that most men are associated with fishing, whereas women are suggested to do other work.

Following this, the team visited the 7to9 Green Store, situated in Tripunithura, Kochi, to understand their circular business model. The six-year-old business has increasingly become popular with many across the city. The zero-waste store promotes plastic-free shopping by asking its customers to refill grocery items in their bags or use eco-friendly packaging materials.

To sum up, this visit provided the project team insights into the local solid waste management system in Kochi and gave ideas to scale up the cases of circular business, and opportunities for collaboration.



A group of fishermen separating fish and marine litter from the net