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UNDP.GEF/SGP-IRAN. QESHM PROJECTS AT A GLANCE

Qeshm Island Projects

Qeshm Island

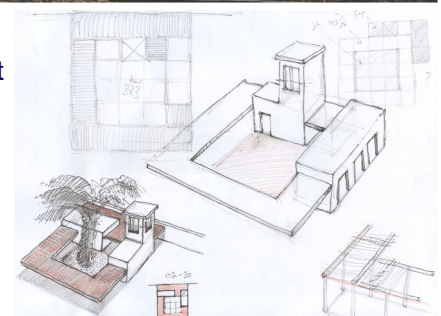
Located in the Strait of Hormoz, at the entrance of the Persian Gulf, Qeshm Island is the largest Island of the Persian Gulf with an area of approximately 1500km² and length of 120 km. Due to its strategic location, it's been historically known as an important hub for marine trade, sometimes also through foreign invasion. The inhabitants of Qeshm Island however, have remained faithful to their culture and environment during all these years.

With the establishment of the Qeshm Free Zone Authority (QFA) in the early 1990s, development in Qeshm Island took a faster pace. The original Development Plan, which was prepared by a Swedish Co. (QIDO), emphasized on "sustainable development", however it's been a challenge harmonizing various economically-oriented development projects on Qeshm Island. In year 2000, the Environment Office of QFA started its work with a team of three people. They worked hard in trying to scan all biodiversity aspects of the island. In 2005, experts from IUCN visited the island and confirmed its unique biodiversity values. Because of a strong community presence on Qeshm Island, it's been critical to work closely with local people to protect the unique natural features of the island. This may be a reason why the Small Grant Programme of the Global Environment Facility (at UNDP) was rather well received by the inhabitants of Qeshm Island. The following describes in summary some of these project experiences:



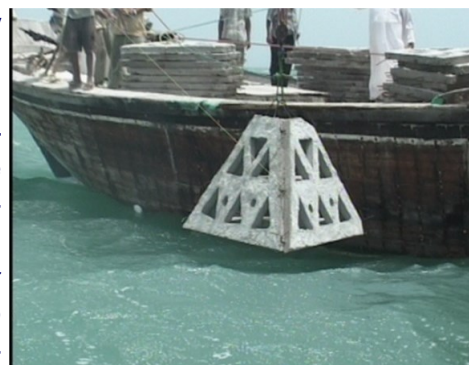
Promoting traditional architectural and use of climate friendly concepts to save energy costs

As part of the cultural heritage of Qeshm Island is its well-known wind towers, which have allowed households adapt to heat during centuries. With rapid development however, there has been a trend in replacing wind towers with air conditioners, and traditional architecture with modern buildings. With rising energy costs there is a possibility to help local communities reassess their priorities, while looking at some ideas from the past that are in harmony with the environment. A pilot project was developed in 2010 in Koshe Village to design a park that used indigenous know-how and concepts, and in a way revive traditional architecture. The project was successfully implemented through collaboration of a group of professional architects and the Koshe Village Council. It is hoped that this idea could be expanded to other coastal provinces of the South.



Pilot Project on Artificial Reefs for Rehabilitation of Marine Resources of Qeshm Island in Salakh area

Local communities on the coasts of Qeshm Island are highly dependent upon fisheries, however, due to population increase, pollution and destructive methods of fishing, the fisheries is in decline. During 2001-4, a field survey was conducted to investigate the state of corals along the northern Persian Gulf, and the indigenous knowledge behind them. Salakh, an important fishing port in the southern tip of Qeshm Island was selected then as a pilot area. It was in Salakh that fishermen mentioned their fathers purposefully disposed useless objects into the sea to enhance reef building process and boost fisheries! Building upon this idea, a project was drafted on promoting “Artificial Reefs in Salakh area”. Through close collaboration between local people and environmental experts, and amalgamation of indigenous knowledge and scientific methods, a modulated pyramid structure was designed and constructed using local materials. Once introduced to the sea, it was protected and monitored by local fishermen (2002-2007). Later, experts found out that biodiversity in these reefs was rather high (EIA study by Khoramshahr Univ. in 2007). With all rights of local community of Salakh reserved, this project has the potential to be expanded and up-scaled at coastal and regional levels.



Pyramid shaped locally-made structure for rehabilitation coral reefs in Salakh

The endangered and very valuable Black Lip oyster (*Pinctada Margaritifera*) is native to waters of Persian

Aquaculture of Pearl by Local Community of Berkeh Khalaf Village



Black Lip oyster (*Pinctada Margaritifera*)

Gulf. The study on this species started as a M.Sc. research by a local biologist. The main concern was to reproduce this species first in the wild and then to promote pearl production in the lab. Considering the potential of this project to create livelihoods for local communities (as well as enhancing biodiversity), a small group of local women were trained to do the laboratory work (grafting operations). With the help of local fishermen (from Berkeh Khalaf) and their indigenous knowledge along with help from experts of Khoramshahr University, for the first time 150 pearl oysters were successfully reproduced. One of the challenges of the project has been however to reserve the rights of this know-how for the Berkeh Khalaf local community.

Onshore Preservation of Hawksbill turtle eggs through Community Participation

Hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricate*) are listed as “Critically Endangered” globally. In year 2000, the Environment Office of QFA found out that locals at Shibderaz Village consumed turtle eggs for medical purposes. Turtles laid eggs in Shibderaz sandy beach in Spring (around March) and baby turtles hatched in April. QFA Environment Office with local Council of Shibderaz initiated a turtle conservation project based on monitoring and protecting the nesting grounds (2003-2005). With funding and support from the Small Grants Programme, local participation was enhanced in monitoring of the project. As a result, approx. 5000 baby turtles were released back to the sea every year. One of the challenges of this project has been to sustain funding for conservation work, and to control visitors!



Hawksbill turtle (laying eggs on Shibderaz shores)

Conservation vs. Tourism: Ecotourism Planning for the turtle Nesting site near Shibderaz Village

To encourage the local community of Shibderaz in turtle conservation work, ecotourism was considered as a good option to provide incentives. With increasing media attention about the turtle nesting beach in Shibderaz, gradually Qeshm Island's visitors came to the site to see the turtles, especially in late March-early April as it coincides with New Year holidays in Iran. Without the necessary infrastructures in place, visitors gradually became a threat for the nesting and hatching turtles. SGP Iran in collaboration with an NGO started planning for ecotourism, aiming to reduce the impacts of tourism, while creating livelihood options for the local community. The project was successful in controlling the impacts of tourism on nesting turtles in peak season for three consecutive years (2008-2011), while also training a group of local youth as guides, and women in handicrafts production (also used as advocacy materials for marine turtles). One of the challenges of the project has been balancing the needs of the locals with the ecological needs of the turtles. It is hoped that a zoning plan will help in this regard.



Tourists interested in turtle nesting

Dolphin watching and Conservation in Hengam Island



Dolphin watching in Hengam Island

As a follow up to the turtle project, the local community of nearby Hengam Island, got also interested in tourism income. Interestingly Hengam also had a nesting turtle population, however the tourism developed around the Dolphins population that was present around the island. As a result, boaters took tourists to show Dolphins in the wild! The result was an economic boom for Hengam Island habitants, however, negative impacts of tourism on dolphins remained a serious concern, until an NGO with co-funding from SGP was involved in training the boaters about the Codes of Conduct. However, it seems that the boaters are not only from Hengam, and there needs to be a supervision from the boaters themselves.

Promoting Livelihoods for Women through Handicrafts

Qeshmi women are known for tedious needle work, namely "Golabtun-douzi". To offer new livelihood options for women and also to build awareness about biodiversity of the island, Art for Conservation was initiated by an NGO with co-funding from SGP. The project was implemented in two villages, Shibderaz and Berke Khalaf, however it has expanded to many other villages now. Handicraft stores are now established in few villages which gives the visitors the chance to contribute to local development. It would be interesting to see the impacts of this project on other aspects of women's life on Qeshm Island.



Presenting new designs while preserving the traditional style—a new livelihood option for Qeshmi women

Future Benefits?

SGP's Qeshm Cluster of projects developed over 10 years, is the fruit of endless efforts by many individuals keen on Qeshm Islands' bio and cultural landscapes. Although the initial aim of these projects was conservation of biodiversity, they have provided the seeds for economic and socio-cultural development. These demonstration projects are now ready to be shared at provincial and regional levels.

GEF/SGP funded Projects on Qeshm Island:

1. Study of Corals and their relationship with Indigenous people - Abie-Bidar NGO in collaboration with Qeshm Island Village communities namely in Salakh (2001-2002)
2. Pilot Project for Rehabilitation of Marine Resources of the Persian Gulf in Salakh Region - Salakh Village Council in collaboration with Tehran University experts (2002-2004)
3. Onshore Preservation of Hawksbill Turtle Eggs through Community Participation - Shibderaz Village Council in collaboration with Environment Office of QFA (2003-2007)
4. Aquaculture of Pearl by Local Community of Berkeh Khalaf Village - Berkeh Khalaf Community Group in collaboration with Persian Gulf Biotechnology Center (2003-2007)
5. Promoting participatory propagation of native plants & mangroves by local communities — Shibderaz and Deyrestan Village Councils (2005– 2009)
6. Networking on indigenous knowledge through literature development and local libraries on land and water resource management on Qeshm Island—Councils of Laft & Sarig-e-dulab Villages (2005– 2010)
7. Promoting and empowering local communities in production and marketing of conservation art (related to SGP project on Hawksbill turtles and nesting site) - Qeshm women group active in Handicrafts in collaboration with Environment Office of QFA (2004-2006)
8. Creating Livelihoods through Ecotourism by promoting women handicrafts (related to SGP projects in Shibderaz and Berke Khalaf) - Women Handicraft's Community Organizations in Shibderaz and Berke Khalaf Villages—Avaye Tabiate Paydar (2008-2009)
9. Extracting baseline information for drafting a full grant project on indigenous literature on natural resources and climatic conditions of Persian Gulf, and enhancing local community libraries (Hormoz and Qeshm Islands) - Shoraye Ketabe Koodak NGO (2005-2006)
10. Empowerment of communities in marketing and alternative livelihood products in Qeshm, Dahan, and Yakhkesh— Tosseyarane Mehr NGO (2006– 2009)
11. Replication and expansion of Artificial Reef Pyramids through enhanced communication materials (related to SGP project on Artificial Reefs) —Salakh Fisheries Cooperative with collaboration of environmental experts (2005– 2009)
12. Environmental Impact Assessment of Artificial Reef Pyramids for future replication and expansion (related to SGP project on Artificial Reefs) —Salakh Village Council in collaboration with environmental experts (2005– 2009)
13. Promoting Ecotourism on Qeshm Island (related to SGP project on Hawksbill turtles nesting site in Shibderaz) —Avaye Tabiate Paydar NGO (2005-present)
14. Pearl Aquaculture on Qeshm Island —A group of local experts in collaboration with Berkeh Khalaf Village community (2006– 2011)
15. Hengam Island, Local Village Council of Hengam in collaboration with Dehyari of Hengam Island and Delphhengam Cooperative (2009-2011)
16. Networking of SGP Projects in Qeshm—Technical team of environmentalists in collaboration with Local Village Councils of Lark, Laft, Shibderaz, Sarrigh, Salakh and Fishermen of Berkeh Khalaf (2008– 2011)
17. Expedite ecotourism plan for Hawksbill turtle nesting site on Qeshm Island during Now-Ruz (New Year holidays): Conservation vs. Tourism— Avaye Tabiate Paydar NGO (2008– 2009)
18. Community turtle conservation fund (conservation and participatory zoning of the site) - Avaye Tabiate Paydar in collaboration with Shibderaz Village Council (2009)
19. Promoting the indigenous architectural and use of the climate friendly concepts in the coastal Persian Gulf –Moassese Farhangi Pajouheshaye Memariye Khaneh va Shahr in collaboration with Laft Village Council (2010– 2011)



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