

Small-scale fishing operations in Bundal and Buddo Islands, Pakistan



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Bundal and Buddo Islands, Karachi, Pakistan, which are located at the mouth of Korangi-Phitti-Jhari creek system are two parts of a single large island separated by seawater at a high tide. These are typical sand bar islands located at the mouth of the Indus River estuary. The islands offer pristine habitats and host about 3,349 hectare of covered mangrove forests. The diverse ecosystem on the islands provides prime habitat for a range of unique biodiversity. There are over 90 species of fish present in surrounding waters and the area is an important breeding ground for fish.

The island is uninhabited and there are no man-made structures, except for a small shrine and recently established small post of Pakistan Navy. The creeks adjacent to two islands are used by fishers as a transit point to enter the high seas for fishing. The community also uses the island to dry fish, mend their nets, and as resting spots while fishing. At times, fishers may be seen fishing along the shallow waters of the island.

Despite being resource limited, government intends to develop a resort and large residence complex on this island, which might end up covering the entire island, its biota and habitats. There are serious concerns that will affect fishers' activities.

Photo: Small-scale fishing boat plying near Bundal Island enroute open sea, Bundal Island, Pakistan. 2020 ©WWF-Pakistan

Location:

Bundal and Buddo Islands, Pakistan

Ecosystem type:

Marine

Main gear:

Cast net, Gillnet, Surrounding net, Traps, Trawls

Target species:

Sardines, anchovies, mullets, sea breams, razor clam, 90 species of small pelagic and demersal fishes

Vessel type:

Small-scale wooden boats

No. of small-scale fishers:

45,000

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Justice in context

Types of justice:

- Distributive
- **Social**
- **Economic**
- Market
- **Infrastructure/wellbeing**
- **Regulatory**
- **Procedural**
- **Environmental**
- COVID-19 related

Intended development on the two islands will have severe impact, which may include:

- Loss of pristine island habitats, associated biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Increased risk of exposure to cyclones and storm surges;
- Increased erosion on the islands and adjacent areas;
- Construction of new road that will provide access the islands seems inevitable, which will cause irreparable damage to ecology of the area;
- Construction of any bridge or causeway will become a major barrier for fishing boats from surrounding fishing settlements in Korangi-Phitti Creek system to access fishing grounds located in the open ocean. It is estimated that about 300-500 boats use this route daily;
- The adverse environmental impacts will seriously impact the livelihoods of coastal communities;
- Post development impacts will be of extreme serious nature, especially on the biodiversity of the area and lead to a total closure of the area for small-scale fishers;
- Significant increased sewage load and other forms of pollutants. The area is already seriously affected by the disposal of the untreated industrial and domestic sewage and any added amounts will affect fish and shellfish fauna making them unfit for human consumption. This will be a serious blow to the small-scale fishers who will have no other alternatives but to travel long distances to catch fish in the offshore waters. There will be serious economic loss in such change in fishing pattern of small-scale fisheries communities; and
- Supply of potable water will also be a serious issue. A likely installment of submarine pipelines will be a serious barrier for major types of small-scale fishing activities.

Definition of small-scale fisheries

Small-scale fisheries are not explicitly defined in Pakistani legislation. In general, small-scale fisheries refer to traditional fisheries involving fishing households (as opposed to commercial companies) that do a relatively small number of trips, close to shore, and use the catch mainly for subsistence and local consumption.

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Dealing with justice

Planned development of resort and residential complex at Bundal and Buddo Islands will have serious impacts on the social and economic wellbeing of the small-scale fishers. Fishers will be deprived of their fishing grounds and restrictions will be put on their access to open sea, use of islands for drying of fish, mending nets and repairing their boats.

It is right to fear that the construction of resort and residential facilities at the two island will lead to increase of solid waste and sewage. These, even if recycled or treated respectively, will have serious impacts on already stressed environment, which will affect fish stocks in the area and small-scale fishers depending on these resources. Denudation of mangroves due to planned construction and other development activities will also affect biodiversity of the area and small-scale fishers will be the one who will bear the brunt of such reduction of mangrove cover in the area.

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There is a general concern among fishers' communities, CBOs, NGOs, and academia that the planned construction of resort and residential complex at Bundal and Buddo Islands will have serious impact on the biodiversity and livelihood of the fishers. Their efforts have resulted in a halt of all developmental initiatives that were initially started in 2007. Unfortunately, in 2020 federal government has again initiated another plan for the development of the islands. Fishers' communities, CBOs, NGOs, and academia are again being vocal and hopeful that this new attempt to impact small-scale fisheries of the area will be stopped once and for all.

Sources:

- WWF, Pakistan



How to cite

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