

## Project Update: December 2016

### 1. Three types of monitoring protocols tested out.

In the monsoon season we researched various citizen scientist-based coral monitoring programmes such as ReefCheck, Coral Watch, REEF, etc. Based on these programmes and other research papers published by the IUCN, the GCRMN etc., we created three different types of protocols to test out:

- I. 100 m line transect for fish and invertebrate Survey and with 50 cm point intersects for benthic composition
- II. 30 m x 2 m belt transect for invertebrate survey, with photo quadrats every 5 m for benthic survey followed by a 20 minute timed swim for fish survey.
- III. 3m x 3m quadrat for invertebrate survey, photo quadrat for benthic survey in the same quadrat followed by a 20 minute timed swim for fish survey

We timed recreational divers conducting each of the surveys above and compared the data collected by each diver conducting the same protocol to judge which format gave the most uniform results.

### 2. Conducted interviews with dive professionals and recreational tourist divers in the Andaman Islands.

We interviewed dive professionals across the island, focusing on more experienced instructors, to tell them about this project and collect feedback on the ease of teaching each protocol, diver safety and prerequisites and theory format they would most prefer. We also spoke to dive centre managers to gauge the number of courses they would be able to sell and to gather feedback on the dive sites in their area that they felt would be most appropriate as study sites.

### 3. Sent out a feedback request note to coral reef scientists and researchers in India and internationally.

Based on the surveys above, the research on indicator species for the area and the results from each protocol we reached out to scientists – the end users of these data – to finalise the protocol and species. We are awaiting their response.

### 4. Formalised a collaboration with the Andaman & Nicobar Forest Department and in process of collaborating with the Indian naval divers.

The Forest Department has expressed their willingness to have their divers trained in this data collection technique to monitor protected areas that are not accessible to tourists. The Indian Navy has also expressed the same for distant reefs where only their boats are able to go to. Workshops for both these teams will be held in January 2017.

