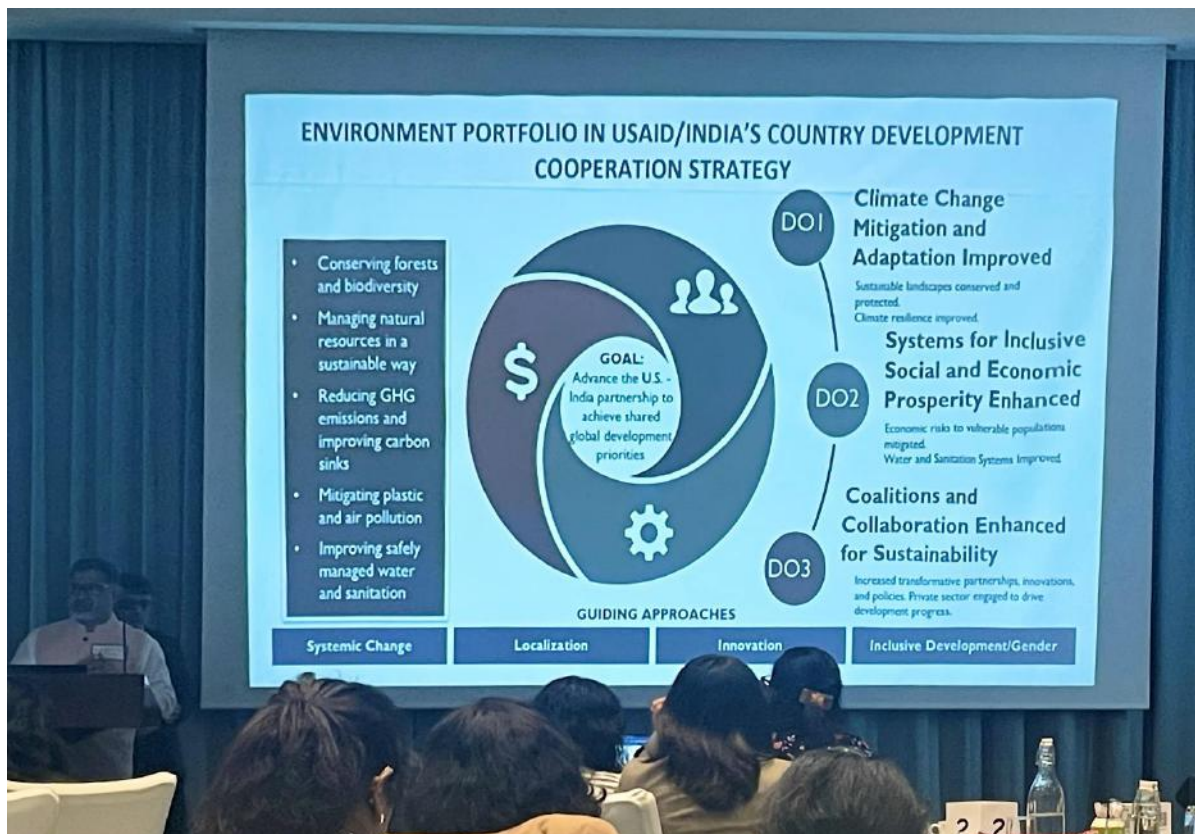


USAID India's Coastal and Marine Conservation Activity Pre-Solicitation Workshop



Development Alternatives took part in the pre-solicitation workshop held by USAID in a hybrid mode in Bengaluru on January 12, 2024. Before the event, USAID sought input and suggestions from relevant stakeholders through a Request for Information (RFI). The workshop aimed to inform USAID's process of designing a new Marine and Coastal Conservation Activity by sharing the summary of the information received and discussing potential strategies to address the identified issues.

The event was opened by Ms. Veena Reddy, Mission Director, USAID. In her speech, she emphasised the law and policy challenges in addressing the challenges, participatory/inclusive management, the importance of sociology in ecological interventions, community-led data collection, local systems preservations, and other critical issues relevant to marine and coastal conservation. Following opening remarks, Ms. Cheryl Hodge-Snead, Office Director, USAID, welcomed all participants and set the background and purpose of the workshop.

Further, Mr. Varghese Paul, Deputy Director (Environment/WASH), and Mr. Soumitri Soumitra Das, Project Management Specialist (Environment), USAID, presented various USAID initiatives, country development cooperation strategies, and field insights on coastal and marine conservation activity. These strategies aim to advance the US-India partnership to achieve shared global development priorities. The primary objectives of the programme were listed as improved climate change mitigation and adaptation, systems for enhanced inclusive social and economic prosperity, and coalitions and collaborations for sustainability. The program's guiding approaches are systemic change, localisation, innovation, and inclusive development. Further, field findings and recommendations, as identified from the RFIs, were discussed for addressing challenges with key ecosystems habitats, species, fisheries, climate change impacts, pollution, data deficiency, resource governance, livelihoods, and women and youth.

The information received through the RFI was discussed in greater detail by Ms. Laia Domenech, Environment Officer, USAID. She discussed the potential outcomes of the project, i.e., strengthened management of Marine Protected Areas and their network, including conservation of Endangered, Threatened, and Protected species, enhanced conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of coastal areas and associated seascapes, and increased resilience of coastal communities. Some of the cross-cutting outcomes of the project were identified as increased knowledge, data generation, inclusive development, and sustainable financing models, among others. She listed the major stakeholders involved in the coastal and marine conservation activities. She also discussed pathways to improve coordination and cooperation among stakeholders. The listed recommendations were the Inter-Ministerial Task Force, Formation of Multistakeholder Committees, Central and State level coordination Portals, Stakeholder Mapping and engagement Plans, and Stakeholder workshops.

The participants in smaller groups then delved into deliberating gaps and opportunities to improve the management of Marine Protected Areas and interventions to improve the conservation, restoration, and resilience of coastal areas. The discussions were followed by identifying priority geographical areas of interventions for Marine Protected Areas and the most vulnerable coastal areas and communities.

The members of USAID then informed the participants on how to respond to a solicitation by USAID and how stakeholders can engage with USAID successfully.