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## Wider View of Coastal Life

Two-thirds of the world's population lives within 60 miles of a coast. And the proportion is growing, even as the global family itself expands. Scientists, environmentalists and others have become increasingly aware of the need to manage these areas thoughtfully. Hence the relatively new field of coastal management has arisen.

The more that coastal regions have been studied, however, the more some researchers have realized the importance of women to successful use and care of these resource-rich environments. To further this understanding, several women (and even a few men) traveled from all over the world to the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Center last month. There they discussed ways of getting women more involved in coastal conservation projects, both as leaders and grassroots participants.

Coastal areas face numerous problems that in most countries have been intensified by development. They range from pollution that harms human beings to over-fishing and the destruction of natural habitats, which both threaten biodiversity. As the two-day workshop at URI revealed, population growth has worsened these problems. Yet coastal management programs have generally not confronted the issue head on.

An exception is a program in the Philippines, where, according to Joan Castro, M.D., the

growing coastal population has begun to deplete fishing stocks, a crucial source of protein in the island nation. Alarm bells went off when public health experts began noting a rise in child malnutrition.

Dr. Castro's nongovernmental program is trying to make family planning part of coastal management. Working with men and women, her organization seeks to boost the availability and use of contraceptives. It also educates youth on the concept of sustainability and favors conservation, along with promoting alternative livelihoods. (Most of the target population supports itself by fishing.)

The discussion at URI ranged well beyond population control. Sex tourism, educating women in the sciences, and overcoming cultural barriers so that women could take part in decisionmaking were just some of the subjects the group saw as key to effective coastal management.

Coasts are something more than sandy beaches and great views. Very often, they are complex ecosystems invaluable to sustaining life. By broadening our view to include sexual relations and other cultural factors, we can better understand how human activity may threaten such areas. More important, we can find ways of living more harmoniously with these cherished strands of earth.