India launches nationwide validation of marine fishing villages ahead of 2025 Census

The Department of Fisheries, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, has commissioned the ICAR–Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) to lead a two-week validation drive across 13 coastal States and Union Territories, covering nearly 3,500 marine fishing villages. This foundational effort is set to redefine the baseline for India's marine data infrastructure—crucial for the full-scale household enumeration scheduled for November–December 2025 under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

The village-level validation process aims to establish a precise and updated frame of all active marine fishing villages and landing centres. Over 100 personnel from CMFRI and the Fishery Survey of India (FSI) have been deployed to physically verify village existence, delineate administrative boundaries, and collect real-time data using VyAS-NAV (Village-Jetty Appraisal Navigator)—a bespoke mobile application developed by CMFRI to capture geo-referenced village attributes on the move. "An accurate and updated frame of marine fishing villages is essential to ensure the success of the household-level enumeration," said Neetu Kumari Prasad, IAS, Joint Secretary, Department of Fisheries.

Designed as a tech-forward operation, the exercise will feed into a GIS-enabled national fisheries dashboard, supported by cloud-based infrastructure and a two-tier supervision model across districts and states to ensure data fidelity. The framework not only includes technical validation but also involves collaboration with state fisheries departments and local panchayats to cross-check village dependency on marine fishing and allied activities, assess household density, and integrate socioeconomic identifiers.

While earlier marine censuses focused predominantly on capturing aggregate trends, MFC-2025 marks a qualitative leap toward bottom-up fisheries planning, embedding digital tools to capture infrastructure gaps, livelihood profiles, and village-level vulnerabilities. The data architecture being built now will allow policymakers to design far more targeted and community-sensitive interventions—ranging from cold chain deployment to coastal climate resilience planning.

The initiative will also serve as a recruitment pipeline, as CMFRI teams are tasked with identifying and training local youth as village enumerators for the main census phase. Their inclusion is expected to improve accuracy, build local capacity, and deepen trust in the enumeration process.

India's marine fisheries sector supports over four million livelihoods, yet policymaking has long been hindered by fragmented and outdated data sets. MFC-2025, supported by this validation drive, seeks to reverse that trend—positioning India to better manage its marine resources, track fisher welfare indicators, and integrate coastal economies into the broader developmental narrative.