

## **A project to support and promote conservation oriented coastal livelihoods through community action in Orissa, India**

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The Orissa Marine Resources Conservation Consortium has developed a project that aims at marine conservation goals through a focus on strengthening livelihoods. The project is an extension and expansion of the efforts of the first phase of a project, undertaken with support from the Ford Foundation and administered through the OMRCC member - the United Artists' Association – an organisation based in coastal Orissa. The OMRCC and the current project began around the urgent problem of building resolution mechanisms for conflicts between marine conservation and fisheries livelihood goals. The project finds common ground in these two apparently opposing goals and aims at enhancing the livelihoods of local fishing communities, in particular those affected the most by marine conservation measures of the State, which restrict their access to fishery resources.

In Orissa, negative attitudes towards conservation are exaggerated in areas where incomes are low, particularly when local livelihoods are further impacted by conservation restrictions. Instead, if conservation programmes were designed based on an understanding of livelihood losses and were geared to mitigate these losses through enhanced incomes, then the motivation for compliance to laws would be greater. The project seeks to test whether greater community participation and collaborative management practices result in better compliance to regulations and greater security of resources themselves. Finally it is to be tested whether these approaches actually result in favourable attitudes towards conservation and what shape these take.

In the second phase, the project will focus on the Devi River mouth region (a mass nesting beach) and the bulk of interventions (for co-management, education and enterprise development) will take place in the villages around this region. However, some of the management actions require continuing our engagement at other mass nesting sites, taking off from Phase I. A few activities that were initiated in the other two sites of Gahirmatha and Rushikulya will take up a small portion of the project focus. This will be restricted to promotion of tourism actions in Rushikulya and the documentation of fisheries across the state.

The objectives of the project are to:

1. To build a sustainable and successful conservation-enterprise model to be adopted and supported by government agencies and various stakeholders involved in fishery resource management.
2. To promote models towards marine conservation that concentrate on enhancing local livelihoods and entrepreneurial skills around conservation to effect long term attitudinal changes towards conservation.
3. To evolve and promote collaborative fisheries management approaches which are appropriate for conservation-livelihoods contexts as in Orissa's fisheries.

### **Proposed activities**

1. Institution building for fisheries co-management at Devi river mouth area:

- o Conducting meetings with trawler associations and building a platform for conflict resolution and joint fisheries management.
  - o Developing a joint programme between the trawler association and the traditional sector.
  - o Conducting studies on the nature of trawl fisheries in the Devi river mouth region.
  - o Exploring joint conservation actions such as fishing holidays or no-fishing zones.
2. Value addition and market access and strengthening existing supply chain:
- o Inclusion of more villages in Devi river mouth area to undertake the activities identified as most feasible for enterprise development.
  - o Identification of beneficiary families in the Devi region particularly those affected by conflicts over fisheries and from conservation activities.
  - o Scaling up of natural-resource enterprises developed in Phase I of the CCD-OMRCC project.
  - o A social audit will be undertaken to assess the beneficiaries of the enterprise activities undertaken through the project in both the first and second phase.
3. Community-based tourism plans and pilot project in the Rushikulya mass nesting villages in collaboration with Orissa Tourism Development Corporation and Environment Department, Government of Orissa. This is an activity that was initiated in Phase I and will be facilitated and supported for its successful operation in future:
- o This will involve conducting meetings with the various villages where mass nesting takes place.
  - o Meetings will be conducted between the concerned government departments and the local representatives to develop the tourism plan and implementation mechanism collaboratively.
  - o The plan will be implemented as a pilot over one sea turtle breeding and nesting season to assess its viability for areas like Devi at a later stage.
4. Development of co-management plans for fisheries management in the Devi region (and other areas where applicable). This will comprise of:
- o Sea turtle conservation management plan.
  - o Gear management plan.
  - o Monsoon fisheries management plan.
  - o Facilitating collaboration between the traditional fisherfolk associations and the trawler associations in the state as a means of evolving co-management measures on fisheries management.
5. Promotion of responsible fishing practices by various categories of fisher communities:
- o Campaign to make people aware about the sustainable fisheries management plan initiated in the first phase.
  - o Engaging with government officials about the community-based participatory fisheries management plan for adoption into state policy.
  - o Initiate activities to promote community-based environment conservation by the way of regeneration of appropriate coastal restoration activities (such as sand dune restoration) with the support of Government.
6. Development of environment education and communication material:
- o Production of the *Upakulare*, a quarterly newsletter in Orissa and English. The newsletter will cover issues related to marine conservation and livelihoods issues and will provide information related to current developments in the state on the government.
  - o Production of educational material on environmental laws and coastal ecosystems in Orissa.
  - o Formation of eco-clubs in the Devi region and providing educational content to children from the schools and villages in this region.
7. Documentation and production of educational and advocacy material on the fisheries of Orissa, namely:
- o Fishing craft and gear used all along the Orissa coast (also in relation to sea turtle conservation).
  - o Nature of women's work in fisheries in Orissa.
  - o Traditional fishing practices in the State.
- The above material will be produced in limited amounts (500 each) to inform policy makers about the nature of Orissa's fisheries and to encourage

them to promote and support community-based conservation enterprises.

The activities planned as part of the project all involve the active participation of existing institutions such as the Orissa Traditional Fish Workers Union and other associations of fisherfolk such as trawler associations and local community-based organisations.

The issues identified have been selected after a careful assessment of the needs and priorities in coastal Orissa on the issue of conservation and livelihoods. This ensures the continued interest and engagement on these issues of all the members, which is the very mandate of the Orissa Marine Resources Conservation Consortium. The collaborative machinery that will be put in place in

Orissa will assign responsibilities to members who are from these local institutions already having mandates to perform these responsibilities in their current positions (for eg. Association Presidents and Union leaders). These representatives and other representatives of the community will be involved in the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of the management mechanisms themselves.

The singularly critical outcome expected from this project is that the Orissa coast will witness more meaningful and increased participation of fisher communities and their institutions in collaborative management initiatives and practices which have a positive influence on compliance to fisheries regulation and greater security of marine resources in the state.