

Ecotourism guide training for local community at the CMPA Project sites in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra

FINAL REPORT



Bombay Natural History Society



Implemented by
giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
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On behalf of:
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The CMPA Project has been commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), under the International Climate Initiative (IKI). It is implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of BMUB. In Maharashtra, the Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra Forest Department is implementing the project in three sites i.e. Thane Creek, Velas-Dabhol Coastal Stretch and Ansure Creek.

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SUMMARY

The GoI-GIZ-CMPA Maharashtra Project, as part of its efforts to create awareness about environment conservation and to showcase the rich natural heritage of marine and coastal areas in Maharashtra, has planned pilot ecotourism activities for Ratnagiri. The main objective is to identify the local youth from villages and train them as ecotourism guides who can assist visitors on nature walks and familiarize them about Olive Ridley Sea Turtle. The Bombay Natural History Society was assigned the task of training the local youth.

The guide training programme was conducted at Anjarle village from March 20, 2017 to March 22, 2017. The local community was trained to identify the flora and fauna of the area and was educated about the ethics of ecotourism.

INTRODUCTION

Indo-German Cooperation on Biodiversity

The Governments of India and Germany have fostered a partnership to enhance conservation of India's biodiversity in line with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The partnership includes implementing projects in which protecting the environment takes center-stage in unison with the principle of sustainable development and enhancement of human well-being.

The CMPA Project

The CMPA project is a flagship project of the Indo-German technical cooperation supporting the CBD's Aichi targets. The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB). It is implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of BMUB.

The overall objective of the project is, "The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the pilot protected areas are improved, taking into consideration the economic circumstances of the local population."

The project aims at conservation and management of potential marine protected areas in Maharashtra. The three main components of the CMPA project are participatory process, human capacity development, and communication and awareness. The Project intervenes at two levels in India: At the national level and at the level of selected federal states. It focuses on:

I: Participatory management

Participatory management processes are implemented in the pilot protected areas.

II: Capacity development

A capacity strengthening system for supporting participatory management of coastal and marine protected areas is developed for selected states and at national level.

III: Information, education and communication

Relevant stakeholders have information on and are aware of the importance of conserving biodiversity in marine and coastal **areas**.

CMPA sites in Maharashtra

A series of national and state level stakeholder consultations involving government representatives, researchers and NGOs resulted in the identification of three CMPA sites in Maharashtra. These are Thane Creek, Velas to Dabhol Coastal Stretch and Ansure Creek.

1. **Thane Creek:** Thane Creek opens into Mumbai's harbour and extends over a distance of 26 km. Thane Creek supports a rich diversity of flora and fauna. It has been declared an Important Bird Area and a Wildlife Sanctuary.
2. **Velas to Dabhol coastal stretch:** This 60 km coastal stretch, is located in the **Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra**. Habitats in the region include sandy beaches, rocky shores; mangroves, estuaries, coastal plateaus and moist deciduous forests on hill sides. Beaches along this coast have become popular due to sea turtle nesting sites and the efforts of local communities to conserve turtle nests.
3. **Ansure Creek:** Ansure creek is located in the **Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra**. It is approximately 6.5 km long and 250-300 m wide. The creek harbors large mud flats and mangrove forests.

The Gol-GIZ-CMPA Maharashtra Project intends to improve the protection of biodiversity by promoting participatory approaches to the conservation and management of existing coastal and marine protected areas (CMPA), and supporting the creation of new protected areas in the future. By involving stakeholders at local, state and national levels, it is expected to make a significant contribution to the conservation of areas rich in biodiversity, without compromising the resource use and livelihood options of the local population.

In Ratnagiri, Velas to Dabhol coastal stretch and Ansure Creek were the selected project sites of the Conservation and Sustainable Management of CMPA project.

The overall objective of the Gol-GIZ-CMPA Maharashtra Project is 'to contribute to the improvement of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the pilot protected areas, while taking into consideration the economic circumstances of the local population'.

As part of its efforts to create awareness and showcase the rich natural heritage of marine and coastal areas in Maharashtra, it has planned to start pilot ecotourism activities for Ratnagiri. The '**Eco-tourism guide training programme at Ratnagiri**' project was assigned to BNHS.

The assigned work involved identifying the local youth from three villages namely Anjarle, Velas and Kelsi and training them as ecotourism guides to assist visitors on nature walks. The training was planned to cover the basic coastal ecology, cultural and natural heritage of the sites, locally found flora and fauna and their significance. Training programme for all these three villages was organised at Anjarle village.

The project duration was from March 18, 2017 to March 22, 2017. This included the pilot site visits, selection of participants, programme material designing and printing, and implementation.

TRAINING PROGRAMME AT RATNAGIRI

Ratnagiri is located on the west coast of India, bound by the Arabian Sea. It has an average elevation of 11 metres (36 feet). The Sahyadri mountains border Ratnagiri to the east. The outstanding features of the district are highly uneven habitat and very narrow plains that fringe the coastline.

The major three types of habitats are Rocky shores, Sandy shores, and Muddy and Mangrove shores which are distributed along the coastal Maharashtra. Occasionally, corals are present along the coastline in small patches. Ratnagiri is especially known for the presence of patchy reefs along the shoreline (Qasim & Wafer 1979; Untawale et al. 2000; Spalding et al. 2001).

Fishing is the main economic activity. Ratnagiri is an important fishing centre of Maharashtra. Extensive fishing activities are carried out along the coast for nine months from September to May.

In Velas and Anjarle Olive Ridley Turtles *Lepidochelys olivacea* have been consistently sighted visiting the beach every year to lay their eggs. Turtle conservation movement has been undertaken by the villagers in both the villages since 2002, where they have chalked out a programme to preserve the dwindling number of turtles.

In 2006, Velas shot into fame when the nests of Olive Ridley Turtles *Lepidochelys olivacea* were conserved and their importance was highlighted by the locals. From this turtle conservation programme was born the Turtle Festival with the intention to increase awareness about this species and link conservancy with livelihood for the Velas residents who protect them. Started in 2006, the Turtle Festival is held every year during the nesting season. The spectacular sight of hatchlings emerging from nests and crawling towards the sea draws tourists to this festival.

The festival was extended to Anjarle village in 2016 and has received a good response. While the locals are quite aware about turtle conservation, the same cannot be said about

their familiarity with the flora and other fauna in the area. This prompted the need to include training in flora and fauna recognition in the ecotourism guide training programme.

Programme activities

Sr No.	Activity	Indoor/Outdoor	Day
1.	i. Introduction to the training programme and its purpose ii. PowerPoint presentation on turtle conservation iii. Field visit to the beach for turtles [if it is specifically olive ridley, then say Olive Ridley Turtles]	Indoor Indoor Outdoor	Day 1
2.	i. PowerPoint presentation on Mangrove ecosystem ii. Field work concerning Mangrove ecosystem iii. PowerPoint presentation on bird identification	Indoor Outdoor Indoor	Day 2

Brief of the training programme

The ecotourism guide training programme at Anjarle, Ratnagiri was conducted from March 20 to 22, 2017. The venue was Anjarle Village. A total number of 19 participants were selected from three different villages namely Anjarle, Velas and Kelsi. Every individual participant was provided with resource material, which included a bird guide (English and Marathi), Mangrove species booklet (Marathi and English), a booklet giving information

about the commonly found shells and a book regarding the birds of Maharashtra and their Marathi names.

Various indoor and outdoor activities were conducted during the training period. Presentations and talks were given by the BNHS staff to teach them about the general biodiversity of that area. Separate presentations were given regarding the avian diversity and the Mangrove species found in and around the CMPA sites of Ratnagiri. Major focus was on helping the participants identify the bird species seen in the area. Other interesting facts and information regarding each species was given during the span of three days. On the last day, a quiz was conducted to assess the knowledge gained during the training programme.

The energy levels of the participants were high and they voluntarily participated in the activities conducted. Their main expectation was to be able to identify the species and by the end of the programme that had been fulfilled by preparing checklist of birds and mangroves found in their area during the field visits. A checklist was prepared by participants through discussions among themselves. The programme was concluded with a certificate distribution ceremony and feedback by the participants.

Observations:

- The participants were able to identify the common birds and mangrove species found in and around the creek.
- The confidence and enthusiasm levels were higher at the end of the programme.



Figure 1 An ice-breaking session with participants



Figure 2 PowerPoint Presentation on turtle conservation



Figure 3 Participants viewing a short film on turtle conservation



Figure 4 Participants being briefed on turtle hatchery



Figure 5 Field visit focusing on turtles



Figure 6 Range Forest Officer addressing participants on World Forest Day



Figure 7 Power Point presentation on Mangrove ecosystem



Figure 8 Participants being familiarized with Mangrove ecosystem



Figure 9 Participants learning to identify Mangrove species



Figure 10 Hands-on training to identify mangrove species



Figure 11 PowerPoint presentation on bird identification



Figure 12 Participants learn to identify birds during field visit



Figure 13 Participants get tips on how to use the Bird Field Guide



Figure 14 PowerPoint Presentation on Marine Ecosystem



Figure 15 A quiz being held for participants at the end of the three-day workshop



Figure 16 Participants with their certificates



Figure 17 Participants pose with the BNHS staff at the end of the session

The CMPA Project has been commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), with funds provided under the International Climate Initiative (IKI). The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India (MoEFCC) has entered into a technical cooperation agreement with BMUB for implementing the CMPA project. BMUB has commissioned GIZ to implement the Project jointly with MoEFCC and the state forest departments in selected states of India.

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