

Preparation of Wetland Management Plan for 5 villages of Bhandara and Gondia districts of Maharashtra having catchment area of Wainganga River

Programme Duration

Overall Duration (months)	May 2017 to December 2017
Start Date (dd.mm.yyyy)	01 May 2017
End Date (dd.mm.yyyy)	28 December 2017

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**By:
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Brief Summary of the Activity

In 2016, Wainganga Water Partnership promoted by India Water Partnership (GWP-India) has undertaken the work of Biodiversity assessment of the five water bodies in villages, namely, Nimgaon, Sawartola, Channa Bakti, Khamkhura in Gondia District and Bampewada in Bhandara district, Maharashtra State located in in Wainganga riverbasin. Global Water Partnership-South Asia and India Water Partnership (GWP-India) have supported this activity to Wainganga Water Partnership (WWP). Bhandara Nisarga Va Sanskruti Abhyas Mandal (BNVSAM) on behalf of WWP has also contributed in this activity. The assessment of biodiversity and use of best practices documented in the above mentioned project, has led towards the planning of the activities for 2017 based on the works undertaken in 2016. The logical aim after the assessment of the tank biodiversity, with the fishermen and other communities in villages, was to share outcome of the study with them. Ten meetings were organized in the five villages for this purpose. It has provided the background to the communities to identify the areas of intervention for wise use of water bodies.

After sharing the outcome, 5 workshops have been organized in Gram Panchayats of these villages for hand holding in preparing the management plans for communities for taking up the responsibility to maintain these precious water bodies with local governance . It was observed from the study of BNVSAM in these villages, that the fishermen is the vulnerable community and the ill effects of the mismanagement of these water bodies will harm them directly. At the same time, the community is dependent on labour work also for sustenance. So the use of MGNREGA/ MREGS for the work of water bodies management was the need of community. The provisions of these acts were not known and the right to work, provided through this act, remains unutilized. Therefore, poster exhibitions on the provisions laid in this Act and the procedures to be followed were shared through organizing exhibitions in all the 5 villages, followed by the follow up meetings for inclusion of the planned activities in the MREGS plans of the selected villages.

The project of biodiversity assessment of 2016 has also highlighted the need for the valuation of these water bodies, as the benefit to the society, from the well managed water body are larger, and the State Government has also started schemes for desiltation of the traditional tanks. To identify the investment needs for maximizing the benefits of these water bodies is the next step in this process. A study group of individuals, who have worked or have interest in economic valuation and wanted to contribute in this process, was formed and a meeting of this group was organized for finalizing the method and planning of economic valuation activity.

WWP has also jointly organized two programmes with BNVSAM, which were not mentioned in the proposal, but were important from the point of view of community awareness and inclusion of community organizations in the issues around the water bodies. One was the organization of World Fish Migration Day and another was International Biodiversity Day. Both the programmes were attended by the community leaders from the five selected villages.

Apart from these planned activities, the findings of the study of 2016 were also shared with the District Biodiversity Management Committee, headed by the District Collector of Gondia district. He also has responded positively for undertaking the selected tanks management in each tahsil of the district. The detail plan of action is in process with the different stakeholder departments for management of these tanks.

Executive Summary

The Wainganga river basin is known for the traditional water management system. The traditional tanks are called Maji Malgujari tanks in all the government records. The tanks played a vital role in supporting the rice crop of the region and also provided support to the marginal farmers or landless people through fishery and the other resources of tanks. After acquisition of these tanks from Malgujars, by the State Irrigation Department, other departments also came in the picture in the catchment and command area of tanks. Holistic approach of water management was fragmented in the programmes and policies of these different departments, which further resulted in deteriorating condition of these tanks and the dependent communities. Mere revival of the traditional structure is not enough as State Government is trying to do this since last five decades, and still the tanks are not in very good condition and the benefits from it are also remained limited for some of the traditional users only.

So documenting the conditions of tank and the associated resources and further sharing of the information with community for planning is the most needed activity. These traditional tanks remained functioning for hundreds of years, as they were managed in past by the local, dependent communities. Alienation of people from this system, after the centralization of resource is also a major reason for the depleting condition of tanks. The project of preparation of wetland management plans by the communities has been helpful to occupy the legal space for management of water resource by the community which is a crucial move. Further follow up of the plans at Gramsabha and district level has guaranteed that the plans will be executed and people will get the work and also the benefits from these works in their village tanks. Some of the work, such as extraction of *Ipomoea fistulosa* and plantation of aquatic plants, which are not included in the MREGS work have also been proposed by community through Gramsabhas, as they were crucial from the point of view of the communities. The district administration has also responded positively to include these works as the special case, on the basis of the data of the work done in 2016 by WWP. Jointly, the WWP and BNVSAM are preparing the proposal for inclusion of these works in the MREGS, so it can be implemented in Maharashtra state by the people, who want to do those works in their respective villages.

Acknowledgement

Wainganga Water Partnership is thankful to the Global Water Partnership-GWP-South Asia and India Water Partnership (GWP-India) for their support for undertaking the activities of management of traditional water bodies by community. It was aimed to rejuvenate the system of management of water bodies along with the rejuvenation of tank and allied resources. Dr. Veena Khanduri, Executive Secretary-cum-Country Coordinator, Mr. Mangala Rai and Ms. Sushma Sharma from GWP-India were constantly there to help WWP.

We are also thankful to the Gomukh Environmental Trust for Sustainable Development (Gomukh Trust) for routing the funds provided by GWP-South Asia through GWP-India for this activity, as WWP is not formally registered due to the changes in rules of Trust act and Companies acts. We specially thank Prof. Vijay Paranjpye, Chairman of Gomukh Trust, who helped the field team in conceptualization of work and for planning the economic valuation activity. Gomukh Trust is also the Coordinating Agency of West Zone Water Partnership formed by GWP-India. Prof. Vijay Paranjpye is the guide and mentor of all the field team of WWP. Bhandara Nisarga Va Sanskruti Abhyas Mandal is the local organization, working in this area on the issues of traditional water management system, has also joined this study and provided the assistance of their staff and contributed financially also through their project, funded by Rajiv Gandhi Science and Technology Commission (RGSTC), Govt. of Maharashtra. We are thankful to BNVSAM and RGSTC for their cooperation and sharing of experiences. The village panchayats and the community leaders and organizations like Fishing Cooperative Societies in all the five villages and the village Biodiversity Management Committees have

actively participated and took the lead in the water management work. Due to their support, WWP has been able to complete the task of initiating the process for revival of the traditional water bodies. The district administration and especially, the District Collector, Mr. Abhimanyu Kale has given attention to the findings of the work and is also providing space for the community and the organizations for taking up the management of water resources and the associated biodiversity. The Honorary wildlife warden of Gondia, and the member of district level BMC of Gondia, Mr. Mukund Dhurve is supporting our work whole heartedly in the interest of communities and the tanks of this area. We are thankful to him for his constant support to programmes and work of the WWP.

Details of Training Programs/Workshops

Community meetings for sharing of the study:

The study regarding the tank use and status of different life supporting resources from the wetland has been undertaken during 2016. This was the participatory study with different community organisations and user groups of wetlands and the knowledgeable individuals from villages. To share some of the information from the study was the need of the time, as different government agencies have planned the desiltation activity from various schemes of the State Government. So basically the findings of wetland use practices and livestock dependency was shared with the community on priority. The issue of undertaking desiltation by labourers was also discussed, as the agencies have planned all the work of desiltation by use of machinery. Ten meetings were initially planned for the purpose in five villages, but a total of 17 meetings were organized. Especially the women SHGs have taken the lead in the water management work and they were keen to know about the status of their village water body. The men from all communities are divided in different groups due to party politics and vested interests. In this situation women organized themselves in SHGs. All these SHGs are not formed by WWP or BNVSAM. Most of them were existing in the villages. The WWP have organized them and provided the space and guidance about their role in the management of natural resource, especially water and the role they can play in the local level decision making for their own benefit. Total 238 women and 41 men have attended these 17 meetings. This activity was the preparation for the workshops for preparing wetland management plans.

Sr. No.	Date	Name of village and CBOs	No. of participants	
			Women	Men
1	15/04/2017	SHG members Channa Bakti	17	-
2	12/05/2017	SHG members Channa Bakti	10	-
3	17/05/2017	SHG members Nimgaon	19	-
4	05/06/2017	SHG members Nimgaon	23	-
5	08/06/2017	Sawartola	8	6
6	09/04/2017	Fishing cooperative society members, Bampewada	-	20

7	27/04/2017	Water distribution committee and fishing cooperative members, Bampewada	4	8
8	10/06/2017	Fishing cooperative society executive members, Khamkhura	-	5
9	01/07/2017	MREGS labourers, Khamkhura	18	-
10	05/07/2017	Village SHG federation members, Sawartola	26	-
11	05/07/2017	SHG members, Nimgaon	17	-
12	10/07/2017	SHG members, Bampewada	12	1
13	14/07/2017	SHG members, Sawartola	11	-
14	20/07/2017	SHG members, Sawartola	10	-
15	23/7/2017	SHG members, Channa	26	1
16	28/07/2017	SHG members, Nimgaon	19	-
17	30/07/2017	SHG members, Nimgaon	18	-
Total			238	41
The details of available phone numbers and addresses are in the attached attendance sheets				

The issues of women gramsabha, on a day before the gramsabha of village were discussed in detail. The resolutions of this gramsabha cannot be rejected, and the resolutions on management of wetlands, not only the wetlands selected for studies, but the other wetlands also in the village were discussed in detail and the issues were listed down by the active women leaders of the respective villages. These resolutions were kept in the women gramsabhas and later followed up in the main gramsabha of the village.

Workshops for preparation of management plans:

Total 5 workshops have been organized. Five workshops have been organized in Nimgaon, Sawartola, Bampewada, Khamkhura and Channa villages. The details of the workshops are as follows:

Sr. No.	Date	Name of village	No. of participants	
			Women	Men
1	05/08/2017	Nimgaon	19	21
2	05/08/2017	Sawartola	25	13
3	07/08/2017	Channa	14	14
4	09/08/2017	Bampewada	21	19
5	10/08/2017	Khamkhura	10	12
Total			89	79
The details of available phone numbers and addresses are in the attached attendance sheets				

Powerpoint presentations of every selected wetland of these villages have been prepared. The study of catchment area, land use pattern of catchment, diversity and distribution of aquatic flora, relation with fishes and birds, species of importance from the point of view of dependent communities and their relationships with the above resources, water quality readings of pH, DO, TDS and its relation with the diversity, wetland use patterns and its good and ill effects on the overall wetland diversity were discussed in detail with the participants. Mainly, the members of Gram Panchayat, Biodiversity Management Committees, Fishing Cooperative Societies and Women's Organizations of village level (SHGs and Gram sangha) were the participants of these meetings. These community organizations have the rights of management and development of all natural resources at village level. The issues of importance were highlighted before the community leaders to provoke them to regulate and plan the management and development of wetlands in their area. It was felt during these interactions that a special meeting with the Biodiversity Management Committees is needed, as they have the most important role to play and also has the mandate for conservation. Apart from the earlier planned activities of the programme these meetings will be organized in three villages, as 2 villages have gram panchayat elections is scheduled in November, 2017 and the BMCs will be newly constituted in those villages. The meeting for capacity building of these BMCs will be organized after that. The data of the detail study of the catchment and wetland allied resources will be submitted to the respective BMCs and Gram Panchayat as the People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) of the selected wetlands, which will go in their village PBR.



Workshop at Nimgaon Gram Panchayat



Workshop at Sawartola Gram Panchyat



Workshop at Channa Bakti Gram Panchayat



Workshop at Bampewada Gram Panchayat

Some of the distinguished points, which the people felt important on the basis of presented data, and incorporated in the management plans are as follows-

- There is the need to form the Water Management Committee of each tank, separately. The members from fisherman society should also be included in the committee along with the farmers. The committee should not only work for water distribution, as in past, but catchment management should also be the work of this committee.
- The fishing cooperative needs to make rules for the fishing by drag net as they clears the aquatic plants which comes in their way during the fishing with this net.
- The work of desiltation by labourers should be done till they can do it, where the labourers are not able to do it, then only machines should be used.
- The wastewear designs should be modified to provide fish passages during reverse migration. Catching of reverse migration should be banned in the tank and also in the water channels, downstream and upstream of the tank.
- The work of Ipomoea extraction and plantation of aquatic plants should be incorporated in the MREGS.
- Washing of tractors in tanks should be banned, as the oil of tractor goes directly in water and then spreadover the water surface.
- The extraction of red laterite from the tank should be regulated as it creates unwanted pits, due to quarries.
- Use of pesticides and weedicides should be minimized in the catchment. But other interventions are also needed to minimize loss to the farmers due to diseases and pests.
- The remains of plastic wastes of use & throw glasses and plates after the ceremonial programmes in village, should not be allowed in the tank area.
- Open defecation in tanks should be banned completely.
- It is the duty of every villager to prevent the illegal poaching of water birds in the tank area.

Some of the things suggested by villagers were not emerged from the data, but villagers have experienced the effects, so they have included them in the plan as that was the part of tank management.

Poster exhibition on NREGA/ MREGS for community capacity building:

Poster exhibition on provisions of MREGS and process of planning and execution, roles of different office bearers were the themes for the posters. Total 11 posters were prepared to exhibit in the villages. Along with

the posters, booklets on MREGS as guidelines for villagers, were also prepared and distributed. These booklets were distributed among the head of the SHG, Gram Panchayat members, Gram Rojgar Sevak, BMC members and Fishing cooperative heads and elected representatives of Tahsil level.

Poster exhibitions were organized on 27/07/2017 in Sawartola and Channa Bakti. On 02/08/17 at Khamkhura. 25 women and 2 men had participated in the discussions. On 03 and 04/08/17 the exhibitions were displayed at two different places in Nimgaon. 35 women and 20 men have visited the exhibition on 3rd Aug. and 15 women and 22 men participated in the morning on 4th August, 2017.

In the evening of 04th August, 2017, it is organized in Bampewada, where 13 women and 9 men visited the poster exhibition.



Discussion and meeting on provisions of MREGS act during poster exhibition at Sawartola



Poster exhibition and meeting at Channa



MREGS Poster exhibition at Nimgaon



Poster exhibition at Bampewada

This activity was very effective for the attendance of labourers in the gramsabhas of the villages. The women have participated in the gramsabhas and many of them attended the gramsabhas meeting for first time, as they were not aware about their role and had no idea about what they can do in the gramsabhas.

Follow up meetings for inclusion of plan in planning gramsabha and district plan:

The visits to the tahsil level offices and meetings with the concerned staff have been carried out by the field workers and the group of villagers with them. Three visits to Arjuni Morgaon Panchayat samiti and two visits to Sakoli Panchayat Samiti had been done. The concerned officials had given the details of the included works, as suggested by the gramsabhas. But the estimates preparation is not yet completed, after that financial allocation will also be known. They are willing to provide those details also, for the information of villagers. The work of desiltation in three tanks by labourers has been proposed. Desiltation activity was undertaken at two tanks in the month of May and early June, 2017, where the women have monitored the work and in the village Channa Bakti, they have changed the desiltation site to protect the plant diversity in the tank.

The proposal for two new works will be prepared with the help of Additional District Collector of MREGS, for sending to include in the rate list.

Visits to organisations and knowledgeable individuals to prepare wetland valuation plan:

An informal study group of people, who are interested in economic valuation, was formed. Prof. Vijay Paranjpye of Gomukh trust, Economist, Mr. Nirmalya and Mr. Sachin, Associate Professor from TISS, Mumbai, Mr. Raghunandan Velankar, Research student, TISS, Ms. Rashmi Mahajan, PhD student, ATREE, Dr. Anil Pimplapure, Ecologist, Mr. Kaustubh Pandharipande, Ecologist, Dr. Rucha Ghate, Economist, Mr. Rajkamal Job, President, BNVSAM, Ornithologist, Mr. Manish Rajankar, Coordinator, WWP, Mr. Dilip Pandhare and Mrs. Shalu Kolhe of WWP are the group members. After providing the available reading material to all the members, a meeting of this group was organized from 26th to 28th of December, 2017. Earlier it was planned at Nawegaon Bandh but due to assembly session, bookings was not available so the venue was shifted to Arjuni Morgaon. Therefore the meeting organized at the office of WWP in Arjuni Morgaon.

Following persons had participated in the meeting-

- Prof. Vijay Paranjpye
- Mr. Rajkamal Job
- Mr. Kaustubh Pandharipande
- Ms. Rashmi Mahajan
- Mr. Manish Rajankar
- Mr. Dilip Pandhare
- Ms. Indira Wethi
- Mr. Nandlal Meshram and
- Mr. Jageshwar Meshram

Though other invitees were not able to attend due to their timely engagements but they will be the part of the process of economic valuation.

The meeting started with the presentation of the work done till the date by WWP. Mr. Manish Rajankar, Coordinator, WWP stated that for preparing the wetland management plan more beneficial for the society at large and to suggest the work needed for benefit sharing by the entire user groups are the needs for doing this activity.

Then there was the discussion on economic valuation and financial valuation, valuation of goods provided by the tank and valuation of services provided by the tank. The discussions also took place on the intrinsic value of biodiversity elements, value of the role of tanks in flood control and creating temperate zones etc.

Then the case of Malgujari tanks was discussed and it was decided to differentiate between the natural wetlands and manmade tanks which have utilitarian value and investments have been done in past and are going on in the present also. Therefore, the economic valuation method of natural wetland and malgujari tanks will not be the same.

As these tanks were built in past, there is the need to fix a base year and calculate values of creating the tank in present day and to add the operation and maintenance cost and then calculate the benefits of the tank. It was also decided as strategy, that though the WWP will initiate the activity, it will be led by the community organizations, especially the Biodiversity Management Committees and the women organizations.

Three objectives have been agreed upon on the basis of the experiences of the field team and the felt needs of the community.

- To derive the present value of malgujari tanks (Cost and benefits)
- To evaluate the desiltation drive, the benefits and the shortfalls
- Identifying the investment priorities to optimize the benefits

It was decided to undertake the activity in twelve malgujari tanks, so it will cover maximum variables and also minimize errors, and for suggesting the measures to community and departments, the number should not be less. A concept note and detail description of programme will be prepared by WWP till the end of January 2018 and will be shared with all the group members. Possible financial supporters for this activity, also needs to be identified and contacted during this period. Regular meetings of the study group will take place at the field to review the ongoing work and to plan further actions.

Results

This section is the most important in the Report and particular attention should be given on **results / and changes** that have taken place during the time of activity intervention. It has three parts to help capture this information in different ways.

i) Narrative reporting on results:

The malgujari tanks in Wainganga basin are the most neglected water resource due to number of things in background. Firstly this system was centralized after the independence and then the tanks were distributed among the State Irrigation Department, Zila Parishad and Minor Irrigation Departments according to the irrigation capacity of the tanks. The number of tanks taken in government custody was large and the newly formed state departments were not equipped to handle the number. The government has now taken the responsibility of repair and maintenance of these structures and tried to collect charges for water supply. Due to the provision of Nistar rights (Document of record of traditional rights of people over the common property resources, according to the provision in the CP and Berar Land Revenue Code and further in the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code) the water for irrigating the kharif crop from these tanks is provided free, according to the court decision, on the basis of Nistar document. So the government has started neglecting it, as they have to bear the repair and maintenance cost and getting nothing in return. On the other hand, community has also shifted the responsibility of management on government. But as the malgujari tanks is the issue of identification of Wainganga basin, different schemes have been implemented for them and most of them were related to desiltation. This also resulted in the loss of diversity in these tanks. In this constant depleting state of the malgujari tanks, there are some examples, where the beneficiary farmers are still managing the tanks and getting the benefit of it for irrigation. But, at village level, these tanks play many roles, other than irrigation also and providing number of benefits to the society and the environment. But, the government is managing and wants to develop the resource for use of irrigation and fishery. All the decisions are taken from this view only and the effects or benefits from these interventions have never been confirmed.

On the basis of the experiences of WWP and BNVSAM with the tank dependent communities in the area and the programmes undertaken during last four years, it has been found that alienation of the community from the system is one of the major reasons for the deteriorating condition of tanks. And it is due to compartmentalization of roles and responsibilities of all the stake holder departments. The holistic view of management of these traditional resources is the thing which is absent from the current practices. For this purpose the current project is the tool to initiate the process of inclusive planning and management of the malgujari tanks. It is one of the major changes, which is taking place in the management of malgujari tanks, as in past also; these were managed by the farmers only. Now, due to the provisions of 73rd amendment, Biological Diversity Act and MGNREGA most of the planning and management activities are in the jurisdiction of the local governance system. The data of the activities undertaken in 2016 have also shows that the benefits of the tanks are not only in the form of irrigation facility, they are providing many utilitarian goods and services to the village communities, but these

communities were never in the decision making position. The community leadership emerging from the villages and especially the women leadership are the potential change makers. So strategically the WWP have planned the data sharing, planning and development work through different government programmes in the leadership of women groups in the villages. This was another process of change that is taking place. The organization of women at village level is strengthening, and now they are able to use the space of women gramsabha for taking the decisions. The follow up and support from the field workers and organization has ensured that the decisions taken by these gramsabhas should get proper attention and action, accordingly, to strengthen this process further. The inclusion of the works proposed by the gramsabhas in the MREGS plans and the process of inclusion of the new works in MREGS for strengthening the malgujari tank system is the beginning of the new approach in the field of malgujari tanks. The community leadership development programme with CORO, Mumbai, and the guidance from Prof. Vijay Paranjpye, the hand holding by BNVSAM and financial support from GWP-IWP are the contributing factors in this process. The MRLM programme of Maharashtra state government is also a contributing factor in the process. Though WWP is not directly connected with the programme, but are working in synergy.

ii) **Outcomes:**

- Holistic and inclusive management of the malgujari tanks is the desired outcome of the activities that WWP has undertaken. The lead role of women in the study, planning and decision making for management is the crucial aspect of this process.
- The conservation of biological diversity of these traditional water bodies is also the important outcome, as it will enhance the benefits of this freshwater system to the larger society and especially to the deprived sections of the village community and will also benefit the environment.

iii) **Outputs:** Outputs are the more immediate results that your activity is responsible for achieving.

1. Initiation of decentralised process of water resource management through the wetland management plans
2. Appropriate and studied suggestions for the implementation of the government programme of employment guarantee
3. Women gramsabhas are taking place now before every gramsabha of the village. The women groups prepare themselves through discussions for these gramsabhas.
4. Due to this process of planning, around 6216 persons will get the benefits in different forms from the tanks in five villages.

Explain, if any delays in implementation, challenges, and lessons learned & best practices

There was the delay in the completion of the activities of 2016 due to delays of responses from some institutions, non-availability of the subject experts and no standardization of methods of the inter disciplinary study of the tanks. Due to this delay, the activities of 2017 were also started in April, May. But this delay not affected the progress and process of 2017.

Monitoring Arrangements (Internal)

The WWP have developed a format of field visit summary for the field staff, which gives detail description of each visit to the villages. Apart from it, weekly visit of every person to the office is fixed on Mondays, to get the documentary or any other support from the office, or to discuss the immediate issues of concern regarding field activities. Monthly meeting also takes place for reporting and planning of next month in the last week of the month or the first week of the next month, according to the field level situations. One staff member for accounting and data entry and another for administration of the office are there. But non availability of the skilled person for report writing and communication is the missing link, which causes extra burden on the coordinating person.