



Two community awareness workshops were organized by Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) and Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum (DMF) in Coastal region of west Bengal with the intention of creating awareness among the fishing communities regarding the need to protect coastal environment, natural resources and various coastal features as well as the ways and means to use CRZ Notification and other instruments towards that end. Various issues were discussed in these two meetings and the issue raised by the fisher folks of that region were recorded which are as follows:

Action Points Discussed in the Kakdwip (South 24 Parganas) Meeting held on 18th September

1. **Fly ash Barge issue:** Fishing nets (e.g.- *Bhasa Jaal*/ Floating Net) of small fishers gets destroyed by the propellor of barges which are transporting fly ash from power plants of India to Bangladesh. Conflicts between Barge crew and common fisherfolks is one issue raised. Other than that, as the barges doesn't always follow the designated route and enters in the different river network. This is issue is crucial as the fisher unknowingly spreads the net in the stretches and that get destroyed.
2. **Hotel and Resorts Issue:** Construction of Hotels and Resorts are another pressing issue in Sundarban which threaten the biodiversity and subsequently fishers' livelihood. Sometimes the villagers support these kind of project as they expect socio-economic improvement, better connectivity and subsidiary business opportunities. But at the end of the day, in the whole process the tourists from outside only gets benefited. It has been decided that the local fisher community will inform any such development in their region in the early stage itself so that required strategy can be decided before the destruction happens

3. **Tiger Reserve and Boat licencing Certificate (BLC) Issue:** Forest department in Sundarban region is focusing more on Project tiger and tiger conservation and restricting fishers from fishing in the region. There is no basis of providing very less no of Boat licencing Certificate (BLC). The misuse of BLC is also another factor. Implementation of Forest Right act and securing Community Forest right is needed to be done.
4. **Intensive shrimp aquaculture:** Aquaculture more precisely the intensive shrimp aquaculture is a major driver of land use change in the region which not only negatively impact the biodiversity and environment but also can cause lower fish catch.
5. **Cyclone Resistant House:** As the intensity of Cyclone in Bay of Bengal has increased since last few years, the housing assistance scheme of both central and state government should be in accordance with this fact. The current scheme is unable to provide cyclone resistant house and putting the coastal population in major risk.
6. **Mangrove Plantation Scheme:** As the cyclone started hitting the coastal region of West Bengal more, since last few years, the state government has initiated rapid mangrove plantation as a mitigation method. However, mangrove plantation is happening in the fish drying region and Fish landing region and Boat Parking region of Fisher folks. It has been discussed that the detailed mapping of Fisher's common land is needed to be done and further should be incorporated in the CZMP of West Bengal.
7. **Restriction in Fishing near Lothian Island Wildlife Sanctuary:** The fishing has been restricted within 200m of Lothian Island. The fisherfolks of that region do fishing in Saptamukhi river using some traditional method called *Chot pata* method. In this method they put the net on the mouth of creeks during high tide and the fish get stuck within during low tide. Now as they can't approach to the Lothian Island, the fish catch has been reduced. Some verbal discussion has happened with the government officials and forest department but the issue hasn't been resolved.
8. **Embankment and Miscellaneous Issue:** In both Jambudwip and Fraserganj, issue of embankment and its strength to sustain repeated cyclone has been discussed in the meeting. The embankment gets destroyed repeatedly during cyclone and doesn't provide any permanent solution. Illegal fishing in the fish propagation season, methods such as using mosquito net and poisons for catching fish in the region is needed to be stopped.

Action Points Discussed in the Dadanpatrabar, Mandarmani (East Medinipur) meeting held on 19th September

Construction: Restriction has been imposed on construction of fishermen's house in five mouzas of a particular village, named Kalindi. These mouzas are Dakkhinpur, Satyampur, Dadan Patrabar, Sonamoye, Silampur and Mandarmani. The area comes under Digha Shankarpur Development Authority (DSDA). Since 2013, such restriction is in place on the ground of coastal protection. However, the same restriction is not applicable for the hotel and resort construction, as the hotel owners are settling the issue in monetary terms. And hence, the communities which are constructing houses, going against the law are losing the money of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY).

Brick Kiln and Aquaculture: Parallel existence of brick kiln and aquaculture is a major challenge. Soil and mud is being excavated rampantly from riverbed using heavy machinery. This issue is found in Sutahata Block along the Hooghly River.

Red Crab Habitat Destruction: The issue of tourist traveler's vehicles plying on the beach front almost upto the shoreline was raised from the places called Boguran Jalpai and Kanthi 1 respectively. This is also affecting the habitat of red crab. Their habitat distribution is getting constricted to few beach and there is highly chances that the number of red crab has also got shortened.

LIFE would use the provision of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and would explore the scope of making the place a Biodiversity Heritage Site under this Act.

Fly Ash Dumping by Kolaghat Thermal Power Plant - Issue of fly ash dumping at the upstream of the Rupnarayan river from the Kolaghat Thermal Power Plants (KTPP) is a big pollution threat in the region, reported from Mahishadal. The fly ash slurry is dumped in the river, which comes with tidal flow and gets floated in the river at Geonkhali, mechada region. This is likely to be the downstream stretch of the river. Detailed mapping can be done by LIFE, while going for further in depth study on this issue. LIFE will also cross check the compliance report of the KTPP of the West Bengal Power Development Corporation Limited for detailed understanding of the current scenario.

Fly Ash Barge Issue: Earlier the challenge was pollution from Haldia Petrochemical and other industries in Haldia Industrial region. Latest addition is the fly ash barge movement by Bangladeshi barge, which is a problem in that region, as fish nets are getting destroyed. 25-30 barges/day are plying along the stretch and most of the time, they do not follow the navigation route. One such location and picture of a sunken barge has been shared with LIFE

Venum Prawn Aquaculture Discharge – This issue was reported from Dakkhin Purushottampur. Discharge from venum prawn aquaculture along the existing canal reaches to the sea. Generally, after extracting the fish, the waste water and the solid waste mixed together and discharged them out into the sea. The waste water and the chemical laden solid waste from the aquaculture prawn leads to reduction in fish catch. As the practice meets demands of headless prawns, drying of fish heads during the rainy season causes unbearable stinking and smelling in the local area. The discharge along the canal also results in loss of other fishes in the canals for 4-5 hours.

The issue was raised in front of the National Aquaculture Authority, West Bengal State Pollution Control Board etc; however, no response received from them on the issue.

Casurina Plantation – Massive plantation of casurina is happening by removing the old and traditional trees like Neems. It is being done under the supervision of the Forest Department, in places like Kanthi Block 1.

Untreated Waste and Effluent Dumping from Hotels and Resorts: It is a problem in Bakkhali and Mandarmani region, where none of the hotels and resorts are treating their waste water before discharging them into the sea. This results in lower fish catch in the place. Two government funded Sewage Treatment Plants are there, but none of them are functional.

Migratory and Local Bird Species' Hunting - Locals have raised this aspects, but no further details could share.

Marine Drive - Locals have raised this aspects, but no further details could share. LIFE will explore the documentation associated with it and accordingly decide on the next course of action.

Inadequate Documentation in CZMP – The CZMP so prepared and approved in 2018 based on the CRZ Notification 2011 has lots of inefficiency. One amongst them is absence of all fish landing structures (*locally called Khoti or traditional coastal panchayat*) and other community infrastructure being used by the fisher folks. The map, prepared by DSDA does not have presence or recognition of any of the fishing supportive system.

LIFE to cross check the presence of fish landing centre and other community facilities in the approved CZMP of 2018

NEXT COURSE OF ACTION BY LIFE

Among the issues, emerged during the two days of discussion, following few issues can be taken up for next course of action.

1. Detailed study of approved CZMPs of West Bengal (72 sheets) and preparation of grounds for litigation
2. Marine Drive issue
3. Coastal Aquaculture and Brick Kiln
4. Mangrove Plantation in Fisher's Common Land
5. Hotel and Resorts and their non compliances
6. Red Crab Habitat restoration and declaration of BHS
7. Fishing Rights Issue

Person Allocation

Subhrajit

- i. A paper on Prawn and Bricks
- ii. Red Crab Habitat restoration and declaration of BHS

Tanvi

- i. Detailed study of approved CZMPs of West Bengal (72 sheets) and and preparation of grounds keeping CZMP preparation guideline in the backdrop

Aayush

- i. Detailed note on existing litigation – for example Subhas Dutta matter in EZ bench, any other litigation with respect to coastal protection or CRZ Notification
- ii. Detailed documentation on proposed Marine Drive
- iii. Fishing Rights Issue

One New Recruit

- i. Mangrove Plantation in Fisher's Common Land
- ii. Hotel and Resorts and their non compliances

Ankit

- i. Photo documentation during field visits