

Conservation of Critical Freshwater Fish Habitats in the Southern Western Ghats

Social Assessment of participant communities with integrated Process Framework to comply with
CEPF Safeguards on Indigenous Peoples and Involuntary Resettlement

Grantee: **Navadarsan Public Charitable Trust**

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Summary

This project aims to improve freshwater biodiversity conservation in the Western Ghats by focusing on Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) sites through an integrated approach of awareness, capacity building, monitoring and policy interventions. The project will be carried out in two of the most critical freshwater AZE sites in Western Ghats, 1) Periyar National Park and 2) Santhampara hills. Freshwater fish are important source of protein as well as livelihoods for local communities in and around the two AZE sites. Approximately 225,000 people live within 2 km of the Periyar Tiger Reserve, and to varying extents these communities depend, directly and indirectly, on the natural resources, including fish. Four tribal groups, Mannans, Malarayans, Urulis and Paliyans reside in and around the Periyar Tiger Reserve. Among them, Mannans are traditional tribal fishermen who have received rights to fish inside the park. The total population of Santhampara is around 8,425 people, who consist of mainly resident and migrant plantation workers, a large population of whom belong to various scheduled castes and tribes. Members of the local communities will be involved in proposed project and their knowledge on the species and sites will be incorporated into the design and implementation of conservation plans. They will also be capacitated to participate as well as in some cases coordinate certain parts of the projects. Through this, they also gain financial benefits (honorarium) and also valuable knowledge and skills which may lead to future part time or full time employment.

Approach (one paragraph or 10 bullet points)

A multi-level approach for setting and implementing conservation plans will be adopted based on the following

- Preliminary workshop for partners and stakeholders for project appraisal
- Participatory research with the help of local communities to understand population status,

ecology and threats to the target species.

- Assessment of local communities and other stakeholder's 'willingness to participate' in long term conservation efforts at the two AZE sites.
- Mid-term evaluation workshop
- Establishment of conservation/community reserve and implementation of site based conservation plans in the AZE sites
- Local stakeholder events for disseminating results of this project.

The project was hence found to trigger the following CEPF socio-economic safeguard policies - **Indigenous Peoples (OP/BP 4.10)** as there are indigenous tribal communities residing in and around the two focus sites; and **Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12)**, as it proposes to establish either a Community or Conservation Reserve at Santhampara.

Communities

The inhabiting communities at the project sites are summarized below:

Sl No.	Name of the Site	Ownership	Name of Community	Ethnic Identity	Socio-Economic Category	Date of consultation on Project(tentative)
1	Periyar Tiger Reserve	Forest Department	Mannan	ST	Scheduled Tribe, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group	15 th January 2012
2	Santhampara	Private & Government	Muthuvan	ST	Scheduled Tribe, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group	20 th January 2012

Of the various tribal groups living inside the Periyar Tiger Reserve, Mannans are the traditional fishing community. Considering the importance of fishing in their livelihood, the forest department has given them fishing rights. Men usually lead the fishing activities, but women also participate. As a leisure time activity, women engage in the collection of small fishes, which are then dried and sold in the market. Selected members of the Mannan community will work together with the project staff and will be trained in the participatory data collection and natural resource monitoring. They will also be trained in eco-friendly fishing techniques.

The scheduled tribe - Muthuvan is the most important tribal community living in Santhampara. However they live deep inside the forests where the scope of the present project is limited. The current project will be carried out at sites in the Panniyar stream which flow around the mosaic of plantations. Therefore tribal communities will neither be affected nor actively involved in project activities at Santhampara.

Other stakeholders

The Kerala State Forest and Wildlife Department
 Eco Development Committees (EDC)
 Plantation owners (both corporate and individuals)
 Plantation workers (local and migrants)

Non-tribals communities who inhabit the areas dealt by proposal may also interact with project staff. However no negative impacts on them are envisaged.

A summary of the potential impacts of the various project activities on the participant communities is given below.

Sl No.	Activity Themes	Envisaged Impact on Indigenous Peoples		
		Mannan	Muthuvan	Other communities
1	Preparatory consultative workshop	Community participants will get an idea of the importance of the local fish fauna. This will be an addition to their traditional knowledge. Their level of involvement in the project will increase if their ideas and suggestions are incorporated into the research design.	Muthuvan presence in the core project area is minimal and so there is no significant impact.	Increased knowledge on the local fish fauna and the importance to conserve these species and their habitats.

SI No.	Activity Themes	Envisaged Impact on Indigenous Peoples		
		Mannan	Muthuvan	Other communities
2	Training workshop	Increased knowledge and capacity to understand scientific methods which will be beneficial for long term monitoring. Such increased capacity can also help them find part time employment with several research projects that are being carried out/will be carried out in this landscape.	Increased knowledge and capacity to understand scientific methods which will be beneficial for long term monitoring. Such increased capacity can also help them find part time employment with several research projects that are being carried out/will be carried out in this landscape.	None
3	Mid Term Evaluation	No Impact	No impact	No Impact
4	Implementation of AZE based conservation plans	Tribal communities will be coordinated to form 'Fish protection forums' which will increase their affection towards the native fauna and instil a sense of environmental stewardship.	No impact	No Impact
5	Final workshop	Governmental appreciation for their work in this project and interest towards long term monitoring and conservation activities.	Governmental appreciation for their work in this project and interest towards long term monitoring and conservation activities.	No impact

As per the project's activities, detailed socio-economic and livelihood based surveys will be undertaken at both the target sites to understand the socio-political context and the relationships with different stakeholders, including the forest department (in PTR) and the corporate plantations (in Santhampara) to ensure the development and implementation of site-specific management plans. A consultative workshop involving all stakeholders will be organized at the start of the project where, among other things, the role of various stakeholders will be specifically discussed and refined. Protection forums (both in PTR and Santhampara) and community/conservation reserve management committee (in Santhampara) will be organized and would include members from local tribal groups. As far as possible all relevant deliverables and outputs of the project will be made available to the community in the local language.

Next steps

Tribal Development Plan (Indigenous Peoples Plan)

In order to comply with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples (OP/BP 4.10), an action plan based on in-depth surveys will be prepared in the form of an Indigenous People's Plan (or Tribal Development Plan, to use the terminology current in India). The necessary surveys will be conducted at the beginning of the project, and the plan will be submitted to CEPF for approval within three months of the start date (i.e. by March 31, 2012). The plan will set out in greater detail measures for monitoring potential project impacts on tribal people, and providing appropriate benefits to negatively affected persons, should there be any (it is not expected that anyone will be negatively affected by the project). The preparation of the plan will also provide an opportunity to undertake Free, Prior and Informed Consultations with tribal communities at the project sites, and ensure they are supportive of project activities.

Safeguard monitoring

The project will promote the establishment of either a Community Reserve or Conservation Reserve at Santhampara Hills. This will not involve the resettlement of any people, involuntary or otherwise. It should also not have any negative impacts on the wellbeing of tribal communities or other local communities, because they will participate fully in management structures, and have recognized rights to access natural resources within the new protected area. However, to ensure these assumptions hold true, monitoring visits, in the form of village meetings or other appropriate forms of community consultations, will be conducted periodically throughout the project. The results of these monitoring visits will be reported to CEPF on a six monthly basis.

In addition to periodic monitoring visits, the project team will prepare a poster, in local languages, explaining the objectives of the project and giving the contact details of the project director, Navdarsan Trust, and the CEPF Regional Implementation Team at ATREE. Should any local person have a grievance with the project, they will be able to contact these persons.