

Indo-German Biodiversity Programme

Conservation and Sustainable Management of Existing & Potential Coastal and Marine Protected Areas (CMPA)

Ecotourism Initiatives in Maharashtra

Sustainability is at the core of our activities related to ecotourism which have made a positive impact on the environment, economy and society.

Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education"

This is well aligned with the goal of the CMPA project: "The conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the CMPAs sites are improved, while taking into account the economic well-being of the local population"



Photo credit Supriya Jhunjhunwala

The Velas to Dabhol coast stretch is a CMPA site spread over 60 km in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. Beaches have become popular due to sea turtle nesting sites and turtle conservation effort by the community. This stretch is conducive for participatory conservation and ecotourism.

- ❖ The village council of both Velas and Anjarle villages have applied to have their coast declared as Biodiversity Heritage Sites, as a result of the CMPA Project.
- ❖ The turtle festival is an excellent example of low impact high volume tourism. About 3,500 tourists come to Velas to witness Olive ridley turtle hatchlings returning to sea.
- ❖ The number of tourists for the Turtle festival and homestays have doubled in Velas during the course of the CMPA project. This brings in an additional income of about 25,00,000 rupees to the village.
- ❖ The CMPA project also started the Turtle festival in Anjarle Village in 2016. About 3,000 people came to Anjarle for this festival in 2017 boosting the local economy by about 25,00,000 rupees.
- ❖ Guidelines have been developed by the CMPA project in the local language for managing the turtle festival, and have been shared with the community.

Nature Interpretation and Education

We have built an interpretation centre in Velas Village to enrich the personal experience of tourists and locals. The displays for the centre were manufactured in Germany

- ❖ Nature trails, outdoor signs and outreach material have also been developed for Velas, Anjarle and Kelshi villages. Several trainings have been conducted for local youth as natural history ecotourism guides.
- ❖ A field guide for the coastal and marine biodiversity of Maharashtra has been developed in the local language and English. A film on the turtle conservation effort has been made. Nature trails and biodiversity talks are conducted for tourists.
- ❖ The villages have banned the use of Styrofoam plates following waste management studies and conservation education and outreach conducted by the CMPA project. Posters related to biodiversity conservation and harmful effects of plastic were distributed, and are displayed in homestays
- ❖ Regular beach clean-ups are conducted with the help of locals and tourists
- ❖ An assessment was carried out to make homestays more eco-friendly.
- ❖ Biodiversity libraries have been provided to schools to build the next generation of conservationists

Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary, in Maharashtra, is a CMPA site and home to over 20,000 lesser and greater flamingos.

It was declared a sanctuary by a Government resolution passed on 6th August 2015, partly due to the efforts of the CMPA project.



Photo credit Supriya Jhunjhunwala

Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Park, Airoli

- ❖ This centre is the gateway to the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary. It was developed as part of the CMPA project. It has state of the art indoor and outdoor interpretation facilities, manufactured in Germany.
- ❖ Financial and environmental planning has been conducted to make the centre sustainable. An ecotourism study has also been conducted.
- ❖ A film, field guides and coffee table books have been developed for tourists
- ❖ Members from the local fishing communities have been trained as naturalists, to identify plants and birds. They have also been trained in hospitality to interact with tourists
- ❖ They are now operating guided natural history tours of the Sanctuary Bird and mangrove identification guides in the local language have been distributed to community members.

This publication has been developed under the CMPA Project of the Indo-German Biodiversity Programme (GIZ).

The CMPA project has been commissioned by The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), Germany, with funds provided under the International Climate Initiative (IKI). It is implemented by the, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India (MoEFCC) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is a German government-owned not-for-profit enterprise supporting sustainable development. In Maharashtra the key implementation partner is the Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra Forest Department. In Velas and Anjarle, Maharashtra the key NGO involved is Sahyadri Nisarg Mitra (SNM).

Responsible

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