

**Threatened and endemic freshwater fishes of the Southern Western Ghats: Improving local capacity to link conservation and livelihoods**

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**

The proposed project aims to document and monitor the status and trends of endemic and threatened freshwater fish species in Parambikulam Tiger Reserve and Kulathupuzha RF that are subjected to indiscriminate exploitation, and develop long term management plan for these species. Approximately 1563 people live within the buffer area of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, and to varying extents these communities depend, directly and indirectly, on the natural resources, including fish. Four tribal groups, Kadar, Malasar, Muthuvan and Malamalar reside in the buffer areas of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve. The indigenous community in Parambikulam is engaged in the Eco-development activities of the park. Even though the park is inhabited by four tribal groups of which Kadar is the major fishing group, Malasar and Muthuvan are also engaged in fishing to a small extent.

The total population of Kulathupuzha is around 33271 people. Kulathupuzha forms a part of the southernmost reserve forests of Kerala state, falling in the SOI sheet No. 58 H/1. Kulathupuzha reserve covers an area under 1000 km<sup>2</sup>. Its forest constitutes predominantly of tropical wet - and semi - evergreens and moist deciduous types. Apart from settlements some parts are occupied by Forest departmental plantations mainly of teak, eucalyptus and acacia. The plantations are grown by planting saplings on cleared natural forests. Plantations are raised to sustain and supplement the timber needs of a few industries in the State. popularly known as the rakoodu estate (Rock Wood estate) is near kulathupuzha.

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

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
- Training workshop for project participants to appraise them regarding the methodology of monitoring.
- Participatory resource mapping to understand the area of occurrence of target species, their breeding and nursery areas, areas that require protection (people's perspective), fishing zones, fishing methods etc.
- Participatory Monitoring of harvested fishery resource by trained local participants.
- Interactive discussion forums will be organised involving local community members, policy makers and biodiversity managers to develop a management plan and incorporation of the same to the protected area management plan (of the Forest Department) or local Panchayath management plan.
- Local fisheries management committees will be formed at the two sites, and these will act as the nodal and take the project forward.

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 will facilitate better management of fish resources within a legally designated protected area (Parambikulam TR).

## Communities

The inhabiting communities at the project sites are summarized below:

SI No.	Name of the Site	Ownership	Name of Community	Ethnic Identity	Socio-Economic Category	Date of consultation on project
1	Parambikulam Tiger Reserve	Forest Department Tribal land	Kadar, Malasar, Muthuvan, Malamalasar	Scheduled Tribe (Indigenous People)	Scheduled Tribe, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2013
2	Kulathupuzha	Private & Government	Kani	Scheduled Tribe (Indigenous People)	Scheduled Tribe, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2013

Parambikulam Tiger Reserve is an ecological portion in the Nelliampathy - Anamalai landscape of the Southern Western Ghats in India (Anamalai Corridor of CEPF Profile). It is located in the Palakkad District of Kerala. It was declared as Tiger Reserve during 2009 with total area of 643.66 SqKm, which includes core area of 390.89 and 252.77 Sq Km buffer area. The indigenous community in Parambikulam is engaged in the eco-development activities of the park. Even though the park is inhabited by four tribal groups of which Kadar is the major fishing group, Malasar and Muthuvan are also engaged in fishing to a small extent. The present project will develop and implement a community based monitoring and management plan, the project will enhance the livelihood options for the indigenous groups. The project will not directly lead to involuntary loss or restriction of access to resources that are legally available to the local communities; any interventions to restrict resource use (with the aim of ensuring more sustainable yields, to underpin local food security) will be undertaken by the community-based fisheries management committee formed at the site, and adopted with full agreement of the tribal communities.

Key Points Discussed in Consultative Meeting and Suggestions ( Parambikulam)

Project team

- Aim and objective of the Project
- Participatory Resource Monitoring, using Participatory Resource Maps and Data collection
- Expected Outcomes, Setting up of Resource management Committee at Parambikulam
- Ensured that the project will not cause any negative impacts to the tribals

Suggestions from Tribals

- The project should not come with suggestions and/or implement management plans without consulting the tribals.
- All management plans should be implemented through the resource management committee.
- Assure fair price to the fish resources.
- Tribals will help to gather data and assist in coordinating the mapping exercise.
- Exotic fishes found in the habitat should be sustainably removed.

The scheduled tribe – Kani is the tribal community living in Kulathupuzha. The Kani tribe is a small previously nomadic but now settled community of almost 25,000 members, based in the Agasthyamalai Hills. Under the modern administrative system in India, this tribal group is spread over six gram-panchayats across the state of Kerala. A small number of other members reside in neighbouring Tamil Nadu. Most of the members are engaged in cultivation of mixed crops such as

rubber, arecanut, banana, pepper, cashewnut, etc. Almost all the group members have small huts along with a small garden attached to them. The requirements on the tribal communities by the Forest Department have increased over the years and this has adversely affected their own ability to make decisions. For instance, the individual areas which they are occupying now are on long term lease from the Forest Department. Their choices for cultivation thus depend on the list of NTFPs as issued and amended from time to time by the Forest Department

### Key Points Discussed in Consultative Meeting and Suggestions ( Kulathupuzha)

#### Project team

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#### Local Communities including tribals

- There exists unethical fishing methods by people coming from the nearby towns ( Kollam and Trivandrum ) and therefore efforts should be taken to control the same.
- The rights over the resource should be given to the local people so that the resource can be managed sustainably.
- The fish sanctuary at Kulathupuzha (Temple sanctuary) should be protected. Pollution in the upstream is affecting the fishes of the region.
- The river banks should be protected as there are plans to build concrete walls on the river banks.
- Providing fishing license to the primary stakeholders.
- Local communities will help to gather data and assist in coordinating the mapping exercise.

### **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		
		Kadar, Muthuvan and Malasar (Parambikulam)	Kani ( Kulathupuzha)	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.	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.	Increased knowledge on the local fish fauna and the importance to conserve these species and their habitats.
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

Sl No.	Activity Themes	Envisaged Impact on Indigenous Peoples		
		Kadar, Muthuvan and Malasar (Parambikulam)	Kani ( Kulathupuzha)	Other communities
3	Participatory resource mapping	Participatory mapping will create ownership among the community members, as the project aim to develop a people's plan for managing freshwater biodiversity.	Participatory mapping will create ownership among the community members, as the project aim to develop a people's plan for managing freshwater biodiversity.	For the Forest Department it will be a new initiative under the Joint- Forest management plan
4	Participatory Monitoring of harvested fishery resource	No Impact	No impact	No Impact
5	Interactive discussion forums	The fisheries management plan will be developed by the community themselves with the support of advisors and thus won't have any undesirable impact on the livelihood and subsistence of local community. The plan will also increase government appreciation of their work in this project and support for long term monitoring and conservation activities.	The fisheries management plan will be developed by the community themselves with the support of advisors and thus won't have any undesirable impact on the livelihood and subsistence of local community. The plan will also increase government appreciation of their work in this project and support for long term monitoring and conservation activities.	No impact

SI No.	Activity Themes	Envisaged Impact on Indigenous Peoples		
		Kadar, Muthuvan and Malasar (Parambikulam)	Kani ( Kulathupuzha)	Other communities
6	Local Fish protection committees	Tribal communities will be coordinated to form 'fish protection forums' and developing and implementing the management plan will increase their affection towards the native fauna and instil a sense of environmental stewardship. Also linking it with the Forest or local Panchayath management plan will help them to continue the efforts	Tribal communities will be coordinated to form 'fish protection forums' and developing and implementing the management plan will increase their affection towards the native fauna and instil a sense of environmental stewardship. Also linking it with the Forest or local Panchayath management plan will help them to continue the efforts	No Impact

Consultative workshops involving all stakeholders were organized during the design of the project at each site, following the principle for Free, Prior and Informed Consultations. During these workshops, among other things, the roles of various stakeholders were specifically discussed and refined, and the project objectives were agreed upon. As per these objectives, 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 and the plantations to ensure the development and implementation of site-specific management plans. Fish protection forums will be organized and will include members from local tribal groups and scientists from NGO's and various Government Departments will act as advisors. 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 August 31, 2013). 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 (although it is not expected that anyone will be negatively affected by the project).

### **Safeguard monitoring**

The project will promote the community-based monitoring and management of fishery resources at both sites. This will not involve the resettlement of any people, involuntary or otherwise. It should also not have any negative impacts on the well being of tribal communities or other local communities, because they will participate fully in management structures, and have recognized rights to access natural resources. If any regulation of resource use suggested by the community as part of the management plan, appropriate grievance mechanisms will be undertaken to compensate the loss that might encounter to the local community as Free ration/ alternate livelihood for the regulation period by incorporating it to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Scheme (MGNREGA) or the Tribal Development Fund of the Tribal Department. 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 applicant, 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.