

Launch of research programme on impacts of climate change on Chilika Lake by Chilika Development Authority and Wetlands International



Chilika Development Authority (CDA) and Wetlands International – South Asia (WISA) launched a three year research initiative on climate change in Chilika. This was declared at an inception workshop being held during December 1 – 3, 2011 at Wetland Research and Training Center, Badakul.

The three year initiative titled ‘Strengthening livelihood resilience to changing climate in Chilika Lagoon, India’ aims to enhance climate preparedness of wetland management through developing response options and strategies for reducing climate related risks as well as increasing community preparedness for changes in wetland ecosystem services. The project is supported under the Climate Change and Water Programme of International Development and Research Center (IDRC). Implementation will be led by WISA and CDA, with expert support from the Institute of Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University, Australia. Implementation will build on climate scenarios modelling, participatory risk assessments with Chilika communities, stakeholder consultations, capacity building and communication and outreach. This initiative is first of its kind to be implemented for a wetland system and would be of immense use to wetland managers in the country.

The three year research would focus on these following elements:

- Developing scenarios of change in ecosystem components, processes and services of Chilika Lagoon due to climate change
- Assessing current coping and adaptation mechanisms within wetland communities in the context of climate change

- Demonstrating options for enhancing livelihood resilience in changing climate through pilot interventions
- Formulating a “climate smart” plan for wetland management identifying adaptation options, intervention strategies, priority actions and investment required
- Building capacity of wetland managers to develop response strategy to climate change, particularly addressing livelihood resilience

The outcomes of the research would be used to guide investment planning for climate change mitigation and adaptation for the Orissa State in general and Chilika in particular. The project would provide a platform for knowledge sharing amongst wetland managers placed in similar development and ecological contexts, as well as advancing research on building livelihood resilience in socio-environmental systems within the context of changing climate. Research outcomes would be available as technical reports, peer reviewed publications, datasets as well as policy briefs.



Dr. Stephen McGurk, Regional Director (South Asia and China) of International Development Research Center (IDRC) joined as the chief guest in the three day international workshop. Dr. McGurk is a noted development economist with experience in leading a wide range of projects in the region ranging from helping Afghanistan to rebuild its health and agriculture sectors, to supporting India’s rollout of mobile communication technology to 600,000 villages. Dr. Ashok Kundra, President, WISA and Former Secretary to Ministry of Mines and Special Secretary to Ministry of Environment had delivered the inaugural address. Dr. Ajit Pattnaik, Chief Executive, CDA outlined the importance of the initiative to management of Chilika. Ritesh Kumar, Conservation Programme Manager, WISA presented the project outline. Dr. Sara Ahmad, Senior Programme Specialist, IDRC facilitated the technical sessions of the workshop. Dr. Ahmad has worked on the political economy of water in India for over 20 years on the connections between water, climate change, and gender issues.

The workshop was also attended by key experts including Prof. M.N.Murty, a noted environmental economist, and Prof. E.J.James, a wetland hydrologist of national repute and a member of Central Wetland Regulatory Authority. The experts will discuss the project components followed by a field visit on the December 2 and concluding session on December 3, 2011.
