



“Chilika Lake: Fishing Livelihood”

A REPORT

Framing Wetlands: Capacity Building Programme for Media Students

**August 22-23, 2024 | School of Mass Communication,
KIIT deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha**

#write4wetlands

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Summary

The KIIT School of Mass Communication in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, hosted a two-day “Framing Wetlands: Media Student Capacity Building Programme” on August 22-23, 2024. This programme aimed to equip future media professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to advocate for wetland conservation through effective communication.

The program commenced with an inaugural session featuring addresses from key figures, including Dr. Rajeev Kumar Panda (Associate Dean, KIIT School of Mass Communication), Ms. Annu Anand (Director, CMS Programs), and Dr. R. N. Samal (Senior Scientific Officer, Chilika Development Authority). These speakers emphasized wetlands' critical importance and media's role in conservation efforts.

Throughout the two days, participants engaged in a series of technical sessions covering various aspects of wetland ecology, conservation, and environmental journalism. Dr. Pranab J Patar provided an in-depth understanding of wetland ecosystems, their significance, and the challenges they face.

Mr. Nishant Saxena introduced environmental journalism and communication, highlighting the media's role in addressing the climate crisis. Ms. Tiasa Adhya focused on conservation efforts in Chilika Lake, using the Fishing Cat as a flagship species to illustrate broader ecological challenges.

Sessions on challenges, threats, and conservation actions gave students a comprehensive view of current issues and solutions in wetland management. Ms. Annu Anand conducted sessions on storytelling techniques and becoming “Wetland Mitras” (Friends of Wetlands), emphasizing the importance of compelling narratives in conservation efforts.

Mr. Saxena also introduced the concept of Solutions Journalism, encouraging students to focus on action-oriented, evidence-based reporting of environmental issues. The program included a screening of “The Sea & Seven Villages,” a documentary by Prof. Himansu Sekhar Khatua, highlighting climate change's impact on coastal communities.

On the second day, participants engaged in a quiz on Indian wetlands and wetland ecology, followed by a pledge-taking ceremony for new Wetland Mitras. The program concluded with a certificate distribution, recognizing the students' participation and dedication. A field visit to Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, provided hands-on experience for the participants. Guided by Dr. Saibala Parida, a Fishery Expert from the Chilika Development Authority, students observed the lake's ecology, biodiversity, and ongoing conservation efforts. They learned about challenges such as siltation, invasive species, and restoration measures implemented by the CDA.

This comprehensive program successfully combined theoretical knowledge with practical experience, equipping future media professionals with the tools to effectively communicate about wetland conservation and inspire action through their reporting..



Lighting of the Lamp



CMS Team and Participants at the Wetlands Research and Training Centre



Students exploring Fish Museum at Wetlands Training and Research Centre



Ms Annu Anand, Director, CMS Programs and Advocacy, giving overview of the Program.



Inaugural Address by Prof Jnyana Ranjan Mohanty, Registrar, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswa



Special Address by Dr. R. N Samal, Senior Scientific Officer, Chilika Development Authority

Inaugural Session: Day 1

The workshop commenced with a registration of the participants followed by the inaugural session, which began with the traditional lighting of the lamp. Dr. Rajeev Kumar Panda, Associate Professor and Associate Dean of the School of Mass Communication at KIIT, delivered the welcome address, setting the stage for the day's proceedings emphasizing the importance of wetlands, often called the "kidneys of the earth," and their vulnerability to human activities. Dr. Panda acknowledged the presence of experts from the fields of media, environment, and sustainability, and expressed gratitude to CMS, MoEFCC, GIZ, and KIIT's founder for their support. He encouraged participants to leverage the program's insights to champion wetland preservation.

Ms. Annu Anand, Director of CMS Programs, then introduced the Centre for Media Studies (CMS) and provided an insightful overview of the workshop's objectives. She emphasized the significance of building capacity among media students in the areas of wetlands conservation and environmental journalism. She also briefly shared about the wetland Mitra initiative and the platform it provides to be involved in conserving local wetlands. She highlighted the role of media communication in raising awareness about environmental issues, particularly wetlands, which are critical to biodiversity and climate resilience.

A special address was delivered by Dr. R. N. Samal, Senior Scientific Officer at the Chilika Development Authority, under the Department of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (DoEFCC), Odisha. Dr. Samal's presentation focused on the Chilika Development Initiative, illustrating the ongoing efforts to conserve Chilika Lake, one of Asia's largest brackish water lagoons. He detailed the lake's rich biodiversity, its vital contribution to local livelihoods, and the broader environmental impact of its preservation.

Dr. Samal began by providing an overview of the Chilika Development Authority, which was established in 1992 under the Department of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (DoEFCC), Odisha. The primary mandate of the CDA is to protect the Chilika Lake ecosystem, conserve its biodiversity, and implement sustainable development projects for the local communities. Chilika Lake, home to over 336 fish species and a critical habitat for migratory birds and the endangered Irrawaddy dolphin is also a vital source of livelihood for more than 200,000 fishermen.

One of the key highlights of the presentation was the CDA's efforts to address environmental degradation in Chilika. In 1993, due to severe ecosystem decline, Chilika Lake was listed in the Montreux Record of endangered wetlands. However, through extensive hydrological interventions, including the opening of new inlets to improve water flow and salinity, the CDA succeeded in restoring the lake's ecological balance. By 2002, Chilika was removed from the Montreux Record, and the authority received the Ramsar Wetland Award in recognition of its conservation achievements.

Dr. Samal emphasized the importance of biodiversity conservation efforts undertaken by the CDA. Chilika is a biodiversity hotspot with 336 fish species, 29 prawn species, and 35 species of crabs, among other species. The CDA has developed eco-tourism infrastructure, supported fishery management, and protected bird sanctuaries like Nalabana. The authority's initiatives have contributed significantly to the conservation of migratory birds and the Irrawaddy dolphin, enhancing the ecological richness of the lake.

The fisheries sector, Dr. Samal explained, plays a crucial role in the region's economy. The CDA has implemented sustainable fishery practices, increased fish yield, and provided financial and technical assistance to local fishers. The revival of cooperative societies and support for post-harvest practices have significantly boosted the income of the fishing community. The presentation also covered the challenges Chilika faces, such as siltation, illegal aquaculture, and the proliferation of freshwater weeds. The CDA has undertaken large-scale desiltation projects to maintain water flow and salinity gradients and continues to combat illegal activities through community engagement and enforcement efforts.

Dr. Samal highlighted the role of the Chilika Wetland Research & Training Centre (WRTC) in monitoring the health of the lagoon. The Center conducts advanced research on water quality, sediment analysis, and biodiversity, collaborating with international organizations to ensure the long-term sustainability of the lake. Dr. Samal's presentation underscored the importance of an integrated approach to wetland conservation, where environmental protection, community development, and scientific research go hand in hand. A journalism student, Karan Veer Bharadwaj asked about the different biodiversity of Chilika lake, to this question Dr. Samal responded by saying that the biodiversity of Chilika lake differs based on the salinity level of the lake at different parts of the lake.



Inaugural Address by Prof. Himansu Shekhar Khatua, D.G, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar



Mr. Pranab J Patar conducting session on Understanding the Mystery and Beauty of Wetlands

Prof. Himansu Shekhar Khatua, Director General of the School of Mass Communication, School of Fashion Technology, and School of Film and Media Sciences, also addressed the participants. He stressed the importance of integrating environmental concerns into media studies and highlighted the role that young media professionals can play in advocating for conservation efforts.

The session concluded with a special address by Prof. Jnyana Ranjan Mohanty, Registrar of KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar. Prof. Mohanty underscored the significance of involving students in environmental journalism, noting that future media professionals have the power to influence public opinion and policy through effective communication and storytelling. He stressed the importance of India's wetlands in context to Odisha's wetlands. He said that fishing is Odisha state's top 2 profession that is for all, unlike agriculture for which you need to own land. Prof. Mohanty also said that there are multiple poems written on Chilika lake, he ended his speech with a call for action to protect all wetlands.

The inaugural session ended with the presentation of mementos to the distinguished speakers, followed by a vote of thanks, marking the formal beginning of the two-day workshop.

Ms Annu Anand felicitating Dr. Rajeev Kumar Panda, Associate Professor and Associate Dean of the School of Mass Communication at KIIT



Technical Session 1: Understanding the Mystery and Beauty of Wetlands

Dr. Pranab J Patar's session provided media students with a thorough understanding of wetland ecosystems, their significance, and the challenges they encounter. He began by defining wetlands as areas where water predominates, supporting diverse plant and animal life, as per the Ramsar Convention. This includes various types of wetlands such as inland lakes, coastal mangroves, and man-made wetlands.

To foster engagement, Dr. Patar encouraged students to share their personal experiences with wetlands and local terminology for these ecosystems. This interactive approach helped contextualize the topic, linking it to the students' lived experiences.

The session emphasized the critical ecosystem services provided by wetlands, including water conservation, flood control, and biodiversity preservation. Wetlands serve as natural reservoirs, purifying water and supporting agriculture and aquatic life while also mitigating climate change by regulating greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, they offer protection against natural disasters like floods by absorbing excess water.

Dr. Patar utilized Odisha's six Ramsar sites—Chilika Lake, Bhitarkanika Mangroves, Satkosia Gorge, Hiraikud Reservoir, Ansupa Lake, and Tampara Lake—as case studies to illustrate the ecological and socio-economic importance of wetlands. These sites support numerous species, including endangered ones, and provide essential services to local communities. A geographical map of Odisha's wetlands helped students visualize their distribution and significance.

The alarming rate of wetland degradation was also addressed; wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests, with over 80% lost since the 1700s. Key drivers include agricultural expansion, pollution, overfishing, and infrastructure development. Climate change exacerbates these issues through rising temperatures and altered rainfall patterns.



Interactive Session

To enhance learning further, Dr. Patar incorporated interactive activities where participants shared recent experiences related to wetlands. This led to discussions about notable locations like the Ganga River and Niagara Falls, reflecting on their beauty and ecological significance.

One participant asked Dr. Patar about the role of media in wetland conservation efforts. He responded, “The media has a profound responsibility to not only report on environmental issues but to inspire action among the public. Your platforms can be powerful tools for advocacy.”

The session concluded with a strong emphasis on the media’s crucial role in raising awareness about wetland conservation. Dr. Patar highlighted that journalists and media professionals must report accurately on environmental issues to inspire public action. Students were encouraged to utilize their future platforms to advocate for wetland conservation and influence policy change.

This session effectively blended theoretical insights with local examples and interactive activities, successfully engaging students while deepening their understanding of wetlands and the urgent need for conservation. It equipped future media practitioners with the knowledge and tools necessary to become effective advocates for wetland protection in their communities and careers.



Mr Nishant Saxena, Climate Science Communication Expert, giving presentation on Environment Journalism and Communication

Session 2: Introduction to Environment Journalism and Communication

Mr. Nishant Saxena, a Climate Science Communication Expert, conducted an informative session on “Introduction to Environment Journalism and Communication” for media students, aiming to equip them with essential knowledge and skills in environmental journalism. He emphasized the critical role of this field in addressing the current climate crisis and highlighted the growing demand for specialized reporting on wetlands.

The session began with Mr. Saxena engaging students by asking them to define climate change and the greenhouse effect. He framed environmental journalism within the broader context of communication, underscoring the increasing environmental threats stemming from unsustainable human activities. Mr. Saxena explained that half of global greenhouse gas emissions result from excessive consumption of natural resources, contributing significantly to climate change.

He outlined the primary responsibilities of environmental journalists to bring these pressing issues to public attention and hold communities, governments, and corporations accountable. The interdisciplinary nature of environmental journalism was highlighted, requiring an understanding of scientific concepts as well as socio-political and economic factors driving environmental degradation. Key terminologies such as global warming, carbon footprint, and carbon sinks were introduced, with concrete examples illustrating the tangible impacts of climate change, including India’s 1.2°C increase in annual mean temperature over the past century.

Mr. Saxena emphasized the media’s vital role in bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and public understanding. He urged journalists to translate complex scientific data into accessible stories while maintaining accuracy. He also encouraged coverage of both environmental challenges and positive actions, such as successful conservation projects.



Participant sharing her opinion regarding Journalism and Environment.



Students attending Film Screening “The Sea & Seven Villages” Directed by Prof. Himansu Sekhar Khatua

Ethical responsibility in environmental journalism was a significant focus. Mr. Saxena engaged students in discussions about local environmental issues in Odisha, prompting them to identify underreported aspects like water scarcity and pollution while exploring their global connections.

A Second-year journalism student asked Mr. Saxena about how journalists can effectively engage the public on climate issues. He responded, “Effective communication is about storytelling; we must connect scientific facts with human experiences to inspire action.”

The session also addressed challenges faced by environment journalists, such as the complexity of climate science and political pressures. However, Mr. Saxena noted that growing global concern for climate issues presents an opportunity for media professionals to make a significant impact. To prepare for these challenges, he recommended that students continuously build their knowledge of environmental issues, follow credible sources, collaborate with experts, and participate in environmental awareness forums.

Through engaging presentations and interactive exercises, Mr. Saxena provided participants with a solid foundation in environmental journalism principles and practices. He inspired students to approach their future reporting with responsibility and purpose, emphasizing their potential role in shaping public perception of environmental issues and driving positive change.

By focusing on wetlands reporting as a specialization, Mr. Saxena highlighted a niche area where future journalists could develop expertise, addressing the need for comprehensive environmental coverage while offering a potential career path that combines journalism with advocacy for sustainability.

Film Screening:

“The Sea & Seven Villages” Directed By Prof. Himansu Sekhar Khatua

During the programme participants were treated to a screening of “The Sea & Seven Villages,” a compelling documentary directed by Prof. Himansu Sekhar Khatua, Director General of the KIIT School of Mass Communication. The film provided a powerful visual context to the workshop’s themes, showcasing the delicate balance between human communities and coastal ecosystems.

“The Sea & Seven Villages” focuses on the Satabhaya village cluster, a region profoundly affected by climate change. Once comprising seven villages, five have been washed away over time, making it one of the first areas in India to experience such dramatic impacts. The documentary vividly depicts the life and struggles of the remaining residents, offering a poignant exploration of climate change’s human cost. The screening served multiple purposes within this workshop context. It provided students with a real-world example of environmental storytelling, demonstrating how complex issues can be communicated through visual media. The film highlighted the challenges of conservation and the importance of preserving local heritage in the face of environmental threats. It offered a springboard for discussions on the role of media in raising awareness about climate change and its impacts on vulnerable communities. The screening of “The Sea & Seven Villages” enriched the workshop experience, offering participants a vivid illustration of the power of documentary filmmaking in environmental journalism and advocacy.



Ms. Tiasa Adhya briefing her session on Conservation in Chilika Lake through Flagship Species.

Session 3: Conservation in Chilika through a Flagship Species

Ms. Tiasa Adhya, a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Co-founder of The Fishing Cat Project, presented an insightful session on wetland conservation efforts, focusing on Chilika Lake. She explored the strategic use of the Fishing Cat, a flagship species, to highlight broader conservation challenges and solutions in wetland ecosystems.

Chilika Lake, the largest coastal lagoon in India and a significant global wetland, serves as a vital habitat for numerous species, including migratory birds and aquatic fauna. Its biodiversity is crucial for local livelihoods and maintaining ecological balance. However, Chilika faces serious conservation challenges due to habitat degradation, pollution, and unsustainable human activities.

Ms. Adhya emphasized the importance of flagship species like the Fishing Cat in conservation strategies. Flagship species serve as symbols for ecosystem preservation; in 2020, the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) declared the Fishing Cat the official ambassador of Chilika Lake to raise awareness about its fragile ecosystem.

The Fishing Cat primarily inhabits coastal regions and river systems, indicating the health of wetland ecosystems. Chilika Lake provides an ideal habitat for this species due to its abundance of prey such as fish and crustaceans. A thriving Fishing Cat population signals a healthy ecosystem, while its decline indicates ecological distress.

During her presentation, Ms. Adhya outlined several threats to Chilika Lake that impact both the Fishing Cat and other wetland species, habitat Degradation, human encroachments and illegal constructions around the lake significantly degrade natural habitats. Pollution, runoff from agricultural and industrial activities introduces pollutants

into the lake, affecting water quality. Overfishing, unsustainable fishing practices disrupt food chains, impacting prey availability for predators like the Fishing Cat. Climate Change, rising sea levels and temperature changes threaten the delicate balance of Chilika's ecosystem.

Ms. Adhya discussed various conservation strategies employed to protect Chilika's biodiversity. These include awareness campaigns targeting local communities and policymakers to foster stewardship for the lake's biodiversity. The Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance, co-founded by Ms. Adhya, works with local communities to promote sustainable fishing practices and habitat restoration initiatives.

One participant asked Ms. Adhya how local communities can be effectively engaged in conservation efforts. She responded: "Community involvement is crucial; when people see the benefits of preserving their environment—like improved fish stocks or eco-tourism opportunities—they become active partners in conservation." The session highlighted the promising results of these conservation efforts, noting increased public interest in protecting Chilika Lake driven by the appeal of the Fishing Cat as a charismatic species. Local communities are becoming more involved in sustainable practices that contribute to wetland protection.

Looking ahead, Ms. Adhya stressed the need for continued research and robust policy enforcement to sustain conservation momentum in Chilika and beyond. She emphasized that strengthening the involvement of young conservationists is essential for long-term success. Ms. Tiasa Adhya's session provided valuable insights into how species-specific conservation strategies can have far-reaching impacts on broader ecosystem health. The Fishing Cat serves not only as an ecological indicator but also as a symbol of collective efforts required to protect wetlands like Chilika Lake.

Students attending Ms. Adhya's Technical Session





Mr. Pranab J Patar giving session on Challenges and Threats, Conservation Action, and Wetlands Restoration

Session 4: Challenges and Threats, Conservation Action and Wetlands Restoration

Dr. Pranab J Patar led a session addressing the various challenges facing wetlands, including human encroachment, pollution, and climate change. He presented successful conservation strategies and restoration efforts, urging participants to consider the media's role in promoting these actions. Dr. Patar began by highlighting the increasing threats to wetlands through compelling images from 2019 and 2020, underscoring the urgent need for conservation efforts.

He outlined several approaches to tackle these challenges, including national plans aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), international frameworks, local government and NGO initiatives, research innovations, training programs, and community-based actions. India has made significant strides in wetland conservation, with 85 Ramsar Sites covering over 1.33 million hectares and various initiatives such as the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA) and the Namami Gange Programme, which has been recognized by the UN as one of the top ten World Restoration programmes.

Dr. Patar highlighted the Namami Gange project as a successful conservation initiative that emphasizes community involvement. He shared insights from Delhi and NCR, where major conservation programs have been implemented through collaborations between civil society organizations and government initiatives, supported by Corporate Social Responsibility funds.

The session stressed the importance of consistent media coverage on wetland conservation efforts. Dr. Patar emphasized the growing significance of citizen science-based research and monitoring, citing Earthwatch Institute India's multi-year citizen science drive that monitored hundreds of water bodies across India.

He concluded by discussing the potential for expanding influence in wetland conservation through ongoing research, community engagement, and policy implementation to ensure long-term sustainability.

A participant asked Dr. Patar how media can effectively contribute to wetland conservation efforts. He responded: "The media must not only report on environmental issues but also inspire action by making these stories relatable to the public."

This session provided media students with a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing wetlands and the multi-faceted approaches employed to conserve and restore these vital ecosystems. By understanding these issues and solutions, participants are better equipped to report on and contribute to wetland conservation efforts in their future careers.



Ms. Annu Anand delivering session on How to tell a Compelling Story

Session 5: How To Tell A Compelling Story

Ms. Annu Anand, Director of CMS Programs, delivered an engaging session on "How to Tell a Compelling Story," aimed at empowering media students with the skills necessary for effective environmental and wetland conservation communication. The session focused on crafting impactful narratives that highlight the significance of wetlands, engage diverse audiences, and inspire action.

Ms. Anand emphasized that successful environmental communication hinges on providing context. Wetlands are integral to ecosystems and impact various aspects of life, including agriculture, health, and climate resilience. She explained that stories should transcend mere facts to connect with human emotions and interests, making complex scientific topics more relatable by framing them within broader societal concerns like livelihood, water security, and extreme weather events.

One of the core challenges in environmental storytelling is balancing the complexity of scientific data with the simplicity needed to engage a broad audience. Ms. Anand stressed the importance of making scientific information accessible by using clear language and visual aids. By simplifying technical jargon and breaking down issues such as global warming and pollution, media students can create compelling narratives without compromising accuracy.

Incorporating human interest is critical in environmental stories. Ms. Anand advised students to focus on communities directly impacted by environmental changes, such as farmers and fishermen. Highlighting personal stories adds depth and emotional resonance, motivating readers to act on environmental issues.

An essential component of environmental reporting is the use of reliable sources. Ms. Anand explained that in-depth research is crucial for crafting accurate stories. She urged participants to gather data from reputable sources like scientific journals and government reports while including expert opinions to enrich narratives with authenticity.



Ms Annu Anand discussing stories ideas and Communication Materials

Ms. Anand introduced the concept of planning stories with a clear news angle, encouraging participants to identify topical issues within environmental reporting that resonate with audiences. She also discussed the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives for a balanced view of wetland conservation.

To keep audiences engaged, Ms. Anand recommended breaking down scientific information into smaller parts and using multimedia formats like images and videos to complement written stories, enhancing their appeal. One standout point was her emphasis on humanizing environmental issues. She urged students to include personal anecdotes and community success stories to foster hope and inspire readers.

A participant asked Ms. Anand how they could effectively convey urgency in environmental storytelling. She responded: “To convey urgency, frame your narrative around real-life impacts—show how these issues affect people’s daily lives, not just statistics.”

This session provided invaluable insights for participants. By focusing on human interest, simplifying scientific information, and utilizing reliable sources, media students were equipped with tools to create impactful environmental stories. Her guidance on framing narratives to engage the public and influence conservation policies was particularly relevant in the context of wetland preservation—a critical environmental issue. Through effective storytelling, students can inspire change, raise awareness, and contribute meaningfully to conversations about environmental sustainability.



Dr. Pranab J Patar giving brief about the Plan of Exposure Visit

Briefing about the Plan of Exposure Visit

Dr. Pranab J Patar provided a briefing about the planned exposure visit to Chilika Lake, preparing participants for what to expect and how to make the most of the field experience. This session aimed to prepare media students for an immersive field visit to a wetland site, offering them the practical knowledge and methodologies required to conduct effective fieldwork. Dr. Patar’s session covered various aspects of planning, observation, and reporting to ensure students could gather meaningful data and create impactful stories about wetlands.

The session stressed that field safety is paramount during the exposure visit. Dr. Patar provided detailed guidance on how to observe and document key elements of the wetland, such as biodiversity (flora and fauna), ecosystem services, and signs of environmental degradation. Participants were encouraged to engage in photo documentation and data collection through multidisciplinary observations. These observations should focus on both the biological and socio-economic aspects of wetlands, including human dependencies and the impacts of degradation.

Dr. Patar concluded by detailing the steps required after the exposure visit. Students were instructed to compile and interpret their data, consult with experts for validation, and ultimately craft a comprehensive narrative. This process, he explained, would help students create impactful stories that could be published to raise awareness about wetland conservation. The final output should blend scientific data with human-interest elements to engage broader audiences.



Ms Annu Anand giving orientation for Becoming Wetland Mitra

Session 6: Orientation for Becoming Wetland Mitras

Ms. Annu Anand delivered a session on “Orientation for becoming Wetland Mitras”. She introduced the concept of Wetland Mitras, or Friends of Wetlands, as a vital initiative to protect and conserve natural resources through informed participation.

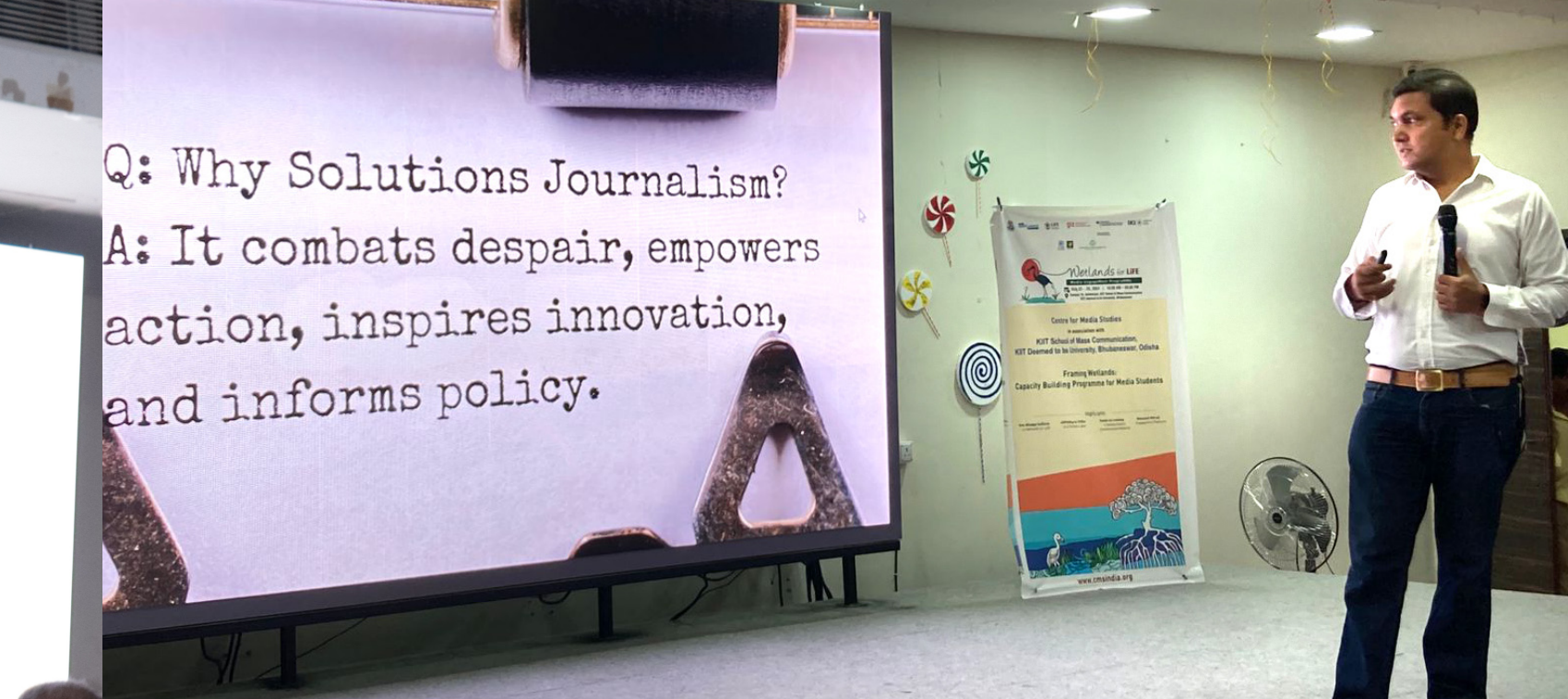
Ms. Anand explained that Wetland Mitras are individuals with local wetland knowledge, passionate about protection, and willing to dedicate time to conservation efforts. These self-motivated individuals act as influencers who understand wetland issues and values. Crucially, they serve as a bridge between communities, local self-government departments, and wetland ecosystems.

The session highlighted the importance of Wetland Mitras in securing ecosystem services such as biodiversity preservation, water quality improvement, recreation, livelihood generation, food security, and flood protection. Ms. Anand emphasized their role in strengthening wetland management processes by enhancing conservation capacity, encouraging micro-level participation, and improving governance sustainability.

Participants learned about the application process to become Wetland Mitras, which involves filling out forms with basic information, areas of interest, and time commitment. Anand outlined the diverse roles these volunteers can play, from creating awareness at individual, civil society, and institutional levels to participating in biodiversity protection, cleanliness drives, and plantation initiatives.

The session also addressed the crucial role of educational institutions in wetland conservation. Anand suggested incorporating environmental curricula, organizing nature walks, conducting multidisciplinary wetland studies, and implementing capacity-building programs to foster a deeper understanding and commitment to wetland protection among students.

Throughout the orientation, Ms. Anand underscored the significance of active citizen participation in wetland conservation. She encouraged media students to use their skills to amplify the voices of Wetland Mitras and raise public awareness about the critical importance of these ecosystems. By becoming Wetland Mitras themselves, participants could contribute significantly to local conservation efforts and inspire others to join this crucial environmental cause.



Mr Nishant Saxena, Conducting Session on Solution Journalism, Resources and Approach

Day 2: August 23, 2024

Session 7: Solution Journalism, Resources and Approach

Mr. Nishant Saxena delivered an enlightening session on “Solution Journalism, Resources and Approach.” This session provided media students with valuable insights into a proactive and impactful form of environmental reporting. Mr. Saxena began by introducing the concept of Solutions Journalism, describing it as action-oriented storytelling that looks beyond the typical “doom and gloom” narratives often associated with environmental issues. He emphasized that this approach focuses on responses to social and environmental challenges, particularly in the context of wetland conservation.

This session outlined four key characteristics of Solutions Journalism, action-oriented storytelling that highlights responses to challenges, evidence-based reporting ensuring credibility through rigorous research, human-centered narratives showcasing real people implementing solutions, and inspiring content that empowers audiences to believe in change and take action. Mr. Saxena explained why Solutions Journalism is crucial in today’s media landscape. It combats despair and apathy by offering alternatives to negative narratives, empowers individuals and communities by showing real people making a difference, promotes innovation and collaboration by highlighting successful solutions, and informs policy and decision-making by providing evidence-based strategies for change.

To illustrate the concept, Mr. Saxena shared examples of Solutions Journalism in action. He mentioned platforms like “The Better India,” which shares stories of positive change across various sectors, and “IndiaSpend,” a data-driven news organization focusing on solutions-oriented reporting. He also highlighted “Khabar Lahariya,” a rural media initiative that brings a feminist voice to local journalism. This session then transitioned to discussing essential qualities of good journalists, emphasizing honesty, objectivity, speed, and accuracy. Saxena stressed the importance of these traits in producing credible and impactful Solutions Journalism pieces.



Student engaging during session on Solution Journalism, Resources and Approach

Recognizing the evolving media landscape, Saxena introduced participants to helpful digital tools and resources. He discussed the role of artificial intelligence in journalism, suggesting that when combined with traditional journalistic skills, newsletters, and Google resources, AI can lead to impressive outcomes. He introduced tools like the Honesty Meter (www.honestymeter.com) for identifying potential bias in articles and FullFact.org for AI-assisted fact-checking.

Mr. Saxena also provided a list of influential Twitter accounts for students to follow, including @ClimateReality, @CarbonBrief, and @GuardianEco, among others. These accounts offer real-time updates and insights on climate and environmental issues. To aid in accurate reporting, Saxena pointed students towards resources such as a Climate Change Glossary and an Experts' Directory. He emphasized the importance of using precise language and consulting with experts when reporting on complex environmental issues like wetland conservation.

Throughout the session, Mr. Saxena encouraged an interactive approach, inviting participants to share their own story ideas and engage in discussions about applying Solutions Journalism to wetland conservation topics. In conclusion, Mr. Saxena underscored the power of Solutions Journalism in environmental reporting. He motivated the students to move beyond merely highlighting problems and to actively seek out and report on innovative solutions to wetland conservation challenges. By adopting this approach, he argued, journalists can play a crucial role in inspiring action, informing policy, and ultimately contributing to positive environmental change.



Certificate Distribution Ceremony

Quiz on Indian Wetlands and Wetlands Ecology, Pledge & Certificate Distribution Ceremony

The concluding session of the programme witnessed an engaging and insightful series of activities. The quiz tested the students' knowledge of the ecological importance of wetlands, their role in biodiversity, and ongoing conservation efforts across India. The competitive spirit and enthusiasm displayed by the participants fostered an engaging environment while reinforcing key lessons from the training sessions.

In a symbolic and meaningful gesture, a pledge-taking ceremony followed, where newly enrolled Wetland Mitras pledged to actively contribute to the preservation and protection of wetlands. These students committed themselves to raising awareness, supporting wetland conservation, and serving as ambassadors for wetland advocacy within their respective communities. The pledge reflected the program's broader objective of instilling long-term environmental stewardship and creating an informed cadre of young communicators passionate about wetland ecosystems.

The event concluded with a certificate distribution ceremony to felicitate the media students for their active participation and dedication throughout the program. Each participant received a certificate of completion, recognizing their involvement in the initiative.

This closing session, combining education, engagement, and commitment, exemplified the overall goal of the programme, leaving participants inspired and equipped to take on active roles in wetland conservation through media and communication efforts.

Participants taking pledge for becoming Wetland Mitra





Participants Capturing the beauty of Chilika Lake



Dr. Saibala Parida, Fishery Expert explaining Physical Map of Chilika Lagoon.



Participants heading towards the Wetland Research and Training Centre

Field Visit to Chilika Lake

On the second day of the workshop, the participants visited the Chilika Lake, the largest brackish water lagoon in Asia, as an exposure. The participants had the opportunity to apply their newly acquired knowledge in a real-world setting, guided by Dr. Saibala Parida, a fishery expert from the Chilika Development Authority (CDA).

Dr. Parida provided a comprehensive briefing on the lake's ecology, highlighting the diverse flora and fauna that call Chilika home. The participants were amazed by the sheer number of migratory birds that flock to the lake during the winter season, with over one million birds representing more than 230 species. The lake is also home to the endangered Irrawaddy dolphin, a keystone species that serves as an indicator of the lake's health.

During the tour, participants observed first-hand the challenges facing Chilika Lake, such as siltation, shrinkage of the lake area, and the proliferation of invasive freshwater species. These issues have led to a decrease in salinity, fish productivity, and overall biodiversity. To address these concerns, the CDA has undertaken various restoration measures, including the desiltation of the outer channel, the opening of a new mouth connecting the lake to the sea, and the implementation of a comprehensive monitoring program.

Participants were particularly interested in learning about the fishing practices in Chilika Lake. They asked Dr. Parida about the Chilika fishing auction and the Odisha Marine Fishing Regulation Act, which aims to regulate fishing activities in the lake. Dr. Parida explained that the CDA works closely with the local fishing communities to promote sustainable fishing practices and ensure the long-term viability of the lake's resources.

One participant inquired about the potential for attracting quality tourists to Chilika Lake. Dr. Parida highlighted the lake's unique ecosystem, which includes a variety of habitats such as the Nalabana Bird Sanctuary, the Honeymoon Island, and the Breakfast Island. He emphasized the importance of promoting eco-tourism while ensuring the protection of the lake's fragile environment.

Another participant raised concerns about illegal shrimp cultivation in the lake. Dr. Parida acknowledged the issue and stated that the CDA is working with the local authorities to crack down on these activities, which can have devastating effects on the lake's ecosystem.

They also visited the Wetland Research and Training Centre (WRTC), a state-of-the-art facility established by the CDA to facilitate research and training on wetland management.

As the field visit drew to a close, participants asked about the current population of Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika Lake. Dr. Parida shared that the latest census conducted by the CDA in collaboration with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) recorded 151 dolphins, a slight increase from the previous year. He emphasized the importance of ongoing research and monitoring to ensure the protection of this iconic species.

The field visit to Chilika Lake was a fantastic experience, providing participants with a deeper understanding of wetland ecology and the challenges faced by these fragile ecosystems.



Dr. Saibala Parida giving his presentation on Chilika Lake

Conclusion

The workshop marks a significant step forward in environmental journalism education. By focusing on wetland conservation, the program addresses a critical yet often overlooked aspect of environmental protection. The comprehensive nature of the workshop, combining theoretical knowledge with practical experience, provides a robust foundation for future media professionals to engage effectively with complex environmental issues.

Fish Museum at Wetlands Training and Research Centre



Annexure-I







Wetlands for LIFE
MEDIA ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME
AUG 22 – 23, 2024 | 09:30 AM – 05:00 PM
Campus 18, Auditorium, KIIT School of Mass Communication
KIIT deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar

WORKSHOP DAY 1 (22 nd August) 2024	
Venue: Campus 18 Auditorium, KIIT School of Mass Communication, KIIT deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar	
09:30-10:00	Registration of Participants
INAUGURAL SESSION	
10:00-10:10	Welcome Address by Dr. Rajeev Kumar Panda , Associate Professor & Associate Dean, School of Mass Communication
10:10-10:25	Introduction of CMS and Overview of the Program Ms. Annu Anand , Director, CMS Programs
10:25-10:35	Lighting of Lamp
10:35-11:00	Special Address by Dr. R. N Samal , Senior Scientific Officer, Chilika Development Authority, DoEFCC, Odisha Presentation about the Chilika Development Initiative
11:00-11:20	Special Address by Prof Himansu Shekhar Khatua , Director General, School of Mass Communication, School of Fashion Technology and School of Film and Media Sciences
11:20-11:30	Special Address by Prof Jnyana Ranjan Mohanty , Registrar, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar
11:30-11:40	Presentation of Mementoes
11:40-11:45	Vote of Thanks
11:45-12:00	Tea & Coffee
TECHNICAL SESSIONS	
12:00-12:15	Ice-Breaking Session by Ms Annu Anand
12:15-12:45	Session 1: Wetlands - Understanding the Mystery and Beauty of Wetlands Presenter: Dr Pranab J Patar , Senior Environment & Sustainability Expert
12:45-13:15	Session 2: Introduction to Environment Journalism and Communication Presenter: Mr. Nishant Saxena , Climate Science Communication Expert
13:15-13:45	Film Screening: The Sea & Seven Villages : Directed by Prof Himansu Sekhar Khatua
13:45-14:30	Lunch Break
14:15-14:35	Session 3: Conservation in Chilika through a flagship species Presenter: Tiasa Adhya , Member, IUCN Species Survival Commission, Co-founder, The Fishing Cat Project, Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance
14:35-15:05	Session 4: Challenges and Threats, Conservation Action, and Wetlands Restoration Presenter: Dr Pranab J Patar , Senior Environment & Sustainability Expert
15:05-15:45	Session 5: How to Tell a Compelling Story Presenter Ms. Annu Anand , Director, CMS Programs
15:45-16:00	Open House Session by Ms Annu Anand
16:00-16:15	Game Session on Wetland Theme
16:15-16:35	Briefing about the Plan of exposure Visit on Day 2 Presenter: Dr Pranab J Patar , Senior Environment & Sustainability Expert
16:35-17:00	Session 6: Orientation for becoming Wetland Mitras Presenter: Ms. Annu Anand , Director, CMS Programs
17:00	Tea & coffee
WORKSHOP DAY 2 (23 rd August) 2024	
Venue: Campus 18 Auditorium, KIIT School of Mass Communication, KIIT deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar.	
9:00-09:30	Registration of Participants
09:30-10:00	Session 6: Solution Journalism, Resources and Approach Presenter: Mr. Nishant Saxena , Climate Science Communication Expert
10:00-10:15	Engaging Quiz on Indian Wetlands and Wetlands Ecology
10:15-10:30	Pledge Ceremony
10:30-11:10	Certificate Distribution Ceremony & Group Photograph
11:10-13:10	Travel to Chilika Lake for the Exposure visit
13:10-13:30	Working Lunch Break
13:30-15:30	Briefing and the tour of the Chilika Lake by Dr. Saibala Parida , Fishery Expert, Chilika Development Authority
15:30-15:45	Discussion of story ideas for producing communication materials
15:45	Travel back to KIIT

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