



In Every Drop of Wetland, a Village's Life Thrives

A REPORT

Framing Wetlands:

Wetlands for LiFE: Regional Media Consultation

July 16, 2024 | Hotel The Panache, SILK ROUTEE, Patna

#write4wetlands

Supported by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GOI, and GIZ as part of the BMUV-IKI Project on Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection.

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Welcoming of Dr. Prem Kumar by Dr. P N Vasanti, CMS and Kirtiman Awasthi, GIZ



Interview Session of Village People by Participants



Candle Lighting by Honourable Dr. Prem Kumar, Minister of Cooperative and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of Bihar



Post Day 1 Workshop Group Picture of Participants, CMS & GIZ Team in Hotel Panache, Patna



Felicitation of Field Visit Coordinator Mr. Shivjee Kumar, Range Officer Dalsinghsarai Debkhal Bihar by Dr. P N Vasanti, DG, CMS

Summary

The Regional Media Consultation: “Wetlands for LiFE” was a comprehensive two-day programme held at Hotel ‘The Panache’, South Gandhi Maidan, Patna, on July 16-17, 2024. It was attended by 60 participants comprising of journalists from various media houses of Bihar and partner stakeholders. This workshop was organized by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS) as part of the ‘Wetlands for LiFE’ initiative under the ‘Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection’ project by IKI-BMUV and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and GIZ in India. The consultation aimed to enhance media coverage on wetland conservation efforts in Bihar.

The programme brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including government officials, environmental experts, and media professionals. The consultation focused on raising awareness about the significance of wetlands in Bihar, exploring current programs and policies, and fostering stronger connections between media and state bodies for effective environmental communication.

Key highlights of the programme included an inaugural session featuring an inaugural address by Honourable Dr. Prem Kumar, Minister of Cooperative and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of Bihar. Informative and technical sessions exploring the importance of wetlands, current challenges, and conservation strategies, conducted by Dr. Pranab J Patar, Wetlands Technical Expert, Ms. Pooja Kumari and Dr. Sunil Kumar Gupta from the Centre for Studies on Environment and Climate at the Asian Development Research Institute, Patna, and Shri Bharat Jyoti, Chairperson of the Bihar State Biodiversity Board and Shri Tejas Jaiswal, Divisional Forest Officer of Jamui district in Bihar.

A media roundtable panel discussion was conducted after technical sessions to bridge the gap between media, academia, scientists/ researchers, and civil society. A field visit to Debkhal Chaur wetland, providing ground experience and practical insights was conducted on the second day of the workshop.

The consultation served as a platform for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and networking, aiming to empower media professionals in Bihar to effectively communicate wetland conservation issues to the public in the region. The event emphasized the urgent need for enhanced media engagement in wetland conservation efforts, recognizing the power of journalism to raise public awareness and influence policy.



Initiation of the Inaugural Ceremony



Special Address by Shri Ravindra Singh, Director of the Indo-German Biodiversity Programme, GIZ.



Felicitating of Shri Ravindra Singh, Director of the Indo-German Biodiversity Programme, GIZ by Dr. P N Vasanti, DG, CMS

Inaugural Session JULY 16, 2024

The inaugural session of the Regional Media Consultation commenced at 11:30 AM with participants' arrival and registration. The formal proceedings began at 11:45 AM with the arrival of the Honourable Dr. Prem Kumar, Cooperative and Environment, Forest & Climate Change Minister, Government of Bihar, and the traditional lighting of lamp ceremony and felicitation of dignitaries.

Dr. P N Vasanti, Director General of the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), while giving the overview of the program, emphasized the crucial role of media in wetland conservation, bridging scientific knowledge and public awareness, and shaping public opinion and policy decisions. She stressed the need for collaborative efforts to enhance awareness and drive effective conservation strategies. She highlighted the importance of informed and responsible journalism to bridge the knowledge gap between scientific communities and the public. Dr. Vasanti stated that wetlands, despite being among the most productive ecosystems, remain underrepresented in mainstream discourse, and urged the media to lead the charge in bringing these critical issues to the forefront, ultimately driving policy changes and conservation efforts.

This was followed by an overview of the programme presented by Shri Ravindra Singh, Director of the Indo-German Biodiversity Programme, GIZ.

Shri Ravindra Singh encouraged media professionals, policymakers, and stakeholders to discuss wetland conservation and management challenges and opportunities, promoting inclusive governance and participatory management. He highlighted the Indo-German collaboration in biodiversity conservation, developing sustainable wetland management strategies by combining local knowledge with international best practices.

Mr. Singh stressed the importance of integrating biodiversity considerations into media narratives, catalysing community engagement and action towards wetland preservation. He emphasized the significance of wetland ecosystems in sustaining biodiversity and local livelihoods, underscoring their importance for achieving broader environmental goals, and recognized the strategic role of media in galvanizing public and governmental action towards wetland conservation, ultimately ensuring the survival of millions who depend on these crucial ecosystems. He said, "Wetland isn't an issue of livelihood, water connects everyone. Our seven target states have different wetland management planning and we are working with the State Wetland Authority to take it forward and further planning.

In his inaugural address, Dr. Prem Kumar emphasized the critical importance of wetland conservation and management, he highlighted the need to integrate systematic conservation principles and management processes, protect wetlands from encroachment, irregular land use changes, and pollution, and prioritize wetland conservation in Bihar, particularly in agricultural plains and river basins.

The minister recognized the unique ecological and utility value of wetlands, distinct from natural forests and tree cover, and emphasized their importance as sustainable sources of biological production and ecological balance. He also stressed the need to implement large-scale conservation, restoration, and development of water bodies within urban green infrastructure frameworks, and promote inclusive governance and participatory management of wetlands.

The minister addressed the adverse effects of uncontrolled land use changes and climate change on wetlands, and urged for collaborative efforts, responsible management, and proactive stakeholder engagement to protect these vital ecosystems. He emphasized the crucial role of media in raising awareness and fostering discussions on wetland conservation and expressed hope that the workshop would provide valuable insights and facilitate effective media engagement and stakeholder collaboration in Bihar.

He also emphasized prioritizing wetland conservation in Bihar & reinforced his government's commitment to wetland conservation, he added; "In Bihar, where three-quarters of the land is in agricultural plains and river basins, it is imperative to prioritize the conservation of wetlands, rivers, and aquatic areas for environmental and ecosystem sustainability; to this end, the state government and Bihar State Wetland Authority are committed to innovative, multidimensional efforts, and we recognize the crucial role of media in raising awareness and fostering discussions on this critical issue."

He also mentioned that the state's departments have been directed to survey and identify the different wetlands in Bihar. He said that after a complete inventorisation of the wetland, conservation measures will be implemented. He announced that by 2028 the green cover area of Bihar will be made to reach 18%, standing currently at 15%. He also suggested to protect the wild animals of the state and to tackle the increasing encroachment a crime control cell will be formed.

The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks by Shri Kirtiman Awasthi from GIZ.



Dr. Pranab J Patar, Environment and Sustainability Expert, conducted session on crucial role of wetlands in our ecosystem



Dr. P N Vasanti, DG, CMS giving overview of the Programme



Participants Icebreaking Session

SESSION I: SIGNIFICANCE OF WETLANDS IN BIHAR

The session started with an ice-breaking session wherein the participants gave their introduction and also shared their expectations from the workshop.

1. Understanding the Mysteries and Beauty of Wetlands

Moderated by Dr. P N Vasanti, Director General of the Centre for Media Studies, the session explored the importance of wetlands in Bihar's ecosystem. Dr. Pranab J Patar, a technical expert on wetlands conducted the first session highlighting the crucial role of wetlands in our ecosystem. His presentation started with the importance of these ecosystems, their categorization, ecological and socio-economic significance, and the pressing threats faced by them. Through his presentation, Dr Pranab described that wetlands are essential ecosystems where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and the associated plant and animal life. They cover approximately 6% of the world's surface and serve as biodiversity hotspots. Dr. Patar categorized wetlands into three main types, freshwater wetlands: including rivers, lakes, pools, flood plains, peatlands, marshes, and swamps. Saltwater Wetlands: such as estuaries, mudflats, saltwater marshes, mangroves, lagoons, coral reefs, and shellfish reefs. Human-made Wetlands: Like fishponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and saltpans. He emphasized that the ecological and socio-economic significance of wetlands cannot be overstated.

"They act as natural water filters, providing clean freshwater and supporting rich biodiversity. Wetlands contribute significantly to livelihood generation through fisheries, agriculture, and tourism, while also holding cultural and spiritual significance in Indian society. Additionally, they provide valuable resources such as timber, medicinal plants, and animal fodder," explained Dr. Patar

He engaged the participants in an activity where they shared personal memories associated with wetlands. Three notable responses were: Shankar Kumar (Hindustan Newspaper) recalled childhood evenings by Kanwar Taal Lake, noting the decline in migratory birds and increased pollution over time. Rishikesh Kumar Singh (The Jantana) shared memories of fishing with his grandfather in the Gogabil Lake, highlighting the impacts of overfishing and agricultural runoff. Amrit Raj (Freelance journalist) reflected on a teenage nature camp near Kusheshwar Asthan wetlands, expressing concern over urban encroachment on such areas.

Despite their importance, wetlands face severe threats and degradation. Dr. Patar highlighted alarming statistics: wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests, with over 80% of all wetlands having vanished since the 1700s. The consequences are dire, with one in three freshwater species and 25% of all wetland species facing extinction risk. Furthermore, 81% of inland wetland species and 36% of coastal and marine species have declined in the last 50 years. The major drivers of this degradation include agricultural expansion, unsustainable practices, pollution, overfishing, infrastructure development, and climate change.

"In Bihar, the state's Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department (DEFCC) is addressing these issues by preparing an 'Ecosystem Health Report Card' for 133 water bodies under the Wetland Protection Rules, informed Dr Patar. This initiative is crucial as Bihar faces various water-related issues that impact its wetlands", informed Dr Patar. He concluded the session by stressing the vital role of journalists and environmental advocates in raising awareness about wetland conservation. Their efforts are crucial for maintaining biodiversity, supporting livelihoods, and ensuring ecological balance.

2. Wetlands of Bihar: Significance and Degradation

The session by Ms. Pooja Kumari and Dr. Sunil Kumar Gupta from the Centre for Studies on Environment and Climate at the Asian Development Research Institute, Patna, focused on the significance, challenges, and strategies for the conservation of wetlands in Bihar.

Wetlands are critical ecosystems that provide various ecological, hydrological, and socio-economic benefits. "Wetlands in Bihar cover approximately 403,209 hectares, accounting for 4.4% of the state's geographic area. There are 133 significant wetlands, each over 100 hectares in size. These wetlands include marshes, peatlands, lakes, rivers, floodplains, and swamps, which offer vital ecological services such as water regulation, climate regulation, waste treatment, and habitat for diverse flora and fauna," informed Ms. Pooja.

She explained with the help of a PowerPoint presentation that wetlands provide a range of services categorized into four main types: regulating services, provisioning services, cultural and amenity services, and supporting services. They help in flood control, soil erosion protection, sediment retention, groundwater recharge, and maintaining



Dr. Sunil Kumar Gupta, Research Lead, ADRI giving presentation on Immediate and sustained efforts in conservation.



Ms Pooja Kumari, Information officer, EIACP Centre, ADRI, Patna giving Presentation on Wetlands of Bihar- Significance and Degradation



Mr. Bharat Jyoti, Chairperson, Bihar State Biodiversity Board giving Presentation on Reflection about Significance of Wetlands



Felicitation of Mr. Bharat Jyoti, Chairperson, Bihar State Biodiversity Board by Dr. P N Vasanti, DG, CMS

stream flow. They also supply water, food, raw materials, genetic resources, medicinal resources, and ornamental resources. Additionally, wetlands have cultural, educational, recreational, artistic, spiritual, and historic significance and play a crucial role in the water cycle, carbon cycle, and provide habitats for unique flora and fauna. Wetlands mitigate global warming by fixing carbon and stabilizing micro-climates. They cover about 6% of the Earth's surface and play a significant role in the hydrological cycle, aiding in flood control, soil erosion protection, groundwater recharge, and water storage. However, wetlands face numerous challenges that threaten their existence and functionality, including climate change, pollution, land use change, hydrological alterations, resource exploitation, and socioeconomic pressures.

A case study on Lake Baraila in Vaishali showed significant changes in the decadal analysis of the Normalized Difference Water Index (NDWI) for 1988, 2013, and 2024, with a reduction in water bodies and an increase in marshy land and agriculture. Ms. Pooja Kumari emphasized, "More than 80% of all wetlands have disappeared since the 1700s, and the trend is accelerating. Since 1970, at least 35% of the world's wetlands have been lost." To mitigate these challenges, several strategies were recommended: conservation and restoration, promoting sustainable practices, implementing pollution control measures, developing climate adaptation strategies, and strengthening laws and policies for wetland protection while involving local communities in conservation efforts.

Dr. Sunil Kumar Gupta stated, "Immediate and sustained efforts in conservation, sustainable practices, pollution control, climate adaptation, and policy advocacy are crucial for preserving these vital ecosystems." Wetlands are indispensable for maintaining ecological balance, supporting biodiversity, and providing socio-economic benefits. The degradation of wetlands poses severe threats to the environment and human well-being.

Overall, Ms. Pooja Kumari and Dr. Sunil Kumar Gupta's session highlighted the importance of wetlands in Bihar and provided a comprehensive framework for their conservation.

3. Reflection on the significance of Wetlands

Mr. Bharat Jyoti, Chairperson of Bihar State Biodiversity Board, presented a comprehensive overview of wetlands and biodiversity issues in his session. He emphasized the delayed recognition of wetlands as vital ecosystems and their significance compared to terrestrial habitats. Shri Bharat Jyoti highlighted parallel challenges facing both wetlands and biodiversity, including massive land use changes, industrialization, agricultural expansion, urbanization, and pollution.

He stressed that wetlands are inherently rich in biodiversity and that their conservation has numerous positive effects, including halting biodiversity loss, transforming land use patterns, and promoting sustainable development. The presentation outlined key action imperatives, such as firming up policies and strategies, scaling up interventions, and setting clear priorities for both wilderness areas and human-managed landscapes.

Mr. Bharat Jyoti emphasized the need for broad-streamed conservation efforts that address both large and small wetlands, as well as restoration and rewilding initiatives. He called for improved implementation mechanisms and consistent action, reminding the audience that "All critique is not criticism; all criticism is not rivalry."

The chairperson also highlighted the complexity of wetland and biodiversity issues, noting competing stakes and the need for transformative interventions. He concluded by offering practical mantras for conservation, including collaborative governance, participatory management, and wise use of resources. Mr. Bharat Jyoti stressed the importance of considering socio-economic contexts in wetland conservation and urged media professionals to understand the nuances of these issues.

On being asked about the successful large-scale wetland conservation initiatives in Bihar and India, during the question-answer session, Mr. Jyoti highlighted the Kanwar Lake Bird Sanctuary in Bihar, where government and community efforts have restored the wetland, increasing bird populations and biodiversity. He also mentioned Kerala's Wetland Conservation Program, which has effectively protected and restored wetlands through community involvement and policy support.

One participant inquired about balancing local community needs with wetland conservation. Mr. Jyoti emphasized the importance of a participatory approach that addresses livelihood concerns through sustainable initiatives like eco-tourism and wetland-friendly agriculture. He concluded by stressing collaborative governance and the need for a comprehensive understanding of biodiversity, stating, "There is much more to biodiversity than greenery and tree cover."



Dr Pranab J Patar giving Brief Session on Programs, Policies and Good Practices



Mr. Tejas Jaiswal, Divisional Forest Officer of Jamui district in Bihar giving Brief presentation on Nagi Bird & Nakti Bird sanctuaries, Jamui

SESSION II: PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND GOOD PRACTICES

1. Programmes and Policies around Wetlands

Dr. Pranab J Patar delivered a comprehensive presentation on different programs and policies linked to the issue of wetland conservation. He began by highlighting India's rich legacy of environmental conservation, citing Article 51-A (g) of the Indian Constitution which makes it a duty of every citizen to protect the environment. Dr. Patar outlined various threats to wetlands and proposed solutions, emphasizing the importance of national plans, international frameworks, local actions, research, capacity development, and community-based approaches.

He discussed key policy frameworks governing wetlands in India, including the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, and the Amrit Dharohar Scheme, as well as international agreements like the Ramsar Convention. He highlighted India's progress in wetland conservation, noting that the country now has 80 Ramsar Sites covering 1.33 million hectares.

During the session, a freelance journalist from Patna raised a question about the effectiveness of the Namami Gange Programme. Dr. Patar responded, "The Namami Gange Programme has shown significant promise in reviving the Ganges ecosystem. It's been recognized by the UN as one of the top 10 World Restoration Flagships, which speaks to its impact to some extent. However, it's an ongoing process, and continued commitment and monitoring are crucial for long-term success."

Dr. Patar also introduced the concept of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) as a viable alternative to the Protected Area system for inclusively securing wetlands. He presented a case study of the Jagatpur wetland in Bhagalpur, Bihar, which is the state's only OECM site and home to several threatened bird species.

This session covered local conservation initiatives, including ecosystem restoration efforts in Delhi NCR and community-based conservation at the Bhindawas Ramsar site in Haryana. Dr. Patar stressed the importance of consistent media coverage, citizen science-based research, and monitoring for effective wetland conservation. He concluded by urging journalists to exercise their right to clean water and air while applying moral responsibility to protect ecosystems. Dr. Patar emphasized, "Humanity as a species must change dramatically and radically or our survival is at stake," underlining the urgency of wetland conservation efforts.

2. Ramsar sites of Bihar - Nagi Bird & Nakti Bird sanctuaries, Jamui

Mr. Tejas Jaiswal, Divisional Forest Officer of Jamui district in Bihar, began by stating that such consultation on wetlands is very important to all stakeholders involved. He then presented a comprehensive overview of wetlands and Ramsar sites, focusing on the Nagi-Nakti Bird Sanctuaries. He explained the importance of wetlands as transitional zones between wet and dry areas, emphasizing their role in water infrastructure, disaster protection, and climate regulation. Mr. Jaiswal highlighted that wetlands cover only 6% of the Earth's surface but support over 40% of the world's wildlife species.

He then introduced the Ramsar Convention in simple language, an international treaty for wetland conservation, and its significance in designating Wetlands of International Importance. The DFO proudly announced that the Nagi and Nakti Bird Sanctuaries are declared as India's 81st and 82nd Ramsar sites, respectively, and Bihar's 2nd and 3rd. These sanctuaries serve as crucial wintering grounds for migratory birds along the Central Asian Flyway, with Nagi hosting over 130 bird species and 3% of the world's Bar-Headed Goose population, while Nakti supports more than 75 species and 2% of the global Red-Crested Pochard population. Mr. Jaiswal outlined the four pillars of wetland management at Nagi-Nakti: biodiversity conservation, knowledge creation, capacity building, and community participation.

He emphasized the transformation of these sites through local community involvement, eco-tourism development, and conservation efforts. Looking ahead, the DFO shared plans for expanding the sanctuary area, improving tourist facilities, and enhancing local livelihoods. Quoting Mr. Jaiswal, "Our mission is to develop Nagi-Nakti Bird Sanctuary in an integrated and phased manner with minimum disturbance to bird habitat, provide bird lovers with a unique experience, and enhance the livelihood of locals to make them stakeholders in bird conservation." He concluded by highlighting the importance of balancing conservation with sustainable development and community engagement in wetland management.

The session provided valuable insights into ongoing conservation efforts and successful practices in wetland management in the Jamui district of Bihar.



Panel Members of Media Round Table - Bridging the Gap Between Media and Civil Society



Interaction between Media Round Table Speakers and the Participants



SESSION III: MEDIA ROUND TABLE - BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Ms. Annu Anand, Director of Program and Advocacy at the Centre for Media Studies moderated a media round table session focused on bridging the gap between media, civil society, academia/researchers, scientists, and educational institutions. The session discussed better communication and collaboration between media professionals, government officials, civil society organizations, and educational institutions. This insightful discussion featured four prominent panellists representing different related sectors Dr. Manisha Prakash, Academic Head of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Aryabhatta Knowledge University Patna, Mr. Vishnu Naryan, a Senior Environment Journalist in Bihar, Ms. Rachna Priyadarshini, a freelance journalist based in Patna, and Mr. Guddu Baba, an Environmental Activist known for his work with Ganga Bachao Abhiyaan. Each panellist brought with them a unique perspective on the connection between wetlands and their respective fields.

Mr. Vishnu Naryan emphasized the critical role of biodiversity in environmental reporting, stating, "Prioritizing biodiversity in our work as journalists significantly impacts the quality and depth of our reporting." This sentiment highlighted the importance of integrating environmental considerations into journalistic practices. Ms. Rachna Priyadarshini focused on the role of women in waste segregation, which directly influences wetlands and the broader environment. She asserted, "The need of the hour is to focus on environmental conservation, starting with changes in our individual habits and lifestyles."

Dr. Manisha Prakash discussed the importance of green auditing as required by NAAC accreditation in Indian universities and stressed the significance of environmental education in the higher education system. "Incorporating green auditing and environmental education into our academic institutions is crucial for fostering a culture of sustainability," she remarked. Mr. Guddu Baba shared his experiences with media interactions and their impact on conservation efforts. He noted, "While media can sometimes backfire and affect our work, my commitment to conservation in Bihar remains steadfast."

Ms. Anand asked questions to each panellist emphasizing how they can contribute to sharing the knowledge and related information to have a continued flow of information among them to create awareness among the general masses.

During the discussion, Ms. Annu Anand also presented a compilation of wetlands-related reporting works by Shri Pushymitra from India Today, who could not attend the media consultation but contributed by providing his materials. His presentation aimed to inspire other journalists present. A participant from the workshop suggested encouraging local fish farming and community engagement as a means to support wetland conservation efforts.

Overall, this media roundtable underscored the interconnectedness of various fields with wetlands and highlighted the collective responsibility of different sectors in promoting wetlands conservation in Bihar.

The session concluded with experience sharing and story ideas on wetland-related issues by the participants, encouraging the practical application of the knowledge gained during the consultation.

Participants Focusing on Presentation on Various Issues of the Wetlands





Participants on the way for the Field Visit to Debkhal Chaur Wetland, Samastipur

Media Participants interviewing Local People

Field visit Debkhal Chaur, Wetland Samastipur

DAY 2: JULY 17, 2024

EXPOSURE FIELD VISIT: DEBKHAL CHAUR, GAMLA BHAWANGPUR, SAMASTIPUR

The second day of the Regional Media Consultation on Wetlands took participants on an exposure field visit to Debkhal Chaur wetland in Gamla Bhawangpur village of Samastipur, Bihar. Participants departed for the field visit at 11:15 AM. Coordinated by Shri Shivjee Kumar, Range Officer Dalsinghsarai Debkhal Bihar, the visit aimed to provide a first-hand experience of the unique wetland ecosystem.

Mr. Shivjee Kumar gave a brief introduction to Debkhal Chaur Wetland, highlighting its ecological significance and the challenges it faces, noting, “Wetland conservation is a collective responsibility, and the Forest Department and State Wetland Authority have a vital role to play in it.” Participants observed the seasonal wetland, noting its unusual dryness due to less rainfall this year, which prompted discussions about climate change impacts. During the briefing session, Mr. Ram Shrist Shani, Block President, shared insights on the community’s dependence on the wetland, stating, “This wetland is not just an ecosystem; it’s our lifeline. Our agriculture, fishing, and even our cultural practices are intricately linked to its health.”

Gram Sarpanch Mr. Dev Ram Shani sharing his experience



Gram Sarpanch Mr. Dev Ram Shani added, “We’ve seen changes over the years. The wetland’s cycles are shifting, and it’s affecting our livelihoods. We need support to adapt and conserve this precious resource.” During the briefing session, Mr. Shivjee Kumar emphasized, “The biggest challenge is balancing conservation with the community’s needs. We’re working on sustainable management practices, but it requires a collaborative effort.”

One journalist asked, “How do you balance human needs with conservation goals?” Shivjee Kumar responded, “We need to adopt a participatory approach, engaging local communities in conservation efforts and ensuring their livelihood concerns are addressed.” Another journalist inquired about local conservation initiatives, and Mr. Ram Shrist Shani explained, “We’ve started community-led monitoring programs and are exploring eco-tourism options to create alternative livelihoods.” The participants had a stroll through the whole wetland area.

The field visit provided valuable practical insights, allowing participants to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world conservation efforts. As participants walked through the wetland areas, they engaged in discussions with community leaders, learning about the unique seasonal wetlands of Bihar and how human livelihoods are closely intertwined with these ecosystems. Mr. Dev Ram Shani noted, “We need to work together to protect the wetland and ensure sustainable use of its resources.”

The comprehensive field experience allowed media professionals to gather story ideas and visual content for future reporting on wetland conservation, empowering them to effectively communicate the importance of these crucial ecosystems to the public and contribute to their protection and sustainable management in Bihar. The visit concluded with lunch and informal interactions among participants, fostering networking and knowledge sharing. By combining theoretical sessions with practical field experience, the exposure visit focused on empowering media professionals to effectively communicate the importance of wetland conservation to the public, ultimately contributing to the protection and sustainable management of these crucial ecosystems in Bihar.



Participants observing catchment area condition of Debkhal Chaur, Wetland Samastipur



Discussion of Local Problem about Wetlands between Local Villagers and Media Persons

Suggestions and Recommendations

Regional Media Consultation on “Wetlands for LiFE” held in Patna, Bihar reveals critical insights into the state’s wetland conservation efforts. The consultation underscored the importance of wetlands in Bihar, which cover approximately 4.4% of the state’s area and are essential for biodiversity, water regulation, and socio-economic activities.

- **Wetland Conservation Importance:**

The consultation highlighted the vital role of wetlands in maintaining ecological balance and supporting local economies. Wetlands in Bihar are crucial for biodiversity preservation and provide numerous ecosystem services, including flood control, water purification, and habitat for wildlife.

- **Media Engagement:**

There is an urgent need for enhanced media engagement in wetland conservation. The power of journalism was recognized as a tool for raising public awareness and influencing policy decisions regarding wetland protection. Consistent media coverage is essential for keeping the public informed about wetland issues and conservation efforts.

- **Prioritization of Significant Wetlands:**

The consultation recommended prioritizing the conservation of 133 significant wetlands in Bihar, particularly those located in agricultural plains and river basins. This includes involvement of community participation in wetland conservation efforts to protect these vital ecosystems.

- **Addressing Threats:**

Key threats to the wetlands of Bihar, such as encroachment, pollution, and climate change, must be addressed through collaborative efforts involving government bodies, civil society, and local communities. Strengthening laws and policies for wetland protection is crucial to mitigate these threats.

- **Sustainable Practices and Climate Adaptation:**

Promoting sustainable practices and developing climate adaptation strategies tailored to Bihar’s wetland ecosystems were emphasized. This includes integrating wetland protection into urban green infrastructure frameworks, which can enhance resilience against climate-related challenges.

- **Eco-tourism and Sustainable Livelihoods:**

Balancing conservation goals with local community needs is essential. The development of sustainable livelihoods through eco-tourism and wetland-friendly agriculture was suggested as a way to engage local populations in conservation efforts while providing economic benefits.



Participants going towards Catchment Area of Debkhal Chaur, Wetland Samastipur

CONCLUSION

The Regional Media Consultation On “Wetlands for LiFE” held in Patna, Bihar, from July 16-17, 2024, was a comprehensive and insightful programme that brought together diverse stakeholders & media personnel to address the critical issue of wetland conservation in Bihar. The consultation highlighted the significance of wetlands, which cover 4.4% of Bihar’s geographic area and play crucial roles in biodiversity preservation, water regulation, and socio-economic support.

Key discussions centered on the urgent need for enhanced media engagement & reporting on wetland issues, the prioritization of Bihar’s 133 significant wetlands, and the implementation of large-scale conservation and restoration projects. The programme emphasized the importance of addressing threats such as encroachment, pollution, and climate change through collaborative efforts involving government bodies, civil society, and local communities.

Speakers stressed the need for strengthening laws and policies, promoting sustainable practices, and developing climate adaptation strategies specific to Bihar’s wetland ecosystems. The consultation also underscored the necessity of balancing conservation goals with local community needs, suggesting the development of sustainable livelihoods through eco-tourism and wetland-friendly agriculture. The exposure field visit to Debkhal Chaur wetland in Gamla Bhawangpur village of Samastipur, Bihar provided participants with practical insights into the realities of wetland conservation.

Overall, this consultation served as a crucial platform for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and networking, aiming to empower media professionals to effectively communicate wetland conservation issues to the public and contribute to the protection of these vital ecosystems in Bihar.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the participants, technical experts, speakers, presenters, and partners who contributed to the success of the Patna Regional Media Consultation on “Wetlands for LiFE”. We are particularly thankful to Shri Dr. Prem Kumar, Honourable Minister of Cooperative and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of Bihar, for gracing the program with his presence and his inaugural address with valuable insights.

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Wetlands for LiFE: Regional Media Consultation
Media Students Registration
July 16, 2024 (Day 1) | Hotel The Panache, SILK ROUTEE, Patna

DAY 1: July 16, 2024 (11:30 AM - 6:00 PM)

Venue: SILK ROUTEE, First Floor, Hotel The Panache, West of Ram Gulam Chowk, South Gandhi Maidan, Patna

INAUGURAL SESSION

Chief Guest: Honourable **Dr Prem Kumar**, Cooperative and Environment Forest & Climate Change Minister, Govt, of Bihar

11:30 AM-11:45 AM	REGISTRATION & TEA
11:45 AM-11:55 AM	Welcome address & Introduction of the programme Wetlands for LiFE: Media Engagement, Film Festival and Forum by Dr P N Vasanti , DG, Centre for Media Studies (CMS)
11:55 AM-12:15 PM	Felicitations of Dignitaries & Lightening the Lamp
12:15 PM-12:25 PM	Overview of the Programme by Shri Ravindra Singh , Director, Indo-German Biodiversity Programme, GIZ
12:25 PM-12:40 PM	Special Address by Shri N. Jawahar Babu , Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (HoFF), DoEF&CC
12:40 PM-01:00 PM	Inaugural Address by Honourable Dr Prem Kumar , Cooperative and Environment Forest & Climate Change Minister, Govt, of Bihar
01:00 PM-01:15 PM	Vote of Thanks by Shri Kirtiman Awasthi , GIZ
01:15 PM-02:15 PM	LUNCH

SESSION I: SIGNIFICANCE OF WETLANDS IN BIHAR

Moderated by **Dr P N Vasanti**, DG, Centre for Media Studies

02:15 PM-02:40 PM	Understanding the Mysteries and Beauty of Wetlands Dr. Pranab J Patar , Technical Expert, CMS
02:40 PM-03:00 PM	Wetlands of Bihar: Significance and Degradation Ms. Pooja Kumari , Information officer, EIACP Centre, ADRI, Patna
03:00 PM-03:20 PM	Reflection about the Significance of Wetlands Shri Bharat Jyoti , Chairperson, Bihar State Biodiversity Board
03:20 PM-03:30 PM	Discussion by Moderator and Q & A Session

SESSION II : PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND GOOD PRACTICES

Moderated by **Mr. Bharat Jyoti**, Chairperson, Bihar State Biodiversity Board

03:30 PM-03:45 PM	Programmes and Policies around Wetlands Dr. Pranab J Patar , Technical Expert, CMS
03:45 PM-04:00 PM	Briefing and Sharing Experience about Conserving Debkhal Chaur Wetland (TBC) Shri Ravindra Kumar Ravi , DFO Samastipur
04:00 PM-04:15 PM	Presentation on Ramsar sites of Bihar - Nagi Bird & Nakti Bird Sanctuaries, Jamui Shri Tejas Jaiswal , DFO Jamui
04:15 PM-04:35 PM	Discussion by Moderator and Q & A Session
04:35 PM-05:00 PM	TEA

SESSION III : MEDIA ROUND TABLE - BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Moderated by **Ms Annu Anand**, Centre for Media Studies

05:00 PM-05:40 PM	Bridging the Gap between Media and Civil Society Presenters: Dr. Saroja Kumar Barik , Wetland Expert, Department of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Patna Dr. Manisha Prakash , Academic Head, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Aryabhatta Knowledge University, Patna Shri Vishnu Naryan , Senior Environment Journalist Shri Pushymitra , India Today, Hindi Shri Guddu Baba , Environmental Activist - Ganga Bachao Abhiyaan
05:40 PM-06:00 PM	Experience sharing and story ideas on Wetland related issues by the participants
06:00 PM	Vote of Thanks and Certificates Presentation

DAY 2: July 17, 2024

Assembly at Hotel The Panache, West of Ram Gulam Chowk, South Gandhi Maidan, Patna

11:00 AM-11:15 AM	Assembly at Hotel The Panache, West of Ram Gulam Chowk, South Gandhi Maidan, Patna
11:15 AM- 01:30 PM	Departure for field visit
01:30 PM-05:00 PM	FIELD VISIT: DEBKHAL CHAUR Coordinated by Shri Ravindra Kumar , DFO, Samastipur Brief of the Debkhal Chaur Wetland
	Lunch, Group Photograph and Informal Interaction

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