

**MAGAZINE****Environment: Together we can**

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Development is a continuous process and has many contexts, approaches and paradigms; an important one being the participatory approach for development or uplift of a particular area in terms of environment, natural resources or community.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Pak) has recently initiated 'Ecoregion', an action programme for conservation of natural resources as well as provision of alternate livelihood for communities of lower Indus basin. The area ranks fortieth among 200 Ecoregions of the world.

The programme 'Indus for All' is a 50 year vision project; the first phase of which is underway at four priority sites out of 14 i.e. Indus Delta (Keti Bunder-Thatta), Keenjhar Lake (Thatta), Chotiyari Reservoir (Sanghar) and Pai Forest (Riverine Forest, Benazir Abad formerly known as Nawabshah District).

The overall objective of the project is to improve livelihood through natural resources management. For development and implementation, active participation of beneficiaries from local communities has been deployed. As part of the project, the communities have been mobilised to form Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in the project vicinity.

Keenjhar Lake geographically comprises of 39 villages; nearly all of which have participated in the social mobilisation process by either becoming members of the CBO or members of board of governors.

In all the 39 villages, nine community based organisations have been formed with different names but the same vision and objectives for sustainable natural resource management of and around the lake.

Jhole Maari Welfare and Development Organisation, Chull Site has taken several initiatives in the area for environmental issues of Keenjhar Lake. "There is tremendous potential to work on environmental and natural resource issues of the lake" said Abdul Rauf, President of the CBO.

"Different bird, plant and animal species of Keenjhar Lake are under severe threat; specially migratory birds from Siberia and European regions as these are being continuously hunted", informed Abdul Qadir, a governing body member of the CBO.

"Previously we had no idea about conservation of natural resources but after the WWF team had formal meetings with us and we participated in different activities, we realised that natural resources are our own property that we should collaboratively and collectively take care of," said Rab Nawaz Dhandhail, a CBO member.

He further added, "Suddenly the water in Manchar Lake became brackish and all fish perished. The Dhandhail community who migrated here 10 years ago is totally dependent on fish and typha. The latter is used to prepare different hand made items such as mats."

Typha is still being cut, but at the same time a "No cutting zone" has been declared in the area of about two square kilometers where resident and migratory birds use the area for nesting and breeding purposes.

The breeding season starts from May to August and after declaration of the 'no cutting zone', a large number of nesting sites, chicks and nests of Blue Birds have been observed. A fish specie called Snake Head has multiplied during this season. It is amazing to see that just one season of observing a 'no cutting zone' can make such a difference," said Dhandhail.

The village has also been provided with a Solar Unit which provides light at night and is a cost cutting measure while kerosene lights are no more in use.

A complete habitat was provided to the water birds for nesting, staging and breeding in the 'no cutting Zone' in the Reed Area of Jhole Maari. More areas as such are also being planned.

The CBO members have a clear vision for sustainable management of natural resources at local level as well as for

addressing different social issues. Alternate energy schemes (bio gas, solar energy units), education for girls through self help and, 'participatory development approach' is also being planned.

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