

Role of Eco-tourism for sustainable rural development: w.r.t. Maredumilli, eco-tourism project, Andhra Pradesh State, India

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Maredumilli Community Based Eco-tourism project, ***Vana Vihari*** (excursion to forest) was commenced in the year 2005-06, at Maredumilli forest village, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh (A.P.), India

Objectives of the paper are;

Main objective of study was to evaluate impact of project in terms of the project's role –

a) providing livelihoods to local rural communities,

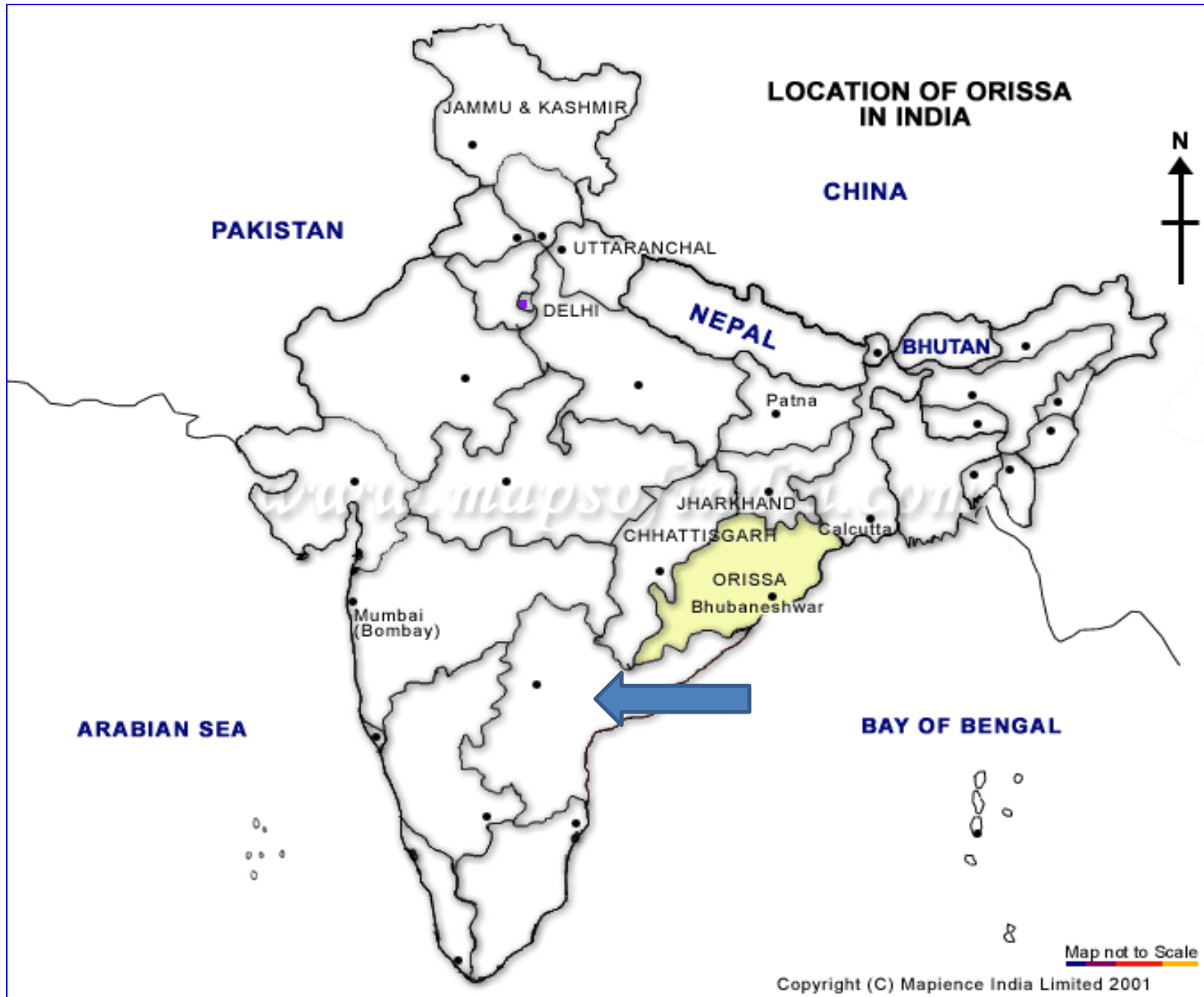
b) protecting natural forest against exploitation

- a) evaluate the impact of the *Vana Vihari* in making poor people to become entrepreneurs and supporting their livelihoods
- b) mapping interventions for capacity building of the forest living communities, infrastructural facilities, publicity for consumer education about *Vana Vihari*
- c) evolving integrated network amongst all the concerned stakeholders, including Forest Department, Communities, tour operators, travel companies, NGOs, and other Government Line Departments

for augmenting marketing strategy that would lead to national and international reputation to *Vana Vihari* and

d) to study and assess the impact of the *Vana Vihari* project on sustainable rural development and local communities and conserving forest.

LOCATION OF ORISSA IN INDIA



Map not to Scale

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The project was financed and infrastructure was developed by Forest Department under World Bank assisted A.P. Community Forestry Project. Project was handed over to three Vana Surakshana Samiti (VSS) / Forest Protection Committees who became micro-entrepreneurs.

Dinning hall

A management committee of 18 members, drawn from all three villages on various skill based criterion including; guiding, hospitality, interpretation, guest entertainment, maintenance, equal representation to all three villages and gender, maintains and manages the project on their own.

Local community

The project is now fully self sustaining and required resources to maintain and develop the project are coming from sale of entry tickets and accommodation charges, and leasing of hospitality facility.

Parking and local management committee members

Visiting places

Total accommodation available including 5 rooms (double sharing) in the initial period. Thereafter more accommodation facilities have been developed and presently there are total 16 rooms, with total capacity of accommodating 50 persons per day. Currently the project has 50% occupancy rate.

The project's operating income comes from

- a) sale of entry tickets,
- b) accommodation charges
- c) and c) hospitality lease rent.

Local 7th -10th standard students are engaged as tourist guides during holidays. The student guides were imparted necessary guiding training from WWF.

Entertainment and cultural activities including local folk song dance RELA, is performed on demand by local community @ Rs. 3500 per show for 10 to 15 tourist to watch the RELA dance for a show.

A 20 members tented accommodation @ Rs. 6000 per night, by the side of the river island is a unique attraction for the tourists. The CBET Maredumilli earns Rs. 100000 mean income per month. Out of which Direct wages @Rs. 3000 x 18 = Rs. 54000 per month is to be paid.

Electricity overheads 15000 and 1500 to forest Department fee and maintenance 5000 per month to be paid per month.

Remaining is net revenue realised from the project is allocated to 50% to the regeneration of the project area, 30% to village community development and 20% bonus for active community members. So far project has accumulated corpus of 1.5 million earned from the project.

The findings of the study based on field survey primary data of the study shows that the ***Vana Vihari***, has been providing livelihoods to about 68 families, directly (18 families) and indirectly (including to school children for guiding).

The project area is now well connected with all amenities. 5th day of every month project community general body meeting is to be held to review and make necessary decisions. All financial sanctions are approved in this general meeting.

Table 1.2 Survival amount forest living family (4 to 6 persons) Rampachodavaram forest range area East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, India

Name of the village	amount Rs (PA)
Kutravada	24720
I Bhimavaram	21140
Pandirimamidikota	22450
Valamuru	24000
Chintalapudi	21500
Somireddy palem	28333
Maredumilli	25750
Kotta colony	28500
<i>Mean</i>	24549

Table Income sources of forest living communities for their survival, in the study area East Godavari District Andhra Pradesh State, India

Name of the village	Income from NTFP collection and sales	Income from eco-tourism activities	Income from agricultural sources and borrowings	Others
	%	%	%	%
Kutravada	34.2	-	45.6	20.2
I Bhimavaram	35.6	-	43.3	21.1
Pandirimamidikota	25.4	-	37.3	37.3
Valamuru	18.8	15.9	32.6	32.7
Chintalapudi	22.8	-	41.7	29.4
Somireddy palem	19.5	17.8	28.6	34.1
Maredumilli	21.4	21.7	39.7	17.2
Kotta colony	25.3	10.5	29.7	34.5
<i>Mean</i>	<i>25.4</i>	<i>16.5</i>	<i>37.3</i>	<i>28.3</i>

Impact of project is visible in many folds;

- a) poor forest living local communities become micro-entrepreneurs and about 68 households / families, directly and indirectly supporting their livelihood.
- b) tree felling and degradation of forest has been arrested
- c) relationship between local communities and forest department has become cordial and harmonious and
- d) local community has been empowered,
- e) forest canopy has been improved significantly and

- e) communities are supporting their livelihoods from project and
- f) local communities also become forest protection force.

Conclusions:

Rural people / Forest living communities in the study area get about 25% of their survival income from NTFP harvest and trade. Income from Eco-tourism 16.5% and agriculture and labour accounts for 37.3% . Income from NTFP trade can be substantially increased by two to three folds with the help of undertaking innovative and eco-friendly value additions. That warrants for policy interventions including facilitating the FLCs, with training by Government agencies like ITDA, forest Department, local NGOs in collaboration with suitable training academies, to add value to the NTFPs, storage and market linkage system.

To increase ecotourism policy interventions for consumer awareness and publicity to entice MICE customers.

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Thank you and one and all
see you soon again