

CEPF Social Safeguards Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12)

Explanation for

Grant funded under CEPF-ATREE Western Ghats Small Grants Program Assessing Ecosystem services of Newly declared Conservation reserves in Western Ghats

Project details:

The study would assess ecosystem services of newly declared conservation reserves in northern part of Malnad-Kodagu corridor in Western Ghats. The study is focused to study the ecosystem services received from these newly declared conservation reserves in Aghanashini and Bedthi river valley in Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka. Intensive and systematic field survey is planned for collecting data following questionnaires. Consultation of experts from the respective fields would also be undertaken.

The region is already declared as conservation reserve. There will **not be any changes in category of protection or restrictions** for local people.

1. Objectives:

This project would like to build upon earlier two efforts to create long term sustainability of the conservation efforts through (i) building network of local stakeholders, who can take responsibility for ecological monitoring of priority sites beyond the end of CEPF funding and (ii) conducting targeted research on ecosystem services to inform policy makers with regard to restoration of highly threatened ecosystems like myristica swamps, grasslands and (iii) develop and support implementation of management plans for conservation reserves designated through CEPF projects.

Specifically, objectives are

- *To assess the ecosystem services of newly declared conservation reserves especially focusing on hydrological, NTFP, ecotourism and carbon services.*
- *To build the network of local stakeholders to take responsibility ecological monitoring.*
- *To develop and support implementation of management plans for conservation reserves.*

Social context:

The major parts of the populations living in and around the project site belong to communities like Havyaks, Khare Vokkals, Namdharis, etc, and these are **not rightfully/originally/traditionally forest-dwellers**. However, they are cultivating land in and around the proposed Conservation Reserves.

Conservation Reserves would not be an obstruction for legitimate day to day activities of surrounding communities, activities such as grazing, fuel wood collection within proposed Reserves, According to Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, 36 A, (ref to WPA Amd Sect 36 A-2 and 36 B). The proposal to convert these sites into CRs **does not intend nor “involve the acquisition”** of any neither Non-forest Department-owned land **nor “restricting access to these sites”** by fencing out the local communities. The intended project **“does not adversely affect the right”** of these communities and **“collection of any of the natural resources”** that they **“are legally entitled”** to do so.

Involvement of these communities in conservation of surrounding forests would provide them additional occupation and gradually they will be encouraged to reduce dependency on forest resources.

Awareness and training that will be provided by Project Coordinator, Snehakunja Trust and other partners, on sustainable use of forest resources. This will enable the above said communities to use the forest resources sustainably. The meeting was already done in Mulgund village on October 2nd, 2013. Photograph of awareness program is enclosed.

Entire project would be participatory with local representatives from Village Forest Committees and women groups, where all the communities in the region are involved. The project objectives and the details about Conservation Reserves would be explained to them and project planning, activities and implementation shall be done with the involvement of these communities.

Project design and consultations with local communities and stakeholders:

The project was designed based on the earlier work by project coordinator. Communities and officials at different levels in Forest Department and other staff were consulted to ensure their active involvement in implementing the project and for the effective management after the project period.

Impact assessment of project components:

A committee from fellow researchers, local communities and VFC members will be organised and will monitor the impact of these research activities.

Measures to monitor negative impact of project activities and budget allocation and Grievance mechanism:

Project does not intend to change any legal rights of local communities. It is just a study for assessing the services offered by the ecosystem to local communities. A poster explaining the objectives of project will be prepared and will be displayed in all major locations. It will be shared among local community organizations, VFC members etc.

Summary: Involuntary resettlement (op/BP 4.12) is not applicable since there will be no restrictions or negative impacts. In fact, communities will be more empowered to manage the resources around the villages. This will provide more opportunities for the communities for conservation action.

Conclusion:

The project will propose for assessing ecosystem service of Conservation Reserves. Conservation Reserve is an IUCN VI category protected Area, which involves local people in conservation. This new category of protected area was introduced to Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, 2003 amendment. It does not curtail any rights of local people on forest resources. It promotes local communities in conservation of forest resources and biodiversity and sustainable use for human well being. This PA category provides more power to local communities for conservation.

Assessing the ecosystem services of the conservation reserves will help local communities in understanding the benefits that are received from these

conservation reserves. Information was widely publicized in villages through the posters, brochures etc.