

NMCG-WII GANGA
BIODIVERSITY
CONSERVATION
INITIATIVE PHASE II

**PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT
FOR AQUATIC SPECIES
CONSERVATION AND
MAINTENANCE OF
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN
THE GANGA RIVER BASIN
FOR A CLEAN GANGA**

HALF YEARLY REPORT
JULY – DECEMBER 2020





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Progress Report

July - December 2020

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COMPONENT

1

SCIENCE-BASED AQUATIC SPECIES CONSERVATION AND MAINTENANCE OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN THE GANGA RIVER BASIN

Habitat modification, fragmentation, invasive species, overexploitation, pollution and climate change are some of the looming threats to freshwater diversity. In addition, persistent xenobiotics, nano-particles and micro-plastics pose a toxicological risk to the freshwater ecosystem. This component aims to document the aquatic diversity of the Ganga River basin and the threats to them, for science-based aquatic species conservation planning. Such documentation would aid in the decision-making process and can facilitate the prediction of future impacts under various scenarios. In addition, the loss of individuals as a result of accidental trapping in fishnets, injury by crafts, and poaching also contribute to the decline in the population of the priority species, viz. Gangetic dolphin, otters, gharial and mugger. To address such emergent situations and to abate the loss of individuals, rescue and rehabilitation centres are being strengthened/upgraded at strategic locations along the Ganga River, through this component. Such efforts would aid in effective rescue and subsequent rehabilitation of the rescued individuals.

- An ecological assessment of Haiderpur wetland was carried out during July-August 2020. Based on the assessment a management plan is being prepared.



- Published the book "Rowing Down the Ganges", which showcases the glorious journey of the Ganga River from its origin in Guamukh to Sunderbans. The book was released through video conferencing by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi on 29th September 2020.



Rowing Down the Ganges – the book released by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi

- Prepared panels for the *Ganga Avlokan*, a first of its kind museum showcasing the biodiversity of the Ganga River and the work carried out by NMCG. The *Ganga Avlokan* is situated at the Chandi Ghat, Haridwar and was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi on 29th September 2020, through video-conferencing.





- Upkeep and winter management of the rescue and rehabilitation centres at Narora and Sarnath were carried out. The Spearhead Team of Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, along with Ganga Praharis rescued more than 600 turtles at Varanasi. These rescued turtles were taken to the Ganga Aqualife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, Sarnath and were successfully rehabilitated in the identified stretch within the High Biodiversity Zone III identified by WII along the Ganga River.
- 'Ganga ki Baat' the second series of the talk show was broadcasted by All India Radio, Dehradun at 100.5 MHz. seven episodes, covering issues of biodiversity and Ganga basin conservation were aired.
- The fourth meeting of the Monitoring Committee was held under the Chairmanship of Director General NMCG, Shri Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, on 15th September 2020, via video conferencing. The meeting was chaired by Director General, NMCG, Shri Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, and under the leadership of Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dr Dhanajai Mohan. The Committee members Padam Bhushan Dr Anil Prakash Joshi, Dr B K Das, Director, CIFRI, Prof. R J Rao, Vice Chancellor, Barkatullah Vishwavidyalaya, Prof. Jamal Ahmad Khan, Aligarh Muslim University, Prof. Rajiv Sinha, IIT Kanpur, Dr Arun Kumar, Dolphin Institute appreciated the efforts put in by the NMCG-WII team to carry the project activities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and congratulated the team.
- Participated in the Fourth expert group meeting on Biodiversity and Wetland Conservation in reference to the *Arth Ganga* on 23rd December 2020 with senior officials of MoEFCC, Director- Rivers Wetlands and Water Policy-WWF, Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR-CIFRI), Advisor (Fisheries), and sector experts from Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) under the Chairmanship of Director General, NMCG. Prepared and presented activities and interventions taken for promoting Biodiversity and Wetland Conservation in the Ganga basin with reference to the *Arth Ganga* concept, during Phase I and II of the project. The draft minutes of the meeting were also prepared.



COMPONENT

2

CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE FOREST DEPARTMENT AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN MANAGING AQUATIC AND WETLAND RESOURCES

Successful implementation of the conservation action plan will depend on the capacity of the stakeholders trained in monitoring of aquatic biodiversity, management planning of wetland, rescue and rehabilitation protocols. Further, to detect any changes in habitat features and species assemblage in future, the capacity of different stakeholders including forest departments, animal husbandry departments, veterinarians and volunteers from concerned areas will be extremely critical. With this background, this component aims to developing capacities of stakeholders for effective conservation of the Ganga.

- To instil the conservation values in the young minds, the Bal Ganga Prahari programme was launched in 2020, with the initiation of Phase II of the project. From July 2020 to December 2020, 48 schools enrolled in the Bal Ganga Prahari Programme, in which the students and teachers were sensitised about the Ganga and its biodiversity through various awareness activities and programmes.
- As part of the "Bal Ganga Prahari Winter Vacation Programme" a skill and development programme was organised from 28th to 30th December 2020 at Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. The students created wonderful pieces on the biodiversity theme, using the quilling technique. A total of 23 students from different schools in Dehradun participated in the event.

- July and December 2020, eight online training workshops on advanced monitoring techniques, ecological survey, biodiversity conservation, management planning of wetlands, rescue and rehabilitation protocols, community engagement, and conservation education were organised. A total of 536 participants from various stakeholder groups attended these workshops. Four offsite trainings on wetland conservation were conducted, in which 147 participants were trained.
- Conducted training workshops for youth on "Conservation of Biodiversity and Wetland" and "Tourist Guides" in Bijnor, between 21st and 26th September 2020. Seventy-one youth from the local communities were trained in these workshops.
- Online competitions were organised for the school students on the occasion of World Nature Conservation Day, National Teacher's Day and World Rivers Day. Around 350 children participated and were sensitised. During "Catch the Rain Campaign" from 29th to 30th September 2020, 554 people participated. In the COVID awareness campaign, 1,450 people participated.



Bal Ganga Prahari being trained in quilling technique



Awareness programme conducted on special days

- Conducted Ganga Prahari Mentor and Faculty orientation exposure tour at Rajaji National Park from 5th to 6th December 2020. A total of 33 participants attended the programme. As part of the programme, a street play on the topic of cleaning and conserving the aquatic species of the Ganga River was demonstrated at *Ganga Avlokan*, Haridwar on 5th December 2020. On 6th December, a field visit was organised at Rajaji National Park, Chilla, Rishikesh, Uttarakhand.

COMPONENT

3

DEVELOP COMMUNITY-BASED AQUATIC SPECIES CONSERVATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMES FOR THE GANGA RIVER BASIN

River conservation decision is a societal one, owing to trade-offs between competitive use of river's resources between maintaining ecological integrity as well as for sustaining the communities. Aligning local livelihoods with conservation goals is known to create a larger constituency of support for conservation, for which site-specific strategies needs to be developed. These communities should also be made aware about the role of an ecologically intact Ganga basin in enhancing the quality of life. The local communities residing along the banks of the Ganga River have high interests in conservation of the Ganga and its aquatic diversity. These local communities have shown their support to conservation initiatives for the Ganga River and some of the members of communities are now part of the Ganga Prahari cadre of trained volunteers. This component aimed to extend this trained cadre at the basin scale. The component also develops high-quality, science-based awareness and outreach material on Ganga River conservation.

- From July to December 2020, a total of 390 volunteers joined the Ganga Prahari cadre. The Ganga Praharis have a presence in 30 districts across seven Ganga basin states, viz. Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. These volunteers are from the 11 tributaries of the Ganga River. Additional seven Ganga Prahari Mentors were identified.

- A total of 323 activities related to awareness programmes, cleanliness drives, plantation drives, sensitisation workshops, consultative meetings, livelihood trainings, cultural activities, ecological surveys and rescue activities were conducted by WII with about 5,136 participants from the local community representatives, especially Ganga Praharis. These Ganga Praharis rescued 34 individuals including Gangetic dolphins, crocodiles and turtles.



Participation in plantation drive

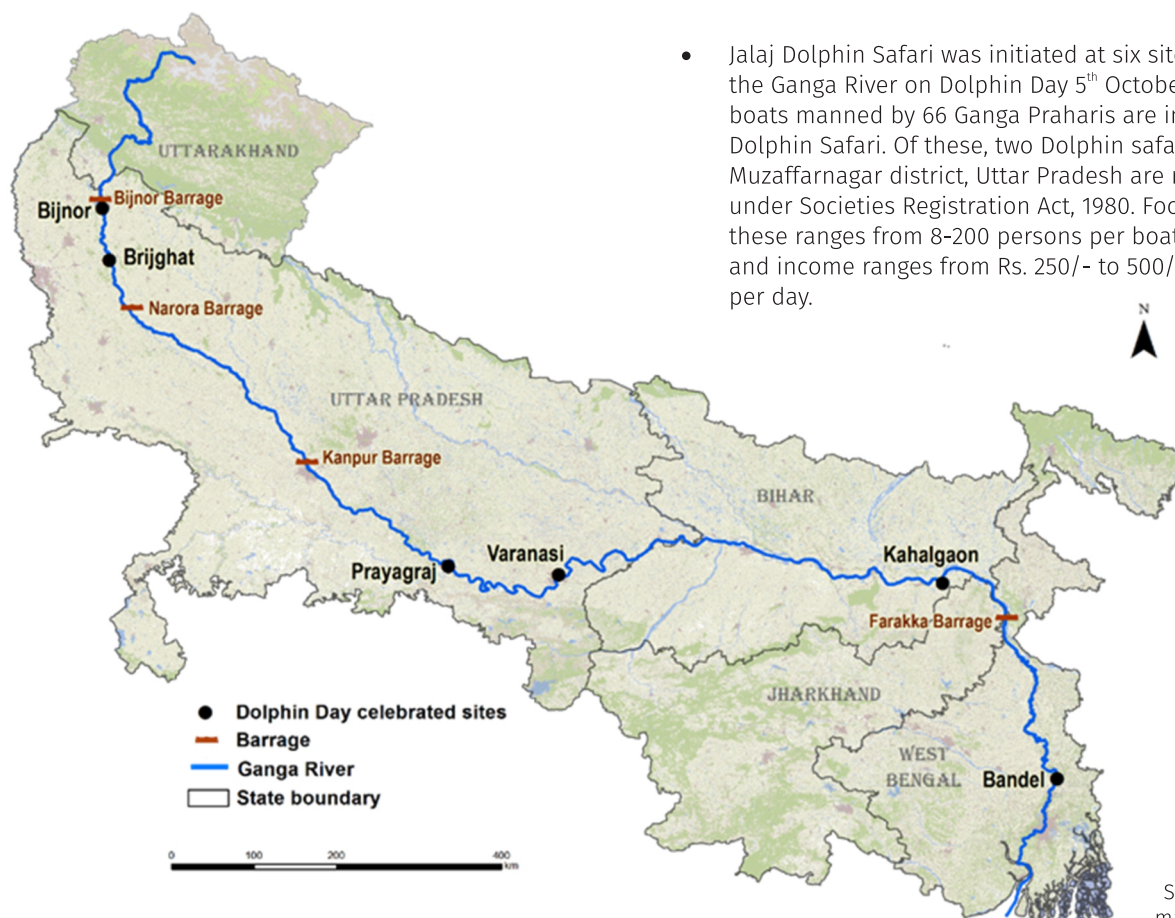


Aquatic animals rescued and rehabilitated

- Thirty-two COVID-19 relief activities were conducted by the Ganga Praharis. These activities included awareness, blood donation, plantation and making of masks and sanitiser in collaboration with local administration. These activities were conducted across five states and more than 1,000 people benefited from these activities.
- Organised online slogan cum poem writing competition "Kavya Ganga" for school students in three groups, group 1 from 5th to 8th standard, group 2 from 9th to 10th standard and group 3 from 11th to 12th standard. More than 80 entries were received from all over the country for the competition.
- Walls painting in villages was done in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, and Hooghly, West Bengal to create awareness about the biodiversity of the Ganga and its importance.
- Sixteen livelihood centres were established in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. During livelihood trainings in these livelihood centres, Ganga Praharis were trained in sewing and stitching, LED bulb making, bakery training, basket weaving, Prasad, candle and incense stick making. 529 start-ups by trained Ganga Praharis are realising the Hon'ble Prime Minister's "Vocal for Local" campaign to achieve the goals of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. Two SHGs, "Ganga Prahari Swayam Sahayata Samuh" at Matli, Uttarkashi and Ganga Bhogpur, Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, formalised with bank linkages.



Ganga Praharis trained and engaged in livelihood activities



- Jalaj Dolphin Safari was initiated at six sites across the Ganga River on Dolphin Day 5th October 2020. 33 boats manned by 66 Ganga Praharis are involved in Dolphin Safari. Of these, two Dolphin safaris from Muzaffarnagar district, Uttar Pradesh are registered under Societies Registration Act, 1980. Footfall in these ranges from 8-200 persons per boat per day and income ranges from Rs. 250/- to 500/- per boat per day.

Location of Jalaj Dolphin Safari along the mainstem Ganga

- In association with NMCG, a Ganga museum "Ganga Avlokan" was established at Chandi Ghat, Haridwar dedicated to the Ganga River, its biodiversity, landscape and vibrant culture. The museum was set up by ITDC Event, a Government of India undertaking. WII is the knowledge partner in the development of the museum. The facility was inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, on 29th September 2020.



Ganga Avlokan inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi



Ganga Avlokan – A museum and the Souvenir shop at Chandi Ghat, Haridwar



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