



From Vulnerability to Resilience

Empowerment of Chilika fisher-folk and land less communities in Odisha through environment protection and access to alternative livelihood through establishing functional and sustainable community participatory institutions.



Submitted by
Action Village India

Partner Organisation
**Project PartnerRegional Centre
for Development Cooperation**

Project Context

Chilika Lake, a Ramsar site, faces severe ecological disruption due to climate change and human intervention, notably the artificial opening of a new sea mouth. This has damaged the lake's ecosystem, reduced fish stocks, and undermined the livelihoods of over 200,000 fishers and landless communities. The region struggles with deep poverty, unemployment, weak infrastructure, and recurring climate shocks. Caste-based exclusion and external commercial pressures in tourism and aquaculture have further marginalised local populations. As resources shrink and competition rises, migration and social tensions have intensified.

With the support from the Zephyr Charitable Trust over the past few years, this project continues to promote sustainable livelihoods and social justice. We work to build community resilience, support equitable access to resources, and create alternatives that protect both people and the environment.



Fisher women at Chilika

Project Participants & Objectives

The project targets 6,043 vulnerable families (approx. 22,949 individuals) from Dalit and fishing communities in 32 villages across 9 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in Brahmagiri and Krushnaprasad blocks, Odisha. Of these, over 5,000 households fall below the poverty line (BPL).

Objectives:

- **Strengthening Livelihood:** Improve household income through secure access to land, fishing rights in Chilika Lake, and diversified livelihood opportunities. Emphasis on value addition, branding, and marketing via community institutions.
- **Ecological Conservation:** Protect local natural resources and reduce environmental degradation through community-led plantation efforts and ecological awareness.
- **Reduced Migration:** Curb distress migration by creating local employment via self-help groups (SHGs), a Shrama Bank (Labour Bank), and Producer Organisation.

KEY INTERVENTIONS & IMPACT



Nutrition Garden

- **500** households supported across **23** villages
- Seeds and plants distributed to families
- Alternative livelihoods and nutrition promoted
- Improved food security and dietary diversity
- Reduced dependence on fishing and market purchase.

Village Development Committees

- **25** village-level meetings conducted
- **320** shareholders mobilised and inducted into the Producer Company
- Kailash Chandra Dash Memorial Shram Bank established
- Increased women and youth participation
- Local Governance leaders engaged and advocating for government schemes



Producer Company & Capacity building

- Strengthened Padma Udaya Jibika Producer Company professionally and leveraged government schemes for subsidies.
- Spice packet production and marketing started
- WASH activities accelerated
- Strengthened and informed workforce developed
- Improved communication and teamwork across staff

Strengthening the Federation



- 1 federation meeting organised
- Issues discussed and resolved collectively
- Confidence and unity built among members
- Future action plan created
- Commitment to sustaining the federation strengthened

Exposure Visits

- **2-day** exposure visit held for displaced women leaders
- Visited 4 Chilika villages and micro-enterprises
- Shared experiences and strengthened solidarity
- Learned about livelihood challenges and collective solutions
- Inspired mutual learning and community-driven development



KEY MILESTONES & IMPACT

1. Strengthening Village Institutions

- **179** village institutions established across **32 villages**.
- Includes: 32 Gram Vikas Committees, 267 SHGs, 29 Youth Clubs, 1 Kishori Balika Sangathan, 5 Cultural Committees, 32 Disaster Management Committees, and education and land protection groups.
- 9 zonal forums (Anchalika Mahila Manchaks) support oversight and social mobilisation.
- Fisherfolk federations and 9 motorboat associations formed for advocacy and regulation.

2. SHG-Based Livelihoods

- **162 Women SHGs** promoted, covering 1,914 women from marginalised communities.
- Project invested ₹69.46 lakhs; convergence mobilised ₹13.4 crore via Mission Shakti and Odisha Livelihoods Mission.
- 2,250 families supported with diverse livelihoods: dry fish, goat rearing, poultry, duckery, crab culture, mushroom and watermelon farming.

3. Shrama Bank (Labour Bank)

- Community-led financial safety net during crises.
- 4 groups formed with structured rules for savings, loans, and repayments.
- Each group seeded with ₹41,250 as a revolving corpus fund managed via SHGs.

4. Coastal & Village Plantation

- Plantation in 7 coastal villages:
- 85,500 Casuarinas
- 35,400 Cashew
- 4,800 Eucalyptus
- 42,000 Mangroves
- Village-level coconut plantations support nutrition, income, and ecological security.

5. Padma Udaya Jibika Producer Company Ltd

- Legally registered producer company
- Focuses on spice production, dry fish processing, and packaged drinking water.
- 250 shareholders mobilised; ₹100,000 capital raised.
- Machinery installed; branded "Padma Uday Handishal Masala" in trial production phase.
- Raw material input supports provided to the producer company
- Three sales outlets are opened and management is ensured
- Established the spices, fish and crab unit separately.
- Initiated community services (WASH, environmental protection, safe migration) using community resources and profit-sharing
- The company has partnered with SAMMANWITA, a leading non-banking financial institution in India, which has provided credit support to 150 women beneficiaries from the fishing community.
- Future plan: Form two cooperatives under the company in Brahmagiri and Krushnaprasad with robust management

Major Outcomes Achieved

- **All 6,043 families sensitised and engaged; women's participation has notably increased in community governance and livelihoods.**
- **279 grassroots institutions are functional and leading village development initiatives.**
- **Over 1.6 lakh trees planted, enhancing biodiversity, coastline protection, and supplementary income.**
- **2,250 households now earn an additional ₹2,000–3,000/month through supported livelihoods.**
- **Tourism exploitation reduced via women's participation and online boat booking systems.**
- **Sustainable enterprise in place through Padma Udaya Jibika Producer Company.**
- **Comprehensive capacity building delivered for stakeholders and community leaders.**
- **Marked improvement in socio-economic resilience and environmental stewardship.**



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In Pictures



Women participate in an awareness meeting on the viability and importance of diversifying income and adopting alternative livelihoods.



Women proudly hold the saplings they received following a meeting on the benefits of growing nutrition gardens.



Members participate in a federation meeting to discuss and resolve issues, build confidence, and plan future activities



Displaced women affected by the Satabhaya project take part in a two-day exposure visit to Chilika. They met fisherfolk women, explored micro-enterprises, alternative livelihoods, community forest management, and women's roles in tourism and WATSAN activities. The visit also included a stop at the local Shram Bank



In the fringe villages of Chilika, 500 households across 23 villages were supported in establishing nutritional gardens



improved livelihood support system of members of Farmer's Producer Company- A women member of the company selling from her own shop in the photo.



Livestock like goats, poultry, ducks, sheep, or a cow are given as loan assets.

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Future

Action Village India remains committed to raising funds and supporting the fisherfolk communities around Chilika Lake. RCDC continues to make a meaningful impact, reaching those often excluded from mainstream development efforts, with promising future interventions planned. While the shifting landscape of development funding presents challenges, our resolve to support this vital work remains strong. Any further support—financial or otherwise—will be deeply appreciated.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT