

From Vulnerability to Resilience: Apr 2025 - Sep 2025 Report

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



Submitted by
Action Village India

Partner Organisation
**Regional Centre for
Development Cooperation**

OVERVIEW

This report presents the progress made in the last 6 months (second phase) of the RCDC Chilika Project. Chilika Lake, the world's second largest coastal lagoon, and also an internationally recognised Ramsar site, faces severe ecological disruption due to climate change and human intervention. The project region lacks livelihood opportunities, causing widespread poverty, inequality, and distress migration. Its proneness to severe cyclones coupled with erratic rainfall and unpredictable temperatures exacerbates the vulnerability of poor communities. Moreover, human interference with the lake's ecosystem, reduced fish stocks, undermining the livelihoods of over 200,000 fishers and landless communities. Caste-based exclusion from natural resources, weak infrastructure, recurring climate shocks and external commercial pressures in tourism and aquaculture further marginalise local populations. As resources shrink and competition rises, migration and social tensions have intensified.

Despite delayed funds, many villages that had benefitted during the previous year continued activities such as: nutrition gardens, support for alternative livelihoods, dry fish and small businesses, village-level planning, strengthening of SHGs, plantation activities and Padma Udaya company-based programmes, on their own initiative. Notably, there has been significant progress in enabling vulnerable families to access government welfare schemes.

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

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS



Map highlighting Puri district in Odisha, India, with a smaller inset showing Odisha's location within India.

2,327 women directly supported this year's initiatives. A further **2,050 women's incomes continued to benefit** from skills acquired through previous initiatives. Also, an additional **54 new target villages** were added to the project, in addition to the existing 39 villages. These villages were assisted in the formation of Self-Help Groups, the enrolment of members for the company, the establishment of *Chilika Krushi o Krushak Bikash Samiti* in each village, and the orientation of villagers on this year's project activities. This brings the **total village count to 93**, with a total of **187 SHGs** created.

KEY INTERVENTIONS & IMPACT



Plantation Programme

- **5,000 Casuaruna (Jhau) saplings** were planted in 2 villages
- RCDC Chilika participated in the government's *Ek Ped Maa ke Nam* - "One Tree in Mother's name" campaign and **planted 1520 trees** at schools, Anganwadi centres and in the community.

Village Development Committees

- **62 village meetings** were conducted
- Discussed, key village issues & solutions, access to government welfare schemes
- Formation and strengthening of *Chilika Krushi Krushak Samiti* through the company
- **59 new shareholders** for the company
- Identification of beneficiaries for livelihood support and documenting them
- Identifying villages for plantation activities



Company activities

- Preparation of packaging materials for value addition
- Procurement of automatic machines to reduce high labour costs
- Availing loans from Sammunati, Chennai for fish and prawn processing business
- Preparation of crab fattening fields in households

Village Cleanliness Campaign (with support from Goonj Bhubaneswar)



- Cleanliness drives held in **7 villages** with **550 women** participating.
- **550 kits distributed to clean** drains, ponds, tube wells, and community paths
- Some areas saw temporary seating platforms and fencing for future nutrition gardens.
- Improved cleanliness of drinking water sources and ponds
- Beneficiaries received essential materials (Goonj kits, ropes, household items)
- Cleanliness activities are now practised regularly

Healthy Women, Healthy Family Programme



- With government support, health check-ups and awareness sessions were conducted in different villages
- **1777 women** learnt how to stay healthy and protect their families



KEY INTERVENTIONS

In Pictures

Women coming together in village meetings for the formation and strengthening of *Chilika Krushi Krushak Samiti* through the company.



These images show the plantation of Casaurina saplings and trees for the government “One Tree in Mother’s Name” programme.

The plantation programme aims to create village-level green forests for climate regulation. Additionally, it could also provide an alternative livelihood as locals reap economic benefits from forest resources.

By planting a community forest, locals are encouraged to protect forest resources on previously unutilised land.

These trees would provide nutritious fruits for school children, and locals would gain access to fuelwood from the plantation area. The plantation would offer some protection against cyclones and improve soil conservation.





These images on the left show the village cleanliness campaign in partnership with Goonj Bhubhaneswar and the construction of the temporary seating platform



This campaign aimed to build unity and cooperation amongst women. Clean water sources help reduce medical expenses by preventing waterborne diseases. The bench helped to create a resting place within the community.

INDIRECT IMPACTS AND PLAN FOR THE NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

01 Nutrition Gardens

- Although this activity was not continued this year (due to financial constraints), seeds and saplings that were distributed in previous years helped 950 mothers continue nutrition gardening using saved seeds and newly purchased vegetable saplings.
- This helped them consume fresh vegetables and earn INR 700 - 1000 per month by selling surplus produce.



02 Livelihood support: Goat rearing, dry fish, small businesses

- Delay in fund allocation caused delay in executing these activities in the first half of the year, however, out of 1,700 previously supported 1,100 women continue to earn INR 900 - 3000 per month through livelihood activities. These activities are being implemented in the later half of the financial year.