



Annual Report

Centre For Research and Community Action Trust (CeRCA)

2023-2024



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Foreword

Climate change has become a reality of the present century unleashing turmoil and difficulties on the human society. With each passing year, the greenhouse gas emission in to atmosphere is adding more power to the climate change forces, transcending in the form of disastrous incidents for the human society. In this regard the vulnerability of coastal community is worth mentioning as seventy percent of the earth's surface is covered under water. The discourse about the impact of climate change on the human society will be incomplete if coastal vulnerability related to fragile ecological zones are not included in the discussion. The coastal tracts are placed at the highest risk zone due to increase in earth's average temperature. The rise in sea level, expansion of water surface due to increase in sea surface temperature, formation of low pressure and cyclone over the sea surface etc. have raised the vulnerabilities of the coastal communities' multiple times.

In order to address these coastal vulnerabilities, mangroves forest ecosystem can be considered as a great saviour. Centre for Research & Community Action Trust (CeRCA) has been working on various development challenges of Odisha since 2015 and has been able to work with the communities to address their vulnerabilities. Odisha is prone to disasters and to address these issues, CeRCA has been able facilitate people's institutions, so that the development solutions are owned by the communities themselves. Capacity building and action research are the main two pillars of CeRCA to cocreate development solutions. We are extremely thankful to SGI Foundation for their support and motivation.

We are happy to share the annual report of CeRCA for 2023-24 and hope to continue our work with the communities in years to come.

Dr. Shakuntala Pratihary

Research

Research has been an important pathway for CeRCA to build collaborative work with various national and international institutions. The collaborative work with Avoidable Death Network (ADN), **University of Leicester** has been quite interesting to raise the issues of avoidable deaths occurring due to snakebites, drowning and maternal mortality in the developing and underdeveloped countries. Through action research, we have been successful in publishing few articles to raise a public discourse for certain policy changes around these issues. This has resulted in initiating awareness campaign in the state of Odisha for institutional care support to the snakebite victims.

University of Waterloo, Canada initiated, “Vulnerability to Viability” field school programme related to small scale fishery as a livelihood opportunity for the fishing communities to assess the declining carrying capacity of the Chilika Lake in Odisha. This has resulted in the publication of the report “Hope is not Lost: Justice and Equity in a thriving Lagoon”.

Research collaboration with All India Disaster Management Institute (AIDMI) on “Regional Sharing Report of the State of Humanitarian System 2022 and India Report 2023” is a pioneering work to improve the structures and systems to bring efficiency in the humanitarian actions in the context of rising frequency of disasters.

CeRCA has also published papers in web-based magazine, to develop the discourse around maternal mortality, drowning, & snake bites and also got actively engaged with the governance system to bring intervention in this regard. Some of these publications are;

1. <https://bigwire.in/2023/05/30/snakebites-an-unheard-public-health-crisis/>
2. <https://bigwire.in/2023/05/23/avoidable-deaths-snakes-and-snakebites/>
3. <https://bigwire.in/2023/06/18/know-about-snakes-to-avoid-snakebites/>
4. <https://www.avoidable-deaths.net/2024/03/06/building-a-public-discourse-on-saving-lives/>



Collaboration

Mangroves for Resilience

CeRCA has initiated a platform for “Mangroves for Resilience” where like minded organisations have come forward to work together to restore and conserve mangroves in the districts of Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapada. This discussion led to the pathway of plantation of mangroves in close collaboration with the local communities. The first batch of plantation took place on 29th October 2023 to commemorate the devastating impact of the Super cyclone of 1999 in Odisha and started with one thousand saplings and by the end of march 2024, we have been able to plant more than one lakh saplings.

The spirit and enthusiasm of local communities was supported by the organisations: SGI Foundation, Action for Protection of Wild Animals (APOWA), Sradha, Sattvic Soul Foundation, Odisha State Volunteers and Social Workers Association (OSVSWA), Sneha Abhiyan, Paradeep Phosphates Limited (PPL) and LTI Mindtree to carry forward the in both the districts of Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapada. The local communities have taken the responsibility of watch and ward of the newly planted mangrove saplings in both the the districts.

CeRCA has also done a scoping study in collaboration with SGI Foundation to expand the mangrove plantation in the districts of Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapada. This has created ripple effect and will on board few more organisations to expand its work to Bhadrak and Balasore districts.





Climate Action

CeRCA believes in action at the community level. In this regard, CeRCA mobilized volunteers from different organisations to carry forward the mangrove's plantation work at the Jatadhar Estuary, Erasama block of Jagatsinghpur district in Odisha on 29th October 2023. The earlier community level actions of our founder and friends were of great help to mobilise the communities to start plantation activities.

The pathway of plantation and the immediate effect of visit of large number of birds to this ecosystem was a great motivation for the fishing communities to protect the new plants. They expressed their happiness that the visit of the birds is going to regenerate the marine ecosystem which will help them to redevelop their livelihoods in this ecosystem.

The community-based discussions have resulted in various decisions where the community members have agreed to initiate water conservation and also work in the direction of developing the green coverage. This opens up new ways of improving the carrying capacity of the ecosystem to help the communities to rebuild their livelihoods.

CeRCA plans to initiate action research to establish the fact that the conservation and regeneration of ecosystem is going to be beneficial to the communities to achieve sustainable development and will collaborate with research institutes and universities to start this from the very beginning. We believe in the praxis of knowledge workers with the communities of practice, to rebuild the ecosystem in Odisha.

Sustainable Livelihoods

CeRCA works in partnership with communities to rebuild and strengthen their livelihoods in the same ecosystem through the blending of traditional knowledge with the modern scientific approach of production systems. In this regard, CeRCA has initiated community level engagements with the small and marginal farmers on establishing the value chain in millets to produce food items to cater to the need of the urban population.

We have started engaging with a group of entrepreneurs to work with the tribal communities to source millets and develop healthy snacks and ready to eat food for the urban people. In the coastal areas of Kendrapada, the local community members have developed certain utility household products from the “Nalia Grass” and a product design training has been organised to develop finished products to cater to the household needs of the urban population. These products will substitute many plastic products and would help to establish a culture environmental sensitisation amongst the urban population.

CeRCA plans to work with Department of Mission Shakti and like-minded women group-based organisations in future so that the livelihoods of the local communities get embedded into the system and these rural products find the way to market.



Denominator Thinking

Mission 480km

Odisha has a coastline of 480 km and to address this huge problem of coastal vulnerabilities, it is important that we initiate a programme at a scale. The community members and especially the women self-help group members have come together to carry forward this ecosystem conservation and restoration activities in both the districts and have a plan to cover all the coastal districts. CeRCA continues to facilitate this discussion amongst the community members to initiate plantation of mangroves and also to initiate agro forestry actions to increase the green coverage along the coast of Odisha.



Scaling Up

The platform “Mangroves for Resilience” is ready for upscaling and plans to plant half a million mangroves saplings. In this regard, organisations have prepared the beds for nursery and will be ready with the saplings by early July 2024. CeRCA plans to facilitate plantation activities of the mangrove saplings in the early days of monsoon period.

The preparation of the nursery beds in a scientific manner by studying the tidal wave pattern in the ecosystem is going to be of great help for the saplings to survive. Collection of seeds are in the process and as we have developed nurseries at the plantation sites, we are hopeful for the greater survival of such saplings.

The mangroves plantation drive has been planned for Jagatsinghpur & Kendrapada and CeRCA will expand its activities to Bhadrak and Balasore districts in the current financial year. We plan to cover all the coastal districts of Odisha to initiate community action to address the vulnerability of the coastal population through conservation and regeneration ecosystem.

This conservation and restoration of ecosystem along the coast of Odisha will be a pathfinder for many coastal states in India to initiate similar community-based actions to ensure dignified and sustainable livelihood for the communities.

We are hopeful that together we will bring the change!!!





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