

Project Update: April 2012

1. We have completed the analysis of the questionnaires. The questionnaires aimed at gathering information to assess the utilisation of the wetlands by the community and the impacts of these activities on the ecosystem. The following are some of the findings so far from the analysis:

- i) The wetlands play an important role as source of livelihood to the surrounding communities. The following nine main direct economic gains from the wetland were identified: vegetable growing, bee keeping, fishing in the 'dams' during rainy season, sand harvesting, source of water for domestic and livestock, grazing land, brick making, source of building stone, source of trees for charcoal burning, and source of grass for thatching.
- ii) There are different perceptions on who 'owns' the wetland.
- iii) There is a high degree of awareness by the community on economic activities that are detrimental to the ecological integrity of the wetlands. The following five activities were identified: grazing, sand harvesting, tree cutting for charcoal, stone breaking and poor farming methods along the rivers.
- iv) Conflicts among members of the community and between members of the community and two main catholic church-based organisations operation within the locality as well as government law enforcement agencies often arise concerning access to and exploitation of some of the resources.
- v) The following alternative livelihood activities were identified as environmentally sustainable and should be promoted: tree nursery, vegetable growing in greenhouses, bee keeping, fish farming, and construction of terraces.

2. We have held three consultative/training sessions with selected members of the community (focussed group discussions). One outcome of these consultations is that the community members have proposed formation of a Community Based Organisation (CBO) to spearhead promotion of environmentally sustainable livelihood activities within the wetlands. I am currently assisting the group in working out modalities of forming, registering and operationalising the CBO.

3. The members of the local community have identified the following four activities to be undertaken by the CBO (in order of priority): vegetable farming, fish farming, beekeeping and establishing a tree nursery.

REMAINING ACTIVITIES:

1. Production of leaflets and posters highlighting the socio-economic significance of the wetlands, threats they face and what needs to be done to conserve them.

2. Dissemination of this information to the general community including schools.

3. Undertaking ecological survey of the wetlands (We have not been able to do this earlier as it has been very dry. The 'long rains' began in mid-April and we wanted to do the ecological survey when the wetland was really wet!).