

Ganges River Dolphin Conservation Education Programme

Roles and Responsibilities

Collaboration

The success of this programme depends on active support and cooperation of government departments, research and academic institutions, agencies working in the field of environment and development and nodal agencies for other national programmes (Pollution Control Boards, Science Council etc.).

Partner Cluster Agency (NGO)

- Identification of schools to form cluster in consultation with education department and CEE.
- Being capacity built to play the role of cluster agency by CEE.
- Orientation and capacity building of teachers to run the programme.
- Anchoring and facilitating year-long school activities culminating in Mela.
- Documenting, monitoring and reporting of the cluster activities.
- Helping to set up and run cluster level resource centre to ensure long term sustainability.

Education Department



- Selection and mobilization of cluster schools.
- Deputing teachers for training programme.
- Supporting effective implementation of school activities.

Forest Department

- Providing scientific and research inputs on species, habitat and local community for the educational material.
- Being resource persons for cluster school activities and programmes.
- Identifying possibilities of synergies between this programme and other related projects and programmes.

Centre for Environment Education

- Developing the IEC package for the programme in four languages (English, Hindi, Assamese and Bengali).
- Identifying suitable partner NGOs and orienting them for the programme implementation.
- Disbursing funds to partner agencies to conduct activities at cluster level.
- Providing technical assistance to partner cluster agencies for organizing teachers training, school activities and mela.
- Documenting, monitoring and reporting on the project activities.
- Organizing regional dolphin camp for all the cluster agencies.

Dolphin Areas and Project Locations

Uttar Pradesh			
Ganga Bulandshahr Farrukhabad Kannauj Kanpur Allahabad Mirzapur Varanasi Ghazipur	Ghaghra Faizabad	Chambal Etawah (Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary)	Gerua Bahraich (Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary)
Madhya Pradesh			
Chambal		Gwalior (Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary)	
Bihar		Jharkhand	
Ganga Buxar Bhojpur Patna Bhagalpur (Vikramshila Wildlife Sanctuary)	Gandak West Champaran Gopalganj East Champaran Saran Vaishali	Kosi Araria Supaul Saharsa Madhepura Purnia	Ganga Sahibganj
West Bengal			
Ganga Kolkata, Murshidabad		Hoogly Hoogly, 24 Parganas	
Assam			
Brahmaputra Guwahati Goalpara Biswanath	Subansiri Subansiri	Dibru Tinsukia	Kulsi Kukurmara



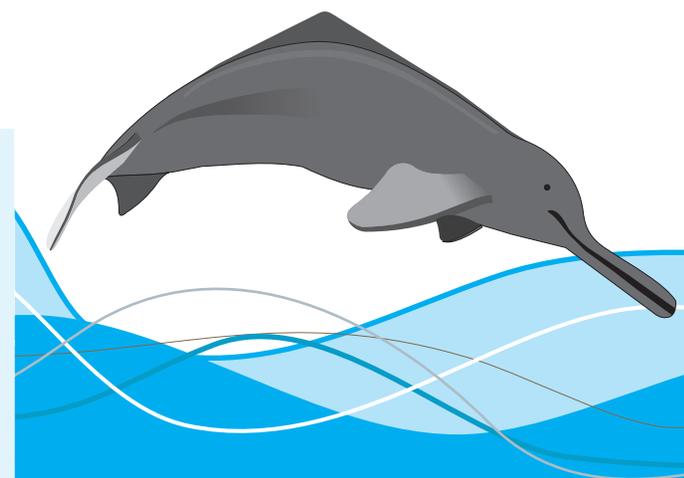
Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) is the nodal agency in the administrative structure of the Central Government for the planning, promotion, co-ordination and overseeing the implementation of India's environmental and forestry policies and programmes. The conservation and survey of flora, fauna, forests and wildlife and ensuring the welfare of animals are among the main objectives of the Ministry.

As part of its initiatives under National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA), Ministry has notified Ganges river dolphin as National Aquatic Animal and formed an expert working group to develop a conservation action plan. Ganges river dolphin conservation education programme is one of the key action areas of the plan.

Centre for Environment Education (CEE) is a national institution engaged in developing programmes and material to increase awareness about the environment and sustainable development. CEE was established in 1984 as a Centre of Excellence in Environmental Education, supported by the MoEF, GoI. It is affiliated to the Nehru Foundation for Development.
www.ceeindia.org

The Northern Regional Cell of CEE was set up at Lucknow in October 1995 to coordinate and implement CEE's programmes and activities in the northern region. The Cell is engaged in organizing regional EE programmes and developing locale-specific EE materials. CEE North has been working on rivers and Ganges river dolphin conservation education since its inception.

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Ganges River Dolphin

The Ganges river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) has been notified as the national aquatic animal of India. It is popularly known as *Souns* or *Susu* in Hindi. *Susu* is distributed along Ganges, Brahmaputra, Karnaphuli–Sangu and Meghna river systems, and their tributaries, from the foothills of the Himalayas to the limits of tidal zone in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and probably Bhutan. The existing population is in the form of small fragmented sub-populations.

This elusive aquatic animal, represents the health of the river systems it inhabits. These dolphins were found in large numbers till a few years ago. But now their number has come down considerably. It's estimated current population is approximately 1200-2000 individuals which is found in India.

The threat to this mammal is largely due to the degradation of its river habitat and poaching. The Ganges river system is one of the most populated areas in the world. It is also home to roughly one tenth of the world's human population and thus suffers from enormous pressure on its resource.

A major threat to the Ganges river dolphin has been due to extensive damming of rivers for irrigation and electricity generation, oil exploration, underwater noise which isolates its populations and prevents seasonal migration. Other threats include chemical pollution, boat traffic, hunting and human disturbances, accidental entanglement in plastic/nylon fishing nets also occurs. This species is hunted for oil, fish bait and food by local people.

Ganges river dolphin, one of the four freshwater dolphins in the world, is facing extinction, and features as Schedule-I animal in the Wildlife (Protection) Act-1972. It has been recognized as 'critically endangered' by IUCN Red List of threatened species and listed in Appendix I of CITES.

'As Tiger is to Forest, Dolphin is to River'.

The Ganges river dolphin occupies the apex of the food chain of the river and plays a vital role in maintaining the essential balance of its ecosystem. In spite of being a flagship species, representing an ecosystem in need of conservation, its status has become a matter of serious concern to its existence over the past few decades. It is a critical time to focus attention on improving the conservation status of this threatened species by improving the status of its habitat.

Conservation Efforts

A number of conservation projects based on research studies, capacity building, field level extension etc. are being implemented by various agencies in the country. However, it is also well accepted that regulation and efforts of the government agencies cannot, by themselves, achieve the conservation goal, unless these measures enjoy popular support.

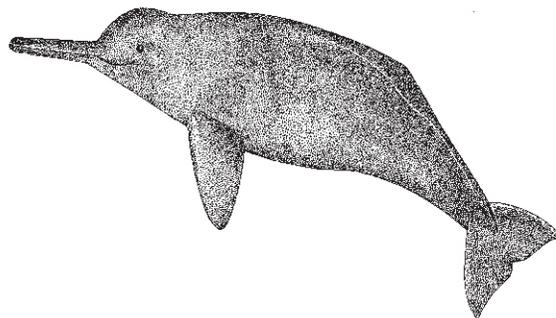
In order to conserve this species, it is important to build an understanding about the species, their life cycles, habit and habitats. Unless people understand and appreciate why Ganges river dolphins must be protected, it will be an uphill battle to protect them. Education and awareness programmes can help in developing a sensitive and informed population. School education and involving related stakeholders to protect *Susu* is a key part of public awareness and education programmes.

Ganges River Dolphin

Conservation Education Programme

With the support from Ministry of Environment and Forests, Centre for Environment Education is initiating a two year awareness and education programme for conservation of the *Susu* and the aquatic ecosystem of which it is a vital part. The selected project implementation areas are the major riverside areas where *Susu* is found in Ganges and Brahmaputra river system of northern, eastern and north-eastern India.

The programme involves carrying out a year-long intensive conservation education programme in schools, involving primarily school teachers and students, and through them reaching out to the larger community, including the fisher folk. The programme components include development and dissemination of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material for schools and general public.



Information, Education and Communication Material

- Information and activity manual for teachers to facilitate school-level programme
- Classroom display material
- Student material
- NGO facilitation guide



Programme Implementation

The project will be implemented with the help of local NGOs having experience and expertise of working in environment and wildlife conservation.

- Identifying NGOs and 20 Project Locations (facilitation: CEE)
- Orientation of NGOs
- Identifying schools in project locations (20 locations)
- Creating NGO-Schools clusters (1 NGO for 25 Schools)
- Teacher training at cluster level (by NGO supported by CEE)
- Year-long school activities (facilitated by trained teacher and cluster NGO)
- Cluster-level Ganges river dolphin Mela (by NGO-CEE)
- Regional Ganges river dolphin Camp

School Activities

Formation of river dolphin club

Group of around 30-50 students from secondary and higher secondary classes.

Classroom activities

Focusing on developing an understanding about the species and its habitat and threat to the same. Carried out by trained teachers with support of the IEC package and local NGO.

Involving the whole school

Communicating issues and messages through bulletin board and/or assembly, expert lectures, and with in the opportunities in the school schedule.

Community outreach

Rallies, street plays, interactions with fisher folk, use of media annual cluster level event river dolphin mela.

Resource centre for Ganges river dolphin education

Located in a school or NGO, for display of school work, reference, data compilation, etc.

