

Participatory Management Planning for the Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur

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THE CONTEXT

Keoladeo National Park (27°7'6"N – 27°6'2"N and 77°29'5"E – 77°33'9"E) is about 170km South of New Delhi on the Agra-Jaipur highway in the state of Rajasthan. The Park is located near Bharatpur on the western edge of the Gangetic plains at the confluence of two tributaries -the Gambir and Bangane. The Keoladeo National Park (KNP) is known as "Ghana" (meaning –dense forest) among the local people and Bharatpur bird sanctuary to many outside people. The name "Keoladeo" is after Lord Shiva. There is a famous temple inside the Park.

The KNP is part of the Bhatpur district which has a population of 1.6 million, and extends over 5,084 square kilometers (175 times of KNP). The district town, Bharatpur, is about 2km from the Park with population of 150,000. About 15,000 people leave in 21 villages surrounding the Park.

The KNP is part of that Indo Gangetic plain with elevations ranging from 173-176 meters above sea level. The area is semi arid with an average rainfall of 500-700 mm, though rainfall can vary greatly from year to year.

The KNP has exceptionally high biodiversity. The Park contains 100 species of plants, about 50 species of fish, seven species of turtles, five lizard species, and thirteen snake species. The KNP is also rightly known as a "bird paradise" with over 354 species. Birds from Siberia and Europe come here in the winter. The Siberian crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) commonly known as "snow wreath" or "lily of birds", visits this Park. In fact, this is the only reported wintering ground of the Siberian crane in the Subcontinent. However, their numbers in the KNP recently declined from 2300 to almost none during the last two decades. In February 1996, four Siberian cranes re-appeared after two years of absence, much to the relief of the conservation community. During the winter of 1999 two Siberian cranes visited the park.

Evolution of the Ecosystem

The history of the KNP is as fascinating as its biodiversity. The area was a natural depression, and the wetlands have existed on some form or other for several centuries. The Keoladeo was re-designed by the local kings to attract more migratory birds. The present wetland sites are reported to have been designed around 1750 after the construction of a small dam, Ajan Bund, up stream by the famous local king Suraj Mal. The Ajan bund is to facilitate complex water management in retaining soil moisture,

supplying water to crops, maintaining the ground water levels, etc. The historical highlights of the Park are shown in the Box 1. The dykes in the Park date back to 1700 and were built to retain water. The Park was owned by the local king who used it as a bird, particularly duck, hunting ground. Even today the hunting records of the then rich and famous are displayed inside the Park on stone carvings. The successful hunters included kings, British viceroys and princes. These dykes were also used by the local elites to shoot the birds during winter. Most of the Park consists of dykes, trees, water gates, etc, - and are part of a conscious design. So this present shape and form of wetlands are result of meticulous design and management.

The Park, apart from rich biodiversity also is a great tribute to the design of water management. Though the initial design had nothing to do with conservation and biodiversity, the place became a symbol of conservation and a source of inspiration for many naturalists, environmentalists, and ordinary people. Keoladeo became a Ramsar site in 1981 and was declared as a National Park in 1980. KNP got the status of a World Heritage site in 1985.

Box 1: HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF KEOLADEO

- 1726 – 1763 Ajan Bund constructed
- 1850 – 1899 Natural depression presently occupied by Park converted into a hunting preserve
- 1901 Reserve flooded for the first time
- 1902 Reserve inaugurated with an organised duck shoot
- 1919 Boundaries of the duck shoot reserve notified
- 1925 Bharatpur Forest Act. Passed. Shikar Department brought under Forest Department. Rules for protection of wildlife and forests of Rajasthan framed for 1930-1935
- 1926 Rulers hand over reserve to Rajasthan Government but retain hunting rights. Is declared a Bird Sanctuary
- 1927 Last leopard shot
- 1928 Declared as a Protected Forest under the Rajasthan Forest Act. 1953
- 1929 Ruler's hunting rights withdrawn
- 1977-1981 Wall around the Sanctuary site was built
- 1981 Declared as a Ramsar site
- 1982 Notified as a National Park – Grazing banned
- 1983 Declared a World Heritage site

- *from Participatory Management Planning for Keoladeo National Park. Report on the PRA workshop held at KNP, WWF.*

Goals and Objectives of the Initiative

The Keoladeo National Park is one of the most fascinating wetlands in the world. This wetland is an important link between Europe and Asia Through many migratory birds, including the remaining few Siberians cranes. Conservation of these wetlands has an international significance.

The history conservation and wise use of this Park goes back several centuries. The most recent conservation measures in implementing the Wildlife Protection Act of 1992 has led to implementing certain regulations and some physical measures. Some of them are listed below:

- Building a 6' wall around KNP and fixing barbed wire on the top.
- Ban on buffalo grazing which was a practice for centuries.
- Restricting free access to temples inside the Park, and to other villages.

These measures were initiated with the intention of improving the ecosystem and managing the park in a better way. Indirectly, such measures were also needed to promote tourism, particularly from outside the country.

But, in reality, these measures, which were part of the implementation of the National Act, were done without any consultations with the local communities. This led to a breakdown of relations and communications between the local people and the Park authorities. The following is the result, which has been continuing for the last 14 years:

- Violent incidents between the people and law-enforcement in the beginning leading to police firings and the loss of human life (seven people died).
- Total bitterness among the people on Park management.
- Non-co-operation.
- Passive resistance – tree-felling, dumping old and sick cows, firewood and fodder collection, etc. All illegal under new regulation.
- People giving small bribes to security guards to get things done “illegally”.
- Influence peddling by the local ‘elites’.
- Lack of mutual trust between communities and the Park authorities.

In other words, conservation has been reduced to law enforcement for park the authorities, whereas for communities obtaining resources has become 'illegal'. In the meantime, the new measures, such as the prohibition of grazing, have also led to some conservation issues (Box 2).

**Box 2: The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
(as amended up to 1991)**

Section 35, Sub-clause 7

“No grazing of any livestock shall be permitted in a National Park, and no livestock shall be allowed to enter therein except where such livestock is used as a vehicle by a person

authorised to enter such a National Park.”

It is interesting to note that these issues were “identified” after a decade long study spending nearly a million US dollars. The institutions, organisations which advocated the “ban” on grazing for the conservation, have concluded that buffaloes are needed to control the water weeds particularly, *Paspalum distichum*. These things have been known to the people, all along.

So, the conflict between the local people and the Park management is not just about extending economic benefits, but integrating the resource use and the ecosystem needs. This is also about giving more responsibilities to manage and use the resources, wise use the core concept of Ramsar convention.

An initiative was set up to facilitate a process to resolve the long standing conflict, and to promote the involvement of local people in managing the wetlands. The prime objectives the initiate were to:

- Facilitate a dialogue with the local communities in order to understand their concerns.
- Identify the key areas of agreement and disagreements between the local people and the concerns of conservation measures.
- Identify the measures, both short term and long term, leading to the conservation of wetlands which are agreeable to both the Park authorities and the local communities.
- Initiate a process for establishing a local institution in managing the wetlands in co-operation with the Park authorities.
- Prepare policy and operational guidelines which could be helpful in similar situations within India and outside.

Brief description of approaches and methods

The project consciously selected the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method to conduct a local workshop. PRA is considered as one of the best ways to facilitate a dialogue with local communities, particularly in the context of natural resources management, where local people have a significant understanding of the system.

The standard approach of engaging consultants to prepare wetland management plans is not only very expensive, but it will not give a complete picture, particularly in cases like this. PRA is also now being accepted as a method which comprises very diverse options. PRA methods are also based on principles to offset the deficiencies of standard investigative approaches (see Box 3).

Box 3: PRA: Some advantages

- Professionals work in multidisciplinary groups, adopting sensitive attitudes and developing the analysis with local people.
- A reversal of learning, to learn with and from rural peoples, directly, on the site, and face to face.
- Learning rapidly and progressively.
- Offsetting biases, especially those of rural development tourism.
- Seeking diversity, this has been expressed in terms of seeking variability rather than averages.
- Triangulating, meaning using a range.
- Facilitating – they do it.
- Self-critical awareness and responsibility.
- Sharing of information and ideas between rural people.

Modified from Michel Pimbert et. al., 1996

Organisations involved in the initiative

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) organised this workshop on the invitation of the department of Forests, Government of Rajasthan, India, which is responsible for managing the Parks. The director of the KNP and another staff member were also part of the team. Local staff members of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and managers of other Ramsar sites were also members of the 16 member team, which worked for 20 days including a training session on PRA conducted by the facilitators.

The team was aware of the situation well before the workshop and most of the participants were already familiar with the KNP and its history and problem. Each participant had been provided with background information. The team was very conscious that the existing conflicts at the KNP have developed over a period of time due to various legal, managerial, and social factors. Is a very complex situation that would need to be resolved through facilitating a dialogue leading to a management plan involving people. It is not the methodology or the sincerity of the team that is going to bring quick results, but rather the follow up action will determine the success of the process.

Donors and Funding

The activity (conducting participatory workshop, preparation of the report, etc.) is not too expensive but the follow up, and implementation of joint management needs funding from the government and/or donors. However, a modest sum of money is needed to do the PRA workshop, which was provided by the WWF. During the workshop, the possible sources of additional revenue generation and the extent of the money Park authorities can transfer to local institutions has been discussed.

ASSESSMENT

Key results of the initiative

The major result or outcome of this exercise is that a process of reconciliation between local communities and the Park management has begun. This is the most crucial need for the conservation of this magnificent wetland. However, this is only a start, albeit the most difficult one.

Community involvement is not an end itself, nor should it be viewed as a public relations exercise. This is part of the process of conserving the biodiversity and improving the quality of life for the people living around the Park. So far, in the context of the KNP, which is not unique, both were not looked at in an integrated way. Conserving the Park is essentially viewed as purely a legalistic approach such as implementing the wildlife acts (see Box 4).

Box 4: Policies and people's perceptions

- 1a. Grazing:** “Arguing against the new policy the local communities maintain that they have used this Park for grazing their livestock, particularly buffaloes, for centuries. Although the damage caused by grazing during the last several decades could be a point of discussion, the banning of grazing in Keoladeo National Park is not based on any scientific study or report recommending it. It is because these wetlands are declared as National Parks that a ban on grazing inside becomes automatic irrespective of its merits or demerits. This is precisely what is being challenged by the local communities”.
- 1b. Grass and Fire:** “We believe in God. It is a sin to set fire to standing grass, specially when there is no fodder for the cattle” – a village woman during the exercise.

- from Participatory Management Planning for Keoladeo National Park. Report on the PRA workshop held at KNP, WWF.

But during the process, the team attempted to design appropriate methodology in facilitating the process. The team is also aware that the methods are only tools and do not alone facilitate the process. Attitudes and behavior are most important but are not easily codified or taught in training sessions. Therefore, one has to be aware that the ‘results’ of such a process very much depends on the trust of the people which is extremely difficult to plan, design, implement and monitor.

The key results of this initiative can be summarised as below:

- Conservation of KNP in future may very much depend on the extent local people cooperate and participate in the management of the wetland and its resources. This

exercise clearly demonstrated that people are willing to do so if some of their traditional rights are respected.

- The rules, regulations and acts of conservation at a national level may not always contribute to the conservation of National Parks.
- The local communities around KNP are well aware of the ecosystem relationship between birds, wetlands and the ecosystem.
- Grazing inside KNP by buffaloes is needed as part of the ecosystem management.
- Tourism is not helping the local community. Tourism is being subsidized by the government and local people.
- The people are willing to form local institutions to conserve and use the resources.
- Respecting the traditional use and knowledge directly contributes to the conservation.
- Facilitating the participation of local people in the conservation of the wetland could probably have the greatest effect for the conservation.

Factors contributing to or hindering the achievement

The success of the present initiative depends on the extent of the follow-up action by the Park authorities. Such follow-up action should ideally lead to a framework for a long-term partnership between the local people and Park authorities. Trust between local people and Park authorities is the key for success. WWF has already printed the report in Hindi and English. It was a conscious decision by WWF to print the report in Hindi so that the people can read it and work towards the follow-up.

The success of the present initiative depends on the following three steps:

The first step towards making this process a success has to come from the KNP authorities. That step is extending some benefits and opening a dialogue for the follow-up action. This is a pre-requisite for any long-term solution for this violent conflict. Immediate actions such as extending the grass cutting times and days, recognising the rights to pray inside temples in the Park, allowing children to collect forest fruits etc. may be the starting point. More than the quantity of benefits a right signal should be sent to the people that they are being heard and the process of participation is somewhat going to take place.

The second step: A joint meeting between Park authorities and the local communities to work out the roles and responsibilities should take place at the earliest. The initial meetings took place during the workshop, but a more formal meeting should go into the details. The main agenda should ideally be to conserve and improve the Park's biodiversity. The meeting should lead to a joint action for the next five years. This meeting should ideally come out with a "Joint Management" agreement.

The third step: Is implementation of the agreed action plan, from both sides. This is the real challenging step. There will be some initial difficulties from both sides, but if the agreement is clear, things might improve over a period of time.

Hindering the achievements of results: The whole process simply may not lead to any follow-up action if the government still thinks that the wetlands can be conserved by implementing the rules and regulations.

Three factors which may lead to total **failure** of the present initiative are given below:

Not respecting the needs and aspirations of the local people may hinder any further progress on setting a new example. If the immediate issues such as grass permits, establishment of local management committees, transfer of some revenue generated from tourism are to be addressed to some satisfaction to the local people. If this does not happen in the next few months, the progress made during the initiatives may be partially or completely hindered.

Not respecting the ecosystem: Local communities, if not respecting the needed restrictions for the health of the ecosystem, may also lead to the hindrance of any achievements. For example, if people demand to restore the unlimited access for the animals into the Park as it was before 1983, may not be possible. The limits to the ecosystem may be specified through a study where local are also a part and there are mutual agreements. This still needs to be done. Before any agreement is reached, local people have to reconcile themselves to the fact that all their traditional rights cannot be restored completely.

Lack of involvement by the people: If the exercise leads to merely extending some monetary benefits to the local people, this could also lead to failure. Any new agreements, concessions have to be part of improving the ecosystem. Therefore, any "benefits" to local people have to be part of the package including responsibilities.

The failure of this present initiative may lead to serious doubts among the local community about the intentions of any outside agencies, which might come in contact with them in future.

Adaptations made during initiative

The entire initiative using participatory rural appraisal is based on adaptation, depending on the situation. During the workshop many adjustments were made to suit the convenience of the local people. However, the team felt that the workshop time coincided with a busy agricultural season. Therefore during the day many villagers could not participate in the discussion. The team also made visits during the night to continue the consultation process. Many other adaptations were made to involve women, tourists, hotel managers and different groups.

Major Developments after the initiative

A report "participatory management planning for Keoladeo National Park' was prepared and printed in Hindi and English. This was appreciated by local people and the

management. The process of preparing the report has been made into a film 'conservation with human face'. The report and the film have received wide attention from the conservation and development circles in India and many other developing countries.

After publishing the report (middle of 1996), the park authorities have taken several steps. The most significant one is to initiate an informal dialogue with community leaders. As a result of this dialogue several agreements were made at local level leading to extension of fodder collection, respecting passage rights, access to temples inside the park etc. Some welfare measures and confidence building measures were also initiated by the park authorities. As part of implementing the recommendations of the report, the entry fee for tourists have increased. However the most important measures, like limited grazing to control the weeds and transfer of part of revenue generated by increase in entry fee to the community, have not yet been implemented (as of February 1999). Joint planning to manage the park was also not done. This is not lack of interest by the park authorities, but such measures require a major policy change at the national level. As mentioned earlier, under the national policy, grazing is not permitted within National parks. Therefore, the implementation of management plans prepared involving communities sometimes require major national policy changes. Therefore, this initiative is only a small step in changing such policies.

Factors affecting the sustainability of the initiative

The initiative itself (PRA workshop) was not meant to be sustained for a long time. But if the follow-up leads to building local institutions and drafting specific agreements, similar PRA workshops may be needed from time to time. Sustainability on such initiatives should be viewed based on the demand to conduct similar PRA workshops at other wetland sites. WWF has received several requests to use a similar process in resolving long-standing issues between local people and wetland management. In India, similar workshops are being conducted to resolve similar issues at various wetlands and National parks.

RESULTS

Main Lessons for Ecosystem Management Effectiveness

Lesson 1: Wetland ecosystems are under serious threat in many countries. Such threats were often “identified” and “analysed” by the outside experts and concluded that the human population living around the wetlands in general is described as “the problem”. Therefore the “solutions” advocated are to impose rules and regulations to keep them “out of the wetlands”.

Such legal measures which were intended for conserving the wetlands often contributed to further degradation. This again is viewed by the outside experts as “not implementing the law or the acts”, and blamed respective local authorities for further stricter implementation, physical boundaries (walls, barbed wires etc.) between the local people and the wetlands.

Such measures have certainly given some results in the immediate time frame. In the long term particularly in the developing countries context, such measures are not only becoming expensive but also ineffective (see Box 5).

The main lessons of the present initiative is that the conservation of wetlands can be achieved in a more effective, relatively inexpensive and a human way of involving the local communities.

Box 5. Quotes from Villagers Living Near the Park

“Buffaloes are the main source of income for a few families. The major cooking fuel for the villagers is dung cake. The absence of buffaloes leads to collection of wood for fuel which would further strain the Park’s system. In general the people in all the villages surveyed are for conservation of the Park, but strongly plead for permission to graze their buffaloes inside the Park”.

“The traditional major primary consumers of the wetland of the Park, the buffaloes, should be brought back to control the unchecked growth of *Paspalum distichum*”.

“The spread and colonisation of *Vetiveria zizanioides* (khus grass) and *Desmostachya bipinnanta* should be controlled by adopting the traditional method of allowing villagers to collect them under the supervision of Park authorities”.

“The calves of feral cattle should be trapped and disposed of and a proportion of bulls should be castrated to check the growth of the population of feral cattle”.

“People have been turning to the Park for cooking fuel and fodder for livestock for centuries”.

“As the rainfall shows a decreasing trend during the last decade, there is a shift in the agricultural crop from food crop to cash crop which appears to have affected the economy of the people”.

“Therefore the only ecologically viable alternative is to get the primary consumers (buffaloes) back into the system. Buffaloes, although domestic, had been keeping the aquatic vegetation under check for ages. A strategy has to be worked out to get the primary consumers back into the system. The administrative problems of regulating the number of buffaloes are enormous, but not insurmountable”.

- Excerpts from the “Keoladeo National Park Ecological study, 1980-1990” report, by Bombay Natural History Society funded by US Fish and Wildlife Society, and Government of India.

Lesson 2: Though the concept of wise use of wetlands is the core of the Ramsar Convention, in practice this seems to be different. Most often the “wise use” is not

defined by the people who use the resources. The present initiative clearly showed that people have known “wise use” for several centuries. They also understand the relationship between the use of resources and the health of the ecosystem. The lesson is to learn from the local people, not always “educate” them.

Lesson 3: The national acts, World Heritage listings, etc. are useful tools in conserving wetlands. But, such international declarations have to take into consideration the local realities. The traditional rights of the people have to be respected. They need to be consulted before such international, national declarations. If they are not consulted, people find ways to violate the law. No acts, walls, fences, watch-towers, guns, penalties etc. can “protect” the wetlands except such measures have been accepted as part of the process accepted by the people during the consultations.

Lesson 4: The popular notion that tourism benefits the local people has been proved to be totally wrong in the case of KNP. Tourism is being subsidized by the government by directly spending to keep the Park open. Every tourist is paid Rs.50 (twice that of the entry fee) to visit the Park. At the same time local people have to give up their traditional rights over resources amounting to Rs.20 million per year. So, tourism could be bringing “revenue”, but the beneficiaries may not necessarily be the “local people” who often have to make sacrifices (Boxes 6 and 7).

Box 6. Tourism costs and benefits

“... Therefore, the net loss to the rural households is Rs.18.23 million from the denial of grazing rights to them. Ideally, the net loss to households has to be measured as the difference between net income from dairying in pre- and post declaration periods which is not attempted in this study ...” (page 59)

“... the net annual benefits accrued to the urban Economy of Bharatpur due to Park induced investments on hotels and restaurants are estimated as Rs.20.15 million at 1992 prices”. (page 59)

“... The case study of KNP provided documented evidence that the distribution of costs and benefits can often be quite lopsided, with benefits often accruing to high income tourists and costs incurred by low income local communities”. (page 86)

- from Murty M.N. and Menkhaus Susan, 1994

Box 7. Ecotourism: subsidized pleasure

Rajasthan State Government and the Government of India together spent about Rs.6.1 million a year (1992 –1993) on development and maintenance of the Park, including salaries and wages. About Rs.2.1 million was the revenue due to tourism during the year.

So, the government extended a subsidy of Rs.4.0 million to the Park. If this amount is divided among the number of tourists, excluding students, it comes to Rs.50 per head. In

other words, if the Park is being maintained for tourists, as is the general impression among the local population, every tourist has been paid Rs.50 to visit the Park. This is taking into consideration only the direct cash subsidy by the government. If the natural resources (land, water, capital costs, opportunity costs, etc.) and value and opportunity costs are taken into consideration, the subsidy would be substantially higher.

- *from Participatory Management Planning for Keoladeo National Park, WWF 1996*

Main lessons learn for ecosystem project logistics

The KNP management is not equipped to handle the issues other than preventing people entering the Park, imposing fines, etc. Even though officials are very sympathetic to the local people, their job, nature of duties, training will not facilitate a process leading to community involvement. This is the case with most of the National Parks system in India and many other developing countries.

For future follow-up on community participation, it may need institutional changes at KNP. The staff may need training in methods of community involvement in conservation projects. New staff who is equipped to handle social conflicts may have to be provided to the Management.

Main lessons learnt for Community involvement

The entire initiative about facilitating a process leading to community involvement in managing KNP. However, the local community, as is the case in every other place, is not a homogenous group. Different groups have different needs and expectations from the KNP. Any PRA exercise will not bring out the total picture. Therefore, the process of reconciliation should start with the segments which have the greater stake.

To some extent, the initiative concentrated on bringing out solutions to the people who are directly affected by the new rules and regulations but this is not perfect and only a start which has to be improved in future.

There are some risks in accepting the outcome of the exercise as the “complete” reflection of the community’s needs and aspirations. It is difficult, maybe impossible, to expect such a “perfect” outcome.

But, there may not be any major surprises. However, the process has to be flexible, open to criticism and ready for adopting new realities.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR GENERAL WETLAND MANAGEMENT

Most of the important tropical wetland ecosystems are in developing countries, which still exist and support the subsistence of the local communities. The local communities have been using the wetland resources for several centuries. Due to various socio-economic reasons, some of these wetlands are threatened with use of resources, directly

or indirectly. In the last 3–4 decades, conservation measures initiated by national governments, with the direct or indirect support of international agencies, have initiated several measures to conserve the wetlands. Often such measures were initiated, though with the best intentions, without any consultations with the local people. Since the traditional rights in many countries are not codified, the newly introduced measures declared such uses as “illegal”. So the conservation measures became law, and the local communities’ actions become “illegal”.

The conflicts have increased in many places wherever the interventions from outside, leading to “restricting” the local rights. Conserving wetlands is becoming primarily implementing “law and order” or enforcing the rules and regulations often without any consultation or compensation. The situation is by no means unique to KNP or India. The issues may be slightly different in other sites, but the origin is more or less from lack of proper participation from local communities.

The present initiative is intended not only to contribute to the process resolving the immediate conflicts but changing the policies which are giving rise to such conflicts.

The Generalised Lessons

- In certain cases, national/international legislations/acts which are intended to achieve conservation could themselves become major obstacles in achieving the conservation. The national acts related to protected areas have to be flexible enough to accommodate certain resource use by local people. Such resource use sometimes is part of the ecosystem management.
- Local communities, which interacted with the ecosystem for several centuries, have fairly good knowledge of the wetlands, birds, animals, and their inter-relations. Their knowledge is useful and necessary in conserving the wetlands to avoid the “expensive”, long studies to arrive at fairly simple conclusions, which people have known already.
- The local communities around KNP are extremely proud of the wetlands and they respect the migrating birds and their needs. Local people think that is their moral obligation to take care of these birds which are visiting them from far corners of the world. Conservation is not just the legal question, as often outside experts see. For people, it is “moral” as well, which is a somewhat alien concept for the Western conservation practices, and which is a very useful tool in conserving the wetlands.
- There is no real conflict between the needs and aspirations of the local communities and conservation of the Park. However, the local communities should derive their own methods to “regulate”, +”control”, and +”exercise restraints” over its resource use. This can only be successful if they are invited to co-manage the Park.
- Tourism is not benefiting the local people at all. Local people are in fact losing their resources to the tourists. Therefore, the “general” theories about the “ecotourism”

benefiting local people seems to be incorrect in the case of the KNP. “Ecotourism” is deriving benefits to different segments of society, who did not lose anything due to the restrictions on the use of the resources.

- It is estimated that local people are losing quite significantly due to implementing the wildlife act. This is the key factor in building resentment towards the “conservation” measures.
- Local people are aware of the importance of the wetlands and the tourism. But their question is why should they have to pay the price of it? The major lesson is that it is not lack of awareness but lack of other resources to depend on for their livelihoods.
- Finally, the future of the wetlands certainly depend on the extent of the local communities being involved in their management. This is the case not only in India, but throughout the developing world. Conservation measures have to work towards appropriate policies, both at national and international level in facilitating the process of community participation. The present initiative has contributed to some extent to formulating recommendation 6.3 at Ramsar COP-6.

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