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German agency to conserve mangroves in Odisha's Bhitarkanika

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German government agency, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), will conserve mangrove and biodiversity of Odisha's [Bhitarkanika National Park, India's second-largest mangrove forest](#).

The agency will provide livelihoods to villagers hit by the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic around the park under Indo-German Biodiversity Programme Green recovery measures, said GD Pati, divisional forest officer (DFO) of the park.

Ambassador to the German agency, Walter J Lindner, had recently visited Bhitarkanika.

India's unemployment rate surged to 27 per cent during the months lockdown was imposed. More than 40 million migrant workers were among the most affected.

Loss of job and income compelled them to return to their villages around Bhitarkanika, creating a labour surplus in these areas. With a decline in job opportunities, a large number fell back on extraction of already stressed natural resources — forests, wetlands and rivers. This has made agriculture and other natural resources-based production systems more vulnerable to climate change.

Green recovery measures offer employment opportunities to communities around the project sites in short term, while building long-term resilience through healthy wetland ecosystems, the forest officer said.

The primary objective of the project is to support [implementation of livelihood-oriented conservation and restoration activities](#) as well as train community members in alternative sustainable livelihoods. The project is supported by International Climate Initiative (IKI) of German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).

Ecosystem-based sustainable livelihood measures — such as mangrove restoration, sustainable fisheries, handicraft-based activities and science-led horticulture — will be implemented at Bhitarkanika. The project will organise skill and capacity development training for local communities in alternative and sustainable livelihoods.

This will include training on pond management, raising nursery, sustainable fisheries, horticulture-based livelihood, skill upgradation for artisans and skill development for eco- tourism guides with help from local organisations, panchayat body members and self-help groups, the officer said.

“Green recovery measures will create employment opportunities, increase fish production, freshwater supply and food security in the short-term. In the long-term, it will enhance storm

protection, reduce soil erosion, improve biodiversity and increase productivity, thereby, leading to improved food security and income,” the forest officer said.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is a cabinet-level ministry that works to encourage economic development within Germany, and in other countries through international cooperation and partnerships.

BMZ is currently supporting research on forests and the global bio-economy, as well as understanding migration and remittances to improve forest management.

Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), a non-profit scientific research organisation, also receives funding from BMU for a study on climate research and multilevel governance.

Both BMZ and BMU are one of CIFOR’s top funders.

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