

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Integrated approach involving locals required to save Deepor Beel: Consultation workshop**

Guwahati, April 17: Although the Deepor beel is now almost an 'urban wetland' surrounded by what can be called 'urban villages' in the western precincts of Guwahati city, the so-called advantage of being in 'urbane' proximity has not helped the cause of conservation and protection of this Ramsar Site, an internationally important wetland. Rather rapid urbanisation and allied pressure have emerged as threats to the existence of the beel.

In a fast-changing socio ecological backdrop, the wetland can survive only if it is managed with an integrated approach inclusive of the local people. There is a lot to be done to mobilise the local communities for playing an effective role in preserving and co-managing the beel sustainably in partnership with government agencies and civil society.

In view of that, Aaranyak ([www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)), regions leading research oriented biodiversity conservation non-profit, organised a consultation workshop on 'The role of community in conservation and sustainable management of the Deepor beel' to reconnect to the local people and to discuss how collectively we can ensure the protection and preservation of the beel.

The consultation was held on April 12 in collaboration with the Paschim Guwahati Mahavidyalaya (PGM), Dharapur, Kamrup Metropolitan District at the conference hall of the college.

Several resource persons such as Dr Rana Sarmah, Principal, PGM, Dr Sudip Kanta Basistha, GIZ-India, Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, Senior Scientist from Aaranyak, Sri Rituraj Dewan, Simang Collectives Pvt Ltd., Dr Bidyut Bikash Sharma, Department of Environmental Science, Gauhati University and Dr. Marie Kalita, Faculty in English Department, PGM addressed the audience and spoke about different dimensions of the importance of the wetland for the lives and livelihoods of the people and the environmental security and sustainability of the Guwahati city.

Umed Ali Ahmed of Dharapur and Mukul Das of Matia addressed the gathering as community representatives. Both provided valuable information and insight from an insider's perspective highlighting intricate socioecological issues.

Dr Partha Jyoti Das, Head of Water, Climate and Hazard Division of Aaranyak welcomed the participants and coordinated the event on Aaranyak's behalf, while Dr Moinul Hoque Choudhry, Faculty, Department of Political Science, PGM coordinated the event on the part of the college and delivered the vote of thanks.

The meeting concluded with the overall message that the government, local people, and civil society must act in tandem with an integrated management approach for the protection of the Deepor Beel and improve the livelihood situation of the riparian people.

The event was instituted as part of an ongoing study on 'Assessment of the socioeconomic and livelihood conditions of the communities living on the banks of the Deepor Beel', by Aaranyak in collaboration with the GIZ-India and the Assam Forest Department.

*Press statement issued by Dr Alolika Sinha, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.  
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