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Planning Strategies For The Development Of Wetland Dependent Livelihood In Thekkumbhagam Panchayat, Kollam

Wetlands are rich in biodiversity. Wetlands provide several benefits, services and sustain biodiversity that is essential for human wellbeing and prosperity. Wetlands are a source of employment. Several people are dependent on wetland directly or indirectly to earn income from farming, fishing, pisciculture, tourism, travel activities and travel. The study aims to understand the major wetland-dependent anthropogenic activities and identify the threats to the livelihood and housing of the people/communities of the Ashtamudi wetland through the detailed study of Thekkumbhagam panchayat. For the wetland-dependent livelihood development, the role of the existing and developing infrastructure and various facilities on the lifestyle of the people is considered. Based on the exploratory study on Thekkumbhagam panchayat, it helps to identify major livelihood activities such as fishing, agriculture, pisciculture, coir making, and tourism; characteristics of the panchayat, water quality, etc. Further study is conducted through surveys. The survey is based on the livelihood activities, infrastructure facilities, financial requirement, housing condition and related issues. A pilot survey of 13 households was taken from nearby surroundings of the lake. Phone-in survey of seven key informants such as panchayat president, panchayat member, Kudumbashree members, etc. is taken. Analysis of these responses depicts the lack of facilities and awareness, improper environment management, which push back the people in the panchayat from the fishing and other water-related livelihood and looking for other occupation rather than fishing and farming. On this basis, it is to recommend that improving the existing facilities, increasing the opportunity of value-added products, providing infrastructure facilities related to the livelihood, in cooperation with existing schemes and funding would improve the housing condition and quality of life through environmental sustainable manner. Further research is needed to identify more factors that can help to improve the ecological stability and wetland conservation that support the livelihood of wetland-dependent communities.

Keywords: *Wetland, Ashtamudi Lake, Livelihood, Thekkumbhagam, Integrated livelihood Strategy*