

Report of the inaugural programme on 'Studies on Conservation and Utilization of Biodiversity & Creating Awareness Through Training Programmes' conducted at College of Forestry, Ponnampet, Kodagu on 10th December 2007.

Kodagu district is part of Western Ghats one of the 32 hotspots of biodiversity in the world today. With over 80% of its land area under trees Kodagu district has diversity of ecosystems, species and genes the three levels of biodiversity and is managed by the local communities in a sustainable manner. Traditionally the native communities have been nature worshipers and large number of Devarkadus(Sacred forests) in the district are examples of peoples commitments towards conservation of nature. This small district has eight percent of India's and 35% of Karnataka's flora of which many are very valuable sources of timber and non timber forest produce. Kodagu is the largest coffee growing region in India and the coffee plantations also support wide variety biodiversity since coffee is grown under shade of trees. The valleys are very fertile and are used for cultivation of paddy under rain fed cultivation and a large number of natural water bodies like ponds, streams and rivulets feed Cauvery the life line of South India. This biodiversity rich district has been identified as the first and the only model forest area in India by the International Model Forest Network Secretariat and the Kodagu Model Forest Programme is working towards sustainable management of natural resources in the district. College of Forestry of the University of Agricultural Sciences(Bangalore)

National Biodiversity Authority, Chennai is the national agency created as per the Biodiversity Act 2002 and regulates activities, approve and advice the government of India on research, commercial, bio-survey and bio-utilization. NBA has sponsored a programme Studies on Conservation and Utilization of Biodiversity & Creating Awareness Through Training Programmes to the College of Forestry of the University of Agricultural Sciences (Bangalore) at Ponnampet and University of Agricultural Sciences (Dharwar) at Sirsi. The Objectives of the training programme are:

1. To inculcate among students and elected members an appreciation of the biological diversity of the country, their use and management in the Western Ghats. To provide opportunities to Forestry / College Students to learn methodologies on Biodiversity Studies
2. To increase the awareness on the policy and legal issues related to Biodiversity and management to the elected members through interactive sessions
3. To provide an understanding of locally available bioresources, their sustainable use and conservation.

The inaugural programme of the training was held at College of Forestry, Ponnampet, Kodagu on 10th December 2007. The programme started with Welcome address by Dr. N. A. Prakash, Director of Instruction College of Forestry. Dr.S.Kannayian, Chairman, National Biodiversity Authority and former Vice Chancellor of Tamilnadu Agricultural University through distribution of NBA publications to the teachers of eight schools inaugurated the programme. In his inaugural address he highlighted the need for conservation of biodiversity and how changes in the global environment will impact biodiversity. He explained the activities of NBA and how at various levels of governance conservation of biodiversity can be undertaken in the country. He informed that participants that people in Kodagu are very lucky to be living in this healthy environment and assured all the support of NBA in protecting the biological wealth of Kodagu. Dr.K.Shivshankar, Former Professor and Head Department of Forestry at UAS(Bangalore) delivered the Key note Address on impact of Climate change on biodiversity and highlighted how world over due to development activities and change in climate natural resources and biodiversity is being impacted. Through an interactive presentation with the students he explained the consequences of global climate change and how it will impact the common people. He suggested ways and means of overcoming this problem and gave simple measures that students could follow to reduce these problems. Dr. Ramesh C. Prjapathi, Member Secretary, Karnataka Biodiversity Board, Bangalore in his address highlighted how issues like water scarcity, loss in agricultural production and pollution will effect the people. He highlighted the activities of Karnataka Biodiversity Board and suggested that educational institutions should come forward to take up activities with KBB in documenting biodiversity and creating awareness

among local people. Dr. P. G. Chengappa, Vice Chancellor of UAS(B) in his presidential address highlighted issues related to ecological economics and how biodiversity conservation will add to economic development. He informed that Bhutan uses Development index rather than GDP to assess the wealth of the nation. He sought the support of NBA and KBB for programmes related to biodiversity conservation by the University and indicated that there is a proposal to establish an centre of excellence on natural resources at Ponnampet.

After tea break interaction sessions with students from schools and colleges and Presidents and Secretaries of Biodiversity Management committees of Grama Panchayats of Virajpet taluk was held. Dr. C. G. Kushalappa , Coordinator of the programme at UAS(B) highlighted the significance of biodiversity of Kodagu in the national context and how it is changing currently due to changes in the land use. The various conservation initiatives being undertaken in Kodagu were highlighted and details about the proposed programme was informed to the participants. Dr. Nagaraj, executive officer KBB in his presentation highlighted the biodiversity of Karnataka and activities being undertaken by KBB. He explained the various issues related to the constitution and working of the Biodiversity Management Committees at the village level. After the presentations interaction was held with the participants regarding various issues related to biodiversity management in Kodagu.

Totally 169 students and 9 teachers from eight invited schools and colleges of Virajpet taluk and presidents and secretaries from ten grama panchayats took part in the programme. Dr. Nagaraj ,Executive Officer of Virajpet Taluk Panchayat , Dr.Vasudeva coordinator of the programme from UAS(Dharwar), Dr.Taranath Executive Officer KBB, Sri.K.N.Changappa, Director of The Coorg Foundtion , Pollibetta, Sri.K.P. Uthappa, Director of Bharathuya Vidya Bhavan, Sri.C.A.Ponnappa, President of Agricultural Sciences Forum of Kodagu, Sri.P.T.Poonacha former member of Board of Regents of UAS(B), Faculty of College of Forestry participated in the programme. The programme had received wide publicity before and during the inaugural programme with members from the print and visual media covering the event. The programme ended with vote of thanks by Dr.C.G.Kushalappa, Coordinator of the programme. Lunch was provided to all the participants.

Dr.Kannayian and Dr.Shivshankar also visited Nagrahole National Park, Sacred forests at Hathur and Kolathodu Bigodu and the Coffee research station at Gonikoppa to get an overview of the various related to biodiversity management in government managed protected areas, community managed sacred forests and privately managed coffee plantations.

This being the first partnership programme between UAS(B) , KBB and NBA discussions were held on future collaborations and activities that could be jointly undertaken these institutions.