IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

ACTIVITY CARRIED OUT BY

CITY UNION BANK LIMITED, KUMBAKONAM

DURING THE PERIOD FY 2024

Impact Assessment By

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Chennai & Kumbakonam

Impact Assessment of CSR Project: Renovation and Desiltation of Olayakunnam Village Lake, Madukkur, Pattukkottai Taluk, Thanjavur District

Executive Summary

In accordance with the notification issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on January 22, 2021, Companies having an average Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) obligation of ₹10 crore or more over the preceding three financial years are required to undertake an **Impact Assessment.** This evaluation is to be carried out by an **Independent agency** for CSR projects involving an expenditure of ₹1 crore or more, and should be conducted no earlier than one year after the completion of the respective project or activity.

As per the above, during the FY 2024, there was one project funded by the Bank above ₹1 crore which warrants Impact assessment. Accordingly, an Impact Assessment for the project viz. **"Renovation and Desiltation of Olayakunnam Village Lake",** located in Madukkur, Pattukkottai Taluk, Thanjavur District, was conducted by us.

This assessment aims to determine the effectiveness, impact, and overall value of the project, with detailed insights into its outcomes and contributions to the local community and environment.

Introduction

Access to sufficient water is fundamental to human existence and overall well-being. However, several regions-particularly within India-are grappling with an acute water shortage. Traditionally, India's lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands have played a pivotal role in fulfilling the water requirements of its population, largely sustained through community-driven stewardship.

Lakes, in particular, hold immense ecological and social significance. They serve as vital source of drinking water, domestic needs, irrigation of agricultural lands, fishing activities etc. Beyond these uses, lakes also contribute to groundwater replenishment, regulate water distribution, and provide habitats for a wide range of plant and animal species.

The Bank has undertaken a series of impactful initiatives across the districts of Thanjavur, Thiruvarur and Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu, with a strong focus on conserving water resources and promoting sustainable water management practices. A central component of these efforts is the renovation and desilting of lakes, aimed at restoring their natural capacity and ecological function.

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CUB CSR Project - "Renovation and Desiltation of Olayakunnam Village Lake"

Key Stakeholders of the project:

1. Olayakunnam Village Residents and Farmers

2. Nearby Village Residents for agriculture and domestic use

The project was undertaken in response to a formal request submitted to City Union Bank Limited by the **Tamil Nadu Cauvery Vivasayigal Sangam.** The initiative focused on the **renovation and desilting of the Olayakunnam Village Lake,** and encompassed activities such as **lakebed restoration, removal of silt deposits, clearance of overgrown vegetation, and elimination of encroachments.**

The primary objectives of the project were to **enhance groundwater recharge, prevent salinization ofground water, restore the lake's water storage and flow capacity, and mitigate the risk of local flooding.** In addition, the project aimed to **rejuvenate soil health,** thereby supporting agricultural productivity, providing a reliable source of water for domestic use, and ensuring availability of water for **livestock and fodder cultivation,** ultimately benefiting the entire village community.

Key Observations from Impact Assessment

Based on stakeholder consultations and field evaluations conducted during the Impact Assessment, the following key observations were noted:

- The Olayakunnam Lake spans an area of 130 acres; however, prior to the intervention, its storage capacity was severely compromised due to dense overgrowth and unauthorized encroachments.
- Through systematic renovation and desiltation-reaching depths of up to three feet-and the removal of invasive vegetation, the lake's water-holding capacity has been significantly enhanced.
- Peripheral development works, including the construction of side pathways and the demarcation and extension of lake boundaries over a stretch of 2 kilometres (1 km newly created, 1 km expanded), have contributed to better accessibility and conservation.
- Post-intervention, the entire 130-acre lake is now capable of storing water, revitalizing its ecological and agricultural utility.
- The rejuvenated lake supports irrigation across approximately 400 to 450 acres of surrounding farmland, significantly enhancing agricultural productivity.
- Historically, borewells and Cauvery water were the primary sources for irrigation. Following desiltation, the lake now supports two cropping seasons annually, with one season sustained solely by lake water.
- As part of the ecological restoration efforts, palm tree plantations were established along a 2-kilometer stretch, contributing to future groundwater recharge and soil stabilization.
- The project has effectively arrested seawater intrusion and halted the salinization of groundwater, improving the quality of local water sources.
- Borewell depths, previously at 300 feet, have reduced to 280 feet, indicating a positive shift in the groundwater table.
- Stakeholders report higher agricultural yields when irrigating with lake water compared to borewell sources, due to better water quality and mineral balance.
- The project has directly benefited around 1,000 households in the village and adjoining areas, enabling improved agricultural and allied livelihoods.
- In addition to agriculture, the lake now provides water for domestic use, livestock needs, and overall community sustenance, reinforcing its role as a critical local resource.

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Behavioural Changes Observed

The implementation of the Renovation and Desiltation of Olayakunnam Village Lake has not only led to ecological and economic benefits but has also driven significant behavioural changes among local communities and stakeholders. These include:

- Increased Community Ownership and Participation: Residents and local farmers have shown greater involvement in maintaining the lake and surrounding areas, reflecting a heightened sense of responsibility toward water resource conservation.

- Shift Toward Sustainable Water Use: With improved access to lake water, farmers have begun adopting more efficient irrigation practices, reducing dependency on deep borewells and mitigating the over-extraction of groundwater.

- Awareness of Environmental Preservation: The project has fostered a stronger understanding of the link between ecological health and agricultural productivity, encouraging villagers to avoid polluting water bodies and to protect natural resources.

- Revival of Traditional Water Management Practices: The success of lake restoration has sparked renewed interest in traditional community-led water conservation methods, which had declined over the years.

- Proactive Encroachment Prevention: Villagers are now more vigilant and actively discourage encroachments and unregulated use of the lake area, recognizing the long term value of preserving its capacity.

- Enhanced Agricultural Planning: Farmers have begun planning for multi-seasonal cropping, taking advantage of the improved and more predictable water availability, which also promotes crop diversification.

- Collective Action for Tree Plantation and Maintenance: The palm tree plantation initiative has led to the emergence of community-driven efforts to nurture and expand green cover, supporting groundwater recharge and climate resilience.

- Improved Hygiene and Livestock Care Practices: With better water availability, households are practicing improved sanitation and livestock management, positively affecting public health and animal well-being.

Recommendations for Ongoing Maintenance and Long-Term Use

To make sure the benefits of the Olayakunnam Village Lake renovation last for many years, and the lake continues to serve the community, the following steps are suggested:

1. Seek Support from Government and Local Authorities:

   Request help from Government and local bodies to regularly take care of the lake, keep it clean, stop pollution, and prevent illegal use of the lake area.

2. Raise Awareness Among Local People:

   Ask local authorities to organize regular awareness programs to teach people-especially farmers and youth-about the importance of saving water and taking care of lakes. This will help create a shared sense of responsibility and care for the lake.

3. Keep Lake Boundaries and Paths in Good Condition:

   Request may be made to Government and local bodies so that the lake's borders and pathways are kept clean and safe so that villagers can use them easily for farming, household needs, and cattle. This will keep the lake useful and connected to daily life.

4. Form a Local Lake Management Committee:

   Ask Local authorities to create a committee with members from the Panchayat, farmer groups, and young people in the village. This group can help plan regular maintenance, look after tree plantations, manage desilting work, and make sure the lake stays clean and usable.

5. Promote Long-Term Thinking Through Education:

   Encourage local schools and local leaders to teach people-especially children-about the value of the lake. Including lake care in school lessons and village planning will help future generations protect and use the lake wisely.

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