# Background

Kaikondrahalli lake is located in the south east of Bangalore, on Sarjapur road. The area surrounding the lake has experienced a multifold increase in real estate value in the past decade. Sarjapur road, which runs past one edge of the lake, is congested with traffic, while the lake itself is surrounded by all the dystopic elements of modern Indian cities - malls, apartments, and IT companies along with shanties and tented slums. Older residents around the lake describe a much different landscape. As recently as 2000, the lake was filled with fresh water, surrounded by groves of fruiting trees, and frequented by birds, foxes, and snakes. By 2003 the lake had begun to dry up, with the incoming channels to the lake blocked by construction and the dumping of debris and garbage. By 2007, the lake bed was a slushy malarial bed of sewage and waste.

This 48 acre water body called kaikondrahalli lake is part of a human made lake system built centuries ago, designed to catch and store rainwater during the monsoons. Encroachment, growth of unhealthy hyacinths, severe inflow of sewage, silting and settled deposits, dumping of debris and waste, Land formation owing to eutrophication, encroachments are the common issues lake was facing. The lake is a unique example of an urban common that has been with active participation of concerned citizens and expresses how social networks influence the redevelopment of urban ecosystems, led by centre researchers and institutions (Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment).
**Timeframe**

Year of implementation: 2009-2012

**Funding Sources**

No ticket fees are charged for entry and the lake is maintained using donations and funds from local individuals and organizations. Corporate funding body United Way. The total cost for implementation was 7.5 crore.

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**Strategies and Interventions**

A small core group of local residents (later, Mahadevpura Parisara Samrakshane Mattu Abhivrudhi Samiti (MAPSAS)) was formed with technical expertise in specific aspects of planning relevant to the rejuvenation, including ecologists and architects. The group contacted the BBMP and asked to be involved with lake rejuvenation, though the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for rejuvenation had already been prepared. The local group were able to involve themselves closely with, and to change key elements of an already prepared DPR. For example,

- Local residents contributed funds, and collected hundreds of saplings of native species for plantation in the lake premises and had the plans to develop an ornamental garden removed from the DPR.
- The original DPR also planned to convert large parts of the lake into wooded areas which was redesigned to retain as much area under water as possible because the group felt it was much more important to preserve the original waterspread area of the lake as the area around the lake is dependent on ground water.
- The DPR was redesigned by the group, using inputs from a local architect, so that access was provided to lake visitors as well as to the children of the school. Washroom facilities were also provided (through donations from a corporate organization located close to the lake), designed so that they could be used by the children of the school, especially the girls, who lacked access to secure, clean bathroom facilities.
To serve the needs of Ganesha idol immersion, and other religious festivals which involve use of lake water but which could also pollute the lake, a separate enclosure was formed at one corner of the lake.

A partial solution for cattle grazing was worked out. Local residents were enabled to enter and harvest grass from the marshy edges of the lake, which they could take back to feed their cattle, without payment.

Fishing continues, but is given out on contract to fishermen who bid for the rights to use the lake: angling for personal consumption is not permitted, nor is the contract specifically awarded to local residents.

Many local residents involved themselves in aspects of lake management at different times.

Social inclusivity, A kere habba (lake festival) held in January 2015 attracted over 3000 visitors in a single day, while a follow up event in January 2016 had close to 4,000 visitors. Children from elite international neighbourhood schools and children from the slum adjacent to the lake have participated in these festivals.

**After rejuvenation: challenges** - Ongoing maintenance and economic sustainability, the donor now slowly decreasing funding support. Neighbouring land owners and residents let in sewage into the lake. Efforts by MAPSAS to halt construction have failed to make headway so far. Constant commitment of time and energy that it demands from a relatively small group of people in the trust who spend the most time working on the lake.

**Opportunities:** As a consequence of the group’s efforts, the BBMP, initiated a program to restore a set of seven connected lakes (of which Kaikondrahalli forms a part).

The use of the rejuvenated lake as a collective node where people from the neighbourhood can meet, and organize to work on other local problems. For instance, an initiative called 2 bin 1 bag formed by a core group of local women residents has worked to develop approaches to deal with solid waste management challenges in the Bellandur ward.

**Outcomes of the Project**

This collaboration between the BBMP and the (then informal) group of local residents was a key factor in enabling the early progress of the rejuvenation effort. A year after restoration, the lake was found to attract over 50 species of birds, and a rich variety of butterflies, frogs, toads, and snakes: the variety of animal and insect biodiversity around the lake has grown substantially since then, with many more bird species added to this list. A large and growing number of people living around the lake visit the lake frequently, and have participated in a number of activities associated with lake restoration, maintenance and fund raising over the years.

**Key Learnings**

Monitoring and maintenance of urban lakes requires the collaboration of local groups and government agencies.

The interactions between local residents, government bureaucracy, elected representatives, corporate bodies, and the media is complex, but the experience of MAPSAS indicates that links between these different groups need to be carefully and strategically used in order to achieve change in the desired direction.

The process of lake rejuvenation has been well documented in a video documentary Kaikondrahalli Lake: The Uncommon Story of an Urban Commons, which can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAN4iGZi3pl.
Additional information

Source:


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