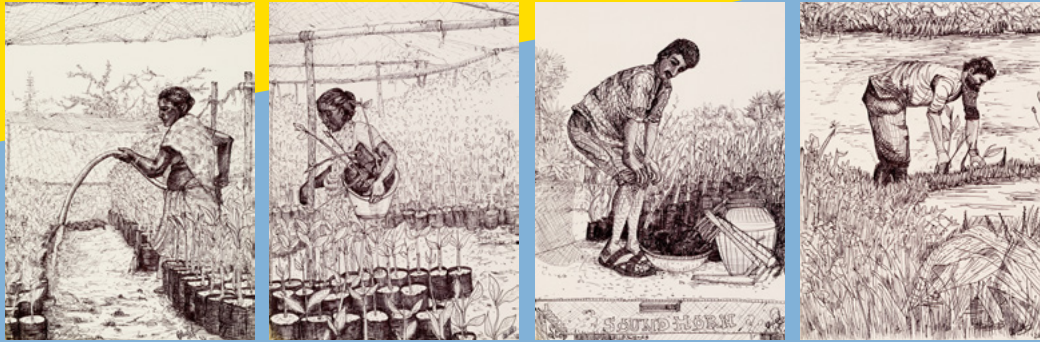


Community action



Dr Ganga Shreedhar's (Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science) fieldwork with coastal communities in India examines how systemic changes to their region are shaping their actions, aspirations, and wellbeing.



Illustrations: Ganga Shreedhar | Photos: Advitya Thapa | Cow photo (right): Ganga Shreedhar | Research team: Ganga Shreedhar, Advitya Thapa and Anomitra Chatterjee

Community-led mangrove regeneration
Mangrove conservation efforts begin in the plant nursery (far left) run by the Forest Department. When the saplings are strong enough, they are taken to the canal and estuary in trucks for planting by the edges of the river. The local community, who live in villages in and around the region, are paid on a daily wage basis for their reforestation work.

“Photography and drawing help.. the researcher.. to notice behaviour, emotions, light, texture, scale, and detail that might otherwise pass unremarked in the pace of fieldwork.”

Frontline communities in Pulicat, Tamil Nadu, India

Coastal degradation

India's second-largest brackish water lagoon and its adjoining bird sanctuary, home to migratory and endemic species, are under significant and compounding threat.

The Pulicat region is transforming at a pace that profoundly impacts the lives of local communities. This is through the conversion of ecologically sensitive landscape to ports or industrial infrastructure, and the enclosure of common and open-access land, alongside coastal erosion, climate change, air and water pollution.



A note on photography and field sketching as research method

The photographs and sketches in this exhibition sit alongside, rather than separately from, the qualitative interviews and quantitative survey work that form the core of this research. They function as a complementary method in their own right.

Where survey data captures patterns across hundreds of respondents and interviews surface individual narratives, photography and drawing help slow the researcher down and sharpen observation. To notice behaviour, emotions, light, texture, scale, and detail that might otherwise pass unremarked in the pace of fieldwork.

The act of drawing, in particular, is an interpretive process. You make deliberate decisions about what to include, what to simply, and what to emphasise. In this sense it is closer to the act of analysis than it might first seem.

These visual records also serve as memory aids, anchoring field notes and interview accounts to specific places, moments, and encounters.

“In research that engages directly with loss, displacement and climate anxiety, drawing and photography offer researchers a means of processing, the emotional weight of what they are witnessing.”

Header image: An artisanal fisherman stakes his driftnet from his catamaran – a precarious livelihood on a shifting estuarine ecosystem. **Above left:** Pelican fishing the Kosathalaiyar. **Above middle:** LPG pipelines cross the Kosathalaiyar, its banks lined with coal yards and thermal power stations. Energy is displacing water as livelihood infrastructure. **Bottom left:** A fragmented coastal forest at the edge of the Buckingham Canal, a JCB backhoe loader hollowing it out. **Above right:** Community-led mangrove planting with the Forest Department – regeneration through stewardship.