

COURSE OF ACTION

Conservation of Indus river dolphins

OIPA INTERNATIONAL

[HTTPS://WWW.OIPA.ORG/INTERNATIONAL/](https://www.oipa.org/international/)

Dated ::10/07/2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

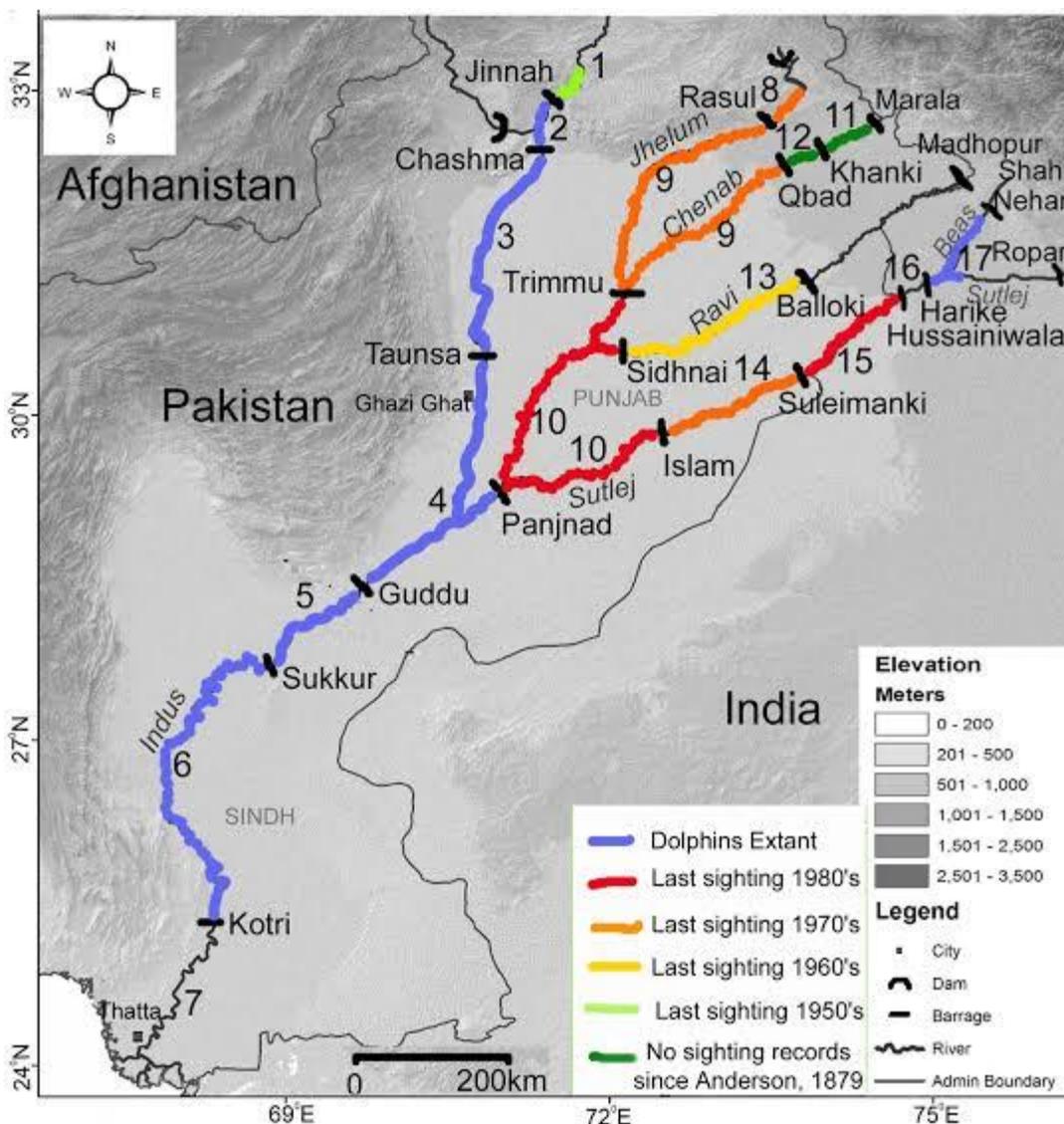
The Indus river dolphin is the second most endangered freshwater dolphin in the world, due to many threats it faces including fragmentation of their habitat after barrages were built across the Indus River, entanglement in fishing nets, reduced flow of water in the river, and pollution from surrounding industries.

The Indus River dolphin (*Platanist minor*) is one of the world's rarest mammals and the second most endangered freshwater river dolphin.

The Indus River Dolphin has a long beak and a stocky body. It has a low triangular hump on its back in place of a true dorsal fin. It is gray-brown in color, sometimes with a pinkish belly. The eyes are extremely small, resembling pinhole openings slightly above the mouth.

The Indus River dolphin measures between 1.5 - 2.5 m (5 - 8) in length and weighs 80 - 90 kg (180 - 200 lb). It is found exclusively in freshwater, living not only in the main channels, but also, during the flood season, in seasonal tributaries and the flooded lowlands.

Approximately 1,100 specimens of this species exist today in a small fraction of their former range, the lower reaches of the Indus river in Pakistan. However, the population of this species has gradually declined



-

because of various factors, including water pollution, poaching, fragmentation of habitat due to barrages, and dolphin strandings in the irrigation canals.

There are less than 600 dolphins left of this species. • These kind of unique dolphins are threatened by fishing nets and commercial killing. • Other species in danger is the black or Chilean dolphin, which lives off the coast of Chile in the Pacific ocean. • There are other dolphin species which are becoming threatened too, but not as those above.

The death of 24 endangered dolphins in the river Indus, Pakistan last year has led to recommendations for a complete ban on fishing in their reserve. Officials from the Sindh Wildlife Department have become concerned at the use of chemicals by local fishermen within the reserve, which are being blamed for the majority of reported river dolphin mortalities.

The Indus River dolphin (*Platanista minor*) is one of the world's **most** threatened marine mammals, with a population size estimated at approximately 1,550 to 1,750 individuals (Braulik et al 2012).

The dolphin, which occurs only in the Indus River system in Pakistan and India, has been heavily impacted by poaching, bycatch and pollution. However, the biggest threat to its survival is the fragmentation of its habitat by the dams and barrages that have been constructed on the Indus River for irrigation and flood control.

These barriers have reduced the dolphins' range by 80 percent and have divided them into small sub populations. Given the small size of each subpopulation and their limited genetic diversity, their ability to persist in the long-term is in question.

Project background:

This project aims to enhance the conservation of the endemic and endangered Indus river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) in Pakistan through the engagement of local communities in citizen science-based data collection and livelihood enhancement.

Simultaneously, policymakers will be lobbied to develop effective dolphin conservation policies. Project partners will engage experts and stakeholders in Pakistan to work together to develop a bi-national Indus River Dolphin Trans-boundary Conservation Action Plan, which is essential to the long-term conservation of the migratory species.

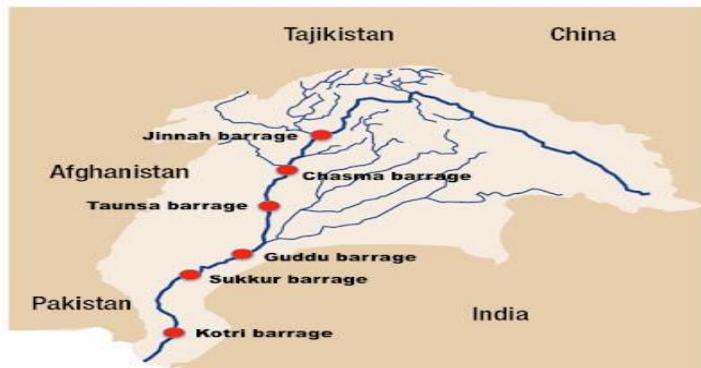
Objectives of the project:

Develop a mobile application for the monitoring of chemical and biological water quality as well as fish abundance, and test the mobile application with community members

Work to engage local fishing communities and high school students from socio-economically marginalised groups and castes within oipa team in the data collection, which will then be submitted and analysed by experts

Better understand the underlying threats to dolphin populations in the region Lobby policymakers at the local, regional and national levels to develop policies that address the root causes of Indus river dolphin decline.

The main objective of the project is to identify key areas for cetaceans, feeding and breeding grounds, and preferred routes used by the animals in the Indus river.



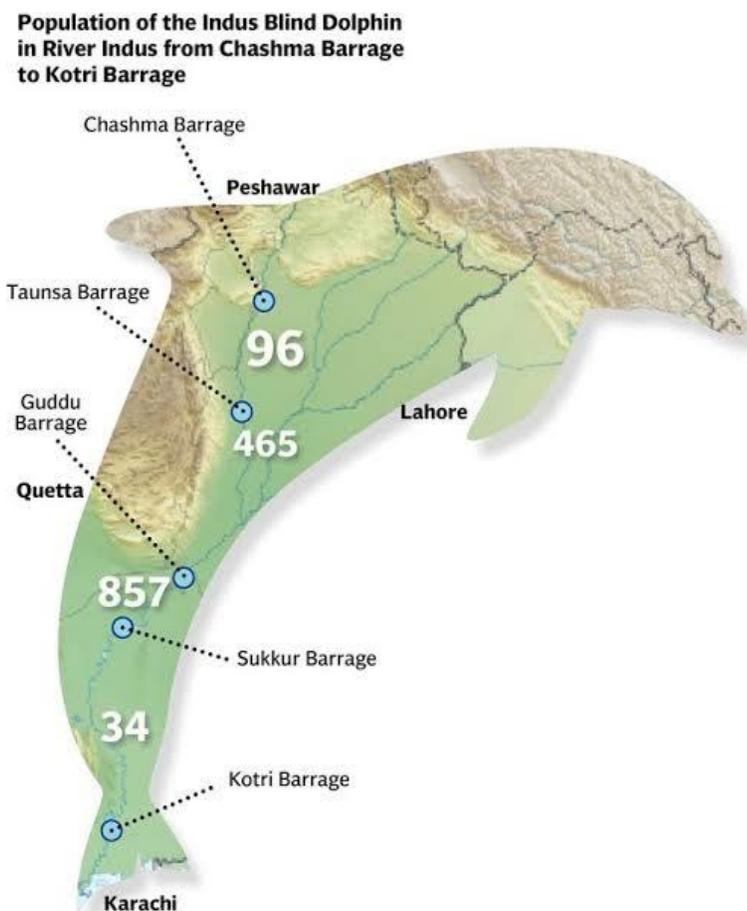
The identified areas are submitted to the attention of politicians and stakeholders, suggesting methods for their protection and management.

In addition to research, the project aims at education and outreach, to expand people’s knowledge and awareness of the conservation needs of Indus river dolphins.

Expected outputs:

A baseline study reflecting the Indus River dolphin population's abundance and distribution in Pakistan will be established using internationally-recognised best practice methods. Another baseline study on water quality and fish abundance in the Indus river will help to elucidate the primary factors that threaten the survival of the Indus river dolphin.

Local fishers and students with riparian rights to the Indus- river system will better understand the link between ecological conservation, environmental services and species viability.



These fishers and students will then use this knowledge to promote conservation awareness within their communities.

Local fishing communities will better understand how to manage and use their local resources. Through training, they will learn how to develop sustainable forest and farm-based enterprises. Policy makers at

•

local, regional and national levels will better understand the threats to Indus river dolphin populations and how to address these threats via policy solutions;

bi-national experts and stakeholders will identify key trans-boundary conservation issues and produce a white paper with technical suggestions for to support the governments of Pakistan.

The mission of Dolphin Project is to end dolphin exploitation and slaughter, as dolphins are routinely captured, harassed, slaughtered and sold into captivity – all in the name of profit.

The Indus dolphin has lived in the Indus far longer than human beings have inhabited its banks.

Budget details::

Expenditure category	Cost	Total expenditure
Project personal	5000\$	5000\$
Official travel in seven districts	7000\$	7000\$
Trainings in seven districts	7000\$	7000\$
Refreshments	200\$	200\$
Handout preparations	500\$	500\$
Communication cost	300\$	300\$
Materials	5000\$	5000\$
Total	25000	25000

One hopes that these beautiful creatures will be saved so that later generations can continue to enjoy observing this rare and graceful link to an ancient world.