

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND FINANCING FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE SUNDARBANS AND RESTORATION OF COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS IN THE BAY OF BENGAL (SUNDAR-BAY)

The challenge

Unique natural areas such as the Sundarbans in Bangladesh and India - the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest - and numerous smaller, unconnected marine protected areas are crucial for the preservation of the many ecological services provided by the Bay of Bengal ecosystem. Bangladesh and India share challenges such as climate change, habitat fragmentation, biodiversity threats, overexploitation of fish stocks, and increasing competition for sea space from various blue economy activities, including mineral resource extraction, fisheries, and energy production in the Sundarbans and the Bay of Bengal. Joint transboundary conservation management offers direct benefits to migrating species like waders, river dolphins, and numerous fish species. It also strengthens the conservation efforts leading to increased resilience of the ecosystem to the effects of climate change such as extreme weather events, sea level rise, and increasing salinity. This, in turn, benefits approximately 6.5 million people across Bangladesh and India whose livelihood depends on the sustainable management of Sundarbans.

Project name	Strengthening regional cooperation and financing for sustainable management of the Sundarbans and restoration of coastal ecosystems in the Bay of Bengal (SUNDAR-BAY)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project regions	India and Bangladesh
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Duration	2024-2028

Objective

The project aims to strengthen regional cooperation and financing models for transboundary protected area management. This initiative will improve biodiversity, productivity, and ecosystem connectivity in the Bay of Bengal, thereby reducing existential risks for resource-dependent residents and strengthening their climate resilience.



L. to r.: At Sajnekhali Ferry Ghat in the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, mangroves line the tidal creek; In the shallow water, women collect fish and shellfish inside small enclosures.



L. to r.: A landscape of mangrove trees in the Sundarbans; a saltwater crocodile, the largest living reptile in the world, also known as the Dragon of the Sundarbans.

Approach

- Promoting and strengthening the cross-border exchange of best practices.
- Supporting the use of aligned monitoring systems for biodiversity conservation.
- Empowering local communities, particularly women, through sustainable livelihood creation.
- Developing financial instruments to make potential green investments attractive.
- Capacity enhancement for managers, rangers and frontline staff, including emerging issues such as marine litter reduction, citizen science for monitoring and ecosystem-based fisheries management.

Expected outcome

- The technical and institutional capacities, for protected area management, tackling the challenges of climate change and sustainable value addition are strengthened. Maps, monitoring frameworks, training programs, and concepts for financing and risk transfer mechanisms have been jointly developed and used.
- Regional knowledge exchange, coordination and cooperation on the management of the Sundarbans happens on a regular basis.
- Community members are actively involved in decision-making processes, especially through Joint Forest Management Committees, this supports the alignment of management measures with local gender-responsive needs and knowledge.
- Raised awareness about the conservation and sustainable use of the Sundarban is helping to increase the consciousness and responsibility of community members' including the younger generation, leading to an increased use of sustainable practices.

Project contribution to the Agenda 2030



Project locations



Figure 1: Project areas

Disclaimer: The geographical map is for informational purposes only and does not constitute recognition of international boundaries or regions; GIZ makes no claims concerning the validity, accuracy or completeness of the maps nor assumes any liability resulting from the use of the information therein.

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