



# Management of the Sundarbans Mangrove Forests for Biodiversity Conservation and Increased Adaptation to Climate Change Project (SMP)

Implemented by:

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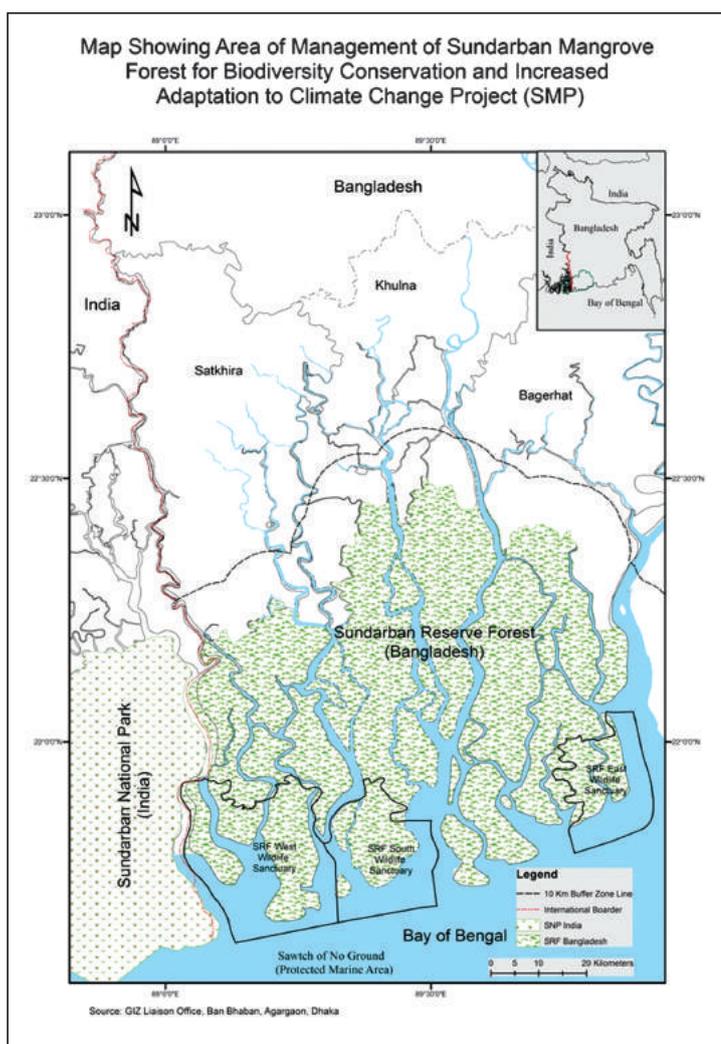
## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Sundarbans constitute the world’s largest continuous mangrove forest (10,000km<sup>2</sup>) located within a massive river delta system between India and Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Sundarbans Mangrove Forest (SMF), covering an area of 6,017km<sup>2</sup>, is protected through restricting resource use and access rights to varying degrees. The SMF plays a crucial role as buffer between land and sea, as well as as a protective wall against tropical cyclones. Against the background of progressing climate change, the Sundarbans ecosystem is even more important for the people living in its periphery. Due to its inaccessibility, unique and globally important biodiversity has remained preserved and the Sundarbans have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There are no permanent settlements inside the SMF. However, a large number of people living in its periphery depend on the mangrove ecosystem for their livelihood: People enter the forest – some legally some illegally - to harvest natural resources including fish, nypa palm and honey. On a larger scale, the SMF plays an indispensable role as breeding and nursery ground for economically important fish species in the rivers and the Bay of Bengal supporting income generation and food security far beyond the direct boundaries of the forest.

The SMF ecosystem and its biodiversity are subject to multiple stressors, including unsustainable use of natural resources. The Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) is the official custodian of the SMF and responsible for its protection. Challenges related to technical

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<b>PROJECT AREA</b>	Field implementation in Bagerhat, Satkhira, and Khulna Districts as well as policy advisory at the national level
<b>DURATION</b>	May 2015 to April 2019
<b>TARGET GROUP</b>	Rural population with strong dependency on Sundarbans resources and BFD staffs



capacities, financial resources, and institutional arrangements currently hamper the BFD’s efforts to effectively address these stressors in the management of the SMF.

Through co-management structures at the village and Upazila / sub-district levels, local communities are given a platform to participate in the management of the SMF.

Different actors, including governmental agencies, donors and NGOs, are involved in conservation and management of the SMF as well as community development in the periphery. Improved coordination between relevant actors to leverage synergies would greatly increase the impact of conservation and management of the SMF.

Also, co-management structures are yet to sufficiently facilitate participation of resource users in decision making about the SMF.

GIZ supports the BFD in strengthening its management capacities, empowering co-management structures, and developing institutional mechanisms towards increased coordination.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Government agencies at the national and local level, that are responsible for the management of the Sundarbans, as well as co-management structures, have implemented mechanisms that improve the management of the SMF.

## INTERVENTION AREAS

The project follows a multi-level approach. Experiences gathered at local level feed into policy formulation and institutional development at district and national level.

### Area 1: Enhancing coordination among relevant actors

The BFD as the responsible agency for the SMF has the lead in coordinating actors and measures implemented in the field. By establishing institutional mechanisms and further building capacities of the BFD, cooperation and coordination among different government agencies, donors, and development partners is enhanced and institutionalized.

### Area 2: Improving participation of resource users in co-management

Sustainable management of the SMF is only possible by considering the needs and rights of the people depending on it. Therefore, resource users are empowered to better voice their concerns within the existing co-management structures and participate in decision making processes. Institutional and policy development helps to sustain these processes on the long term.



### Area 3: Strengthening the capacity of the BFD for management and conservation of the Sundarbans

SMP further develops conservation tools and mechanisms to improve the management of the SMF. As a part of this, capacity building of BFD frontline staff on technical topics such as bio-monitoring, law enforcement and co-management of natural resources, enables them to effectively use the newly developed tools. Furthermore, SMP supports the BFD in developing and implementing steps towards further integration of co-management in their existing structures.

**SMP has a special focus on gender:** The project activities strengthen women rights for access to natural resources and to the benefits derived from them.



## Selected Achievements

SMP in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and other relevant actors such as USAID and the World Bank supports capacity building of the BFD for the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART). SMART provides the BFD the tools to better plan, evaluate and implement effective law enforcement and bio-monitoring. By developing a joint data model and standard operating procedures, SMART has been embedded in the management structures of the BFD. Bangladesh is one of the first countries to pilot SMART in a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

SMP conducted a participatory governance assessment for (co-)management of the SMF involving more than 150 participants from government agencies and civil society. Strengths and challenges related to six core principles of good governance (effective participation, fair sharing of benefits, law enforcement, accountability, policy coordination, and achievement of conservation objectives) were identified and were fed into the design of the measures under this component. In cooperation with the local NGO Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS) SMP supports co-management structures with a focus on empowering resource users and women.



As part of this, SMP is conducting a comprehensive household survey in Chadpai range covering 37 villages. The findings will be used to design a set of capacity development measures for local community members to strengthen their participation in co-management. The formation of dedicated resource user groups and women groups under the umbrella of the existing co-management structures, is another step to improve organizational structures for co-management in the SMF.

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