



ECOSYSTEMS FOR LIFE

A Bangladesh-India Initiative



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Context of Ecosystems for Life

Rivers cover half the land surface and support over 40 percent of the world's population. Managing the flow of rivers or "water regimes" are a significant part to resource governance in both national and international trans-boundary contexts around the globe.

Bangladesh and India together have some of the most intricate and complex river systems in the world. There are over 50 river systems in this region with most of them flowing into the Bay of Bengal. The Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna, the three major rivers, along with their tributaries drain an area of about 1.75 million square kilometres and have direct impact on around 620 million people. These great rivers are inseparable from the histories and cultures of the region, and are fundamental to the people who depend on them for their well-being.

Towards sustainable management

A technical understanding of these river systems is needed to build strategies that can ensure sustainability of the ecosystems that can lead to an enhanced well-being of the people in the region. The Ecosystems for Life: A Bangladesh-India Initiative uses a multi-stakeholder dialogue process to promote insights across the three major rivers systems. Ecosystems for Life focuses on five themes:

- Food security, water productivity and poverty - exploring the links between these issues for poverty alleviation
- Impacts of climate change - developing a common understanding of these impacts and adaptation methods

- Convergence of inland navigation and integrated water resources management goals – developing a common understanding of economic, social and environmental benefits
- Environmental security - developing a common understanding of the links between economic development and environmental security
- Biodiversity conservation – understanding of ecosystems and habitats, leading to improved conservation of flagship species

The objectives of Ecosystems for Life

The overall objective is to increase understanding of the values of ecosystems in the Bangladesh-India sub region using various dialogue processes. In doing so, it will create avenues for informing decision making towards establishing a system of improved, integrated management of these ecosystems.

The specific objectives are:

Creating a shared vision

Establishing a civil society led multi-stakeholder forum for organisations and individuals to engage in constructive and informed dialogue. These dialogues are to be complimented by consultative processes such as collaborative research and studies. Results will be shared through formal and informal meetings and workshops with the aim to advance the research agenda in both countries.

A knowledge hub

Developing a relevant and comprehensive knowledge base on integrated ecosystems management of common water regimes by engaging civil society groups, research institutes, universities, scientists and experts. This will include packaging and dissemination of the research findings and developing research-based policy options to share with relevant stakeholders.

Strengthened capacity

Fostering mutual learning between civil society groups leading to the development of their respective capacities that are linked to similar processes in the region. This will include identification and promotion of best practices and undertaking training programs.



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Implementation

Ecosystems for Life is being implemented in Bangladesh and India by IUCN country offices with support from the IUCN Asia Regional Office, Bangkok, Thailand. It commenced in mid 2010 and will run for four and a half years. It is supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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