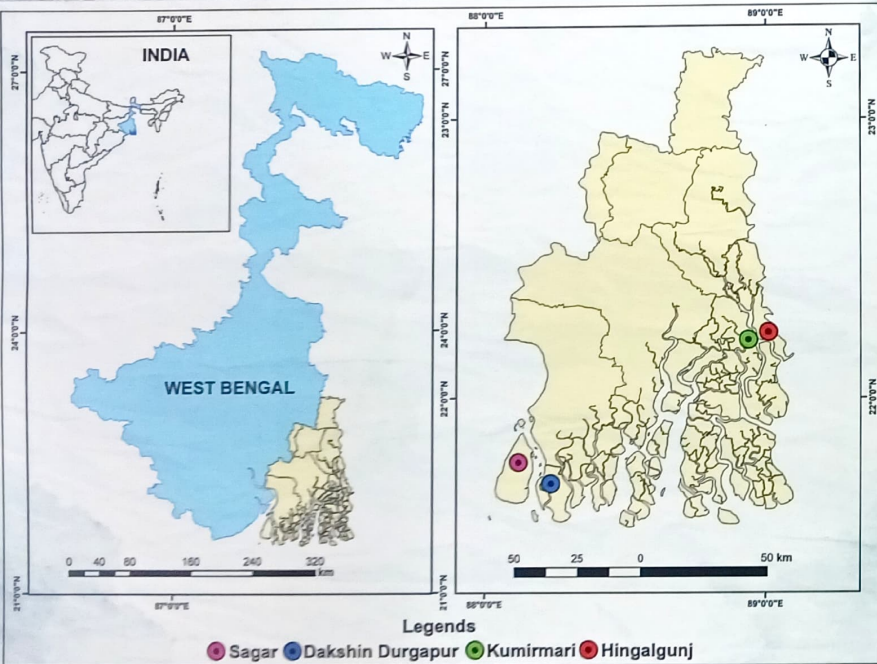




terre des hommes  
Help for Children in Need

Climate resilient communities in Sundarbans are economically, ecologically and socially strengthened and are committed to address the consequence of climate change



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# Building resilience to climate change in Sundarban - Co-creating with communities



## Introduction:

Sundarban, the dynamic delta, experiences periodic high and low tides and the landscape is dominated with saline water, soil erosion and frequent devastating cyclones. There are 54 inhabited islands out of the odd 102 where the earthen embankments, surrounding the islands act as the lifeline for the people of Sundarban protecting life and livelihoods from the saline tidal water. And it is here that the world's largest mangrove ecosystem gives the island embankments a protective cover, acting as a bio-shield dissuading the wind and wave energy of this huge hydrological system. Mangrove forests support the livelihoods of local coastal communities in the Sundarban by providing numerous resources, like brackish water fish, crab, shrimps, honey, tourism etc. There is a high dependence on agriculture too, which is adversely affected by climate change. Increasing number of cyclones, floods, hailstorms, irregular rainfall pattern and long and hard summers make it difficult for the population to sustain their livelihoods.

Sundarban is a popular destination for tourists. In 1989, the Ministry of Environment and Forests declared the entire 9,630 square kilometers of Sundarban as the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve (SBR). In the same year, it was also declared a World Heritage Site. This global recognition has made the SBR a popular destination for national and international tourists. The uniqueness of the Sundarban forests lies in its extremely rich diversity of aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna, not to mention the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Statistics show that about 180,000 tourists visit the Sundarban every year, especially during the peak season (November - March). At present, however, tourism in the Sundarban region is not ecologically sustainable. Moreover, it is not the local population that benefits from tourism, but large agencies that are not from the region. The local population benefits mostly from small, menial jobs, that too seasonal. Renting of boats for tourism is also a good source, but initial investments, maintenance do not always make it a preferred choice among locals. In addition, tourism in the region is currently focused almost exclusively on the tigers, resulting in overcrowding in some places. Tourism outside Tiger Safaris is still highly expandable. The diverse nature of the region has a lot more to offer in a sustainable way. However, there is no networking among those actors who want to promote ecologically sustainable tourism, whereby best practices and learnings are shared and mechanisms exist to establish a vibrant network. This weakens alternative forms of tourism in the region.

Education is an essential element of the global response to climate change. It helps people to understand and address the effects of global warming, increases climate literacy among young people, promotes changes in attitudes and behaviour, and adapt to the trends associated with climate change. Education and awareness-raising enable decision-making and supports youth and communities to play a pivotal role in increasing the adaptation and mitigation capacities of communities and empowering women and men to adopt a sustainable lifestyle.

In this context, NEWS is striving to build a climate resilience community and has taken the initiative to establish community governance in order to produce a regular and varied source of income by establishing a community-based eco-tourism in Kumirmari village with an appropriate waste management strategy. The initiative will also emphasize the involvement of young people to take appropriate climate action and creating climate resilience in Sundarban.



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## Objectives:

The underlying objectives for this program are as follows-

- Establishment of community-owned sustainable tourism business at Kumirmari village under Gosaba block of Sundarban.
- Mangroves protected with the establishment of nurseries at Dakshin Durgapur village under Namkhana block of Sundarban.
- Children and young people in the project region are actively committed to environmental protection and their right to a healthy environment.

## Target groups:

- Local community from Kumirmari are trained in tourism, biodiversity guides as well as tourism-related services.
- Farmer Interest Groups and individual farmers from Kumirmari are trained in climate-adaptive agricultural practices.
- The local people are receiving a series of training in arts and crafts and waste management.
- In the village of Dakshin Durgapur, a women's group are trained in mangrove restoration, protection, and monitoring techniques.
- 430 Young people (14 to 24 years old) are taught with the basic principles of climate literacy and carry out practical projects on environmental protection.
- Youth from the project region participate in the national and international network to exchange views on climate change and ecological rights, best practices, and action plans.



## What we want to do:

### A. Communities of Kumirmari are able to make a living in a sustainable, environment-friendly, and financially resilient manner.

- A registered company namely "Kumirmari Ecotourism Private Limited (KEPL)" with 12 Board of Directors (BOD) under the Company Act, 2013 (18 of 2013) is formed.
- Capacity-building of KEPL BOD members, Farmer Interest Groups, and Individuals to operate the eco-tourism business successfully.
- Training for personnel engaged in activities related to Tourism and Hospitality Management.
- Site selection for construction and landfilling for Eco-tourism infrastructure (3 cottages, 1 kitchen, 1 reception, 2 staff toilets, and 2 tube wells) with the inclusion of eco-friendly aspects and maintaining the regulations.
- Development of solid waste management strategy to convert Kumirmari into a plastic-free island.
- Development of Agro-ecological farming practices to meet the needs of the tourists.
- Empowering women for local handicraft promotion.

### B. The mangrove plantation in the village of Dakshin Durgapur is extended by 150,000 mangroves and is sustainably protected.

- The establishment of a mangrove nursery at Dakshin Durgapur.
- Preparation of jute bags, soil, and nursery beds for nursery development.
- Capacity building of women groups to develop and monitoring of the nursery, are formed and sustained.

### C. Children and young people in Sundarban are actively committed to environmental protection and their right to a healthy environment.

- 42 eco-club (12 at Kumirmari, 10 at Hingalgunj, and 20 at Sagar) with 430 members (14 to 24 years old), are formed and sustained.
- Development and implementation of Climate Literacy Module (CLM).  
Module 1 – Sundarban, Biodiversity & Ecosystem, Mangroves  
Module 2 – Energy, Water, Disaster Management  
Module 3 – Pollution, Waste Management  
Module 4 – Sustainable livelihood
- Establishment of network for the children and young people to exchange ideas and network with large cross-regional networks. The meetings will be arranged by Eco clubs to exchange views on climate change, best practices, and action plans. The aim is also to raise awareness of the extent of climate change in Sundarban among youth outside of Sundarban and to actively or morally support the network.

## Our Appeal:

- Come forward and contribute towards creating resilient coastal communities and conservation of the unique diversity of the largest contiguous mangrove forest and a UNESCO world heritage site, the Sundarban.
- Invest in eco-tourism business and uphold Biodiversity Ethics.
- Invest to reduce the plastic waste.
- Collaborate for afforestation and restoration of degraded mangrove ecosystem in Subdarban.
- Invest in the community that brings shared vision and common benefit.
- Build a wise planet.

