

A photograph showing several pairs of hands holding small, green seedlings with soil in their roots. The hands are adorned with traditional Indian jewelry, including bangles and a rakhi thread. The background is slightly blurred, showing more people in traditional attire. The text 'Impact Report 2025' is overlaid in the center in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Impact Report 2025

regenerate
Sundarbans

Publisher

SOCEO gGmbH
Eduard-Steinle-Str. 23
70619 Stuttgart
Germany

www.socceo.de / www.regenerate-sundarbans.com
August 2026

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Impacting together

This report presents the work of the third year of Regenerate Sundarbans. The collaborative initiative brings together organizations, researchers and other stakeholders that are active in the Sundarbans. **Our shared vision is to realize the Sundarbans as a pioneering region for the protection of the environment and the empowerment of local communities.**

Together, we strive to ensure that the Sundarbans are a green and clean ecosystem that provides a safe habitat for people, animals and plants, and serves as a basis for sustainable income opportunities for the local population.

Through mutually reinforcing partnerships, we are committed to preserving the unique importance and diversity of the Sundarbans for future generations.

This Impact Report is a representation of the progress of the projects conducted by the participating organizations in 2025.

It provides information on the different thematic areas (Sustainable Agriculture, Plastic Waste Management, Water and Climate Resilience) and sheds light on valuable insights from the field.

Over the next years, we want to expand our involvement in the Sundarbans and use our resources effectively. Starting in 2026, we also plan to better pool our financial resources to achieve the greatest possible impact with the *Sundarbans Fund*. We are always looking for new partners to join our network and work with us for the Sundarbans.

Partners in the Global North

The involved partner organizations in the Global North supported diverse initiatives in the Sundarbans and fostered understanding about the Sundarbans in 2025 with more than 900,000 € in funding and technical support in the different focus areas:

Barthel
Stiftung

 hoffnungszeichen
sign of hope


KARUNA
DEUTSCHLAND

ChildFund
Deutschland


**GERMAN
DOCTORS**
HILFE, DIE BLEIBT

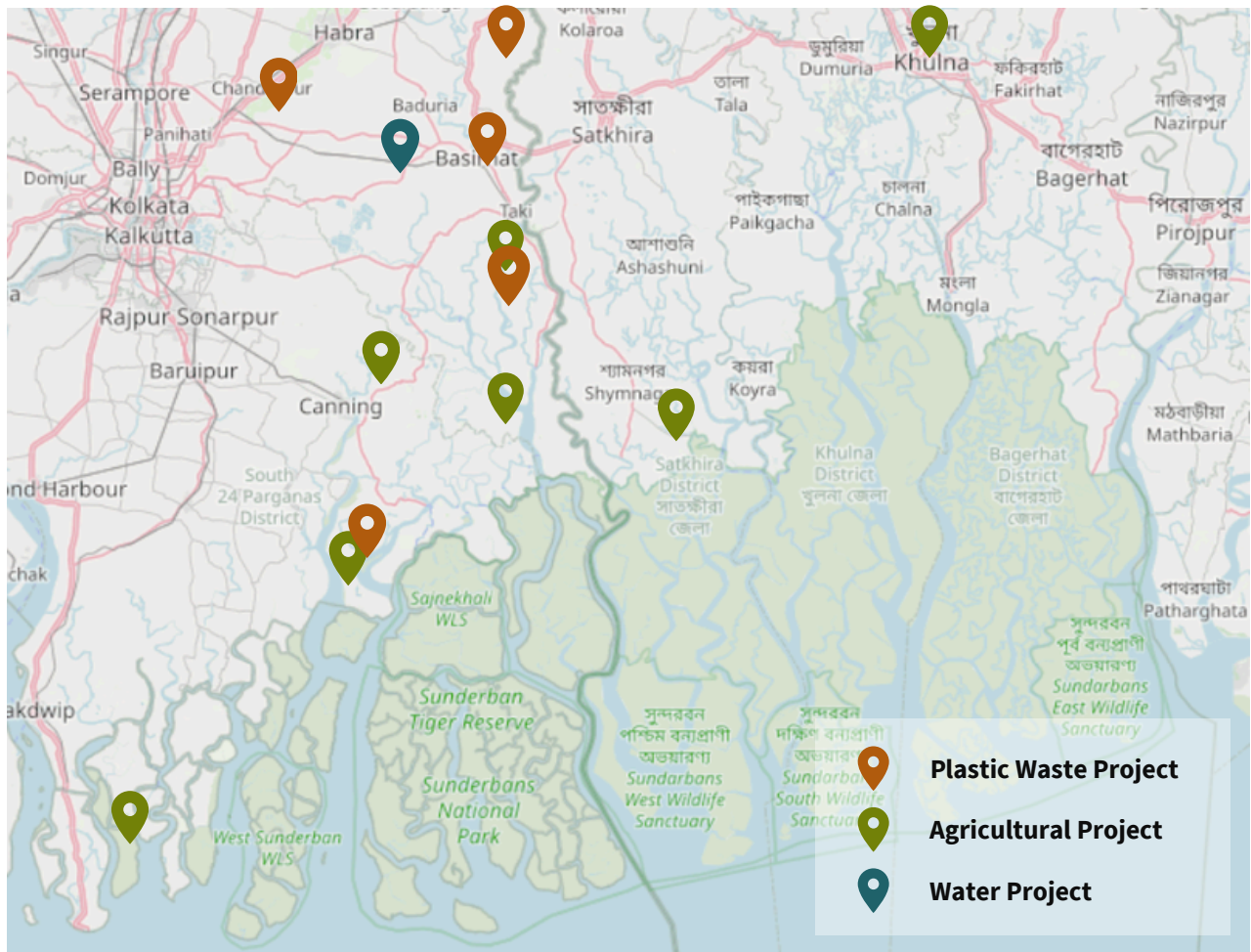
 **RÖCHLING**
STIFTUNG


Schöck-Familien-Stiftung
ZUKUNFT DURCH BILDUNG


SOCCEO

Our focus areas

The organizations that have come together to form Regenerate Sundarbans are working mainly on the topics of plastic waste, agriculture and water as part of the initiative, but also on the topics of livelihood development and food security. Together, we are addressing some of the most important challenges faced by the population. The project locations are spread across the entire region, as the map shows.



This is why Regenerate Sundarbans is so important

The Sundarbans are unique from various angles: Located in the world's largest delta-region, they are also the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest. Home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, the Sundarbans are a crucial region for biodiversity. At the same time, they are on the Indian side home to more than 5 million inhabitants and the ecosystem forms the basis for the livelihood of many in the region. Like under a magnifying glass, most challenges our world is facing today can be seen in the Sundarbans: the effects of climate change, human-nature-conflict, urbanization and migration as well as various forms of pollution.

Goals and Focus Areas

We know that the challenges in the Sundarbans can only be solved together. That is why organizations from the Global South and the Global North are working together for Regenerate Sundarbans to combine their strengths, knowledge and resources and thus work more efficiently and effectively.

The diagram below provides an overview of the goals that the organizations working on Regenerate Sundarbans have jointly set themselves. The topic of climate change is seen as an overarching theme that is taken into account in all three thematic areas of plastic waste, agriculture and water. There are also other themes that reflect on each of these areas, such as livelihood development, food security or gender equality. The following pages of this report show examples of how the goals of the different areas are already being addressed.

Climate Change

Increasing the resilience of communities in the Sundarbans and adjacent areas in view of the effects of climate change, e.g. by creating safer living conditions, developing resilient income opportunities, addressing associated health risks and increasing disaster preparedness.



Plastic Waste

Develop **waste management infrastructure** in all inhabited blocks of the Sundarbans and adjacent areas, to **reduce environmental pollution**.

Increase environmental awareness among the local communities.

Improve the **living and working conditions** of waste workers.



Agriculture

Promote sustainable agriculture* and raise awareness of the benefits of natural farming methods and the use of traditional varieties.

Make better use of **economic opportunities** and sustainable modern technologies.

**sustainable agriculture implies usage of non-genetically modified seeds, no harmful chemical fertilizers or pesticides, and promotion of local seed varieties*



Water

Enhance **preparedness** of the population for disasters by implementing measures for **sustainable water management**.

Ensure and advocate for **access to safe drinking water and related topics**.

Support **livelihood opportunities** in face of increasing natural calamities.



Climate Change

Climate change affects all areas in which Regenerate Sundarbans' partners operate, and threatens safe living conditions, livelihoods and health. This is why we have chosen to address the issue as an overarching theme of the initiative.

The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and natural disasters in the Sundarbans is increasing due to climate change. These environmental changes are creating a vicious cycle where the loss of natural resources and livelihoods drives more people to migrate, leaving behind fewer resources and putting additional strain on already vulnerable ecosystems. Some parts of the Sundarbans have already become uninhabitable, and this trend is expected to continue unless immediate action is taken.

The main sources of income in the Sundarbans, agriculture and fisheries, are severely threatened by the effects of climate change. As a result, the livelihoods of many inhabitants are more at risk, threatening their

economic stability and food security. Climate change also poses significant health risks. Increased temperatures can lead to heat-related illnesses, while the scarcity of freshwater exacerbates hygiene and health problems, and uncertainty about future conditions can have an impact on mental health.

To counter these threats, the Regenerate Sundarbans initiative integrates the issue of climate change into all projects. The focus lies on building community resilience by creating safer living conditions and income opportunities that are adapted to the increasing threats posed by climate change, while also taking into account the associated health risks.

**Our work
in 2025**



25,000

mangrove seeds and
seedlings were planted



21,450

other trees
were planted

Insights from the field

Strengthening Climate Resilience

Karuna Deutschland e.V., together with its partner Pragma, is strengthening climate resilience in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna Basin across India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The project supports communities facing increasing floods, landslides, erratic weather patterns and declining agricultural productivity caused by climate change.

Climate-Smart Agriculture

In 900 villages across the region, 9,000 smallholder farmers are gaining access to climate-smart agricultural training and advisory services. Farmers are supported in adopting regenerative farming practices, improving soil health and introducing locally adapted crops such as salt-resistant varieties in coastal areas. Agricultural experts provide soil testing and guidance to help communities improve yields and strengthen food security.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The project also aims to strengthen disaster preparedness. Together with local authorities, evacuation plans and emergency systems are being developed in areas vulnerable to floods, monsoons and landslides. Farmers and young people are trained as “Climate Resilience Champions” who monitor early warning signs,

raise awareness and coordinate emergency responses in their communities.

Ecosystem Restoration and Clean Energy

Ecosystem restoration activities, including tree planting and sustainable land stewardship, help reduce soil erosion and mitigate the impact of floods and landslides. Besides that, pilot clean energy initiatives are being introduced in isolated villages to improve access to sustainable energy sources.

Strengthening Climate Governance

The project also promotes climate-responsive governance by creating multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together communities and local governments. These platforms support the integration of climate resilience into planning and policy processes in the project region.





Plastic Waste Management

The Sundarbans' mangrove ecosystem and its species are highly endangered by **plastic pollution**. This is why Regenerate Sundarbans supports local organisations that collect and manage plastic waste so that it does not end up in the environment.

A major challenge in managing plastic waste in the Sundarbans is the lack of a solid waste management infrastructure. Currently, waste collection relies on informal waste collectors. Another key factor contributing to plastic pollution is the local population's low awareness of proper waste disposal and separation.

Economic difficulties often force residents to resort to plastic as an affordable material, especially during natural disasters when plastic items can be lifesaving. This dependence, combined with inadequate knowledge of waste management, can lead to improper disposal practices that exacerbate pollution. As part of Regenerate Sundarbans,

a comprehensive waste infrastructure is therefore to be implemented in the region.

In 2025, three organizations were supported that work with waste workers in five locations to collect and process plastic waste that would otherwise have ended up in the environment.

Through their work, the partners also promote environmental awareness among residents. By improving the living and working conditions of waste collectors and workers, the goal is to create a sustainable and inclusive waste management system.

This approach will strengthen the resilience of the community, protect the mangrove ecosystem and contribute to the global fight against plastic pollution.

**Our work
in 2025**



over 1, 553 tons
plastic waste collected
and processed



239 waste workers
involved and working
conditions improved

Insights from the field

Together against Ocean Plastic

In the Bay of Bengal, fishing is an important source of income. While working at sea, fishermen regularly collect large amounts of plastic waste as bycatch. In the past, they would leave this waste on the beach until the tide washed it back into the sea.

This cycle continues because, until now, there has been no waste collection infrastructure in the Indian region and no incentive for fishermen to dispose of the plastic. Yet the waste poses a major risk to the environment and the health of people and animals.

Together with local fishing communities and the partner organization KJKS, SOCEO developed a program to collect, sort, and process marine plastic so that it no longer enters the environment. The goal is to collect 32 tons of plastic waste and establish a waste management infrastructure within two years. In 2025, the partner organization already set up eight collection containers at participating

fishing stations to store marine plastic, which is then picked up for further processing. The project's goal is to install 16 collection containers across eight fishing stations.

In addition, 80 people were trained on the origins and types of plastic, as well as the sorting and processing. As multipliers, they pass on their knowledge within the communities and support the fishermen in systematically collecting marine plastic.

From September to December 2025, 38 fishermen were able to collect 832 kilograms of plastic waste and store it for processing. Without the project, this plastic waste would likely have ended up back in the ocean.





Sustainable Agriculture

To ensure the long-term resilience of agriculture in the Sundarbans, there is an urgent need to shift to more sustainable farming practices. Currently, agriculture in the Sundarbans is largely dominated by conventional methods that rely on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. While these practices may increase yields in the short term, they often lead to long-term negative impacts such as soil infertility, water pollution, loss of plant diversity as well as negative effects on the health of consumers.

Since the "Green Revolution", the cultivation of high-yielding crops has prevailed in the Sundarbans, which are often less able to cope with the climatic challenges of the region. As a result, the use of indigenous seed varieties, which are better adapted to local conditions and climate change, has declined. Besides that, farming in the Sundarbans is often not seen as a lucrative profession, which drives seasonal migration to the cities where people seek work in other sectors. To overcome these challenges, the promotion of sustainable agriculture in the Sundarbans is essential.

This includes raising awareness of the benefits of natural farming methods and the use of indigenous seeds.

Sustainable agriculture in this context means avoiding genetically modified seeds, harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides and instead using indigenous seed varieties as well as environment-friendly farming methods.

Promoting natural farming will strengthen the region's resilience to climate change, protect its biodiversity and support the livelihoods of its inhabitants.

In 2025, around 7,440 farmers were trained in different projects on techniques of sustainable farming. Around 6,150 of them changed to sustainable agriculture.

**6 seed-banks,
preserving**



**over 150
rice varieties**



**pulses, vegetable seeds,
spices, flowers and oil seeds**

Insights from the field

Strengthening Food Security

Sign of Hope is implementing a climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods programme supporting around 5,000 farmers. The initiative focuses on strengthening food security, improving soil health and promoting diversified farming systems that can better withstand climatic stress such as salinity, drought and erratic rainfall.

To strengthen the resilience of smallholder farmers, the programme promotes climate-smart agricultural practices like Single Stick Paddy cultivation. This method improves plant spacing, reduces seed use and strengthens the root development of the plant.

In addition, the project team is introducing Integrated Farming Systems to diversify income sources by combining crop production with livestock rearing, fisheries and horticulture.

The farmers also receive training in composting, vermicomposting, gardening, pest management, and the use of microbial inputs and organic fertilizers to improve soil fertility.

Besides that, the programme supports the establishment of community seed banks. At the

moment, they preserve 50 rice varieties, six pulse varieties and 26 types of vegetable seeds like yam, pumpkin and spinach.

Afforestation and Community Engagement

Nature-based solutions complement these agricultural interventions. Afforestation activities and the protection of mangrove ecosystems help reduce cyclone impacts, prevent soil erosion and limit saline water intrusion into farmland.

The project also aims to strengthen community institutions such as Self-Help Groups and Farmer Producer Companies to enable collective decision-making, improved market access and greater participation of women in agricultural leadership.





Water

Climate change has led to more frequent and intense natural disasters in the Sundarbans. Stronger and more frequent cyclones cause widespread flooding, damaging homes, infrastructure and agricultural land. Rising temperatures contribute to longer periods of drought, which further strain water resources and agricultural productivity. In addition, changing monsoon patterns are disrupting traditional cropping patterns and reducing yields, directly impacting the livelihoods of local communities.

The region also faces critical freshwater shortages as groundwater levels continue to decline. This issue combined with inadequate infrastructure means that many communities do not have reliable sources of clean water.

To solve these problems, strategies must be implemented to ensure access to safe drinking water and improve community preparedness for natural disasters.

In addition, it is crucial to support agriculture in a way that it can withstand the increasing frequency of cyclones and other developments associated with climate change. This can include promoting climate resilient crops, training farmers in sustainable practices and developing early warning systems for natural disasters.

Our work in 2025



48,120 people

gained access to clean drinking water through projects run by the partner organisations of Karuna and SOCEO.



more than 5,990 people reached

with WASH education and advocacy (e.g. awareness on hand washing, prevention of water borne diseases, addressing communities, institutions and politicians)

Insights from the field

Resilient Tubewells

On the remote islands of the Sundarbans, access to safe drinking water is often limited due to recurring floods and cyclones. To address this challenge, SOCEO and its local partner SSDC installed eight disaster-resilient tubewells with elevated platforms and solar lighting to provide communities with a reliable source of clean water.

The tubewells were strategically installed in villages that are particularly affected by flooding and have limited access to drinking water.

The selected locations are now providing approximately 8,000 residents with reliable access to clean water. This significantly reduces the reliance on contaminated water sources and helps prevent water-related illnesses.

Strengthening Community Ownership

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the wells, eight community-based water and sanitation committees were established. Each committee consists of around 12 local members who are responsible for operating and maintaining the tubewells and managing small user contributions that are reserved for future repairs and maintenance.

In addition, SSDC conducted eight training sessions for committee members and community representatives. A total of 340 participants attended these trainings, learning how to operate the wells, monitor water access, and organize maintenance activities. Through this approach, the local communities are equipped to manage the infrastructure independently beyond the project period.

Expanding Access to Safe Water

By the end of 2025, all eight planned wells had been successfully installed and handed over to the water and sanitation committees. At the same time, the committees have begun generating sufficient revenue through user contributions to cover operational and maintenance costs and are therefore strengthening the long-term resilience of the initiative.



Outlook

We look forward to continuing to share ideas, pool resources and create synergies as part of the Regenerate Sundarbans network. On a regular basis, we host online meetings where the organizations present their projects and we evaluate how we can work together on our goals in the different thematic areas.

This report will be published annually to share the progress and impact of the initiative and provide valuable and comparable insights into the work being done in the Sundarbans.

Sundarbans Fund

The Sundarbans Fund, which will operate from 2026, is a collaborative funding mechanism that supports locally led solutions for a more resilient and sustainable Sundarbans region. By pooling resources from multiple foundations and partners, the Fund will help scale impactful projects in areas such as sustainable agriculture, waste management, and access to safe drinking water.

We welcome foundations, companies, NGOs, and philanthropic partners who share our vision and would like to contribute to the Fund or explore opportunities for collaboration.

Join our effort!

We are happy to hear from organizations that share our goals and are active in the Sundarbans in India or Bangladesh.

If you are interested in joining Regenerate Sundarbans or learning more about the Sundarbans Fund, please get in touch with us:

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Learn more on:
<https://regenerate-sundarbans.com>