

IPSI Case Study Summary Sheet

Basic Information

Title of case study			
“The Sundarbans is our mind”: An exploration into multiple values of nature in conversation with traditional resource users			
Submitting IPSI member organization(s)			
Unnayan Onneshan			
Other contributing organization(s) <i>(IPSI members and/or non-members)</i>			
Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka			
Author(s) and affiliation(s)			
Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir; Md. Shah Paran; and Mostafa Walid Pasha (Unnayan Onneshan)			
Format of case study <i>(manuscript or audiovisual)</i>	Manuscript	Language	English
Keywords			
Interdisciplinary Valuation, Multiple Evidence-based Approach, Traditional Resource Users, Indigenous and Local Knowledge, Human Sociality, the Sundarbans			
Date of submission <i>(or update, if this is an update of an existing case study)</i>		13 December 2019	
Web link <i>(of the case study or lead organization if available for more information)</i>	https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:7506/SITR_vol5_fullset_web.pdf#page=107		

Geographical Information

Country <i>(where site(s) or activities described in the case study are located – can be multiple, or even “global”)</i>									
Bangladesh									
Location(s) <i>(within the country or countries – leave blank if specific location(s) cannot be identified)</i>									
Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat									
Longitude/latitude or Google Maps link <i>(if location is identified)</i>									
https://www.google.com/maps/place/Sundarban/@21.8331866,88.7276051,9.75z/									
Ecosystem(s)									
Forest	x	Grassland		Agricultural		In-land water	x	Coastal	x
Dryland		Mountain		Urban/peri-urban		Other (Please specify)			
Socioeconomic and environmental characteristics of the area									
The Sundarbans is the largest single-tract mangrove ecosystem of the world, enriched with high biodiversity. The combination of various types of ecosystems (forest, coastal and wetland) makes the Sundarbans home to uniquely adapted aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna. The Sundarbans was declared a Natural World Heritage Site (139,700 hectares of forest land comprising Sundarbans East, Sundarbans West and Sundarbans South) in 1997 by UNESCO and as a Ramsar Site of international importance in 1992. It has also been listed for the selection of seven wonders of the world. It is located at the great delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna (GBM) rivers at the edge of the Bay of Bengal.									
Description of human-nature interactions in the area									
The resources of the Sundarbans have been declining gradually. The forest structure is becoming simpler and the average height of the trees is decreasing, causing a decline in habitats for birds, monkeys and other tree-dwelling species. This globally important ecosystem is now vulnerable due to anthropogenic pressures amidst fragile institutions and an ineffective command-driven governance system.									

Contents

Status (<i>"ongoing" or "completed"</i>)	Completed	Period (<i>MM/YY to MM/YY</i>)	
<i>Rationale (why activities or policies described, or information shared in the case study are needed)</i>			
<p>Breaking down natural resources into commodities, mainstream economics considers the value of nature in monetary terms. Thus, natural resources are understood under this framework as valuable assets that yield flows of services to people. The valuing of nature in this way largely ignores the intrinsic value of the resources, and in this process the resources are regarded as extractable as much as possible for the benefit of human beings, leading to the destruction of the resources.</p>			
<i>Objectives (goals of activities or policies described, or of producing the case study)</i>			
<p>The traditional knowledge system can significantly contribute to the sustainable management of biodiversity of resources, both within the protected areas system and potentially as other effective area-based conservation measures, if it is given a chance and is supported by governmental and non-governmental agencies. The ultimate purpose is to integrate local level knowledge platforms into mainstream policy tracks to value natural ecosystems on multiple grounds.</p>			
<i>Activities and/or practices employed</i>			
<p>The political economy approach, which is adopted here, helps deal with the impact of power structures and power relations on the usage, management and distribution patterns of natural resources and argues that an unequal distribution of power induces over-extraction and degradation of natural resources. The political economy approach, in fact, does not explicitly discuss the problem of natural resource degradation, rather it offers guidelines to scrutinize the problem by incorporating some major factors that help explain how the resources are being accumulated for personal gains under the capitalist market economy. Nevertheless, integrating human behavior into the formal model of natural resource management is still a major challenge.</p>			
<i>Results</i>			
<p>According to TRUs, the services received by humans from the Sundarbans have innumerable types of value. Not all of these values can be calculated by market-centric approaches. During focus group discussions (FGDs), they also argue that high prices derived from marketization of the natural resources causes over-extraction of the resources, which is seriously damaging the ecosystems of the Sundarbans. Instead of market-based valuation, the TRUs value the Sundarbans based on their age-old relationships with the forest.</p>			
<i>Lessons learned (factors in success or failure, challenges and opportunities)</i>			
<p>TRUs consider the Sundarbans as their mind, through which human-nature sociality thrives. The TRUs challenge mainstream valuation methods and argue that valuation of environmental resources through market penetration pricing does not reckon the social benefits and values coproduced through complementarity between humans and nature. Their reasoned knowledge and practices, documented and demonstrated, cast a shadow on the orthodox view of sustainable governance as an abstract tradeoff between human activities or environmental protection based on cost-benefit analysis (CBA), which assumes human beings are the external agents to the natural resources governance.</p>			
<i>Key messages</i>			
<p>The TRUs argue that a weak market structure and unequal distribution of power cause rents to be dissipated, going into the pockets of the rent-seeking powerful class. As a result, rent-seeking agents including bureaucrats, businesses and politicians extract resources as much as they can, thereby destroying the biodiversity. These unproductive, expropriating activities bring positive returns to the individual but not to society.</p>			
<i>Relationship to other IPSI activities (if the case study is related to any other IPSI collaborative activities, case studies, etc.)</i>			
<p>This case study originally appeared in the Satoyama Initiative Thematic Review v. 5.</p>			
<i>Funding (any relevant information about funding of activities or projects described in the case study)</i>			

Contributions to Global Agendas

CBD Aichi Biodiversity Targets (<https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>)

The table below shows based on the self-evaluation by author(s). ● and ■ indicates the “direct” or “indirect” contributions to the CBD’s Aichi Biodiversity Targets respectively to which the work described in this case study contributes to.

Strategic Goal A				Strategic Goal B					
■	■								
Strategic Goal C			Strategic Goal D			Strategic Goal E			
●							●		

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>)

The table below shows based on the self-evaluation by author(s). ● and ■ indicates the “direct” or “indirect” contributions to the SDGs respectively to which the work described in this case study contributes to.

	■	■		■	■			