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Living with changing climate and encouraging climate resilient sustainable livelihoods in Sundarban, India

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Sundarban, the world's largest contiguous mangrove swamp and world heritage site faces several challenges due to climate change. Rising sea level forces islands to disappear and the increasing salinity in the water and soil has severely threatened the health of mangrove forests and agricultural crops. The present study includes last habited island (Gosaba block), surrounded by Sundarban reserve forest on three sides. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tool, such as Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted during a period of March 2016 to April 2017 with village heads, panchayat members and members of the forest development committees to get the overview of the impact of the climate change on their livelihood, income, fishing practices as well as socio economic conditions including migration or climate refuges. Climate change is triggering a silent yet drastic livelihood change in the agricultural fields and water bodies of Gosaba. The study identified 14 primary occupations with consideration of both earning and time engagement, along with other two occupations as Secondary and Tertiary. Different occupants were made into four broad groups viz., Resource Dependent (RD), Wage Earner (WE), Self-Resilient (SR) and Government Servant (GS). Resource dependent shared 63.9% among others. A Relative Occupational Priority Index (ROPI) was developed, assessing the degree of strength among primary occupations. Fin fish, shell fish and crab (Af) scored 60.97 numbers, followed by agricultural activities (Aal) with 21.38 numbers. Livelihood Asset Status Tracking (LAST) method will be an attempt to measure the changes in five capital asset groups (social, financial, human, physical and natural assets) for suggesting climate resilient sustainable livelihood in the low-lying forest dependent coastal areas like Sundarban.

Biography

Chandan Surabhi Das is an Assistant Professor in West Bengal Educational Services (WBES) and currently in the Department of Geography, Barasat Government College, West Bengal, India. He has pursued his PhD from the Vidyasagar University, India. His research focuses on socioeconomic aspects of the human wildlife conflict in the protected areas of developing countries.

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