

# Wetlands for Resilience

A ten year global wetland ambition



**Wetlands**  
INTERNATIONAL

# Introduction

Wetlands are amongst the most biologically diverse ecosystems on Earth. They sequester vast amounts of carbon, are home to 40% of our planet's biodiversity and help save billions in property damages due to disaster risks every year. Wetland ecosystems, especially peatlands and coastal wetlands like mangroves and sea grass beds, are massive carbon stores. However, when these ecosystems are drained or degraded, they release greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere. Intact wetlands also play vital roles in protecting humans and wildlife from the impacts of extreme weather events caused by climate change.

The W4R (Wetlands for Resilience) programme addresses the continuing loss and degradation of wetlands and responds to the recent understanding that humanity urgently needs wetlands to be safeguarded and restored at scale to achieve climate, biodiversity and sustainable development goals. The programme aims to achieve global influence of countries, institutions and sectors, resulting in shifts in approach, policies and investments towards the regeneration of wetland landscapes. This responds to and helps to mobilise and bring substance to the existing global agendas set by Conventions and the SDGs. The programme, developed with the encouragement of and through dialogue with the global team of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) is designed to extract learning and experience from our global portfolio of wetland landscape programmes in various stages of development, and to use that as an accelerator for wetland recovery and resilience building.

## W4R Objectives

1. To bring together and share globally the learning and methodologies for holistic, ecosystem-led resilience building, from our global wetland landscape portfolio and partner programmes;
2. To design and apply a Wetlands 4 Resilience model approach, toolkit and guidance to accelerate upscaling in our major wetland landscape regeneration programmes;
3. To catalyse wetland landscape regeneration by others, through uptake and implementation of the W4R model approach across different sectors, globally.

# Lighthouse Landscapes



## Mahanadi delta and Chilika Lagoon, India



The Mahanadi delta is a huge landscape (10,589km<sup>2</sup>) in North East India and in one of the poorest states in the country (Odisha). The Mahanadi river and its seasonal flooding supports local production, provides water security and maintains internationally important wetlands and threatened biodiversity. The delta is prone to devastating cyclones in the Bay of Bengal.

Through our work in the Partners for Resilience programme, innovative approaches were developed and tested to reduce disaster risks in the delta, influence climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning and investments using bottom-up policy influencing, addressing the root causes of risk in the landscape.

## **Jeta-Pecixe-Cacheu coast, Guinea-Bissau**

The Jeta-Pecixe-Cacheu (JPC) landscape is one of the most environmentally and culturally unique wetland systems in West Africa, comprising a diverse array of wetland ecosystems, including mudflats, seagrass beds, barrier islands, mangroves, and freshwater marshes. These highly productive ecosystems provide food security, income and climate resilience to the 128,000 inhabitants of the landscape and millions of people worldwide. Over-exploitation of natural resources leads to population declines, ultimately causing extinction of species and decrease in income of local communities.



Through our ongoing programmes, we are focusing on mangrove restoration, conservation, and livelihood improvement. We have taken the first steps towards landscape level work, by bringing together stakeholders into a mangrove platform that has been successful in attracting a range of donors with complementary interests in upscaling for biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation and adaptation and community resilience, including through long-term commitments.

## **Demak, North Java coast, Indonesia**

The Demak coast in northern Java is a severely degraded stretch of mangrove coastline that was formerly of great value to biodiversity, rice farming and coastal fisheries. Commercial aquaculture, infrastructure for coastal defence and over-exploitation of groundwater along the coast resulted in loss of mangroves, land subsidence and massive coastal erosion that led to devastating floods that destroyed the local economy.



Working in a unique public-private partnership from local to international levels – and with local communities leading throughout - Wetlands International has driven a showcase project to establish a mangrove greenbelt to buffer the storms, halt erosion, as well as to transform the approach to sustainable aquaculture. This is allowing mangroves to recover and stabilize the coast. Biodiversity is returning and livelihoods have been enhanced. The initiative has won multiple awards for innovation and is being adopted by government authorities along the coast.

## **Ziway-Shalla lake system, Central Rift Valley, Ethiopia**

Ziway-Shalla is a closed water sub-basin, comprising the catchments of Ziway, Langano, Abijatta and Shalla lakes. Lake Ziway is the only freshwater lake that feeds Lake Abijatta, forming part of the Abijatta-Shalla National Park and the most important wetland area for migratory water birds in Ethiopia. In last two decades, many small farmers and large agribusiness have caused overconsumption of water - threatening the natural water system of the basin. As a result, its water quality is deteriorating and quantity is declining. Furthermore, erosion caused by unsustainable land use, deforestation and overgrazing in the watershed have aggravated the problems.



Wetlands International has successfully piloted the implementation of a suite of water management, landscape restoration, conservation and livelihoods measures to date through complementary running programmes.

## The Sundarbans, Bangladesh

The Sundarbans wetland complex (in Bangladesh and India) is located at the confluence of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna Rivers and includes the world's largest mangrove forest, as well as sandbars, rivers and lakes. The wetlands are home to the Bengal tiger and many critically endangered, vulnerable and endemic species. It is also a major source of fish, wood, leaves, honey and other natural products for some 3 million people living in the periphery.



resilient Sundarbans in Bangladesh. The programme will provide a platform where goals for biodiversity, disaster management, community development, national economy development, social conflict, etc. are addressed through approaches such as landscape zoning. The programme also offers an opportunity to tackle the continuing degradation of the landscape by embedding best practices to enhance the health and functionality of the wetland ecosystem as a whole.

## W4R Community of Practice

A key mechanism for programme development and implementation will be an inter-office Community of Practice (CoP) that works together to share knowledge, evaluate opportunities, address challenges and set priorities and actions. The intention is that the community of practice will at some point also be opened to the stakeholders in the selected landscapes, providing them opportunities to build skills and capacity and facilitate knowledge sharing across landscapes.

This team will also provide part-time technical and diplomatic outreach support to the country teams and nurture collaborations and advocacy for global influence and impact as well as stimulate in-country and additional countries' adaptation and replication.

### Global inspiration & influence

We will aim to bring global inspiration and influence throughout the programme, through intensifying our collaboration in a wide range of global partnerships, platforms and networks; as well as communications and advocacy, including in global policy fora and conventions. This will enable identification and action on global upscaling mechanisms including through knowledge and capacity development, stimulating policy shifts and leveraging green finance.



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### **Interested? For more information, contact**

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