

## Terms of Reference (ToR)

### Conducting the Midline Study of the Project “Reducing Pollution and Improving the Ecology of the Sundarbans Mangrove Forests and their Zones of Influence in Bangladesh”

#### Overview:

[Rupantar](#) is implementing the project “Reducing Pollution and Improving the Ecology of the Sundarbans Mangrove Forests and their Zones of Influence in Bangladesh”, co-funded by BMZ and Helvetas Germany. The project covers 17 sub-districts in the five coastal districts<sup>1</sup> of Bangladesh called the Sundarbans Impact Zone (SIZ). The overall objective of the project is to sensitize the population of the Sundarbans Impact Zone to the pollution of the Sundarbans mangrove forests in Bangladesh and the associated consequences. Specifically, the project aims to create a youth network consisting of 530 members from the five districts of the SIZ, established to educate the local population about pollution prevention and the protection of the Sundarbans ecosystem, and to represent the interests and needs of resource users at the political level. The project began in June 2024 and will end in November 2026. At this midway stage, Rupantar intends to assess progress and impact, and is seeking qualified consultant(s) to conduct a Midline Study to guide the project’s final phase.

#### Objective(s) of the Assignment

**Overall Objective:** The purpose of this ToR is to engage a qualified consultant or consulting firm to conduct a Midline Study of the project. The study will systematically assess the project’s progress, effectiveness, and emerging impacts at its halfway stage, and provide actionable recommendations for refining and optimizing activities during the remaining implementation period.

#### Specific Objectives:

- Assess the progress of the project against its planned objectives, targets, and Impact Matrix indicators.
- Identify achievements, challenges, and opportunities, and recommend practical actions to strengthen outcomes and ensure sustainability in the project’s final phase.

#### Scope of Work

The selected consultant/firm will be responsible for carrying out a comprehensive Midline Study that combines document review, field investigation, stakeholder engagement, and data collection in the field as well as their systematical analysis to assess the project’s progress and impact. The assignment will include:

- Desk Review:** Examine all relevant project documents, including reports, baseline study, SBCC materials, training manuals, youth forum documentation, and the Impact Matrix to align findings with initial and target situations.
- Field Assessment:** Visit a representative sample of the 17 upazilas to observe on-ground progress and engage with key stakeholders such as Youth Forum members, local government representatives, resource user groups, market committees, NGOs, civil society, and, where relevant, tourists and media actors.

<sup>1</sup>

Sl.	5 Districts	17 Sub-districts
1	Satkhira	Shyamnagar, Kaliganj, Assasuni
2	Khulna	Botiaghata, Dakop, Koyra, Paikgasa
3	Bagerhat	Mongla, Rampal, Sarankhola, Morrelganj
4	Pirojpur	Matbaria, Bhandaria, Nesarabad
5	Barguna	Bamna, Barguna Sadar, Patharghata

- **Conduct structured interviews to collect quantitative and qualitative data and provide a systematic approach for the analysis of the data**
- **Progress and Performance Analysis:** Review the establishment, functionality, and sustainability plans of the 530-member Youth Network, with attention to gender inclusion, leadership roles, training outcomes, and representation in decision-making spaces.
- **Community Awareness and Waste Management Assessment:** Evaluate and verify public knowledge and attitudes on plastic pollution, evidence of behavior change (plastic reduction, eco-friendly alternatives, waste segregation), waste disposal practices, progress in waste management, local interest in waste collection business models, youth training and involvement in these models, youth access to co-management structures, and responsible practices in fishing and tourism sectors.
- **Stakeholder Coordination and Policy Linkages:** Assess the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder coordination platforms, dialogue forums, and policy engagement efforts, including the integration of best practices in local action plans.
- **Outcome Verification:** Measure progress against key project indicators in the Impact Matrix, such as awareness levels, professional sensitization, youth forum registrations, and policy participation.
- **Recommendations for the Final Phase:** Identify achievements, gaps, challenges, and opportunities, and provide clear, actionable recommendations to enhance project performance and sustainability during the remaining implementation period.

## Methodology

The Midline Study should employ a mixed-methods approach utilizing both quantitative and qualitative tools to ensure data triangulation and the credibility of findings. The consultant/firm is expected to design a participatory methodology involving the community, youth groups, and stakeholders at all stages of the process, tool development, pre-testing, validation, and review.

**Tools may include, but are not limited to:**

- Desk Review of project reports, baseline data, MEL documents, and communication materials
- Quantitative Surveys (structured questionnaires respectively for different stakeholders)
- Qualitative Methods such as:
  - *Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)*
  - *Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)*
  - *Case Studies*
  - *Other tools as appropriate.*
- Comparative Analysis with initial status

All survey instruments must be bi-lingual (English and Bangla) and should be administered in Bangla, or any relevant local dialects understood by the respondents. Reports must be submitted in English.

The methodology section of the proposal should clearly state the rationale and justification for the selected methods, ensuring they are aligned with the objectives and structure of the project's Impact Matrix and OECD DAC evaluation criteria.

## Sampling Approach

The consultant/firm **should propose a scientifically sound sampling strategy** for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The proposed sample size and distribution must reflect the geographic coverage of the project (17 upazilas in 5 districts) and ensure the inclusion of the relevant stakeholder categories, such as:

- Youth Forum members (across all 17 sub-districts)
- Sundarbans dependent community people include but not limited to fishermen, honey, crab, nipa palm collectors etc.

- Local professionals like tour boat operators, market committee members, traders etc.
- Local Government Representatives (UP, UPZ, municipal authorities) and members from existing Co-Management Structure.
- Government Representatives like UNO, Youth Development Officer, and officials from Forest and other relevant departments as well as academicians from Khulna University and KUET.
- NGO/CSO/private sector representatives and local influentials.
- Members from the district level group of Journalist Forum.
- Business entity of waste management including but not limited to Recycle Jar.

The sample must be disaggregated by relevant identity markers including sex, age, geographic location, occupation, income, education, and any other contextually relevant variables. The consultant must explain the accessibility and reliability of the sampling frame and justify the sampling method used (e.g., stratified, cluster, or purposive).

### Pre-Test of Tools

Prior to full-scale data collection, all tools must be pre-tested with a small, representative group to check timing, clarity, cultural relevance, and suitability of ICT equipment. Based on the findings must incorporate necessary adjustments into the final tools.

### Data Collection and Enumerator Orientation

- Enumerators must be carefully selected, trained, and oriented on the project's objectives, tools, ethical guidelines, and safeguarding policies.
- Data collection should be conducted digitally, should use KOBO Toolbox.
- Gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate approaches must be applied throughout fieldwork.

### Data Analysis and Validation

A systematic process for data cleaning, coding, and analysis will be employed to ensure both quantitative and qualitative datasets are properly disaggregated and interpreted. Quantitative data should be analyzed using statistical software, while qualitative data will be assessed thematically through using methods such as content analysis, grounded theory analysis, etc to link findings directly to project objectives and outcomes.

All findings should be validated with project key stakeholders and by sharing preliminary results directly with the project teams.

All indicators must be analyzed in direct alignment with the project's Impact Matrix, ensuring coverage of both initial situation and target situation for each objective and sub-objective.

The final analysis must clearly document progress made, gaps identified, and alignment with OECD-DAC<sup>2</sup> criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability.

## Deliverables

- **Start-up Report:** To be submitted immediately after the training of data enumerators, this report will provide a brief overview of the training. It will also detail the preparation of a comprehensive work plan, as well as the final sample size and distribution.
- **Draft Midline Report:** This report should contain preliminary findings and analysis, aligning with the project's impact matrix and DAC criteria.
- **Final Report:** The final, refined report incorporating feedback on the draft. It should include all necessary annexes such as cleaned data (in Excel), interview transcripts, photos, and if any audio clips.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/development-co-operation-evaluation-and-effectiveness/evaluation-criteria.html>

## Timeframe of the assignment

The duration of the selection procedure will be for one month (1-30 September 2025); while the assignment duration will be for approximately three months, starting on 1 October 2025 and to be completed by 30 December 2025. The consultant/consultant team will provide an action plan that includes a detailed timetable in the technical proposal, specifying the distribution of tasks, responsible persons, and duration to complete each task. The proposed sequencing in the table below is indicative and can be refined in the technical offer. The study budget should be proposed based on activity lines linked with the person-days involved.

Task / Output	Suggested Timeline
Publish ToR (Terms of Reference)	01 September 2025
Submission of proposal / EoI (Expression of Interest)	By 15 September 2025
Evaluation of proposals and selection of consultant/firm	By 25 September 2025
Interview with the short listed consultant/ firm	By 28 September 2025
Contract signing with selected consultant/ firm, and inception meeting	By 01 October 2025
Share the draft questionnaire	By 10 October 2025
Feedback on the draft questionnaire	By 15 October 2025
Finalize the questionnaire incorporating the feedback	By 20 October 2025
Training of Data Enumerators	By 25 October 2025
Submission of Start-up report	By 30 October 2025
Data collection and analysis	By 20 November 2025
Submission of Draft Report	By 01 December 2025
Feedback on the draft report from Rupantar and Helvetas	By 15 December 2025
Final Midline Study Report submission	By 30 December 2025

## Qualification and Experiences of the consulting firm/consultant

The consultant should possess the following qualifications:

- Extensive experience and track record on conducting similar types of study or evaluation.
- Expertise in conducting the study based on OECD DAC criteria.
- Proficiency in conducting field surveys, data analysis, and environmental impact assessments.
- Familiarity with the regional context, including relevant policies and regulations.
- Knowledge of local dynamics and ethical considerations in data collection.
- Strong communication and report-writing skills.
- Good interpersonal communication, easy presentation and report writing skills in English is must.
- Commitments to deliver the final report in line with the set TOR within the agreed timeline.

## Evaluation Criteria

On receipt of the EOI, a designated team will evaluate the proposals and take a decision about the consultants/firm for the assignment. Selection of the consultants/ consulting firm will be based on:

Selection Criteria	Score
<b>Qualification and Experience:</b> Proven Track record of conducting similar studies	20
<b>Language Skills:</b> Excellent English Skills	10
<b>Proposed Methodology:</b> Methodologies and tools comply with standard study methods	30
<b>Team Composition:</b> The team balanced with having necessary expertise	15
<b>Proposed Time Frame</b>	10
<b>Cost and Value:</b> Costs are justified and represent value for the assignment	15
<b>Total</b>	100

## Budget Ceiling

The budget must be inclusive of all applicable taxes and VAT, and should not exceed the **maximum limit of BDT 1,500,000**. However, bidders proposing a lower amount with necessary justification of maintaining quality will have the opportunity to obtain higher score under *Selection Criteria, Section 4: Cost and Value*.

## Mode of Payment

The payment is subjected to be made under three tranches whereupon the receipt of the deliverables and as agreed mentioned in the agreement and contract,

- First payment is 30% of total amount within 7 working days after receiving the Start-up Report;
  - Second payment is 40% of total amount within 15 working days after receiving the draft Mid line study report;
  - Final Payment is 30% of total payment within 15 working days after receiving the approved version of final Mid line study report.
- All the payments will be made through Account payee cheque in the name of the consultant/firm;
  - The payment will be made after due deduction of VAT and Tax as per Bangladesh government rules;
  - The service provider will be paid through provided Bank Account (Individual / Firm) upon submission of required deliverables; while the final transfer will be made upon receiving the approved version of final report.
  - VAT and Tax will be deducted at source as per government rules and regulations.

## Other Terms and Conditions

- The selected consultant will implement the work in coordination with the focal person of Rupantar. The consultant will inform the focal person of the schedule/program prior to implementing the assigned task.
- All reports and documents prepared during the assignment will be treated as the property of Rupantar.
- The reports/documents or any part, therefore, cannot be sold, used and reproduced in any manner without the prior written approval of Rupantar.
- Representatives of Rupantar and Helvetas reserve the right to monitor the quality and progress of the work during the assignment.

## Proposal Submission Requirements

The submission should include a detailed **Technical Proposal** (maximum 13 pages) in PDF format, presented in English, using Calibri font, size 11. The Technical Proposal should contain the following:

- Cover page
- Contact Details of the applicant (maximum 1 page)
- Introduction and Understanding of the Assignment (maximum 1 page)
- Overview of experience and qualifications – Should mention relevant experience of conducting similar tasks (maximum 2 pages)
- Methodology – Should include but not limited to tools, sampling approach, sampling frame, plan of data collection, analysis, and validation (maximum 2 pages)
- Gant Chart/ Time Frame (maximum 1 page)
- Team composition along with brief on 3 key members expertise, experience along with roles and responsibilities (maximum 4 pages).
- Brief Financial Proposal in Table with mentioning the following column (maximum 1 page)

Particulars/Cost Item	Type of Unit (for example: day/month/person/trip)	Unit Cost	Unit/Qty	Total cost	Description of costing

Along with the **Technical Proposal**, consultants/firms are requested to submit the following supporting documents as **Annexures**:

- **Annexure 1:** Detailed Financial Proposal in Excel format. (Budget should provide with necessary breakdown under different line items, following the same column structure as mentioned above.)
- **Annexure 2:** Detailed CVs of 4 key personnel compiled into a single PDF file.
- **Annexure 3:** Copy of TIN Certificate.
- **Annexure 4:** Copy of last year's Tax Return / Proof of Submission of Return (PSR).
- **Annexure 5:** Copy of VAT Registration Certificate (only for organizations /consulting firms).
- **Annexure 6:** Copy of valid Registration Certificate (only for organizations /consulting firms).
- **Annexure 7:** Evidence of experience: final copy of two such prior study report.

## Application process

Interested and qualified consultants/firms are asked to submit their Technical Proposal along with the Annexures to [eo@rupantar.org](mailto:eo@rupantar.org) with keeping cc [eo.rupantar@gmail.com](mailto:eo.rupantar@gmail.com)

- Please write “**Proposal for Conducting Mid line Study**” in the subject line.
- Last date of submission: **15 September 2025, 5:00 PM** (Bangladesh Standard Time).
- For any queries, applicants may reach out via email to [eo@rupantar.org](mailto:eo@rupantar.org) with keeping cc [eo.rupantar@gmail.com](mailto:eo.rupantar@gmail.com) by **10 September 2025, 2:00 PM** (Bangladesh Standard Time).
- We will only able to consider electronic submissions.

## Annexure

Following Annexure will support you the better understand the project and offering optimum methodology-

Annexure 1: Brief of the project

Annexure 2: Project Impact Matrix

## Annexure 1: Brief of the project

**Project Name:** Reducing Pollution and Improving the Ecology of the Sundarbans Mangrove Forests and their Zones of Influence in Bangladesh.

**Funded by:** BMZ and Helvetas Germany

**Project Area (Including District & Upazila):**

Sl.	5 Districts	17 Sub-districts
1	Satkhira	Shyamnagar, Kaliganj, Assasuni
2	Khulna	Botiaghata, Dakop, Koyra, Paikgasa
3	Bagerhat	Mongla, Rampal, Sarankhola, Morrelganj
4	Pirojpur	Matbaria, Bhandaria, Nesarabad
5	Barguna	Bamna, Barguna Sadar, Patharghata

**Project Duration:** June 2024 – November 2026 (30 months).

**Beneficiary Category:** Youth, Students, Market Committee Members, Tour Boat Operators, Journalists, LEBs, GO-NGOs and Private Sector's Representatives

**Direct Beneficiary:**

- Youth Forum members (across all 17 sub-districts) - 530 (40% female)
- Local occupational groups (fishermen and other resource users/tour boat operators/market committee members)- 3,035
- GO/NGO/CSO/private sector representatives and local influentials- 3,040
- Members from the district level group of Journalist Forum- 155

**Indirect Beneficiaries:** Project targeted to reach 38,35,521 community people under 17 Upz (60% people of total population<sup>3</sup>).

**Overall objective:** The population of the Sundarbans Impact Zone is being sensitized to the pollution of the Sundarbans mangrove forests in Bangladesh and the associated consequences.

**Project Objective:** A youth network, consisting of 530 members from the 5 districts of the SIz, is being set up to educate the local population about pollution prevention and the protection of the Sundarbans ecosystem and can represent the interests and needs of resource users at the political level.

**Sub objectives:**

- A network of young people (aged 18-35) is being established and empowered to successfully campaign for the protection of the Sundarbans mangrove forests.
- Local population being aware of the causes and consequences of pollution and ways to prevent it through the awareness campaign.
- Coordination, cooperation and dialogue between governmental, non-governmental and private sector organizations is improved for the protection and use of the Sundarbans mangrove forest and best practice models of waste management being shared for potential adaption and adoption.

**Overview:**

The project operates across 17 sub-districts within the Sundarbans Impact Zone (SIz), encompassing the coastal districts of Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Pirojpur, and Barguna. This region, vital to the livelihoods of its



inhabitants, faces severe environmental degradation due to pervasive plastic and polythene pollution. These pollutants, originating from local communities, flow into the Sundarbans, damaging its fragile ecosystem and biodiversity. This environmental damage also negatively impacts the socio-economic well-being of the region, contributing to resource depletion, poverty, and unsustainable living conditions.

To combat this, Rupantar is implementing a holistic approach, engaging youth, communities, local government, and NGOs to address pollution and promote sustainable resource management. The project aims to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of pollution on the Sundarbans and empower local communities to take action. A key strategy is the creation of a 530-member youth network (40% female) comprised of volunteers from 17 sub-district groups. These young people will lead awareness campaigns, educate their communities about pollution prevention, and advocate for resource users at the political level. The project intends to build their capacity through leadership training and environmental education, enabling them to become agents of change. It will also foster collaboration among government, non-governmental, and private stakeholders to promote best practices in waste management and sustainable alternatives. Through public awareness campaigns, youth summits, and stakeholder workshops, the initiative seeks to reduce pollution, protect biodiversity, and ensure the long-term resilience of the Sundarbans, while simultaneously improving the livelihoods of the millions who depend on it.

By implementing integrated waste management systems and promoting sustainable practices, the project intends to contribute directly to the preservation of the Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site crucial for ecological balance and the livelihoods of approximately 3 million people. The project's core implementation strategy involves forming 17 youth groups (31 members each) in the target upazilas, creating the 530-member empowered and active youth network. This network is the central to all project activities, including community awareness campaigns, local initiatives to combat plastic and polythene pollution, and advocacy for improved waste management in the Sundarbans Impact Zone.

**Key Activities:** Bellow goes the key project activities under 3 sub objectives-

1.1 Development of youth groups at sub-district level
1.2 Learning exchange of youth groups
1.3 Youth conference
1.4 Skills development of the youth groups
1.5 Quarterly meetings to discuss inventive learning in the sub-districts
1.6 Ideas competition for young people
1.7 Social media campaign and promotion of learning exchange between youth networks via digital platforms
2.1 Awareness-raising campaign
2.1.1 Observation Day (Sundarbans Day and Environment Day)
2.1.2 Development of cultural productions and interactive events
2.1.3 Youth-led initiatives to improve student awareness
2.2 Initiatives for knowledge and capacity development
2.2.1 Youth-led initiatives to improve the knowledge capacity of fishermen and other resource user groups
2.2.2 Awareness-raising session with operators of excursion boats
2.2.3 Workshops with the SIZ market committee and retailers on reducing plastic and polythene
2.3 Activation of the Sundarbans Journalists' Forum
3.1 Workshop to share experiences with GO-NGOs
3.2 Consultation meetings at subnational level
3.3 Public consultation at upazila level



## Annexure 2: Project Impact Matrix

Project objective	Indicators (specify quantity where applicable)	
	Initial situation (Quantitative and qualitative)	Target situation (objective) (Quantitative and qualitative)
A youth network, consisting of 530 members from the 5 districts of the SIZ, is being set up to educate the local population about pollution prevention and the protection of the Sundarbans ecosystem and can represent the interests and needs of resource users at the political level.	1) In the 5 districts of the SIZ, there is currently no format in which 18 to 35 year olds can systematically engage in the protection and conservation of the Sundarbans mangrove forests.	1) At the end of the project, 530 18 to 35 year olds are members of a youth network that pursues the common goal of preserving the Sundarbans mangrove forests.
	2) The project beneficiaries do not have the skills and resources to build a network.	1) At the end of the project, the members of the network have the skills to manage and coordinate the process organization independently.
	2) The local population of the SIZ is insufficiently informed about the prevention, dangers and consequences of pollution of the Sundarbans.	3) At the end of the project, the local population is aware of the dangers and consequences of pollution in the Sundarbans and is actively involved in preventing further destruction and pollution.
	4) 18 to 35-year-olds are currently insufficiently represented in existing political decision-making formats and have difficulty accessing them.	4) The newly founded youth network has access to political decision-making formats such as the Co-Management.
Sub-objectives	Initial situation (Quantitative and qualitative)	Target situation (objective) (Quantitative and qualitative)
1. A network of young people (aged 18-35) is being established and empowered to successfully campaign for the protection of the Sundarbans mangrove forests.	1.1 At present, young people in the SIZ do not have a permanent group that systematically represents their interests with a common goal of protecting the Sundarbans mangrove forests.	1.1 After the first year of the project, a youth network was formed in co-operation with 17 youth groups at sub-district level. The members of the youth network (40% women) have defined the role, objectives, structure and activities of the network.
	1.2 The young people currently lack the competences and skills to actively engage in lobbying for the protection of the Sundarbans mangrove forests.	1.2 By the second year of the project, the 530 members of the youth network have been trained to manage and coordinate the organizational process independently.
	1.3 18 to 35-year-olds lack the financial resources to maintain a youth network in the long term	1.3 By the end of the project, at least three of the youth groups at sub-county level will be registered with the State Youth Development Department and will be able to fund their work beyond the duration of the project.
2. Through to an awareness-raising campaign, the local population is aware of	2.1 The feasibility study confirmed that less than 35 % of respondents to the SIZ were aware of the causes and consequences of pollution.	2.1 At the end of the project, 60% of the local population of the Sundarbans Impact Zone will be able to identify the causes and

<p>the causes and consequences of pollution and ways to prevent it in the Sundarbans mangrove forests.</p>		<p>consequences of pollution and take individual prevention measures.</p> <p>(For example, community people will reduce the uses of polythene/plastic bottle, enhance uses of ecofriendly bags. They will change their attitude of throwing polythene/plastic into the river directly. They will select some dumping point to dump the used polythene and plastic; from there those will be taken by informal sectors who works as small-scale plastic recyclers.)</p>
	<p>2.2 The local professional groups that depend on the resources of the mangrove forests (fishing/tourism/excursion boat operators/traders) lack knowledge about the sustainable use of resources.</p>	<p>2.2 By the end of the project, 2000 people from the professional groups of fishing/tourism/excursion boat operators/traders are aware of environmentally harmful practices and are familiar with alternatives (e.g., use of environmentally friendly products like cotton bags, waste collection for recycling vendors, business models for waste management). They pass this knowledge on to other resource users.</p>
	<p>2.3 Local community in the SIZ lacks the knowledge about waste management collection and how this can be economically beneficial for them.</p>	<p>2.3 125 members of the youth group (25 of each district) are trained in business models for waste management and share this knowledge with the local community in the SIZ for replication.</p>
<p>3. Coordination, cooperation and dialogue between governmental, non-governmental and private sector organizations is improved for the protection and use of the Sundarbans mangrove forest and best practice models of waste management for potential adaption and adoption are shared.</p>	<p>3.1 Coordination and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations within the framework of co-management structures is currently weak. The population group of young people (18-35 year olds) who use resources is not yet adequately represented.</p>	<p>3.1 After the second year of the project, coordination and cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental organizations has improved through the implementation of joint workshops. The newly founded youth network has access to the co-management structures and can represent their interests appropriately.</p>
	<p>3.2 GO and NGO Stakeholders are unfamiliar with existing governmental and private sector initiatives for waste management in other areas in Bangladesh and do not cooperate.</p>	<p>3.2 The local government authorities are aware of existing waste management approaches (e.g., Cash for Plastic by Recycle Jar and Bhangariwallahs, Faridpur Model) in other areas of Bangladesh. A networking and cooperation dialogue between GO, NGOs and Private Sector for the exchange of best practices waste management approaches is established.</p>
	<p>3.3 The Sub-Districts in the SIZ do not have a waste management approach anchored in their action plans.</p>	<p>3.3 5 Sub-Districts include one or more waste management approaches in their action plans based on the shared best practices.</p>