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COPING OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES WITH CLIMATE CHANGE INDIAN SUNDARBANS— ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE



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❖ ABSTRACT:

The research paper has studied the present status of coping capacity of the people in five coastal blocks of Indian Sundarbans having limited livelihood options under climate change scenario. In addition to different physical changes like relative sea level rise, coastal erosion and submergence, frequent embankment failures, rise in salinity, rise in the frequency of high intensity events like cyclones, the region has also experienced a tremendous growth of population size (287%) since Independence till 2011. This has made this mangrove ecosystem increasingly fragile through over exploitation of natural resources, wide scale reclamation and deforestation practices. There has been a sharp decline of cultivators and agricultural labourers over the last five decades and expansion of aquaculture farms replacing the agricultural fields for rise in salinity. The local livelihood dynamics has been studied here with the help of household-level information collected from several rounds of surveys conducted over the last two decades in these coastal blocks. In the densely populated, cyclone-prone reclaimed lands of Sundarbans, where surge heights can reach 1.5–4.0 meters, protection against inundation risk requires mangrove protection and restoration with strengthening built infrastructure, such as cyclone shelters and embankments. Basic education to the masses and labour outmigration from the delta may act as an effective strategy for ecosystem conservation and enhancement of coping capacity to face different livelihood challenges.