Youth Mobilization for Sundarban Conservation

1.0 Background:
Sundarban is the largest mangrove forest in the world that has become the last habitat of the Royal Bengal Tiger and has declared as the world heritage site by UNESCO. The Sundarbans mangrove forest is situated in the southwest region of Bangladesh (62% of the total) and southeast part of India (remaining 38%) which has been become the source of livelihoods of more then 4 million of people living in the Sundarbans impact zone. While the Sundarbans has the rich biodiversity having numbers of floral and funnal species, the responsible government agencies allow random resource extraction without considering the biodiversity of the forest. Eventually, the Forest Department allows everybody to collect forest resources without considering their professional skill. Thus forest resources are being abused and the process of renewing of resources is seriously being hampered. When the unskilled people are engaged in forest resource collection, they are not aware of the ecosystem of the forest and unconsciously they are destroying the habitat of many endangered species such as the Royal Bengal tiger and Nipa leaf etc. While the habitat and food chain are destroyed by the resource collectors, the Royal Bengal Tigers become aggressive to find foods and sometimes they enter into the human settlement area that cause killing of human being. Recently the death incidents by tiger killing increased and number of widows of tiger victims increased as well. Apart from the livelihood option of the poor and marginal occupational groups, the Sundarbans has become the windshield to reduce the intensity of natural disasters such as cyclone, tidal surge and tsunami etc. Thus conservation of the Sundarbans is important to protect its biodiversity, livelihoods of the forest resource users and reduce the intensity of natural disasters. As environmental organization LEDARS is working for the conservation of coastal ecology and Sundarbans since it’s inception. In 2012, LEDARS launched a program entitled “Youth Mobilization for Sundarbans Conservation” and continue its mission to till mow.

2.0 Working area:
The working area of the project will be Shyamnagar Upazila of Satkhira and Koyra Upazila of Khulna district.

3.0 Goal and objectives of the Project:
Goal of the project as defined is to ‘advancing capacity of stakeholders towards conservation of the Sundarbans through sustainable management of coastal resources.

Specific objectives of the project are to:

- Capacity building of local youth on conservation of environment and Sundarbans,
- Aware the Sundarbans resource user groups and local community towards sustainable coastal resource management;
- Aware community people, school and college students and other stakeholders to contribute the Sundarbans conservation;
- Enable different stakeholders to understand the importance of the Sundarbans conservation by developing resource materials and information packages;

4.0 Activities of the Project:

4.1 Sundarbans Friends Club formation:
LEDARS formed Sundarbans friends club in the high school and college level. The club has been formed with the students chaired by a permanent teacher. An executive committee formed by at least 17 members. The club conducting some community meetings in the surrounding area of the school and college and also create awareness of all student and community. Till now LEDARS formed 10 clubs and has a plan to formed in more 25 educational institution.

4.2 Awareness Raising of youth people in Sundarbans region.
Youth are the most important segment of the community who can play important role in the community. They are the change agent and future leader for the country. LEDARS organized 20 school awareness session in Shyamnagar.

4.3 Youth Environmental Camp: LEDARS organize Youth Environmental Camp to building capacity of youth to engage them to conservation of Sundarbans and impact zone. 100 youth attained in this camp yearly.

4.4 Hiking in Sundarbans:
LEDARS organized experimental visit of selected youth inside Sundarbans. LEDARS organized 3 experimental visit inside Sundarbans where 150 students attain to know about ecology of Sundarbans, importance of Sundarbans in coastal area, biodiversity, characteristic of mangrove trees, etc.

4.5 Day observation:
LEDARS observed some important days to raise awareness of the community on environmental conservation.

4.6 Develop easy reading & awareness materials and information packages:
LEDARS is developing easy reading materials (like leaflets, stickers, posters, booklets etc) for raising awareness of community people. The project is developing a flip chart to conduct community session. Besides this LEDARS has a plan to develop small curriculum for the eight and nine class student of high school and higher secondary student of college.