

# TAPESTRY

## Transformation as Praxis: Exploring Socially Just and Transdisciplinary Pathways to Sustainability in Marginal Environments

The TAPESTRY research project explores how transformation may arise 'from below' in response to climate change and related uncertainties.

Climate change is considered to be a major threat to the environment and people's wellbeing around the world, but its local impacts are uncertain and varied. In disaster-prone marginal environments in India and Bangladesh, climate uncertainties interact with other drivers of change.

TAPESTRY focuses on three 'patches of transformation' in India and Bangladesh – vulnerable coastal areas of Mumbai, the Sundarbans and Kutch. These are initiatives and alliances between different actors (local communities, NGOs, scientists and state agencies) that seek socially-just and ecologically sound alternatives, based on local people's ideas of what transformation means, and historical perspectives on it. Each patch is unique; some fade, others grow or merge to form a tapestry. Our study will explore and study these dynamics.

### UNCERTAINTY AND TRANSFORMATION

While uncertainty can make anxieties about the future seem worse, it can also provide an opportunity to create transformation and deep structural change that addresses social, power and gender imbalances, and reimagines the relationships between society and nature, and the trajectory of development.

In coastal and dryland areas, people live with uncertainties every day. But there are examples of citizens, governments and researchers working together to respond to them. This includes alliances to restore coastal ecosystems, support pastoralist livelihoods, or develop new agricultural methods. From these 'patches', we can learn about how transformation happens locally and how it can link to wider change.

### CREATIVE METHODS

The TAPESTRY project aims to create spaces where people can explore their options creatively, through photography, video, performance and art.

Exhibitions from the project will reach local and regional audiences, as well as national policy makers.

Roundtables in each study area will bring people with different roles and viewpoints together to discuss the options and learn from each other's views. The project will be informed by academic evidence that brings together methods from the social and natural sciences.

### KUTCH

In Kutch, herders have been marginalised and their livelihoods are under threat, and changes in weather are making livelihoods even more precarious.

Here, camel herders are working to get local breeds recognised – including the unique swimming camels who graze on mangroves. They are working to open up markets for food products that use camel milk, and challenge negative perceptions of pastoralism.



Pastoralist with a Kharai (swimming) camel, Kutch



Fishing boat, Mumbai

### MUMBAI

In Mumbai, we are working with fishing communities and people who live close to the mangroves that grow along the coast, threatened by commercial and infrastructure development.

Fishing communities in the city are adapting their tools and techniques to respond to pollution and environmental change, and forming new alliances based on mangrove restoration, sustainable water and waste management.

### SUNDARBANS

In the Sundarbans, a delta region across the border of India and Bangladesh, people living on islands are vulnerable to storms and salinity from seawater floods.

They are exploring new farming methods, using dykes for fish farming and growing vegetables in specialised nets.



Salinity-resistant paddy varieties, Sundarbans, India



Crab fishery, Sundarbans, Bangladesh

### Partners

- Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK
- Norwegian University of Life Sciences
- Indian Institute of Technology (IIT Bombay)
- Kyoto University, Japan
- Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA)
- Sahjeevan, Gujarat
- International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), Bangladesh
- Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology (GUIDE)
- Indian Institute of Public Health Bhubaneswar (IIPHB)
- All-India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI)
- Bombay 61
- Conservation Action Trust (CAT)
- Caritas-India
- Caritas-Bangladesh
- University of Oslo, Norway
- University of Sussex, UK
- Hunnarshala Foundation, India
- Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra
- Welthungerhilfe

The TAPESTRY project is financially supported by the Belmont Forum and NORFACE Joint Research Programme on Transformations to Sustainability, which is co-funded by ESRC, RCN, JST, ISC, and the European Commission through Horizon 2020.

Contact: Ruby Utting, IDS [R.Utting@ids.ac.uk](mailto:R.Utting@ids.ac.uk)

Website: [steps-centre.org/project/tapestry](https://steps-centre.org/project/tapestry)