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## Bangladesh: support required to protect mangrove

Friends of the Earth-Bangladesh is seeking international support to halt Sundarbans destruction. Sundarban is the largest mangrove in the world, situated in a land where three of Asia's mightiest rivers -the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna- mingle before flowing into the Bay of Bengal (see WRM Bulletin 15).

Extending at the border between India and Bangladesh, this mangrove comprises a more than 10,300 square kilometre area. The forest floor is crossed by a complex network of rivers, creeks and canals which flood twice daily as the tide rises, creating a rich habitat for the many species of fish and invertebrates that move into the forest with the tides.

The whole territory of Bangladesh was divided into 23 blocks and phase by phase leased out to multinational oil companies for oil/gas exploration and extractive activities. From the very beginning of the process, environmental NGOs of Bangladesh have demanded not to lease out the environmentally sensitive areas including the Sundarban. But the government did not heed to any demand and leased out Sundarban (Block 5) to Shell Oil & Cairn Energy for oil/gas exploration. They are already going to start building infrastructures for their activities. It is remarkable that after leasing out Sundarban the Prime Minister of Bangladesh declared Sundarban as world heritage site, apparently to appease UNESCO who last year declared the forest as world heritage site.

Under these circumstances Friends of the Earth-Bangladesh is having a plan of action to raise a big campaign vis-a-vis mobilising the local communities physically to protect the forest and for that is needing financial support estimated in U\$S 27,000. Those interested in collaborating with this initiative can contact: Chowdhury M.F. of FoE-Bangladesh at: gbs@dhaka.agni.com or gbs@bangla.net

Source: Chowdhury M.F., FoE-Bangladesh, 19/5/1999.