



भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान  
Wildlife Institute of India

PLANNING AND  
MANAGEMENT FOR  
**AQUATIC SPECIES  
CONSERVATION AND  
MAINTENANCE OF  
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES**  
IN THE  
GANGA RIVER BASIN  
FOR A CLEAN GANGA





## Background and Progress made under Phase I

Considering the unique cultural, social, economic and ecological value of the Ganga River, the Government of India (GOI) has been working towards its conservation through the Prime Minister's flagship programme-Namami Gange, to achieve "Aviral and Nirmal Dhara" of the Ganga River. Conservation of the Ganga River including its aquatic biodiversity, thus, has been one of the most important attributes of the 'Three Year Action Agenda 2017-18 to 2019-20' of the NITI Ayog. In view of this, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) designated the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), an autonomous institute of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GOI as the lead knowledge partner of NMCG and entrusted WII with the "Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation" project to prepare a science-based aquatic species conservation plan for the Ganga River, for a duration of three years from 2016 to 2019.





WII as a lead knowledge partner and conservation planning body of NMCG, established the Ganga Aqualife Conservation Monitoring Centre (GACMC), a virtual centre, to spearhead the conservation of the Ganga River and its biodiversity. The GACMC team carried out the first-ever comprehensive ecological monitoring of the entire Ganga River, which concluded that 49% of the River still harbours high biodiversity, as opposed to a common notion of Ganga being highly polluted and devoid of any life. The survey also found that the efforts made under the Namami Gange programme are significantly improving the river's integrity. Conservation priority zones were identified along the mainstem of the Ganga River, which are being promoted for conservation planning.







The spearhead teams comprising of the officials of the Forest Department of the five Ganga states are carrying out training and ecological survey on their own such as Gangetic dolphin survey in Bihar, migratory bird survey at Sahibganj, Jharkhand and training on ecological monitoring of rivers and wetlands in West Bangal. A total of 736 and more than 12000 stakeholders comprising of personnel of the Forest and Veterinary departments, university professors, religious group and local communities have been trained and sensitized. These trained and sensitized stakeholders have initiated Ganga conservation activities and cleanliness drives. The three rescue and rehabilitation centres established under Phase I of the project are enabling the Forest Department to scientifically tackle large consignments of confiscated aquatic animals, especially turtles of the Ganga River. The Trained cadre of forest staff, veterinarians and network of local communities and Ganga Praharis have improved the information network of poaching/entrapment/trade for the Forest Departments.





Livelihood and skill enhancement activities for local communities have built their stake in Ganga conservation. Livelihood activities are being carried out through six livelihood centre and an innovative mobile livelihood centre “Jalaj”. A total of 1290 trained volunteers “Ganga Prahari” from riverside communities are adopting sustainable livelihood practices and promoting sustainable use of natural resources, conducting cleanliness drives, plantation drives, biodiversity monitoring, rescue operations and actively participating in all NMCG activities. The specific skill sets and the workforce of these trained volunteers are being recognized at the national and state level, inspiring more youth to join the cadre. During Kumbh 2019, the Ganga Praharis actively coordinated n sensitization and cleanliness activities with local administration and NMCG. These Ganga Praharis are getting recognized at national as well as state level. Nature interpretation centres ‘Ganga Darpan’ and ‘Anubhuti’ established at Sarnath and Kanpur respectively, are playing a major role in public outreach. The social media platform like Facebook and Instagram are followed by people across the globe from all walks of life.



**The impact of the project is visible through the enhanced synergies between departments, agencies and communities at local, national and global scales, all committed to a cleaner Ganga River.**





# About Phase II of the Project

## Aim of the Project

To intensify conservation efforts in identified sites along the mainstem Ganga River and up scale the conservation efforts to basin level for aquatic biodiversity conservation and maintenance of ecosystem services for a clean Ganga.

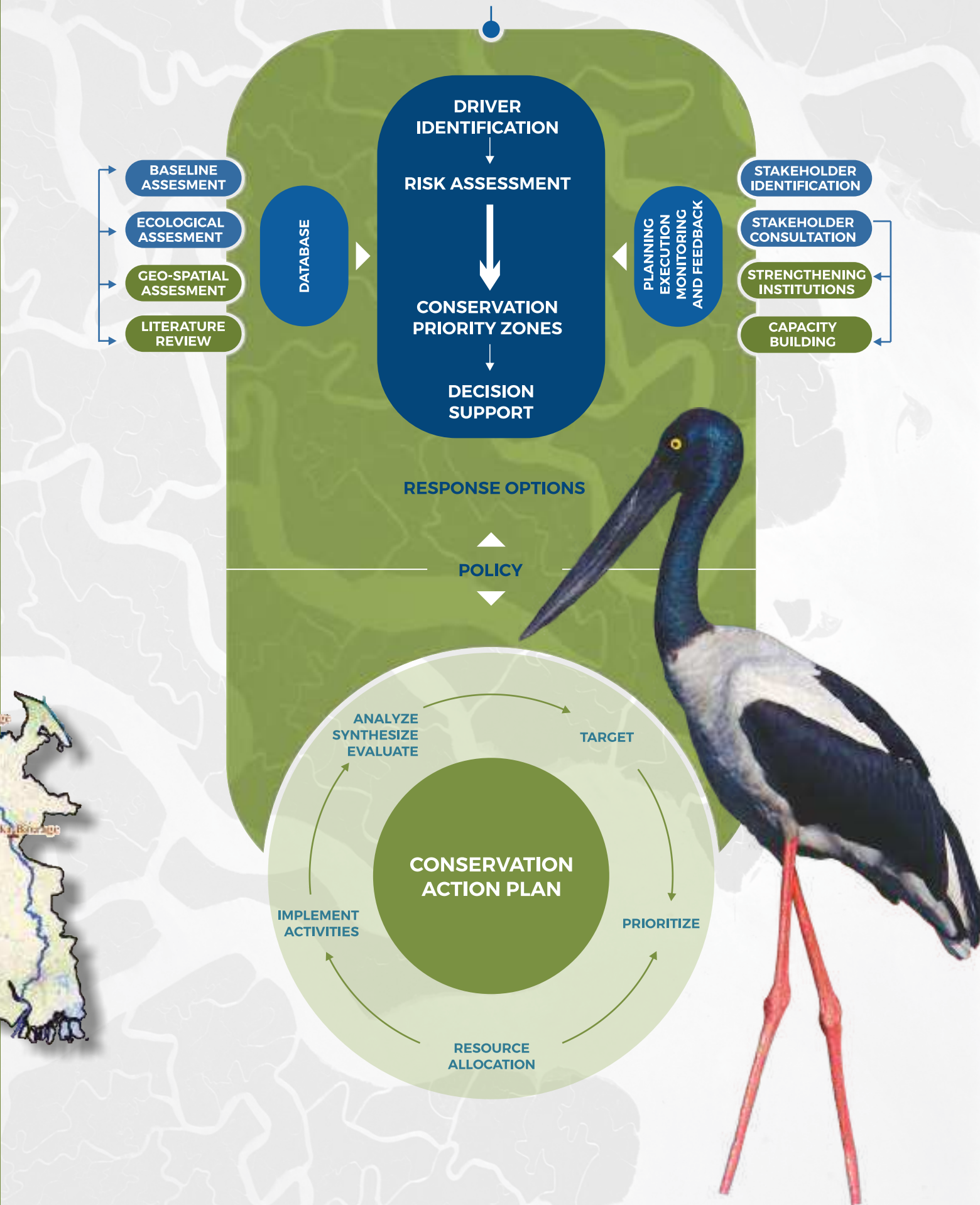
The Ganga River is intricately connected with a network of tributaries and floodplain wetlands. Together these enhance flow of the Ganga, serve as breeding grounds and refuge for aquatic species. However, they also drain pollutants into the River, severely affecting aquatic fauna and their habitat, hampering the conservation process. Initial efforts made through the implementation of the phase I of the “Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation” project emphasised the urgent need for accounting at the basin scale natural and anthropogenic processes, and upscaling the present work to the basin level to ensure sustainable and effective Ganga conservation actions.

In view of this, the second phase of the project aims to intensify conservation efforts in identified sites along the mainstem Ganga River and up-scale the conservation effort at basin level to ensure the sustainability of the river conservation efforts. The project is being carried out in the major tributaries and the wetlands in the basin. Thus, the north bank tributaries, Ramganga, Gomti, Ghaghra, Gandak and Kosi rivers and the south bank tributaries Yamuna and Son river were selected. Along with these tributaries the Chambal River is also being studied, since it homes a significant population of the critically endangered gharial, endangered Gangetic dolphin and several species of birds, thereby contributing to the aquatic diversity of the Ganga Basin.



The Phase II of the project has initiated a systematic conservation planning of the Ganga River at the basin scale, incorporating cross-disciplinary coordination of water, land and related sectors through a structured framework.

# FRAMEWORK FOR BASIN LEVEL CONSERVATION PLANNING





The project is being undertaken through three components, viz.

1

Science-based aquatic species conservation and maintenance of ecosystem services.

Capacity building of the Forest Department and other stakeholders.

2

3

Community based aquatic species conservation and outreach.

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