



## **SAFE & IUCN project: Conservation of Bhitarkanika wetlands, Ramsar site**

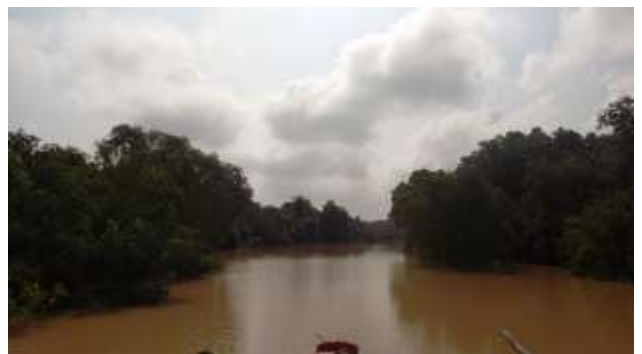
**About Bhitarkanika:** It is a national park located in the Kendrapara District Odisha in eastern India. Core area of 145 square kilometre of the Bhitarkanika Wild Sanctuary, spread over 672 km, has been designated as a National Park since 1998. The national park is surrounded by the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. Gahirmatha Beach and Marine Sanctuary lies to the east, and separates swamp region cover with canopy of mangroves from the Bay of Bengal. The park is home to Saltwater Crocodile, White Crocodile, Indian python, King Cobra, black ibis, darters and many other species of flora and fauna. The sanctuary is the second largest mangrove ecosystem in India. Bhitarkanika is designated Ramsar site and a UNESCO world heritage site.



**Current threats:** Bhitarkanika National Park in the district faces major threat from anthropogenic activities - prawn farming and timber smuggling. Unscrupulous tree felling, illegal prawn culture continues to be threatening the livelihood of villagers in Bhitarkanika. Increasing pollutants have caused significant change in the quality of water and this can pose damaging effect to the mangrove ecosystem in the long run.

### **Project title: “Integrated Aqua-farming in Inundated Coastal Areas of Odisha towards Alternative Livelihood and Climate Adaptive Community Conservation Program”.**

SAFE with IUCN partnership has started the conservation program for Bhitarkanika and on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep 2016, SAFE project team is launching Socio-Economic Survey as well as Focused Group discussion for the project, “Integrated Aqua-farming in Inundated Coastal Areas of Odisha towards Alternative Livelihood and Climate Adaptive Community Conservation Program”, funded by IUCN in Bhitarkanika, Orissa. The survey will involve 60% population coverage of the 5 selected villages in the intervention site. Project includes ground truthing by GPS instruments for obtaining information through direct observation. A series of random sampling of water for testing purposes will be completed since it is necessary to know the state of water before embarking on sustainable aquaculture initiatives. We acknowledge the Govt. of Odisha for supporting the project implementation at community-conservation interface.



**Project goal** is technology cooperation and capacity building on sustainable aqua-farming for fringe villages of Bhitarkanika National Park in Odisha can augment climate adaptive conservation and community resilience.