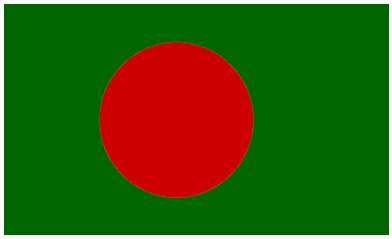
Forests and the Biodiversity Convention

Independent Monitoring of the Implementation of the Expanded Programme of Work in Bangladesh

Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh



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Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh.

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Disclaimer:

Cover:

Kaptai National Park, a semi evergreen forest in the southeast.
Photographer: Gawsia W. Chowdhury.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An independent assessment was conducted on the implementation status of the Programme of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bangladesh.

The assessment revealed that there has been limited work done in implementing the ecosystem approach to forest management. Although the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) were prepared by the government in 2005, actual implementation of NBSAP is yet to be started.

The current forest management policy of the Forest Department (FD) of MOEF primarily targets revenue generation through timber production. Little is known about the ecology of animals and plants in forest ecosystems, mostly through research projects from universities. There are no explicit laws or policies that permit equitable benefit-sharing by the indigenous and local communities. Traditional approaches to forest management derived from colonial rules are not consistent with the ecosystem approach and are detrimental to forest biodiversity. The National Forestry Policy (1994) needs to be upgraded to properly incorporate biodiversity conservation goals as well as rights of the indigenous people.

Several alien tree species, such as *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus*, were introduced in Bangladesh during 1980's. These plantations could not fully provide the necessary fuel wood for local communities and had adverse ecological and socioeconomic impacts. The negative impacts of these species have been disputed by the FD. However, attempts have been made by the civil society to discourage plantation of alien species and encourage native species. Also, indications are evident in some of the recent projects of FD that 'protected area management' has started receiving attention of FD emphasizing application of collaborative management approach. However, these efforts are inadequate and would require mainstreaming in the forest biodiversity management plans, policies and financial allocations.

The impact of pollution as well as the overall degradation of forest ecosystems is not being properly monitored by the FD because of its inadequate human resources, logistics and absence of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system. Extensive forests trails and roads have caused fragmentation of forests. Surrounding communities have converted many parts of forest patches into agricultural plots. There are many instances, where forest lands have been leased out to the influential people and institutions, incompatible use of which has caused serious degradation to the forest ecosystems. In addition, numerous instances are there where local communities have encroached into the forest lands including the protected areas. Influential members of local as well as distant communities have participated in making brick fields close to and within forested areas. There has been no attempt to systematically reduce such widespread forest degradation.

Reforestation initiatives to date, in degraded forests, have been extremely inadequate in improving biodiversity, especially when you consider the former state of biodiversity in natural forests. However, it is increasingly recognized by FD (forestry department) that traditional forestry practices of clear-felling and monoculture plantations may be replaced by selective-felling and mixed-species plantations. The GIS/RS land cover database of Bangladesh illustrates the level of forests remaining, the extent of fragmentation and the likely sources of threats to forests. This resources need to be updated and as a part of the M&E System and effectively used for forest conservation planning.

The Red Data Book of IUCN – the World Conservation Union (2000) has categorized many animal and plant species as threatened at various levels. A large number of plant and vertebrate species and most invertebrate species remain unstudied. Arannayk - a US Government supported foundation, has initiated programs that support the conservation of

threatened plant species in secondary and homestead forests. Of the twelve bio ecological zones of Bangladesh, only four broad forest types, constituting nineteen sites, have been brought under Protected Area status. However, except some project based initiatives, protection measures are extremely inadequate and large-scale illegal timber extraction, wildlife trade, encroachment including permanent land-grabbing and land-use alterations have occurred in these areas which is being continued. Many of these illegal activities often take place in collaboration with corrupt officials of relevant agencies including FD. The Nishorgo project of the FD has worked in six such PAs and has documented illegal timber extraction, wildlife habitat degradation, disturbance, and brickfields and associated activities within or near these protected areas. This project has also addressed indigenous people's rights by introducing collaborative management or co-management. Indigenous people, FD officials and other stakeholders form co-management councils that formulate and decide on conservation action. Although income has been generated among indigenous people, benefit-sharing mechanisms are not in place and Nishorgo's activities may not sustain the involved communities once funding from the project expires.

There have been national level attempts to assess the impact of climate change and to explore adaptive strategies. The coastal belt afforestation program of the FD is a successful effort to reduce erosion and provide protection from tidal surges and cyclones in coastal areas. Further adaptive strategies need to be formulated and executed to provide protection against increasing frequency of calamities. A strengthened green belt initiative can provide with the biodiversity benefits in addition to its significance as one of the major adaptation option for coastal Bangladesh.

- **Photo 1:**

Consultative workshop summarizing the assessment process and the themes of POW. Gawsia W Chowdhury, WTB

A number of institutions, particularly the Forest Department, Department of Environment, Bangladesh Forest Research Institute, MOEF, Universities, Ministry of Land, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Home, Ministry of Law, Local Government, NGO's and Community-based Organizations, are collectively involved in forest biodiversity management and conservation. Infrastructure and resource capacity of most of these organizations have improved considerably, although the scientific knowledge base and understanding remain insufficient for good forest management. Additionally, exchange and dissemination of knowledge is poor preventing concerted efforts to forest biodiversity conservation and management. Major steps need to be taken to implement most of the targets of the POW of CBD in Bangladesh.

CONTENT

PRELUDE

The implementation of the Program of Work (POW) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is crucial to the future of biological diversity. An independent assessment was undertaken to measure the extent to which the POW has been implemented in Bangladesh. In order to carry out this task, the POW was divided into three broad themes containing individual components of its goals and targets. A questionnaire was developed by the country monitors with focused questions addressing the various targets of the POW. This questionnaire was checked for consistency and redundancy through a series of discussions amongst the country monitors, before it was finalized and deemed fit for conducting the assessment. Several handouts were prepared that highlighted the activities of the Global Forest Coalition, the motives behind this assessment and the various relevant articles of the CBD to aid participants in helping with the assessment. Four formal consultative workshops were carried out involving representatives of different stakeholder groups: government officials, NGO's, donor agencies, environmentalists, biologists, academicians, researchers, nature enthusiasts, indigenous people and members of local communities to participate in discussions. In order to select the participants, the country representatives first listed all the major organizations that were actively involved in conservation and development in Bangladesh. Twenty out of the 30 different organizations or groups that were selected for participation in these workshops, represented by over 100 people (list attached), attended the workshops that were spread out between July and September. Total number of people in each workshop was kept small (around 30) and the monitors ensured that individuals at directorial, managerial, research and field levels were invited to these workshops to ensure that a diversity of viewpoints was elicited. It was evident on the first workshop that a separate workshop would be necessary for a better assessment of the views of indigenous people. This was conducted separately and at a more informal level.

Lawachara National Park, semi evergreen forest. Photo: M. Anwarul Islam

Participants of the consultative workshops were divided into thematic subgroups such as ecosystems, sustainable use and institutional, based on their areas of expertise or background. One facilitator was assigned to each group to ensure interactive discussions on part of all of the themes. Country monitors and facilitation staff from WTB were assigned to each group to ensure that the questions were adequately encountered and key issues were addressed. Each thematic group presented their summary of viewpoints at the end of the day-long workshop. The views and recommendations of the subgroups on the implementation of the POW were recorded in detail. Group facilitators were also asked to provide written notes in bullet points to aid country monitors to incorporate these into the final report. As part of the literature review, over 200 documents were consulted including published peer-reviewed papers, books, newspaper articles, government reports, government strategic plans, national policies and laws, and independent reports of NGO's. In addition, informal discussions were conducted with project directors and managers of different forest conservation projects, field officials of the Forest Department (FD), top Forest Department officials and indigenous people from one national park to assess similar questions of implementation. All the workshop reports, field and

informal interviews and outcome of the literature review have been synthesized into this report. A slightly deviated approach from the research process outlined by the Global Forest Coalition's (GFC) Terms of Reference has been adopted to carry out this independent assessment. Considering the local context this approach was more compatible with the groups involved in Bangladesh and has yielded the necessary information for this independent assessment.

1. DETAILED ASSESSMENT

1.1 Reporting

Has the government of Bangladesh sent a national report on the implementation of CBD to the CBD Secretariat?

Article 6 of the CBD stipulates that the contracting parties will develop a national report on the implementation of the CBD with especial reference to developing a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. The National Focal Point for Bangladesh represented by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF) had sent the third national report in 2005. The report contains an overview of the different ecosystem types of Bangladesh, the different threats these ecosystems face, the priority items on the government's agenda in dealing with these threats and key challenges in the implementation of necessary steps to achieve POW goals and targets. However, it is worth mentioning that the report clearly admitted that Article 10(c) and 8 (j) of CBD will present great challenges in implementation in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) has produced the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) with support from GEF/UNDP and IUCN Bangladesh was the technical collaborator in this initiative. This document, produced through extensive consultative workshops, provides a synoptic overview of all of the needs of the country with respect to conserving and restoring the biodiversity. The primary threats to forests identified by the national report as well as the NBSAP include deforestation for agricultural and settlement expansion, clear-felling for plantations, unregulated and unscientific logging practices, forest policies and laws that are inconsistent with conservation science, conflicting intra-governmental sectoral policies, and revenue-driven forestry practices. These aspects of forest conservation are discussed further below.

1.2 The Ecosystem Approach

Has the ecosystem approach been applied to forest management?

There has been limited work done in promoting an understanding of the conceptual basis of the ecosystem approach and developing practical methods to apply the approach. The current forest management policy of the Forest Department (FD) of the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF) is geared towards generating revenue through the production of timber. There is limited information on the ecology of animals and plants in forest ecosystems, primarily coming out of research projects from universities. Many aspects relating to the living and nonliving components of forest ecosystems, such as the interactions of animals and plants in different trophic levels in food webs remain unknown. There are no explicit laws or policies that permit equitable benefit sharing by the indigenous and local communities consistent with the ecosystem approach. Traditional approach to manage forests in forest lands[1] derived from colonial rules, therefore, is not conducive to the implementation of the ecosystem approach to forest management.

It is worth mentioning here that forest management has historically been on the basis of written management schemes known as working plans that were formulated periodically since British regime. However, no new management plans have been formulated since 1993 other than plans for the five Nishorgo sites. The forested areas are currently being managed through old management plans. A moratorium was placed on felling in natural forests in 1989 to aid in

[1] Land area managed by the Forest Department that may or may not have forests and constituting a total area of 2.52 million ha (17% of the total area of Bangladesh). Approximately 6% of forest lands consist of forests of various kinds, while the remainder is under various other forms of land use.

ecosystem conservation. However, felling was only allowed in planted forests until recently with special permission from MOEF so that the revenue target of FD is met.

To support FD's protected area management program, Nishorgo Support Project was initiated in 2002 and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through a contract awarded to International Resources Group (IRG) to demonstrate viable approaches to manage and conserve protected areas in Bangladesh. The essence of the ecosystem approach in forest management was incorporated into the list of activities outlined including: establishing partnerships to develop collaborative management of forest resources; facilitating alternative income generating activities; highlighting necessary upgrades for existing policies dealing with Protected Areas (PAs); and developing mechanisms and capacity for ecotourism. However, this is a pilot project operating in six protected areas in Bangladesh. Various components of the projects have had successes, while others have been met with significant challenges. Both aspects will be discussed in the following sections.

- **Photo 2:**

MA Islam, WTB

Collection of wood and other forest products is common in Bangladesh. Shown here is a man carrying a large tree branch within the premises of a reserve forest in Bangladesh.

1.3. Reduce threats and mitigate impacts

Has there been any action to prevent the introduction of alien species?

The introduction of alien tree species occurred primarily in the 1980's when the Asian Development Bank (ADB) supported plantation projects of the FD to curtail the fuel wood needs of indigenous and local people. Several *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus* species were planted in monocultures throughout the country. Since these trees, particularly *Eucalyptus* species, required minimal care and could tolerate adverse conditions, the projects were considered sound. These plantations, however, could not provide the necessary fuel wood and were clearly having adverse ecological and socioeconomic impacts. The matter remains controversial since no long-term studies have been carried out to demonstrate the negative impacts of these alien tree species. While biologists have frequently warned against the negative impacts based on evidence from independent studies, the FD had been resistant to accepting these, declaring them as unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, the FD issued a ban on *Eucalyptus* plantation in natural forests through an executive order in 1995. Subsequently, *Acacia* species was discouraged in natural forests. However, hybrid *Acacia* are being planted in degraded forests under the social forestry program due to the interest of participants. Earlier, the mono-culture was the main mode of plantation in degraded forests although this has now been replaced by mixed-species culture. Production forest management has also experienced a paradigm shift in its silvicultural practices and selective felling rather than clear felling is currently used.

- **Photo 3:**

S Chakma, WTB

Villagers from the areas surrounding forests often have different needs compared to indigenous people living within forests. The elderly gentleman on the left speaks of his memories of forest cover that have been largely replaced by barren areas.

The third national report to the CBD and the NBSAP, however, identify a variety of alien plant species and the need to eradicate them. The National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA) has correctly identified a number of capacity building constraints in conserving biodiversity. A committee has been formed by the MOEF with representatives from government organizations (GO's) and NGO's to identify and eradicate alien species. However, no coordinated and organized programs have been initiated since then. Scientists, indigenous people, activist groups, students and the civil society, has been successful in creating awareness of the risks and negative impacts of alien tree species. The need for planting native and medicinal tree species in degraded and denuded forested areas has come to the forefront. Recently, there has been a trend in FD activities to increase a combination of native tree species in their plantation activities. However, extensive tracts of alien species remain in forested areas, many of which are protected, and are discussed later.

Has there been any action to mitigate impacts of pollution and disturbance?

There is no monitoring of the impact of pollution on forest ecosystems by the FD. For instance, it is well recognized that a major threat to the Sundarban mangrove forest in south-western Bangladesh is water pollution. Professors of various universities have carried out limited studies on pollution and these remain as technical documents (theses, research papers) with limited or no impact on forest management. Disturbance is also a common feature of all forests in Bangladesh. There are a few studies that have attempted to quantify and monitor disturbance, but these studies have not been utilized in refining forest management practices. The third national report to the CBD and the NBSAP have enlisted different forms of pollution that impact ecosystems in general, and forest ecosystems in particular. Both documents identify the need to monitor pollution and disturbance as a governmental priority item, but recognize that major challenges exist in monitoring and mitigating the their impacts.

Has there been any action to prevent losses due to fragmentation and land-use alterations?

Forests have been crisscrossed by trails to aid in the removal of timber and other forest products causing fragmentation of forests into forest patches. Additionally, surrounding communities have often converted parts of these forest patches into agricultural plots.

Encroachment of local communities on the fringes of forests and sometimes in substantial areas within forests has occurred in many forested areas of Bangladesh. Influential members of local as well as distant communities have participated in making brick fields close to and, in many instances, within forested areas including protected areas. Such degradation of forest habitats has occurred throughout Bangladesh and there has been no attempt to systematically reduce these problems. Again, activities of researchers, indigenous people, activists and members of the civil society have been able to increase awareness of these problems. The reduction of encroachment and changes land-use patterns in forests remains a major challenge in forest conservation and management. In fact land grabbing is the principal problem for the forest biodiversity in Bangladesh. Although officially it is recorded that about 17% of the country's forest land is under the jurisdiction of FD, in reality this would be significantly lower because of indiscriminate land grabbing, encroachment and tenure conflict, one of the major underlying causes of this conflicting policy regime. There is an urgent need to address these issues if forest conservation is to gain momentum. All of these challenges of forest fragmentation and loss have been highlighted by the Nishorgo project but necessary steps to effectively deal with these problems will require firm government commitment. The third national report to the CBD and the NBSAP clearly identify land use changes and illegal harvests as important determinants of forest loss. Implementation of the NBSAP is the next step to prevent further losses. UNDP supported sustainable management project would address many of the issues mentioned.

Has there been an assessment of the possible negative impacts of climate change on forests?

Climate change is an emerging problem that is projected to severely impact Bangladesh. There have been national level attempts to assess the impact of climate change, particularly on coastal communities, and to explore adaptive strategies. A program to increase awareness and manage green house gas emissions has been initiated through a project entitled the Asian Least Cost Green House Gas Abatement strategies (ALGAS). In addition the question of climate change has been addressed by the third national report to the CBD and the NBSAP and is identified as a priority item, particularly in relation to poverty. The coastal belt afforestation program (covering an area of about 130,000 hectares) is a successful effort made by FD to reduce erosion and provide protection from tidal surges and tropical cyclones in coastal areas. Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) has developed different simulation models on crop intensities and sea level rise. More systematic assessments are desperately needed to identify how climate change can affect forest cover and type, their resident biodiversity and indigenous and local human communities. For instance, swamp forests in north-eastern and north-central Bangladesh have become denuded and degraded. These swamp forests thrive in floodplains but altered flood cycles could adversely impact the remnants of such forests. Similarly, coastal mangrove forests could be re-distributed depending on the extent of sea level rise. Mitigation and adaptive measures can only be considered after thorough assessments on the impacts of climate change are done to ensure the continued existence of forests in Bangladesh. The government is yet to undertake programs towards the adaptation of climate change in relation to biodiversity conservation. It is noteworthy that some NGO's have been working in awareness raising aspects of climate change. The National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA) has been produced by the MOEF with support from GEF/UNDP and has identified coastal afforestation as a priority action for the country. The follow-up coastal afforestation project is under formulation. Another national forestry initiative being formulated with participation off MOEF, FD, Ministry of Land (MOL), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and other stakeholders in response to the issues mentioned above including Climate Change.

1.4. Protect, recover and restore forest biodiversity

Have there been attempts to restore biodiversity in degraded secondary forest and plantations?

The National Forestry Policy (1994) explicitly identifies afforestation of degraded and denuded forest lands as one of its long-term targets. However, afforestation in degraded forests, especially in relation to improving biodiversity relative to the former natural forests, has not been systematically undertaken. The achievement of social forestry aided programs since1983 in degraded forests lands is that the participatory approach has been developed and more recently, mixed plantation with indigenous plants has been encouraged. The need for restoration of forest ecosystems is identified in the third national report to the CBD and the NBSAP, and some plans of carrying out restoration programs are stated. The study of restoration ecology, with the aim of restoring forest ecosystems endemic to biogeographic zones of Bangladesh, is relatively unknown in Bangladesh. In no way are traditional forestry plantation practices conducive to restoration of forests and their associated biodiversity. However, the FD has a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) database of all land cover in Bangladesh although this is not easily accessible to the interested individuals or organizations. The database however, clearly illustrates the extent of forests remaining, the level of fragmentation and the likely sources of threats to forests. This database could serve as a starting point for restoration work, specifically in relation to forest biodiversity restoration, if the necessary commitments are made by the FD.

Have there been attempts to promote forest management that helps conserve threatened and endangered species?

Understanding the status of animal or plant species is very limited. The Red Data Book of IUCN – the World Conservation Union (2000) had categorized many animal and plant species as threatened at various levels (e.g. vulnerable, endangered, critically endangered). However, a large number of plant and vertebrate species and most invertebrate species remain unstudied (i.e. Data Deficient). Although conserving threatened and endangered species have been identified as a priority in the first National Conservation Strategy (1997) and the third national report to the CBD and the NBSAP, there is no specific action being taken relating to conservation of threatened species. Researchers and conservationists, supported by different projects have raised awareness among communities living in or near protected areas. Additionally, documents have been produced illustrating conservation needs of some species. But these documents have not been used in a planned manner to aid conservation. Moreover, Arannayk - a USAID supported foundation has initiated programs that support the conservation of threatened and endangered plant species in secondary forests and homestead forests. Actual protection of many such species remains questionable since their habitat is severely threatened (e.g., the Hoolock gibbon, *Hoolock hoolock*, in south-eastern and north-eastern Bangladesh). One independent research and awareness program supported by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has carried out population censuses of the Hoolock gibbon and created awareness among indigenous and local communities. Recent studies have estimated the Bengal Tiger, *Panthera Tigris*, population, using accepted scientific methods such as camera trapping. Additionally, awareness about the tiger ecology, conservation and tiger-human conflicts has been increased. Similarly, various university faculty members have carried out independent research and awareness programs, supported by international and national organisations, dealing specifically with endangered wildlife.

Are there effective protected forest areas networks in place to ensure conservation of habitats?

Twelve bioecological zones have been identified in Bangladesh, but only four broad forest types constituting nineteen sites, have been brought under PA status of three types: Wildlife Sanctuaries, National Parks and Game Reserves. However, these areas are protected only in paper and large-scale illegal timber extraction, wildlife trade, encroachment including permanent land-grabbing and land-use alterations have taken place in these areas over the years and continue to take place. This fact is also acknowledged in the third national report to the CBD and the NBSAP. Nishorgo project has worked in six such PAs and have documented illegal timber extraction, wildlife habitat degradation, disturbance, and brickfields and associated activities within or near these protected areas. All these activities require major coordination among individuals and cannot take place without the collaboration of Forest officials and influential local people. Making the PA network in Bangladesh operational, therefore, will require a lot of effort and commitment from the government, to eliminate corruption, and through the building of partnerships with local and indigenous people (discussed further below).

1.5. Promote sustainable use of forest biodiversity

Has there been promotion of sustainable use of forest resources to enhance biodiversity conservation?
Have there been efforts to enable indigenous and local communities to develop and implement adaptive community-management systems?

The participatory approach to forest management and conservation exists as a buzzword in Bangladesh, especially with respect to forest management. There has been a move towards attempting to bring communities to participate in conservation planning. This has often been in the form of inviting local and indigenous people to planning meetings and acknowledging their views and needs. However, outside of this formality, most indigenous communities of forested areas contend that most of their advice had been ignored and forest management practices have supported agendas of other entities and groups. Indigenous and local communities that depend on forest resources for their livelihoods have traditionally entered forest areas and collected fuel wood and non-timber forest products for an entry fee. With growing populations, this practice places a great deal of pressure on the existing forest resources.

To curtail some of these pressures, the FD introduced the Social Forestry in the eighties. This had resulted in the plantations and training programs, particularly in rural areas. Similar activities in forest lands have not been successful due to illegal activities (especially timber extraction by outside entities, influential locals and corrupt forest officials) that greatly surpass fuel wood or NTFP extraction by indigenous or local communities. The Nishorgo project has attempted to address the issue of indigenous people and their rights by introducing collaborative management or co-management. In this approach (consistent with the ecosystem approach), indigenous people, FD officials and other stakeholders are placed as members of Co-management councils that formulate and decide on conservation through economic and conservation planning. Indigenous people in Lawachara National Park, for instance have been mobilized to be tourist guides, nature interpreters and women have been involved in selling local handicrafts. Whereas this has generated some income among indigenous people, the greater challenge lies in sharing the benefits of tourism between the indigenous communities and the FD. The FD has agreed to share the revenue from tourism charges with indigenous communities but this proposal has been declined twice by the government and is currently being reviewed for a third time. The sustainability of co-management program introduced by Nishorgo is also a matter of concern. The alternate income generated through the above

- **Photo 4:**

P Anjus, WTB

Indigenous communities are often neglected groups marginalized by development and deforestation. Interviews with indigenous people, such as woman on the left, reveals that conservation projects providing long-term employment are useful to many indigenous people.

mentioned activities do not seem enough to sustain the communities in the long run once funding from the project expires. Other concerns include the membership in the co-management councils that include influential people that frequently override the issues dealing with necessities of indigenous people. In spite of these significant difficulties, the shift in the forest management attitude from a top-down to a partial bottom-up approach, with possible sharing of benefits with indigenous communities, is worthy pursuit and may have potential in future forest management practices. Efforts have been made by NGO's and indigenous people to protect their forest biodiversity. For example, the Chakma and Boom community has designated numerous village community forests with their own management systems. The donor funded work of NGO's on the collection and collation of indigenous knowledge is in progress.

1.6. Institutional and socioeconomic enabling environment

Have there been efforts to enhance institutional capacity to better understand forest declines?
Have there been efforts to improve and implement policies on forest biodiversity conservation?

A number of institutions, particularly the Forest Department, Department of Environment, Bangladesh Forest Research Institute, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Universities, Ministry of Land, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Home, Ministry of Law, Local Government, NGO's and Community-based Organizations (CBO), are collectively involved in forest biodiversity management and conservation. Infrastructure and resource capacity of most of these organizations have improved considerably, although the scientific knowledge base and

understanding remain insufficient for good forest management. Linkage between different governmental organizations and between government and non-government or autonomous organizations is very poor leading to duplication of efforts or mutually exclusive practices. The Forest Act (1927) remains the backbone of existing forest laws and practices. The Forestry Master Plan launched in 1993, followed by the Forestry Policy (1994) incorporated participatory approaches in to forestry practices but implementation remains weak. Further changes are required urgently to these policies and principles and a re-evaluation and transformation to reflect forest biodiversity conservation in the 21st century are in order. Most importantly, substantial changes are needed in the implementation of the forestry plans and policies. The Bangladesh Wildlife Preservation (Amendment) Act of 1974 enlists wildlife species that can and cannot be hunted. These lists are outdated and need to be updated based on current information on the status of wildlife (e.g. IUCN status reviews). This Act also provides a framework for the management of protected areas but implementation is non-existent. The FD initiated revision of the Act, however as a comprehensive and relevant policy, requires further updating and harmonizing to conserve its forest biodiversity.

The third national report to the CBD and the NBSAP serve as guiding documents for future action in the implementation of the POW of the CBD. Strict adherence to the identified goals and targets of the NBSAP in a strategic and timely manner may be a source of optimism. Implementation of strategic plans has traditionally suffered in Bangladesh due to lack of initiative on the part of the government and its different departments. The path ahead lies in the hands of the government and their partnerships with indigenous and local communities.

- **Photo 5:**

MA Islam, WTB

Brain storming at the consultative workshop's thematic group.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were derived as a key to achieving the targets of the POW:

1. Approaches to strategic forest management with zonation of the forested areas should be instituted.
2. Awareness with respect to conservation principles and practices must be improved amongst the manpower.
3. Participatory approaches are essential in conserving forest biodiversity and necessary partnerships need to be developed between FD and indigenous and local communities.
4. Total cessation of clear felling is to be immediately instituted in all forested areas in Bangladesh.
5. Targeted revenue demand from the government should be stopped.
6. Selective cutting and natural forest planning should be conducted considering ecosystem functioning.
7. Buffering the reserve by creation of biological corridors with similar habitat close by in case of PAs should be prioritized. Forming Tran frontier reserves with neighbouring countries might be a solution too.
8. Alternative livelihood and income generation methods need to be planned and encouraged.
9. Civil society, NGOs, government representatives and law enforcement agencies should be involved in forest management.
10. Regional and local level policies for forest conservation should be developed to aid in management.
11. Forests should be continuously monitored and human resources should be actively trained and developed for this purpose.
12. Restoration programs should be developed based on principles of restoration ecology. The historical biodiversity of ecosystems should be ascertained from earlier records and studies. Fast growing native tree species should be especially encouraged in these programs. Indicators species should be developed in addition to other methods of monitoring success of restoration programs. Local stewardship bodies should be formed to aid in this process.
13. The protected areas network should be made functional and a minimum of 10% of the land area of Bangladesh should be brought under strict protection.
14. Alien and Invasive species of plants and animals should be examined carefully to explore the alternatives to commercially important alien species. There should be no further introduction of alien species to ecosystems.
15. Pollution impacts on forest ecosystems (especially the Sundarban mangrove forests) should be carefully monitored and the precautionary principle should be followed whenever possible to avoid impacts of unknown or unstudied substances that are likely to be harmful.
16. Monitoring and adaptive strategies should be developed to understand and deal with climate change and its impact on forest ecosystems.
17. Losses due to fragmentation and conversion to other land uses should be minimized and prevented. Private entrepreneurship in declaring private reserves (community landscapes, wilderness areas) for forest conservation purposes should be encouraged.
18. Existing forest lands should not be used for any purposes other than forestry activities.
19. Existing policies, regulations and laws should be reviewed and upgraded in par with targets of POW of the CBD.
20. Intra-governmental collaboration should be improved and made functional.
21. Collaboration between governmental and all other institutions dealing with biodiversity conservation should be improved and made functional.
22. Capacity for dealing with forest biodiversity conservation should be improved.
23. Research and Development on all aspects of biodiversity conservation should be facilitated and improved.

24. Knowledge arising from research should be disseminated widely and effectively to all audiences.
25. A database should be established documenting and managing the information on biodiversity of Bangladesh.
26. Existing databases, such as GIS database of the FD, should be made widely available.
27. Theme-based education of senior government and non-government officials should be facilitated.
28. Conservation of Biodiversity should be incorporated into school curricula.

Annex I:

CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM OF WORK OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL.

Diversity in the Forested Regions of Bangladesh. Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh.

July 21, 2007

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Annex II:

SECOND CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXPANDED PROGRAM OF WORK (POW) OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh

Global Forest Coalition

August 25, 2007

THEME 1: CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND BENEFIT-SHARING: application of ecosystem approach, reduction of threats and mitigation of impacts

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Annex III:

CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM OF WORK OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL

Diversity in the Forested Regions of Bangladesh

Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh

September 8, 2007

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Annex IV:

FOURTH CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM OF WORK OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD) IN THE FORESTED REGIONS OF BANGLADESH

Wildlife Trust Of Bangladesh

September 20, 2007, Thursday, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Kaptai National Park, a semi evergreen forest in the south east.
Photo: Suprio Chakma

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