

Report of the Field Survey on the Sustainable Forest Management in Bangladesh

Participants:

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Itinerary:

August 3 (Wed)	Leave Narita, arrive at Dhaka (Masuda)
August 4 (Thu)	Visit Forest Department, Ministry of Environment and Forest Leave Narita, arrive at Dhaka (Hossain)
August 5 (Fri)	Visit JICE Dhaka Office
August 6 (Sat)	Visit Bhawal National Park and Madhupur National Park
August 7 (Sun)	Visit Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) and Forest Department
August 8 (Mon)	Visit Forest Department
August 9 (Tue)	Leave Dhaka, arrive at Cox's Bazar, visit Cox's Bazar South Forest Division office
August 10 (Wed)	Visit a community in Teknaf
August 11 (Thu)	Visit Fasiakhali Wildlife Sanctuary and a project site of IPAC
August 12 (Fri)	Leave Cox's Bazar, arrive at Dhaka (Masuda); continue data collection at Cox's Bazar (Hossain).

Findings:

1. Forests and forest administration in Bangladesh

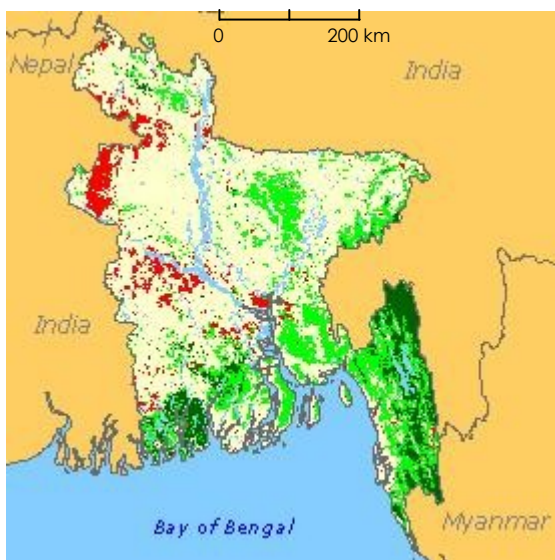


Fig. 1 Forest cover in Bangladesh (FAO, 2006)

Forest cover area in Bangladesh looks to remain stable, 882 thousand ha in 1990, 884 in 2000, and 871 in 2005. However, there are no forests categorized to primary forests. Modified natural forest area is decreasing, while tree plantations are increasing to offset the decrease (FAO, 2006). Dense forests are mostly found in Sundarban mangrove forest area and in Chittagong Hill Tracts (Fig. 1).

Forest administration system in Bangladesh still shares common features with the one in India, which was established during the 19th century under the British rule. It is characterized

with the state control over the resources with scientific basis. Sal (*Shorea robusta*) was one of the most important commercial species, managed under coppice system, and teak (*Tectona grandis*) was preferred for plantations (FAO, 2010). However, extensive areas of sal forest have been heavily degraded, and extremely high population pressure reaching 964 person km⁻² in 2011 (BBS, 2011) on the forest resources has moved the Forest Department to community involvement in the forest management.

2. Social forestry in Madhupur

In Dhaka division, sal forests are found in originally zamindar land. People cultivated lowland (*baid*) and utilized forest resources in upland (*chala*) mainly for subsistence during the colonial period. The conflicts between local people and the government have started since the land was vested to the government for the direct management. The topographic configuration, containing small patches of *baid* that have already been occupied and cultivated ever since before might be one of the reasons to leave the area without clear demarcation, namely gazette process and visible boundary signs on the ground.

To reduce the pressure on remaining sal forests, the Forest Department introduced Participatory Benefit Sharing Agreement (PBSA) inside forest reserves. Tree planting outside forests has also been encouraged as a part of Social Forestry, and now every niche in rural areas is filled with trees for commercial purposes (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Trees arranged on the farm boundaries (Mymensingh)



Fig. 3. Sale of wood harvested from a social forestry site (Madhupur).

In Gasabari village with around 2,400 voters, around 250 people participated in PBSA. It started in 1998, but not successful in the beginning. The first felling after 10-year rotation has just been realized when we visited the range office (Fig. 3), and 45% of the sale of each plot will belong to the Forest Department, 45% to the participant, and 10% to Tree Farming Fund (TFF).

3. Trends of Forest land Encroachment in Cox's Bazar

Cox's Bazar South Forest Division is located in the south-eastern tip of Bangladesh. We visited

Whykeong Range Office and its surrounding area that is administering under the Cox's Bazar South Forest Division. There are about 2, 24,000 voters are living Cox's Bazar South Forest Division area but we focus on the Teknaf Wild Life Sanctuary area. This area experiences heavily encroachment by the local and Rohingya people. If we consider, especially on Whykeong Range Area under the Teknaf Wild Life Sanctuary, the area comprises of 5,197.16 hectares of land. There are about more than 4,500 voters and 10,000 people are living in Whykeong Range area. Most of them are settled in this area about 100 years of period. After the World War-I, half of the total people i.e. tribal people came to this area from Arakan, Cambodia and north western part of Thailand. They were illiterate and forest dependent people. To manage these people, the then British Government allowed tribe people to live in forest with a condition to receive their labour in forest department activities. From that initiative, basically forest land encroachment started. After that, within the passage of time, encroachment increases. After 1979, Rohingya influx added the situation critical. Now more than 50 % forest land are encroached by the illegal dwellers of that area. The Forest Department of Bangladesh Government is now trying to conserve that forest land from illegal encroachment by introducing Social Forestry (Participatory Forest Management) and building public awareness.



Fig. 4. Community patrol group members partly consist of Chakma people.



Fig. 5. Remaining trees indicate that the area was once covered by a dense forest (Teknaf).

After Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit held in 1992, Bangladesh Government started to think to conserve its forest. As a result, Government formulates Social Forestry Policy, 1994 that initiates participatory forest management practices. Now it is the main agenda of Forest Department though there are some barriers exist. Forest Department, by their different donor supported projects, is trying to implement participatory forest management concept by forming Community Patrol Group (CPG) and benefit sharing mechanism (Fig. 4). But in some cases, it is not working well due to illiteracy, poverty and health constraints (Fig. 5). Even these forest dependent people do not know alternative income generation practices. But they are starting to realize the necessity of conserving forest.

Conclusion: Discovering social changes pattern in forest area is the main lesson of this visit. People have started to realize the necessity of conserving forest even in the poverty prone areas. They realize

that illegal logging and forest land encroachment should not be their job. They have to be moved to the sustainable forest management practices for the betterment of their future generation. So they need to have the assistance from their government.

Reference:

BBS (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics). 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2011*. Ministry of Planning, Dhaka.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization). 2006. *Global forest resources assessment 2005: progress towards sustainable forest management*. FAO, Rome.

FAO. 2010. *Forest management – practices: Bangladesh*.

<http://www.fao.org/forestry/country/61585/en/bgd> (cited on Sep. 15, 2011).