



LINKING NISHORGO SUPPORT PROJECT AND FORESTRY SECTOR PROJECT

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nishorgo Support Project (NSP) is being implemented in 5 Pilot Sites (Lawachara National Park, Rema-Kelenga Wildlife Sanctuary, proposed Satchuri National Park, Chunoti Wildlife Sanctuary and Teknaf Game Reserve). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) funded Forestry Sector Project (FSP) was designed to be implemented in 7 Protected Areas (Lawachara National Park, Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary, Chunoti Wildlife Sanctuary, Teknaf Game Reserve, Himchari National Park, Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary and Madhupur National Park). However, field activities could not be taken up in Chunoti Wildlife Sanctuary as it was transferred from Chittagong (South) Forest Division to Chittagong Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, which was not included in the Project Proforma of FSP. So only 3 PAs (Lawachara National Park, Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary and Teknaf Game Reserve) are common where the planned management interventions are being carried out under both the projects currently under implementation.

Main objectives of the FSP are to:

- Enhance the conservation of forests in selected project areas, increase overall wood production and institute sustainable management of forest resources through local community participation, institutional capacity building and policy reform;
- Continue the expansion and extension of the successful models of participatory afforestation and rehabilitation of degraded forests and other under-utilized government lands;
- Enhance the capacity of FD and NGOs, delivery mechanisms and the appreciation of the local environment;
- Institutionalize community participation in forest management, thereby increasing overall wood production and contributing to forest conservation; and
- Ensure conservation and sustainability of forest resources, leading to better environment both for the present and future generations.

The above-mentioned objectives are being achieved by implementing three programs on i) afforestation, ii) natural forest management and iii) support activities by following a participatory approach of forestry sector development. Unlike other ADB funded projects (e.g. CFP, UANDP, etc.) FSP for the first time included a component on the protection, management and development of natural forests under the control and management of FD. Under natural forest management program a component on conservation area management was included with main aim of the management of 7 PAs by focusing to retain maximum possible under forest cover, and to maintain this forest in the best possible condition based on a participatory approach of PA management. Three sub-components under conservation area management are i) management of existing PAs, ii) expansion of PAs and iii) buffer zone management in association with local communities.

Main objectives of NSP are to:

- Develop a functional model for formalized co-management of PAs;

- Create alternative income generation opportunities for key local stakeholders;
- Develop policies conducive to improved PA management and build constituencies to further these goals;
- Strengthen the institutional systems and capacity of the FD and key stakeholders;
- Develop infrastructure facilities within PAs; and
- Restore and manage habitats.

Protected Areas covered under NSP and FSP

Of the 3 PAs covered under both NSP and FSP, 2 are located in Sylhet Forest Division of north-eastern Bangladesh whereas one PA is located in south-eastern Bangladesh (in Cox's Bazar South Forest Division). Lawachara NP (in Kamalganj Upzila of Maulvibazar District) is located nearly 160 km northeast of Dhaka and approximately 60 km south of Sylhet city. It lies between 24030' – 24032' N and 91037' – 91047' E and is nearly eight km east of Srimongal, on way to Kamalganj. The NP comprises forests of southern and eastern parts of West Bhanugach Reserve Forest (RF) within Lawachara, Chautali and Kalachara Beats of Maulvibazar Range. The NP was notified in 1996 as per the Wildlife (Preservation) (Amendment) Act, 1974, with a total forest area of 1250 ha.

Rema-Kalenga WS (in Chunarughat and Madhabpur Upazilas of Habiganj District) is located nearly 130 km east-northeast of Dhaka and approximately 80 km south-southwest of Sylhet city. The Sanctuary lies in between 24006' – 24014' N and between 91036' – 91039' E. The WS, bordering on east and south by the Indian state of Tripura, comprises forests of southern and eastern parts of Tarap Hill RF covering Kalenga, Chonbari and Rema Beats of Habiganj-2 Range. The WS was originally notified in 1981 with a total forest area of 1095 ha, and expanded to 1795 ha in 1996, and now includes nearly 85% of the high forest remaining in Tarap Hill RF. Parts of Tarap Hill RF are contiguous with the Sanctuary's western and northern boundaries.

Teknaf Game Reserve (GR), as a part of Teknaf peninsula, is located in the country's far south-eastern corner, near to Myanmar border. It was established in 1983 over a RF area of 11,615 ha covering 11 forest blocks in three Forest Ranges (Whykong, Silkhali and Teknaf) of Cox's Bazar (South) Forest Division. It is situated in Ukhia and Teknaf Upzilas of Cox's Bazar District, and lies in between the Naf river on eastern side and Bay of Bengal on western side. The GR is part of a linear hill range (reaching an altitude of 700m) gently slopping to rugged hills and cliffs running down the central part of the peninsula, with a north-south length of nearly 28 km and an east-west width of 3-5 km). The northern boundary of the GR starts near Whykong town (which is nearly 50 km from Cox's Bazar), extending in south up to Teknaf town. A metalled road connecting Cox's Bazar with Teknaf runs in between the Naf river and eastern boundary of the GR. Although a four wheel drive can reach Teknaf on western side through an unbroken stretch of beach from Cox's Bazar during low tide, no metalled road exist presently. Many earthen and brick soled roads traverse the GR from east to west including one on the north most boundary.

2. ESTABLISHING LINKAGES BETWEEN NSP AND FSP

The natural forest management program of FSP includes the conservation area management component focusing on participatory management of 7 PAs. This component offers ample opportunities for establishing close linkages between the ongoing activities of FSP and the planned activities under NSP.

2.1 Conservation Area Management Activities under FSP

The conservation area management component under FSP has the following three sub-components : i) management of existing PAs, ii) expansion of PAs and iii) buffer zone management in association with local communities. The existing notified area of the 7 PAs was to be managed under the first sub-component of FSP. An amount of Tk. 96.21 million was earmarked for covering an area of 24,150 ha with management aim of long-term biological restoration through natural regeneration, habitat rehabilitation and protection from biotic interference. Under the second sub-component new areas of outstanding beauty and attractions and with ecological and biological importance were to be identified and notified as PAs. An amount of Tk. 1.4 million was earmarked for bringing an additional 2,000 ha forests under PA cover. The third sub-component to be implemented in identified buffer zones around the PAs focused on participatory management by associating local stakeholders through usufructuary benefits granted to them based on participatory benefits sharing agreements (PBSAs). The user groups of participants, formed with the help of locally selected NGOs, enter into agreements with FD for raising and managing plantations on sustainable use basis in identified buffer areas in order to reduce biotic pressure on PA's core areas. An amount of Tk. 166.21 million was earmarked for covering an area of 5,160 ha under buffer zone activities including buffer zone plantations.

Unfortunately not much could be implemented under the conservation area component till 2001-02 due to a number of reasons. Even after 2002 main activities under this component were implemented under the third subcomponent focusing on buffer areas mainly for raising buffer zone plantations. For instance, during 2002-03 and 2003-04 only buffer zone plantations (mainly woodlots and agroforestry) were raised over an area of 1,277 ha and 2,080 ha respectively in the PAs covered under FSP. In view of poor implementation, particularly on the sub-component i) and ii), a review mission (2004) of ADB has substantially curtailed the budget earmarked for these two sub-components. As a result, only buffer zone plantations under buffer zone management, and to much lesser extent enrichment plantations (planned during 2004-05 – a target of 900 ha enrichment plantations has been fixed for Cox's Bazar South Division for implementation in Teknaf Game Reserve and Himchari National Park) under the sub-component i) on existing areas, are being implemented currently.

2.2 Buffer Zone Plantations around Lawachara National Park

The Park is intimately surrounded by a number of villages, towns, cultivated fields and Tea Estates. It is bordered on the north, west, south and south-east largely by Tea Estates whereas a part of the eastern boundary (nearly 1 km.) is bordered by FD lands (mainly grasslands) under long-term lease to HEED Bangladesh (a health and participatory development NGO). Most of

the north-eastern boundary of the Park is bordered by FD lands under Kalachara Beat. Local population including ethnic minorities, who depend on agriculture for their livelihood, meet their consumption needs for forest produce from nearby forests. The area used for betel leaf production by the residents of Lawachara Forest Village is an enclave within a larger area used by BFRI for silvicultural research. The boundary between the Park and the BFRI area is nearly 2 km. in length.

In total 18 villages of local stakeholders, identified in and around the Park's boundaries, will form key local stakeholders for an effective Park management. These villages lie within 1 km. of the Park boundary; 4 villages (Baligaon, Bagmara, Rashtila and Chatakchara) are just at the outskirts of the Park. Of the 18 villages, 6 villages (Bagmara, Magurchara, Lawachara, Baligaon, Dolubari and Biranpur slum) have been identified as having major stakes, another 6 villages (Botertol slum, Rashtila, Saraibari, Veerachara and Radhanagar) with moderate level of stakes and the remaining 6 villages (Langurpur, Ballarpur, Noagaon, Tilagaon, Bhasaniganj and Bongaon) with minor level of stakes in the forests covered under the Park.

Buffer zone plantations are being established under FSP since 2002 on RF land, available around Lawachara NP, mainly in Kalachara and Chautali Beats of Moulvibazar Range. The year-wise buffer planting details in each of the Beats are presented in Table 2.2 :

Table 2.2 Buffer Zone Plantations around Lawachara National Park

Year	Range	Beat	Plantation (ha)
2002-3	Moulvibazar	Kalachara	70
2003-4	Moulvibazar	Kalachara	80
		Chautali	25
2004-5	Moulvibazar	Kalachara	43

Source : DFO, Sylhet Forest Division

These buffer zone plantations are mainly woodlots of fast growing tree species (including indigenous species) planted at a spacing of 2 m x 2 m (2500 seedlings/ha). The main objectives of raising buffer plantations are to plant degraded/barren forest lands with suitable/indigenous tree species by associating local stakeholders on usufruct sharing basis and reforest encroached and blank forest lands to reduce biotic pressure on core areas. The user groups formed of 15-25 participants from neighbouring villages are involved in raising, protecting and managing these plantations raised on RF land adjacent to the core area of Lawachara NP. The user groups as a whole have been assigned forest land for which they sign PBSAs (valid for a rotation period of 10 years) with the FD.

The forest land for raising buffer plantations are assigned to a user group in such a way that each participant's share would on an average be 1 ha. In lieu of their protection efforts the user groups are entitled for sharing benefits as per the PBSAs (in case of woodlot and agroforestry plantations the participants are entitled to 45% of the total proceeds from the harvest whereas the FD gets 45% and the remainder 10% is deposited in a Tree Farming Fund to be operated by user groups). The woodlots are harvested at 10 years rotation with two intermittent thinning at year 4 and year 7. The forest produce from the first thinning entirely goes to user group whereas the proceeds from 2nd thinning and final harvest are shared as per the PBSA. Other intermediate

benefits arising from cleaning/pruning, agricultural crops raised till canopy closure, fruit trees along the boundaries, etc. entirely go to the participants/user groups.

2.3 Buffer Zone Plantations around Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary

A number of villages, cultivated fields, tea estates, khas lands and forests are located around Rema-Kalenga WS. The WS is intimately surrounded by a number of villages, cultivated fields, forests and Tea Estates. It is bordered along most of its northern and western boundaries by RFs (nearly 11.5 km in length), along part of its south-western boundary by Tea Estate lands (nearly 3.5 km in length), along its southern and eastern boundaries by India (nearly 15 km), and along a small portion of its northern boundary by khas lands (approximately 1 km in length). Little or no natural forest borders the Sanctuary on the east or south, although some scrub vegetation remains. Land adjacent to the Sanctuary in India has been converted to rubber plantations and paddy fields.

Based on a RRA/PRA study conducted by NACOM during May-July 2004, a total of 22 villages have been identified having stakes of different levels in the WS. Of these, Debrabari Forest Village is located inside the WS, 9 villages (Kalengabari, Kalibari, Mongoliabari, Puranbari, Chakidarbari, Chanbari, Rema-Balumara, Hatimara and Krishnachara) are on the periphery of WS, and 12 villages (Harinmara, Himalia, Chamaltoli, Nichintapur, Lalkear, Barabda, Sayadabaj, Alinagar, Krishnanagar, Basulla, Kabilashpur and Jamburachara) are located outside of the WS. Ten villages inside and on the periphery of WS have major stakes in the WS as local villagers depend on the WS for meeting their basic consumption needs. In addition to fuelwood, timber, bamboo and other NTFPs, they collect vegetables, fruits, fodder and sungrass from the WS. Tipra tribals from Debrabari Forest Village get involved in forest protection efforts by joining patrol parties of FD. The remaining 12 villages lying outside the WS have minor stakes mainly in terms of associated with fuelwood collection. A number of Tripura villages/housing clusters (for example, Chonbari, Mongoliabari, Kaliabari, Krishnachara, together comprising 60 or more households) are scattered (from Chonbari Beat Office to near the Indian Border) along the north-western and northern boundaries of the Sanctuary.

Under FSP the buffer zone plantations are being established on RF land around Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary since 2002. The year-wise planting details in each of the Beats are as below :

Table 2.3 Buffer Zone Plantations around Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctaury

Year	Range	Beat	Plantation (ha)
2002-3	Habiganj 2	Chonbari	30
2003-4	Habiganj 2	Kalenga	150
2004-5	Habiganj 2	Kalenga	43

Source : DFO, Sylhet

The technical details of the above-mentioned buffer plantations are the same as in Section 2.2.

2.4 Buffer Zone Plantations in Teknaf Game Reserve

A large number of villages/paras, cultivated fields including betel leaf areas, khas lands, brick fields, prawn farms and water bodies are located in and around Teknaf Game Reserve. It is bordered along most of its northern boundaries by RF, along southern boundary by Teknaf town including BDR establishments, along its western boundary by Bay of Bengal and along eastern boundary by Naf river bordering Myanmar. As a result of refugee influx from Myanmar, a number of Rohingya camps and settlements have come up in between the Naf river and the eastern boundary of GR. A large number of betel leaf cultivation areas are noticed, particularly in and around the western boundary facing the Bay of Bengal. Little or no natural forest borders the GR on the west, although some scrub vegetation remains. Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) is responsible for maintaining security along the Bangladesh-Myanmar Border. The presence of BDR staff brings additional biotic pressure on one hand but on the other hand may help check illicit felling from the forests.

Based on a RRA/PRA study conducted by NACOM during May-July 2004, a total of 115 settlements locally called paras or villages (spread over 6 unions : Zaliapalong, Whykong, Baharachara, Hnilla, Sabrang and Teknaf) have been identified having stakes of different levels in the GR. A total of 53 settlements are located inside the GR boundaries whereas the remainder 62 paras are situated (adjacent or outside the GR) in the interface landscape zone. Nearly two-third of total paras (the villages inside and on the periphery of WS) have major stakes in the WS as local villagers depend on the GR for meeting their basic consumption needs.

Buffer zone plantations are being established on RF land in Teknaf Game Reserve since 2002. The year-wise planting details in each of the Beats are as below :

Table 2.4 Buffer Zone Plantations in Teknaf Game Reserve

Year	Range	Beat	Plantation (ha)
2002-3	Teknaf	Teknaf	25
		Hnilla	10
2003-4	Whykhyong	Roikhong	60
		Teknaf	30
		Mochuni	60
	Shilkhali	Hnilla	40
		Moidho Hnilla	60
		Shilkhali	50
		Mathavanga	20
2004-5	Targets (Ranges/Beats to be decided)	Rajarchara	50
			50

Source : DFO, Cox's Bazar (South) Forest Division

The technical details of the above-mentioned buffer plantations are the same as stated in Section 2.2.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of establishing close linkages required for catalyzing synergy between the two people-centered projects is being increasingly realized both by FD officials and the staff of NSP. As discussed in Section 2 the buffer zone plantations being raised under FSP in fact fall under the interface landscape zones as identified under NSP. The user groups of participants to whom forest land is assigned for raising, protecting and managing buffer zone plantations are indeed from the villages located in the identified interface zones. An important objective of raising buffer zone plantations through peoples' participation is to reduce biotic pressure on core areas. During the field visits it became evident that this message has not percolated down well to local villagers due mainly to low importance given to building public awareness under FSP. The NSP staff can bridge this gap through better motivation, training and communication activities on biodiversity conservation in the 3 common PAs.

The planned activities under NSP will be implemented by new user groups being formed by NSP field staff. This gives an opportunity for the NSP staff to forge close linkages between NSP and FSP through formation and motivation of user groups. There can be many ways to establish such linkages. For example, the chairman and some other members of the user groups of FSP can be opted as members of user groups being formed under NSP. This also means that whenever the NSP field staff visits a village having FSP user groups they should invariably discuss with the group members about biodiversity conservation activities including their responsibility of providing protection to core areas around which they are engaged in buffer zone plantation activities. Also there can be a case for the formation of a network or federation in relation to the user groups formed under the two projects. The skill development, training and income generation activities planned under NSP should also include the group members active under FSP. Similarly a close coordination can be achieved by FD whenever the field staff interacts with the two user groups. This issue has been discussed with the officials FSP directorate and FD field staff, who agree to maintain close linkages between the two projects through the user groups. The planned co-management committees to be chaired by the concerned ACF/DFO should also focus such coordination issues during their regular meetings.