



INTEGRATED PROTECTED AREA CO-MANAGEMENT (IPAC)

REPORT ON IPAC MEETING WITH IUCN-TH PROJECT AND IPAC TEAM VISIT IN TANGUAR HAOR, SUNAMGONJ

November, 2009

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25-28 October, 2009

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**Report on IPAC sharing meeting with IUCN-TH Project and IPAC
Team visit in Tanguar Haor, Sunamgonj
25-28 October, 2009**

Documented by: WorldFish Center-IPAC Component



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BACKGROUND

Tanguar Haor is a Ramsar site lies in the northeastern part of Bangladesh. It spread over in two Upazila namely Taherpur and Dharma Pasha of Sunamgonj district. The Meghalay hills of India lie on the northern side of this *haor*. It has significant importance as mother fisheries of the country. There are 88 villages in and around this *haor* who rely upon *haor* resources including fish for their livelihoods.

IUCN is working here under Tanguar Haor Management project. This is the second phase of the project. IUCN with CNRS has implemented its first phase of 18 months during 2008-09. Similarly, some other partner organizations are involved in community mobilization and introducing co-management approaches for resource conservation. As Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) project also aimed to wetland biodiversity conservation and management, hence it has the objective to explore through discussion with IUCN project management and partner institutions as well as with the community. The scope and areas of working with Tanguar *Haor* resource management interventions along with IUCN at complimentary state and find activities with scope for leveraging with IUCN TH management project. With this view, CoP-IPAC designated a team to share with IUCN project personnel, beneficiaries and visit TH to explore possible future interventions for IPAC.

THE TEAM

1. Dr. Giasuddin Khan, Project Leader, WFC-IPAC
2. Masood Siddique, PMAR Associate, WFC-IPAC
3. Mazharul Islam Zahangir, CIF, WFC-IPAC
4. Ataur Rahman, SF, Sylhet Cluster, IPAC.

DURATION OF VISITS

25 to 27 October 2009 at Sunamgonj.

DAY 1: 25 OCTOBER, 2009- The team attended an informal meeting at 06:00 pm at IUCN Office, Sunamgonj. CoP-IPAC was also present in the meeting along with the team. Mr. Rezaul Karim, Project Leader, IUCN-TH Project, Sunamgonj and other IUCN staffs, IUCN partner CNRS personnel were present in the meeting. Mr. Hasan and his teammates explained the team about their project interventions, methodology of co-management body formation, constraints encountered etc. IUCN targeted to form 81 CBOs in 81 villages of TH. So far 47 CBOs have been formed.

DAY 2: 26 OCTOBER, 2009- The team attended in IUCN-TH quarterly coordination meeting of CBO leaders at 06:30 pm in the same venue as silent observers. A number of issues raised in the meeting of which note worthy was forth coming fishing period in TH. From the discussion, it was assumed that, unlike other wetlands of the country, here also

most of the potential fishing spots being grabbed by the musclemen and influential non-fishers. The participant CBO leaders were complaining frequently on that issue. They expressed their fear that they might be resisted by non-fisher power groups during pile fishing. Meeting moderator Mr. Hasan and his fellow mates were encouraging them to encounter those non-fishers power group by any means to establish their fishing rights.
IPAC reading as observer on 26 October, 2009—at IUCN in community meeting

- IUCN has prepared the village communities lead by the central community leaders to start commercial fishing from 1st January 2010
- Work done 46 of 88 villages, office made four *khas* lands have been allocated for them through DC
- Fishing will start from January 1, now community need to protect illegal fishing
- How to do it and why to do it – Rezaul wanted to get the community members understand if they would need to become successful in establishing their rights
- If community can not take possession of fishing now given the situation developed in their favor they can never do it
- Anser guards are 12 in each point x 4 = 48, corrupt , illegal fishers are doing fishing through hidden arrangements with guards, community need to protect illegal fishers to legal rights to stop
- Registration is going on; only one profession will be recorded for each HH either agric or fishing, HHs need to decide now. They are on both professions and even they have some alternative jobs like weeds collection
- Along with Anser's villagers need to be added for patrolling to guard Anser's so that they can not do corruption.

Observation: Community appeared to be not fully empowered and not mentally strong to take the challenge for fishing by taking the security and management responsibility. IPAC-WorldFish recent study revealed that CBO development and fictionalization takes time and in the regard these CBOs have had relatively small time frame to be able to undertake resource management functions and maintain institutions.

It seemed to the team that IUCN is probably going too fast and instead of taking rational resolution of conflict within the community IUCN-TH Project approach in engaging them in fishing (with a part of the population) needs to be based on assessing the strength they reserve. This may not bring good results for any of the two parties. The team has the impression that:

- Yet the formed CBOs are not well organized both in resource and office management and well represented by fishers;
- Local DoF is out of scene and has no functional link with the TH project which can not be viewed as a positive action implementation modality;
- Instead of introducing pile fishing practices, no other appropriate fisheries management tools introduced in TH;
- Implementation of Fish Act is seldom and there are no joint initiatives with local DoF and administration.

IUCN project leader Mr. Rezaul Hasan provided necessary support and arrangements for the team's following day's visit to TH by assigning IUCN representatives including CNRS to attend community meetings and arranging meeting with the village committee in one of the TH villages.

DAY 3: 27 OCTOBER, 2009- The team started from Sunamgonj at 07:30 am with a hired speedboat. After three hours journey the team arrived in a fisher's village named Mojrai. It is a small village almost like an island inside the TH *Haor*. There are 37 HH of which all are fishers and from minority group. The advance parties of IUCN partner NGO CNRS staffs were waiting at the spot. They arranged a community meeting in the village that held in front of *Samity* office. Team members started very informal discussion with the villagers. Their livelihood, income source, present and past fish availability, fish biodiversity, awareness on fish act etc. were the topics of discussions. Instead of asking questions, the team allowed them to talk freely at their own way.

TH VISIT 27 OCTOBER, 2009

On 27th the team visited along with the IUCN/CNRS members



TH - Village **Mojrai**

Present (in advance for IUCN) CNRS FS (3)

Shankar Sheel Taherpur 01728-454687

Md. Zamaluddin 01914- 078644

The team has following observations from the discussions:

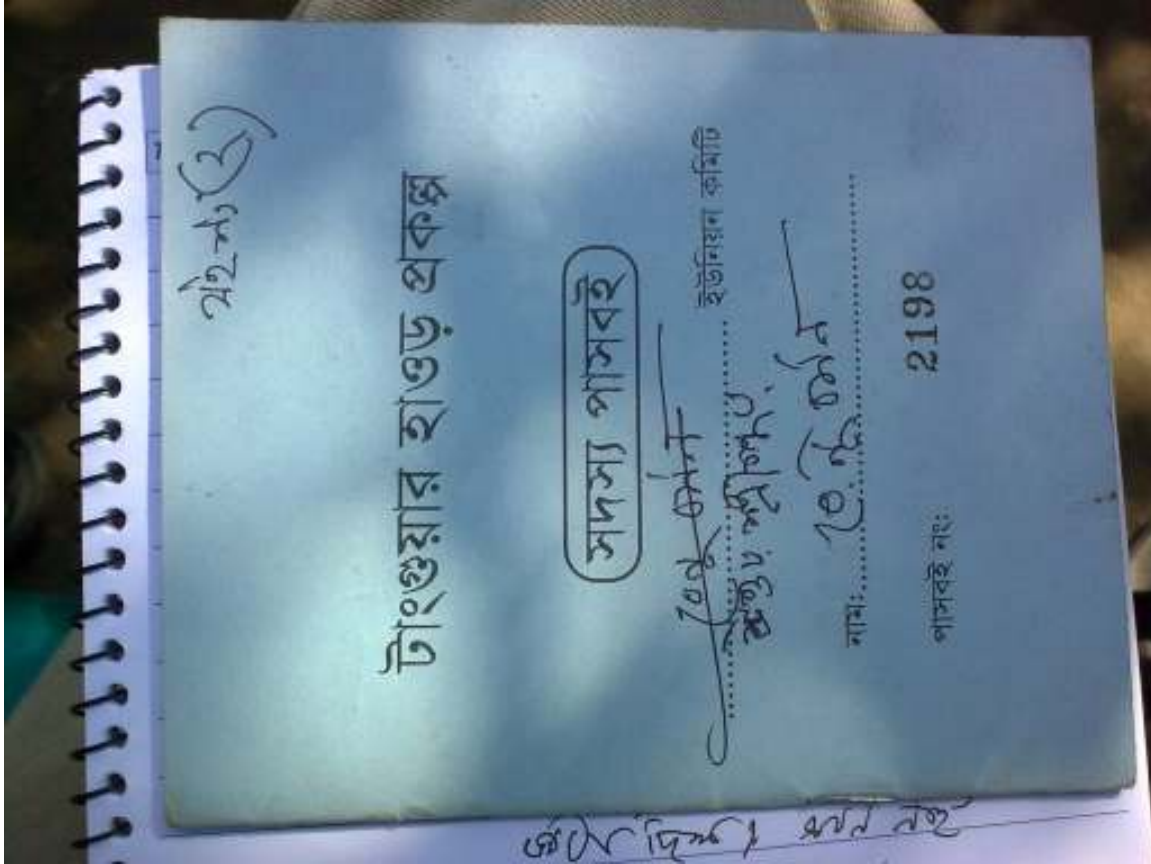
- Mojrai is not a real fisher village although IUCN recognizes it as pure fisher village. Actually there is no real fisher village in TH as assumed;
- Each of the HH mainly depends on agriculture farming for their livelihood. Fishing is their another income source with which they can meet up other family expenses;
- Almost all HH have own agriculture land. A few landless use to take “*borga*” where they grow rice on share basis;
- Their agriculture farming highly affected as the BWDB dam damaged in many areas. They were appealing to take immediate necessary actions to reconstruct the dam;
- They are well aware about Fish Acts and claimed that they remain abide by the rules. However, it assumed that use of *current jal* is common though they denied;
- The community recognized CNRS is providing necessary resource management support to them;
- Most of the HH use to take credit from other HH especially from ASHA. They also lend money from *mohajon* for fishing;
- They do not face any obstacle to sale their catch independently;
- Almost all children are school going;
- There were no ultra poor HH seen in the village.



Ataur Rahman, Site Facilitator and Masood Siddique in deep discussion with CBO

Villager's additional view

- Many fishes are now extinct: *nandin*, *mohashol* etc; Ramsar is responsible for this situation;
- Past-pile fishing (fishing at every three years interval) maintained by leaseholder, no poaching or illegal fishing was allowed – strictly managed by own power, used to put *katha* and fishes had chances to grow;
- But previously they could do some marginal fishing (the leaseholder allowed/overlooked) subsistence fishing and villagers had enough for livelihoods supplemented by rice cultivation;
- Now there is no pile fishing, no *katha*; controlled fishing is allowed year round. There is no closed season but guards take bribes and allow illegal fishing. CNRS does not allow over fishing and they catch nets. As such real fishers are unhappy with Ramsar management introduction;
- DC's license of fishing (6am – 6pm) which do not match with them and real fishers suffers from misuse of powers by the 'law enforcing' people;
- No crisis of water they encounter but *beri bandh* (BWDB embankment) is damaged and so rice harvest frequently interrupted and damaged putting them into food crisis, particularly during fishing ban period;
- Md. Surat zamal, village Uttar Sreepur is not a member of CNRS *Samity*;



Member passbook issued by CNRS at TH project

- DoF had no role before and also not now (in IUCN TH project DoF has no functional link)
- Some villagers demand reconstruction of *beribandh* as they give priority to cultivation, not the fishing which is their second choice.



Community meeting in progress (rep of BELA is sitting right to CBO members)

After the discussion, the team went to Taherpur Upazila to visit Upazila Fisheries Office and IPAC Site office. There they met UFO Mr. Ahsan Habib Khan and AFO Mr. Ziaul Hoque. UFO informed the team that IPAC Site office has good linkage with his office and Upazila administration. He recognized SF-IPAC Mr. Ataur Rahman as a good field worker and praised him for his cordial support during different occasions. The team passed by the IPAC site office at Taherpur while the SF Ataur was present in the team.



IPAC site Office at Taherpur

After the discussion, the team left Taherpur and returned to Sunamgonj at 07:30 pm.



IPAC team visits Upazila Fisheries Office at Taherpur (Ahsan Habib UFO is seen left) in picture with the team

CONCLUDING REMARKS FROM THE IPAC TEAM

In spite of the fact that IUCN TH project in the first phase has made some milestone developments in the policy level to share the revenue from fishing with the community and has developed the CBOs and arranged for policy decisions for the establishment of community fishing rights there are some areas need be added to complement as well as supplement the future management action plan.

Some more observations from the IPAC team with reference to the TH Project PCR analysis **(the extract prepared by Gias was forwarded to CoP and DCoP for information)** as a summary of the actions implemented by TH/IUCN and the present programs including observation of some issues) and simulating the field observations and the discussions at IUCN TH project office the team makes the following conclusions:

Tentative areas of IPAC complimentary work with IUCN–CNRS (to be further reviewed later – after January 2010 to confirm):

- Review and decide on the combination of ‘pile fishery and the closed season for fishing’ in addition to the IUCN plan to establish sanctuary at five *beels* and allowing fishing to year round fishing through licenses, in which case the stock assessment and MSY level fishing and the optimum fishing effort need to be considered where IPAC–WorldFish can contribute;
- Additionally cage culture may be introduced where IPAC can contribute with leveraged financing from the TH project;
- DoF needs to be involved in the technical advice and partly implementation of the good practices along with IPAC;
- AIGAS need to be linked to ‘resource management’ rather than only providing extra livelihoods where IPAC can contribute.

It is however strongly recommended that this plan should neither be taken for development into action plan from IPAC side nor shared with IUCN or its partner agencies until the commercial fishing as planned by the project for 1st January 2010 is started and some results comes to hand to oversee the impact. It needs to be mentioned that this is very strongly planned by the TH project. They are preparing the CBOs seriously for this to make a success in establishing fishing rights of the already formed groups while there are opponents and it has been taken as a challenge. We need to wait and see what comes out after January 2010 before we further share our plan and views with them.