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Place of visit: Srimangal

Date of Visit: February 15 to 17, 2009

Purpose of visit:

1. Discuss and review the present status of issuing ticket;
2. Review the system of book keeping and present status;
3. Consult on patrolling activities to protect illicit feeling review the present status;

Observation at LNP on issuing ticket, recording books and some other issues:

1. Nishorgo was trying to ensure entry fees from the visitors of LNP and other parks. In this regard, the intension of the project was that 50% of the collected entry fees would use for community development through CMC. There was no instance to collect/ earn money from government property and use that for community development through a CBO without any sorts of legal instrument. Although CMC has allowed by the Bangladesh Government through Gazette Notification for working in five protected areas along with Forest Department, but it does not clarify whether CMC will able to get benefit through collecting money and using land of the FD. However, NSP tried to influence policy makers of the department and at one point was able to convince them. They wrote to ministry for getting its approval. Forest and Environment Ministry alone cannot take decision for this matter as it relates with Finance Ministry. Finance Ministry agreed on principal and issued circular to FD for preparing a guideline. Meanwhile, NSP invited Secretary, Forest and Environment Ministry to visit LNP and requested him to open the ticketing system as it is agreed by Finance Ministry on principal and he did it accordingly.
2. However, as issuing ticket was not approved formally, entry fees collection through sale of ticket was stopped on the first day of opening and it was decided to wait for final approval. However, the management of NSP and CMC decided to issue a free ticket for counting park visitors to have update information about the visitors.
3. Considering the context, NSP handed over the tickets to CMC- LNP and on behalf, CMC Accounts and Administration Assistant received those tickets, but either not properly recorded in CMC stock register book neither also at NSP site office register. There were two types of ticket; one is with the entry fee amount and another one without that.
4. There were no stock register for two three months of 2008, from November 2008 a new register is on the table for recording stock items. It appeared to me that CMC Accounts cum Administration Assistant does not very much aware or conscious about proper recording of stock items.

5. Up to November 2008, Accounts cum Administration Assistant issued ticket (the free one) to the visitors for counting purpose. In the month of November 2008 the stock of the printed tickets were finished. After that, he started to issue counterfoil of the ticket. There were no signs where CMC requested the visitors to collect the ticket, which is free of cost. The general practice is that when people come to LNP than gateman ask them to collect free ticket and if they come to hire eco tour guide or kiosk for brushier or gift item then tour guide or Accounts cum Admin. Assistant inform them for collecting ticket. When SF LNP when came to know about the issue asked him not to issue counterfoil of ticket for counting purpose. However, without any reason the Accounts cum Administration Assistant continued to issuing the counterfoil. Here it is worthy to be noted that, it was tough to count the number through tickets, as the ticket was not issued from the gate. People rarely visit Tourist Kiosk for buying gift items; as there were no charges for entry inside the LNP, visitors do not feel interest to collect it. However, control of issuing ticket through is very weak and there is scope to collect money by issuing ticket or counter foil of ticket.
6. Book Keeping and Recording is weak, particularly maintaining stock register of salable items are poorly maintained through stock register. Through spot check of one item (PA guidebook) it was clear to me that it is hard to follow the quantity items received, item sold and item stored. Hence, there are scope of misuse and even corruption.
7. I could note here that there was no menu/chart on the wall describing the rate/price of the saleable items of CMC. That is why any one can ask for the price according his desire and no one can protest it.
8. There was provision to keep the counterfoil of tickets, money receipts in a good manner for audit purpose. It is found that for recording transaction a cashbook and ledger is maintained by Accounts cum Admn. Assistant of CMC.
9. It reveals to me that CMC financial issues are less priority for the Site Office and it was poorly monitored, supervised and informed CMC members. Site Facilitator is less concern about financial management of the organization rather he is busy with other works. It could also be noted here that there was no presentation of CMC income and expenses in line with ADP at CMC office room, although it was told to SF several times to hang it on the board.
10. The rate for tour guide was fixed earlier and requested the guides to charge according to the fixed rate. However, it was my impression that they do not follow it always. Besides, the Account and Administration Assistant also some time involve for collecting more money from the visitors on behalf of tour guides. If he can collect more, he gets certain amount from the guides.

However, the rate for eco tour guide is written in a small piece of paper and hanged on the wall, which is not properly visible. CMC decided to have a fee from tour guides each month amounting taka 200 (Blue cardholder) and 150 Taka (green card holder).

Rate for hiring eco tour guide

Three hours Trail	: Taka 500
Two hours Trail	: Taka 400
(It was fixed later and not in the hanged chart)	
One hour Trail	: Taka 300
Half an hour Trail	: Taka 200

11. People can use toilet of CMC office and has to pay Taka 5 for this. There were other two temporary toilets, which are free. The amount charged for toilet use is not formal and that is why a small notebook is maintained for recording accounts for that. Due to proper decision from concerned authority, it also cannot be recorded properly. The money collected is used as casual labour cost for a person who take care of cleaning the toilet and trails.
12. Two picnic spots were selected for LNP and one of them are now functional and another one is yet to be operational. One round shed and one toilet for each picnic spot is constructed. However, no one is assigned for the management of the picnic spots. This issue is also need to be addressed immediately.
13. Visitors also hire guides from outside and they are not properly educated about the flora and fauna of LNP that is why they could not able to describe about the park properly. This also a reason to misunderstand about the quality of the tour guides trained by NSP. However, according the Guides they have lacking on English vocabulary and need training on that.
14. There were no resting places inside the hiking trail particularly in 2 and 3 hours.
15. One more issue to be noted here that snatching from the visitors inside the LNP is gradually increasing. From the discussion with different people, I assumed people/labour of lemon garden of LNP is some time involve with this. Obviously, those gardens are illegal and encroached.
16. Car parking spaces are not sufficient and tourist control is less priority to CMC and concerned personnel. A strategy or action plan needs to be developed to address the issue.

17. The salary of Accounts cum Office Administration was 3000 Taka initially, later on it reduced to Taka 2000. After withdrawing support from NSP, it was Taka 1000 for three months (October- December 2008) and now it is Taka 3000. It is too low for survival of a family.

Observation at LNP on illicit felling and some other related issues:

1. Illicit felling is a high rated issue for Lawachara national Park and often news, report publishes as news papers regarding the issue. Eyes of all corners are always kept on LNP. Two reasons, one is Lawachara is very close to Dhaka and another one is USAID project is working there for conservation. Besides, the most valuable trees like teak are vanishing from the forest very quickly. From the very beginning project also gave high priority on protecting illicit felling. Project formed few community patrol groups to help Forest Department and one of them also received honorarium from project.
2. Only 1250 hector is considered as Protected Area of thereserve forest. Therefore, another department is operational for the management of reserve forest. There were no boundary pillars or line to demarcate PA and Reserve Forest.
3. Community Patrol Groups (CPG) is still operational although paying honorarium is stopped. Other strategy has taken to provide livelihood opportunity to the patrolling group members. According to the CPG members, AIGA support given to them is not sufficient for their subsistence.
4. The rate of felling is less then earlier but it is still quite high. Community mobilization process is continued in different ways involving DC, UNO and other local high profile stakeholders. This has some impact on illicit felling. But still the it needs to be focused more.
5. CPG members some time hold illicit feller from forest and hand over to FD or local police station. It is an argument from the CPG members that illicit feller can easily come out from the custody of FD or Police.
6. However, it is true that as there were no instance of punishment so a feller is always a feller. He never changes his profession. On the other part of the coin due to poverty, poor people are used as feller by the big timber mafia.
7. 5-6 professional fellers in the LNP landscape area are involved with illicit felling and big timber mafias patronize these people.
8. Although LNP is an important and well-focused PA, the Social mobilization for conservation of LNP is rather weak. Involvement of all stakeholders is not well addressed in this PA, otherwise it is difficult to protect and conserve bio diversity.

9. There are still lacking of harmony among the local stakeholders, FD personnel and CPG members, which need to be improved.
10. Although project tried to develop a local team for monitoring forest health but it is not very regular to do it.
11. When FD personnel seized timber from illegal feller, higher authority appreciates them, but it has opposite reactions to feller. Illegal feller tries to recover it through cutting more trees. This also increases illegal felling.

Recommendations:

Issue	Problem	Recommendations for CMC	Recommendations for IPAC
1. Ticket Issue	Issuing counter foil of tickets to visitors	1. CMC should stop issuing ticket to visitors.	1. Stop issuing ticket to visitors without guideline. 2. A guideline need to be developed regarding ticket issue, which is linked with guideline of 50% benefit sharing.
2. Book keeping	Stock register is poorly maintained	1. CMC should audit stock register at the end of each month.	1. Site office should facilitate CMC to audit the stocks and other books of records. 2. Office management and Book keeping training need to impart to Accounts cum Administrative Assistant. 3. At least two CMC members should also include in the Office management and book keeping training.
3. Charge for	Rate chart is poorly	1. CMC should	1. Site office must

tour guide	visible to others	hang a rate chart of tour guides in such place, which is easily visible to others.	support and facilitate to hang this chart in proper place.
4. Cost of salable items	There are no price sheet for the buyers	1. CMC should hang a price chart of salable items in such place, which is easily visible to others	1. Site office must support and facilitate to hang this chart in proper place.
5. Financial management	Not priority in monthly CMC meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A statement of income and expenditure should be submitted to meeting each month. 2. ADP and Income and expenditure statement should be hanged on notice board. 3. All charges to visitors should be transparent and recorded in books properly. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Site office need to facilitate to prepare and hang income and expenditure statement for CMC. 2. Site office must follow up whether the system is working properly or not. 3. Site office may support and facilitate CMC to audit it's books and records quarterly basis.
6. Visitors management and facilities	Poor facilities for visitors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CMC should prepare a comprehensive proposal for visitor management and facilities; 2. CMC need collect fund by submitting that proposal to different parties. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Site office need to facilitate and support CMC to prepare the proposal. 2. Site office support CMC according to the proposal with a long-term vision. 3. Private ownership need to be encouraged for creating more picnic spots, car-parking facilities for the visitors. 4. Federation/youth

			club may develop picnic stops jointly in leased land. FD can help them in this regard.
7. Security inside the National Park.	Incidence of snatching is increasing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CMC should talk with the local community regarding the issue. 2. Local law enforcement authority should be informed. 3. Stop and evict illegal encroachment and lemon garden inside the NP. 	1. Site team need to facilitate this issue at CMC meeting.
8. Salary/ honorarium of Accounts cum Administration Assistant	The honorarium is Taka 1500 per month now.		1. Site office should look after this issue and propose to project HQ what should be honorarium of the person.
9. Illegal felling	Illicit felling is increasing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patrolling groups need to be reshuffled. 2. Spot of illicit feeling need to be identified properly and form patrolling groups according to need. 3. Exclusive list of the illegal feller need to be prepared and start dialogue with them. 4. Mass gathering, public meeting should continue to create public 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Site team need to facilitate CMC properly. 2. Site team need to understand social mobilization process and have to keep it as continuous effort. 3. Site team has to interact with CMC, CPG and other stakeholders regularly and has to build a good working relationship with them. 4. Site team has to response quickly to

		<p>opinion against illicit felling.</p> <p>5. Dialogue with Truck owners and drivers association, tea garden managers and labour association need to be initiated.</p> <p>6. Mobile team from CMC should visit NP area at least twice in a week.</p> <p>7. AIGA support should be given to those who are directly involved with protection and need to revise the existing strategy of AIGA support.</p> <p>8. Campaigns against illicit felling need to be expedite.</p>	<p>address the problem.</p>
Site management	Weak facilitation skill		<p>1. Facilitation skill needs to be improved.</p> <p>2. Site team need Understanding about social dynamics and response quickly accordingly.</p> <p>3. Site team need very good understanding with local stakeholders.</p> <p>4. Need relation with local administration and involve them with</p>

			<p>project activities.</p> <p>5. There are two options to address above issues by the project management- (a) Train and skill site team, (b) Recruit skill person for LNP.</p>
Site strategy	No site strategy		<p>1. Need to develop a site strategy with proper consultation with local stakeholders and other Government partners.</p>

Conclusion:

After a short visit to LNP, this is a quick review and recommendation on some issues. I believe these issues should be addressed through developing guidelines and policy and at the same time management decisions.

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People I met and discussed:

1. Raihanul Islam IPAC staff, Srimangal
2. Abu Md. Sharif IPAC staff, Srimangal
3. Abdul Jalil IPAC staff, Srimangal
4. Ataur Rahman IPAC staff, Srimangal
5. Shaila Sultana IPAC staff, Srimangal
6. Parvez Kamal Pasa IPAC staff, Srimangal
7. Modinul Ahsan ACF, Srimangal
8. Rafiqur Rahman President, CMC, LNP
9. Jidisan Pradhan Suchiang CMC member
10. Afzalul Hoque Accounts cum Administration Assistant, CMC, LNP
11. Borhan Uddin Eco Tour Guide, LNP
12. Dhiraj Eco Tour Guide, LNP
13. Benedic Darim Eco Tour Guide, LNP
14. Ahad CPG member, Dolubari
15. Chan Mia CPG member, Dolubari
16. Aiub Ali CPG member, Dolubari
17. Ali Azam CPG member, Dolubari
18. Jonab Ali CPG member, Dolubari
19. Shamser Ali CPG member, Dolubari
20. Siraj Mia CPG member, Dolubari