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# NEWSLETTER

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## Seven member team represent CREL in COMACON 2015



Seven members from USAID’s CREL project participated at the Regional Conference on Co-Management of Natural Resources (COMACON) 2015 which was held from 28 to 30 October 2015 at Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. GIZ and USAID co-hosted the COMACON 15. The overall objective of the conference was to promote exchange of cutting edge approaches and leading ideas among experts and practitioners to guide the next generation of Co-Management in South and Southeast-Asia. And the specific objectives were (i) to give an overview of the concepts and recent trends of Co-Management/shared governance of natural resources, (ii) to foster and promote a creative exchange of current good practices and lessons learned among experts and policy makers in South and Southeast Asia, (iii) to enhance the implementation of Co-Management efforts through training, field trips, and dialogue among policy makers, academia and civil society.

The conference covered key note speech, interactive panel discussions, sharing experiences through group discussions, and plenary presentations. Almost 100 participants from government, NGOs and the private sector in 10 Asian countries attended the conference. Mr. Shams Uddin, Manager-landscape planning of CREL, presented two posters on Ecotourism Potential as Payment for Ecosystem Services for Protected Area Management in Bangladesh and Participatory Climate Vulnerability Assessment-A Planning Tool to improve Co-Management of Protected Area in Bangladesh. Also Ms. Shahzia Khan, Manager-Improved Governance of NR and Biodiversity, CREL presented timeline for the forest and wetland Co-Management in Bangladesh showing how Co-Management was evolved over the period in Bangladesh.

## Women leaders of CMC face the media



To recognize women’s role in rural development, food production and poverty eradication CMCs observed ‘International Day of Rural Women-2015’ with support from CREL. CMCs from all four regions where CREL works organized press briefings. 346 CMC members took part in the briefing, among them

201 were women. These press conferences were significant for a couple of reasons. First, this was the first press briefing by any CMC. And second, women members led the question answer sessions with the media.

Women office bearers presented a keynote paper that discussed CREL’s focus on women members of the CMC and the resulting advances made in food production, rural development, poverty eradication and reduction of dependency on forest resources through various interventions. These papers also presented clear statistics on economic impacts of CREL interventions. The event was covered in 25 different news releases countrywide.

## CREL Gender training motivated CMC to select a gender focal person

CREL is emphasizing a “Gendered Approach” to co-management through training. Gender Leadership and Equality training was provided to Hazarikhil CMC where half of the members are women. Through this training, the participants learned more about gender equality and how women are important in protecting forests and should take on leadership roles in forest co-management institutions. They discussed how forest governance and resource management improves when women are included in forest management committees and are able to participate effectively in the decision-making process. They also discussed the importance of men supporting women’s roles in governance and natural resource management.

As a result, during their October meeting Hazarikhil CMC selected Mr. Mohammad Ali, vice president of CMC, as the gender focal person. He will be responsible for bringing up and resolving gender related issues in the regular CMC meetings. He will also be responsible for addressing and mitigating gender-based violence.

### SLG is leading to increased economic opportunities

A Saving and loan Group (SLG) is a community approach to save together and take small loans from those savings. The activities of the group run in cycles of one year, after which the accumulated savings and the loan profits are distributed back to members. The group follows a very simple method of accounting to ensure that even the members with limited literacy can understand the process.

USAID’s Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project is trying to popularize the systems at the VCF level. Currently 3 SLGs from Chandpai and Dacope-Koyra site have completed their first year cycle.

The 20 member Hoglabunia SLG group saved BDT 110,880 with a profit of BDT 20,030. Some members used their accumulated savings to invest in fish fingerlings for aquaculture, some for invested in poultry for traditional rearing and someone bought a new boat and fishing net to catch fish at the adjacent river. The Koyra Dakkhin Para SLG fishermen group made a total profit of BDT 8,965.



They want to develop a Men’s Fishers Club and plan to lease a Jolmohal together.

SLG has become popular among the community based on the benefits received. In the second cycle the membership has already increased.

### Co-Management Council meeting held in Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS)

The council meeting of the three CMCs of Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary (Teknaf, Shilkhali and Whykong) was held on 13th October 2015 at Teknaf Upzila Auditorium. In this meeting the three CMCs presented their annual reports, financial accounts and annual development plans through separate presentations. The DFO (south) Cox’s Bazar, Md. Ali Kabir, was the chief guest of the meeting and Teknaf UNO, Shah Mujahid Uddin, the president of the CMC Council presided over the meeting. 148 councillors (men-105, women-43) participated in the meeting. The Annual Development Plans for fiscal year 2015-16 were presented, discussed and three ADPs were approved by the Councillors after modifications. CMC councillors discussed forest conservation, tree felling, hunting, forest fires and other illegal activities. Participants talked about potential solutions to local issues and problems related to conservation, livelihood activities, capacity building of CMC, fund raising, climate change adaptation and mitigation.

### Jamtilah Lake brought under Fish Culture



The CREL Project has trained beneficiaries to culture fish using modern aquaculture technologies. Based on this, the Chandpur Fish Culture Group was formed in the Chandpur Tea Estate area adjacent to Satchari National Park. In this estate, a 10 hectare lake locally known as Jamtilah was unused for a long time. With support from CREL, the Chandpur Fish Culture Group composed of 19 members and 20 other interested local people contacted the Habiganj Department of Fisheries through CREL for their support. The DoF agreed and released 15,500 fingerlings of different carp varieties in two stages. The 1st release of 9000 fingerlings was on 15 September and the 2nd release of 6,500 fingerlings was on 30th October. During the releases the Habiganj DFO, Chunarughat UFO, Chairman of the Deorgach UP, VCF members, local people, and CREL officials were present. 39 families will benefit from this aquaculture activity.