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## SUCCESS STORY

### Local Communities and Government Collaborate to Protect Forests

#### Community Patrol Group stands tall against illegal logging



*Top: Community Patrol Group Members along with Forest Department Guarding the Forest*

*Bottom :Forest Dependent Communities in the Dudhpukuria Forest*



Collaborative management of natural resources between local communities and the government might be a new idea in certain protected areas of Bangladesh. But the fact that it is an effective approach and well received by forest and wetland dependent communities was proven recently at Dudhpukuria Wildlife Sanctuary, a newly established protected area by the Government of Bangladesh.

USAID's Integrated Protected Area Co-Management (IPAC) Project has been working in Dudhpukuria since June, 2010. With IPAC's initiative the Forest Department and the local community has been working hand in hand to balance forest conservation and sustainable livelihoods development. A Community Patrol Group (CPG) was formed in March 9, 2011, and this group has already made a significant impact.

In July 2011, the Dudhpukuria CPG group was on their duty when they found a truck full of 800-1000 illegally logged bamboo culms along with the illegal loggers. They seized the vehicle right away and called the respective forest department officials. The beat officer and range officer were not available so following guidelines the CPG members contacted the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) who then came to the site and handled the situation.

This great initiative by the CPG members has created a strong bond between the Forest Department and the local community. It has given a new light to their relationship of partnership and trust. The DFO commented "With the help of the Co-Management Committee (CMC) we can protect our forest and grow to great heights like other successful protected areas of Bangladesh practicing co-management."

USAID's IPAC project works in 25 forest protected areas as well as wetlands and Ecologically Critical Areas of Bangladesh, advocating and implementing collaborative management of natural resources between the Bangladesh Government and the local forest/wetland dependent communities. Under IPAC 35 Co-management Organizations have been formed in protected areas. These organizations are constantly working for better conservation measures and partnership.

The work of CPG members in other protected areas of Bangladesh has also been outstanding. There are numerous accounts similar to the incident in Dudhpukuria which give hope to the work of co-management and a future of sustainability for this platform. As mind sets and actions change of forest and wetland dependent communities, nature conservation is bound to move in a positive direction.