

Title of the Proposal:

Impact of eco-tourism in two villages of protected area, Lawachara National Park, Moulovibazar, Sylhet.

by:

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Location of Research Area:

Lawachara National Park is situated in 8 km east of Srimangal town of Kamalganj Upazila of Moulovibazar District of Sylhet Division. It is one of those few protected area in Bangladesh where diverse birds and Hoolock Gibons are found. Lawachara National Park is a part of the West Bhanugach Reserve Forest. The park was notified in 1996 under the Wildlife Act of 1974. From the turn of the century through the 1950s, the park's natural forest was gradually felled for plantations. The core area is an excellent compact forest of plantation dating from 1920s, now evolving towards natural forest Nishorgo Support Project (June, 2006).

The total forest area of this park is 1250 ha. In which 850 ha of long rotation of plantation (Teak, Jarul, Chapalish), 170 ha of short rotation of plantation (Albizia, Eucalyptus, Akasmoni, Mangium), 21 ha bamboo and cane and 130 ha of betel leaf cultivation raised by forest villagers, some agricultural land, forest research area and other infrastructure like officers, road, railway track, etc.

Lawachara National Park is bordered by 4 tea estates and 18 villages of which 2 inside, 4 adjoining and 12 located near by the park and its natural resources provide a way of living in varying degrees for population of 27,500 (population census-1991).

Research Objectives:

To reduce dependency on forest how can we utilize the local people creating opportunity of employment through development of eco-tourism. We know that visitors are increasing in number day by day. So local people can choose their profession as an owner of hotel/resort/cottage or owner of vehicle or tourist guide or owner of the shop of handicrafts etc. For reducing pressure on fuel wood the rich & the middle class can use gas cylinder for cooking as fuel and the poor can use improved furnace of bio-gas. Nishorgo Support Project has already designed a visitor interpretation center at Lawachara National Park. It will also create job opportunity for the local people.

Research Questions:

Following questions will be explored during research work.

- What is co-management and how is it being implemented at this PA?
- How do the local people and FD personnel protect forest?
- How can local people reduce their dependency on forest?
- What is eco-tourism and are they interested to develop eco-tourism?

- How can the local people earn money from eco-tourism?
- How do the tourists enjoy beauty of the forest and wildlife?
- How will be they benefited by eco-tourism?
- How many women are involved in co-management of PA?

Methodology:

The study will be conducted in three phases i.e. literature Survey, collection of field data and finally data analysis and report writing.

Phase 1. Literature Survey: Collect information on eco-tourism, co-management, protected area, local communities etc. by searching internet & collection of books from different libraries. Prepare a map of Lawachara National Park (LNP) with relevant information.

Phase 2. Collection of field data: Two villages of Lawachara National Park named Dolubari and Radhanagar will be selected for this research program. According to Mollah and Kundu (2004), Dolubari and Radhanagar is situated in southwest corner of LNP. 84 and 325 households are existed respectively in Dolubari and Radhanagar. Tipra and Bangali communities are inhabited in Dolubari and local communities are inhabited in Radhanagar.

Visiting Lawachara National Park (LNP) discussion will be held with the local forest personnel, GO and NGO officers and villagers of Dolubari and Radhanagar according to the semi-structured questionnaire.

10 households who are directly involved with NSP activities and 10 households who are not involved with the NSP activities of both villages will be selected for interrogating questionnaire. Forest Users Group (FUG), Patrolling Group, Tourist Guide and Tourist Group are the target group in this research program.

Phase 3. Data analysis & report writing: Analysis of collected data and finally report writing on development of socio-economic condition of local people by alternative income generation. And lastly citation of some recommendations will be helpful for future management plan of this PA.

Timeline of Research Work:

Name of the month	Jan/07	Feb/07	Mar/07	Apr/07	May/07	Jun/07	Jul/07
Literature Survey	█						
Collection of field data		█					
Data analysis & Report writing							█

References:

1. Nishorgo Support Project, June, 2006, Bangladesh's Protected Areas: A Visitor's Guide.
2. Mollah, A.R. and Kundu, D.K. August 2004, Site Level Field Appraisal for Protected Area Co-Management: Lawachara National Park, Nishorgo Support Project, International Resources Group (IRG), NACOM.
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4. Population Census, 1991, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning.
5. Nishorgo, Bangladesh Protected Forest Area Management Program, August, 2006, Architectural Designs for a visitor Interpretation Center at Lawachara National Park.