Research proposal
For NSP Fellowship Grant, 2007

Research Theme: **Co-Management and Protected Areas**

Research Topic: **Governance through Co-Management Committees under NSP: A case Study at LNP**

Introduction:

Since the initiation of community forestry in Betagi in 1979, government owned denuded hill forest lands are brought under peoples' participation as experimental basis. Subsequently, in the community forestry project (1981-1988) poor communities of northern districts are involved to develop awareness and in tree plantation programme. During 1989-96, the upazilla afforestation and nursery development project is launched nationwide as follow up schemes. Further coastal greenbelt project (1995-2002) and social forestry project (1989-2006) gave foundation of people-oriented forestry in Bangladesh which developed tree plantation movement in public as well as private and marginal lands throughout the country. Based on the experiences and lessons learnt from above mentioned projects, realized strength of multi-party involvement in forest management and steady loss of forest resources from forest reserves, a more holistic involvement of stakeholders in forest management in the frame of NSP co-management is our today's standpoint. Hopefully alike other PAs around the world, FD, with assistance from USAID, has made a timely drive to conserve the last resorts of wild fauna and flora in February 2004.

Co-management in the protected areas as a means of sustainable forest management regime, is recognized in Bangladesh and currently piloting under the Nishorgo Support Project (2004-2009). Collaborative management of forest resources refers to what Borrini-Feyerbund define as 'a situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define and guarantee among themselves a fair sharing of management functions, entitlements and responsibilities for a given territory, area or a set of natural resources".

In order to strengthen tie as well as participation of relevant stakeholders in the co-management process, NSP initiatives, with legal backstopping of the MoEF, has

formulated a two-tier institutional structure comprising PA Co-management Council, as advisory board and PA Co-Management Committee, as functional body in 5 pilot PA sites. It is expected that Co-management committee will function effectively with all members subscribe to a shared value, and function on the principles of collaboration, participation, transparency, accountability and responsive for successful governance in the PA management. This committee is responsible for developing a coordinated force against the root threats of PA management.

The 15-19 membered Co-Management Committee brings stakeholders from various structures having uneven status, power and differing interests in a common platform to pledge to a common value and pursue similar goals and objectives. Since the strengths and stakes of these diverse communities often contradictory to one another, especially the powerfuls versus the resource users and environmental activists, it is obvious to stand this committee to stand on good governance.

The study will, hence, focus on the levels and extent of good governance principles of the Co-Management Council in the frame of participation, transparency, accountability, responsiveness and inclusive efforts of her members.

Study site: Lawachara National Park

The study area is the Lawachara National Park (LNP), which is a part of the West Bhanugach Reserved Forest. The national park (covering 1250 ha reserved forests) is established through a Gazette Notification {PBM (S-3) 7/96/367 on 07 July 1996} under the Forest Act. It has got a unique feature in natural resources both in flora and fauna. Moreover it has got indigenous people who have very high profile of culture. Under NSP pilot programme, this park has got formal approval of a two-tier institutional structure (namely Lawachara NP Co-Management Council and Lawachara NP Co-Management Committee) from the MoEF. The study focus will be whether the Lawachara Co-Management Committee members, their activities and programme implementation are in harmony with nature and the people's aspiration as well.

Research Questions:

- Who are the members of the PA Co-management committee? Are they selected or elected representative of the stakeholders? Is the committee **equitable and inclusive** of the most marginalized section of the PA resource users?

   [A society's well being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their well being.]

- Identify whether the PA Co-management committee is representative based on their stakes; assess whether the meaningful **participation** exists in the committee.

   [Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them.]

- Is the committee **transparent** i.e. do they inform relevant public policies, rules and management decisions to the stakeholders, prior to implementation, that empower and/or affect them?

   [Transparency refers to the availability of information to the general public and clarity about government rules, regulations, and decisions. It can be strengthened through the citizens´ right to information with a degree of legal enforceability. Transparency in government decision-making and public policy implementation reduces uncertainty and can help inhibit corruption among resource managers.]

- Is the committee **accountable**, for their actions, to the stakeholders?

   [Public officials must be answerable for government behavior, and responsive to the entity from which their authority is derived.]

- What are the **perceptions** of FD personnel and local stakeholders in good governance principles? Does FD personnel feels this initiative as a **threat to their loss of control** over the PA resources? Does the committee members **feel empowered** through this NSP endeavours?

Methodology

The information will be collected from primary and secondary sources and finally will be analyzed. The sources are as follows:

A. Primary Sources

- ❑ Participate in the LNP Co-Management Committee meetings as observer – 1 meeting
- ❑ Focus group discussion (FGD) with the Co-Management Committee–1 no.
- ❑ **Interview the committee members individually with semi-structured questionnaire. 10 nos. of interview.**
- ❑ Interview the key informants from excluded section of stakeholders, if any, with semi-structured questionnaire - 1 or 2 interviews.
- ❑ Key informant interview from FD field personnel, NSP, NGO and local community.
- ❑ Open ended discussions with the external agencies and relevant personalities.

B. Secondary Sources

- ❑ Literature review from FD documents, NSP reports, journals, books, web portals etc.
- ❑ Studies conducted by NSP, FD and NGOs involved in conservation programme.

Work plan

Timeline of research activities /2007

Assignments	January	February	March	April	May	June
Literature review	▬▬	▬▬	▬▬	▬▬	▬▬	
Identification of stakeholders and Questionnaire Development	▬					
Field works (FGD, Questionnaire survey and Key informant survey)		▬▬	▬▬			
Data Analysis				▬▬	▬▬	
Draft Report Writing					▬▬	▬▬
Final Report writing and Submission						▬▬

References:

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