

Assessing the Capacity and Progress of Forest Co-Management Organizations

Niaz Ahmed Khan, Utpal Dutta, Modinul Ahsan, Michael Mrong, Rafiq Sultana, Abdur Rahman

The crucial role and significance of institutions and the associated surrounding contexts in consolidating and furthering forest co-management initiatives are now unequivocally established (for some pioneering arguments, see, for example, Borrini-Feyerabend, 2004; Kothari, *et al.*, 1998). This chapter reports on the lessons and experience of a comprehensive study that attempted to examine the performance and viability of Co-Management Organizations (CMOs) as “local institutions” against selected indicators of sustainability and organizational development. In this chapter we broaden the mainstream of research and define the term “institutions” as including both the complex of norms and behaviors that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes, and the organizations and bodies that establish those norms and in which they are embedded¹. The study upon which this chapter was based² was commissioned and fielded by the Bangladesh Forest Department (FD) under the auspices of its Nishorgo Support Project. The detailed study proceedings and findings are available in Khan *et al.* (2008).

We reviewed the rationale for, and the critical necessity of studying institutions as a means and channel of development elsewhere (Khan, 2008). Suffice it to note here that the key literature on co-management and community-based management suggest the following ways in which co-management bodies can relate to rural development and community empowerment (excluding, of course, their role in natural resource management, which is not considered here):

- (i) Planning and goal setting for any deliberate attempt towards rural development and transformation
- (ii) Resource mobilization
- (iii) Provision of networks and services to local communities
- (iv) Integration and coordination of varied services to ensure that target groups receive these services in right quantities and at the right time
- (v) Keeping a check on rural administration and service delivery agencies and forcing such accountability
- (vi) Articulating local demands and interests

Besides the above general utilities, in the context of the Nishorgo project, local CMOs are particularly important for three simple but crucial reasons. First, such bodies may provide

¹ For a compilation and analysis of the relevant conceptual connotations see Khan (2008).

² The senior management of NSP had been considering the idea of conducting an assessment of CMOs’ performance for several months prior to commissioning the study. This study design was developed in response to NSP in-house discussions as conveyed to the study Team Leader by the NSP, Project Director and Chief of Party.

an avenue for training, orientation, and public awareness-raising activities for the targeted communities. Secondly, these can act as a platform for articulation of the communities' voice and demand on issues critical for survival. Thirdly, an active and vibrant village institution can also contribute to the broader process of socio-political empowerment among the respective communities³. Despite these potential benefits of institution building, there has been strikingly limited research on the institutional arrangements related to participation and co-management in Bangladesh forests.

The remainder of this chapter is organized into a number of interrelated sections. The next section sets out the conceptual and methodological considerations of the research together, with a description of the key steps and processes involved in conducting the study. The third section elicits and summarizes the key lessons of the study – drawing on the overall observations and experiences of the fieldwork. In line with the format of the conceptual framework (“ecology-entity”), the analysis was pursued at two complementary levels. Firstly, the ecological level – exploring the suitability and conduciveness of the broader contextual factors for the promotion and facilitation of collective action and performance of CMOs and the co-management approach. Secondly, the entity level – investigating selected key factors and dynamics concerning the organization of CMOs and the associated surrounding local communities. The concluding section recapitulates the key arguments of the study, and exhorts increased research on this relatively less-explored subject.

The Study: Key Steps, Conceptual Framework and Methodological Considerations

The key steps, phases, and activities of the study included the following:

Identification and fielding of the study team: The Nishorgo project had considerable in-house experience and expertise of working with CMOs and conducting some form of periodic participatory assessments of their performance. The Study Team Leader was hired to complement the project's in-house team by bringing in broad-based experience and providing general guidance to the assessment exercise. The study team members represented such diverse academic disciplines as natural resource management, sociology, anthropology, forestry/environment, zoology, and development studies. Each member was reasonably familiar with the major issues and challenges of the study, and possessed an intimate knowledge of the concerned project field sites, their socio-geographical peculiarities and cultures.

Initial Secondary Review and Stakeholder Consultation: A thorough review of the relevant literature was made and circulated as a secondary review report (Khan 2008). As a part of the orientation and piloting exercise, the study team held informal discussions with a cross-section of key stakeholders including the concerned project and FD staff in Dhaka and various project sites, local/partner NGO activists, academics/researchers, and relevant government staff (e.g. concerned Upazila Nirbahi Officers). An inception meeting was also held at the FD headquarters.

³ Although the CMOs are not village-based, to function effectively they require that common interests of villages represented in a CMO are articulated.

Formulation of a Conceptual Framework (Assessment Tool): The study draws on the Conceptual Framework that was developed, discussed, and endorsed prior to the fielding of the team. The framework argues that capacity and performance are regulated and affected by a number of complex issues and dynamics that may be explored at two interrelated levels: (i) at the broader environmental level (what we call the “ecology”); (ii) at the more immediate level of the organization under the study (particular CMO) and associated (participating or targeted) community; we refer to this level as the “entity”.

The ecology is primarily concerned with the broader context and dynamics that have a bearing on collective action and institutional development for co-management. In other words, here we address and explore the conduciveness of the broader contextual factors for the promotion and facilitation of collective action and development of local co-management bodies and institutions. At the entity level, we examine such factors as the extent of organizational development (within the CMOs), leadership development, formation and nurturing of capital assets (human, financial and social), development of self reliance, soundness in the conduct of routine tasks and operations, women and gender development, participatory planning, and networking and relations with relevant agencies/organizations.

The framework went through a rigorous validation process. It was discussed several times amongst the relevant project and FD staff, shared with USAID, and received formal comments from the senior management of the project and the FD. The first round of revisions was made following these consultations. Subsequently, the framework was field-tested in Chunati WS, and based on feedback, further revised and finalized for wider application. It may be noted, however, that the framework is essentially flexible, and meant to be periodically assessed for validity, and revised/modified in response to particular contextual demand and situation.

Empirical Investigation: During a concentrated period of May-July 2008, three days were spent with each of eight CMOs. This field investigation involved the following tasks:

- (i) One-on-one interviews with key actors including the respective Upazila Nirbahi Officers, chairpersons of CMOs, local social or political elites, and the concerned Divisional Forest Officers
- (ii) Exclusive Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with CMO members (men separate from women), local FD staff, local project staff, and others
- (iii) Community workshops with villagers from various walks of life (who are not directly involved in (or participants of) the project
- (iv) Field visits to selected Landscape Development Fund (LDF) projects
- (v) Daily progress review and trouble shooting meetings amongst the team members and associated staff

Cutting across the above tasks was the tool of uncontrolled ethnographic observation. The team maintained field diaries to record virtually any observed phenomenon of interest. To

⁴ The conceptual framework is set out in Khan (2008); moreover, eight detailed site-specific reports – one for each CMO – were prepared that set out the background, context, methodological approach, and rationale of the study.

the extent possible, efforts (such as use of local dialect/language during interactions, fixing time and venue of meetings according to the respondents' convenience, informal gestures by the team, personalized attention to relatively "weaker" sections of women and marginalized or very poor members of CMOs and villagers) were made to provide the respondents with a flexible and relaxed atmosphere to vent their emotions and ideas in ways they preferred without being interrupted, guided or directed. Particular attention was given to observe the facial and body language of the respondents, along with the general features of the locality.

Debriefing and Feedback: A number of consultative and debriefing meetings were held during the course of the fieldwork at the site and divisional levels. A central staff debriefing meeting-cum-final sharing workshop was held on September 2, 2008 at the FD Headquarters in Dhaka. This event was participated by the top FD and project management, and attempted to provide the participants with a summary of the major findings and lessons of the study, and to share ideas for future action and further improvement. The team's observations and recommendations were generally well received and validated by the participants. This chapter reflects the feedback and opinions expressed in the workshop, together with the written comments received from other senior staff.

However, there were limitations to the study. The exercise was essentially "exploratory" in nature. It makes no claim of being exhaustive in its treatment of all the complex dynamics of the operation and efficacy of CMOs, or generating findings that may qualify for broad-based generalizations. Instead, the study's main aim has been to initially examine the issues affecting the functioning of CMOs and their surrounding socio-cultural and political contexts – in large part highlighting areas where information is most thin, and eliciting broad lessons, as well as pointing to some practical clues for improving the situation.

Lesson Learned

Based on the overall experience of the study and assessment exercise, a number of lessons can be identified. Following, the key lessons are discussed in line with the conceptual framework of study.

Lessons learned at the "Ecology" level

It is imperative to engage with local leadership organizations—both traditional Samaj and local government (especially Union Parishad)-based mechanisms—for successful functioning of CMOs. In areas where existing local institutions function relatively well, and the respective CMOs have made it a conscious policy to work closely with these institutions, results have been encouraging.

It is strategically wise, if not always "noble and brave," for CMOs to avoid any major confrontation or clash with the powerful social and political forces in their locality. In other words, an incremental and palliative approach, rather than radical encounters, serves the purposes of co-management better.

Relative homogeneity of social and demographic composition of the locality makes the exercise of CMOs' leadership authority and implementation of decisions easier. This matches

with the findings and “design principles” for collective action in other studies (for example, Ostrom 1990; Wade 1988).

In areas where some natural resources are still left (to be conserved) and the current depletion rate is alarming, local people show a relatively greater interest in coming to the fold of co-management activities. In such areas, a degree of general agreement amongst the local people of various walks of life is often noticeable regarding the severity of the depletion and degradation process, and the need to arrest and then reverse losses. Most respondents expressed a willingness to try out and participate in any “trustworthy initiative” towards improvement of the situation. Internationally, immediacy and recognition of threats to a community’s resource base have been shown to be an incentive for collective action (Ostrom 1990, 1992).



Shared experiences between CMOs can help in understanding different approaches. Here, a woman involved in co-managing the Boxa Tiger Reserve in India shares observations with a delegation from Bangladesh.
[Philip J. DeCosse]

Internationally, immediacy and recognition of threats to a community’s resource base have been shown to be an incentive for collective action (Ostrom 1990, 1992).

There has to be a recognition, rather than denial or avoidance, on the part of the concerned officials involved in co-management of the historical fact that local people, especially the poor and marginalized communities, have commonly run into conflicts with the government’s regulatory forest management regimes. Many local communities in co-managed PAs have a long tradition of living alongside forests. Their historic dependence on forests is also clear and poignant. In the process, gradual scarcity and systematic decrease of the resource base have intensified this conflict. Any attempt or initiative of the government is therefore initially viewed with some degree of suspicion and mistrust. Overcoming and bridging this confidence-gap remains a major challenge for any forest conservation effort.

Co-management activities have a better prospect of public acceptance and grounding in areas where the local people have some earlier exposure to “participatory” projects. In a few project PAs, the participating local communities have had some experience of working with participatory forest management initiatives (for example, several projects in the late 1980s and 1990s involving FD and NGOs that supported community-based nursery-raising enterprises, and social or community forestry by planting trees along roads and other public lands), and this has been to the advantage of CMC operation.

At the sub-national (field) level, the understanding of, and benefits ensuing from, the recent policy and regulatory reforms in the forestry sector are inadequate and marginal. Since the early 1990s, the following reforms have been adopted: promulgation of the National Forest Policy 1994, with a clear emphasis on community-based forest management and public participation; enactment of the Forest Amendment Act 2000; creation and operationalization of a separate Social Forestry Wing in FD; reorganization and ministerial approval of an expanded FD; recruitment of a new batch of Bangladesh Civil Service (Forest) Cadre officers; promulgation of Social Forestry Rules; streamlining of higher level promotions in FD; and

institutionalization of benefit-sharing mechanisms for social forestry projects (see Khan 2004). Unfortunately, however, the team's observations suggest that there has been little corresponding impact or understanding of these national/macro level reforms in the field. Local respondents hardly demonstrated any knowledge of the policy and institutional changes. Even local FD staff are marginally aware of these issues, and many of the respondent FD field staff do not seem to have relevant updated information. Although local FD officers have started to come to terms with the idea of co-management, and engage in limited community level activities, many FD field staff are still preoccupied with regulations, revenue generation, and exclusion or limitation of local uses on FD lands.

Long-term financial sustainability of CMOs calls for careful visionary planning and overcoming of bureaucratic constraints. There has been very limited thinking or effort to build up any developmental fund to sustain CMO operations beyond the project. CMOs and local people often complain of procedural complications and bureaucratic delays in decision making and release of funds (especially in matters of Landscape Development Fund projects) – as accounting for poor performance in implementing projects.

There are a number of legal, procedural, and policy constraints on successful functioning of the CMOs and co-management approach, which need to be urgently addressed. Examples of such constraining issues include the following:

- The CMO structure (including CM Committees and CM Councils) has been formed under the Government Gazette Notification that provides for the establishment of “the co-management model” in five specifically named PAs of Bangladesh. A good number of respondents (especially the field FD staff and CMO leadership) opined that the Notification limits the application of the co-management model to these five PAs, and may pose a legal constraint on future expansion and wider replication of the model.
- There is no specifically developed benefit-sharing contract for buffer plantations. In the absence of a standard format, the current practice is to follow the memorandum of understanding that was used in the Forestry Sector Project. The current arrangement does not provide for addressing the particular contextual situation and field realities of the co-management approach in PAs.
- One major issue concerns the definition, scope and authority regarding projects under the LDF. A CMO (with representation of the FD and endorsement of the Grants Review Committee of the project) has to finalize plans for implementing selected LDF projects inside the “core area” (PA forest land). This move has been opposed by some local FD staff with the argument that the current legislative framework (especially the Forest Act, Wildlife Preservation Order, and National Forest Policy) do not provide for establishment or conduct of any externally funded and implemented project, or operation of any external agency (e.g. CMO) inside the “core area.” Currently, there is a stalemate regarding the issue

⁵ vide MOEF/Parisha-4/Nishorgo-64/(part-4)/112. Dt: 15.05.2006.

⁶ The Grants Review Committee reviews and endorses proposed projects under LDF. Its membership includes the FD Project Director, the project Chief of Party, and the project Grants Coordinator.

in the field – causing serious frustration among CMO members and associated villagers. Thus there is a fundamental lack of understanding and acceptance of co-management in the field, and there are also ambiguities and conflicting interpretations of the definitions of such terms used in the co-management model as “core,” “buffer,” and “landscape area.”

- A concern was raised by some respondents about the fate of “enrichment plantations” implemented under the auspices of a CMO within the “core area.” The Bangladesh Wildlife Preservation Order 1973 vide clause 23(3) states: “...any felling inside the park shall not be allowed”. In light of this regulation, ambiguity and misunderstandings exist among FD, CMOs, and participating villagers as to whether CMOs would be allowed to ultimately reap benefits from enrichment plantations. Since this planting is for habitat restoration in a PA it is unclear whether CMOs or villagers should benefit from “thinning” operations, since those operations may not be appropriate to restoration of forest in a PA.
- Referring to various regulatory frameworks, some mid-level FD staff wondered (and candidly shared with the team) a number of queries that have profound legal and functional implications. These include: Can a CMO as a local institution exist beyond the project period, given that the government Gazette Notification, on which the CMOs primarily draw, is time-bound and limited? What would be the “role” of CMOs: management, decision making or implementer of projects?

Lessons Learned at the “Entity” Level

CMOs (including Councils and Committees) need to ensure greater inclusion and voice of the relatively disadvantaged sections of society (e.g. women, religious and ethnic minorities and poorest of the poor). Currently, a form of negotiated alliance or compromise is noticeable: although CMO membership often includes substantial representation from the local “power circle” – local government leaders and socio-cultural elites – the dominant (powerful) CMO members maintain generally good terms with the relatively powerless and disadvantaged sections, and are open to the idea of wider inclusion of such sections.

One key reflection of vibrancy of CMOs is the frequency and functioning of meetings. In a majority of cases, participation in CMO meetings is enthusiastic. Although the discussions are generally lively, and a good number of members listen and show interest, a few relatively dominant members raise and discuss the salient issues. Most discussions and ensuing decisions in the meetings are transparent, recorded (in the official proceedings), and widely shared. Some reasons for the relatively high participation in CMO meetings include the perceived honor associated with them, an opportunity to interact with the FD staff in a public setting, and the prospect of participating in some local activities that are generally viewed as worthwhile.

Transparency in CMO leadership calls for an institutionalized system of performance evaluation (including a reward and punishment system). Although a formal system of evaluating the performance of formally recognized CMO office holders (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) is yet to be developed, the respondent general members and common villagers appear to be broadly aware and conscious of the role and activities of these CMO leaders.

The regulatory documents (Co-Management Council and Committee constitutions and government circulars) need to be disseminated to common members and any interested person in the community in a language and manner that is understandable to the local people.

Successful CMO leaders depict a high degree of interpersonal and negotiation skills. However, the application of such qualities is limited.

The social capital associated with CMO membership is widely valued, and remains a major attraction for CMO leaders. Membership in a CMO is viewed as a “prestige position” in the locality, and a way “to get closer to the government.”

The FD and government need to do more to convince people of their long-term commitment to the co-management approach. In a good number of sites, local people, even CMO members, did not show a full understanding of the mission or vision of co-management or the basic premise of “conservation.” They have considerable doubts and suspicion about the FD/government’s “prolonged and continued commitment” to this type of project – especially the level of FD commitment to a transfer of rights, authorities, and responsibilities to CMOs in order to more effectively protect and manage PAs while ensuring increased local benefits.

FD needs to play the crucial role of principal facilitator and nurturer of “co-management” if there is to be any reasonable degree of success of such an approach. The current capacity of the FD to perform this demanding role is limited – especially in terms of staff training and orientation, logistics, and associated knowledge base.

Some quarters of local FD staff share an uncomfortable feeling of losing territorial control and authority in trying to promote co-management. Some even noted that CMOs are overshadowing local FD offices. A more direct and proactive involvement of FD leadership, including the relevant Conservators of Forests and DFOs, may help to dispel such feelings and restore local level confidence in the work.

Women and youth are only cursorily represented in the CMOs.



Women and youth were only cursorily represented in the CMOs [Philip J. DeCosse]

Training and skill enhancement initiatives need to be locally specific, tailor-made to local demand and context. A number of problems, which hinder the effectiveness of training programs, were identified during the course of discussions with the local people and project field staff, including the following: (i) Most recipients of training noted that it is difficult for them to leave their villages to attend training sessions; (ii) Some (mostly women) faced difficulty in following the training presentations, materials and handouts because of their low level of literacy; (iii) The timing of the training

was mainly determined by the project, which sometimes conflicted with the participants' livelihood engagements, especially agricultural work; (iv) Some training courses were not supported/supplemented by practical demonstration and hands-on exercises; (v) In the absence of (or inadequate) refresher or follow-up training, the impact of training, as reported by some respondents, has been somewhat short lived and blurred.

Handling development projects contributes to CMO confidence and skills enhancement. A high degree of interest and enthusiasm was found amongst CMOs and participating local communities as regards taking up development projects. Poorer sections – especially destitute women – are engaged in the implementation phase – providing manual labor and other maintenance inputs.

Local people's sound "popular wisdom," especially in analyzing the performance of development projects (that they/CMO handle), is worth noting and exploring further. The experience and results of various projects handled by CMOs have been mixed. The team visited both successful and failed projects. Local communities, as revealed in the course of community workshops, have sound knowledge of (and are capable of examining) the reasons for relative success and failure (see the following table).

A People's Anatomy of "Successful" and "Failed" Strip Plantation Projects (under LDF)

Positive factors	Negative Factors
Provision of fencing and maintenance	Exclusion of the (often relatively affluent) households or owners/controllers of land adjacent to the road/strip
Full-time supervision and vigilance by participants (based on mutually agreed rotational duties)	No provision for maintenance and monitoring
Participants are all from the locality/immediate vicinity of the plantation site	Inclusion of participants from other areas (beyond immediate surrounding of the strip plantation site)
Many of the participants own/control pieces of land adjacent to the strip/road	Relatively ineffective Project Implementation Committee
Widespread consultation and distribution of specific responsibilities among participants	

Source: discussions in community workshops over experiences of strip plantations in Sufinagar (Chunati) and Ching Shah Road (Boro Hatia) sites under the purview of Chunati CMO.

⁷ The Project Implementation Committee works under the auspices of the CMO, and is primarily responsible for implementation of local small projects.

⁸ The concerned FD staff, however, have a different view on this complaint by the local community. Their interpretation is that LDF project proposals are primarily reviewed and endorsed by the Grants Review Committee, and the communications mentioned in the case were between the Grant Coordinator and the CMO, not directly between FD and CMO. It may be mentioned here that FD is represented in this committee by the PD.



CMOs have potential for serving as platforms for conflict resolution. [Philip J. DeCosse]

The provisions for livelihood enhancement linked with the project are clearly insufficient, and the income generated from those alternative occupations supported falls far below the demand. These provisions are inadequate to make any substantive change in the livelihood status of the recipient households.

Participating women require greater recognition and opportunities to access formal avenues of income and decision making. The opportunities for women's participation in "formal" sectors of paid work and public office premises are still

limited. Most women respondents have emphasized the need for more livelihood-related training and skills development opportunities. A limited number of women are engaged in implementation of CMO-managed projects; their participation at the formulation and design stage of such initiatives is, however, insignificant. Women have some access to micro-credit offered by various NGOs. There have been a few reports of misuse or unproductive use of such credit funds, for example, because of the immediate demand of family consumption, drawing credit simultaneously from more than one source, and transferring the fund to male members of their families. The poorer women admitted to still entering the local forests (PAs) – but noted that they have done so less frequently in recent months compared to the time prior to the launch of the project.

Locally based planning exercises contribute to CMO and local community empowerment and confidence building, but require constant central support. Currently, the process of planning at the CMO level essentially follows a "bottom-up" approach, where the planning exercise is done involving the relevant local communities, and the level of participation in such interactions is reported to be generally good. The funding decisions are, however, ultimately made centrally. This is seen, as one CMO leader commented, only as a "partial [or] half-hearted trust by FD on local people and CMO." Although there is FD involvement in the planning conducted by CMOs, the team noted cases where FD staff subsequently "disowned" the decisions taken in such CMO planning meetings. A number of projects that were planned by CMOs (and endorsed by the project and the FD centrally) currently remain unimplemented – due to objections by local FD staff on grounds of legal and procedural complications. This stalemate seems to frustrate the basic spirit of the co-management approach. Here is a comment by a key member of a CMO in the southern region:

The Range Officer and Beat Officer both were present when we planned all these LDF activities. We followed the guideline, completed all paper work, ... there were several back and forth correspondences between us and them in Dhaka; ... we were asked to revise the budget – which we did. Then after long waiting, we heard that the PD has approved our projects. ... Meanwhile, local people keep enquiring to us – 'what happened to our plans?' 'when can we start the projects?' We have no answer, but to say: 'wait – things are taking shape'. ... Now finally, the Range Officer tells us that you cannot implement

the project. Is this for fun? Where has ‘co-management’ gone? ... You are a ‘big’ professor [pointing to the team leader], you tell us - how do we save our face now in front of all these [local] people?

CMOs have potential for serving as effective platforms for local conflict resolution and peace building. A good number of CMO members take part in local conflict resolution processes and mechanisms. This serves as an added advantage in the functioning of CMOs. The CMO leadership is, however, not very enthusiastic about playing an active role in the settlement or negotiation of various conflicts between the FD and local communities. The common “apples of discord” include: encroachments (and resultant lawsuits), boundary demarcation, and activities related to (forest) land use conversion (e.g. betel-leaf cultivation, pond excavation and aquaculture, establishment of brick kilns). While the



FD expects and insists on a more proactive role of CMOs in matters of conflict resolution, the CMOs argue that there has been a tacit and commonly understood agreement among the local people that they would cooperate in these “new conservation projects (including the Nishorgo project) of the government”—provided the FD does not get back to its “old enmity and pursuits” and there is “a status-quo between the FD and local communities” during the project period. One typical comment by a CMO leader astutely made the point:

CMO play a critical role in gauging the needs of the marginalized for drawing sustenance from the PA, and advocating on their behalf. [Philip J. DeCosse]

We have to live with these people. They expect us to uphold their interest – which is not always in line with the FD’s interest. FD officials are not permanent here – they will come and go; but we are here for good. What would happen to us if people see us as *dalal* (collaborators) or *gaddar* (betrayers of trust)?

CMO leaders therefore consider any direct involvement in these matters may make a CMO unpopular, and jeopardize other activities run and managed by the CMO—risks that they clearly want to avoid.

Although formal Co-Management Council and Committee “constitutions” exist, actual knowledge and understanding of the document is marginal amongst most of the observed CMOs and communities. This remains a constraint on forging a shared purpose and common vision in CMO operation.

Clear tenurial status and documentation go a long way towards ensuring community

participation, and building better FD-community relations. Although some tenure agreements – especially relating to strip plantations – are considered generally clear and fair, not all such agreements are fully understood by the participating communities. The agreement documents are not uniform, and various forms are used.

Epilogue

Of late, the need to understand institutions and their broader contexts has moved center stage in our pursuit of establishing appropriate forest co-management structures and processes in Bangladesh. The lessons identified and discussed above, which emanate from a rigorous study of the functioning of the few CMOs in the country, are worth keeping in mind while designing and implementing co-management programs. These hard-earned observations may illuminate the process of wider natural resource management policy and practice in the country and beyond.

Currently, however, there is not much of an effort by way of systematically examining the performance and capacity of forest PA co-management institutions and associated “ecology,” and benefiting from the lessons learned. This important area of study deserves immediate attention from both development practitioners and academia – as at present our knowledge on the subject is at best marginal.

References

- Borrini-Feyerabend, G., M. Pimbert, M. T. Farvar, A. Kothari and Y. Renard, 2004. *Sharing Power: Learning by Doing in Co-management of Natural Resources Throughout the World*. Cenesta, Tehran: IIED and IUCN/ CEESP/ CMWG.
- Khan, N.A. 2008. Towards a Conceptual Framework for Performance and Capacity Assessment of CMCs as Local Institutions. Dhaka: Nishorgo Support Project of Forest Department.
- Khan, N.A., Dutta, U., Ahsan, M., Mrong, M., Sultana, R., and Rahman, A. 2008. An Exploratory Study on Performance and Capacity of NSP-Co-management Committees: Collation and Overview. Dhaka: Nishorgo Support Project of Forest Department.
- Kothari, A., Pathak, N., Anuradha, R.V., and Taneja, B. (eds.) 1998. *Communities and Conservation*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ostrom, E. 1990. *Governing the commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ostrom, E. 1992. The rudiments of a theory of the origins, survival and performance of common-property institutions. Pp 293-318. In Bromley, D. (ed.) *Making the commons work: theory, practice and policy*. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press.
- Wade, R. 1988. *Village Republics: Economic Conditions for Collective Action in South India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.