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Bangladesh Government Delegates and CREL Contribute to the World Forestry Congress-2015

USAID's Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project facilitated the participation of three members of Bangladesh's delegation to the World Forestry Congress - 2015 held September 7-11, 2015 in Durban, South Africa. Delegates included Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed, Honorable Secretary of Ministry of Environment and Forests, Md. Abdul Latif Miah, Conservator of Forests (CF), Chittagong and Md. Shams Uddin, Manager-Landscape Planning, CREL Project.



This year's theme of the Congress was Forests and People: Investing in a Sustainable Future. The Congress addressed socio-economic development and food security, building resilience with forests, integrating forests and other land uses, encouraging product innovation and sustainable trade, monitoring forests for better decision-making, and improving governance by building capacity.

The delegates actively participated in plenary sessions, side events, special events and poster session. The Honorable Secretary Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed presided over several side events of the Congress. Mr. Shams Uddin, Landscape Manager for CREL, made two technical contributions in the form of two papers and a poster. The papers were: Improving Food Security in Bangladesh through Participatory Forest Management, co-authored with Md. Yunus Ali, Chief Conservator of Forests, Forest Department, Bangladesh and Ruhul Mohaiman Chowdhury, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, CREL Project; and, Climate Change Impacts on the Sundarbans Mangrove Ecosystem Services and Dependent Livelihoods in Bangladesh. Mr. Shams Uddin also presented a poster on 'Economic Valuation of Provisioning and Cultural Services of Protected Mangrove Ecosystems: A Case Study on Sundarbans Reserve Forest, Bangladesh'.

Communication training provided to Co-Management Organizations



Co-Management organizations are one of the primary organizations that support Forest Department in conserving forests and its biodiversity. To ensure their contribution, the sustainability of co-management organizations is vital. CMOs must learn how to promote and communicate their role and activities, as well as concerns related to conservation, and how to sustain themselves.

CREL conducted 9 communication training events in four regions. The CREL communications team introduced the CMOs to various approaches to communication as an important tool for ensuring sustainability and to build their capacity. 187 members from various tiers of 30 CMC/CBOs/CMOs participated in this training. The communications training covered ways to communicate with different stakeholders, advocacy, networking and better negotiation skills. Participants were also oriented on processes for organizing press conferences and submitting memoranda to the concerned authorities. Modern communication tools including social media and e-mails were reviewed during the training, along with how to share and engage global population in conservation efforts.

CREL support augments reproduction of Pigmy Cotton Goose in Baikka Beel



Balihash also known locally as Indian Pygmy Goose or Cotton Teal, is a small species duck. Once there was a huge population of the duck in Baikka Beel sanctuary. But, unrestrained hunting and lack of unavailability of safe shelters threatened their existence. The nesting season of Balihash is from July to September and their nests are usually found in natural hollow tree-trunks beside the water bodies. Female geese incubate eggs for about 28 days, and after hatching when the chicks are two days old, they get down into the water.

To augment natural nesting sites and the reproduction of these birds, placement of artificial wooden box nests were initiated in 2007 with the intent of increasing the population of geese in Baikka Beel. This year, CREL installed 30 boxes. Five boxes were set up on the branches of trees and the remaining 25 on the top of RCC poles in the bush adjacent to water. The female geese laid eggs in 21 boxes, with from 8 to 35 eggs found in a single box. With the installation of the artificial nests, an increasing number of Balihash are laying and successfully incubating eggs.

CREL funds CMC to establish Fish Sanctuary in Tengragiri

Tengragiri Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent areas are important spawning and nursery areas for many species of commercially valuable fish (hilsha) and invertebrates (shrimp). Designation and development of fish sanctuaries are effective mechanisms to protect these populations from over fishing and to ensure conservation. Tengragiri, Feuchaar Khal, which is connected to the Andhermanik River that flows to the Bay of Bengal, is a good location for conservation of fish and other aquatic species. At the mouth of the canal, 40 logs, 6 feet apart in two rows have been placed to prevent boats from entering the areas, thereby helping to ensure an undisturbed environment for these aquatic animals. The total area of the sanctuary is about 7.6 hectors.

CREL supported the Tengragiri CMC with a grant to establish this sanctuary, which is monitored and tended to by Nishanbaria VCF members.

Cross site visits promote share of experiences among Co-Management Organizations

CREL organized cross-site visits for the members of Co-Management Organizations. These visits helped CMCs to share and exchange their experiences and acquired knowledge on conservation, alternative livelihoods and natural resource management with CMCs from other regions. Twenty (male 15; female 5) CMC members from Cox's Bazar region visited Sundarbans with a special focus on wetlands and forests of Sundarbans ECA, its protection strategy, natural resource management and alternative livelihoods activities. The visit took place during September 8 - 11, 2015. Similarly, a 30-member (male 20; female 10) team from South West region visited Cox's Bazar region during September 11 - 13, 2015.



Another exposure visit was organized for 15 members from different villages in the vicinity of Ratargul Swamp Forest to Lawachara and Hail Haor. In this visit the CMC members of Lawachara National Park and the Resource Management Organization member of Baragangina shared their knowledge of co-management and how the local community benefits from the co-Management approach.

The legend of Fire Breathing Dragons reaches Cox' Bazar



According to legend, thousands of years ago dragon fruit was created by fire breathing dragons. During a battle, when the dragon breathed fire, the last thing to emerge would be this fruit. When the dragon was killed, the fruit was collected by the victorious soldiers and presented to the Emperor as a coveted treasure. In actuality, Dragon fruit originated from Central and South America and are now grown in suitable climates all over the world. The fruit is produced by a species of cactus.

CREL is popularizing dragon fruit as a high value crop that increases the income of natural resource dependent people in Cox's Bazar. CREL, with support from Germplasm Centre, Department of Horticulture, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) of Mymensingh, organized trainings for farmers in Cox's Bazar to help them plant and produce the fruit. One thousand dragon fruit seedlings were handed over to the farmers at the training.