

CREL Project Steering Committee Meeting Held



The first meeting of the project steering committee (Forest Part) of USAID's Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project was held in June 2016. The meeting was

presided over by Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed, honorable Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, and attended by various high-level government officials including the

Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), members from the Bangladesh Forest Department and CREL staff. The CREL Project Director (Forest Part) presented a current progress review. The MoEF Secretary led a discussion on CMC sustainability for protected area management after CREL ends. Meeting participants suggested that CREL prepare a realistic plan including required investment on eco-tourism, natural resource management and climate change adaptation and present it by September and then government officials will search for the required resources for implementation of the sustainability plan.

Forest Dragons of Cox's Bazar

Dragon fruit, common in other parts of Asia, isn't yet widely known in Bangladesh, but that's about to change. USAID's CREL Project has joined with the Bangladesh Agricultural University Germ-plasm Centre to introduce dragon fruit cultivation in Cox's Bazar. By linking to the Centre,

106 participants received 3,000 high quality dragon fruit cuttings combined with high-level training on cultivation and marketing from BAU experts. This is accompanied by focused dragon fruit market outreach in local hotels that cater to tourists. Farmers receiving the initial cuttings and training are already selling cuttings to their neighbors who see potential for profit. To popularize dragon fruit, campaigns were organized in coordination with the Department of Agricultural Extension in June, where 175 cuttings were sold and 2,600 people received information on dragon fruit cultivation. Growing dragon fruit will be an excellent opportunity for farmers to make money and reduce their dependency on natural resource extraction from protected areas.



Training of Trainers on CMC Long-Term Planning Held

After the successful piloting of a long-term plan at the Chunati Co-Management Committee (CMC), a training of trainers (ToT) was organized in the Cox's Bazar region in May 2016. The key objective of the workshop was to develop a group of trainers to facilitate the development of long-term plans for each CMC in Bangladesh's protected areas. The workshop provided a platform for discussion between participants who agreed on the importance of planning for the long-term financial sustainability of CMCs.

Linkage Workshop with DAE

USAID's CREL Project is attempting to reduce natural resource dependency in Bangladesh, and linking with different government sectors is an important component of this. The project beneficiaries are going to receive support from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Sylhet. A linkage workshop between the DAE and CREL was held in June where the DAE expressed interest in fruit garden demonstrations. The DAE will support a 50-decimal plot of land for a fruit garden and CREL beneficiaries will get priority in their training sessions. Horticulture representatives also agreed to provide technical support. Workshops like these are effective as they will continue to help beneficiaries even as CREL winds down.

Nijhum Dweep Co-Management Council Meeting Held

The second meeting for the Nijhum Dweep National Park Co-Management Council (CMC) was held in May at the Upazila room in Hatiya. The meeting was presided over by Abu Hasnath Md. Mainuddin, UNO, and included 46 participants. The councilor approved the resolution from the first council meeting and the annual development plan for 2015-16. Major decisions made at the meeting were the implementation process of CMC grant activities, increasing tree plantations and the establishment of a fish sanctuary.

Private Sector Engagement for Conservation

"The government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is not against industrialization, rather the objective of the government is to ensure environment friendly industrialization," the Divisional Commissioner of Khulna said in a day-long workshop entitled, "Establishing Industries, Operating in an Environment Friendly Way and Social Responsibilities" at the Department of Environment (DOE) in Khulna on May 31. USAID's CREL Project and the DOE organized this workshop with over 50 participants from different industries and departments. Dr. Mallick Anwar Hossain presided over the meeting, with the honorable Mr. Md. Abdus Samad, Divisional Commissioner, Mr. Niranjana Kumar Mondal of the Board of Investment and Mr. SM Ziaul Huque,

CREL Regional coordinator, Khulna as special guests. CREL invited private industry in Khulna to support conservation in the Sundarbans as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Representatives of different industries presented current CSR funding and CREL shared key areas where industries could provide funds. Industries can get involved in conservation by financially supporting co-management organization (CMO) activities like tree plantations, dam building, alternative livelihoods, awareness events and modern agriculture. In its quest to engage the private sector and leverage funds for co-management organizations, CREL has partnered with more than 60 companies to support CMO conservation initiatives.

"Go Wild for Life" on World Environment Day



USAID's CREL Project celebrated World Environment Day this year in the Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Khulna and Sylhet regions with several activities organized in collaboration with Department of Environment (DoE) Bangladesh. Discussion meetings, rallies, fairs, essay and drawing competitions, interactive popular theatre shows, tree plantings, sapling distribution, a book launching and cultural programs were the key events in these CREL regions engaging nearly 6,000 attendees. The major participants were DoE government officials, the Forest Department, district administration, co-management committees, project beneficiaries, school and college level youth, teachers, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and media representatives.