

Evaluating Co-management as a tool for reducing poverty and inequality in 'Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary'

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Introduction:

According to the Forestry Master Plan (1993) total forest lands managed by the Forest Department, Land Ministry and individuals are 24,60,000 hectares-16.85% of the land surface of the Bangladesh. Per capita forestland in Bangladesh is 0.022 hectare, which is said to be the lowest in the world. Again the annual deforestation rate in Bangladesh is also alarming- 3.3% (Gain, P., 1998). Reasons of deforestation mentioned in Forestry Master Plan include change in land use pattern, encroachment of forest land, fire, uncontrolled and wasteful commercial logging, illegal felling, turning forest land into grazing land and collecting fuel wood. An important reason of failure of traditional management approach of forest department is extreme poverty and widespread unemployment of people who actually depended on forest for their livelihood (Studd, K., 2004). So there felt an urge to do some thing effective among policy makers. Under the Wildlife Act 1974, the government declared 19 reserve forests as protected. Government also initiated a new approach regarding effective management with the active participation of local people in decision-making process. It was officially launched in February 2004 with a name "Nishorgo Support project (NSP)" is actually a co-management approach, proved efficient and sustainable. One of the objectives of the project is to improve the income and livelihoods of the people living in and around protected areas. In this regard, NSP formulated various forest user groups in each protected areas. Under supervision of NSP these user groups are trained and motivated for efficient and wise use of forest resources. In the meantime this also provides alternative jobs facilities for the local peoples.

Rational of the study:

One of the National Development Goals (NDG) of Bangladesh is to reduce poverty by half with in 2015. In this regards various policies already have been adopted and there observed significant change in the rate of poverty. However, recent studies have shown that, the rate of poverty is reducing but incoming inequality is increasing. Policies of Nishorgo support project have been formulated around the idea of uplifting the socio-economic condition of the local people by creating alternative jobs and improving income. After the initiation of the project a considerable amount of time has passed. We would like to find whether there is any significant difference in income of the forest user groups organized by the NSP and the rest which are not organized by NSP but extract resource from the forest. If there is any, how it looks like i.e. distribution of income.

Broad Objectives:

One of the objectives of NSP is to Create alternative income generation opportunities for key local stakeholders associated with pilot co-managed Protected Area this study is an attempt to explore whether maintained objective has succeed or not. To answer the problem we would like to raise three further questions, which actually will be the objectives of the study. thus the objectives are as follows-

1. To find the rate of poverty in “Forest User Group” and in non-user group?
2. To find whether there persist any types of income inequality among the members of the groups.
3. To find whether income inequality is less in “Forest user group” than that of non-user group?

This research will give significant insight about co-management, whether it could be a tool for poverty reduction and uplifting socio-economic condition of the local people living in and around the protected areas. NSP could be more efficient and effective in protected area management by enriching itself with the outcomes of the study

Location of the study Area:

The Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary is located at 21°40' North latitude and 92°07' East longitude, about 70 Km south of Chittagong Port City on the west side of Chittagong- Cox's Bazar highway. Chunati Wildlife sanctuary includes nearly 7763.94 hectares of forest and grassland. We have selected the area because-

- We are familiar with the language of the local people.
- Transportation is easy from Dhaka.

Methodology:

The study will mostly be a descriptive type of study. Because it is easier to extract detailed and factual information about the existing phenomena and to make comparison and evaluation of facts and information.

Co-management committee and local experienced people will be consulted for village selection. After consultation two villages will be selected. Villages will be selected on the basis of their 'degree of stakes' in forest resource extraction. Only two villages will be selected because it will be easy to administer.

Total population will be divided into two sets of population as 'Forest User Group' and the rest population of the villages, who extract resources from the forest but are not affiliated by the Co-management committee.

Stratified random sampling method will be used for sample selection. Stratification (rich, medium, poor) will be based on their wealth (tangible). Information about wealth will be collected from local experienced people and secondary sources. Total sample size will be thirty-six. Eighteen samples will be selected from each subset of population. The distribution of samples among various strata and groups, which will be used are summarized in table-1.

Table 1: Distribution of samples among various strata and groups.

Groups Strata	Forest User Group	Forest User Group not recognized by NSP	Total
Poor	6	6	12
Middle class	6	6	12
Rich	6	6	12
Total	18	18	36

Data will be collected from primary and secondary sources. Mode of data collection will be personal interviews through semi-structural questioners and focus groups discussions. One of the main objectives of the interview method is "many types of information and even data can be produced by face-to-face contacts with people, especially data related to, personal history, opinions and attitudes"(Aminuzzaman, S. M. 1991 "Introduction to Social Research"). The tools, which will be used in interviews, are ranking exercises, seasonal calendars, time line, resource map and others. Secondary data will be collected form household survey reports conducted by NSP and other related literatures.

As it will be a descriptive type of study, data will be analyzed qualitatively On the basis of tools, which would be used for data collection (e.g. Ranking exercise, seasonal calendars etc)

Time Frame:

Activities \ Months	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Literature review						
Data collection						
Data analysis						
Report writing & presentation						

References:

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