ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS
WELL CONSERVED FORESTS

Snapshots of CRPARP Interventions and Results
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CLIMATE RESILIENT PARTICIPATORY AFFORESTATION AND REFORESTATION PROJECT
(Component-2: Alternative Livelihood to Support Forest Communities)

Implemented by
Arannayk Foundation
in Partnership with Uttaran and YPSA

The project is jointly implemented by Bangladesh Forest Department and Arannayk Foundation under the Ministry of Environment and Forests with the grant financing from Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF). BCCRF benefits from the generous support of the governments of Australia, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union and from the technical support of the World Bank.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

– Robert Frost
FOREWORD

Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) and Arannayk Foundation (AF), under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, have been jointly implementing the Climate Resilient Participatory Afforestation and Reforestation Project (CRPARP) in nine coastal and hilly districts namely Cox’s Bazar, Chittagong, Noakhali, Feni, Laxmipur, Barisal, Bhola, Patuakhali and Barguna since July 2013 with financial support from the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF). This project is first of its kind that includes promotion of alternative income generating activities among the forest dependent communities along with their active involvement in the planning and monitoring of the afforestation and reforestation activities.

In this project, the BFD has a target of establishing 17,500 ha of block plantations and 2,000 km of roadside plantations with climate resilient species in the nine coastal and hilly districts mentioned above and the AF is responsible for supporting alternative livelihood development of 6,000 poor forest dependent households in 200 villages where climate vulnerability and risk of anthropogenic disturbances to the plantations are very high. The AF selected the 200 villages based on certain criteria such as proximity to proposed afforestation/reforestation sites, proximity to natural forests, vulnerability to climate change impacts, size of afforestation area and level of poverty. From each village 30 forest dependent and extreme poor households were then selected through a rigorous screening process. The 6,000 selected households include 1,634 female headed households and 321 households from indigenous communities.

The major activities of the livelihood component of the project, implemented by the AF in partnership with two NGOs include mobilization and capacity development of the forest dependent communities in institutional development and alternative income generating activities (AIGA), environmental awareness raising and promotion of improved cooking stoves and tree planting in homesteads. The AF has supported the communities to establish ‘Mutual Rotating Savings and Loan Funds’ for financing AIGA. In selected areas, the AF has established community patrol groups (CPG) to help local BFD staff protect the plantations and natural forests.

In two years’ time, the interventions of this project component resulted in 20% increase in average annual income of the beneficiaries and reduced their forest dependency by 21%. It is expected that within next one year there will be further improvement of livelihood of the project participants with the ongoing value chain improvement interventions for certain prospective commodities. This will ultimately contribute to forest conservation and development of effective climate resilience among the targeted communities.

This picture book illustrates the interventions and results of this project component.

Farid Uddin Ahmed
Executive Director
BACKGROUND

One of the most densely-populated agrarian countries in the world, Bangladesh has been facing the problem of increasingly high rate of deforestation. In the last three decades, Bangladesh’s forest cover has declined by 2.1 percent per year due to illegal and unsustainable harvesting, expansion of slash and burn agriculture and conversion of forest lands into settlements, croplands and industrial or commercial areas. Presently, forest lands in Bangladesh cover around 2.56 million hectares, or 17.8 percent of the country’s total land area, but the actual tree cover is less than 11%. On the other hand, the country is highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as storm, flood and drought that are further aggravating due to climate change. The lower part of Bangladesh adjoining the Bay of Bengal is particularly prone to frequent tropical cyclones, storm surges and salinity intrusion. The last several decades have been witnessing increasing frequency of severe cyclones in this
coastal zone, affecting the natural resources and livelihoods of 16 million people. Climate change models suggest that the intensity of super cyclonic events will further increase over the coming decades.

Considering the fact that a thick forest belt along the coastline can help reduce such climate change-induced threats, Bangladesh Forest Department has been implementing programs of coastal afforestation along the 710 kilometer coastline since 1960. But, protection of the coastal plantations has remained to be a challenge as illicit extraction of the trees, often at sapling stage, causes the plantation to fail. While more than 0.17 million hectares of embankments, chars and islands have been planted since 1960, many of the coastal plantations are now lost or highly degraded.

In the above context, Bangladesh Forest Department and Arannayk Foundation, under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, have jointly undertaken the Climate Resilient Participatory Afforestation and Reforestation Project (CRPARP) with financial support from the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) to increase coastal afforestation in a sustainable manner involving local communities and providing alternative livelihood development support to the forest dependent households in selected areas.

THE PROJECT

The CRPARP is a project of 42 months’ effective duration, from July 2013 to December 2016, which is implemented in nine coastal and hilly districts in the south of Bangladesh, namely Cox’s Bazar, Chittagong, Feni, Noakhali, Lakshmipur, Barisal, Bhola, Patuakhali and Barguna. The project area covers 10 forest administration divisions namely Chittagong North Forest Division, Chittagong South Forest Division, Cox’s Bazar North Forest Division, Cox’s Bazar South Forest Division, Chittagong Coastal Afforestation Division, Feni Social Forestry Division, Noakhali Coastal Afforestation Division, Bhola Coastal Afforestation Division, Patuakhali Coastal Afforestation Division and Barisal Social Forestry Division.

The overall objective of CRPARP is to reduce forest degradation and increase forest coverage through participatory planning and monitoring and to contribute in building long term resilience of selected communities in coastal and hilly areas to climate change.

The project has four components (i) participatory afforestation and reforestation program; (ii) alternative livelihoods to support forest communities; (iii) capacity development for forest resource planning and management, and (iv) project management. The major targets of the project include 17,500 ha of block plantation (afforestation and enrichment planting) and 2,000 km strip plantations under 10 Forest Divisions in the nine coastal and hilly districts; alternative livelihood development of 6,000 poor forest dependent households in 200 selected villages around the plantation areas under the project; and establishment/strengthening of forest resource assessment and monitoring system with the use of remote sensing (RS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies.

CRPARP INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The 1st, 3rd and 4th components are implemented by the Forest Department and the 2nd component is implemented by the Arannayk Foundation. A Project Implementation Committee (PIC), headed by the Chief Conservator of Forests guides and coordinates the management and implementation of all the project components. The World Bank, as the manager of the BCCRF, provides implementation (technical)
support to the project. The Governing Council and Management Committee of the BCCRF provide strategic guidance and exercise broad fiduciary controls. A Steering Committee, chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of Bangladesh, oversees the implementation of the project.

Arannayk Foundation implements the ALSFC component of CRPARP in partnership with two NGOs: Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) in Chittagong and Cox’s Bazar (Southeast region) and Uttaran in the other seven districts (Southern region).

THE ALSFC COMPONENT: OBJECTIVE AND ACTIVITIES

The Alternative Livelihoods to Support Forest Communities (ALSFC) component promotes and supports alternative livelihood development of 6,000 poor forest dependent households in 200 villages near the planned afforestation areas and existing forests and plantations that are most vulnerable to illicit felling of trees and other human disturbances.

The objective of the ALSFC component is to improve mainly non forest-based livelihood opportunities of poor forest dependent households in selected forest communities, which will contribute to lessening of pressure on the forest and hence the sustainable use, conservation and protection of forest resources.

The ALSFC component includes four broad areas of activities:

- Social mobilization and human and institutional development of forest dependent groups (FDG) and co-management organizations
- Technical capacity development of the forest dependent groups in alternative income generating activities (AIGA)
- Establishment of mutual rotating saving and loan fund (MRSLF) for the FDGs
- Monitoring of impacts of the livelihood development support on biodiversity conservation.

ALFSC TARGETS

- Poor forest-dependent households in 200 villages are organized and provided with capacity building and small grant support
- Members of the forest dependent groups formed by the project are women
- Forest dependent groups supported by the project develop as active and effective institutions
- Households increase their income by at least 30% through diversification or up-scaling of their alternative income generating activities
- Increase in savings and investments in at least half of all participating households
- Reduction in illegal or unsustainable harvesting of forest resources
CONTEXT
Coastal areas of Bangladesh are increasingly experiencing sea-level-rise, frequent cyclones, storm surges and salinity intrusion in crop fields due to climate change.
The natural forests and plantations in the hilly areas of Chittagong and Cox’s Bazar districts, adjacent to the coastal belt, are being increasingly degraded and deforested due to population pressure. Increasing household and commercial demands for fuel wood is the most important driver of forest degradation in this as well as other areas of Bangladesh.
Since 1960, Bangladesh Forest Department has undertaken several projects on coastal afforestation and planted 0.17 million hectares of embankments, chars and islands but many of the plantations are now lost or highly degraded.
The Livelihood component (ALSFC) has been included in CRPARP with the aim of creating alternative (non forest-based) income and employment opportunities for the forest dependent communities so that the plantations established under the project and those that are already existing can continue to survive.
Arannayk Foundation identified the poorest and highly forest dependent households through a rigorous screening process involving participatory social mapping and wealth ranking exercise, household survey and validation meeting with community leaders.
Arannayk Foundation organized the 6,000 project (ALSFC) participants into 200 village-level Forest Dependent Groups (FDG) and 55 Union Federations of the FDGs and trained their leaders in the concepts, practices and tools of organizational development and management including financial management.
In order to promote broader community participation in forest and biodiversity conservation activities, Arannayk Foundation has established Union level Forest Conservation Forums (UCF) under the leadership of the respective Union Parishad Chairmen in the working areas of the ALSFC component (55 Unions). The UCFs conduct monthly meetings and discuss local conservation issues including measures to protect the plantations.
In order to create mass awareness on climate change and forest conservation, Arannayk Foundation and its partner NGOs make use of different media and events such as billboards, posters, radio, cultural shows, community meetings and observance of the World Environment Day.
Based on identified needs and prospects, Arannayk Foundation organizes technical training programs for the project beneficiaries using experienced resource persons from relevant government and non-government agencies. Upazila-level officers of the Department of Agricultural Extension, Department of Livestock and Department of Fisheries are most frequently utilized for this purpose.
Arannayk Foundation has engaged a Community Organizing Volunteer, selected from respective locality, to provide monitoring and accompaniment support to each Forest Dependent Group and has trained them in their roles including facilitation techniques.
To demonstrate methods and results of improved and climate resilient farming practices to the project participants and other people of the project areas, Arannayk Foundation and its partner NGOs established 79 demonstration plots in different places. The demonstrations include improved methods of vegetable cultivation, integrated homestead farming, hygienic cow shed, improved fodder grasses and improved methods of poultry rearing, fish cultivation, banana cultivation and woodlot planting.
Foreseeing the fact that organizational development and establishment of Mutual Rotating Savings and Loan Fund (MRSLF) of the forest dependent groups might take about a year, Arannayk Foundation distributed 3.5 ton seeds of 16 types of vegetables and 36,000 saplings of 5 types of quick growing fruits among the FDG members at the early stage of the project to help them start some alternative income generating activities quickly. Each household was also provided with 3-4 chickens or ducks.
Epidemic outbreak of *Ranikhet*, fowl pox and fowl cholera diseases is a major constraint to making poultry rearing profitable. Arannayk Foundation and its partner NGOs organize poultry vaccination camps for these diseases in the project areas in collaboration with the Department of Livestock Services (DLS).
To help them establish a Mutual Rotating Savings and Loan Fund (MRSLF) to support alternative income generating activities of their members, the project provided each Union FDG Federation a grant (calculated at the rate of BDT 10,000 per household) to complement the participatory savings fund of the latter.
Arannayk Foundation and its partner NGOs trained 565 leaders of the 200 FDGs and their 55 Union Federations in the concepts, practices and tools of organizational development and management, financial management and leadership by organizing 1,695 man-days of training sessions.
Arannayk Foundation has initiated a value chain improvement program for local poultry, pond fish and two types of handicrafts (a kind of mat made from *Murta* plants called ‘Shital pati’, and ‘Pebble Child’ brand of soft toys) in six selected areas.
In order to reduce their fuel wood consumption, Arannayk Foundation, promotes and supports adoption of improved cooking stoves (ICS) by the FDG members. By December 2015, 5895 FDG members (98%) adopted ICS. While the project bears the costs of ICS, the beneficiaries bear the costs of transportation and installation of the same.
Project staff of Arannayk Foundation and its partner NGOs maintain close liaison and coordination with the Divisional Forest Officers to facilitate inclusion of the FDG members in the social forestry program under the afforestation component of the project too.
RESULTS & IMPACTS
The 200 Forest Dependent Groups (FDG) and their 55 Union Federations are now fully active and nicely managing their Mutual Rotating Savings and Loan Funds (MRSLF) including disbursement and recovery of loans. By the end of 2015, the total amount of MRSLF of the 55 Union Federations stood at BDT 67.76 million of which BDT 8.16 million came from their monthly savings scheme and BDT 59.6 million from project grant. During this period, 4,462 FDG members received AIGA loans (BDT 5,000 – BDT 25,000) amounting to BDT 50.01 million in total. They invested the loans mostly in cow rearing (26%), cultivation of rice and other field crops (23%), different small businesses (14%), vegetable cultivation (8%) and fishing (7%). The recovery rate of the loans is above 99%. 
The initial input support given to the project participants was very useful. For example, Jannat Ara of Boroduara, Satkania, Chittagong, who joined the project in May 2014, started cultivating vegetables in her homestead using the seeds and training she received from the project. Inspired by good production in the first year, she concentrated more in doing the same and in 2015 she was able to earn BDT 8,000 by selling 44 pumpkins. With that money she renovated her house, paid school fees of her children and leased a small piece of land for BDT 2,000 for a year to expand her vegetable cultivation. Meanwhile, the three hens she received from the project in 2015 have grown in number too.
Jesmine of Rangunia, Chittagong leased a 0.8 acre land from a neighbor for BDT 7,000 for a year and started cultivating different vegetables when she got the vegetable seeds and training on their cultivation techniques from the project in 2014. She saved BDT 10,000 from the income she earned from selling her vegetables. She was particularly happy with her income from cucumber. In May 2005, she took a loan of BDT 10,000 from her Federation to expand her cucumber cultivation. Along with the savings she already had, Jesmine invested BDT 20,000 in cucumber cultivation by leasing a new land. Her crop was good and she was able to pay off 60% of her loan by December 2016. Forest dependent Jesmine has neither time nor needs to go the forest for fuel wood collection anymore.
Like many of her poor neighbors, Aktar Begum of Choukidarpara, Kalapara, Patuakhali used to depend on fuel wood collection from the forest (coastal plantation) for the subsistence of her family before joining CRPARP. She got two hens and one cock from the project in 2015 from which she has 16 new chickens now. Meanwhile she has also earned BDT 1300 by selling four birds. Now she spends most of her time in taking care of her poultry birds and vegetable garden and does not depend on fuel wood collection from the forest as before.
Saju Begum lives in Rahmatabad, Mirsarai, Chittagong with her husband and four children. Both she and her husband used to collect fuel wood, and even cut trees, from the forest for the subsistence of the family. After joining the project in 2014, Saju started cultivating different vegetables and rearing chicken in her homestead with the initial input support she got from the project. She earned and saved BDT 5,000 by selling her surplus production of vegetables and some poultry birds. In June 2015, she took a loan of BDT 10,000 from her Federation and invested that money, along with her BDT 5,000 savings, in cow rearing. She paid off her first loan in six months and immediately took a second loan amounting to BDT 25,000 from the Federation to lease a land, where she is cultivating different vegetables now. The economic condition of the family is much better now and both of them have stopped collecting fuel wood and cutting trees from the forest.
In Shaherkhali Noyapara village of Moghadia Union in Mirsarai, Chittagong, both Khaleda Akter and her husband Jebol Haque used to rely on collection of fuel wood from the forest for the subsistence of their three-member family. As a participant of the alternative livelihood program of CRPARP, Khaleda took a loan of BDT 10,000 from her Union FDG Federation in June 2015 and bought two female goats and established a small tea stall beside her house. Now Khaleda runs the tea stall and her husband works as an agricultural laborer and their family relies on the income from these two sources. They do not go to the forest for fuel wood collection. Meanwhile, one of their goats has delivered two kids which they are planning to sell in 7 – 8 months from now.
1. Mr. Ibrahim of Uttar Ratanpur village of Baharchara Union in Bashkhali, Chittagong took a loan of BDT 10,000 from his Union FDG Federation in May 2015 and invested in fish cultivation in a small pond that he had already leased from a neighbor using his previous savings. In the first year, he sold BDT 20,000 worth of fishes from that pond. He expects to earn double from the same pond within one more year.

2. Rupali Rani Shil of Dearabalua Guchhogram, Companigong, Noakhali took a loan of BDT 10,000 from her Union FDG Federation in April 2015 and started a small business dealing with buying and selling of crabs. She earns BDT 4,000 per month on an average from this business.
1. Amina Khatun of Purba Napitkhali, Islampur, Cox’s Bazar took a loan of BDT 10,000 from her Union Federation to start a grocery shop. She paid off her loan within a few months and took a second loan of BDT 3,000 to top up investment in the same business. Now her average daily sales amount to around BDT 3,000 that gives her a net profit of BDT 800. After paying BDT 15,000 rent for the shop, she earns a net profit of around BDT 9,000 per month.

2. Rina Begum of Padrishibpur, Bakerganj, Barisal took a loan of BDT 10,000 in March 2015, with which her landless husband Bellal Hossain started a new business of selling a locally popular fast food called Chotpati on mobile rickshaw-van. Now her husband earns BDT 4,000 a month from this business.
Amina Khatun of Chargangamati, Kalapara, Patuakhali already had a sewing machine when she joined the alternative livelihood program of CRPARP but she could earn very little from tailoring as she did not have a cloth store. For convenience, people generally use those tailors who sit in cloth stores from where they buy the clothes. So she took a loan of BDT 10,000 from her Federation in April 2015 and established a cloth store with that money. Now her income has increased significantly and she can save BDT 2000 – BDT 2500 per month after repaying her monthly installment of loan. During last Ramadan (the month of fasting and Eid-ul-Fitr festival), she earned BDT 5,000 from her tailoring work.
Aleya Khatun of Dokshin-Purbo Charchandia, Feni used to produce and sell “Shital pati” – a kind of mat made from Murta plants. After joining the project, she took a loan of BDT 10,000 from her Union Federation and invested that money, along with her little savings, to buy raw materials to expand her mat-making business. From an investment of BDT 13,000, she made a profit of BDT 9,000. By December 2015, Aleya repaid her total loan and was planning to take another loan of BDT 20,000 to invest in the same business.

Recently, Arannayk Foundation has taken an initiative to promote local production of the Murta plants and mobilize the renowned handicrafts marketing company, Dhaka Handicrafts, to buy the mats produced by her group.
Husband of Raima Begum of Chargamati FDG in Kalapara, Patuakhali was experienced in catching Hilsha fishes from the Bay of Bengal but, due to lack of ability to buy fishing nets, he used to work for others as a fishing laborer and thus earn at best BDT 5,000 per month. After joining this project, Raima took a loan of BDT 10,000 from her Union Federation and bought three fishing nets for her husband. With his own nets, now he earns BDT 8,000 – BDT 15,000 per month during the 10-month fishing period of a year.
Shaira Khatun of Khuniyapalong, Ramu, Cox's Bazar is happy to use improved cooking stove that she got from the project as she does not need to go to the forest for fuel wood collection as frequently as before and she can breathe clean air in her smokeless kitchen.
Members of the Community Patrol Group (CPG) of Dhulashar, Kalapara, Patuakhali regularly patrol the plantations (both new and old) in and around the village along with the concerned staff of the local camp station of the Forest Department. Due to this intervention, the incidence of illicit cutting of trees from the coastal plantations in Dhulashar has reduced significantly. Arannayk Foundation has mobilized such CPGs in 21 places within its project (Livelihood component of CRPARP) areas.