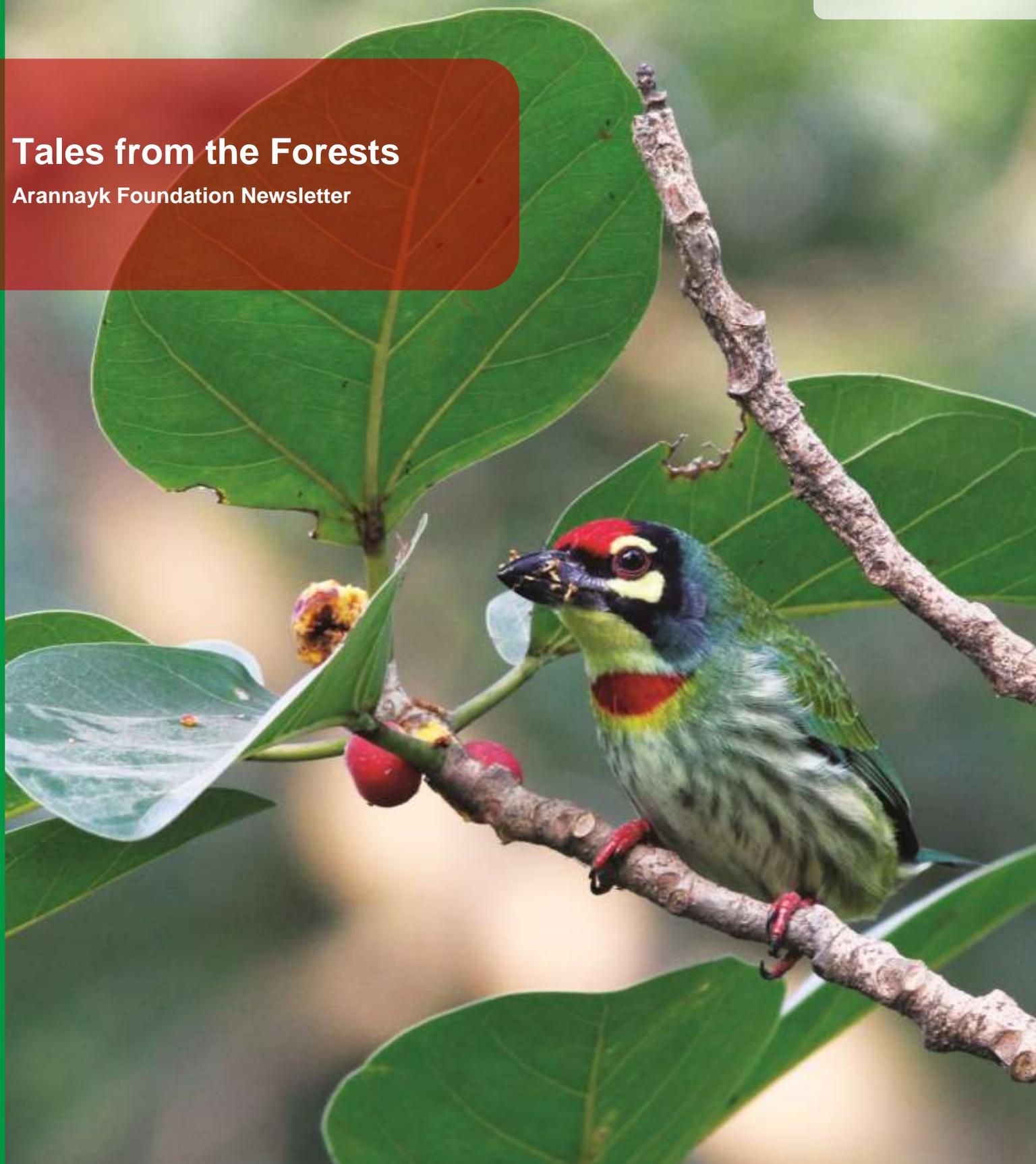


# Tales from the Forests

Arannayk Foundation Newsletter

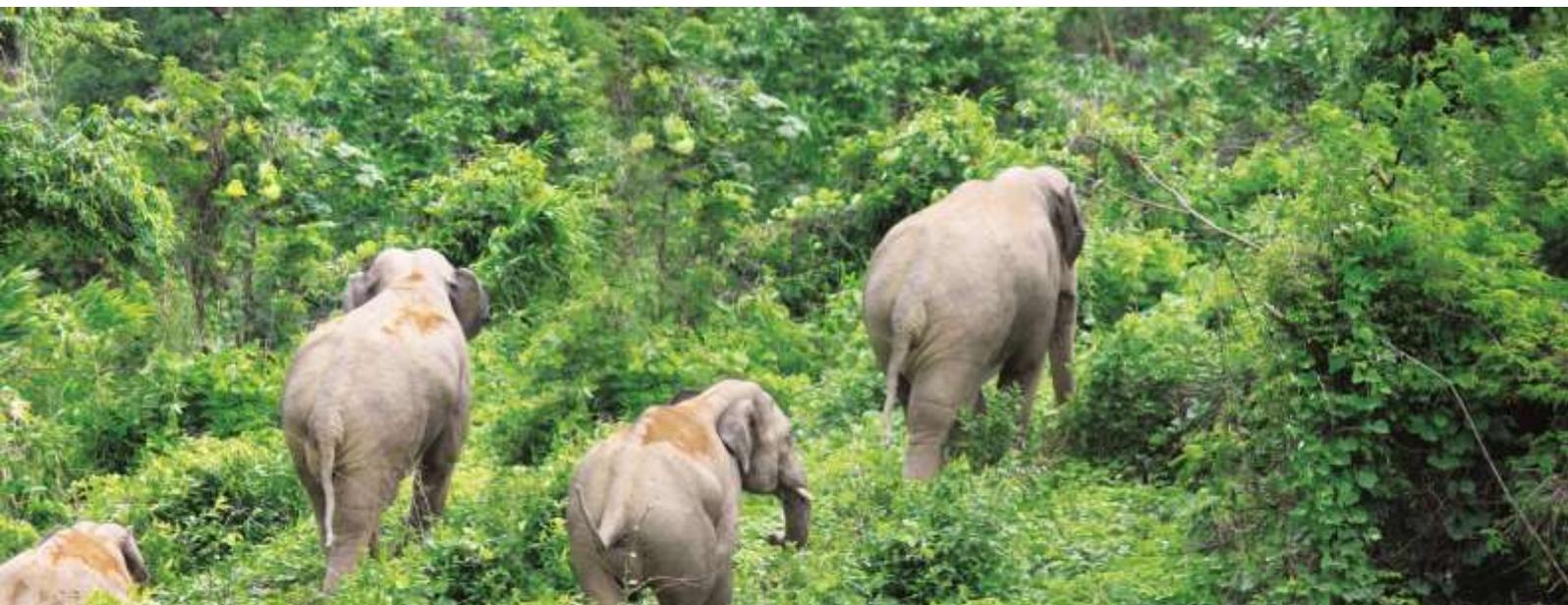


ARANNAYK  
FOUNDATION



Conserving forests for the future

Jan – April 2015



## In this issue

**03** Read about an inspiring man who changed his community

**05** Find out about our latest activities in the field

**08** Learn about our recent and upcoming events

## Editorial

### From the Executive Director

Welcome to the May edition of our revitalized newsletter.

It has been an exciting period as field activities for the BCCRF-funded Climate Resilient Participatory Afforestation and Reforestation Project have started in earnest. We are already seeing positive results following the distribution of seedlings and poultry through our partner NGO's. This project focuses on creating a green belt around the coastal areas of Bangladesh in partnership with the Bangladesh Forest Department.

Conserving trees is critical to lessening the impact of climate change, particularly in Bangladesh where more cyclones and tidal surges are forecast. Aside from simply planting trees, we know that forest dependent communities also require new ways to earn incomes so they do not need to fell the newly planted trees. Different studies suggest that if the livelihood of forest dependent communities is improved by 30 to 40 per cent, forest degradation is reduced by 50 to 60 per cent. This is where Arannayk Foundation comes in as we use our expertise in organizing and mobilizing forest dependent communities to choose alternative livelihoods. You can read more about our activities as part of this project in our In The Field section.

This edition of our newsletter also focuses on how small actions and small groups with big convictions can change their communities and environment. You can read about Bhante, a monk living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, who changed his mindset, his community and the bare hills around him after seeing an old champa tree cut down for his pagoda. Here in Bangladesh, deforestation is a serious issue with an estimated rate of over 2 per cent each year. Globally, it also accounts for 15 to 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions as the felled trees and plants can no longer absorb the carbon dioxide released by all living creatures. Deforestation also brings wild animals like the Asian Elephant into conflict with forest dwellers. As the habitat for the elephants is being destroyed they are now searching for food in people's homes or vegetable and paddy fields. Sometimes the elephants destroy the entire home or field in the process. You can read about the conflict further in our Voices from the Field section. I think you might be surprised at the practical actions that the local people suggested to stop this destruction of their homes and livelihoods.

We hope that you enjoy reading about our latest activities and achievements. If you want to find out more about Arannayk Foundation you can find our contact details on the last page of this newsletter.



### Special Acknowledgement

Arannayk Foundation is delighted to announce that, from over 30 entries, the newsletter title chosen by our Editorial Board with some minor modifications is "Tales from the forests". We want to thank Ms. Ambareen Khan (Communication and Information Specialist, CRPARP) for suggesting the title for our revitalized newsletter.

# Keynote Article

## One man, one tree and a changed community

Contributors: Ms. Marissa Kate Bertram (ECO, AF) and Ms. Farhana Khan Pushpa (CS, AF)

If you would know how much time it takes a tree to grow tall and wide enough to be sold, you might stop felling trees. Like you, it grows year by year. It provides fruits, shelter and wood for fuel as well. It is almost like another family member when it is growing near your home. We are releasing carbon dioxide while trees consume it to produce their own food and also release oxygen. It is a symbiotic relationship. So, we must respect the trees as they are critical to our environment as well as our survival.

Bon Bhante of Nirbanpur at Kutukchari, Rangamati felt very guilty when he realized that the Champa Phul tree which was felled for the Kheyang (pagoda) was more than 100 years old. The tree was growing on his land but was felled to make the doors and windows of the Kheyang in Kutkchari. The wood from this tree was enough for all of the windows and doors in the three-storey Kheyang.

Seeing the growth-rings he estimated that the tree was about 100 years old and was of 15 feet girth and more than 70 feet high with many branches and nests. He saw that this tree had provided support to many birds and insects, shade to people, protection for the soil from erosion and assistance in water percolation during the rainy season. Felling this very old tree changed his attitude and he promised that in future he would never fell any more trees and requested all his followers to do the same.

Dr. Mohammad Mohiuddin from the Bangladesh Forest Research Institute visited most of the Kheyangs in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) as part of his ethno-botanical research for his Ph.D. study. During this time he met Bon Bhante and recommended that he plant all kinds of different local trees around the Kheyang. He provided more than 100,000 seedlings of over 100 species. These were planted across 100 acres of land and are now more than 10 years old and cover entire hills. Gradually, the dense forest is being restored and there are now many monkeys and other wild animals living around this pagoda.

Bhante, during his preaching to his followers, has started motivating people to conserve the forests.

***I want all to protect trees from felling till the tree dies due to age or natural disaster.***

His followers joined hands with Bhante and have stopped felling trees. The hills which were once denuded are now green which is improving the watershed of the area. Bhante had an idea to harvest water in a reservoir and distribute it to the communities including the Kheyang. Using a Gravitational Flow System (GFS), the water coming from the hills is taken to a reservoir where it is filtered and then distributed, all without the use of electricity. People receive drinking water year-round free of cost from this GFS.

Bhante was awarded the 'Bangabandhu Agricultural Award' for his wonderful work this year. Just one man with his convictions, changed the hills around the Kheyang. You can see birds and wild animals around and a thriving community with a secure source of clean drinking water. Imagine what incredible changes we could all make in our community if we stood by our conservation convictions and turned them into actions.



# In the News

## Fighting for Forest Protection

Source: Daily Azadi, 8 January 2015

Abu Taher, one of the dedicated Community Patrol Group (CPG) members, was seriously injured by gunfire on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 while seizing trucks loaded with illegal forest resources from Sadhanpur Beat, Banskhali, Chittagong. Taher was accompanied by the Beat Officer and two other CPG members. He located the truck and gave chase to the culprits, however was shot multiple times when he confronted them. Taher was rushed to hospital and underwent emergency surgery. He is gradually recovering from his injuries. The Forest Department and Arannayk Foundation provided financial support and counselling while Arannayk Foundation and Dhaka Ahsania Mission are also monitoring his treatment and health condition.

## 'Information sharing workshop' of CRPAR Project (Livelihood Component) at Noakhali

Source: Bangladesh Protidin, 24 March 2015

An awareness workshop on the 'Climate Resilient Participatory Afforestation and Reforestation Project' was held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in the Noakhali Deputy Commissioner's meeting room. The Forest Department, Arannayk Foundation and the World Bank jointly organized the workshop which was chaired by the Divisional Forest Officer Md. Chanalyaha Patowari. The workshop included staff from the Agricultural Development Corporation, Agricultural Research Institute and Chairman of the people's representatives, politicians, journalists and leaders.

## Capsized Oil Tanker Threatens Biodiversity in Sundarbans

Source: Daily Prothom Alo, 9 December 2015

A devastating oil spill took place in the Sundarbans from a capsized tanker. The oil from the tanker spread to an area of seven kilometers, posing a serious threat to the flora and fauna of Sundarbans. However, people living around Sundarbans have collected significant amount of crude oil from the water and the rest gradually moved away from the area to the sea. This gives a signal to the government that unless we regulate the movement of water vessels through the Sundarbans, we may lose our heritage in the near future.

## Human Wildlife Conflict: Elephants in Locality

Source: Coastal Bangladesh, 28 January 2015

Southern Chittagong is a well-known elephant roaming track. Due to deforestation, there is an acute shortage of food for elephants, as a result, the herd of elephants are coming closer to human settlements and damaging houses, crop lands and vegetable gardens. The villagers are aware that by establishing villages in forests, they are encroaching on the elephants' roaming grounds. However, no initiatives have been implemented yet to lessen its effect. Such conflicts could be avoided by planting trees and training local people on co-existing with wildlife along with creation of mass awareness on the importance of elephants and biodiversity.



In other news, USAID has recently launched a US\$13 million project focusing on conservation of Bengal Tigers (The Daily Independent, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2014). Along with the Bangladesh Forest Department, the Wild Team will implement this project over the next four years, aiming to reduce illegal wildlife trafficking and minimize human-tiger conflict in the Sundarban area.

Abu Taher shot while protecting the forest



Information sharing workshop held in Noakhali



Capsized Tanker



# In the Field

## Spotlight on:

### Climate Resilient Participatory Afforestation and Reforestation (CRPAR) Project

The CRPAR Project funded by the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) aims to tackle climate change in nine coastal and hilly districts in south and southeastern Bangladesh. Arannayk Foundation is responsible for implementing Component 2 which focuses on working with selected communities to reduce their dependence on the forest. At the same time, the Bangladesh Forest Department are planting trees in the area to provide a physical buffer against extreme weather events.

## Distribution of Chicks and Ducklings to Beneficiaries to Reduce Forest Dependency

In order to reduce our project participants' dependence on forest resources and to promote their alternative livelihood development, recently we distributed almost 5,000 chicks and ducklings to beneficiaries as part of our role in the BCCRF funded CRPAR Project's livelihood component. One of our partner organizations, Uttaran, in the southern region distributed 3,620 chicks to 928 beneficiaries (1 rooster and 4 hens to each family) and 1,153 ducks to 193 beneficiaries in 52 villages during March 2015. The chicks and ducklings were, on average, 5 months old. A follow-up survey found that 84 per cent of chicks and 97 per cent of ducklings survived past the first few weeks.

## Training Program on 'Homestead Farming Systems'

Arannayk Foundation organized a training program on 'Homestead Farming Systems' for all the project staff of the CRPAR Project's livelihood component at the Germplasm Centre of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU-GPC), Mymensingh on 18-22 April 2015. The training provided vital information and hands-on experience in integrated homestead farming systems and homestead space planning. It also focused on topics specific to certain activities such as year-round vegetable production and cultivation techniques for coastal and hilly areas, common pests and diseases, poultry rearing for meat and egg production, cultivation of fish and crabs in ponds and the rearing of cow and buffalo for milk and meat purposes. Project staff also visited nearby villages and nursery beds where new practices were in use. Prof. Dr. Abdur Rahim, Director of BAU-GPC, Mymensingh coordinated the training.

## Distribution of Improved Cooking Stoves (ICS) among Forest Dependent Households

Improved Cooking Stoves can play a role in reducing consumption of household fuel wood as well as reducing dependency on the forest for fire wood. With this in mind, the CRPAR Project's livelihood component is distributing these stoves to all participants. So far 1,934 Improved Cooking Stoves have been distributed which has also created a buzz in the surrounding communities. Many are interested in installing an ICS because it takes less time, uses less fuel wood, causes less smoke in the kitchen and is economically beneficial for the household.

## Distribution of Blankets to Project Participants at Noakhali

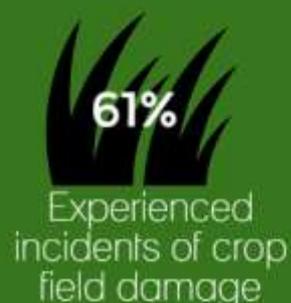
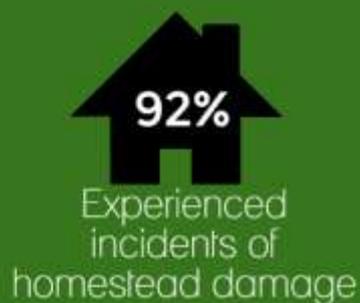
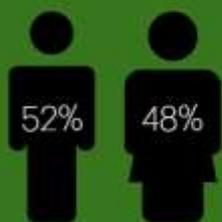
While it may be hard to imagine as we approach the summer heat here, Bangladesh does experience a particularly cold period during December and January with night time temperatures dipping below 10°C. As part of the CRPAR Project, one of our partner NGO's, Uttaran, distributed 400 blankets for protection against the winter cold with the help of 'Hands In Need'. These were distributed to very poor and extreme poor project participants in January 2015 at four site offices focused around Noakhali. The Executive Director of AF personally collaborated with the donor organization ('Hands In Need') and collected the blankets for the welfare of project beneficiaries. 'Hands In Need' was very happy to be able to distribute the blankets among the highly vulnerable and needy people.



# Voices from the Field: Human-Wildlife Conflict

In the Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary, people living in or near the forest are increasingly finding animals such as elephants foraging in their homes or fields for food causing destruction. We surveyed people in the villages in and around the area about the issue.

## About the Survey Participants



Did you know? Only 1/4 people knew that they could access compensation for damages

## Their Recommendations



87%

Plant trees



84%

Alternative income opportunities



76%

Raise awareness



63%

Install electric fencing



60%

Keep elephant corridors open



## Inspiring Stories

### Multipurpose Community House Boosts Dynamism in Tulachari VCF Community

Over the last six years, Arannayk Foundation (AF) has been supporting the communities of Tulachari Para, Rowangchari Sadar Para and Ronin Para, Bandarban in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in partnership with the local NGO TAHZINGDONG.

The Tulachari community was inspired to conserve the forest around them however lacked a meeting place where the community could meet in any weather to discuss these issues. They also lacked the financial means to build such a community house on their own. When TAHZINGDONG, with support from AF, proposed building the community house, the community not only enthusiastically accepted the proposal but also committed to provide manpower and other support to help build the house. The community allocated a place in the centre of the village for the house.

AF provided a grant of almost BDT 430,000 along with the basic design which was discussed with the community leaders.

Though the community could not contribute financially to the building, almost every family selected a representative from their house to help with construction. Before construction had even started, the community filled up the selected land with sand. They carried all the goods (bricks, tin, and cement bags) from the other side of the adjacent river and the structure (36ft x 19ft) was complete within three months by March 2015.

They now proudly call this place their own community's office. According to Kay Hla Prue, President of the Tulachari Village Common Forest (VCF) community,

*"I know we couldn't financially support AF for building the house but our moral support was always with them. We feel much attached to this house and believe it belongs to every person of our community."*

The Tulachari community with the help of TAHZINGDONG and AF is planning to inaugurate this office soon and use it as a multipurpose centre for monthly meetings, community gatherings or any other social purpose approved by the VCF management committee.

The nearby Rowangchari community were inspired by this and approached AF for help in building a community office of their own and a similar house will be built in Rowangchori with the help of TAHZINGDONG.



# Events

## Study visit to Malaysian Universities and Forest Research Institute

A team of three Bangladeshis from Chittagong University and Arannayk Foundation (AF) went to Malaysia in April 2015 to learn about Malaysia's forests and natural resource management practices as well as to explore future opportunities for collaboration with AF and the universities. The team members were Dr. Mohammad Kamal Hossain, Dr. Mohammad Shafiul Alam from Chittagong University and Farhana Khan Pushpa from Arannayk Foundation. The team visited Universiti Putra Malaysia, Nottingham University and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan and Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM).

## Workshop on Impact of Eucalyptus Plantation in Bangladesh

A workshop was held on 18 April 2015, organized by the Bangladesh Forest Research Institute (BFRI) in Chittagong to discuss eucalyptus plantations in Bangladesh. The workshop focused on assessing the environmental, social and economic impacts of eucalyptus plantations. Dr. Mohammad Kamal Hossain (IFESCU, Chittagong University) presented the keynote paper 'Eucalyptus dilemma in Bangladesh' in the workshop, which has been published with the support of Arannayk Foundation. Mr. Khandakar Rakibur Rahman (Additional Secretary, MoEF), Mr. Md. Younus Ali (CCF, FD) were present at the workshop. The recommendations of the workshop will shortly be presented to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh by BFRI.

## Regional UN-REDD Asia-Pacific Exchange Program

The UN-REDD Programme is a collaborative partnership among three UN Agencies (FAO, UNDP, and UNEP) to support countries in preparing to implement REDD+. A priority for the UN-REDD Programme is to support countries to progress as rapidly as possible on REDD+ through exchange of knowledge and experiences. This year the Regional UN-REDD Asia-Pacific Exchange program among Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and Indigenous Peoples' (IP) representatives and leaders was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 7 – 8 May, 2015 and AF's Executive Director, Mr. Farid Uddin Ahmed, attended.

## World Environment Day'15

The theme for World Environment Day (WED) 2015 is 'Sustainable consumption and production' with a slogan of 'Seven Billion Dreams. One Planet. Consume with Care.' AF and its partner organizations are planning to celebrate WED nationwide through rally, tree planting, and seedling distribution and discussion meetings with representatives from government and non-government organizations. AF is also planning to inaugurate its first Bengali Newsletter dedicated to the theme of WED at this time.

Study Visit to Malaysia



Eucalyptus Plantation Workshop



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