

# Factsheet-3

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## ADB in South-West Coastal Region of Bangladesh

### Two Case Studies

# Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP) & Sundarban Bio-diversity Conservation Project (SBCP)

## EDITORIAL

*.The Southwest Coastal Region of Bangladesh is a region of highly sensitive, fertile and ecological characteristics and biological diversity. But due to various natural causes and human interventions, this region has become the victim of various disasters. Many projects funded by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have been implemented in this region, without any consideration for the region's unique natural characteristics or the long-term effects of the projects. Among the projects funded by ADB, the Khulna Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP) and the Sundarban Bio-diversity Conservation Project (SBCP) are the most important. In this Fact Sheet, we have taken these two projects as Case Studies. Though both the projects claim to have peoples' participation, in actual implementation, it has been seen that peoples' participation is the one thing that is absent. It was in the face of peoples' movement that the Tidal River Management Concept was incorporated in the KJDRP, but that too as an eye-wash. In the same manner, criticism from all circles have put a stop to the implementation of the SBCP half-way through its duration, and the ADB is considering to re-design it. We give below, in brief, introductions to these two projects, peoples' experience and opinions, and the present situation.*

**Background :** The Southwest Coastal Region of Bangladesh is unique in its environmental nature and is one of the most fertile regions in the world. It is also very rich in natural resources and bio-diversity. Human habitation in this region has a history of thousands of years. Yet, the entire Southwest region of Bangladesh is part of the great Ganges delta, which extends from the Bhagirathi-Hooghly eastwards to the Meghna estuary through which the Ganges discharges its waters into the Bay of Bengal. The Bangladesh portion of this delta lies between the Meghna estuary and the Ichamati-Kalindi river on the border with India.

**The Southwest Coastal Region :** The Southwest Coastal Region comprises the present districts of Bagerhat, Khulna and Satkhira, the southern portion of Jessore district and the 6017 square km Bangladesh portion of Sundarban mangrove forest, which has a total area of about 10,000 square km. The rest of the Sundarbans lies in West Bengal State of India.

The southern part of the region has a brackish water regime, while the northern portion has fresh water. The region is comprised mostly of low-lying land, barely one metre above mean sea level. Most of the land used to be Tidal Flood Plain. The region is criss-crossed by numerous rivers. But during the last 3-4 centuries, the big rivers lost their connection with the Ganges and became mere drainage channels for surplus rainwater. Only the Gorai remained as the main distributary of the Ganges before the Ganges joined with the Brahmaputra and Meghna. The tides used to govern the environment, ecology and economy of the region. The 3.5 million tons of forest detritus dropped from the Sundarbans, decomposing in the water, produces enormous quantities of nutritious organic food for all kinds of aquatic life.. As such, the estuarine rivers, creeks, canals and cross channels used to be, and still are, one of the best feeding and breeding grounds for fish and other aquatic life forms. The tides carry heavy loads of silt, and when the diurnal tides covered the land, the silt used to be deposited on the land, compensating for the natural subsidence, common to all loose delta soils throughout the world. The silt, mixed with the decomposed detritus also enriched the soil.

When the first rains of the monsoon washed away the surface salinity, the farmers traditionally used to build low earthen dikes to prevent the incursion of the tides, and similar temporary wooden sluices to drain off surplus rain water. They then cultivated numerous varieties of flood tolerant and salinity tolerant rice.

After the harvest in December, the dikes and sluices were dismantled, and the tides given free access to the flood plains. enabling it to restore the land. Numerous kinds of fish and other life forms then used to enter

the flood plains, where the people used to catch fish. Thus, with plenty of rice and fish, there was no shortage of food and nutrition.

In order to conserve the environment and to eliminate poverty, it was necessary to design environment-friendly projects in a participatory manner. On the other hand the International Financial Institutions have designed projects in the name of development, but none of such projects have so far been able to achieve their declared objectives. In addition, after a short spell of positive effects, the projects have generated long-term negative impacts, which have not only caused massive damage to the environment, but have also increased the poverty and misery of the people. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has financed various development projects in this region. The most important among them are the Khulna Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP) and Sundarban Bio-diversity Conservation Project (SBCP). In this Fact sheet, we shall discuss the pros and cons of the two projects, peoples' opinions, and present situation of these two projects.

### **Brief Review of Khulna Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project**

<b>Title</b> : Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP)		<b>Status</b> : Terminated December 31, 2002.
<b>Location</b> : Manirampur, Keshabpur & Abhoynagar Upazillas of Jessore district and Dumuria & Phultala Upazilla of Khulna district. Area: 100,600 hectares.		
<b>Implementing Agency</b>		Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) Department of Fisheries (DoF)
Funding agency: Asian Development Bank(ADB)	Funds Allocated (optional) US\$ 62 million	
Start Date : November, 1995	Completion Date	December, 2002
<b>General Objective</b> The Principal objective – Environmental improvement, poverty reduction by reducing congestion and increased agricultural production and creation of on-farm employment through Tidal River Management.		
<b>Specific Objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobilizing beneficiary participation in design, implementation and subsequent O&amp;M of the project facilities;</li> <li>• Rehabilitating the existing drainage infrastructure to reduce drainage congestion and protect the project area from tidal and seasonal flooding.</li> <li>• Providing support for the expansion of agricultural extension services that will be necessary; and</li> <li>• Improving management of fisheries in polder areas.</li> </ul>		
<b>Activities Performed</b> River dredging -28 km, Drainage channel-404 km Closure-1 no. Embankment-24.5 km, Hydraulic structure-7no. Rehabilitation of hydraulic structure-8 no. Outlet structure-12 no. Tidal basin perimeter-9.5 km Culvert/bridge-24 no.		
<b>On-going Activities</b> Remaining Works of the project are scheduled to be completed by December, 2002: River dredging-2 km, Drainage channel-150.70 km, Embankment-8.86 km, Rehabilitation of hydraulic structure 11no. Outlet structure-8 no. Tidal basin perimeter-0.5 km, Culvert-bridge-14no. <i>Note : The KJDRP has been wound up on December 31, 2002.</i>		

### **People's Initiatives**

The people rejected the KJDRP on the ground that it will only exacerbate the problem and bring more lands under water-logging. They demanded incorporation of their Alternative Proposal of the Tidal River Management concept in the KJDRP. Accordingly, the NGOs under the leadership of Uttaran, conducted Advocacy and media campaign for the incorporation of the TRM concept in the KJDRP, under the umbrella of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), the apex body of NGOs. By participating in the Governing Body meeting of ADB at Geneva as Observers from April 28 to May 3, 1998 at the invitation of ADB, the NGOs were able to convince the ADB and accordingly, the KJDRP was revised to incorporate the TRM concept, at least on a trial basis.

Thus the ADB had to acknowledge the effectiveness of the Traditional Wisdom of the people, gained from living in this highly sensitive environment for generations.

### **Present Situation**

But the TRM concept has been implemented in a very small area on a trial basis. Though now the BWDB claims that TRM is the most appropriate strategy, this admission came at a time when there was no more time to implement TRM in the whole project area.

## *Sundarban Bio-diversity Conservation Project (SBCP)*

**S**undarban the largest contiguous mangrove forest that exists in the world today, is situated in the Southwest coast of Bangladesh, on the mouth of the Ganges delta. The unique characteristics of the Sunderbans persuaded the UNESCO to declare it as a World Heritage site on December 6, 1997. But this rare beauty spot and gift of bountiful nature is now on the verge of destruction due to many reasons. To develop a sustainable management and biodiversity conservation system for all resources of the Sundarbans Reserve Forest (SRF) SBCP was adopted for implementation. But many important issues have been overlooked in designing the project.

### **Brief review of the Sundarban Bio-diversity Conservation Project (SBCP)**

Title Biodiversity Conservation in the Sundarban Reserve Forest		Status : On-going	
Location The Sunderbans Reserve Forest (SRF) comprises 6017 sq. km. The project area also includes an Impact Zone comprising 17 upazillas extending about 20km north and east of the SRF and a 20km Marine Zone extending into the Bay of Bengal			
Implementing Agency		Department of Forest (DF)	
Executing Organization		Arcades Euroconsult, Netherlands; Winrock International, USA; Kranti Associates Ltd, Bangladesh; NACOM, Bangladesh.	
Funding agency Asian Development Bank (ADB) Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Government of the Netherlands Government of Bangladesh		Funds Allocated (optional) A total of US\$ 77.5 million including ADB Loan US\$ 33.9 million; GEF Grant US\$ 12.2 million; Netherlands grant US\$ 3.1 million, GoB US\$ 15.6 million, PKSF US\$ 6.8 million, NGOs US\$ 1.9 million and Beneficiaries US\$ 3.8 million.	
Start Date 2000		April (Expected) Completion June, 2006	
General Objective The overall objectives is to develop a sustainable management and biodiversity conservation system for all resources of the Sunbarbans Reserve Forest (SRF)			
Specific Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote &amp; implement a system of bio-diversity conservation &amp; sustainable forest management system.</li> <li>• To improve the institutional capacity to manage the SRF itself.</li> <li>• To reduce the poverty level of about 3.5 million people living in the impact zone by expanding economic opportunities, improving social infrastructure, improving organization for resource users and facilitating stakeholder participation in resource management.</li> <li>• To undertake activities adhering to increased awareness of the environment and eco-tourism and building necessary infrastructure.</li> <li>• To carry out silvicultural trials, study and research for improvement.</li> <li>• To provide technical consultancies, feasibility studies, monitoring, other services etc.</li> <li>• To establish mangrove arboretum the pioneer one regarding mangroves in Bangladesh.</li> <li>• To develop a strong forestry database through MIS for the country as well as for the international users.</li> <li>• To develop a sound wild life management system for the Sundarbans.</li> <li>• To improve planning, monitoring and applied research capabilities.</li> <li>• To reduce the extent of pollution by effluents from KNM.</li> <li>• To provide training to a large number of professionals and user groups.</li> </ul>			

### **Critical Review of SBCP**

*Though the SBCP talks of an integrated plan for the conservation of bio-diversity, there are serious defects in project formulation, as shown below :*

- 1) There is no acknowledgement or mention of utilizing Peoples' Traditional-Cultural Wisdom, and their experience of conservation through generations of living in this region.
- 2) Commercial Shrimp Aqua-culture in the Impact Zone threatens bio-diversity, increases unemployment, but a viable shrimp policy is absent in the project.
- 3) There is no policy position or action plan to address pollution by the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in upstream areas.
- 4) The proposed privately owned social a forestation, to be located outside the Sundarbans, is likely to lead to mono-culture, and not based on bio-diversity and ecologically sound principles.
- 5) Though the Sundarbans is situated in the cyclone-prone zone, no provision has been included in the SBCP for disaster management.
- 6) Lack of a historical review of the negative Environmental and Social Impacts of Construction of roads, bridges, culverts, embankments, sluices and polders in the Impact Zone and beyond has caused massive environmental and ecological damage to the entire region including the Sundarbans.
- 7) Peoples' needs for cooking fuel and housing materials have not been assessed or provided for.
- 8) Micro-Credit has been imposed without any guidelines as to its utilization.
- 9) The project has accused the poor people of the region as the culprits for depletion of resources. But actually, the local money-lenders, traders in forest resources and a section of corrupt forest officials are actually responsible. The poor people are mere wage earners.
- 10) Moreover, a study by the ADAB in 1998, conducted on the advice of the funding agency ADB, had implicated the forest official as the prime culprit for the plundering of the Sundarban resources. But the Forest Department itself has been chosen to "manage" the Sundarban according to the SBCP.
- 11) The greatest emphasis is given to eco-tourism. The SBCP does not give due consideration to the possible destructive effects of eco-tourism on such a highly sensitive ecosystem as the Sundarbans.
- 12) The project "hopes" that economic benefits will accrue to the local poor people by promoting eco-tourism. But the experiences in other parts of Asia-Pacific have shown that the poor get only 3% of the benefits.
- 13) A large portion of SBCP is devoted to Research, and only the Donors can appoint Research personnel. But in spite of availability of qualified persons within the country, total preference is being given to less qualified foreigners. Thus a large part of the peoples' monetary resources are exported.
- 14) Deep suspicions have been generated already in respect of the transparency and accountability of the SBCP. One of the conditions in the project is that, except for local perishables, all purchases must compulsorily be of foreign origin, even if the cost is higher. People see this as a trick to export the monetary resources of the people.
- 15) The absence of Gender policy and provisions for Peoples' participation in the entire project document is quite noticeable. But specific Policy or Guidelines for the same are absent.
- 16) The SBCP lacks Transparency. It has been an experienced fact that collection of information from SBCP or ADB is not easy

**Peoples' Initiatives:** In perspective of the above, the people and peoples' organizations inhabiting the Impact Zone of the Sundarbans, have taken initiative to critically review the implementation of the SBCP. One such initiative is the "SBCP Watch Group"

**Goal of SBCP Watch Group :** The Goal of SBCP Watch Group is " Save Sundarban, Save People through empowered Community Participation"

**Immediate objective**

- Broader awareness constitution through people's participation
- Effective re-design of SBCP according to people's voice.

This watch group is in the process of preparing a position paper and intend to launch an Advocacy Campaign for re-designing of the SBCP. The SBCP Watch Group, after reviewing the documents and consultations with the people, have prepared a report on the project , which is being presented below

**Expected Outputs**

- 1) Develop board constituency of SBCP Watch Group and mobilization people as pressure Group on the project implementing organization and ADB
- 2) Prepare a set of recommendations to modify or re-design the SBCP in favor of Sundarbans Impact Zone dwellers, specially poor people, based on people's perceptions, study findings and analysis of secondary documents
- 3) Develop a strong Prediction Group to analyses the implications of any kind of future interventions by International Financial Institutions (IFI) in the Southwest Coastal Region of Bangladesh

**Present Situation**

The Asian Development Bank, after going through the critical review of the SBCP by the SBCP Watch Group, has decided to re-design the project. In the meantime, the SBCP Watch Group is continuing discussions among group members as well as the inhabitants of the Sundarban Impact Zone.