

SDC Project No: 7F-01013.01.02
SDC Contract No: 81009474

DRAFT Final Report

Mid-Term Review of the preparatory phase of the project
Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor

9 March 2008

Executive summary

The review of the preparatory phase of the project “Community Based Management of Tanguar Haor” took place in early 2008. Its purpose was to *to assess the real possibilities of the project*



Introduction

Tanguar Haor, located in the district of Sunamganj in the north-eastern part of Bangladesh, is a unique wetland ecosystem of national and international importance covering about 10,500 hectares. It provides subsistence and livelihoods to about 56,000 people living in 88 villages situated within the Tanguar Haor Ramsar site and in its periphery. The Tanguar Haor plays an important role in fish production locally and nationally as it functions as a 'mother fishery' for the country.

In 1999, the Government of Bangladesh, recognising the ecological importance of the area and the over-exploitation of resources declared the Tanguar Haor an “Ecologically Critical Area”. In 2002 the Tanguar Haor was listed as the country’s second RAMSAR site – wetland of international importance. The management of the haor was transferred from the Ministry of Land to the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2001.

The MoEF, under the National Conservation Strategy Implementation project, sponsored a number of studies to determine the potential in natural resources of Tanguar Haor and to identify the causes of observed resource depletion. These studies identified lack of income and employment opportunities for the people of the basin (who live isolated on islands during the entire rainy season) as a major cause of resource depletion. The swamp forests have diminished as local people harvest wood for use as fuel, reed beds have depleted due to unsustainable harvesting practices and the fish stocks had been seriously diminished due to over-exploitation by leaseholders. The lack of any system for recognising customary rights of use and related management schemes has alienated the haor residents and precluded the emergence of management schemes that could ensure that exploitation levels are sustainable.

With these observations, the Government of Bangladesh took three important steps:

1. It terminated the allocation of fishing rights to the highest bidding leaseholder, and suspended all fishing except for small scale fishing in the immediate vicinity of haor villages for subsistence purposes. This suspension continues to this day, and surveys by the Sunamganj divisional fisheries officer would indicate that fish stocks are beginning to recover.
2. It prepared a comprehensive management plan for Tanguar Haor, introducing the concept of “wise-use” of wetland resources based on the wise-use principles of the RAMSAR convention.
3. In 2003, put in place with its own resources and under the direction of the Deputy Commissioner, Sunamganj District, a protection force consisting of District Magistrates, Police Officers and Border patrol officers, to enforce a moratorium on the exploitation of Tanguar Haor natural resources.

Subsequently, the MoEF, together with the World Conservation Union IUCN Bangladesh office, developed a project proposal titled “Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor” and approached different development partners.

The final report was produced by the consultant after the de-briefing. It presents his views and recommendations.

Objectives of the review and structure of the report

The Terms of Reference (see Annex 4 for full TOR) for the review were drafted in consultation with the main project partners (MoEF, IUCN and IC). The two main objectives of the review 2008 were *to assess the real possibilities of the project*

- *in achieving relevant results* in an effective and efficient way within the projected time frame
- *to deliver elements for the decision making of the involved partners on the future orientation* of the joint endeavour.

In conducting this assessment, the consultant was asked to consider 14 key questions. Initial findings / observations of the review are presented below according to these key questions³. Following a presentation of the observations / findings on activities of the current phase,

- 40% for the persons doing the harvest (in the case of fish, the fishermen)
- 26 % for the Union Parishad, with the intention that these sums should be reinvested in initiatives for the benefit of TH
- 34% to government, to compensate for the loss of income due to the ending of the leasehold system.

This ratio has now been discussed and approved by the THMC and the PSC. The first

interest of TH'. This will provide a basis for the implication of UPs in the process and will contribute, over time, to the TH Ramsar site finding its place in the broader District and regional context.

In this respect it is also noted that the precise demarcation of TH on the ground is not fully worked out. The administrati

It has been noted that project staff with better facilitation skills have been more successful in obtaining the participation of women in community discussions. It would follow that strong facilitation skills would also favour conflict resolution. Distinction needs also to be made between minor conflicts and major conflicts. The project should consider both increasing the competence levels within staff, and possibly envisage recourse to professional conflict resolution skills for predictable, major conflicts such as those concerning the purpose and finality of water management (agriculture vs. fisheries) where a more sophisticated technical dialogue is likely to be necessary.

Role, commitment, ownership and interest of Government of Bangladesh (GoB)

Government plays an active role in the management of the project through the Project Steering Committee (PSC - Chaired by the Secretary, MoEF) and the leadership provided by the National Project Director. The PSC has met twice formally and IUCN Country Representative interacts regularly with the Secretary MoEF and the National Project Director whenever project matters so require. Additionally, at District level (Sunamganj) the THMC, Chaired by the Deputy Commissioner, meets on a monthly basis (nine meetings to date) and approves both a monthly report and activity plan for the coming month. In this way the District Administration provides coordination and leadership. The IUCN PM acts as Member Secretary to the THMC.

The interest and commitment of government to establishing a functioning co-management system for TH with local communities was confirmed to the mission at local (UP; UNO), District (meetings with Deputy Commissioner and THMC) and Central (meetings with National Project Director and Secretary MoEF) levels. The commitment is strongest at Central and local levels, and possibly the temptation would be to go too fast, or at least faster than the support mechanisms (project + local government resources) can keep up.

The Secretary MoEF and the National Project Director (Joint Secretary MoEF) both expressed to the mission their vision of the TH Co-management initiative as a model to be applied to other wetlands in Bangladesh. Conversations with the Ministry of Lands concerning the hand-over to MoEF of selected wetlands have taken place, and the ability of TH to generate and realise revenues for the government (according to the agree ratios) is being watched carefully.

Government has also demonstrated, since 2003, its commitment to the management and protection of TH resources through the uninterrupted placement of 4 magistrates in TH to enforce protection and access rules.

Recently (February 2008) a substantial governmental delegation – led by the National project Director – inaugurated the first of the community proposed fish sanctuaries.

At the District and local levels, the examination of means and approaches to reinforce the capacity of District, Upazilla and UP officials to participate in and contribute to TH co-management is underway. Line agencies (through District and THMC) would certainly have a contribution to make both in supporting communities and in assessing ecological and economic sustainability factors. UP and Upazilla officials would also have a key role in supporting TH developments and possibly in the context of conflict resolution.

The efforts of the project to organise civil society networks have been emphasised less in this phase due to the emergency. That being said, the awareness campaigns led by PSMU and NGO partners have raised awareness of TH and of co-management concept it seems quite

successfully if the Focus Group Discussion held during the mission is a reflection of general awareness.

The true test of government commitment will come when the Co-Management Body is established and consensual decisions with communities elaborated and then materialised in the field. While this can be expected to raise complex issues, there is no reason to suppose that the willingness to resolve them would not be there.

well-being, social and political participation, enhancing incomes and improving access to decision-making processes.

Project results will contribute to the two thematic areas of “employment and income” and “local governance”. In addition the project has a strong “replicability” potential both in the dimension of wetland (Haor) management and in terms of co-management and benefits sharing.

The project, by virtue of the social stratification of vocations and of the option to ensure the inclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable, will contribute to promoting employment opportunities, exploring market linkages and – through the consolidation of the ending of the leasehold system – improve local economic framework conditions in a s 0 Td 4(p4(a []m)-2lp p4(a []m

maintaining productivity? What impact does water flow, volume and periodicity have on fish species?

- What other economic activities are compatible with maintaining the ecological processes and values of TH?
- What other economic activities are feasible?
- What kind of monitoring, social, economic and ecological, would be necessary to ensure that sustainability limits are understood and respected?
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- Support communities in organising restoration of degraded areas or increasing supply of natural resources critical for income generation of conservation. Develop modalities for compensating communities and individuals for resource management measures (such as the suggested three-month fishing ban).
- Starting from the existing network of interested institutions and scientists, build a monitoring and knowledge management system able to provide technical and scientific advice to MoEF and to the TH Management Authority on matters relevant to the maintenance of ecological processes and critical habitats. This would probably involve the creation of a scientific advisory group. While IUCN may be the repository of this information in a first phase, a permanent home for both the information and the advisory body should be sought.

If the above measures were to be developed and implemented, with appropriate training and other capacity building or support measures in place, and adequate revenue streams generated and managed, it should be possible for complete responsibility to be handed over progressively after a five-year period.

Cost recovery system to allow sustainability

The cost recovery system (for communities the “benefit sharing system”) proposed by the communities and approved by government seems to be a good starting point. Ultimately the adequacy of this cost recovery system for ensuring sustainability of management mechanisms will depend on the following factors:

- The quantity of resources that can be harvested and sold in an organised fashion under the authority of the THMC and communities and later the THMA, and the price that can be obtained for these resources.
- The ability to devote income thus generated to TH management or whether this income (60% portion going to local and central government) is used for other purposes.
- Alternative income sources that can be developed, such as tourism, and entry or visitor fees that could be envisaged.
- The ability of government to invest additional resources (beyond cost recovery) in the protection and management of TH resources.
- The willingness and ability of communities to share protection and management responsibilities with government.

It could be expected that in addition to the 40% share going directly to the persons participating in the harvest, some share of the income could go back to the communities to support their management initiatives. It could also be envisaged that some portion of UP income (24%) could be used to finance the cost of community participation in the Co-Management Body.

This aspect will need to be followed closely by the PSC and the MoEF.

Ensuring transparency and accountability

Accountability and transparency would need to be ensured through a number of steps.

Ensuring that decisions concerning resource harvesting (timing, quantity and participation) are well discussed and understood both by communities and local government. This is a task primarily of the THMC and of the UACs in the first instance, and later of the THMA as a

world-leading capacities in protected area management, sustainable management of natural resources and critical habitats, community mobilisation and livelihood improvements. A consultancy budget should be made available to allow the institutions to bring this global expertise to bear with the PSMU when and as needed.

For the remainder of the preparatory Phase and for a Development Phase

Clarify the lead implementing agency (IUCN or IC)

- **Sunamganj Coordination Initiative:** Use the Sunamganj Coordination Initiative of SDC to organise discussions at the field level to promote the identification of synergies amongst SDC projects in the region. Discussions could usefully be held to clarify understanding of approaches in terms of sensitivity to the needs of the poorest and marginalised groups including women, the content and implications of Protected Area management for co-management processes and institutions.

For a Development Phase

- **Main Objectives:** SDC assistance should focus on 2 major objectives: Elaboration and consolidation of Co-management model including the operationalization of the concept of cost-recovery / benefits sharing, and consolidation of community self-help and consensual representation mechanisms. IUCN should take a lead, in consultation with Government and other partners, in securing additional interest in the region to address additional questions requiring substantial additional resources. Such questions include: improving access to health and education services; managing siltation and pollution from external sources; development of tourism; etc.
- **Hurry slowly:** The formalisation of Co-Management arrangements – encompassing definition of the representational modalities, attributes, scope of work and rules of procedure of the Co-Management body, cost recovery / benefits sharing modalities for different resources and eventual regulations concerning zoning (sanctuaries for example), sustainable yields – should proceed methodically and be closely linked to practice. The formal establishment of a Co-Management Body should be a two to three year target. At the same time, there need to be milestones established and concrete benefits should be flowing to the stakeholders and measured from the first months.
- **Co-Management Body:** The establishment of the Union ad hoc Committees is a rational way to organise a community-based counterpart to the District based Tanguar Haor Management Committee. The four UACs will need some way of coalescing to formulate a coherent representation towards the THMC. Careful consideration should be given to formulating an adequate mechanism for this. It is not clear that a structure, at least in the short term is needed. Rather a process / procedure is required that will allow UACs to convene and consult in preparation for discussions with THMC. The process for elaborating community positions would be the basis upon which to decide, in due course, on community representation in a Tanguar Haor Management Authority. In this connection a mechanism for ensuring coordination with and involvement of Union Parishad and Upazilla officials in the Management Authority will also be required.
- **TH Boundaries:** The boundaries of TH, from a Ramsar point of view, from a socio-economic point of view and from the point of view of ecological and hydrological

dynamics need to be considered and materialised – on the ground in the case of the Ramsar site and in management terms for socio-economic and ecological parameters.

- **Scientific Advisory Group:** Establish a scientific advisory committee to advise decision-makers at Project Steering Committee level and at Co-Management Body level on scientific and technical matters. A workplan and operational modalities should be for this group should be established during the preparatory phase.
- **Conflict resolution:** Conflicts within and between communities will arise as the practice of granting access to resources is expanded. Conflict resolution training should be offered to partner NGO, project field staff and probably also to Village Committee members and Union ad hoc Committee members. More substantial and more complex conflicts are also likely to arise as TH management begins to address questions such as the competing requirements in terms of water management between agriculture and fisheries, issues of external pollution (sulphur) sources etc. For these major conflicts, external conflict resolution skills / advice may be useful.
- **Management:** The quantity and intensity of the management, coordination and supervision effort required will be greater even in an eventual development phase. IUCN should ensure that adequate resources, both at field level and at Dhaka level, are allocated to coordination, supervision and management. The effort needed to elaborate the full scale of regulations to make the co-management process work for the benefit of the communities while ensuring a flow of revenue to government and guaranteeing sustainability of ecological processes and resources will be substantial.

Annexe 1 – List of documentation consulted

1. Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor Programme, Annual Report, IUCN, December 2006 –November 2007
2. Annual Report Annex on Awareness Campaign, IUCN, November 2007
3. Annual Report Annex on Organisation Formation, IUCN, November 2007
4. Annual Report Annex on Participatory Resource Management Planning, IUCN, November 2007
5. Annual Report Annex on Project Management, IUCN, November 2007
6. Annual Report Annex on Process, IUCN, November 2007
7. Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor Programme, Progress Report, IUCN, December 2006 – May 2007
8. Cooperation Strategy Bangladesh 2008 – 2012, SDC January 2008
9. Minutes of the Meeting on the Review Mission, IUCN 12 February 2008
10. Concept on fish harvesting (draft note) IUCN, February 2008
11. Credit proposal, Tanguar Haor Community Management, October 2006
12. National Fisheries Policy, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, 1998
13. Report of a short-term consultancy to develop a strategic proposal on community based management of Tanguar Haor, Peter Hilaire, December 2005
14. National Water Policy: Bangladesh, Ministry of Water Resources, undated copy
15. Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Switzerland and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh concerning the Community Based Management of Tanguar Haor Project, Inception Phase: December 2006 to May 2008.
16. Fisheries Resources of Tanguar Haor, Baseline, TARA, February 2008
17. Tanguar Haor resources, Status Report, Resource Maps, CNRS, December 2007
18. Tanguar Haor resources, Status Report, Resource Use Mobility Maps, CNRS, December 2007
19. First draft Report on Census, wetland Inventory, Assessment, Resource Mapping and Community Profile, CNRS, February 2008

Annex 2 - List of persons met

In Dhaka:

Mr Joseph Guntern, Head of Cooperation, SDC Bangladesh
Mr Imran Md Bhuiyan, Senior Programme Officer, SDC Bangladesh
Mr A H M Rezaul Kabir, NDC, Secretary, MoEF
Mr Rabindranath Roy Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, MoEF
Mrs Begum Dilruba Yasmin, Deputy Chief, MoEF
Mr Mohammad Qamar Munir, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forest
Mr Alain Cuvelier, Head of Delegation, InterCooperation, Bangladesh
ATM Azmul Huda, Programme Officer, InterCooperation
Dr Ainum Nishat, Country Representative, IUCN Bangladesh
Mr Raquibul Amin, Programme Coordinator, IUCN Country Programme, Bangladesh
Mrs Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Director (Programmes), Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association
Mr Mokhelsur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Natural Resource Studies

In Sunamganj:

Village Communities, Union ad Hoc Committee members from villages of Patabuka, Joypur, Nababpur

AFM Rezaul Karim,	Tanguar Haor Project Manager, IUCN
Mr. Dhruva Kanta Kundu,	Program Officer (NRM), IUCN
Mr. Md. Mostafa Rahman,	Program Officer (Livelihood), IUCN
Akikur Reza,	Executive Director, GUS

Annexe 3 - Output by Output: Brief review of progress

Output 2.3 Basic understanding of and consensus on princip

Output 3.2

Annexe 4 - Terms of Reference

for the Review 2088 of the project
“Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor”

1. Background

Tanguar Haor, located in the district of Sunamganj in the north-eastern part of Bangladesh, is a unique wetland ecosystem of national and international importance covering about 10,500 hectares. It provides subsistence and livelihoods to about 56,000 people living in 88 villages situated in its periphery. The Tanguar Haor plays an important role in fish production as it functions as a 'mother fishery' for the country. The Government has declared Tanguar Haor as an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) in 1999. In 2000, the Haor basin was also declared as the country's second Ramsar site as a wetland of international importance. With this declaration, the Government of Bangladesh committed to preserve its natural resources and the Ministry

5. The Institutional and Government steps in place or to be in place to ensure the sustainable development of the Tanguar Haor project (including clear development options for the poor, vulnerable population of this area).
6. The project's possibility of harmonisation and alignment with other actors that are working in similar

strengths/approaches of IUCN and IC creating synergies for reaching conservation and livelihood improvement objectives/goal?

9. How far is the project *in line with SDC Cooperation Strategy* (including its conceptual settings for E&I and Local Governance)? What kind of linkages and synergies this project has or should have in relation to other SDC projects in line with the new Cooperation Strategy (e.g. the Sunamganj Coordination Initiative)?
10. What could be the *follow up phases* (or exit strategy for SDC) for the project? When, in order for the local and central government, the district administration and representative of community take complete responsibility for the project interventions? Which phases towards such scenarios are to be envisaged?
11. What kind of *cost recovery system* would work for sustainability of the project (within the scenarios, proposed under point 9)?
12. What is the strategy to be put in place to *ensure transparency and accountability* (and to avoid corruption)?
13. Are the lessons learnt *attracting other development partners* for investing in such initiative? Is the project harmonised (or is there a scope to harmonise) with other projects by other development partners?
14. Is there a need for *technical backstopping in future phases*? What kind of support would be required?

Methodology

The detailed methodology, further specific key questions and a detailed programme of the review will be prepared and finalised by SDC (lead for the review) in consultation with the consultant and IUCN.

The following steps are to be included in that programme:

- x Review of agreements among SDC-Government-IUCN, the project logical framework, proj8-1(N)4,(Tf 0.15 Tw)m(c)2 im4(i01 24(g)-8i-2((c)64(g)-n,-)50 Tw 16.19 0 Td1.3)

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Budget

Annex 5 - Implementing agencies

As a partner organization of SDC, Bangladesh Country office of the World Conservation Union (IUCNB) has been assigned by the Ministry of Environment and Forest as the coordinating organization. IUCNB has the overall coordination role and is in charge of technical aspects of the project. It will work together with Inter-cooperation. Intercooperation will put emphasis on its efforts on the livelihoods component of the project. It will organize and mobilize the community to implement its livelihoods component with partners. Other partners involved include local NGOs, civil society network and national think tanks.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)-

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