

Project Update: September 2012

We have completed biodiversity survey, community survey, key informant survey and group discussion in Empu Para Village Common Forests (VCFs) and Tulachori Para VCF of Bandarban Hill Districts, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. The field works were very challenging due to very bad weather in June-July 2012 and remote location of VCFs. These two VCFs (Empu Para and Tulachori Para) were purposively selected based on ethnicity and spatial locations. Empu Para VCF is located in Tongkaboti Union (sub-upazilla), Bandarban Sadar Upazilla (sub-district), nearly 39 km away from Bandarban Sadar toward the way of Thanchi Upazilla. The total area is 80 acre (approx.) and total member of VCF is 41. The ethnicity of the community people is Muro. Tulachori Para VCF is located in Rowangchari Sadar Union, Rowangchari Upazilla, about 20 km away from Bandarban Sadar toward the way of Rowangchari Upazilla. The total area is 50 acre (approx.) and total member of VCF is 36. The ethnicity of the community people is Marma.

The study is conducted in three phases. Firstly, community survey is conducted with a semi-structured questionnaire in both communities. A total of 30 members (15 from each) were surveyed from two communities. Four key informant surveys have also been conducted in each community. Secondly, biodiversity survey is conducted in both VCFs. 20 sample plots (10 plots in each VCF) of 10m×10m size following random sampling were selected. Data about no of tree species, individuals and diameter at breast height (dbh) were collected. At the centre of each 10m×10m plot, a 2m×2m plot was selected and regeneration data and medicinal plants data were collected. The identification of plants was done by Taxonomist from Bangladesh Forest Research Institute, Chittagong and local people. Thirdly, a group discussion in each community was arranged.



We are now analysing the collected data. Community awareness and conservation education programme will be done very soon. Some of the findings are described briefly here. Most community people are illiterate and engaged with shifting cultivation and tree farming. Biodiversity of VCF is decreasing with time, as well as proportion of native trees is also decreasing. The disappeared tree species from the studied VCFs are Latkon (*Bixa orellana*), Garjan (*Dipterocarpus turbinatus*), Boilam (*Anisoptera scaphula*), Goda (*Vitex peduncularia*), Civit (*Swintonia floribunda*), Jaganna gula (*Ficus racemosa*), Buddo Narikel (*Pterygota alata*), Champa (*Michelia champaca*), Chapalish (*Artocarpus chaplasha*) and Banspata (*Podocarpus nerifolia*). The causes of biodiversity loss are: unsustainable

harvesting, shifting cultivation, lack of clear defined management rules, over-exploitation, lack of well-defined boundary, mistakes from leadership, habitat destruction, land use change and population pressure.