# Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor Project – Phase III (Consolidation)

Mid Term Review

Final Report

May 17, 2014

**CONTENTS**


| | | Page no |
|---|---|---|
| Contents | | 1 |
| Abbreviations and Acronyms | | 2 |
| Executive Summary | | 3 |
| 1 | Background and Terms of Reference | 4 |
| 2 | The Tanguar Haor Ecosystem (THE) | 6 |
| 3 | Summary of the MTR Findings | 9 |
| 4 | Conclusions and Recommendations | 13 |
| 5 | Relevance of CBSMTHP to SDC Cooperation Strategy: Recommendations | 29 |
| 6 | Consolidation of Recommendations and Suggested Roles | 37 |
| Annexes | | |
| A | Terms of Reference | 42 |
| B | Persons Met | 48 |
| C | Dhaka Meeting Schedules | 50 |
| D | Field Trip Schedule | 52 |
| E | References | 54 |

**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

| | |
|---|---|
| BCCSAP | Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan |
| CBOs | Community Based Organizations |
| CCC | Central Co-management Committee |
| CBSMTHP | Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor Project |
| CNRS | Center for Natural Resources Studies |
| CREL | Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihood |
| DFR | Draft Final Report |
| DP | Development Partners |
| GIZ | Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammerarbeit |
| GOB | Government of Bangladesh |
| IPAC | Integrated Protected Area Co-management |
| IUCN | International Union for the Conservation of Nature |
| LGED | Local Government Engineering Department |
| MACH | Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry |
| MOEF | Ministry of Environment and Forests |
| MOL | Ministry of Land |
| MTR | Mid-Term Review |
| NWN | National Wetland Network |
| NGOs | Non-Government Organizations |
| NSB | National Scientific Body |
| PSC | Project Steering Committee |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| TH | Tanguar Haor |
| THE | The Tanguar Haor Ecosystem |
| THIC | Tanguar Haor Information Center |
| THMA | Tanguar Haor Management Authority |
| THMC | Tanguar Haor Management Committee |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| UCC | Union Co-management Committee |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNO | Upazila Nirbahi Officer |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| VCC | Village Co-management Committee |

**Executive Summary**

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) deployed one independent Consultant[1] for the Mid Term Review (MTR) of the Consolidation Phase of an important project they have been funding since 2006, "Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor Project" (CBSMTHP). The project is being implemented by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Bangladesh Country Office in tandem with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). This report is the Final Report of the MTR that commenced on March 1, 2014.

Following a brief preparatory phase, a three-year (2009-2012) development phase was completed to establish a co-management system that would ensure both the preservation of key ecosystem functions and values as well as provide substantial livelihood improvements for rural communities. The current phase is termed as the Consolidation Phase (2013-2015), which will be ending in June 2015. The CBSMTHP is an ambitious project embarked upon a challenging endeavor with a low budget. With only about a year left, the Consultant recommends that the project focuses on preparing an "exit strategy" and starts implementing it, rather than newly planning and spreading implementation actions.

The CBSMTHP co-management governance has a foundation at the grassroots resource users level that links up to the GOB's highest policymaking level. The Village Co-management Committee (VCC) is at the bottom of the governance structure. The CBSMTHP formed 73 VCCs covering 76 out of 88 villages and brought 6,616 members from 4,774 out of 10,205 households into the co-management process. The VCCs formed four Union Co-management Committees (UCCs). The Central Co-management Committee (CCC) is the apex body at the ecosystem level. The Tanguar Haor Management Committee (THMC) is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the Sunamgonj district. While THMC is the authority to set the TOR for the implementation of all the operations of the project, the CCC plays a central role in co-management. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) is chaired by the Secretary MOEF; the Joint Secretary (Development) is the Project Director.

The MTR Consultant concludes that the co-management institutions are not truly inclusive even though the heterogeneity of the community (gender and ethnicity) was well included. The Consultant recommends that, within the Consolidation Phase,

- The entire co-management governance structure be revisited. This will include at a minimum but not limited to:
    - Re-naming and re-organizing the VCCs, UCCs and the CCC under a user-group federation rubric.
    - Making every effort to include the local elite and the local government into the co-management structure.
- The location, level of participation and the TOR of the co-management committees be immediately re-considered. This may include, but not be limited to:
    - Rethinking whether it is effective to keep the THMC at the district level or not.
    - Rethinking whether relocating the THMC (perhaps this will be the re-constituted CCC) at the Upazila level would be more effective or not. The Upazila level THMC can report to District Development Committee (DDC) and/or the District Environmental Committee (DEC) where issues of the THE will constitute a permanent agenda. The District administration can maintain status quo in ensuring the law enforcing measures for THE protection.

[1] Dr. Azharul Mazumder

- Rethinking how the PSC can include representation from the newly conceptualized THMC, particularly the grassroots.

The THMC was established through a GOB Gazette Notification on May 6, 2013. The CCC (and its Constitution) was registered as a "Co-management Society" under the 1860 Societies' Registration Act. The Gazette that established the THMC is tied to the CBSMTHP; it does not give any permanence to the THMC after project completion. The TOR of the THMC is also too sketchy and non-visionary. The CCC is a "poor community only" platform; its Constitution only describes the roles and responsibilities of the communities. Roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders were nowhere mentioned. The project is now working for approval of a revenue sharing scheme for the community guards.

Experience has shown that the sustainability of co-management organizations depends to a great extent on how solid is the legal footing. The MTR Consultant closely reviewed the CBSMTHP's co-management negotiation process and concluded that the project in its "learning by doing" process have been trying its best to put in place some crucial safeguard measures. However, these safeguard measures may not prove strong enough to protect and sustain the existence or effectiveness of the co-management organizations since they do not specify the roles of all stakeholders.

The MTR Consultant recommends that the legal standing of the co-management process be revisited within the Consolidation Phase. This can be achieved, for instance, by:

- Negotiating with the MOEF to sign an interim memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the CCC with the understanding that, for safeguarding the communities rights over the resources and managing the THE in a sustainable manner, the governance structure will be revisited,
- Re-defining the co-management governance structure to include all relevant stakeholders, and
- Revising the TOR of the re-constituted co-management institutions to adequately elaborate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

The MTR Consultant concludes that the MOEF has been showing its conspicuous commitment. The THMC runs the operation following a "command and control" approach. The communities are the backbone of the THE co-management. The CBSMTHP has so far mobilized 48% of the total THE population to join the process. The influential elite are still out of the co-management process and structure. This can have a seriously negative impact as discussed earlier. The poor communities consider the project as a blessing. The CBSMTHP has given them a "prestigious" social position, direct financial incentives, access to resources as well as technology and skill training. Women are vocal and active in economic incentives. There is no ethnic conflict.

Are the communities fully committed to safeguarding the THE resources after the CBSMTHP is closed down? The MTR Consultant cannot confidently provide a bold affirmative answer to this question. The MTR Consultant recommends that the following actions must be initiated and/or intensified prior to the ending of the Consolidation Phase:

- Co-management of NRs is all about alliance building. The CBSMTHP should strengthen the facilitation of alliance building among all stakeholders of the THE as well as other neighboring initiatives such as the "Community-based Fisheries Management Project" funded by IFAD and implemented jointly by the World Fish Center (WFC) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and the "Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project" funded by USAID and implemented by Winrock International. The CBSMTHP partner CNRS is also a CREL sub-grantee.

- The incentives for the communities should be revisited during the preparation of the exit strategy (see Section 5 below).

The MTR Consultant concludes that the CBSMTHP performance in helping mobilize the AIGA and other economic opportunity enhancing efforts, secure communities' access rights to resources and modest attempts to understand the market challenges are reasonably good. Sustainability of these systems is going to be a serious issue and it should be a major focus for the remaining period.

The MTR Consultant recommends that:

- The wholesale idea of transferring the operation of the revolving fund to an existing MFI be re-assessed. Hiring an MFI may be expensive. The opportunity cost may be too high for the community in absence of the other supports they are now receiving from the project. Protection of the fund (currently about BDT 6,240,287) is crucial. Other cost effective means should be explored. For example, the MACH project came up with an effective measure. The CBSMTHP partner CNRS should advise the team to find a solution to this issue.
- The tendering system for commercial fish marketing must stop now. The CBSMTHP is an exceptional project that aims at empowering a vulnerable community. The THMC should be able to negotiate with the policymakers to make an exceptional mechanism to conserve a national heritage and a public good in public interest. Some suggestions follow:
    - First and foremost, focus on value protection. Even though the area is still out of the national electricity grid, helping establish diesel operated ice factories may be a good option.
    - Proactively reach out to the fish processors that are operating in the area. The organized VCCs may be attractive as suppliers to the processors. They may come up with some upfront investment as well.
    - Examine the possibility of creating a branding for the THE fish to access special clientele.

The potential of future conflict among the local elite, local government and co-management organizations over power and control of resources has been discussed. The communities do not reserve any ethnic barrier, which is a positive point for co-management. Unfortunately, there are other sources of conflict. Some of the conflicts, the Consultant concludes, will be a living process and the project at this point of time and the CCC in future must be vigilant of them. Some recommendations follow:

- Expedite the CG revenue mainstreaming process. A good contingent of the CGs with attractive benefit sharing process will be able to defuse the future need to involve the formal law enforcers to protect the THE. The project must, however, start working with the CCC to prepare the CGs to abide by a code of conduct so that the CGs themselves do not appear as a threat to conserving the resources.
- The CCC should start dealing with the more influential advantage takers and setting good examples of equitable disbursement of funds.
- The CCC should be aware of any future plan that the BHDB may have. If there is a potential conflict, the issue should be raised at the THMC meetings.

The habitat restoration process gained a serious momentum during the CBSMTHP Consolidation Phase. The restoration work features a broad spectrum of activities: sanctuary (5 fish and 2 birds) development, afforestation, assisted natural regeneration, repopulating the haor with fingerlings, etc. Trained community members are monitoring the ecosystem.

The project's approach in facilitating the permit system for non-commercial fishing is commendable. Instead of issuing a wholesale, open-ended permit system, the permits are given for the types of gear. This is an excellent way of controlling indiscriminate extraction, even by the permit holders.

Restoration ecology is a complex technical area. The project has used the natural history of the area, supplemented by the baseline survey and one-off consultants' reports on fishery, forestry and reeds to make a judgment on the restoration process. This is perfectly alright. The concern that the Consultant has is the late start of the restoration process, which means that the project will end with no opportunity to monitor the establishment and success.

The project has demarcated, broadly, the water bodies into two divisions: (a) the core zone and (b) the buffer zone taking into account the ecosystem protection, habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation requirements. This demarcation is working well for identifying appropriate habitat restoration and sustainable resource harvesting interventions that the project is deploying. However, there is a clear dispute over the demarcation when it comes to identifying the THE boundary under official land tenure systems. Absence of a proper and officially approved boundary marking puts the entire resource management system at complete jeopardy.

The THE still does not have a comprehensive biodiversity assessment. IUCN Bangladesh Country Office has worked to leverage the Arannayk Foundation (Bangladesh Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation) to conduct an assessment. Once completed, the information will be valuable input to the CNSMTHP exit strategy.

The project has established a hydrological monitoring system and trained some community monitors to regularly monitor the water level. This is an essential aspect of understanding the seasonal changes and their impact on the ecosystem.

The Consultant concludes that ensuring the ecological sustainability of the project interventions are of most critical in nature and the project should spend considerable energy to devise an appropriate exit strategy. Some recommendations follow:

- The project should intensify the supervision of the community M&E process to make sure it works and continue to help the monitors refresh the training that they received.
- The project should make every effort to link the future SCM management to resource M&E.
- The CBSMTHP should look for other initiatives (such as USAID's CREL project) that have some presence in habitat restoration now. The community M&E may be linked with those initiatives in a formal manner.
- The boundary marking must be completed and approved not only to safeguard the beels from leasing, but also to help maintain the ecosystem's ecological integrity and productivity.
- Ecological restoration is a long-term process and monitoring plays a critical role. A time series of real time data will be essential to determine the improvement of the ecosystem. A long-term monitoring protocol should be established no matter whether the project will be extended beyond the planned period of June 2015. The community M&E may be a permanent agenda for the National Scientific Body. The other option will be to link them with a university or research institute.
- The hydrological monitoring system deserves a very serious attention. The monitoring protocol should be linked to an academic or research organization. The results shown in Figure 4 indicates a clear trend that historical water flow in a major river that traverses through the THE is decreasing steadily. This is alarming. If this trend continues, no external intervention will prove good enough to maintain the vitality of the ecosystem.

  This visible trend in decreased water flow into the THE indicates another broader aspect. Control of the water flow into the THE exists outside the geographical boundary of Bangladesh. This is; therefore, a transboundary issue and this cannot be dealt with within the current scope of the project or the current knowledge that exists on the THE. The CBSMTHP coordinating partner IUCN should flag this issue and

start discussing with its India and Regional Offices to find a way to initiate a dialogue with the Government of Meghalaya to commission, at the very least, a transboundary study. This is perhaps well beyond the scope of the project, but IUCN/Bangladesh should make the long-term monitoring of the THE a priority agenda under its core program, fund the study from its own resources and approach other DPs (including SDC) for support.

The CBSMTHP has planned a series of actions to ensure that it leaves behind a system, and a more aware, skilled and organized community with better economic and livelihoods opportunities to sustain the ecological integrity and productivity of the THE. A National Scientific Body (NSB), approved through a gazette notification, comprising of 8 members started working and they are providing scientific inputs for achieving project objectives. The planned National Wetland Network (NWN) was established and the network has already organized a national level meeting. The CBSMTHP has established a TH Information Center (THIC) at Sunamganj. Construction of a new dynamic and interactive web portal for knowledge management on the THE is under process to improve the existing knowledge portal.

The plan to establish the Tanguar Haor Management Authority (THMA) under an Act of the Parliament is a brilliant idea. The institutional nature of the proposed THMA will determine the flexibility and effectiveness of the institution. The CBSMTHP is currently working to develop a long-term management plan framework for the THE. The Consultant holds, but only in theory, a positive impression about the CBSMTHP's long-term institutional sustainability approach.

The MTR Consultant would offer the following recommendations that the project should consider seriously in the remainder of the Consolidation Phase:

- While establishing the THMA, it should be kept in mind that the institution will have a unique mandate of managing complex governance processes, science and art of biodiversity conservation and natural resources management issues, communications to publicize the importance and attraction of the system worldwide, and develop and manage a community-centered eco-tourism system that will attract the world. A conventional institution will fall short in meeting these sophisticated expectations, which are fitting to the co-management needs of the THE. There are experienced professionals at IUCN who understand the issue very well. There are examples of autonomous institutes set up by the GOB (e.g., Center for Environment and Geographic Information System, CEGIS or Institute for Water Modeling, IWM). The THMA may be a more open set up with a more challenging mandate, but it must be a slim, corporate-smart institute. The location of the THMA would also be important.
- The approach to developing a management framework also appears to be a 'checking the box' one. The Consultant contradicts with the idea of developing a management plan at haste. Rather, the Consultant recommends that the CBSMTHP takes a step back and considers developing a "Tanguar Haor Strategy and Action Plan" (THSAP) following the format of Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) and identify some strategic pillars such as fishery, forestry, adaptation, etc. for which individual short-, medium- and long-term management plans will be prepared. IUCN/Bangladesh (and the entire CBSMTHP team) should assemble a multi-disciplinary team and assign it to develop the THSAP. The Consultant is aware that the project is under budget constraint to undertake such an exercise. IUCN/Bangladesh may
    - Approach the SDC to provide a one-off funding for the THSAP development.
    - Start a dialogue with the UNESCO World Heritage Site Secretariat to provide a small grant.
    - Approach the Ramsar Secretariat for a similar small grant.
- The CBSMTHP activities align very well with the six BCCSAP pillars. IUCN/Bangladesh should take lead in preparing a full-fledged climate change adaptation project proposal for continuing its involvement at the THE and submit it to the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) for consideration.

The CBSMTHP objectives match very well with those of the SDC Cooperation Strategy. The CBSMTHP has been a long-term commitment for SDC. The Consultant commends the SDC for the way they have been incrementally supporting the development of a collaborative management, with the poor as central to the approach, of a significant ecosystem that has its influence on the ecology of a much larger area and the wellbeing of a large section of the ultra-poor. The Consultant strongly recommends that SDC considers keeping its engagements with the THE improvement as well as supporting the poor communities for another project cycle. This is too good to drop at this stage.

The Consolidation Phase is crucial since it is expected that the CBSMTHP will take into serious cognizance the MTR recommendations. Implementing the recommendations will require SDC's focused attention, particularly from the Project Manager and, intermittently, from the Head of Cooperation. The MTR Consultant recommends that:

- The SDC proactively convenes a meeting involving the Country Representative of IUCN Bangladesh Country Office and the Steering Committee to discuss the MTR recommendations and strategize priority actions.
- The SDC convenes a meeting involving like-minded DPs, preferably at the Heads of Agencies level, and have the CBSMTHP team present the project highlighting the importance of the THE, achievements thus far of the CBSMTHP and importance of continuing the process.
- The SDC Project Manager holds more frequent consultations with the CBSMTHP team to oversee the implementation of the priority actions.

The SDC has an advantageous role and a responsibility. Even if continuation of its involvement to improve the management of the THE for another project cycle does not meet SDC's new strategic priorities, the Consultant recommends that, at a minimum, the following be considered:

- Adding a supplementary fund to CBSMTHP to develop a THSAP.
    - Alternately, jointly with IUCN Bangladesh Country Office, approaching the Ramsar Secretariat to fund the process.
- Keeping a thematic focus based on the CBSMTHP achievements on the THE communities and the co-management organizations through other projects in the region.
- Leveraging support from other DPs (e.g., USAID through its CREL project and German Technical Cooperation who is facilitating a broader process to improve wetland management policies) to co-finance some priority areas identified in the exit strategy.

# 1 Background and Terms of Reference (TOR)

## 1.1 The Report

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) deployed one independent Consultant[2] for the Mid Term Review (MTR) of the Consolidation Phase of an important project they have been funding since 2006, "Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor Project" (CBSMTHP). The project is being implemented by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Bangladesh Country Office in tandem with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). This report is the Final Report of the MTR that commenced on March 1, 2014.

## 1.2 The TOR

**Annex A** contains the detailed TOR of the MTR. The CBSMTHP Consolidation Phase design kept a provision of an MTR to be conducted during the second half of the program to review its approaches and strategies. The objectives of the MTR are:

- Assessment of achievements of present phase of the project
- Receive and consider a report on sustainability of the co-management system and improved livelihoods practiced so far.
- Present a review of the costs and organization of the co-management institutions and a discussion of current and possible cost recovery options to maintain the co-management institutions. Get recommendations for the strategic orientations as well as for future planning in line with SDC`s country strategy and GoB`s Policy and priority.

## 1.3 Scope and Methodology

The TOR contains a detailed suggestive methodology for the MTR (**Annex A**), including a broad framework of the analyses to be done. The suggestive methodology is summarized in the following:

- Review of agreements and related technical documents.
- Meetings with all stakeholders starting from the GOB policymakers to the CBSMTH partners in Dhaka and TH to the grassroots communities, including a short field trip to the CBSMTH site.
- Conducting a fact-finding and information gathering workshop at local level (Sunamgonj) involving all stakeholders.
- The analyses will include, at a minimum:
    - The GOB's views on the overall protected area management plan in the context of the TH Ramsar site management as well as the GOB's commitment towards ensuring appropriate institutional arrangements at local, regional and central levels for supporting the TH Management beyond the project period.
    - The implementing partners' capacity in managing the complex process that was aimed at conserving the resources through improved management and, at the same time, improving the natural resources dependent vulnerable population. The acapacity assessment will be presented in a simple matrix.
    - Community perception on biodiversity conservation and livelihoods.
    - The impact of CBSMTH interventions; their successes and failures.
    - Critical appraisal of the consolidation phase and validation of the strategies and approaches.

[2] Dr. Azharul Mazumder

- A final report containing the presentation of findings and recommendations focusing on:
    - Adjustment of interventions to improve performance within the consolidation phase.
    - Providing SDC with the rationale for making a decision on the future of the project.

Among other analytical work done under the CBSMTHP and beyond (e.g., Eleanor Ostrom), the MTR Consultant used a conceptual framework to understand and analyze the impact of the co-management approach from the perspectives of "Nature, Wealth and Power" (USAID, 2013). The MTR Consultant was provided with a large volume of documentation by the SDC and IUCN Bangladesh Country Office. The Consultant also collected a large number of documents from various sources and used them, directly or indirectly, to understand and analyze the achievements of CBSMTHP. The Consultant held extensive meetings with a wide range of stakeholders in Dhaka, Sunamgonj, Tahirpur and the communities living around the haor (see **Annex C** for the list of meetings). In addition, the Consultant reviewed many relevant websites. A list of all persons met is provided in **Annex B** to this report. A selection of the main websites and reports reviewed are provided in **Annex E**.

A field visit was carried out from March 21-26, 2014 at Sunamgonj and the TH. The field visit included a stakeholders' workshop. **Annex D** provides the details of the field schedule.

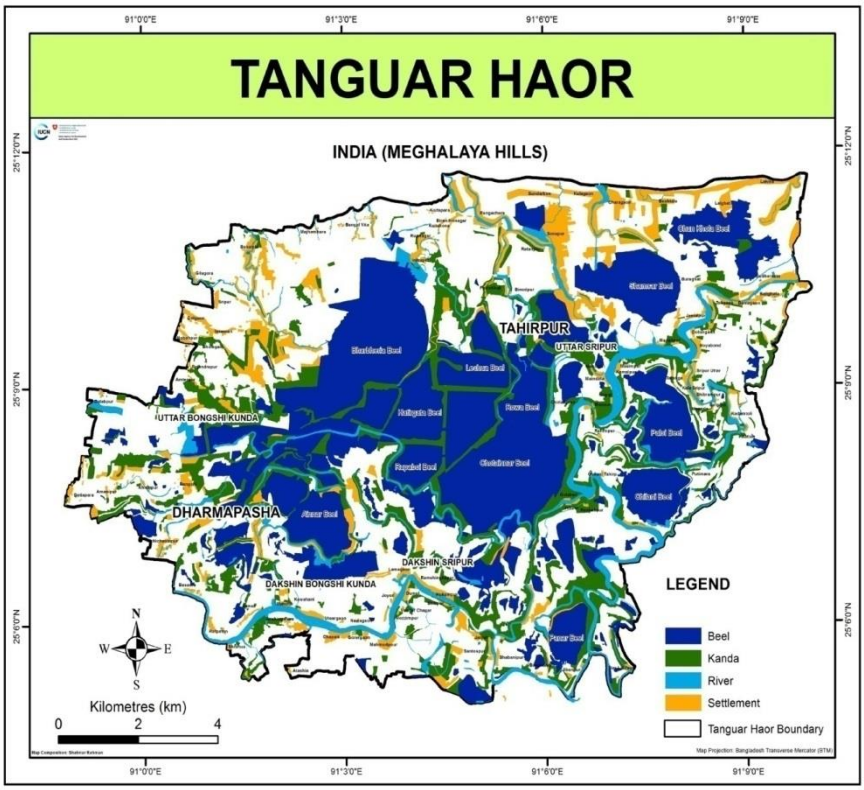
## 2 The Tanguar Haor Ecosystem (THE)

### 2.1 The Resource

Legally protected under national and international systems[3], the Tanguar Haor Ecosystem (THE), covering about 9,727 hectares, located in the district of Sunamganj in the north-eastern part of Bangladesh, is an ecologically and economically unique wetland ecosystem. It supports the livelihoods to about 60,000 people living in 88 villages. The THE functions as an important breeding ground for fresh water fishery. Because of its critical ecological importance, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) took its management responsibility from the Ministry of Land (MOL) in 2001.

The MOEF, under the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) Implementation project, sponsored a number of studies to determine the potential in natural resources of the THE 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) alongside excessive exploitation under the leasehold system, 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 recognizing 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.

Figure 1. The THE




[3] The TH is a Ramsar Site since 1999. The MOEF declared TH as an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) in 2000.

## 2.2 Conservation of the THE: Major GOB Initiatives

To conserve the resources of the THE, the GOB took three important steps:

1. 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 continued until 2008.
2. Prepared, in 2000, a comprehensive management plan for THE, introducing the concept of "wise-use" of wetland resources based on the wise-use principles of the RAMSAR convention.
3. Put in place in 2003 through the MOEF with its own resources and under the direction of the Deputy Commissioner, Sunamganj, a protection force consisting of Magistrates, ANSAR (unarmed law-enforcers of the government), Police and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officers, to enforce a moratorium on the exploitation.

## 2.3 The CBSMTHP

The MOEF in tandem with IUCN Bangladesh Country Office received SDC support for the CBSMTHP project. Following a brief *Preparatory Phase*, a three-year (2009-2012) *Development Phase* was completed to establish a co-management system that would ensure both the preservation of key ecosystem functions and values as well as provide substantial livelihood improvements for rural communities. The current phase is termed as the *Consolidation Phase* (2013-2015).

The goal of the CBSMTHP is to introduce and institutionalize a co-management system for the TH Ramsar site that will conserve ecosystem values and services and provide a basis for the improvement of livelihoods for rural communities. Based on the experiences of the previous phases, the consolidation phase was set to achieve the goal through the following specific outcomes:

1. The co-management system in TH is consolidated and effective
2. The communities of the TH have improved livelihoods and increased incomes
3. The sustainability is assured beyond project intervention

# 2 Objectives of the MTR

The objectives of the MTR as set forth in the TOR are:

- Assessment of achievements of present phase of the project
- Receive and consider a report on sustainability of the co-management system and improved livelihoods practiced so far.
- Present a review of the costs and organization of the co-management institutions and a discussion of current and possible cost (re)covering options to maintain the co-management institutions. Get recommendations for the strategic orientations as well as for future planning in line with SDC`s country strategy and Government of Bangladesh (GoB)`s Policy and priority.

The TOR listed a number of issues and questions to be addressed under the MTR. To summarize, the MTR will aim to:

- Evaluate the project delivery against the project design.
- Assess the performance of the community based organizations (CBOs) in terms of capacity building and networking to augment sustainable co-management of the resources (water, fisheries, forest and reed beds) of TH.

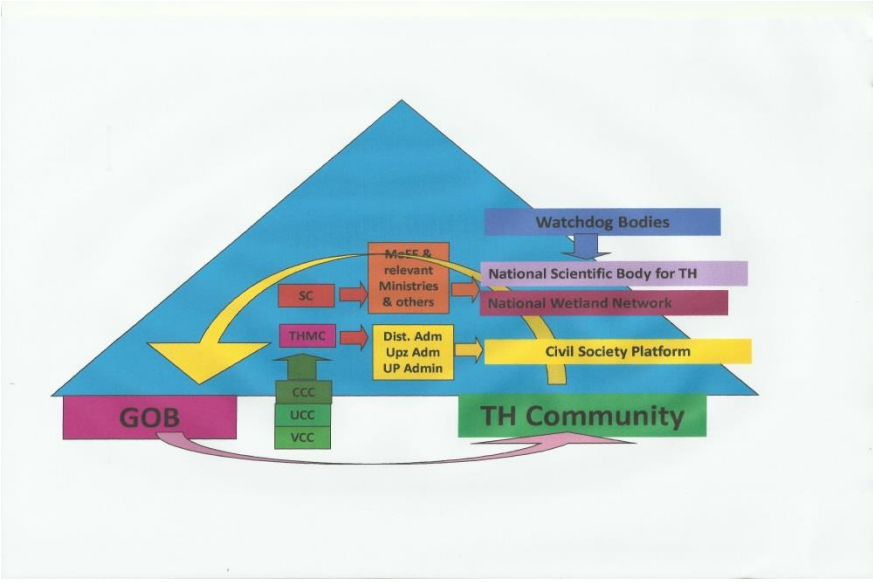
- Commitment of the local administrations including Upazilla and local government to establish a co-management mechanism involving the communities.
- Analyze the status of the institutional capacity to empower communities, particularly the poor and the women and also to provide a comparative analysis of the new institutional mechanism with the existing local system.
- Analyze the effectiveness of alternative income generation (AIG) and other economic activities for the poor including women to examine whether they have helped improve livelihood options to the extent that they would take the pressure off the resources of TH.
- Analyze the progress in managing local power relations and conflicts in implementing the proposed co-management system with particular reference to conflict management.
- Evaluate the role of the GOB in the project management as a major stakeholder. How far GoB policy decisions, practices and/or steps on Haor/water bodies, Ramsar helping or affecting? Does the GOB have special strategy on the project, particularly on co-management?
- Identify and analyze the factors that may influence sustainability of co-management in the medium and long term.
- To recommend the next course of role/action for the local and central government, the district administration and representatives of community.
- Evaluate the uptake of the lessons learned by the government at all levels as well as to examine if the lessons (or success) have attracted other development partners.
- Evaluate if the project has made efforts in coordinating with other DP's or GOB's efforts.

## 3 Summary of the MTR Findings: Overall Performance of the CBSMTHP Consolidation Phase

### 3.1 The CBSMTHP Governance

The CBSMTHP co-management governance apparently is well thought-out with a foundation at the grassroots resource user level and linking up to the GOB's highest, policymaking level. The Village Co-management Committee (VCC) is at the bottom of the governance structure. As its name suggests, VCCs were formed at the village level. The CBSMTHP has so far facilitated the formation of 73 VCCs covering 76 out of 88 villages around the THE and brought 6,616 members from 4,774 out of 10,205 households into the co-management process. The VCCs are the bases for establishing four Union Co-management Committees (UCCs). The Central Co-management Committee (CCC) is the apex body at the ecosystem level that serves as the voice for the THE community. The Tanguar Haor Management Committee (THMC) is located at the Sunamganj District Headquarters and chaired by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the district.[4] While THMC is the authority to set the TOR for the implementation of all the operations of the project, the CCC plays a central role in managing the SCM. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) located at MOEF is chaired by the Secretary MOEF. The Joint Secretary (Development) of MOEF is the CBSMTHP Project Director.

**Figure 1** Schematic of the CBSMTHP Co-management Governance Structure




One adult member of the household comes in as a member in a professional group of his or her choice, which is led and managed by a secretary. It is unusual that both the husband and wife join a group.

[4] The THMC is 30+ member body; 21 of which represent the GOB administrative, technical and law enforcing agencies at the district level. Two elected local government representatives (Chairmen of two of the four TH unions), representatives of the implementing partners at the local level and a representative from the CBSMTHP (Policy and Institutional Support Coordinator or the Project Director) are also members of the THMC.

Nine General Body members of the VCC, five professional secretaries and four other office bearers; President, General Secretary, Office Secretary and Treasurer, are elected to the VCC for two years and form the VCC Executive Committee (EC).

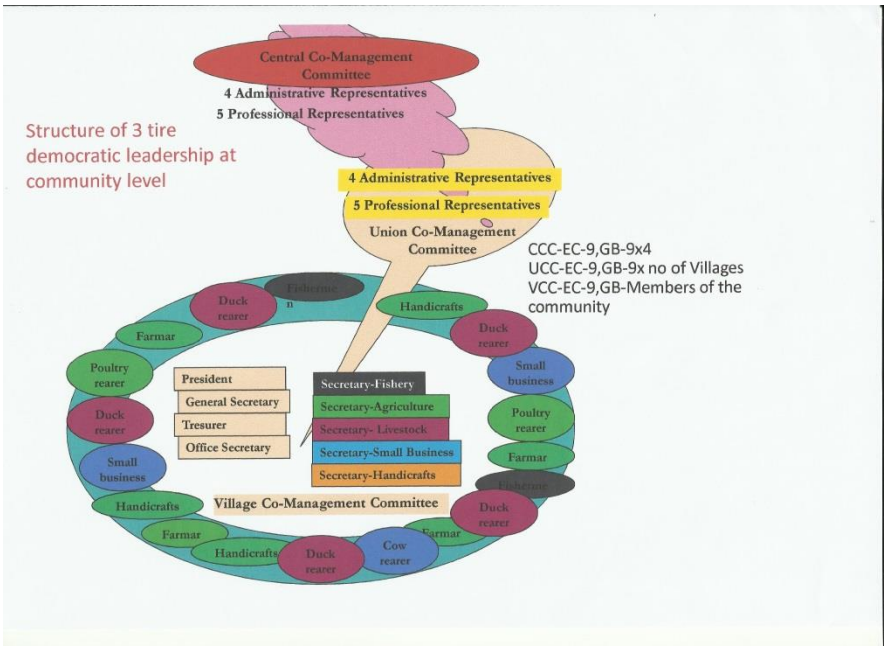
The VCC-EC members are aggregated at the concerned UCC as UCC General Body (GB) members, and they vote for formation of UCC-EC members. The UCC-EC members are aggregated into the CCC as CCC-GB members.

At VCC level each voter of GB has the right to choose four office bearers, and one professional secretary from his/her own professional group in the EC. At the UCC level each voter of the GB has the right to choose only one member for the EC from his/her own group. On the other hand, at the CCC level each voter of the GB has the right to choose all members of the CCC-EC body. That means that the VCC is practicing five votes, UCC a single one and CCC nine.

Three representatives from the CCC represent the THE community at the THMC.

Portfolio based election system is introduced under the project, i.e., an elected President of the VCC is only legible to compete for the UCC presidential candidature, and the same way an elected President of UCC is only legible to compete for the CCC presidential candidature. Three representatives from the CCC represent the THE community at the THMC. The following schematic summarizes the governance structure.

**Figure 2** Compositions of the Co-management Governance Bodies



## 3.2 Legal Authority

The THMC for the CBSMTHP Consolidation Phase was established through a GOB Gazette Notification on May 6, 2013. The Gazette includes a TOR for the THMC.[5] The CCC (and its Constitution) was registered as a "Co-management Society" under the 1860 Societies' Registration Act. The VCCs and UCCs do not have any separate legal standing; they have been included in the CCC Constitution as supporting units.

## 3.3 Reported CBSMTHP Performance under the Results Framework (Logframe)

The 1st Operational Report CBSMTHP-revised-05.04.2013 (an updated Results Framework as of March 2014 was provided by the Project Manager on request by the MTR Consultant) provides a detailed account of the project performance.

### 3.3.1 *Outcome 1*: The Co-management System in TH is Consolidated and Effective

#### 3.3.1.1 Coordination for Co-management

Overall, the performance of the CBSMTHP in making co-management work is satisfactory. A large number of joint initiatives between the government and communities for resource management have marked the Consolidation Phase. The THMC met 10 times and took 185 decisions. Most of the decisions were implemented. A total number of 142 "joint actions" lead by the local administration against fish, bird and reed were taken. Law enforcing agencies (24 Ansars and 12 police) joined hands with 29 community guards. At times, the Boarder Guard of Bangladesh (BGB) also cooperated. These joint efforts succeeded in capturing and destroying illegal equipment (boats, fishing nets, bird's hunting nets, etc.) with an approximate market value of BDT 10,000,000. Adequate numbers of coordination meetings took place to take important resource protection and management decisions.

#### 3.3.1.2 Input into the Proposed TH Management Plan

The CBSMTHP is working on preparing a comprehensive TH Management Plan following the plan developed under the NCS and revised during the preparatory phase of the project. The CBSMTHP staff both in Dhaka and at the field is diligently providing input to the team of consultants.

#### 3.3.1.3 Biodiversity Conservation and Ecological Restoration

With the modest goal of maintaining the ecological character of TH against the baseline scenario, the CBSMTHP has made some notable efforts in habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation. Four fish sanctuaries have been established in the core area. Besides, five beels were protected by piling with bamboo and planting native tree saplings (hijal) to protect the fish habitat against poaching. Afforestation with native tree species (hijal and koroch) of the ridges (kanda) and assisting natural regeneration (by fencing and guarding about 60 hectares of land) formed a significant part of the habitat

[5] The THMC TOR is: a) Proper management of the project, b) Facilitate coordinate among government departments/agencies, c) Provide administrative support to continue to protect natural resources base fisheries, swamp forests, migratory birds and other non-fisheries resources, d) Recommend the Project Officer for any' changes for improvement in Tanguar Haor protection, enforcement and linking with relevant project activities, e) Facilitate administrative support for establishing community partnership for Tanguar Haor resources management, f) The committee will meet monthly during the project period, and g) The committee may co-opt any other member, if necessary.

restoration process. Training programs on biodiversity conservation with gender- and ethnic-balanced participants are ongoing to educate the communities on the importance and methods of ecological restoration are ongoing.

### 3.3.2 *Outcome 2*: The Communities of the TH have Improved Livelihoods and Increased Incomes

#### 3.3.2.1 Economic Empowerment

Aiming at helping the communities to achieve economic empowerment, the project has been assisting alternate income generating activities (AIGA). The Project is facilitating the use of the money through co-management committees.

The total of 700 HHs is facilitated to develop their 3 years LIP, and out of these, 463 HHs have already been supported. The communities accumulated BDT 18,681,112 and the Project has been utilizing this fund for livelihood improvement of the community. Total 2822 community members have been trained on AIGA (35% women); they are using this fund to increase their household level income. Financial assistance from the revolving Social Capital Management (SCM) increased up to BDT 57,990,000 as of February 2014. Involvement of women in economic activities increased by 70% compared to the previous reporting period. The Livelihood Improvement Plan (LIP) has already supported 463 (out of 700 planned) households.

#### 3.3.2.2 Community Coverage and Engagement in Co-management

The community coverage fell short of expectation. The Project has so far brought 48% of the population (4793 households) into the co-management process as of March 2014. The Project has achieved and, in some instances, over-achieved results against the indicator, “community leaders at three levels of TH community organizations are able to operate independently”, that demonstrated active engagement of the organizations in the co-management process. The VCCs, UCCs and the CCC met regularly and took decisions on resource management, AIGA, SCM and LIP operations. Participation of women in those meetings was encouraging.

### 3.3.3 *Outcome 3*: The Sustainability is assured beyond Project Intervention

#### 3.3.3.1 Institutional Sustainability: Proposed Tanguar Haor Management Act and Authority

The CCC has been registered, as mentioned earlier, under the Societies’ Registration Act 1860 that provides a legal basis for the apex co-management body. The CBSMTHP is working to establish legal provisions for institutional development for sustaining the achievements of the Project and communities. In addition to developing a Management Plan, the CBSMTHP is facilitating the enactment of a proposed Tanguar Haor Management Act (THMA) under which a permanent institution named as the Tanguar Haor Management Authority (THMA) is being proposed to be established. The proposed Act and associated Rules have been drafted and discussed at a consultative meeting in Dhaka recently. Moreover, a National Scientific Body (NSB) has been formed by a Gazette notification. Also, the newly formed National Wetlands Network (NWN) and Civil Society Platform (CSP) are supporting the project with information, experience and ideas.

#### 3.3.3.2 Financial Sustainability

The co-management organizations have accumulated BDT 2,191,545 from commercial and non-commercial fish harvesting as of March 2014. The CCC also received BDT 1,500,000 as Organizational Development (OD) fund. The cumulative fund of the CCC has been raised to BDT 7,158,544 since inception of the project. All these efforts are expected to bring the sustainability target into fruition. The project is in the process of developing a long-term financial sustainability plan.

As an exit strategy, the project is also weighing options to transfer the management of the credit operation to an established micro-finance institute (MFI) since the communities, lacking education and skill, have a way to go to efficiently manage the operation themselves.

The community indeed needs further support for management of their huge fund due to their limitation particularly in case of providing the operational cost and capacity to manage the SCM operation . Other options; therefore, need to be discussed with the communities as communities are the owner of their savings.

In preparation for exit, the project is carrying out value chain analyses for four major economic sectors: fish, agriculture, livestock and handicrafts. The fish and vegetables value chain analysis has been completed already. Project will do livestock value chain and leave handicrafts value chain as this is not promising through value chain selection lens.

Modest attempts are being made to popularize ecotourism in the THE aiming at benefitting the participating communities. An ecotourism plan will be prepared.

# 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

## 4.1 The CBSMTHP Partnership

In this Consolidation Phase, the MOEF-led CBSMTHP team is consisting of IUCN Bangladesh Country Office as the coordinating implementer, with the Center for Natural Resources Studies (CNRS) leading the biological monitoring and natural resources monitoring aspects, HELVATAS planning and implementing the livelihoods components, including value chain analyses, and Efforts for Rural Advancement (ERA) social mobilization and SCM operation. Although IUCN Bangladesh Country Office is designated as the lead coordinator, it appears that HELVATAS is operating quite independently. CNRS is a pioneer and one of the most credible organizations in Bangladesh dealing with biodiversity conservation through co-management of resources. As a CBSMTHP partner, CNRS is active at the field level and is also complementing the CBSMTHP operations with another activity (Ecosystem Based Adaptation) that they are implementing in the THE.

The MTR Consultant did not, however, have the scope to decipher the details of the partnership. However, it is understood that the partners should have a very regular and planned interaction at this stage of the Consolidation Phase since so many crucial planning processes are going on as part of the exit strategy.

IUCN Bangladesh Country Office maintains a thin core staffing pattern in managing the CBSMTHP, which is smart. However, the Consultant sensed that the Project Manager needs more technical, senior level backstopping from the central office. Since the CBSMTHP is a flagship conservation project for IUCN, the IUCN Regional Office should take tangible interest in the Project, particularly in consolidating the results for future use of IUCN, SDC or any other DP and for developing a long-term THE strategy (see 4.5.9).

## 4.2 CBSMTHP is at a Crucial Juncture

The CBSMTHP Consolidation Phase will be ending in June 2015, marking an end to SDC's longstanding support to improve the health of the ecosystem and livelihoods of the communities depending on it. The CBSMTHP is an ambitious project that embarked upon a challenging endeavor with a low budget (considering the budget of all the three phases).

With only about a year left, the Consultant recommends that the project focuses on preparing an "exit strategy" and starts implementing it, rather than newly planning and spreading implementation actions.

## 4.3 Co-management Governance and Structure: How Inclusive is It?

Natural resource management (NRM) is not only a science or social science; it is rather a major political arena. In the past, many traditional societies formed relatively closed systems in which natural resources (NRs) were managed through complex interplays of reciprocities and solidarities. These systems were fully embedded in the local cultures and accommodated for differences of power and roles – including decision-making – within holistic systems of reality and meaning. Dialogue and discussion among interested parties on the basis of field experience (what is referred to as "co-management" today) were widely practiced in some of these societies. The historical emergence of colonial powers and nation states, and their violent assumption of authority over most common lands and natural resources led to the demise of traditional NRM systems virtually everywhere (for details, see Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2000). The co-management approach is trying to bring the age-old system back.

Arya (2011) concluded that the strategy to organize people around saving and credit has largely been successful inasmuch as it mobilized a majority of poor population, including women; gave them voice; strengthened empowering processes through transparency of records; and built representational tiers above successively. While the first part of the conclusion is valid to a great extent, the last part seems seriously questionable. The MTR Consultant concludes that the CBSMTHP co-management governance system has a major flaw.

Co-management by definition is "a pluralist approach to managing NRs, incorporating a variety of partners in a variety of roles, generally to the end goals of environmental conservation, sustainable use of NRs and the equitable sharing of resource-related benefits and responsibilities" and "a political and cultural process *par excellence*: seeking social justice and "democracy" in the management of natural resource" (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2000). Since the question of social justice, social equity and democracy are considered vital in the pluralist approach, the governance system demands to be inclusive of all social actors.

Let's discuss this. The PSC is government-led. The THMC, which is the main driver of the THE management is also a body with heavy representation from the government, including the law enforcing agencies. Three members of the CCC and two representatives from the local government (who do not belong to the CCC or any of the VCCs) represent the entire THE community. Their role seems to be limited to presenting proposals for approval by the THMC and get directives on every aspects of project management. The CCC (and, for that matter, the VCCs) do not have any representation from the influential local elite (some of them are the former leaseholders of the TH) and the local government. The exclusion of the two most important stakeholders at the outset does not seem to be deliberate from the project planning perspective[6]; the elites refused to join the process. They did not feel it prestigious to join the same platform with the poorest of the poor. The exclusion of the elites features a considerable amount of risk when it comes to the question of sustainability of the process. The elites are waiting for the project to be over. The former leaseholders still tend to believe that the abolishment of the leasing system will cease some day and they will be able to re-establish control over the resources. Even if the system sustains, absence of an organized conservation system will help illegal exploitation of the resources. The local government is an age-old institution and the local government representatives (usually coming from the elite) may not tolerate the dominance of the poorer class in taking resource management decisions and solely benefitting from the harvest.

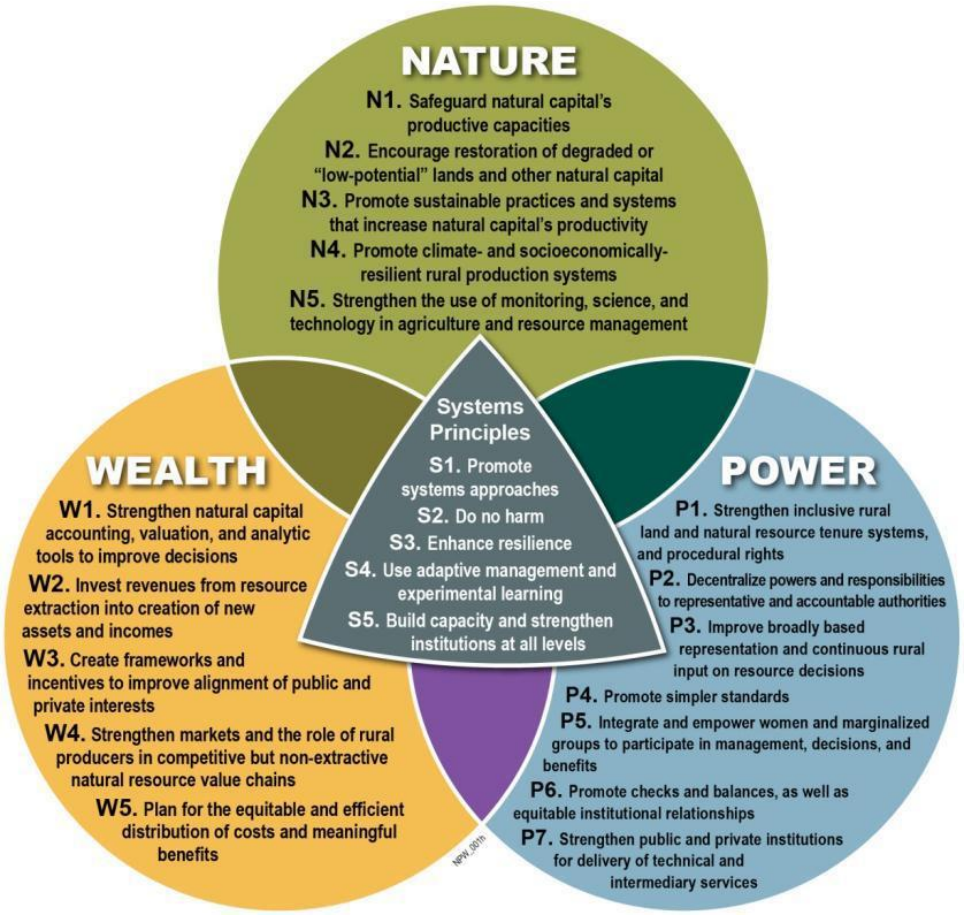
The governance continuum excludes the Upazila altogether in the community level co-management governance structures, except for the inclusion of the Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO) of the two Upazilas – Tahirpur and Dharmapasha – under the geographic jurisdiction of which is the THE located. The magistrates that are routinely assigned to help supervise the protection also come from  come from the Sunamganj District. Exclusion of the UNOs from the community level co-management structure and bypassing the Upazila level altogether in the governance process was not a well thought-out and smart decision.

The CBSMTHP was conceived with the right approach considering that resource co-management must take into cognizance the importance of understanding the interrelationships among "Nature, Wealth

[6] There are, however, reports that the previous CBSMTHP Project Manager had a great fascination towards excluding the elites from the process and wanted the poorest of the poor to take control over power and management of the resources.

and Power" (USAID, 2013) (See Figure 3).[7] The MTR Consultant concludes that the exclusion of the elite, local government and the UNO may prove harmful in the long run in terms of the government's as well as communities' ownership of the process. The THMC and, for that matter, the PSC is far away from the resources and helm of affairs where co-management matters most.

**Figure 3** Principles of Nature, Wealth and Power (USAID, 2013)




Many scholars and co-management practitioners (e.g., Elinor Ostrom) have challenged the conventional wisdom that common property is poorly managed and should be either regulated by central authorities or privatized. Based on numerous studies of user-managed fish stocks, pastures, woods, lakes, and groundwater basins, Ostrom concludes that the outcomes are, more often than not, better than predicted by standard theories. She observes that resource users frequently develop sophisticated mechanisms for decision-making and rule enforcement to handle conflicts of interest, and she

[7] **Nature**: Natural capital is the foundation of the rural economy and many developing countries' national economies. It includes not only renewable and non-renewable resources but also biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services. NWP recognizes that not only must natural capital be safeguarded and restored, its productivity must be increased to meet global needs. **Wealth**: In terms of resource **economics** there is a glaring need to improve rural development decisions through better natural capital accounting, valuation, and analysis. This will help to re-invest revenues from resource extraction into new assets and incomes, and improve the alignment of public and private interests. **Power**: People's use of resources for development are mediated and constrained by **rights frameworks, institutions, and policies**. Power over resources and influence over decision-making largely determines who benefits from resource management and the incentives for sustainable management.

characterizes the rules that promote successful outcomes.[8] The MTR Consultant is not sure whether this observation holds equally true in case of the THE communities. The communities are poorer by all parameters of wealth, literacy and skill when compared to the national statistics (for details, see the CBSMTHP's detailed baseline survey and other relevant analytical work). Even though the communities reside around the fisheries rich THE, they do not have the skill for large scale fishing. There is, of course, a community that practices subsistence fishing. This is because most of the communities are migrants and they never had the opportunity to get involved with large scale fishing. The former lease holders used to import skilled fishers from distant districts and deliberately neglected the resident communities.

Examining the communities' social structure and skill level and the exclusion of the local elite raises a fundamental question about the VCCs. Are the VCCs really co-management institutions? In reality, these are resource users groups. The same groups eventually aggregate into the UCCs and, finally, into the CCC, which does not include the local elites and the local government. The UCCs are; therefore, Union level federations of the resource users groups and the CCC the apex federation that covers the THE.[9]

Finally, the MTR Consultant concludes that the CBSMTHP co-management institutions are not truly inclusive even though the heterogeneity of the community (gender and ethnicity) was well included. A close review of the political economy of NRM in Bangladesh reveals an uncanny fact that resources developed through meticulous planning, serious investments, community motivation and commitments and administrative support can also become vulnerable and victim of grab and massive destruction. The most recent massacre of the Baikka Beel[10] at Moulavi Bazaar district provides an ample testimony to the fact. Exclusion of the local elite from the co-management process can prove dangerous after project completion.

The MTR Consultant recommends that, within the Consolidation Phase,

- The entire co-management governance structure be revisited. This will include at a minimum but not limited to:
    - Re-naming and re-organizing the VCCs, UCCs and the CCC under a user-group federation rubric.
    - Making every effort to include the local elite and the local government into the co-management structure.
- The location, level of participation and the TOR of the co-management committees be immediately re-considered. This may include, but not be limited to:
    - Rethinking whether it is effective to keep the THMC at the district level or not.
    - Rethinking whether relocating the THMC (perhaps this will be the re-constituted CCC) at the Upazila level would be more effective or not. The Upazila level THMC can report to District Development Committee (DDC) and/or the District Environmental Committee (DEC) where issues of the THE will constitute a permanent agenda. The District administration can maintain status quo in ensuring the law enforcing measures for THE protection.

[8] From the Nobel Prize Committee Announcement Awarding the 2010 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences to Elinor Ostrom, quoted in DeCosse *et al*., 2011.

[9] There are numerous examples of reasonably successful co-management governance in Bangladesh. See, for example, the governance structures under the USAID-funded Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry (MACH), Nishorgo Support Project, and the Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) project.

[10] Baikka Beel is a small but internationally renowned sanctuary for birds, fish and other aquatic resources and has been a site since 1997 under a number of pragmatic co-management projects.

- Rethinking how the PSC can include representation from the newly conceptualized THMC, particularly the grassroots.

### 4.4 The Legal Standing of THE Co-management

The Gazette that formally established the THMC is tied to the CBSMTHP; it does not give any sense of permanence to the THMC after project completion. While this limited time authority itself may jeopardize the goal of future sustainability, the TOR of the THMC is also too sketchy and non-visionary[11]. Since the CCC is a "poor community only" platform, its approved CCC Constitution only describes the roles and responsibilities of the communities. Roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders, including the local elite, elected local government and the GOB in helping the CCC in sustainably managing the THE have nowhere been mentioned. The CBSMTHP also facilitated the issuing of supplementary Gazettes such as "Fish Profit Distribution" and "National Scientific Body". The project is now diligently working to getting an approval of a revenue sharing scheme for the community guards.

Even though there are no blueprints or universally applicable paths, there is an enormous variety of co-management planning options depending on specific contexts. However, to allow for comparisons and to break down the process into manageable units, four key co-management components and three main phases in a co-management process can be identified (see e.g., Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2000 for a detailed analysis):

**Four Inter-related Co-management Components**

→ **CM context**

→ **CM process**

→ **CM plan(s) and agreement(s)**

→ **CM organization(s)**

Experience has shown that the sustainability of co-management organizations depends to a great extent on how solid is the legal footing. The MTR Consultant closely reviewed the CBSMTHP's co-management negotiation process and concluded that the project in its "learning by doing" process have been trying its best to put in place some crucial safeguard measures. However, these safeguard measures may not prove strong enough to protect and sustain the existence or effectiveness of the co-management organizations since they do not specify the roles of all stakeholders.

The MTR Consultant recommends that the legal standing of the co-management process be revisited within the Consolidation Phase. This can be achieved, for instance, by:

- Negotiating with the MOEF to sign an interim memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the CCC with the understanding that, for safeguarding the communities rights over the resources and managing the THE in a sustainable manner, the governance structure will be revisited,

[11] See www.nishorgo.org for an example of a co-management Gazette.

- Re-defining the co-management governance structure to include all relevant stakeholders[12], and
- Revising the TOR of the re-constituted co-management institutions to adequately elaborate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

## 4.5 Commitment is Key to Sustainability: How Committed are the Co-management Stakeholders?

### 4.5.1 The Policymakers

The policymakers, particularly at the MOEF, live far away from the TH. Reviewing the policy decisions the MOEF has taken to date to protect the ecosystem, the MTR Consultant concludes that the MOEF has been showing its conspicuous commitment. The inclusion of the TH as a Ramsar site, declaring it as an ECA, making the haor the priority site under NCS implementation and, finally, working in tandem with IUCN Bangladesh Country Office in implementing the CBSMTHP are all a good testimony of commitment. Policymakers often depend on the nature, frequency and quality of the feedback mechanism. The manifested commitment primarily was facilitated by nature-lovers and environmental professionals who traversed through the difficult terrain of TH out of their own interest. Since the inception of the CBSMTH, the involvement of the MOEF policymakers has become more direct. The Consultant met with the Secretary MOEF and the Project Director and was impressed by their expression of continued commitment.

The greatest commitment that the MOEF has been demonstrating is the fundamental changes that it promoted in the management of the THE. Since 2003, the major shift in management policy came through the commissioning of and implementing the CBSMTHP. For example, followed after the ban on leasing, the formation of the Steering Committee at the highest level, establishment of the THMC through a gazette notification, registration of the CCC, benefit sharing schemes, etc. are solid policy instruments that provide the basis of multi-stakeholder participated, holistic management of the THE. Even though all the instruments may not seem perfect (see discussion in the governance section), this is a good beginning and the CBSMTHP Consolidation Phase still has enough time to revise and refine them.

### 4.5.2 The THMC and Associated GOB Machinery

The THMC is expected to be the bridge between the policymakers at the ministry and the communities at the THE. The MOEF established the THMC with a TOR that devolves ample authority to the THMC, particularly the Deputy Commissioner who heads the body, to run the operation following a "command and control" approach. The Consultant facilitated a workshop at Sunamgonj on March 25, 2014 to get the THMC feedback on the performance of the CBSMTHP. The experience was less than encouraging. The members of the THMC – mostly the representatives of the GOB agencies – did not appear to be engaged. Rather than constructively discussing the performance of and challenges ahead of the project in managing the THE, they were expressing what the respective departments think of or plan for their involvement in managing the THE. The Consultant is fully aware that the THMC met numerous times and took many decisions to help CBSMTHP implementation but it is not sure whether those were done because of the conspicuous facilitation of the project staff at field or influence from IUCN/MOEF at the center.

[12] The draft Management Strategy Plan has kept a provision of an "Upazila Co-management Committee". However no details are available about any re-organization of the existing CCC, UCC and VCCs to include the local government and local elite.

The Deputy Commissioner did not speak very highly of the achievements of the CBSMTHP. This is alarming. However, the saving grace is that the Deputy Commissioner said as an anecdote that the TH will never be leased out to any commercial interest ever again. As the THMC Chair, he of course emphasize on the necessity to continue the project for at least two more years to help strengthen the CMCs.

The UNOs at the Upazila's are not part of the co-management structure. Per the gazette of the THMC, UNOs are the member of THMC. However, at the Upazila level, there is no co-management structure. Nonetheless, the UNO of Tahirpur Upazila seemed to have more engagement. He clearly understood the challenges and also had a clear idea about the role of the administration in conserving the resources of the THE vis-à-vis supporting the communities' wellbeing.

### 4.5.3 The Co-management Community

The communities are the backbone of the THE co-management. The CBSMTHP has so far mobilized 48% of the total THE population to join the process. As a numerical achievement, this is quite a good number. The challenge, however, lies elsewhere. The influential elite – the former leaseholders and the elected local government – are still out of the co-management process and structure, even though the elected local government has a presence at the THMC. This can have a seriously negative impact as discussed earlier.

The poor communities consider the project as a blessing. The CBSMTHP has given them a "prestigious" social position, direct financial incentives, access to resources as well as technology and skill training that they never enjoyed before. Even though the project staff was facilitating the process, the Consultant witnessed a Participatory Resource Management Planning (PRMP) session. The understanding of the resource users is clear about their access rights to the THE resources. They are proud of the wealth they have accumulated and the financial support they are receiving both from the project and their revolving resources; the technological knowhow they are acquiring from the training opportunities; and the official access they are getting the resource both commercially and non-commercially. Women are vocal as well as active in economic incentives. There is no visible ethnic conflict.

Are the communities fully committed to safeguarding the THE resources after the CBSMTHP is closed down? The MTR Consultant cannot confidently provide a bold affirmative answer to this question. The temporal challenge of mindset and behavioral changes is real. It takes a long time. It cannot be expected that a total community stewardship will be at action and the entire community will render an all-out effort in sustainable protection of the THE. Illegal activities are still going on despite community patrolling and the activities of the law enforcing agencies. Some of the community members take pride of being a "leaseholder", considering the commercial fishing rights as "lease". The communities are not content with the unprecedented access right they gained for both commercial and non-commercial fishing; they want more. This provides a strong testimony that the awareness generating activities have not been strong or adequate enough to trigger behavioral change. This is not unusual. The section of the community that received formal access rights to commercial fishing want to go for indiscriminate fishing, even by draining the waterbody completely to catch whatever is remaining. This is the age-old cultural practice in natural resources management in open water with public access in the country.

In addition to the recommendations made above on the governance issues as well as the legal standing of co-management organizations (Section 3), the MTR Consultant recommends that the following actions must be initiated and/or intensified prior to the ending of the Consolidation Phase:

- Co-management of NRs is all about alliance building. The CBSMTHP should strengthen the facilitation of alliance building among all stakeholders of the THE as well as other neighboring initiatives such as the "Community-based Fisheries Management Project" funded by IFAD and implemented jointly by the World Fish Center (WFC) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and the "Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project" funded by USAID and implemented by Winrock International. The CBSMTHP partner CNRS is also a CREL sub-grantee.
- The incentives for the communities should be revisited during the preparation of the exit strategy (see Section 5 below).

## 4.6 Incentives for Taking the Pressure Off the THE: How Effective is the Alternate Economic and Livelihood Opportunities?

The CBSMTHP is working with the poorest of the poor section of the rural community and like any other natural resources management projects, the main focus has been the restoration of the ecosystem by providing the dependent communities with basic livelihoods improvement and economic incentives. However, the CBSMTHP is not a project aiming at alleviating the poverty of the communities. As always the case, large scale poverty alleviation efforts must come from the GOB and/or other multilateral investments. The purpose of including the livelihoods improvement components in natural resources management projects is to jump-start the process of conservation aiming, ultimately, at policy uptake of the lessons learned. Within its very limited financial scope, the CBSMTHP has been administering its own livelihoods initiatives and AIGA. The project has also leveraged additional supports from the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) program. The CBSMTHP livelihoods activities are working well. However, they are not at the scale of poverty alleviation.

### 4.6.1 SCM, LIP and VGF

The SCM and LIP programs are running well. The "innovation fund" provided to the CCC is a great idea. It would be important, however, to plan carefully the exit strategy for CBSMTHP so that this gradually accumulated resources and skill do not become vulnerable once the project is closed. Establishment of a sustainable system to keep the required level of integrity in operating this revolving fund after the closing of the project will be an issue. At present, the project is considering linking an existing microfinance institution (MFI) to take over the operation.

The communities are not unanimously pleased with the way the VGF is handled. They tend to strongly believe that the distribution of VGF is not transparent. The CBSMTHP staff believes that the number of VGF beneficiaries outnumber the number of truly vulnerable population under the project. The Consultant did not have any direct, non-conflicting way to verify the allegations made by the community. The Consultant, of course, had an honest discussion with the senior project staff and some interesting facts emerged. The staff claimed that the allegation is not proper and just. Whoever raises the issue, it is obvious that s/he has a misconception of the real context of VGF distribution at THE area. The VCF support aimed only targeted the poor fishers' community, who are supposed to prevent themselves from catching fish during the breeding season. However, allegation and counter allegations are quite normal, where most of the community members are poverty stricken and VGF support focuses

only a section of the community, other communities feel deprived and, as a result, are bitter about it. The Consultant in fact commends the project for leveraging the facility for the project beneficiaries.

### 4.6.2 Access Rights to Resources

The project's initiative in making formal provisions for the communities to establish access rights to use the THE resources (fish) both on commercial basis and for subsistence is highly commendable. The communities, however, complain about the price of the permits for commercial fishing. The Consultant does not consider this to be a deterrent. The communities should be able to understand the long-term value of this access right. The cumulative earning from the fishing activities is not, however, very high. This is because of restriction imposed on fishing areas and, of course, level of production. Examining the catch monitoring data it appeared that the productivity of the THE at this point of time is low. This contradicts with the general perception. The monitoring system should be carefully examined. As the ecosystem starts regaining health and the sanctuaries start functioning well, the productivity is expected to increase, which, in turns, will bring in more benefit from fisheries to the community.

### 4.6.3 Cost Recovery Strategy: Is it Sustainable?

The CBSMTHP has been successful in getting a cost-recovery system in which the communities get 76% of the income from non-commercial fisheries. While abolishing the commercial leasing system for resource extraction from the THE because of its ECA status as well as the successful facilitation of the CBSMTHP in providing the communities with access rights are commendable, there are issues related to the market strategies. The first and foremost is the marketing of fish. The TMHC decision to follow a tendering process for giving a vendor the solitary right to buy the entire catch is absolutely risky. This is like "instead of leasing the TH, now it is a system of leasing its most valuable products". This year a vendor, who does not have sufficient financial credibility according to the communities, won the tender at an exorbitant price. The aftermath was quite disappointing. He did not pay the communities for their catch in a timely manner. Moreover, he did not buy the catch on a regular basis. Commercial fishing at THE is a highly seasonal phenomenon. If the communities cannot use the small window for fishing and do not get the financial return on time, the situation will create negative incentives for the communities affecting their commitment towards conserving the resources. Overall, poor capacity and limited risk taking ability of the THE community are the most noticeable barriers to explore new marketing mechanism at this moment. However, the Project is in constant search of best possible ways to ensure maximum returns out of fish marketing.

About 46% of the THE population are involved in and dependent fully or partially on the fisheries resources of the haor. According to the CBSMTHP Baseline Study, the THE used to produce about 6,500 MT of different varieties of fish, which is 14% of the production of the Sunamgonj district. Even though the communities believe that the production has significantly declined in recent years, a credible statistics is hard to come by. Nonetheless, fish is the main product of the system. The project conducted a rapid value chain assessment of the fisheries resources. The report was sketchy with the main recommendation to the project being establishment of collection centers involving the co-management organizations. The report, of course, identified the fish business entities that are operating in the area. Since the poor fisher-folks cannot afford even a day's catch to rot, they are victim of the absence of a secure preservation and marketing system. The question is one of 'value protection' first, not of value addition.

The MTR Consultant concludes that the CBSMTHP performance in helping mobilize the AIGA and other economic opportunity enhancing efforts, secure communities' access rights to resources and modest attempts to understand the market challenges are reasonably good. Sustainability of these systems is going to be a serious issue and it should be a major focus for the remaining period.

The MTR Consultant recommends that:

- The wholesale idea of transferring the operation of the revolving fund to an existing MFI is re-assessed.[13] Hiring an MFI may be expensive. The transaction cost may be too high for the community in absence of the other supports they are now receiving from the project. Protection of the fund (currently about BDT 6,240,287) is crucial. Other cost effective means, of course with sound fiduciary safeguards, should be explored. For example, the MACH project came up with an effective measure. The CBSMTHP partner CNRS should advise the team to find a solution to this issue.
- The tendering system for commercial fish marketing must stop now. The CBSMTHP is an exceptional project that aims at empowering a vulnerable community. The THMC should be able to negotiate with the policymakers to make an exceptional mechanism to conserve a national heritage and a public good in public interest. Some suggestions follow:
    - First and foremost, focus on value protection. Even though the area is still out of the national electricity grid, helping establish diesel operated ice factories may be a good option.
    - Proactively reach out to the fish processors that are operating in the area. The organized VCCs may be attractive as suppliers to the processors. They may come up with some upfront investment as well.
    - Examine the possibility of creating a branding for the THE fish to access a special clientele.

## 4.7 Conflicts and Conflict Management

The potential of future conflict among the local elite, local government and co-management organizations over power and control of resources has been discussed in Section 3. The communities do not reserve any ethnic barrier, which is a positive point for co-management. Unfortunately, there are other sources of conflict.

### 4.7.1 Guarding the THE for Protection of Resources

An ongoing conflict between the CGs and the GOB law enforcers (Ansar and police) is facing the CBSMTHP implementation. The previous patrolling system that was introduced by the project – joint patrolling by the CGs and the law enforcers – is working no more. The CGs refused to go with the law enforcers complaining that the law enforcers ally with the illegal poachers that may put the CGs into danger. The project is closely working to resolve the issue. One significant effort the project is making is to mainstreaming the CG patrolling system under the GOB's fiscal system. Once approved, the number of regular CGs will increase in one hand and, on the other; the morale of the community to join the CG will heighten to a great extent.

### 4.7.2 Conflict within the Communities

The MTR Consultant heard from the project staff as well as members of the co-management organizations that the relatively more influential members of the VCCs take greater advantage of the

[13] The partner NGO ERA is showing interest in taking over the operation. There are other MFIs even though the large ones do not operate in the difficult terrain of the THE.

SCM opportunities than the poorest of the poor. The CCC is aware of it and is trying to mitigate the situation.

### 4.7.3 Potential Conflict with Development Planning of Other GOB Entities

Coordinating development planning and implementation is a common issue. The Bangladesh Haor Development Board (BHDB) has recently developed a Master Plan for the development of the haors. The BHDB representative that attended the Consultant's meeting with the THMC also mentioned that the THE will also be given priority during the implementation of the Master Plan, which, however, may not happen anytime soon.

Some of the conflicts, the Consultant concludes, will be a living process and the project at this point of time and the CCC in future must be vigilant of them. Some recommendations follow:

- Expedite the CG revenue mainstreaming process. A good contingent of the CGs with attractive benefit sharing process will be able to defuse the future need to involve the formal law enforcers to protect the THE. The project must, however, start working with the CCC to prepare the CGs to abide by a code of conduct so that the CGs themselves do not appear as a threat to conserving the resources.
- The CCC should start dealing with the more influential advantage takers and setting good examples of equitable disbursement of funds.
- The CCC should be aware of any future plan that the BHDB may have. If there is a potential conflict, the issue should be raised at the THMC meetings.

## 4.8 Ecological Restoration: How Sustainable Would It be?

### 4.8.1 The CBSMTHP Habitat Restoration Effort

The habitat restoration process gained a serious momentum during the CBSMTHP Consolidation Phase. Admittedly, the Development Phase did not feature much of the restoration work. The CBSMTHP partners, staff as well as the communities testify that social mobilization for group formation, revolving funds operation, AIGA and skill training were the major emphasis while the importance of starting the restoration process clearly received a lower priority.

The restoration work features a broad spectrum of activities: sanctuary (5 fish and 2 birds) development, afforestation, assisted natural regeneration, repopulating the haor with fingerlings, etc. The project has trained VCCs and UCCs leaders on M&E of different restoration measures, mainly focusing on fish harvesting, swamp forest plantation, reeds vegetation and limited commercial fish harvesting in the core zone. The trained community members are monitoring the ecosystem. Prior to establishing the community-based monitoring protocol, the project has undertaken an assessment of the maximum sustainable yield levels for fish, reeds and forest.

The project's approach in facilitating the permit system for non-commercial system is commendable. Instead of introducing a wholesale, open-ended permit system, the permits are given for the types of gear. This is an excellent way of controlling indiscriminate extraction, even by the permit holders.

Restoration ecology is a complex technical area. The project has used the natural history of the area, supplemented by the baseline survey and one-off consultants' reports on fishery, forestry and reeds to make a judgment on the restoration process. This is perfectly alright. The concern that the Consultant

has is the late start of the restoration process, which means that the project will end with no opportunity to monitor the establishment and success. We will have to wait and see the effectiveness of the community monitoring protocol.

### 4.8.2 The THE: Do We Know the Resource and the Ecosystem Dynamics?

The project has demarcated, broadly, the water bodies into two divisions: (a) the core zone and (b) the buffer zone taking into account the ecosystem protection, habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation requirements. This demarcation is working well for identifying appropriate habitat restoration and sustainable resource harvesting interventions that the project is deploying. However, there is a clear dispute over the demarcation when it comes to identifying the THE boundary under official land tenure systems. The Consultant came to know that the CBSMTHP completed a survey to correctly delineate the THE boundary but that was not officially accepted. Currently, the project is planning to do it once again. Absence of a proper and officially approved boundary marking puts the entire resource management system at complete jeopardy. Vested quarters are taking advantage of it. Even though the THE is forbidden for commercial leasing, the absence of a clear-cut boundary allows the administration to lease out beels claiming that they are outside the core area. If this is happening in presence of the project on the ground and the THMC, what will happen beyond the project period is anybody's guess.

The THE still does not have a comprehensive biodiversity assessment. IUCN Bangladesh Country Office has worked to leverage the Arannayk Foundation (Bangladesh Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation) to conduct an assessment. Once completed, the information will be valuable input to the CNSMTHP exit strategy.

The project has established a hydrological monitoring system and trained some community monitors to regularly monitor the water level. This is an essential aspect of understanding the seasonal changes and their impact on the ecosystem.

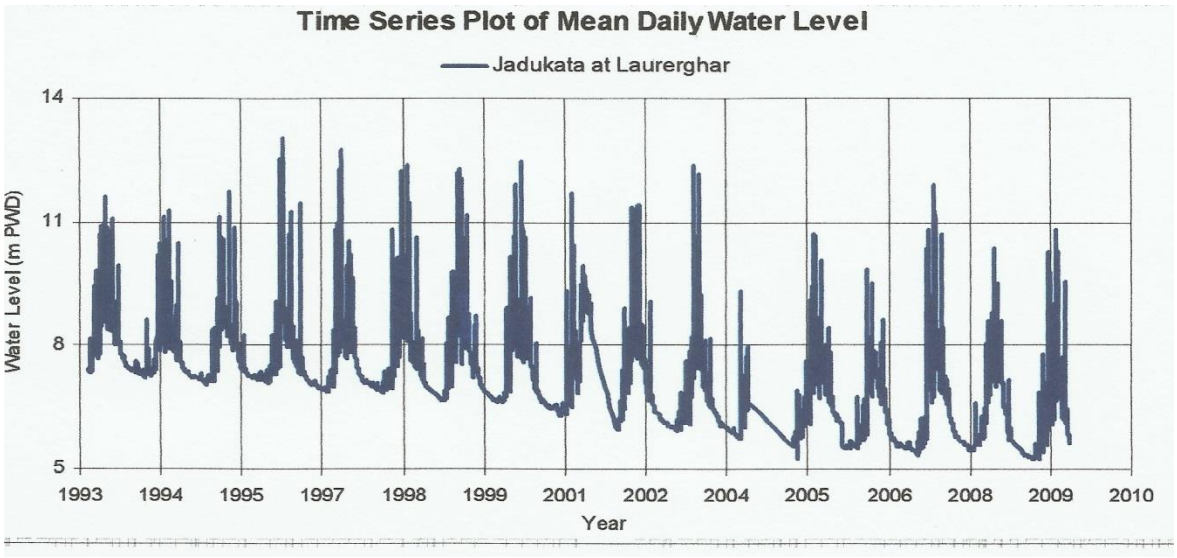
The Consultant concludes that ensuring the ecological sustainability of the project interventions are of most critical importance and the project should spend considerable energy to devise an appropriate exit strategy. Some recommendations follow:

- The project should intensify the supervision of the community M&E process to make sure it works and continue to help the monitors refresh the training that they received.
- The project should make every effort to link the future SCM management to resource M&E.
- The CBSMTHP should look for other initiatives (such as USAID's CREL project) that have some presence in habitat restoration now. The community M&E may be linked with those initiatives in a formal manner.
- The boundary marking must be completed and approved not only to safeguard the beels from leasing, but also to help maintain the ecosystem's ecological integrity and productivity.
- Ecological restoration is a long-term process and monitoring plays a critical role. A time series of real time data will be essential to determine the improvement of the ecosystem. A long-term monitoring protocol should be established no matter whether the project will be extended beyond the planned period of June 2015. The community M&E may be a permanent agenda for the National Scientific Body. The other option will be to link them with a university or research institute.
- The hydrological monitoring system deserves a very serious attention. The monitoring protocol should be linked to an academic or research organization. The results shown in Figure 4 indicates a clear trend that historical water flow in a major river that traverses through the THE is decreasing steadily. This is

alarming. If this trend continues, no external intervention will prove good enough to maintain the vitality of the ecosystem.

This visible trend in decreased water flow into the THE indicates another broader aspect. Control of the water flow into the THE exists outside the geographical boundary of Bangladesh. This is; therefore, a transboundary issue and this cannot be dealt with within the current scope of the project or the current knowledge that exists on the THE. The CBSMTHP coordinating partner IUCN Bangladesh Country Office should flag this issue and start discussing with its India and Regional Offices to find a way to initiate a dialogue with the Government of Meghalaya to commission, at the very least, a transboundary study. This is perhaps well beyond the scope of the project, but IUCN Bangladesh Country Office should make the long-term monitoring of the THE a priority agenda under its core program, fund the study from its own resources and approach other DPs (including SDC) for support.

**Figure 4**. Time Series Plot of Mean Daily Water Level at Jadukata River




## 4.9 Approaches to Long-Term Sustainability

The CBSMTHP has planned a series of actions to ensure that it leaves behind a system and a more aware, skilled and organized community with better economic and livelihoods opportunities to sustain the ecological integrity and productivity of the THE.

### 4.9.1 National Scientific Body (NSB)

A NSB, approved through a gazette notification, comprising of 8 members started working and they are providing scientific inputs for achieving project objectives. The NSB will advise and provide recommendations on all scientific aspects of project intervention. The NSB met only twice so far. The Consultant attended the second NSB meeting. They discussed the implementing status of the decisions

taken in the first NSB meeting. It did not appear that the NSB has organized well yet even though the individual members have notable capacity in their respective areas of expertise.

### 4.9.2 National Wetland Network (NWN)

The planned NWN was established and the network has already organized a national level meeting. Participation at the meeting came from the GOB, NGOs, and natural resources stakeholders from all over the country. The participating stakeholders shared lessons they learnt from being involved in co-managing other wetlands. The main theme was sustainable wetlands management following the Ramsar "Wise Use" Principle. The participants exchanged information, knowledge and experiences with the THMC.

### 4.9.3 TH Information Center (THIC)

The CBSMTHP has established a THIC at Sunamganj. The THIC has already started attracting students and academicians interested in the THE. Construction of a new dynamic and interactive web portal for knowledge management on the THE is under process to improve the existing knowledge portal. A high speed internet service has been established in the project office to support the new web portal.

### 4.9.4 Proposed Tanguar Haor Management Authority (THMA)

The plan to establish the THMA under an Act of the Parliament is a brilliant idea. The project has started drafting the Act and associated Rules and has had held a consultative meeting at the national level following field level consultations. The institutional nature of the proposed THMA will determine the flexibility and effectiveness of the institution. Reading the draft Act gives an impression that it will be heavily government controlled. The proposed steering committee is consisting of top level of bureaucracy. The project has recently conducted a study tour to Lake Cilika[14] – also a Ramsar site located in Orissa, India. The Chilika Lake is managed by the Cilika Development Authority (CDA).[15] If the project and, for that matter, the MOEF conceives the CDA as a model for the proposed THMA, that may be fatal. The THE does not match the expanse, both in terms of areal coverage and conservation challenges, of Lake Cilika. Also, the CDA is alleged to be a top-heavy bureaucratic authority and the management of resources is done through a "command and Control" approach. The legal basis for setting up the institutional framework; its technical mandate, organogram and personnel compensation plan must be very clearly thought out with a pragmatic vision.

### 4.9.5 Approaches to Eco-tourism Development

Road communications to and from the THE are difficult during the dry season. The wet season offers easy transportation even though the system becomes turbulent. The project, however, is planning to develop an eco-tourism plan despite a budget constraint. It is also considering negotiating with a tour operator to take the lead in developing eco-tourism packages to attract tourists to the THE. The Consultant is not comfortable with this 'checking the box' approach.

[14] Lake Chilika is a brackish water lagoon, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha state on the east coast of India, at the mouth of the Daya River, flowing into the Bay of Bengal, covering an area of over 1,100 km².

[15] In 1992, the Government of Orissa, concerned by the degradation of the lake's ecosystem and cognizant of significant numbers of people who were dependent upon the lake's resources, set up the CDA as a parastatal body for restoration and overall development of the lake.

### 4.9.6 Proposed TH Management Framework

The CBSMTHP is currently working to develop a long-term management plan framework for the THE. The first management plan for the THE was developed in the 1990's under the NCS implementation, which was revised by the CBSMTHP. The Consultant attended the consultative meeting where both the THMA draft Act and the management framework were presented. The framework appeared to be too generic. This will require some serious efforts to make it fitting to the THE management needs.

The Consultant holds, but only in theory, a positive impression about the CBSMTHP's long-term institutional sustainability approach. Experience in Bangladesh and elsewhere affirms that the initiatives taken under a project remains project-tied and fall apart quickly after the project comes to an end. The fate of the NSB, NTN and THIC may be the same unless the THMA comes into being with a right structure, political commitment and adequate funding.

The MTR Consultant would offer the following recommendations that the project should consider seriously in the remainder of the Consolidation Phase:

- While establishing the THMA, it should be kept in mind that the institution will have a unique mandate of managing complex governance processes, science and art of biodiversity conservation and natural resources management issues, communications to publicize the importance and attraction of the system worldwide, and develop and manage a community-centered eco-tourism system that will attract the world. A conventional institution will fall short in meeting these sophisticated expectations, which are fitting to the co-management needs of the THE. There are experienced professionals at IUCN who understand the issue very well. There are examples of autonomous institutes set up by the GOB (e.g., Center for Environment and Geographic Information System, CEGIS or Institute for Water Modeling, IWM). The THMA may be a more open set up with a more challenging mandate, but it must be a slim, corporate-smart institute. The location of the THMA would also be important.
- The approach to developing a management framework also appears to be a 'checking the box' one. The Consultant contradicts with the idea of developing a management plan at haste. Rather, the Consultant recommends that the CBSMTHP takes a step back and considers developing a "Tanguar Haor Strategy and Action Plan" (THSAP) following the format of Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) and identify some strategic pillars such as fishery, forestry, adaptation, poor resource users' alternative livelihoods options, resource marketing strategy, etc. for which individual short-, medium- and long-term management plans will be prepared. One may argue that the BCCSAP deals with the whole country's climate change challenges and a similar strategy for a small ecosystem may be too much to embark on. But, the counter argument is that size does not matter; it is the importance of the ecosystem that matters. The location of the THE is crucial for the vitality of all the wetlands in the region. The ecosystem services that the system is providing are too invaluable to ignore. The THE has already received some long-term interventions, a number of legal protection measures are in place and, more importantly, the communities depending on the resources are now organized and, to a great extent, sensitized. This is the time to go into the future with a strategic framework.

  IUCN Bangladesh Country Office (and the entire CBSMTHP team) should assemble a multi-disciplinary team and assign it to develop the THSAP. The Consultant is aware that the project is under budget constraints to undertake such an exercise. IUCN Bangladesh Country Office and MOEF may
  - Approach the SDC to provide a one-off funding for the THSAP development.
  - Start a dialogue with the UNESCO World Heritage Site Secretariat to provide a small grant.
  - Approach the Ramsar Secretariat for a similar small grant.
- The CBSMTHP has done a disaster risk reduction (DRR) analyses that recommended a number of actions. The project, however, did not include a long-term adaptation approach for the THE even though the

improved management will make the ecosystem more resilient and improved livelihood will make the communities more adaptive. The THE, however, needs to give a special attention to climate change adaptation. The CBSMTHP activities align very well with the six BCCSAP pillars (*1: Food Security, Social Protection and Health, 2: Comprehensive Disaster Management, 3: Infrastructure, 4: Research and Knowledge Management, 5: Mitigation and Low Carbon Development, and 6: Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening*). Table 1 shows the alignment of the CBSMTHP objectives with the BCCSAP pillars. IUCN Bangladesh Country Office should take a coordinating lead in preparing a full-fledged climate change adaptation project proposal for continuing its involvement at the THE and submit it to the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) for consideration.

Table 1 Synergy of the CBSMTHP Objectives with BCCSAP Pillars

| **CBSMTHP Outcome/Output** | **BCCSAP Pillar** |
|---|---|
| **Outcome 1:** The co-management system in TH is consolidated and effective | 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 |
| *Output 1.1*: Institutional co-management structures are strengthened | 6 |
| Output 1.2 A monitoring system for environmental and economic parameters is established and applied | 1, 2, 4, 6 |
| *Output 1.3*: The TH Management Committee is capable to take decisions, and the updated Management Plan is endorsed | 6 |
| *Output 1.4*: Ecological protection and restoration is strengthened | 1, 2, 6 |
| **Outcome 2:** The communities of the TH have improved livelihoods and increased incomes | 1, 4, 6 |
| *Output 2.1*: The communities have improved knowledge and skills to develop and diversify their livelihoods | 1, 4, 6 |
| *Output 2.2*: The communities have increased incomes | 1, 6 |
| Output 2.3: The savings and loan scheme are transferred to a competent microfinance agent | 1, 6 |
| **Outcome 3**: The sustainability is assured beyond project intervention | 6 |
| *Output 3.1*: A long-term organizational and financing concept is developed and implemented | 6 |
| *Output 3.2*: The commitment of relevant stakeholders is mobilized and expressed | 6 |

## 5 Relevance of CBSMTHP to SDC Country Strategy: Recommendations

The SDC Cooperation Strategy 2013-17 in Bangladesh features an overall goal to contribute to the improvement of well-being for the poor and disadvantaged people in Bangladesh. In particular, poor peoples' employment and income will be increased, and public services and citizens' voice and participation will be strengthened. The Cooperation Strategy mainly focuses on the three broad thematic areas:

1. Market Development
2. Skills Development
3. Local Governance

4. *(Cross-cutting) Climate Change Adaptation*[16]

Broadly speaking, the CBSMTHP objectives match very well with those of the SDC Cooperation Strategy (Table 2).

The CBSMTHP has been a long-term commitment for SDC. The general area (Sunamganj) is still a focus geographical area under the strategy. The Consultant commends the SDC for the way they have been incrementally supporting the development of a collaborative management, with the poor as central to the approach, of a significant ecosystem that has its influence on the ecology of a much larger area and the wellbeing of a large section of the ultra-poor.

With the new strategy, SDC may decide to explore newer areas of interest for its engagement in the focus areas. The Consultant, however, strongly recommends that SDC considers keeping its engagements with the THE improvement as well as supporting the poor communities for another project cycle. Co-management is a temporally and fiscally challenging process. Empowerment of the poorest of the poor in a less favorable enabling environment is not easy to come by. The CBSMTHP has been an ambitious project with a low budget. The current MTR has identified a number of issues related to the achievements of the project. Nonetheless, the CBSMTHP's accomplishments are convincing, given that the scope of the work was quite wide and the project budget low. But, there is a long way to go. The Consultant hopes that the CBSMTHP Exit Strategy will set the stage for a renewed interest from the SDC and other DPs in advancing the process. This is too good to drop at this stage.

The Consolidation Phase is crucial since it is expected that the CBSMTHP will take into serious cognizance the MTR recommendations. Implementing the recommendations will require SDC's focused attention, particularly from the Project Manager and, intermittently, from the Head of Cooperation. The MTR Consultant recommends that:

- The SDC proactively convenes a meeting involving the Country Representative of IUCN Bangladesh Country Office and the Steering Committee to discuss the MTR recommendations and strategize priority actions.
- The SDC convenes a meeting involving like-minded DPs, preferably at the Heads of Agencies level, and have the CBSMTHP team present the project highlighting the importance of the THE, achievements thus far of the CBSMTHP and importance of continuing the process.
- The SDC Project Manager holds more frequent consultations with the CBSMTHP team to oversee the implementation of the priority actions.

The SDC has an advantageous role and a responsibility. Even if continuation of its involvement to improve the management of the THE for another project cycle does not meet SDC's new strategic priorities, the Consultant recommends that, at a minimum, the following be considered:

- Adding a supplementary fund to CBSMTHP to develop a THSAP.
    - Alternately, jointly with IUCN Bangladesh Country Office, approaching the Ramsar Secretariat to fund the process.
- Keeping a thematic focus based on the CBSMTHP achievements on the THE communities and the co-management organizations through other projects in the region.

[16] The pillar will aim at mainstreaming climate change across the portfolio. Climate Change Adaptation will be addressed as a priority besides the core domains of intervention. Disaster Risk Reduction will be mainstreamed wherever relevant and feasible, in particular in the Market Development and Local Governance portfolios.

- Leveraging support from other DPs (e.g., USAID through its CREL project and German Technical Cooperation who is facilitating a broader process to improve wetland management policies) to co-finance some priority areas identified in the exit strategy.

Table 2 Synergy of the CBSMTHP Objectives with the SDC Country Cooperation Strategy (2013-2017)

| **CBSMTHP Outcome/Output** | **SDC CS Pillar** |
|---|---|
| **Outcome 1:** The co-management system in TH is consolidated and effective | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| *Output 1.1*: Institutional co-management structures are strengthened | 3, 4 |
| Output 1.2 A monitoring system for environmental and economic parameters is established and applied | 2, 4 |
| *Output 1.3*: The TH Management Committee is capable to take decisions, and the updated Management Plan is endorsed | 3 |
| *Output 1.4*: Ecological protection and restoration is strengthened | 4 |
| **Outcome 2:** The communities of the TH have improved livelihoods and increased incomes | 1, 3, 4 |
| *Output 2.1*: The communities have improved knowledge and skills to develop and diversify their livelihoods | 2, 4 |
| *Output 2.2*: The communities have increased incomes | 1, 2, 4 |
| Output 2.3: The savings and loan scheme are transferred to a competent microfinance agent | 1, 2, 4 |
| **Outcome 3**: The sustainability is assured beyond project intervention | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| *Output 3.1*: A long-term organizational and financing concept is developed and implemented | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| *Output 3.2*: The commitment of relevant stakeholders is mobilized and expressed | 1, 2, 3, 4 |

## 6 Consolidation of Recommendations with Suggested Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

The following Table makes an attempt to suggest the appropriate roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders in prioritizing the tasks, assigning a realistic timeframe and addressing resource requirement issues in implementing the recommendations made in the MTR Report. The CBSMTHP should make every effort to address all the issues within the Consolidation Phase to maximize the potential for sustainability of this lomg-term effort.

**Table 3** Recommendations with Suggested Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

| Recommendation | Roles and Responsibilities | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **MOEF** | **IUCN Bangladesh Country Office and CBSMTHP Partners** | **SDC** |
| **Co-management Governance** | | | |
| • The entire co-management governance structure be revisited. This will include at a minimum but not limited to:<br>o Re-naming and re-organizing the VCCs, UCCs and the CCC under a user-group federation rubric.<br>o Making every effort to include the local elite and the local government into the co-management structure.<br>• The location, level of participation and the TOR of the co-management committees be immediately re-considered. This may include, but not be limited to:<br>o Rethinking whether it is effective to keep the THMC at the district level or not.<br>o Rethinking whether relocating the THMC (perhaps this will be the re-constituted CCC) at the Upazila level would be more effective or not. The Upazila level THMC can report to District Development Committee (DDC) and/or the District Environmental Committee (DEC) where issues of the THE will constitute a permanent agenda. The District administration can maintain status quo in ensuring the law enforcing measures for THE protection.<br>o Rethinking how the PSC can include representation from the newly conceptualized THMC, particularly the grassroots. | Agree in principle to revised governance structure, instruct CBSMTHP team to submit revised proposal, approve new structure and location and, finally, publish gazette notification. | Provide guidance to and supervise the timeliness and quality of the proposal, and coordinate with MOEF (and other GOB entities) and SDC | Coordinate with MOEF (and other GOB entities) and IUCN |
| **Legal Standing of Co-management Organizations** | | | |
| • Sign an interim memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the CCC with the understanding that, for safeguarding the communities rights over the resources and managing the THE in a sustainable manner, the governance structure will be revisited,<br>• Re-defining the co-management governance structure to include all relevant stakeholders, and | Agreeing in principle and guide the CBSMTHP partners to start negotiating and finalizing through stakeholder consultation. | Revising the TOR of the re-constituted co-management institutions to adequately elaborate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholder | Keep close watch of the process and coordinate with MOEF and IUCN. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | s. | |
| **Stakeholder Commitment and Alliance Building** | | | |
| • Alliance building efforts should be strengthened.<br>• The incentives for the communities should be revisited during the preparation of the exit strategy. | MOEF should reach out to other similar GOB initiatives and other ministries, e.g., Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Local Governme nt, Rural Developme nt and Cooperativ es, and Ministry of Land. | The CBSMTHP should strengthen the facilitation of alliance building among all stakeholder s of the THE as well as other neighboring initiatives such as the "Community -based Fisheries Managemen t Project" funded by IFAD and implemente d jointly by the World Fish Center (WFC) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and the "Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) Project" funded by USAID and implemente d by Winrock Internationa l. The CBSMTHP partner CNRS is also a CREL sub-grantee. | Coordinate with other DPs. |
| **Conservation Incentive** | | | |
| • The wholesale idea of transferring the operation of the revolving fund to an existing MFI is re-assessed. Hiring an MFI may be expensive. The transaction cost may be too high for the community in absence of the other supports they are now receiving from the project. Protection of the fund (currently about BDT 6,240,287) is crucial. Other cost effective means, of course with sound fiduciary safeguards, should be explored. For example, the MACH project came up with an effective measure.<br>○ | Oversee the process. | The CBSMTHP partner CNRS should advise the team to find a solution to this issue. | Oversee the process and coordinate with MOEF and IUCN. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| • The tendering system for commercial fish marketing must stop now. The CBSMTHP is an exceptional project that aims at empowering a vulnerable community. The THMC should be able to negotiate with the policymakers to make an exceptional mechanism to conserve a national heritage and a public good in public interest. Some suggestions follow:<br>o First and foremost, focus on value protection. Even though the area is still out of the national electricity grid, helping establish diesel operated ice factories may be a good option.<br>o Proactively reach out to the fish processors that are operating in the area. The organized VCCs may be attractive as suppliers to the processors. They may come up with some upfront investment as well.<br>• Examine the possibility of creating a branding for the THE fish to access a special clientele. | MOEF must influence now and make an exception because of the fact that THE is a Ramsar site and an ECA. | Coordinate with MOEF and Ministry of Finance. Explore value protection and value enhancement options for fish and other produces. | Coordinate with MOEF and IUCN. |
| **Conflict Mitigation and Management** | | | |
| • Expedite the CG revenue mainstreaming process. A good contingent of the CGs with attractive benefit sharing process will be able to defuse the future need to involve the formal law enforcers to protect the THE.<br>• The CCC should start dealing with the more influential advantage takers and setting good examples of equitable disbursement of funds.<br>• The CCC should be aware of any future plan that the BHDB may have. If there is a potential conflict, the issue should be raised at the THMC meetings. | MOEF must play a leadership role in working with the Ministry of Finance once the project submits a proposal. | The project must start working with the CCC to prepare the CGs to abide by a code of conduct so that the CGs themselves do not appear as a threat to conserving the resources. | Closely oversee the process. |
| **Ecological Restoration** | | | |
| • The project should intensify the supervision of the community M&E process to make sure it works and continue to help the monitors refresh the training that they received.<br>• The project should make every effort to link the future SCM management to resource M&E.<br>• The CBSMTHP should look for other initiatives (such as USAID's CREL project) that have some presence in habitat restoration now. The community M&E may be linked with those initiatives in a formal manner.<br>• The boundary marking must be completed and approved not only to safeguard the beels from leasing, but also to help maintain the ecosystem's ecological integrity and productivity.<br>• Ecological restoration is a long-term process and monitoring plays a critical role. A time series of real time data will be essential to determine the improvement of the ecosystem. A long-term monitoring protocol should be established no matter whether the project will be extended beyond the planned period of June 2015. The community M&E may be a permanent agenda for the National Scientific Body. The other option will be to link them with a university or research institute.<br>• The hydrological monitoring system deserves a very serious attention. The monitoring protocol should be linked to an academic or research organization. The | MOEF may convene a meeting involving other initiatives under the ministry to discuss the possibility of jointly work on restoration. | Bulk of the work should be done by the project team under a close supervision and technical guidance of IUCN. Transboundary issues should be addressed on a priority basis by IUCN Country and Regional Office. | Keep a close watch on the process. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| results shown in Figure 4 indicates a clear trend that historical water flow in a major river that traverses through the THE is decreasing steadily. This is alarming. If this trend continues, no external intervention will prove good enough to maintain the vitality of the ecosystem.<br><br>This visible trend in decreased water flow into the THE indicates another broader aspect. Control of the water flow into the THE exists outside the geographical boundary of Bangladesh. This is; therefore, a transboundary issue and this cannot be dealt with within the current scope of the project or the current knowledge that exists on the THE. The CBSMTHP coordinating partner IUCN Bangladesh Country Office should flag this issue and start discussing with its India and Regional Offices to find a way to initiate a dialogue with the Government of Meghalaya to commission, at the very least, a transboundary study. This is perhaps well beyond the scope of the project, but IUCN Bangladesh Country Office should make the long-term monitoring of the THE a priority agenda under its core program, fund the study from its own resources and approach other DPs (including SDC) for support. | | | |
| **Long-Term Sustainability** | | | |
| • While establishing the THMA, it should be kept in mind that the institution will have a unique mandate of managing complex governance processes, science and art of biodiversity conservation and natural resources management issues, communications to publicize the importance and attraction of the system worldwide, and develop and manage a community-centered eco-tourism system that will attract the world. A conventional institution will fall short in meeting these sophisticated expectations, which are fitting to the co-management needs of the THE. There are experienced professionals at IUCN who understand the issue very well. There are examples of autonomous institutes set up by the GOB (e.g., Center for Environment and Geographic Information System, CEGIS or Institute for Water Modeling, IWM). The THMA may be a more open set up with a more challenging mandate, but it must be a slim, corporate-smart institute. The location of the THMA would also be important.<br>• The approach to developing a management framework also appears to be a 'checking the box' one. The Consultant contradicts with the idea of developing a management plan at haste. Rather, the Consultant recommends that the CBSMTHP takes a step back and considers developing a "Tanguar Haor Strategy and Action Plan" (THSAP) following the format of Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) and identify some strategic pillars such as fishery, forestry, adaptation, poor resource users' alternative livelihoods options, resource marketing strategy, etc. for which individual short-, medium- and long-term management plans will be prepared. One may argue that the BCCSAP deals with the whole country's climate change challenges and a similar strategy for a small ecosystem may be too much to embark on. But, the counter argument is that size does not matter; it is the importance of the ecosystem that matters. The location of the THE is crucial for the vitality of all the wetlands in the region. The ecosystem services that the system is providing are too invaluable to ignore. The THE has already received some long-term | Agree in principle and lead the process. | IUCN and partners must work fast complete the tasks within the Consolidation Phase. IUCN Bangladesh Country Office (and the entire CBSMTHP team) should assemble a multi-disciplinary team and assign it to develop the THSAP. The Consultant is aware that the project is under budget constraints to undertake such an exercise. (1) IUCN Bangladesh Country Office and MOEF may Approach | • The SDC proactively convenes a meeting involving the Country Representative of IUCN Bangladesh Country Office and the Steering Committee to discuss the MTR recommendations and strategize priority actions.<br>• The SDC convenes a meeting involving like-minded DPs, preferably at the Heads of Agencies level, and have the CBSMTHP team present the project highlighting the importance of the THE, achievements thus far of the CBSMTHP and importance of continuing the process.<br>• The SDC Project Manager holds more frequent consultations with the CBSMTHP team to oversee the implementation of the priority actions. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| interventions, a number of legal protection measures are in place and, more importantly, the communities depending on the resources are now organized and, to a great extent, sensitized. This is the time to go into the future with a strategic framework.<br><br>○<br>• The CBSMTHP has done a disaster risk reduction (DRR) analyses that recommended a number of actions. The project, however, did not include a long-term adaptation approach for the THE even though the improved management will make the ecosystem more resilient and improved livelihood will make the communities more adaptive. The THE, however, needs to give a special attention to climate change adaptation. | | the SDC to provide a one-off funding for the THSAP development. (2) Start a dialogue with the UNESCO World Heritage Site Secretariat to provide a small grant, (3) Approach the Ramsar Secretariat for a similar small grant.<br><br>IUCN Bangladesh Country Office should take a coordinating lead in preparing a full-fledged climate change adaptation project proposal for continuing its involvement at the THE and submit it to the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) for consideration. IUCN Bangladesh Country Office should take a coordinating lead in preparing a full-fledged climate change adaptation project proposal for continuing | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | its involvement at the THE and submit it to the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) for consideration. | |
| **Leveraging** | | | |
| • Leveraging support from other DPs (e.g., USAID through its CREL project and German Technical Cooperation who is facilitating a broader process to improve wetland management policies) to co-finance some priority areas identified in the exit strategy. | Reach out to the Ministry of Finance for internal resources and through ERD to DPs for external resources | Planned consultation, proposal development and coordination | • Consider adding a supplementary fund to CBSMTHP to develop a THSAP.<br>○ Alternately, jointly with IUCN Bangladesh Country Office, approaching the Ramsar Secretariat to fund the process.<br>• Keeping a thematic focus based on the CBSMTHP achievements on the THE communities and the co-management organizations through other projects in the region. |

**Annex A**

**Terms of Reference**
**Midterm Review Mission**
**Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor Project-Consolidation phase**

**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 9,727 hectares. It provides subsistence and livelihoods to about 60,000 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 2000 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 Ministry of Environment and Forests, 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) alongside excessive exploitation under the leasehold system, 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 continued until 2008, and surveys by the Sunamganj District Fisheries Officer would indicate that fish stocks are recovering.

2. It prepared, in 2000, 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, the Ministry of Environment and Forests put in place with its own resources and under the direction of the Deputy Commissioner, Sunamganj, a protection force consisting of Magistrates, ANSAR (unarmed law-enforcers of the government), Police and Border Guard Bangladesh officers, to enforce a moratorium on the exploitation of Tanguar Haor fisheries. The work of these forces has been discussed and is coordinated with community committees who also have an interest in controlling the uses of the resources.

Subsequently, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, together with the IUCN Bangladesh office, has developed a project proposal titled "Community Based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor" and has approached different development partners.

SDC has already considered Sunamganj as one of its priority working area because of its special poverty and vulnerability and has had projects (Livelihood, Local governance) in the District since 2004.

A preparatory stage gathered both social and scientific information on the area and laid the foundations for the organisation of communities into structures that could partner with governmental entities responsible for the management of the Ramsar site and the conservation of the natural resources it contains.

On the basis of the results of the preparatory phase, SDC agreed to finance a three-year (2009 – 2012) development phase to establish a co-management system that would ensure both the preservation of key ecosystem functions and values as well as provide substantial livelihood improvements for rural communities.

A review by an independent reviewer in June 2011 concluded that the efforts at building the capacity of local communities, in a partnership with government, to manage access to and derive benefits from the management of the natural resources of Tanguar Haor, were promising and should be continued and deepened.

On this backdrop, the goal of this consolidation phase has been articulated essentially as for the previous Phases.

The goal of this project is to get a co-management system for the TH Ramsar site is in place which conserves ecosystem values and services and provides a basis for an improvement of livelihoods for rural communities.

Based on the experiences of the previous phases, the current consolidation phase will achieve the goal through the following specific outcomes:

1. The co-management system in TH is consolidated and effective
2. The communities of the TH have improved livelihoods and increased incomes
3. The sustainability is assured beyond project intervention

**Rationale and Objectives of the review**

To meet the conditions of the Project Document, a mid-term evaluation will be conducted during the second half of the programme, and shall review its approaches and strategies. The monitoring of the outcomes will be a part of that process, and should be used as instrument for re-planning, if need be. This process will include the participation of stakeholders, programme team, IUCN, partner organization and SDC.

This report will be produced by the review mission appointed by SDC in consultation with key stakeholders and the THMC and will be commented on by the National Project Director.

The objectives of the review work are:

- Assessment of achievements of present phase of the project
- Receive and consider a report on sustainability of the co-management system and improved livelihoods practiced so far.
- Present a review of the costs and organisation of the co-management institutions and a discussion of current and possible cost (re)covering options to maintain the co-management institutions. Get recommendations for the strategic orientations as well as for future planning in line with SDC`s country strategy and Government of Bangladesh (GoB)`s Policy and priority.

<u>Key issues to be addressed during midterm review:</u>

The following issues and questions could be addressed during the upcoming review of Tanguar *haor* project?

1. How far the ***project delivery*** is satisfactory as compared with the project document, PIP, logical framework etc.?
2. Are the community based organisations and their clusters/networks being built to a reasonable capacity so that they have potential to take part in the ***sustainable co-management*** of the resources (water, fisheries, forest and reed beds) of Tanguar Haor? Are the local administrations including Upazilla and local government

proactive to establish a co-management mechanism/modality for the Tanguar Haor Ramsar site involving the communities around Tanguar Haor?

3. How inclusive are the ***local institutional mechanisms of the poor and vulnerable population*** groups for addressing a sustainable co-management (including voice raising and participation in decision making)? Do the mechanisms address the needs of the women, poor and vulnerable? How far does the Tanguar Haor institutional mechanism support or contradict existing local systems and mechanisms?
4. Are there available ***promising alternative income generation activities*** for the poor including women allowing them to maintain wise use of Tanguar Haor resources? How has the project enhanced the livelihood options of the community in the project area?
5. How to ***manage local power relations and conflicts*** in implementing a co-management system? Are conflict resolution instruments available? Are the traditional instruments if any, applicable? What changes are necessary? Is a training process built in for conflict resolution?
6. What ***role GoB plays in the project management*** as a major stakeholder? What kind of Government ***commitment and ownership*** is in place? Are the available means and approaches reinforcing local administrations including Upazilla, civil society networks, local elites, and local government in their capacity to support the concept of co-management of the Tanguar Haor involving the communities around it?
7. How far ***GoB policy decisions, practices and/or steps*** on Haor/water bodies, Ramsar helping or affecting? Does the GoB have special strategy on the project, particularly on co-management?
8. What could be the next course of action? What, in order for the local and central government, the district administration and representative of community will do after the consolidation phase?
9. What are the factors that may influence **sustainability** in the medium and long term? Is the co-management mechanism established will sustain beyond the project period?
10. How is the existing system of SCM and mobilization of fund for AIGs working? Is it sufficient for the livelihood support for the community beyond project? Who will take responsibility of the SCM after project is over?
11. Are the lessons learnt ***attracting*** **relevant ministries/departments of GoB and** ***other development partners*** for investing in Tanguar haor and similar places? Is the project harmonised with other projects by other development partners and relevant ministries/departments of GoB.

**Methodology:**

The methodology of the review work will include the following steps:

- Review of agreements among SDC-Government-IUCN, the project logical framework, project implementation plan, annual work plans, and project reports.
- Meetings with key government officials to develop understanding about the government views on the overall protected area management plan of the Government of Bangladesh in the context of the Ramsar site management and the respective role of Tanguar Haor project. This would include an assessment of the Government's commitment and the steps taken towards institutional arrangements at local, regional and central levels for supporting the Tanguar Haor Management beyond project intervention.
- Meetings with the project partners (IUCN, HSI , CNRS and local partners), relevant actors and developing a matrix of performance, understanding and capacity in the context of Ramsar site management, in general and wetland management co-management in particular, as well as capacity to support improving livelihood conditions for the TH community, especially very poor and vulnerable.
- Undertaking a reconnaissance visit to the Tanguar Haor area to understand the community perceptions on the issues in the area vis-à-vis biodiversity conservation and livelihoods.

- Facilitation of a workshop with stakeholders in Sunamganj and Dhaka to identify key issues and challenges of the ongoing project in view to orient the future joint endeavour.
- Critical appraisal of the current phase and validation of the strategies and approaches as a crucial input that shall enable SDC to make a decision to orient for the remaining project period and if recommended, fix a next phase.
- Elaboration of recommendations for facing future challenges based on the good practices and failures observed during the field visit and activities undertaken so far, partners mix and roles (mainly HSI, CNRS, ERA, BELA, IUCN and GoB), including policy issues, strategies and approaches, co-management set up, cost recovery system.
- Facilitation (act as resource person) of a meeting or workshop with representatives of the project partners to share and verify recommendations and views on future direction of the project.
- Presentation of the key findings and recommendations (including related to decision making on the future orientation of the project) to SCO-B, IUCN and PNGOs on a final debriefing session (at SCO-B premises).
- Lay out a proposal with any further comments made by the SDC, Government and other actors.

**Output**

A review report with guidelines and recommendations in line with GoB policy and priority and SDC`s country strategy 2013-2017 (approximately within 20 pages, including observations, lessons learnt, an executive summary within three pages and excluding annexes). The report and recommendations shall enable SDC and its counter parts to make a decision to move towards next strategic orientation/course of action. The report should scope out possible objectives, results, and detail out time-bound activities for rest part of the present phase or next phase/phases (If any, proposed by the review mission).

**Timeframe**

20 days in January/February 2014 including debriefing.

**Responsibilities**

SDC has the lead for operational and administrative follow up of the review.

The consultant will have the overall responsibility of taking lead in doing an independent review and develop a report in line with the objectives and issues mentioned in the ToR.

IUCN would facilitate the logistic arrangements and other support in consultation with GoB (National Project Director and Tanguar Haor Management Committee-THMC).

**Contact persons**

***IUCN Bangladesh Country Office***

Dr. Istiak Sobhan, Phone: 88029890423, 8802-9890395- ext. 120

Fax: 8802-9892854, E-mail: Sobhan.istiak@iucn.org

***Swiss Cooperation Office Bangladesh***

Farid Hasan Ahmed, Senior Programme Officer, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Embassy of Switzerland
Bay's Edgewater, 8th Floor, Plot 12, North Avenue, Gulshan 2, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh
Tel. +88 02 881 23 92/94

Fax +88 02 882 34 97, Email: farid.ahmed@eda.admin.ch

**Budget**

The consultant will be contracted to SDC and her/his fees will be defined as per SDC's procedures, norms and criteria.

**Reference Documents**

1. Project Document
2. Project Implementation Plan
3. Annual work plan of Year-1 and 2
4. Monitoring reports of the project
5. MoU between SDC and the Ministry of Environment & Forests
6. Credit Proposal
7. Baseline study Reports
8. Other study reports and documents produced.
9. Progress Reports
10. Govt policy documents on haor/wetland and related issues.

**Annex B**

**List of People Met (in person and via audio/video conference)**

**Government of Bangladesh**

Ahmed Iftekhar, Superintending Engineer (Planning), Local Government Engineering Division (LGED)

Azad, Syed Arif, Director General, Department of Fisheries (DOF)

Amin, Dr. Md. Ruhul, Deputy Secretary, Director (Wetland Development), Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board, Ministry of Water Resources

Islam, H.M. Nazrul, Program Analyst, Local Governance Cluster, UNDP

Islam, Quzi Munirul, Deputy Chief, MOEF

Mia, Feroze, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration

Mohsin, Sk. Md., Project Director, Sunamgonj Community Based Resource Management Project, LGED

Muller, Dr. Derek, Counselor and Head of Cooperation, SDC

Patwary, Shafiqur Rahman, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF)

Rahman, Sheikh Mustafizur, Director, (Finance and Planning), DOF

Rahman, Mohammed Sayedur (Joint Secretary), Director General, Bangladesh Haor & Wetland Development Board

Saima, Ummea, Senior Assistant Chief, MOEF

Uddin, Dr. Nasir, Joint Secretary Development, MOEF and Project Director, BCCRF Secretariat

**SDC and Other Development Partners**

Ahmed, Farid Hasan, Senior Programme Officer, DRR/HA and Livelihoods, Embassy of Switzerland

Bachmann, Felix, Country Director, Helvetas (Swiss Intercooperation) Bangladesh

Booth, Gregory, USAID

Feroze, Sumaiya, USAID

Hasan, Md. Zahid, Program Officer, Helvetas (Swiss Intercooperation) Bangladesh

Mooshofer, Ottilie, Principal Advisor & Climate Change Coordinator, GIZ

Sage, Nathan, Environment Officer, USAID

Sommer, Dr. Verena, Advisor – Environment and Climate Change, GIZ

**IUCN and Other Civil Society**

Ahmad, Farid U., Executive Director, Arannayk Foundation (Bangladesh Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation) (AF)

Ahammad, Ishtiaq U., Country Director, IUCN

Chowdhury, Mohammad Shahad Mahabub, Dialogue Coordinator, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Khan, Professor Dr. Niaz A., Chairman, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka

Majumder, Mihir K. (Ex-Secretary MOEF), Dialogue Advisor, IUCN

Munshi, Zahid Hossain, Policy and Institutional Support Coordinator, IUCN

Nishat, Dr. Ainun, Vice Chancellor, BRAC University

Riadh, Sayeed Mahmud, Project Manager, CBSM Tanguar Haor Project, IUCN

Saika, Anshuman, Regional Program Support Coordinator, Asia, IUCN

Shelly, Dr. Anwara Begum, National Coordinator Bangladesh, Mangrove for the Future, IUCN

Quddus, M. Abdul, Program Director, Arannayk Foundation

**Annex C**

Appointment Schedule for Dr. Azharul Mazumder, Consultant, MTR, CBSMTH Project, Phase III

| Name of the concerned persons/organizations | Date and Time | Place | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1.National Scientific Body for Tanguar Haor** | 3 March 2013 at 3:00 pm | **IUCN country office, Dhaka** | Accomplished |
| **2.Mr. M. Anisul Islam**<br>Acting Executive Director<br>CNRS<br>**Mr. M. Mokhlesur Rahman**<br>Vice-Chairperson, CNRS | 4 March 2014 at 03:00 pm | **Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS)**<br>House-13 (4th-6th Floor), Road-17, Block-D,<br>Banani, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh | Accomplished |
| **3.Mr. Greg Booth**, Economic Growth Office,<br>USAID Bangladesh | 5 March at 11:00 am | **Economic Growth Office,** USAID Bangladesh | Accomplished |
| **4.Mr. Anshuman**<br>**ARO,IUCN** | 05 March 2014 at 01:30pm | **IUCNB Office** | Accomplished |
| **5.Mr. Felix Bachmann**<br>Country Director<br>HELVETAS Bangladesh | 05 March 2014 at 04:00pm | **HELVETAS OFFICE**, House # 13/A NE (K),Road # 83,<br>Gulshan-2,Dhaka-1212 | Zahid and Riadh |
| **6.Ottilie Mooshofer**<br>Principal Advisor & Climate Change Coordinator<br>Wetland and Forest Biodiversity Rehabilitation Projects<br>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH | 6 March 2014 at 8:00 am | Road 90, House 10/A, Gulshan 2,Dhaka 1212 / Bangladesh | |
| **7.Mr. Md. Shafiqur Rahman Patwari, Secretary**<br>Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF),<br>Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. | 6 March 2014 at 10:30 am | **Bangladesh Secretariat,Dhaka** | Zahid |
| **8.Mr. MoazzemHossain**<br>Additional Secretary<br>Ministry of Land | 6 March 2014 at 02:30 pm | **Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka** | 01713115403<br>Zahid |
| **9.Dr. Mohammad Nasiruddin**, Joint Secretary (Development), Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. | 6 March 2014 at 3 pm | Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka | Zahid |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **10.Mr. Md. Sayedur Rahman**<br>Director General<br>Bangladesh Haors and Wetland Development Board (BHWDB) | 9 March 2014 at 10am | **Bangladesh Haors and Wetland Development** Board (BHWDB)<br>72, Green Road, Dhaka-1215 | Tentative<br>( Cell: 01712106600<br>Land Phone:9137312)<br>Zahid |
| **11.Mr. Yunus Ali,** Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), Bangladesh Forest Department. | 9 March 2014 at 12pm | **Office of the Chief Conservator of Forests**<br>Forest Department, Banabhaban, Agargaon,<br>Dhaka-1207 | 01715371965,<br>**8181737**<br>**Zahid** |
| **12.Syed Arif Azad**, Director General (DG),<br>Department of Fisheries, Bangladesh | 9 March 2014 at 3pm | **Department of Fisheries**<br>13, Shohid Captain Moonsur Ali Sharani<br>Matshya Bhaban<br>Ramna, Dhaka-1000<br>Bangladesh | 9562861, 01714746405 |
| **13.Mr.Iftekhar Ahmed,** Superintend Engineer<br>Local Government Engineering Division | 9 March 2014 at 4pm | **LGED,**6th Floor, Agargaon, Dhaka | 01711548520, 9127158 |
| **14.Mr. Mohammad Alamgir Hossain**<br>Programme Analyst (Environment))<br>United Nations Development Programme-UNDP | 27 March 2014 at 5pm | **UN Offices,** 18th Floor<br>IDB Bhaban, E/8-A Begum Rokeya Sharani,<br>Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar<br>Dhaka 1207 | |
| **15.Dr. Niaz Ahmed Khan**<br>Professor<br>Department of Development Studies<br>University of Dhaka, Dhaka | Telecon | **Department of Development Studies**<br>University of Dhaka, Dhaka | |

**Annex D**

Local itinerary for the MTR consultant Mr. Azharul H. Mazumder

| Time | Place | Activities | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| **March 21, 2014 Friday** | | | |
| 4:30 PM | Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Guest House | Arrive at Sunamganj | Stay overnight at HSI guest house |
| 6:30 PM | Project office at Sunamganj | Briefing about the project | Sayeed Mahmud Riadh, PM, CBSMTH Poject |
| 7:30 PM | Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Guest House | | Stay overnight at HSI guest house |
| **March 22, 2013 Saturday** | | | |
| 7:30 AM-9.00 AM | Travel from Sunamganj to Sulemanpur | Travel by Leguna/Jeep | Sayeed Mahmud Riadh, PM, Azad-TC (IUCN)/Shahidul-TC(IUCN) |
| 9:00 AM-11.00 AM | Travel to Sulemanpur | Travel by Barky boat | Sayeed Mahmud Riadh, PM, Azad-TC (IUCN) |
| 11.00 AM -12:30 PM | Travel from Sulemanpur to Hatirgatha CFH camp | Meeting with the CCC- EC and UCC Presidents. | Shahidul Haq-TC (IUCN), Touhid-PC (ERA) |
| 12.30 PM-01.30 PM | Hatirgatha Camp | Lunch | Sayeed Mahmud Riadh, PM, Washim Newaz, PA |
| 01.30 PM-2.30 PM | Travel from Hatirgatha to Bangal Vita | Travel by motorbike | Riadh-PM (IUCN), Touhid-PC (ERA) |
| 02.30 PM-4.30 PM | Banghalvita | Observe PRMP session | Wahiduzzaman -TC (IUCN), Yahiya-PC (CNRS) |
| 4:00 PM- 05:00 PM | Back to Hatirgatha Camp | Travel by motorbike | Riadh-PM (IUCN), Touhid-PC (ERA) |
| **March 23, 2014 Sunday** | | | |
| 09:30AM-10:00 AM | Travel from Hatirgatha to Golgolia | Travel by boat | Riadh-PM (IUCN), Azad-TC (IUCN) |
| 10:00AM-10:30 AM | Travel Golgolia to DS UCC office, Dumal | Travel by motorbike | Riadh-PM (IUCN), Azad-TC (IUCN) |
| 10:30AM-11:30 AM | Dakshin Sripur UCC Office, Dumal | Observe UCC EC meeting | Shahidul Haq-TC (IUCN), Touhid-PC (ERA) |
| 11:30 AM-12:00 PM | Travel from Dumal to Janjhail | Travel by motorbike | Riadh-PM (IUCN), Touhid-PC (ERA) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12:00 AM-01:00 PM | Janjhail VCC | Observe Livelihood improvement programme ( Shital Pati weaving) | Azad-TC (IUCN) |
| 01:00 PM -02.30 PM | Travel from Janjhail to Tahirpur | Travel by motorbike | Riadh-PM (IUCN), Azad-TC (IUCN) |
| 02.30 PM-03.30 PM | CNRS Project Office, Tahirpur | Lunch | Riadh-PM (IUCN), Yahiya Sazzad, PC (CNRS) |
| 03:30 PM-04:30 PM | CNRS Project Office, Tahirpur | Meeting with CNRS staff | Sayeed Mahmud Riadh, PM Yahiya Sazzad, PC (CNRS) |
| 4.30 PM-6.30 PM | Travel from Tahirpur to Sunamganj | Travel by Luguna/Jeep | Riadh-PM (IUCN), Azad-TC (IUCN)/Shahidul-TC(IUCN) |
| March 24, 2014 Monday | | | |
| 9:30 AM-10:30 AM | Meeting with the PM and PISC | Project Office, Sunamganj | |
| 11:00 AM-11:30 AM | Meeting with the ED, ERA | ERA Office, Sunamganj | Riadh-PM(IUCN) |
| 12:00 PM-02:00 PM | Attended the consultation meeting with the THMC members and civil society | Circuit House, Sunamgnaj | Riadh-PM(IUCN),Shahidul-TC(IUCN) |
| 2:30 PM -3:00 PM | Meeting with the DC, Sunamganj | Circuit House, Sunamgnaj | Riadh-PM(IUCN),Shahidul-TC(IUCN) |
| March 25, 2014 Tuesday | | | |
| 9:30 AM | | Meeting with ERA | Riadh, PM |
| 10:30 | | Meeting with CBSMTHP team | |
| March 26, 2014 Wednesday | | | |
| 7:30 AM | | Leave Sunamgonj for Dhaka | |

**Annex E References**

**Note**: The MTR Consultant was provided with a substantial volume of background information by SDC and IUCN Bangladesh Country Office, including project agreement, previous evaluation reports, presentations, reports on project activities, and copies of GOB circulars, etc. This annex does not list all the documents seen, but includes key websites, major reports and all documents that are explicitly referred to in the text.

Websites:

IUCN: www.iucn.org/Bangladesh

Local Consultative Group on Climate Change and Environment: http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/cce.php?q=1&s=4

MOEF: www.moef.org.bd

Nishorgo: www.nishorgo.org

Reports and Documents


| | |
|---|---|
| Borrini-Feyerabend et. al., 2004 | Sharing Power. Learning by doing in co-management of natural resources throughout the world, IIED and IUCN/ CEESP/ CMWG, Cenesta, Tehran. |
| CBSMTHP, 2013 | Year 1 Operational Report |
| CEGIS, 2012 | Master Plan for Haor Area, Volume I-III |
| GOB, 2009 | Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 2009: http://www.scribd.com/doc/40048702/BCCSAP-2009 |
| GOB, 2010 | Outline Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2015, Making Vision 2021 A Reality, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, GOB, 2011 |
| GOB, 2010a. | Perspective Plan of Bangladesh FY 2010-2015. Making Vision 2021 A Reality, General Economics Division, Bangladesh Planning Commission. |
| GOB, 2011 | Bangladesh, Sixth Five Year Development Plan, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, GOB, 2011 |
| GOB, 2012 | Bangladesh Climate Expenditure and Institutional Review, General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, May 2012 |
| SDC | Bangladesh: Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2013-2017 |
| USAID, 2013 | Nature, Wealth and Power: Leveraging Natural and Social Capital for Resilient Development |