

Consideration for Environment in Development

DEVELOPMENT policies of Bangladesh is increasingly focusing on environmental conservation and sustainable resource management. Though still not all development projects have not been incorporated through any governmental process before the initial feasibility study stage, the latest Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95) has clearly stated the government's concern for environmental commitment with development. Not only that, after suffering unprecedented catastrophic floods and dreadful cyclone the Bangladesh government formed a separate Ministry for Environment and Forest in 1989 and declared 1990 as 'The Year of the Environment' and 1990s as 'The Decade of the Environment'.

A two-day national workshop on Environment and Natural Resource Management in Bangladesh was organized by Bangladesh sociological Association (BSA) from January 26-27, 1991. Proceedings of this workshop have been brought out recently in a book entitled "Environment and Natural Resource Management in Bangladesh" Edited by Syed Zahir Sadeque. The articles in the book point that a number of methodological and empirical considerations have been neglected and overlooked by policy planners, academicians, and activists concerned with development planning, nature and environment conservation and protection.

Environmental, developmental and social context

The critical area of culture, politics, economics of envi-

ronment can be seen as societal degradations which are put into effect by development policy. Generally we know that Bangladesh is a predominantly agrarian country. Existing agrarian structure of Bangladesh hinders the dynamics of production process that eventually affects the production and equitable distribution for its production. Subsequently, agriculture development policies were for-

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mulated to increase production rate without considering these factors. These policies resulted in unplanned urban growth which sucked the surplus from rural economy in favour of a support for the metropolitan economy. Such a growth and urban-based development practice obviously neglected its potential social and environmental impact. As a result, these policies, have led to numerous problems, though not explicit and immediate, affecting our society, people and nature in the long run. The impacts are as follows:

a) The growth approach of agricultural development policy has created differences in Bangladesh society on the one hand. On the other hand, it is increasingly causing damage to the fertility of soil as it encourages use of chemical agro-

inputs, relentlessly. Over the years, Bangladesh agriculture

by Imtiar Shamim

has witnessed an unsatisfactory production. Marginal farmers are being evicted from their small land.

b) Infrastructural development programmes under political patronage, indiscriminately constructed roads and highways, dams and embankments which did not take into consideration the huge floodplain and river networks of the country. These dams and embankments have changed

cially uninformed and ill-conceived.

But the real world is, of course, much more complex and demands assimilation of socio-cultural and anthropological variables in project designs in absence of appropriate methodological discussion and in presence of the emphasis given by some scholars on economic variables.

In this perspective, some researchers offer a possibility

courses of rivers and sometimes halted their flows. As a result, the country has suffered frequent floods and droughts, putting burden on the poor majority. Fish population has decreased abnormally.

c) The so-called question of national identity and development policy introduced by state-mechanism and interventions of Bangladesh in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) has created a major political and environmental crises for the state.

Methodological discussion

Environmental research and development could be excellent with the active partnership and involvement of social scientists. All the development policies are planned deliberately with economic bias. This tendency has failed or did not fulfil its potential objectives because it was so-

and scope of sociological and anthropological method in environmental conservation and sustainable resource management, which will incite development policy planners to recognize an integrated plan reflected by environmental consciousness in the post UNCED era.

Illusion and reality

From the time unknown this part of the world was known as the granary of Asia. People used to live on rice and fish.

But our growth-biased development policies do not reconcile with these anthropological considerations. Strategies of all development goals are characterized by immediate economic and consumer greed. Therefore the so-called modern agricultural technology usurped the traditional

practices of cultivation; HYV technology was imposed without examining its long-term environmental effect. We expand our Plain Land Agriculture (PLA) to Upland Hill Tracts (UHT) causing further environmental degradation. Massive flood control and irrigation projects have been undertaken, which barely involve assessment of impacts on environment and local people. Greedy intervention and unwise management of our fragile natural resources throws us into sinister fate, as Syed Zahir Sadeque correctly has identified: 'No process exists within the government to identify a project's need for an environmental impact assessment at or before the initial feasibility study stage. No institution has been established to determine the scope of analysis that projects might require, carry out integrated analyses, or coordinate cross-sectoral reviews routinely among the agencies before new projects decisions are made.'

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Needless to say, this book ('Environment and Natural Resource Management in Bangladesh') will, as the editor expects, encourage 'the younger social scientists to appreciate and understand the social context of environment and natural resources management.'

Putting People Before Pachyderms

ENVIRONMENTALISTS regard them as harmless, gentle giants in need of protection, but more and more Africans are seeing elephants as nothing more than big pests.

Chris Atim of the London-based African Refugee Centre has watched elephants trample through farmers' fields, devouring and destroying whatever crops they could lay their trunks on.

"When elephants pass through your field," he says, "be assured that your family will experience famine next year."

But as world-wide environmentalists efforts increase the pressure on African governments to protect the elephants, countries in the region are getting hard put in balancing environmental demands with their own people's needs.

"Without providing a viable

Officials who attended a seminar 'Beyond the Earth Summit' at the University of London in November said one of the causes for the decrease in elephant populations is

The preservation of Africa's elephant population must take the needs of the people into consideration, say activists. Moyiga Nduru of IPS reports.

faulty western-oriented environmental policy that has ignored the needs of the local people.

"Once policies ignore the needs of the local people, it is bound to crumble," said Mohamed Suliman of the Institute for African Alternatives in London.

Suliman, originally from

failed in Africa because people did not like it.

To stop elephants from destroying crops, African governments would need more money to keep the lumbering beasts in reserve or game parks. Southern Africa's worst drought in living memory this year has made the crisis worse.

Unfortunately, most of these countries are too poor to finance such programmes. African government representatives meeting in Kenya earlier this year estimated that at least an extra US\$ 350 million was needed for elephant conservation over the next five years.

Writing in the British newspaper The Guardian recently, Simon Lyster of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), said: "Perhaps more important than increased spending, programmes are needed that give local people more benefits from elephants, therefore more incentives to conserve them."

"Increasing human populations mean that conflict between elephants and humans is growing," he argued, "and unless local communities benefit from elephants they will simply get rid of them."

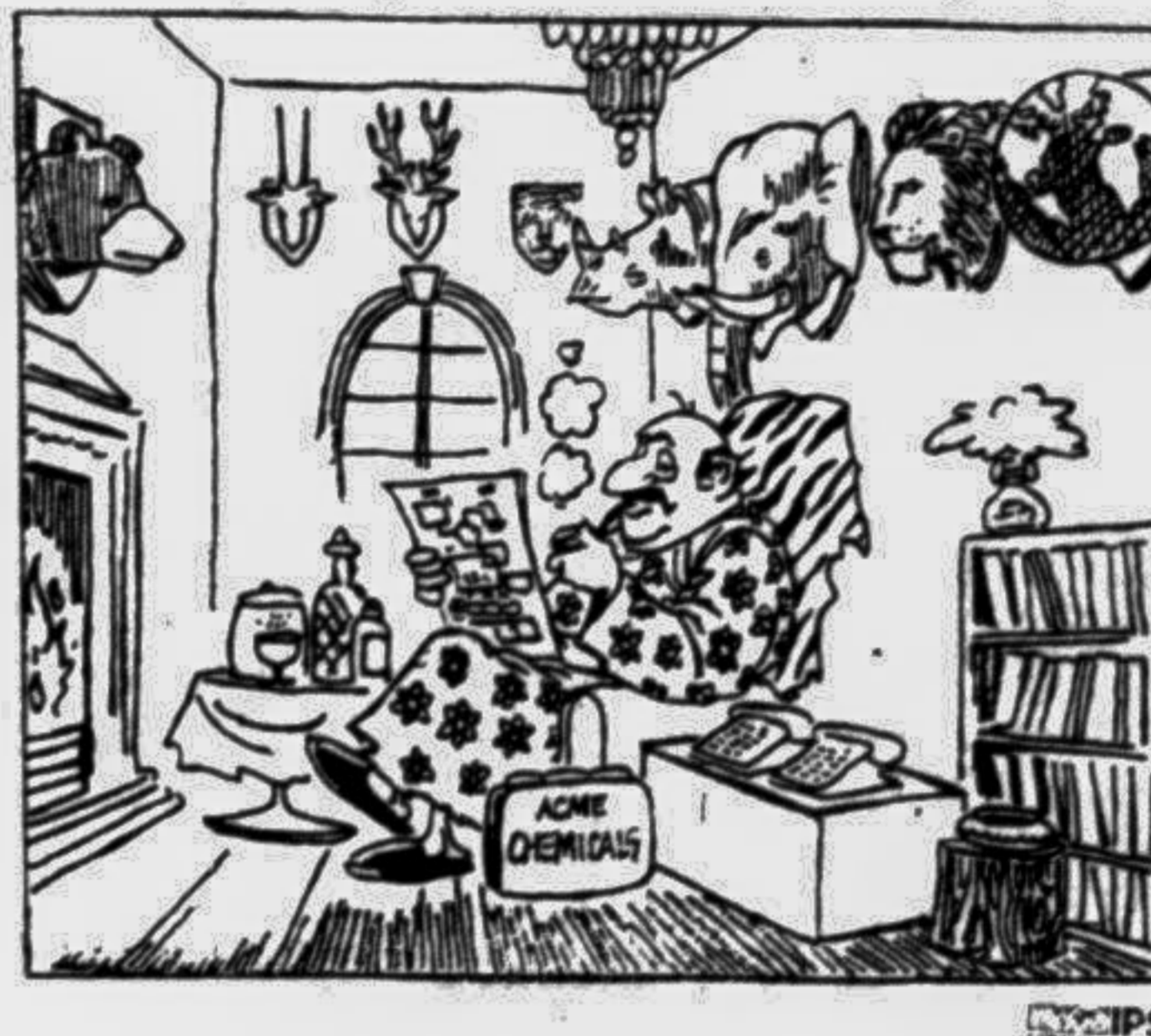
Still, the major fear comes from poaching. Although ivory trade was banned by CITES in 1989, the valued commodity continues to find its way in the international markets, especially in Hong Kong and Japan.

Allan Thornton, chair of Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), whose organisation monitors elephant populations in southern Africa, also blamed the warring military juntas in the region of being responsible for killing 'thousands of Africa's elephants as a sideshow to their armed crusades.'

Once home to well over 100,000 elephants, Thornton said that elephant populations in Angola and Mozambique now hang in the balance. "Years of civil war have reduced them to relic populations living in a state of siege," he said.

Despite the arguments advanced by southern African governments to lift CITES ban on ivory trade during a meeting in Kyoto, Japan, early this year, a vast majority of the 114 CITES members opposed the idea.

But the reconciliation between elephants and man is expected to take a long time. As A. Odhiambo of the British charity Oxfam put it: "I can't be kind to animals until I am fed." — IPS.



The Right and Wrong Ways to Raise More Trees

by Mark Richardson from Ghana

Planting trees is one of the most common environmental safeguards in Africa, where numerous aid agencies combine with governments to encourage efforts to replenish the continent's disappearing forests. In this report from Ghana, part of the special Gemini News Service series on the African environment, Gemini News Service reports on how educational projects can be made to work, and how they can be wasted.

Some schools do, others don't," he says.

"The Ministry doesn't seem to mind what happens then, though. We still have to buy and find the trees ourselves. They don't care so much about trees as doing what they're told is the right thing."

"Every now and again, somebody comes and looks at the trees and says 'You're doing a good job,' but that's it.

Some villagers believe they will die when they plant a tree that will take their soul, or that all fruit must be given to the chief alone and not benefit the grower.

Kuwornu also denies frequently voiced charges that money and effort can easily be wasted.

"Just look at this," says Bruce Thomerson in disgust, walking through a field near

supply them. "We planted 500 trees instead, back-breaking work for me and them, and I told them they could have more if those survived. They haven't."

And in the scrub field, he kicks at some stunted stalks of trees that were never watered, never protected from animals, and never cared about.

At the nearby village of Nwodua, though is a small, well-tended nursery, and healthy crops sprouting among lucina, mahogany and neem trees. This, says Thomerson, is the main difference between education and food aid.

"When environmental awareness is taught on the back of missionary literacy programmes, like here, so much the better. These people look ahead, which is uncommon here, and realise that trees planted now can give them better crops, a better village, and an income from the wood."

The planting was sponsored by Africa 2000, a United Nations funding agency which provided \$5,422 to Nwodua to buy tools, fencing and seedlings. After five years, Thomerson predicts the village will pay for itself in sales of wood and crops to other villages.

"These people are really trying — they don't even have mains water here, all the water must be carried from the dam."

"You've got to give them lots of encouragement and help at this stage, without giving orders or assuming you know everything. Then they'll be successful, and so will Ghana."

Africa 2000 is careful about how it gives away its \$5000,000 budget each year. Near the timber town of Kumasi, board member Nana Koranteng is not impressed with the teak lot she is standing in that was grown with thousands of dollars worth of tools provided by Africa 2000. A few small trees in the overgrown field are all to be seen.

"They won't be getting a recommendation for the extra money (they want)," she whispers as an aside. But later up the dirt road, at an unscheduled tour of the village of Wiameso, pastor Stephen Antwi takes her around a very different teak project.

The trees, for poles and firewood, are tall and straight and the cassava and groundnuts growing beneath them are healthy. Antwi wants about \$6,000 to buy tools for 400 villagers to tend the various established projects, spread over 50 hectares.

"We wanted to grow teak to stop all the erosion and make some money for the town," ADRA provided the money to

get them started. Africa 2000 will help fund only established projects with sincere interest from its workers, and for Koranteng, Wiameso fits the bill. Maybe not for \$6,000, but probably for at least half that in shovels, machetes and wheelbarrows.

Antwi doesn't know this yet and he's still selling the village. "We've already got the money, they'll bend over in the fields from morning to night." — GEMINI NEWS

Why Norway will Start Killing Whales this Summer

by Ross Brown writes from Oslo

NORWAY will ignore the possibility of trade sanctions and the probability of militant campaigns by environmental groups by resuming whaling this northern summer. A quota of 110 minke-whales will be killed for "research purposes."

The decision brings a glimmer of hope, indeed light, to Arctic coastal communities now experiencing total darkness. But the government is being criticised for not going far enough and starting commercial whaling, and allowing a catch of 2,000 minke.

Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg of the Labour Party government recently travelled 1,550 kms from Oslo to Svolvær, main town of the ruggedly beautiful Lofoten Islands. There he addressed the annual meeting of the Northland Small Whale Hunters Association, which has a mere 44 members, yet has long been granted a status by the press and politicians far outweighing its economic significance for Norway.

Stoltenberg obviously carried support from Prime Minister Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland. As head of the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development she has emphasised the compatibility of taking a toll of biological resources when a species is not endangered.

Norway bases its decision on estimates of 80,000 minke in the North-East Atlantic. Many scientists elsewhere say these number are vague as counting methods are disputable. Yet Norway's chief scientist on marine mammals, Prof. Lars Walloe, believes taking 1600 minke a year is justified.

Many Norwegians living far to the south of the Lofotens and North Norway claim that people "up there" are making too much fuss about temporary loss of income from whaling. They say North Norway is unpolluted and the people have cosy lives despite a harsh climate.

Besides, there is the fear that countries like the United States and Britain will retaliate with trade boycotts if whaling is resumed. Like Japan and the former Soviet Union, Norway is a traditional whaling nation dating back to times when coastal whaling provided subsistence.

The great days of whaling began after Seved Foyen invented the harpoon-gun in 1868, culminating in pelagic whaling in the Antarctic.

Norway ceased this blood-bath in 1968 not because of pressure from environmental groups but because the giant whales were decimated and many companies were losing their vast profits.

Coastal whaling was quite different. The whale hunted was the minke, a baleen whale up to 10 metres long. Activity was pursued for a few weeks each year mainly by fishing vessels fitted with whaling gear and a crew.

This brought added income to vulnerable coastal communities like Rost, the southernmost groups of islets of the

Here are modern homes and cars, albeit just a few kilometres of paved road.

The island had five fish-processing plants that took half of all minke caught off Norway before the International Whaling Commission (IWC) imposed a ban on hunting these whales in 1985. Yet only one plant closed. Island businessmen had the foresight to concentrate on salmon farming and herring export and kept full employment.

The government says the whale quota of 110 in 1992 will increase to 136 in the following two years. Former whalers on Rost and Skrova see this as simply a means of testing world opinion, especially that of the IWC, before

Fishing Association.

They are critical of environmental groups like Greenpeace and attack the US stand on whaling. Said Georg Blichfeldt, of Survival in the Far North: "The pet culture there considers whales and seals as sacred. They want to drag their beliefs over the heads of people elsewhere."

Whaling lobbyists see the IWC as a threat. Even Norwegian Fishery Minister Mrs Oddrun Pettersen agrees with the general attitude that it seems to be more of a conservation organisation for whales than one managing hunting without depleting the stocks.

Whalers are angered by the contention of some IWC members, particularly New Zealand, that whales are unique and intelligent mammals of the ocean and must be protected forever. Nor can they fathom how countries like Oman, Switzerland or Seychelles can deliberate on whaling at IWC meetings.

Set up in 1946, the IWC received support from whaling nations for the view that stocks were being destroyed faster than many could be replenished. Its membership is dwindling. In 1983 it had 40 members. Of the 36 registered in 1991 only 30 came to the annual meeting in Reykjavik.

There Iceland withdrew membership, although this will not take force until June with the next meeting in Glasgow.

Norway has previously shown dignity and graceful acknowledgement when defeated in its efforts to resume commercial whaling. Now Thorvald Stoltenberg sees advantages in Norway announcing its withdrawal in Glasgow and probably forming a new whale union with Iceland and the former Soviet Union.

Norway is not yet free of the flensing knife, even if it has heartened people in the far north. In Oslo in February it will be taken to court by the Small Whale Hunters Association and five whaling companies. They want 400 million kroner compensation because the State stopped whaling following the IWC decision in 1985.



Trees planted now can give Ghanaian villagers better crops, a better village and an income from the wood. The problem is to get the people environmentally aware.

Faso border. In March, the temperature can reach 50 degrees — "In March, even those of us born and bred here will suffer," says Adongo. "I suffer."

The villagers of the area have few trees left to protect them from the sun after the ravages of chopping for firewood and charcoal and construction. Palm-thatched roofs offer the only respite and leafy shade trees near a compound are appreciated.

It is this kind of immediate appreciation that is the spark for firing environmental awareness around the world.

Among Ghana's numerous tree-planting projects, there is inefficiency and corruption in the government, and misplaced good intentions from some of the international aid agencies. So it is the work of basic teachers like Adongo that is slowly but effectively getting across the message that trees are good for the land.

School headmaster Ben Kumasi says he gave the go-ahead for the project with no practical help from the government.

"The Ministry (of Education) sends us all letters encouraging us to plant trees.

That's all they do." Adongo compares these worlds without action to assigning homework to his students.

"If you don't mark the prep who's going to do the prep next time? They'll just forget about it."

The head of public relations for Ghana's Department of Forestry, which acts with the ministries of education, agriculture and lands and resources to offer environmental education to schools, denies the charges that the government is ineffective.

"We have a proposed education budget of five million cedis a year (about \$11,000), which is grossly inadequate, but within this we're doing our best," says Samuel Kuwornu.

"The response now is better than any time in the last 10 years."

The lack of money often means that education must be left to non-governmental organisations such as Landlife Ghana, which travels to schools throughout the country showing Western teaching videos and trying to convince students not to listen to their parents' environmental advice.

the northern town of Tamale. "This is a classic example of five or six people in a village who care, and all the others not giving a twopenny cuss."

Five acres of woodfuel trees have been planted in the field, some 10,000 nurtured seedlings, so that the village of Chesugu could claim a free bag of rice from the Independent Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). Once the trees were planted and the rice eaten, almost everyone lost interest. Not long afterwards, the young woodlot was razed when villagers set fire to the grass to flush out bush rats and other prospective meals.

"Here, there was no awareness," says Thomerson, a British agro-forestry adviser working with Ghana's Ministry of Agriculture. "They didn't want to plant trees — they just wanted to keep up with the Joneses and make sure they're in line for all the free goodies."

They benefitted then from good intentions that backfired.

The same villagers approached Thomerson last year for another five acres of free trees, which would give them more rice, but he refused to