

Tangua Haor

The Ramsar Site needs proper protection

DR MAHFUZUL HAQUE

HAOR is a saucer-shaped water body formed in between the levees of the rivers. We have around 200 of them in greater Sylhet region in the north-east. Tangua Haor is under Dharmapasha and Tahirpur Upazilas in Sunamganj district with a population of 55,000 living in 88 villages. There are around 51 Beels covering an area of 6912 acres in autumn and 20,000 acres in monsoon. It is accessible by engine boat from Sunamganj or Dharmapasha in 5 hrs for 8/9 months and by motor bike from Sunamganj for the rest 4/3 months. Best time to visit the haor is in the monsoon to view the scenic beauty and in winter for watching the migratory birds and fishing. There are also a number of tourist sites at Tekerhat limestone quarry and the Jadukata river.

Because of the richness of the haor in terms of fisheries (140 species), biodiversity, flora and fauna and migratory birds (500,000), the haor was declared as an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) in 1999 and a "Ramsar Site" in 2000. It is the place for many endangered species of birds including the globally endangered Pallas's fish-eagle. The Haor is rich in swamp forests -- Hijal, Karoch, Barun and Reed Lands. Following its declaration as Ramsar Site under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 1971, it was imperative on

Following declaration of the Tangua Haor as the "Ramsar Site" in 2000, the Ministry of Environment and Forests undertook measures through the district administration in Sunamganj to police the Haor with the help of police and ansars.

the government to implement Ramsar Guidelines on Wise-Use.

All rivers, haors, baors and forest lands are traditionally known as Common Property Resources (CPR) allowing common people to access them freely. People of the area over the generations had de facto right over the Haor resources, which was usurped by the de jure rights of the State. Government later administered the haor by the district administration through leaseholders. Leasing of Haor continued until 2000 under the Ministry of Land on 3-year basis and the haor continued to be over-harvested during the lease period including felling of hizal and karoch trees. Conflict grew between the local community and the leaseholders over the CPR in the Haor. The leaseholders administered the haor with high hand through a reign of terror perpetrated by hired goons with guns.

Management

Following declaration of the Tangua Haor as the "Ramsar Site" in 2000, the Ministry of Environment and Forests undertook measures through the

district administration in Sunamganj to police the Haor with the help of police and ansars. Such a protection helped the Haor to regenerate its swamp forests, breed fish species under extinction and prepare the wetland as a safe ground for half a million migratory birds.

Following Ramsar Wise-Use guidelines, government took up a "Community Based Sustainable Management of Tangua Haor project" with the help of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) sometime in 2006. A Tangua Haor Management Committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner, Sunamganj oversaw implementation of the project. There are Village Co-Management Committee (VCC) represented by local fishermen and Committees at Upazila level.

Village members contributed to a common Fund, now rose to over 10 million taka. They allowed restricted fishing for 5 months only (November-March). Specific fishing gears are allowed. Five

beels (water bodies) are preserved as "fish sanctuaries" as no-fishing zones. The members are involved in alternative livelihood and income generation activities during the fishing ban period. Protection and policing of the migratory and resident birds by the local volunteers continues. Some swamp forests are being planted and protected.

In the traditional leasing system, the water lords (lease holders) used to administer and monitor the Haor resources with gunmen in a most coercive method. They used to overharvest the wetland for personal profit only. Swamp forests are felled and migratory birds are caught or killed for food. On the other hand, through community co-management, the local community leaders are on the driving seat exploiting resources of the wetland in a sustainable manner. They administer and monitor the project in a participatory way though village and union level committees. In order to avoid monopolization by a person or a group of persons, they periodically elect their committees in a most transparent manner.

Some wetlands are kept as fish sanctuaries.

Challenges

Tangua Haor is currently passing through a very critical-phase. Politically powerful former leaseholders have waged a concerted campaign vilifying the project in order to bring the Haor back on commercial leasing system. A piece of good news is that the Hon'ble Prime Minister during her visit to Tahirpur in December last year declared that Tangua Haor would maintain its status-quo, meaning continuation of the present co-management system, despite political pressure for return of the haor under lease system. She flew low over the Tangua Haor and appreciated activities of the project. Members of the Co-Management Committee do not hold enough power and authority in the locality in comparison to the elected representatives at and Union Parishad levels. They also lack training to manage such a huge haor of immense resources. Local government at Upazila and Union levels is not meaningfully involved with the project. Their active involvement is extremely needed. It is alleged that corruption and fish poaching in connivance with the Ansars continue as the poachers of the locality "persuade" the Ansars in the name of "settlement".

Members of the Co-Management Committees are not in a position to protect the Haor themselves from the poachers. They said that they need more time to train the



Migratory birds at Tangua Haor.

PHOTO COURTESY: SIRAJUL HOSSAIN

volunteers with proper equipment for effectively guarding the wetland. Moreover, the members of the village committees lack proper training on how to run a project of such magnitude as per the Ramsar guidelines. It is understood that the government and partner organizations like IUCN, CNRS, BELA and ERA would hand over in phases, the boats and launches of the project to the village co-managers. Question arises, whether the community people equipped enough to face challenges of the reality. Perhaps they need more time, training and motivation.

Conclusion

All these years, I have been asking myself, do we

have "ownership" of the project? The Government of Bangladesh has made global commitment for conservation of the wetlands by ratifying the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 1971. Following declaration of the Tangua Haor as "Ramsar Site", the Ministry of Environment and Forests has so long been active in protecting the wetland from the grabbers and poachers. Question arises, whether the field administration at Sunamganj, who are steering the project at the field level are properly geared and motivated to run the project following Ramsar Wise-Use Guidelines? Their commitment would be extremely important in

ensuring much needed ownership of the government over the project, in absence of which, I am afraid, the project may run into a disaster.

After the Sundarbans, this is the only wetland of the country at Tangua Haor as the second Ramsar Site. This is a unique project following Ramsar guidelines of community-based sustainable management. If we are successful in co-managing this wetland, we can replicate the model in other wetlands of the country. Can we afford to lose?

The writer, a former Secretary, presently an adjunct faculty, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, drmahfuzulhaque@yahoo.com

Bringing clean water and sanitation to Khulna slums

Z. A. M. KHAIRUZZAMAN

ACCCESS to clean water and adequate sanitation facilities has made two Khulna slums different from others.

These are Alam Nagar slum situated on a railway land in Ward No. 13 of Khulna City Corporation and Khalispur Customs slum in Khalispur industrial area.

This was learnt following an exposure visit to the slums organised recently by Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA)-Bangladesh, an advocacy network working to ensure WatSan rights for people, especially the grassroots and poor people in the community.

Alam Nagar slum is inhabited by 150 poor families, most of them migrated from coastal areas of Barisal, Pirojpur, Bagerhat and Khulna. Status of the slum is quite satisfactory as regards water-sanitation situation, personal hygiene and cleanliness vis-à-vis other slums. The dwellers are now quite aware about their water-sanitation facilities and hygiene.

But the two aforementioned slums were most dirty areas about six years ago, a breeding ground for disease and exploitation. Chronic lack of clean

Sanitation coverage of urban areas is a very challenging task. Because, everyday a large number of people come to the city for various requirements. There are many slum areas where people are simply deprived of civic amenities.



PHOTO COURTESY: THE WRITER

Provision of tubewell and sanitary Latrine.

water and proper sanitation led to social as well as health problems. Disease outbreaks were making the lives of the residents of the apparently sprawling slums even harder.

Life was very miserable for the slum dwellers as they were deprived of the basic amenities. As the slum dwellers belonged to very low-income group and were illiterate, they were unaware about health and hygiene, waste management and clean water. They had no entitlement to land and were mostly living on daily

income from various odd jobs.

They were excluded from any service by both government and other service providers. Even local ward members did not extend any support to manage their problems.

However, taking all their deprivation into consideration, Nabolok Parishad, an NGO, undertook an initiative along with donor support in 2005, to organise and make people aware about WatSan issues. The interventions improved lives of the slum people, who

formed a Community Based Organization (CBO) with joint initiative of the NGO. The CBO was formed at ward level to claim various rights of slum dwellers from appropriate authority. The NGO worked as a catalyst.

A bank account was opened in the name of the slum organization where they save for future to purchase their own land on installment or for any other sudden requirement. The CBO members of the Alam Nagar slum advocated to the respective ward commissioner for cleaning garbage and drain passing through their slums. At first the commissioner did not pay attention to their complaints but finally he had to yield by listening to their woes.

Now the city corporation cleans drains of the aforesaid slums after 12-15 days' interval. The dwellers are now conscious and aware enough about their rights. By now they have understood well

that unity is strength. Now they get clean water from tubewell and use sanitary latrines sharing among themselves.

The Managing Director, KWASA informed that Khulna WASA started its activities in Khulna division in October 2008. Khulna WASA needs 240 million litre water to meet Khulna City Corporation's jurisdiction demand each day but it can supply only 35 million every day. But despite constraints, Khulna WASA strives to work for welfare of the slum people, the official informed.

Sanitation coverage of urban areas is also a very challenging task. Because, everyday a large number of people come to the city for various requirements. There are many slum areas where people are simply deprived of civic amenities. However, there are many non-government organisations who extensively work for ensuring sanitation both in urban and rural areas.

Although, our government is committed to meet up the sanitation target by 2013, but now time has come to rethink whether the city will be able to accommodate the large number of people which is yet to be served.

Z. A. M. Khairuzzaman is a working journalist e-mail: khairz@yahoo.com

Army Headquarters
E in C's Branch
Works Directorate
Dhaka Cantonment

Invitation for Tenders

Notice No. 600/15/32/2010-2011/E-6 Dated: 06 February 2011

Military Engineer Services

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence.				
2.	Agency	Military Engineer Services.				
3.	Procuring entity name	E in C.				
4.	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.				
5.	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).				
6.	Budget and source of funds	GOB, Revenue budget.				
7.	Development partners (if applicable)	None.				
8.	Project/programme name (if applicable)	Construction of 2 nd and 3 rd Floor incl ancillary works with furniture over existing bldg No. 160 at AFD Dhaka Cantt.				
9.	Selling of tender will commence from	17 February 2011 (from 1200 hours to 1400 hours).				
10.	Selling of tender will close on	06 March 2011 (from 1200 hours to 1400 hours).				
11.	Last date and time of submission of tender	08 March 2011 up to 1200 hours.				
12.	Date and time of opening of tender	08 March 2011 at 1230 hours.				
13.	Name & address of the office(s)					
	-Selling tender document	Tender Selling & Information Centre of Works Directorate at GE (Army) Project Dhaka and AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantt.				
	-Receiving tender document	Tender Selling & Information Centre of Works Directorate at GE (Army) Project Dhaka.				
	-Opening tender document	-Do-				
14.	Eligibility of tenderer	a. MES enlisted contractors Class-'A', 'B' & 'C'. b. Contractors enlisted in other govt., semi-government & autonomous organization of similar capacity may also participate in tenders having security clearance from DGFI.				
15.	Brief description of works					
Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location	Price of tender document (Taka)	Tender security amount in the form of Bank Draft/Pay-Orders in favour of AHQ, E in C's Br, Wks Dte, Dhaka Cantt (Taka)	Up-to-date statement/certificate against liquid asset/bank credit facility certificate to be attached with tender documents (Taka)	Completion time in weeks/months
a.	Construction of 2 nd and 3 rd Floor incl ancillary works over existing bldg No. 160 at AFD Dhaka Cantt	Dhaka Cantt	3,000/-	4,40,000.00	21,90,000.00	12 (twelve) months
16.	Name of official inviting tender	Director of Works.				
17.	Designation of official inviting tender	Director of Works.				
18.	Address of official inviting tender	Army Headquarters, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment Web address: www.army.mil.bd				
19.	Contact details of official inviting tender	Army Headquarters, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment Tel No. 8752870 Fax No. 8752906 E-mail address: dwks@army.mil.bd				
20.	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.					

ISPR/Army/886
09/02/2011
GD-731

Director of Works
Works Directorate
Engineer in Chief's Branch
Dhaka Cantonment