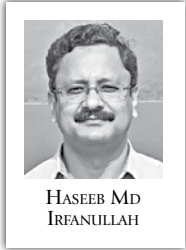


Is a new vision possible for Tanguar Haor?



OVER the last 50 years, Bangladesh's journey towards community development has essentially been a result of government, donors, and NGOs coming together to work for the vulnerable people.

But how do we capture our experience of community development and use it in follow up projects? Do we only rely on what donors tell us to do in every new project, forgetting what we did before? Is our organisational community development knowledge shareable or do we keep such knowledge within the organisation as "trade secrets"?

Experiences and lessons from numerous community development projects of our government and NGOs are rarely made public. Between 2010 and May 2021, for example, the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCCTF) supported 789 projects, implemented by different government agencies and NGOs. But how many project documents are available on the BCCCTF website? None.

There are, of course, exceptions. For example, the Department of Environment (DoE) of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) implemented a project between 2010 and 2015 called "Community Based Adaptation in the Ecologically Critical Areas through Biodiversity Conservation and Social Protection Project" (CBA-ECA Project) with NGOs and supported by the BCCCTF, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Near the end of the CBA-ECA Project, the DoE collaborated with IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Bangladesh to capture the experiences of community development and resilience building in the Ecologically Critical Areas (ECAs) within the haor (wetland) and coastal regions. This collaboration brought out a fantastic book titled, "Community Based Ecosystem Conservation and Adaptation in Ecologically Critical Areas of Bangladesh".

Talking about the government's

community development initiatives through natural resource management, in December 2006, the MoEFCC started collaborating with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and IUCN to improve the dire condition of Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj. Since the 1930s, this freshwater wetland was overexploited for fisheries through leasing and other unsustainable practices by local elites, and to some extent by

NGO partners implemented this project on behalf of the MoEFCC. Major achievements of this 10-year project included giving back the right to fish to the local community through permit fishing and benefit-sharing mechanism gazetted by the government, a three-tier inclusive governance system (from village to the central level) to participatory management of the wetland, restoration and protection of wetland resources and

haor's fisheries and other resources through community guards and local administration.

Since January 2019, Tanguar Haor does not have any "project" to manage it. But local communities, village and central cooperatives, and the local administration did continue—to some extent—several major systems put in place over the last 12 years.

On August 17, 2020, I wrote in this daily about the need for long-term support to the people of Tanguar Haor. UNDP Bangladesh has recently received funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to design a comprehensive project with the MoEFCC titled, "Community-based Management of Tanguar Haor Wetland in Bangladesh". As per the Project Identification Form (PIF) available on the GEF website, the UNDP and the DoE would implement a five-year-long USD 21.6 million project—with the GEF providing USD 4.4 million and the remaining USD 17.2 million being co-financed by the MoEFCC (USD 12 million) and Ministries of Water Resources, Agriculture, and Fisheries (USD 5.2 million). This proposed financial arrangement reiterates the Bangladesh government's commitment to sustainably manage Tanguar Haor with the local people by ensuring coordination among relevant government agencies.

Although prepared in September 2020, the PIF of the new project could not sufficiently capitalise on the knowledge and lessons of the past Tanguar Haor projects (2006-2018) by consulting and appreciating IUCN Bangladesh's comprehensive book on Tanguar Haor (2016) and accomplishments of the MoEFCC's Bridging Phase project (2017-2018).

A significant focus of the new Tanguar Haor project will be implementation of the "Ecologically Critical Area Management Rules, 2016" (ECA Rules) of Bangladesh. This is a logical approach since the long-anticipated ECA Rules are now available to be implemented in ECAs and the new project's implementing partner DoE is responsible for improving all 13 ECAs, including Tanguar Haor.

Many proposed activities of the anticipated project are broadly similar to what were done by the MoEFCC, IUCN and its partners for

over 12 years, such as participatory wetland resource management, related frameworks and governance structures, biodiversity conservation, and livelihoods opportunity creation. There are also many new, timely activities expected to be included in the new project, for example, creating sustainable financial mechanism (including public-private partnerships), giving special focus to Covid-affected families, enhancing private-community partnerships, controlling pollution, addressing emergence of new diseases from damaged ecosystems, and establishing an ecological monitoring system.

The new Tanguar Haor project will indeed reflect the mandates and priorities of the DoE, UNDP, and GEF, and their past experiences in similar ecosystems. But the project development team of UNDP need to consider three crucial aspects while designing the new project. First, the wealth of experience and knowledge captured by MoEFCC, IUCN and partners during 2006-2018 should be duly considered by closely interacting with these agencies and individuals involved. The lessons from past projects on co-management structures, benefit-sharing mechanisms, resource protection measures, and community-based organisation management, for example, need to be appreciated. Second, based on the above lessons and the changes taking place in the absence of any projects over the last 30 months, DoE and UNDP can then align their new approaches with the existing best practices and new challenges and opportunities. In this way, Tanguar Haor can avoid being an experimental ground of new management structures, again and again. Third, both the DoE and UNDP are committed to implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In October 2021, the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the CBD is expected to decide on the next global conservation targets for the coming decade and beyond. The new Tanguar Haor project thus has an amazing opportunity to appreciate these new targets and become the first project of the new era.

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Every day, thousands of domestic ducks which are painted in different colours to easily identify their owners, enter the haor to feed and forage.

PHOTO: SAKIB AHMED

haor dwellers, with the government's policy and administrative support. Given its poor condition, Tanguar Haor was declared an ECA in 1999. In the following year, it was declared a Ramsar Site, under the Ramsar Convention, because of its globally important migratory birds.

In 2001, the land ministry handed over Tanguar Haor to the MoEFCC and the leasing was stopped. This landmark transfer opened the door to sustainable management of the haor with its people and resulted in the SDC-supported "Community-based Sustainable Management of Tanguar Haor Project". During 2006-2016, IUCN Bangladesh and its

biodiversity, and overall community empowerment and livelihoods improvement. In 2016, "Tanguar Haor: A Decade-long Conservation Journey" by IUCN Bangladesh captured this 10-year experience.

After the end of SDC funding, the MoEFCC used government allocations to implement a two-year-long Bridging Phase project in Tanguar Haor. It was an unprecedented but welcome move from the MoEFCC to collaborate directly with IUCN and NGO partners. This brief phase converted the community organisations into cooperatives, continued with fishing permits and benefit-sharing from fish harvests, and protected the

Happy birthday thoo you!



RESearchers, I have always assumed, perhaps audaciously and inappropriately so, are rather awfully late to come to any conclusion, even on matters that appear conclusive on face value.

No hurrah to them, for by earth's timeline, they have only recently discovered, that too with relative conservatism, that blowing out candles could make birthday cakes unsafe for human consumption. Now, you do realise that birthdays have been in vogue since the birth of the second person.

According to a 2017 research paper, on a study undertaken at South Carolina's Clemson University, "blowing out candles on a birthday cake increases the growth of bacteria on the dessert" by a whopping 1,400 percent. You don't need scientific investigation to infer that you could possibly, rather most certainly, splatter saliva on the cake while you blow the candles. That is more so because almost no one can blow out the candles the first time, except the gregarious one who whooshes hard, which means more rain. You may have wondered why some cakes taste different.

They are now also telling us (hah!) the human mouth contains many bacteria, but this was also known since Galileo Galilei discovered a microscope. Hmmm 1609! Thankfully, after looking up from their lenses, scientists also assure us (are they sure?) that not all of the spewed specks of drool are harmful; normally, that is, unless you detest spit.

It is further comforting to know that only a sick person blowing out the candles could transmit the infection. This was long before Covid. But, wait! Head of the research, food safety professor Paul Dawson adds that, "you have one or two people who really for whatever reason... (Pray, what could that reason be?) transfer a lot of bacteria". And that could be your host.

Being a diabetic for over 1.5 decades (healthy living demands diagnosis in decimals), I am fortunate to have a therapeutic excuse for not having to oblige the birthday person (girl or boy is

so sexist. Yuch!) with a bite of the splattered cake.

Then there is this bizarre and thoughtless ritual of sharing the same piece of cake from one mouth to a different mouth, not to be confused with lifesaving resuscitation. People mind if you move away from their "charitable" offering. But, you must, to save yourself and the others from you.

I have found a getaway from that inevitable cake-kiss. For a head start, stay as far back as protocol allows from the table. As soon as the happy birthday song and the cheering commences, signalling that the cake has been spat

newspaper.

There are more opportunities for infection. Someone travelling to the party from home or workplace may have had to pay the CNG driver or the rickshaw-puller with authentic taka. There was no mandatory condition pre-Covid to wash hands for 20 seconds. Never understood though why one TV channel kept on streaming that we have to wash "20 times a day". Not necessary at all, if we are in a safe bubble. Also, there could be reason to wash them more than 20 times.

To further our problem, you know as much as



upon, start moving your jaws in a biting, chewing or eating manner, enjoying. Avoid engaging in any conversation and all eye contact. Soon enough, the frenzy of sharing shall calm down. You may also stop making a fool of yourself.

You never know what those fingers touched last. The index could have been exploring possibilities in the nostrils, one at a time. The little one may have ventured to engage an itching irritation in the depth of the auditory orifice. The middle? For heaven's sake, this is a family

I that not every toilet has soap to cleanse after the relief work. Which brings me to a sticky point. While many foods and goods can be purchased with money, researchers have found out that there are other things stuck on the notes and coins that one does not bargain for.

Currency notes move from hand to hand, squeezed too between his lips and hers, and where not, accumulating unseen bugs and germs. According to research findings (2019) by a Khulna University student Nishat Tasnim, unbeknownst

to us innocent victims, such "taka notes and coins contain bacteria like E. coli and faecal (read human waste matter) coliform which are very harmful to health".

Environmental science researchers at the university laboratory tested currency notes and coins from 15 random sources in Khulna city over a period of six months, revealing that vegetarians are comparatively more safe because "maximum bacteria and faecal (stool) bacteria were found on notes used by the sellers of meat, fish and chicken".

Harmful bacteria were also found from the currency notes and coins of 12 other sources, (OMG!) said professor Abdullah Harun Chowdhury, the concerned research supervisor. He added that currency notes pose a severe health hazard, including causing various diseases, when people eat without washing their hands after touching currency and coins.

From a hygienic perspective, we should also take precautions as vendor and buyer, and not talk and hassle over Iftar items during Ramadan, showering the delicacies with spit. There is the additional hazard of people touching and poking, picking up food with unwashed hands, and returning them to the tray. The unsuspecting next customer will accept the polluted food.

Sellers and the customers also touch food items after transacting money, and letting their hands wander anywhere. There is so much to touch and so many places that itch. That is why we should avoid manhandled food, or alternatively encourage healthy practice on both sides of the food counter.

Coming back to saliva, I have never found a good reason for chefs talking incessantly while preparing, cooking, baking, grilling, plating and serving food except perhaps to add an extra ingredient; salt is not on my mind. Not many people in the world can speak with squeezed lips. And ventriloquists earn a lot more than the normal cook. What is there to say? The proof should be in the pudding, or cake.

Happy birthday to you all!

Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed is a practising Architect at BashaBari Ltd., a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

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QUOTABLE Quote

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT
English writer and philosopher (1759 - 1797)

Women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Rica
- 6 Puccini opera
- 11 Choose to participate
- 12 Pays to play
- 13 Intended
- 14 Jury makeup
- 15 Tourist stop
- 16 Tea cooler
- 18 Chart model
- 19 Cow's chew
- 20 Berlin lang.
- 21 Place
- 22 Web spinner
- 24 Loses light
- 25 Alley target
- 27 Teller's place
- 29 Bracelet
- 32 Hosp. parts
- 33 Make tempura
- 34 Kinsey topic
- 35 Play division
- 36 Crew need
- 37 Keg need
- 38 Train stations
- 40 Make amends
- 42 Fork features
- 43 Radio dial
- 44 Play division
- 45 Bring to bear

DOWN

- 1 Sunday paper section
- 2 Door-pounder's cry
- 3 Stone-henge component
- 4 Light metal
- 5 Immunity trigger
- 6 Become narrower
- 7 Wallet bill
- 8 Means of advancement
- 9 Soft metal
- 10 Useful skills
- 17 Brain parts
- 23 Conk out
- 24 Racket
- 26 Time and a half, e.g.
- 27 Port settings
- 28 Polar
- 30 Near-ringer
- 31 Pro
- 33 "Cabaret" director
- 39 Stock holder
- 41 Groom's garb

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

TUESDAY'S ANSWERS

J	A	D	A	S	E	T	H	E	R
A	G	E	N	T	Q	U	A	K	E
G	H	A	N	A	U	R	G	E	D
D	A	R	W	I	N				
G	A	L	V	I	P	L	A	B	
A	R	I	S	E	S	W	A	D	E
F	I	N	I	S	H	L	I	N	E
F	E	E	T	F	O	N	D	L	E
E	S	S	G	U	Y	L	E	T	
C	A	D	I	Z	S	A	L	A	M
E	X	I	L	E	L	A	N	D	O
L	E	E	K	S	O	N	S	E	T

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

I WANT TO GIVE DAD SOMETHING COOL FOR HIS BIRTHDAY, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT.

WELL, CAN YOU THINK OF SOMETHING THAT MAKES HIM HAPPY?

...AND THEN SHE SAID, "THAT LADY AT THE HARDWARE STORE."

SHE JUST TOLD ME A JOKE ABOUT HAMMERS!

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

DON'T KEEP AGREEING WITH ME. IT DOESN'T HELP UNLESS YOU TELL ME HONESTLY WHAT YOU THINK!

Nobody wants a yes man!!

RIGHT, SIR

THERE YOU GO AGAIN!!