

## Practicing Participatory Approach in Social Forestry to Strengthen Sustainability in a Rural Area of Bangladesh

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**Abstract :** The forest storing up in Bangladesh is of deep concern to policy analysts because of increasing encroachment that results in deforestation and degradation of the ecosystem. To address these problems, forest-dependent people, as responsible for encroachment, could be involved in the co-management process along with other local stakeholders through a participatory approach. On the basis of this premise, this paper conceptualizes and empirically assesses the integration of all stakeholders in the co-management process through two lenses such as participation and collaboration. The study also analyzed the issues of sustainability in local communities along with examining constraints that limit the processes of integration. The study used a qualitative research method, which included face-to-face interviews with semi-structured questionnaires and field notes following the purposive sampling technique focusing on Comilla Sadar South Upazila (CSSU), Bangladesh. The findings of this paper reveal beneficiaries, Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) and Union Parishad (UP), come together as leading actors, while NGOs and business entrepreneurs are ignored in the co-management process of social forestry. However, integrated management contributes to the strength of community sustainability, although it has some major limitations causing the matter of concerns among the local communities and policy analysts.

**Keywords :** integration, participation, collaboration, stakeholders, community sustainability

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