

Conservation and Restoration of Biodiversity in Khagrachari

Authors : Anima Ashraf

Abstract : Over the past few decades biodiversity has become the issue of global concern for its rapid reduction worldwide. Bangladesh is no exception. The country is exceptionally endowed with a vast variety of flora and fauna, but due to tremendous population pressure, rural poverty and unemployment it has been decreased alarmingly. Since, both biodiversity and sustainable development are the part of human life in modern era and both work together to make our life safer and comfortable therefore balance should be kept in development and biodiversity conservation and priority should be given to alternative and sustainable development paths. This paper is based on study of two projects undertaken by Arannayk Foundation jointly with its local NGO partners. The aim was to understand previous, current and future scenarios for the hilly biodiversity of Khagrachari in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. It is also observed how alternative income generating activities (AIGA) improve livelihood of the tribal inhabitants of the area, decrease their dependency on forest resources and also aid conservation activities. Intensive field visits were made and interviews were conducted with key informants to see the progress and achievements of local NGOs working with the tribal community for the past seven years to restore the denuded hills of Khagrachari. The paper also covers the impacts and interventions of the projects and the methods used to aid conservation activities. Raising awareness among the villagers has reduced extraction of forests resources by 47% and granting funds and access to microcredit to adopt AIGAs have increased their average annual income by 25%. Finally, the paper concludes that effective community-based conservation practices are fundamental to ensure biodiversity conservation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In order to conserve biodiversity and restore the forests of CHT, livelihood development of the villagers has to be considered as the main component of the projects undertaken by all NGOs and the Government.

Keywords : biodiversity, conservation, forests, livelihood

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