

LEARNING HUB EVENT REPORT

Nature-based Solutions for Development Planning in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Planning Commission, Dhaka, Bangladesh
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SUMMARY

The topic of the 34th Monthly Learning Hub Event (LHE) is the role of Nature-based Solutions for development planning in Bangladesh. It organized under the MoU between the General Economic Division (GED), Planning Commission of the Government of Bangladesh and International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), and supported by the University of Oxford. As Bangladesh is on track for the transition from the Least Developed Country (LDC) to the Lower Middle-Income Country (LMIC), there is need to value its natural ecosystems for sustaining the economic growth and development. The LHE gives an overview of Nature-based Solution (NbS), including its benefits to tackle wide range of societal challenges. NbS is a concept that has been practiced in Bangladesh for so long and addressed in different development plans. There are opportunities to consider the NbS in the forthcoming development planning process including the 8th Five-Year Plan (2020-2025). The discussion suggests looking beyond policy planning and focus more into the implementation of the policy.

OBJECTIVES

- Formally introducing NbS to the Planning Commission and to the relevant ministries and mandated departments.
- Exploring how NbS can help address environmental and development challenges faced by the country.
- Broad discussion on the best possible way to mainstream NbS to support the national development documents.

KEY POINTS

1. Consider NbS as one of the core strategies of the development planning as 2020 gives us a tremendous opportunity to go for a conservation-development mix.
2. While knowledge generation is important around NbS for action-oriented plans, there is need to scale up the good examples and interventions adopted in different projects.
3. Need to have a change in mindset as we see development, and therefore shift our discussion from 'environment' to 'nature'.



REMARKS BY THE SESSION MODERATOR AND CHAIR

Welcome remarks by the Moderator:

Dr. Saleemul Huq, Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)

As a developing country, Bangladesh is having robust socio-economic development, but there is need to value its natural ecosystems for sustaining the economic growth and development. Hence, the session is designed to discuss how Bangladesh can consider the role of nature-based solutions to tackle the environmental and development challenges towards a sustainable future.

Remarks by the Chair:

Prof. Shamsul Alam, Member (Senior Secretary), GED, Planning Commission

Prof. Alam emphasized on the value of keeping the nature intact and not degrading it. He mentioned about the Delta Plan 2100 and discussed on the example of adaptive delta management with nature-based solutions. The planning will be sustainable when nature is incorporated where NbS can be an effective approach to manage, utilize and protect our natural resources. Hence, NbS is an important issue to consider both in implementing BDP2100 and preparing the next five-year plan.



PRESENTATION TITLE: Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for Development Planning in Bangladesh¹

Dr. Haseeb Md. Irfanullah, Expert, NbS project, ICCCAD gives an overview of Nature-based Solution (NbS), including its benefits to tackle wide range of societal challenges. While showing few photos of different ecosystems in Bangladesh, including – Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj, Sundarbans and the south western region, hills and forest areas in Chattogram and one of the major rivers Jamuna at Chilmari – he explains how we receive different types of services from natural and modified ecosystems to meet different societal demands. The services can be classified into Provisioning, Supporting, Cultural and Regulating Services. Furthermore, NbS is an umbrella concept which covers a wide range of ecosystem-related approaches; and includes restoration, ecosystem related specific issue, infrastructure related, management and protection. All these approaches address societal challenges, including – climate change, food security, water security, human health, risks from disasters.



Nature-based Solutions (NbS) refers to
 “Actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.”
IUCN, 2016

Dr. Haseeb shows how NbS are being practiced in Bangladesh and addressed in the development plans. He mentions some of the examples of NbS being adopted in Bangladesh by Bangladesh Forest Department on the restoration and protection of forest and protected areas, Department of Environment and Department of Fisheries on wetland restoration and management and Department of Agricultural Extension on floating agriculture. As NbS is being practised for a long time by government, but does it really help us? A recent study on “The global flood protection benefits of Mangroves” ranked Bangladesh as one of the three top countries receiving greatest benefits in terms of people protected by mangroves from flood events. NbS approach provides a set of economic and societal benefits along with cost effectiveness, easy maintenance and other long-term benefits. Dr. Haseeb also provides five examples of planning documents which addressed NbS into the development planning in Bangladesh. Additionally, Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 explicitly emphasizes on Environmental Sustainability and several natural resources related programmes in the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) has addressed NbS options. In the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), if not all but 8 of them are relevant to NbS. Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) of Bangladesh (2015) to UNFCCC also talks on mangrove plantation, reforestation and afforestation, social forestry, ecosystem-based adaptation and community-based conservation as it focuses on limiting GHGs emission. Furthermore, the seventh five-year plan follows environment-friendly growth in its overall strategy with wide range of activities included in the agriculture, environment and climate change sector.

Dr. Haseeb then notes the progress so far been made on NbS, especially over the last five years. Different projects undertaken by relevant ministries, government departments, iNGOs and NGOs on diverse ecosystems

¹ Link to the presentation: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339941836_Nature-based_Solutions_NbS_for_Development_Planning_in_Bangladesh

showed varied degrees of successes and failures. In all cases, the local people were at the centre of conservation and thus, communities are an integral part of putting NBS in Bangladesh. Bangladesh also has different strategies and action plans, for example – National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan along with different legal instruments (Bangladesh Biodiversity Act 2017; Ecologically Critical Area Management Rules, 2016; and Protected Area Management Rules 2017).

Finally, the presenter highlights the opportunities for considering NbS in the forthcoming development planning process. If we consider the next five year, Bangladesh is on track to reach the Lower Middle-Income Country (LMIC) status from the Least Developed Country (LDC) with enormous opportunities for sustainable development (as the year 2021-2025 will be a crucial 5-year slot of the SDG era). In addition to the transition from Vision 2021 to Vision 2041, the unanimous declaration of planetary emergency in Bangladesh in November 2019 incorporated the importance of climate crisis and irreversible loss of biodiversity. The Conference of the Parties (COP) 15 of Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to be held in October 2020 looks into the adaptation of 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework” to guide global to national conservation activities from 2021.

The presenter ends on the note for asking the participants to think towards balancing between the economic growth and environmental sustainability, and having the synergies on the SDG targets, revised BCCSAP, post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and NDC. In addition, he asks to explore options to increase allocation to NbS and conservation initiatives having focus on internal domestic resources. **He urges to address nature conservation and NbS as a core guiding principle in our 8th Five-Year Plan.**

REMARKS BY THE PARTICIPANTS DURING OPEN DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What are the advantages of including NbS in the 8th Five-Year Plan as a core principle?
- How can natural resource-focused sectors (e.g. agriculture, forestry, environment, & climate change) and other sectors (e.g. housing & transport) effectively include NbS in their respective 8th Five-Year Plan programmes?
- With increasing urbanization, how can we make our cities and towns livable by harnessing NbS?

The Department of Environment (DOE) is currently updating the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commitments and make it accessible. The revised Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action plan (BCCSAP) is also under construction by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC). Therefore, GED, Planning Commission asks the experts to address BCCSAP in the 8th five-year plan.

The use of jute products as an alternative to plastic materials was pointed out in the open discussion by one of the experts. It is suggested that the manufacture of jute products has to be cost effective and be produced in larger scale to promote for wider use and acceptance from public. Prof. Alam mentioned that sometimes it is futile and waste of resources, if the solution is not made accessible to wider population

Mentioning about the Nishorgo project, it has been raised that NbS is closely linked with water in most of the cases, and the flow of water from upstream towards downstream needs to be considered as an integrated approach. Additionally, riverbank plantation along 50 metres of the both sides of the rivers was highlighted as an NBS which is a replication of roadside plantation in the country. Moreover,

NbS in urban environment and urbanization was considered as an important aspect in the upcoming development plans.

NBS approaches and projects need to incorporate every group of vulnerable people in the core of its planning. Considering both men and women should also be addressed in designing the NbS interventions as nature behaves equally with everyone. Hence, NbS requires the community to live in harmony with nature.

Bangladesh has robust long-term development plans, but the question remains on how achievable the targets are and how sustainable are the activities in those plans. While phrasing, we should not only say environment but use nature, and there is need for positive solutions in adopting NBS over other solutions if we want to promote nature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The BCCSAP should be shared with GED and look for opportunities to incorporate NBS in the five-year plan.
- There is need to put more focus on phrasing the NbS as the NDC is being revised. It can consider further including land-based mitigation measures, like plantation/reforestation, coastal afforestation, EbA and other relevant NbS.
- Nbs can be added as a clause/phrase in the development project proforma (DPP) as a means of mainstreaming nature-based actions in all development projects.
- Creation of NbS database for better understanding and identifying the best practices.
- Examining the food production processes in order to make them nature friendly.
- Community participation should be ensured in NbS so they can protect the nature they are living with.
- Additional research activities with proven technology should be initiated for policy planning formulation.
- The policy documents related to NbS must look beyond planning and focus on effective implementation.
- Scaling up the good examples and interventions adopted in different projects.
- Ensure accountability and transparency of every intervention is also very important.
- There is need to generate knowledge, action-oriented plans and best practices around NbS.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Huq said that “If we don’t protect the nature, what harm we are doing to it is visible”. He also urged for the protection of Sundarbans which is anticipated to be exploited due to the construction of Padma Bridge. Prof. Alam emphasizes to look for the best practices and choose the right pathway for action-oriented planning. So there needs to have a change in mindset as we see development. Hence, we need to shift our discussion from ‘environment’ to ‘nature’.

ICCCAD is developing an NbS network for knowledge dissemination as well as for planning and implementation purpose. The centre has invited policy makers, planners and practitioners to join the network so they can wisely invest on nature and manage it to address societal challenges. There is huge potential to use our previous experiences and learn from the mistakes to sustain the existing development growth in Bangladesh through NbS.

The report is prepared by Tasfia Tasnim, Senior Research Associate, ICCCAD with contribution from Rukhsar Sultana, Ali Mohammad Rezaie, Haseeb Md. Irfanullah and Md Abdul Latif.

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Web: <http://www.icccad.net> , <http://www.gobeshona.net>

Photographer of the event: Noor -E-Elahi, Research Officer, ICCCAD

Link to the photo album <https://www.flickr.com/photos/icccadarchive/albums/72157713498323123>