Indigenous Peoples’ Mitigation and Adaptation: The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

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Research: Maleya Foundation

- literature review
- primary data collection
- Interviews, questionnaires

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Time frame: 20 years...

3 villages (Khagrachari): Headman Para, Monglechan Para
Dil Chan Karbari Para
Constraints and Challenges

- Focus also on IPs identity, not only CC
- Focus on CHT region only, not entire BGD
- Emphasis on literature review
- Lack of relevant statistical data to compare past and present climate change
- Lack of awareness of climate change
- Communication problems - Email network, electricity, computers
- Predictions based on oral interviews
Where is the CHT?
Introduction to CHT

- Majority indigenous-inhabited - 501,144 (1991-census)

- Total surface area - 5,089 sq. miles (13,189 sq. km.)

- CHT region: 1/10 of country & 1% of total pop (143 m +)

- 11 indigenous peoples in CHT: Bawm, Chak, Chakma, Khumi, Khyang, Marma, Mro (Muron), Lushai, Pangkhua, Tanchangya and Tripura

“Only a century ago the hill people accounted for more the 90% of the total CHT population. Today…hill people and Bengalis are nearly the same.”
Characteristics

- 75% up-land # hilly land
- *Jum* and *forest resources*
- Tropical rainforest ecosystem
- Kaptai Dam (1960s)
- Settlement programme - Increasing population (1985 - )

Photo courtesy of Mani Swapan Dewan
Natural Disasters:

1. Cyclone
2. Tornado
3. Flash Floods
4. Earth Quakes
5. Bamboo Flowering - rats

(Courtesy of Mani Swapan Dewan, Taungya from RIPP dialogue at PFII 2008)
Impacts of Climate Change

- Imbalanced environ
- Temp increases
- Rainfall patterns
- Increased disease

Contribution:
- Increasing pop pressure
- Mono-culture
- Human behaviour (non-sustainable use)

Photo - Mani Swapan Dewan (Taungya)
Impacts of CC…

- Loss of bio-diversity
- Increased diseases
- Less production
- Dried water sources
- Soil erosion
- Food (in)security

Loss of livelihood
Loss of traditional culture
Adaptation and mitigation strategies

Ecological adaptability, TKS
Home gardens

Bamboo: livelihood, culture, religious practices
- watershed management
  - Godha – Irrigation/cross dam
  - Thagalok – drinking (Gravity FS)
  - Bamboo containers & baskets (Turong)

Photo – Simon Amlai
Adaptation: Good Practices

- **Village Common Forests (VCF)**
- **From 20 to 100 acres**
- **Bamboos and trees - construction, sale**

*Photo – Simon Amlai*
Reasons behind the Preservation of VCFs (courtesy of Mani Swapan Dewan, Taungya)

- To maintain tree cover and protect the environment
- VCFs are repositories of biodiversity. They are the homes of diverse animal and plant life (including herbs and plants used in indigenous medicine)
- The VCFs are the main sources of wood and bamboo required for house-building, medicinal and other sustainable biomass needs of hill villagers;
- VCFs are crucial for watershed management. Many VCFs contain headwaters of streams, natural springs and other aquifers
- VCFs are also related to the religions, cultural beliefs, rituals and ceremonies of many indigenous peoples
Good Practice (Dil Chand Karbari village)

- Limited land and resources
- Mainly Jhum cultivators – swidden cultivation
- Insufficient production to meet needs
  - Little education and skills
- 1997 – Innovative farming method
- Short fallow period (2-5 yrs) –
  - Annual crops (rice, banana, turmeric, ginger, vegetables)
- Longer fallow periods (10 years)
  - Long terms crops (mango, jackfruit, karai, gamari, etc.)
Recommendations

- Conduct more research on CC and identify gaps
- Familiarization and sensitization
- Organize public forums for lobby and advocacy (decision makers)
- Lobby/advocacy with line department/GOV to make climate change mitigation policy sensitive to indigenous peoples
- Awareness raising and capacity building training for IPs
- Full and effective participation in all Government/NGOs initiatives
- Free, Prior informed Consent of IP
- International involvement to build capacity of Bangladesh
- Proper mitigation and adaptation strategy including the IPs

- Current climate change strategy of Bangladesh does not mention anything about Impact of Climate Change on IPs and mitigation strategy - it should be revised.