

Report on Stakeholder Consultation Workshop

“Forests in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Local Issues and Potential Approaches” Bangladesh REDD+ Roadmap Process

Date: 27th October 2011

Venue: Conference room, District Sports Association, Rangamati

Organised by: CHTDF, UNDP

Background Information:

The term REDD stands for “Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation” which endeavors to create an incentive for developing countries to protect, better managed and wisely used their forest resources, thus contributing to global fight against climate change. The UN-REDD Programme launched in 2008 is a United Nations collaborative programme which involves FAO, UNDP and UNEP. Bangladesh is one of the REDD+ countries and a team with support from UNDP Bangladesh started consultative workshops to develop the strategies for Bangladesh REDD+ readiness. The first consultative workshop was held in Dhaka on 25th October 2011 and the second workshop on 27th October 2011 at Rangamati in CHT followed by a 2 days field trip in forest areas to see different forest management approaches in Langadu (community managed) and Bilaichari (forest department managed) Upazillas under Rangamati Hill District.

The forest in CHT covers about 25% of total CHT area which is considered about 40% of national forest coverage. The forests in CHT include reserve forest, protected forest, sanctuaries and un-classed state forest (USF). The first 3 categories are managed under the forest department and USF falls under the management of Hill District Council (HDC). In many places, the village common forest (VCF) – one of the traditional practices of managing forest by the communities in CHT.

There are many people live in reserve forests where, most of them are displaced from their lands either because of the construction of Kaptai dam for hydroelectricity project (Kaptai lake) or political unrest which ended through the signing of peace accord in 1997. There is an unfriendly environment prevails between the communities residing in the reserve forest and forest department. Apart from it, some of the indigenous communities are not supportive to the expansion of reserve forest areas by the forest department because of the chance of displacement.

According to the Hill District Council Act the forest department supposed to be transferred to Hill District Councils.

Considering above situations, the workshop mainly focused on the local issues related to forests in the CHT and its management without highlighting the UN REDD+ issues which are very new concepts to the locals. Therefore, the title of the workshop was **“Forests in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Local Issues and Potential Approaches”**.

This report provides a brief overview on the workshop findings including recommendations made by different stakeholders at the workshop held in CHT.

Objective of the Workshop:

The overall objective of the workshop was *“To obtain local perspectives on appropriate regional strategies in the CHT within a national REDD+ Roadmap”*.

The specific objectives of the workshop were:

1. *To identify the direct and underlying (or root) causes of deforestation and forest degradation in CHT,*
2. *To identify existing and potential future tools and approaches to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the CHT and*
3. *To address pressing concerns about the impact of a national REDD+ process on the people and forests of CHT.*

Facilitators Team:

The workshop was facilitated by the following team members:

Main facilitators: Mr. Ben Vickers, Consultant, UNDP, Bangladesh and Mr. Haradhan Banik, Conservator of Forest, Forest Department and UN-REDD+ National Focal Point

Co-facilitators: Biplab Chakma, Jhuma Dewan, Oishwarja Chakma, Snigdha E. Tigga, Supriya Tripura and Ushingmong Chowdhory from CHTDF, UNDP part

Participants:

A total of 36 participants from three hill districts have participated in the workshop. The participants were from communities or forest dependents, traditional leaders, elected leaders (Union and Upazilas), civil society, forest department, department of agriculture extension, NGOs, media personnel etc.

Brief description of the Workshop:

The workshop was opened by Mr. Biplab Chakma, Chief, Community Empowerment Programme, CHTDF, UNDP through his opening remarks to the participants stating the rationale for the workshop in the context of the CHT forest, national REDD+ Roadmap process and the role of CHT people into this context. He expressed that CHT has a potential forest coverage in the country and it has a greater scope to get involved in the REDD+ process and requested participants to contribute in this workshop with their valuable experiences and observations. He also added that there are few forest issues that may ignite debate during the discussions and therefore, the participants were requested not to focus much on those parts rather to take them as examples in discussing that how the CHT forest can be well managed in future. After his speech all participants have introduced themselves to the house.

Mr. Haradhan Banik said few words on “why forest is required”. Then Ms. Jhuma Dewan started the workshop session with raising a question to the participants that what they mean by the term ‘Deforestation’ and ‘Forest Degradation’. She said that before going in detail of the workshop we need to make clear understanding on these two terms. She added that under the Kyoto Protocol “deforestation means the long term conversion of land from forest to non-forest” and “Forest Degradation means changes within the forest which negatively affect its structure or function, and lower its capacity to supply products and services”. Mr. Banik added that in simple term deforestation means reduction of forest cover whereas forest degradation means reduction of advantages from the forest resources.



However, the questions attracted many responses of the participants where Forest department and civil society took part.

Mr. Dhiman Khisa argued that besides these two terms, the people of CHT, particularly the indigenous people define forest that includes everything for their livelihood. Ms. Susmita Chakma explained that there are far differences between "Natural forest" and "Man made forest", so we need to be clear on the term which we are meaning to from these two. The indigenous people want the forest where they can get everything for their needs not just for commercial purposes. Ms. Nomita Chakma said that "when there is forest there is life, if there is no forest there will be no life". One of the Headman in the workshop also said that in his area in Rajashthali upazilla communities are involved with Community Reserved Forest or commonly known as village common forest (VCF) and they are getting benefits out of it and more communities are demanding for this type of forest. He said the question is that are we going to create new forest or are we going to conserve and increase the forest that we have?

As the discussions on the forest definition was continuing Mr. Biplab took the floor and said that there may have different perception or meaning about the forest and its benefits. However, one issue is very clear that everyone recognizes the importance of forest and therefore, we need to focus discussion that how to improve the situation in CHT. In this regard, having a clear idea on the ways of improving current situation, we need to understand the existing issues first. Therefore, the discussion should be taken place under the specific issues where everyone will have better scope to contribute. Following the agreement in the house, the workshop participants were divided into 4 groups:

- Group-1: Community people and traditional leaders- Headman, Karbari
- Group-2: Elected leaders of Union and Upazilla Parishad the Chairman, Members and the Councilors from Hill District Councils
- Group-3: NGO representatives and Lawyer
- Group-4: Government officials-Forest Department & DAE.

The four groups worked on two issues - **deforestation** and **forest degradation in CHT** with specific questions.

The first round group work was on "*What is Driving Deforestation and Forest Degradation in the CHT?*" The second round group work question was on "*What strategies currently in place to reduce deforestation and forest degradation? Which of the strategies are working well, why? Which of the strategies are not working, why?*". The co-facilitators facilitated the group works.

The Groups presented there group work findings where other workshop participants also made their comments and suggestions. Please find [Annex II](#) (Problem Tree Analysis of 4 Groups)

The Afternoon session started with the following questions where same groups looked into the issues on Sustainable Approaches to Forestry in the CHT. The questions were-

- *Is there any strategy available to protect forest resources?*
- *What strategy is working well and why?*
- *What strategy is not working well and why?*
- *What needs to be done?*

Key Issues Discussed in the Workshop:

- The forest department is managing the reserve forests.

- The un-classed state forest (USF) (outside the reserve forest) is under Hill District Council (HDC Act 1998).
- The traditional leaders (Headman in particular) have role in managing the community forest (CHT Regulation 1900).
- Coordinated efforts of all relevant stakeholders in managing the forest is not in place.
- Rapid population growth and population settlements in CHT create pressure over the forests.
- Community managed forest (commonly known as Village Common Forest) is not recognized properly.
- Excessive forest resource extraction.
- Clear felling of the trees contributed to forest degradation.
- Law and order situation (mainly before signing Peace Accord in 1997) contributed to deforestation.
- Lack of artificial regeneration did not take place in some of the parts.
- Encroachment contributing to deforestation.
- Livelihood needs, limited alternative income options and unemployment contributing to excessive forest resource extraction.
- Dependency on forest increased due to Kaptai dam construction (inundated 54,000 acres or 40% of CHT cultivable land).
- Displaced people are not rehabilitated.
- The CHT institutions e.g. Ministry of CHT Affairs (MoCHTA), CHT Regional Council (CHTRC), Hill District Councils (HDC), Circle Chiefs etc. need to be engaged in consultation process and they should be part of National REDD Cell.
- The CHT requires a separate approach to conserve the forest in CHT.

Group Works

Group 1:

Topic: Forest Degradation

Participants: Community & traditional leaders (Headman)

IS THERE ANY STRATEGY AVAILABLE TO PROTECT FOREST RESOURCES?	STRATEGIES	WHAT STRATEGY IS NOT WORKING WELL AND WHY?	WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?
CHT Accord			
Customary laws	In some places it is effective. Accountability of relevant stakeholders need to be ensured	In some places it is not effective because the headman needs to develop their capacities	
Hill District Council Act	Not functioning Due to the fact that the forest and land department is not transferred to Hill District Council		Suggestion: The forest and land should be transferred according to the law and election of hill district council to ensure democratic practices and accountability.
Laws of Jhum Cultivation	functioning Tax collection ceremony (Rajpunnya) by Raja is still in practice	Laws of Jhum Cultivation is not effective in some places, because farmers do not pay tax.	
			Suggestion: Formulate policy for limited teak cultivation and introduce alternative species instead of Teak, e.g. <i>Accacia</i> or <i>mono cropping</i>

Group 2:
Topic: Forest Degradation
Participants: Public representatives: Up Chairman & HDC Councilors

EXISTING STRATEGIES	EFFECTIVENESS	CAUSES	SUGGESTION
			Provision of Moratorium, Declaration of more protected area
Take initiatives to coordinate among the development activities of Regional Council (RC), Hill District Council (HDC) & Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA)	Partially functional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination gap and lack of Government's will - Lack of proper implementation of CHT accord 	Strengthening of MoCHTA, RC & HDC according to CHT accord.
Forest and Wildlife Protection Act	Partially functional	Lack of manpower, conflict with customary law, & absence of consultation with local community	Ensure community peoples' participation
Customary Law	Partially functional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict between customary law and state law - Lack of education & sensitivity, especially in Banarban district 	Coordination & education
CHT Accord	Partially functional	Lack of political will of government	Proper implementation of CHT accord

Group 3:
Topic: Deforestation
Participants: NGO representatives & lawyers

- There is existence of Regional Council Act and Hill District Council Acts. Proper implementation of these acts can solve the problems – as both deal with basic issues of CHT
- Ensuring community (directly or indirectly involved with forest) participation along with forest department in the Forest Act and Forest Policy.
- Currently Village Common Forests (VCFs) are located outside the reserve or protected forests. As a result it is easy to grab the land by outsiders. But if government takes initiatives to register or giving entitlement of these lands to local communities it will be easier to protect the common forests. At the same time forest management should be transferred to the community.
- Stop tobacco cultivation in CHT with provision for alternative option for farmers,
- Brick field related regulation (Fuel use) should be effective and alternative fuel use should be introduced (e.g. gas, coal)
- Land dispute should be resolved and land should not be leased to outsiders except permanent residence of CHT.
- Initiatives should be taken on proper employment creation.
- All land that was declared as reserved forest after the year 1990, they should be cancelled.
- Rights to Information Act need to be implemented, and people should have access to correct information as per their need. E.g. people are unaware of the development activities within their area, hence they rely on traditional sources. If they had known on the alternative sources, their dependency on forest resources would have been decreased.



Group 4:
Topic: Deforestation
Participants: Govt. Officials

EXISTING STRATEGIES	EFFECTIVENESS	CAUSES	SUGGESTION
Participatory Community Forestry	Not functioning well in CHT context	- Lack of coordination among the key stakeholders - Lack of awareness	Through development partners like UNDP and or similar organisations to initiate negotiation process with Forest department and other relevant stakeholders to minimise misunderstanding, mistrust etc.
Education for all, Family Planning, Skilled manpower	Not functioning well	- Reluctance of the government on this issue	

Concluding Remarks:

Overall, the workshop was very effective in terms of active contribution by the participants, valuable inputs from the resource persons regarding the REDD+ process. It has been found, as many expressed that, CHT people are very much interested to conserve the natural forest rather to create new forest in CHT. The most preferable model suggested by the community, NGO activist, civil society, elected leaders were to promote



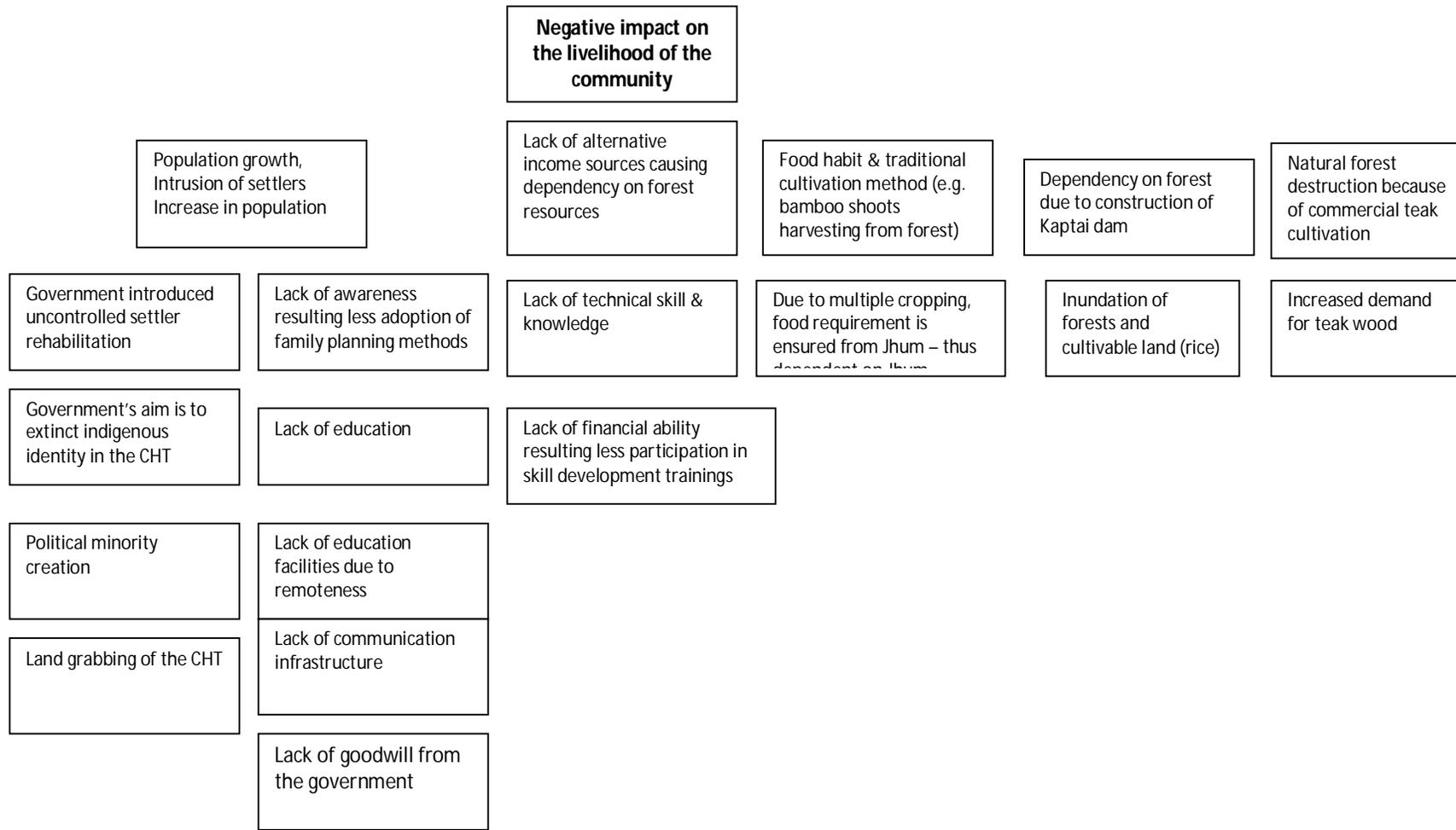
Village Common Forest (VCF) being the most effective approach to conserve forest till to date which also ensures community participation. Many argued that without community's active participation the forest cover can not be retained or increased. Nevertheless, there was suggestion to involve local communities during formulation of forest related policies or strategies as CHT holds a remarkable portion of forest cover in the country. It is noted that land grabbing is contributing to deforestation due to lack of political commitment and misuse of power structure. Moreover, shifting cultivation is contributing to deforestation. To reduce deforestation the participants suggested to introduce sustainable farming system approach which will ensure land ownership and ensure user rights for the community. It has been revealed in the workshop that forestry sector development needs longer period to get return, hence alternative income option like mixed fruit gardening (short term, mid term and long term) should be introduced so that people can survive till they get return from forestry. The "Forest" definition need also be clarified as there are differences between forest department definition and community people's definition who are very much involved with forest. The community people want forest which includes everything for their livelihood. They do not want to see forest as commercial purpose only which will rarely serve their purpose.

Problem Tree Analysis

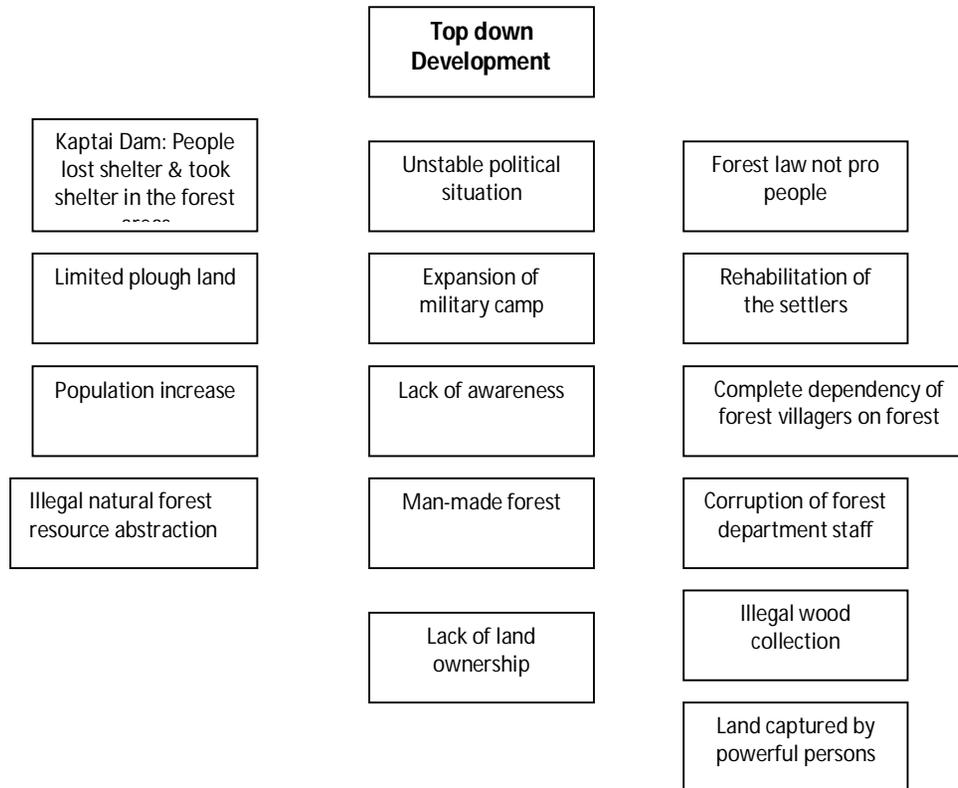
Group 1:

Topic: Forest Degradation

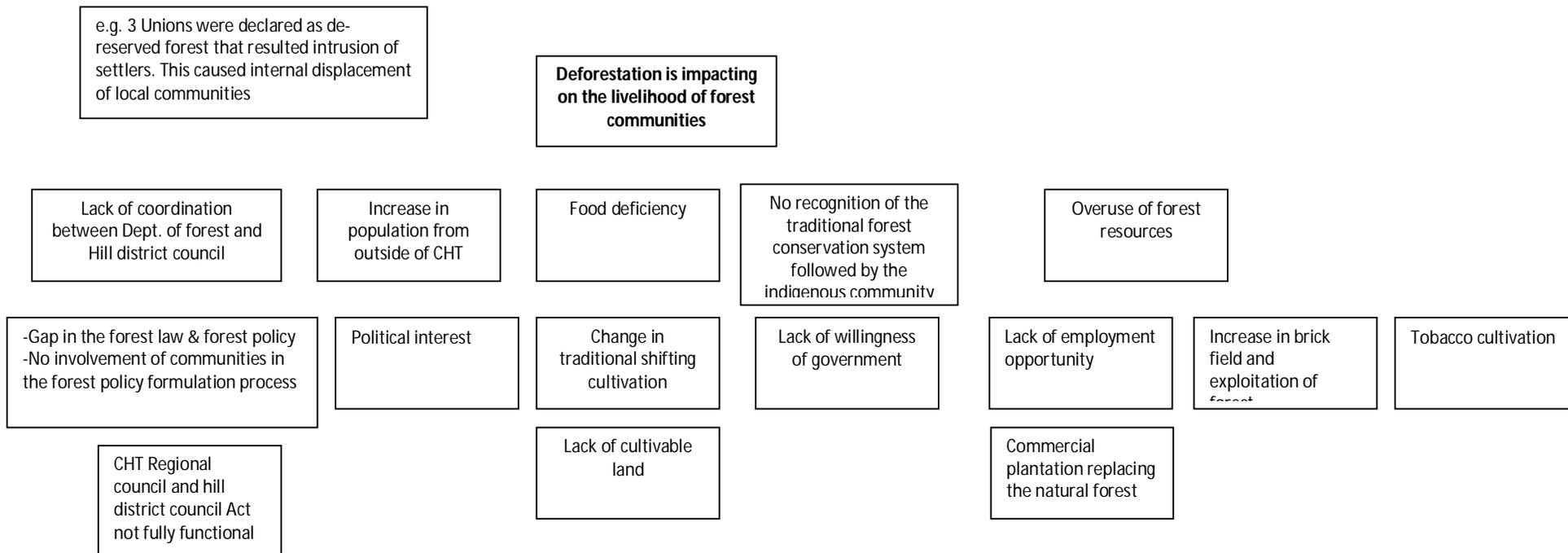
Participants: Community & traditional leaders (Headman)



Problem Tree Analysis
Group 1:
Topic: Forest Degradation
Participants: Pulic Representatives: UP Chairman, UP member & HDC Councilors

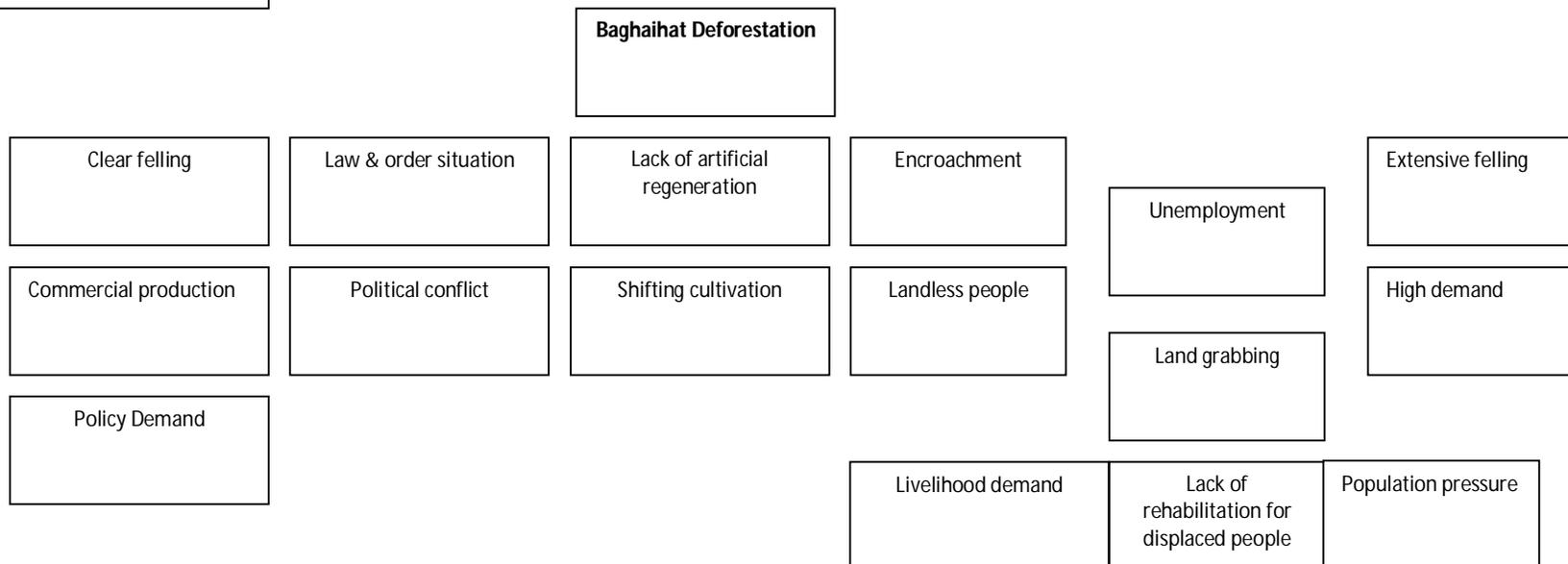


Problem Tree Analysis
Group 3:
Topic: Deforestation
Participants: NGO representatives & lawyers



Problem Tree Analysis
Group 4:
Topic: Deforestation
Participants: Govt. Officials
(Forest Department and Department of Agriculture Extension)

e.g. Place: Baghaihat Deforestation



Participants list

Workshop on "Forest in the CHT: Local Issues and Potential Approaches" with different stakeholders on 27 October, 2011 at Conference room, District Sports Association, Stadium Area, Rangamati.

SL	Name of Participants	Designation, Organization
1	Mr. Sathau Marma	Headman, 260 No. Ichachari Mouza, Khagrachari
2	Mr. Kong Yeang Mro	PDC representative, Rangkhong Bagan Para, Thanchi, Bandarban
3	Mr. Pratijoy Tonchangya	Karbari, Bijoy Para, Rowangchari, Bandarban
4	Mr. Kham Lai Mro	Upazila Chairman, Thanchi, Bandarban
5	Mr. Rangklang Mro	PDC Representative, Thanchi, Bandarban
6	Ms. Namita Chakma	Treasurer (Incharge ED), Allam, Khagrachari
7	Ms. Pai Thui Angkhyong	Social Worker, Rajasthali, Rangamati
8	Ms. Madhumita Chakma	CF, Taungya, Bilaichari, Rangamati
9	Mr. Neilwai Pangkhua	PDC representative, Belaichari, Rangamati
10	Ms. Bhomeka Tripura	President, Jhowtha Khamar PDC, Khagrachari
11	Mrs. Nu Ching Marma	PDC Representative, Rowangchari, Bandarban
12	Mr. Lalsorong Bawm	PDC Representative, Rowangchari, Bandarban
13	Mr. Monindra Lal Chakma	Headman, 154 No. Aimachara Mouza, Barkal, Rangamati
14	Mr. Dibendu Chakma	Development Worker, Taungya, Langadu, Rangamati
15	Mr. Biswa Khetra Chakma	PDC representative, Sakrachari PDC, Barkal, Rangamati
16	Mr. Sundarmoni Chakma	PDC representative, Sakrachari PDC, Barkal, Rangamati
17	Mr. Dipomoy Talukder	Chairman, Chilachari Union, Langadu, Rangamati
18	Mr. Mangal Kanti Chakma	Chairman, Attarockchara Union, Langadu, Rangamati
19	Mr. Biro Raj Chakma	Member, Banglachara Para PDC, Barkal, Rangamati
20	Ms. Sumita Chakma	Member, Banglachara Para PDC, Barkal, Rangamati
21	Mr. Joysen Tangchangya	Upazila Chairman, Belaichari, Rangamati
22	Ms. Gyana Prova Chakma	Member, VCF, Langadu, Rangamati
23	Ms. Eco Chakma	PDC representative, Subalong, Barkal, Rangamati
24	Mr. Shyama Ratan Chakma	UP Chairman, Aimachara Union, Barkal, Rangamati
25	Md. Sanaullah Patwary	DFO, Hill Tracts North Division, Rangamati
26	Md. Mizanur Rahman	DFO, USF Plantation Division, Rangamati
27	Md. Abdul Awal Sarker	DFO, Jhum Control Forest Division, Rangamati
28	Md. Shafiul Alam Chowdhury	Conservator of Forest, Forest Department, Rangamati
29	Mr. Mohammad Sobeder Islam	DFO, CHT, South Forest Division, Rangamati
30	Mr. Brisha Ketu Chakma	Councilor, Rangamati HDC, Rangamati
31	Md. Shariful Islam	Divisional Forest Officer, PPD, Kaptai, Rangamati

32	Mr. Jugal Pada Dey	Crop Production Specialist, D & E, Khagrachari
33	Mr. Chai Thow Aung Marma	Councilor, Khagrachari HDC, Khagrachari
34	Mr. Dhiman Khisa	Executive Member & ODC, Taungya, Rangamati
35	Ad. Susmita Chakma	Secretary, TAUNGYA, Rangamati
36	Mr. Amar Sadhan Chakma	Executive Director, Tanugya, Rangamati