CBOs turn to development in the southwest coastal region of Bangladesh

Presented by:

Gana Unnayan Sangstha (GUS)
Village: Munshigonj, Post Office: Kadamtaka
Upazila: Shyamnagar, District: Satkhira,
Bangladesh
Working Area of GUS

Eco-Club Movement for Coastal Environment Conservation.
(Location of Eco-Club in Satkhira Coastal Area)

District: Satkhira

Legend
- GUS Office
- Eco-Club
- Sunderban Reserve Forest
- Union Boundary

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**Background of the Area**

- The area is close to the bay of Bengal and also largest mangrove forest-Sundarbans
- 70% land under brackish or saline water shrimp farming
- 60% people are landless and living undignified lives
- More than 40% households migrate to cities seasonally for better livelihood

**Causes of drinking water crisis in the area**

- Salinity intrusion into larger areas due to climate change and consequent rise in sea level
- Local fresh water resources degraded due to extensive and unplanned shrimp farming during the 1980’s
- Lack of a mechanism to accumulate community resources to develop alternatives
The Problems

Drinking water scarcity

Basically women are responsible for supply of drinking water for the family in our society.

Women compelled to fetch water far away from their households

*Womenfolk faced various socio-economic and social problems in fetching water from distant places*

Women sometimes became victims of sexual harassment

For better and easy livelihood a significant number of households migrate to cities and abroad
Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and their integrated approach

• Traditionally community people developed CBOs and they involved with diverse socio-economic and cultural activities in the society. But they have no specific strategic direction for development.

• Considering the major problem, GUS took the initiative of involving the CBOs in solving the priority problem of water scarcity

• The CBOs agreed to start working in a unified way and launched together “Eco-club Movement” and pursued a common strategy toward solving the problem

• The movement ensured effective participation of local government agencies, particularly the Union Parishad (UP)
Elements of the common strategy:

GUS along with other CBOs took up the following activities to address the drinking water issue:

Mobilizing community members and raising their awareness regarding the problem and possible solutions

- Village level information sharing session, meetings.
- Cultural function
- Publication and distribute the leaflet
- Billboard and sign board established
Elements of the common strategy:

2. Advocating and lobbying with local government agencies
   Collaborating meeting with local government institute (UPs)
   Memorandum submission to the Prime Minister

3. Demonstrating low cost technology to ensure supply of pure drinking water
   • Filtering pond water through Pond Sand Filter (PSF)
   • Rain Water Harvesting

4. Introducing a mechanism to accumulate community resources to develop alternatives
Achievements and lessons learnt

Achievements so far:
1. Unified action from relevant institutions
2. Rehabilitation of ponds through community participation for conservation of drinking water
3. Adoption of viable technologies at the community level for supply of drinkable water
4. Revival of a number of water related projects of the government and its tacking up of newer projects

Lesson learnt:

It is possible to implement a joint action plan of CBOs toward solving a crisis, provided the crisis is properly identified and a dialog is initiated
On behalf of the people of the south-western region of Bangladesh