

Destruction of hundred year's oldest mangrove Chakaria Sunderban forest: socio-economic impact on coastal communities

M.A.M. Siddique

Institute of Marine Science and Fisheries, University of Chittagong, Chittagong – 4331, Bangladesh. E-mail: tigermomin@yahoo.com

Abstract

Chakaria Sunderban is the oldest and second largest mangrove forest of Bangladesh, located in the south-eastern part of the country alongside the coastline of the Bay of Bengal in Cox's Bazar district. In 1903, 8,510 ha of forest came under institutional regulation, where 7490 ha were reserve mangrove forest and 1020 ha were protected forest. British Government leased 1600 ha of land to landless families for their settlement in 1926. Maps from 1926 and 1975 show that these communities maintained forest coverage. The forest possesses a unique ecosystem and a secure area for wildlife, as well as providing goods and services for people's livelihoods. The annual economic value was estimated to be between \$200,000 and \$900,000 per ha, and thus the whole forest had vast economic value.

In 1977, 2251 ha of mangrove forest were converted into shrimp farming and, again in 1982, another 694 ha were cleared for shrimp farming. About 3577 ha of mangrove forest, was leased for shrimp farming during 1985-1988 and the rest portion was leased during 1995-1996. In the subsequent years, the entire mangrove forest of Chakaria Sunderban was cleared mainly for shrimp farming with little salt bed and minor human settlement.

Although the shrimp culture has been created some employment opportunities for few local people, but only shrimp farmers are mostly benefited from this activities. This study is revealed that the destruction of Chakaria Sunderban greatly effect on the socio-economic condition of 90 percents of local communities. For years, local people have depended upon the mangrove forest for direct and indirect benefits. Many household necessities, such as firewood, timber, medicinal plants, honey and other minor products have been provided by this mangrove forest. The area was a very good habitat for different types of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. However, increase of coastal pollution, decline of fish stock, increase of natural calamity and salinity intrusion due to the destruction of Chakaria Sunderban forest directly or indirectly affect on socio-economics of local communities.

Keywords

Chakaria Sunderban, destruction, socio-economic impact, coastal communities