Communities in Conservation:

Changing paradigm of protected area management and enhanced conservation in the north-eastern hill region of Bangladesh

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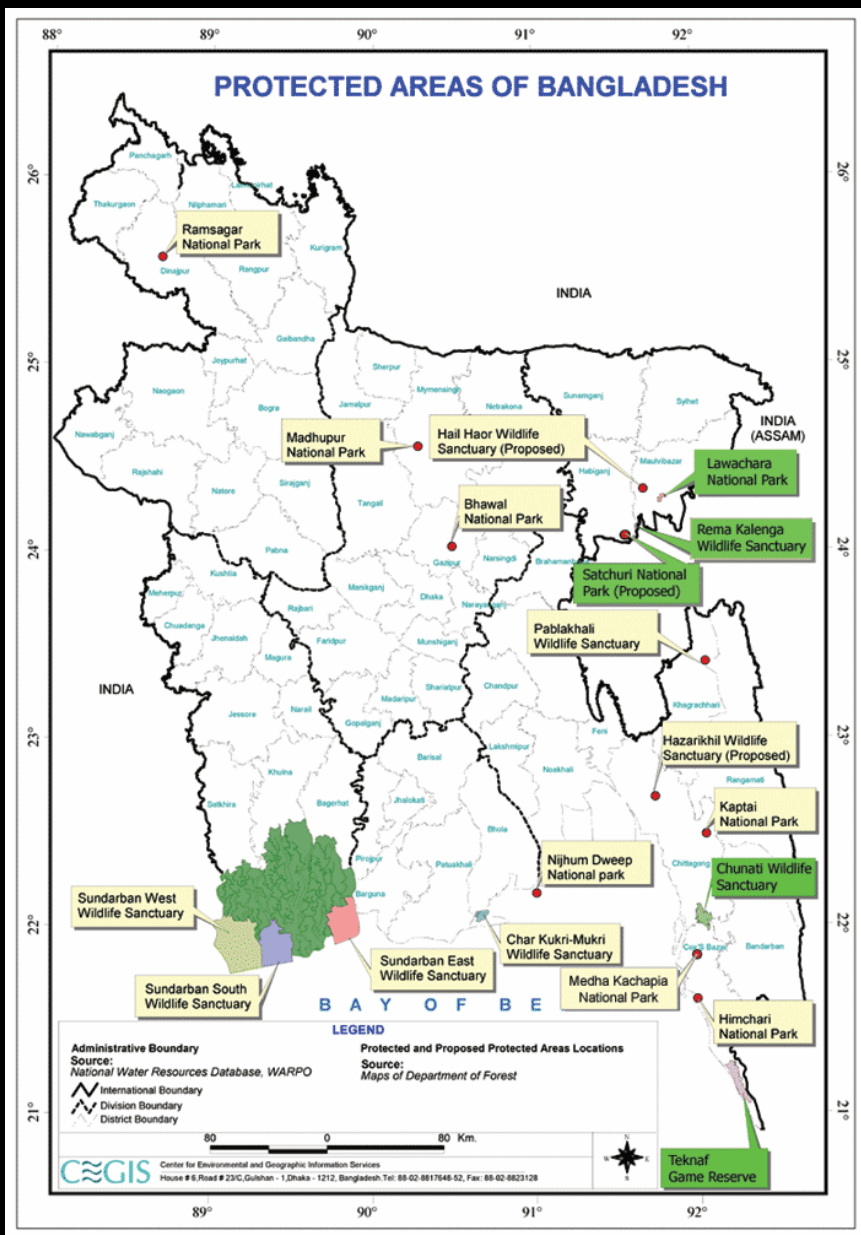
Forests and PAs in Bangladesh

- 18 PAs – lowest # in South Asia.
- PAs cover 1.67 % of total land area
- forest cover is 6% or less (20% in 1950)
- deforestation worst after 1980



Co-management in Bangladesh

- Social Forestry – community-based afforestation programs since 1979
- Forests, conservation and people were first addressed together in 1997
- Nishorgo Support Project (NSP) 2004: local & public involvement in conservation

Current co-management activities under Nishorgo

reduce illegal extraction & unsustainable practices

empower local stakeholders
ensure local participation

Co-management activities under Nishorgo

training to build local capacity

develop market opportunities, information, technology and credit

How have co-management activities with local people affected their

1. forest use & dependency

2. attitudes & adaptations?

Case Study: Satchari NP

4 villages studied over 1 year

4 levels of village forest dependency

FGDs & interviews:

- forest dependency
- forest uses
- perceived benefits
- expectations from co-management

RESULTS

Forest dependency dropped in most-dependent villages

household net income from the forests,

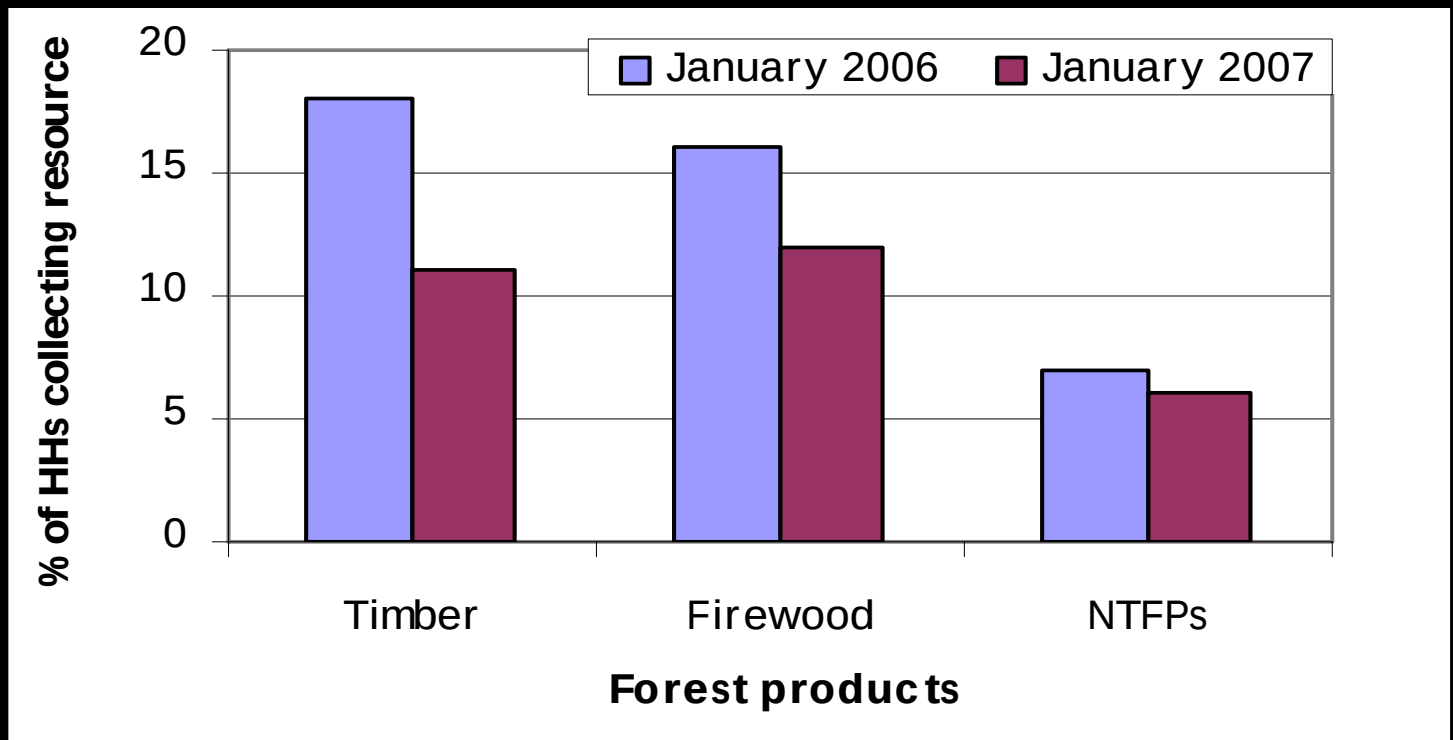
NFI = D + M – (I + O)

(after Ambrose-Oji 2003)

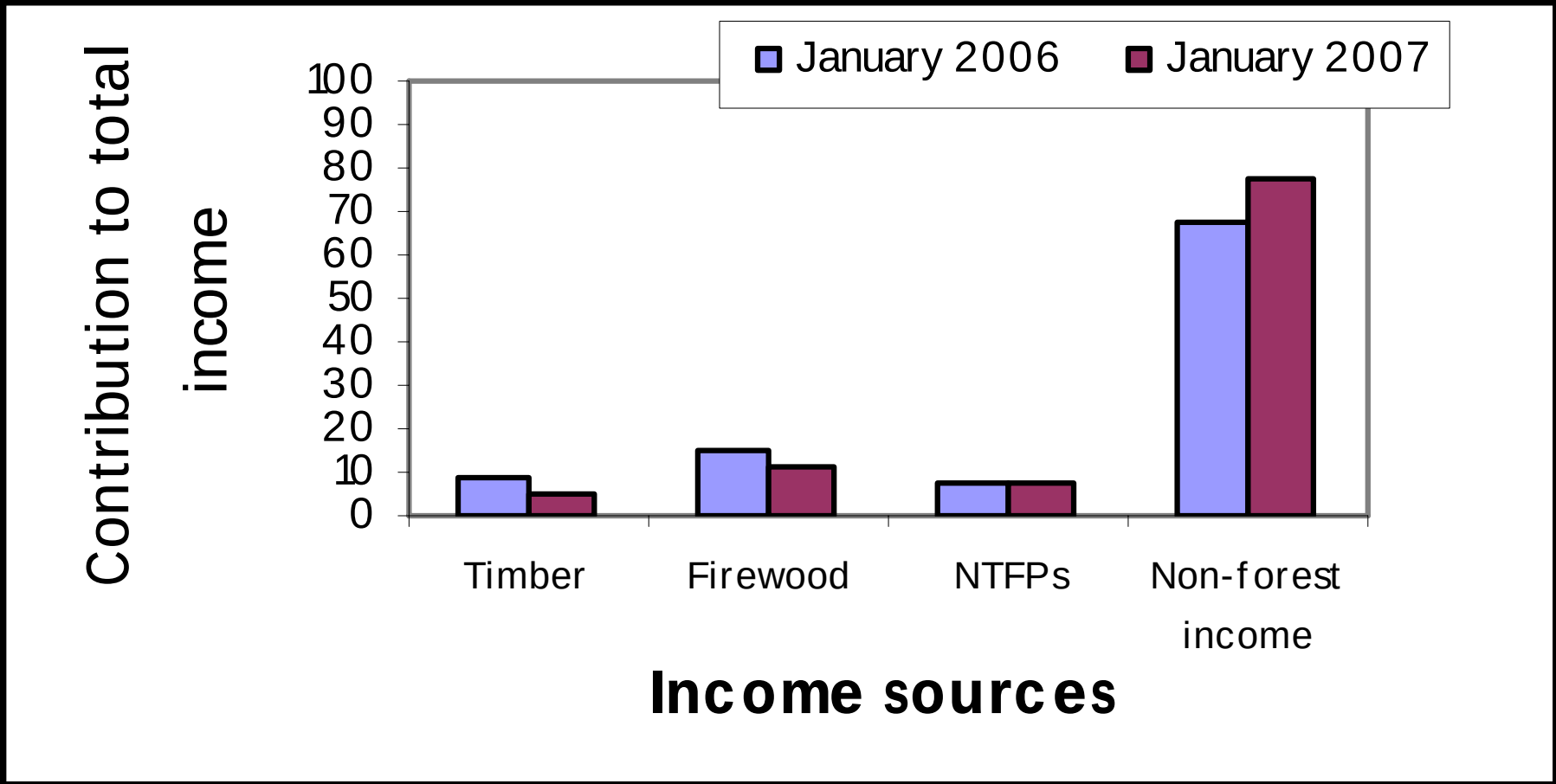
Village	*Stakes in Forest*	*(HIGH) Most Dependent %*		*(MED)Moderately Dependent %*		*(LOW) Least Dependent %*	
		2006	*2007*	*2006*	*2007*	*2006*	*2007*
Tiprapara	**major**	67	18	17	59	16	23
Ratanpur	**maj-med**	22	16	29	31	49	53
Deorgach	**medium**	11	12	12	9	77	79
Goachnagar	**med-min**	8	9	13	11	79	80

Forest use/ collection decreased

- ***reduction in resource extraction*** *uniformly greater in villages with high forest dependence*
- *less dependent villages showed a very slight* ***increase in extraction*** *of 1 or more product*



Proportion of income from forest resources decreased



Distribution of benefits vary across and within villages

☑ Across villages: AIGs, benefit-sharing agreements are pre-selected; focus is on highly dependent villages

☒ Within villages: uneven distribution of support leads to dissatisfaction, but no means of reporting

Responses/ expectations from co-management

'Nishorgo recruited us as forest protectors instead of as illegal loggers, which has made our lives more secure. We are more respectable in society than we were before.'

– former illegal logger of Tiprapara, January 2007

Summary of findings 2006-2007

- forest resource collection patterns
- people's income sources
- dependency on protected forests
- satisfaction and morale are high
- some exemplary success stories
- local people increasingly consulted in decisions regarding park management

Challenges ahead

- uneven/ inappropriate distribution of support
- focus only on highly-dependent villages
- potential long-term impacts from ‘less-dependent’ villages ignored
- as access to PA decreases, hidden linkages to forests may be emerging: new sets of loggers
- rights, responsibilities of villagers poorly defined

Tripura girl learning to weave on a toy loom

Conclusions

- long-term sustainability depends on poverty reduction
- AIG programs should be more broadly available over a larger area and more evenly and appropriately distributed
- collaborate with organizations that share poverty reduction goals
- governance roles need clear definition

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