



Celebrating International Day for Biological Diversity - 22 May, 2016

Bangladesh Environment and Development Society (BEDS) is a non-profit, non-political organization committed to the sustainable socio-economic development, conservation of natural resources, use of clean energy and protection of environment through research and implementation of activities. The organization strives for the long-term co-existence of people and natural ecosystems on our planet creating harmony among the living beings. The vision of the organization is to promote ecological balance for creating harmony between human and environment.

Biodiversity is the foundation for life and for the essential services provided by ecosystem. The variety of life on Earth, its biological diversity is commonly referred to as biodiversity. The importance of biodiversity cannot be described so easily. At least 40 percent of the world's economy and 80 percent of the needs of the poor are derived from biological resources. In addition, the richer the diversity of life, the greater the opportunity for medical discoveries, economic development, and adaptive responses to such new challenges as climate change. The number of species of plants, animals, and microorganisms, the enormous diversity of genes in these species, the different ecosystems on the planet, such as deserts, rainforests and coral reefs are all part of a biologically diverse Earth. Appropriate conservation and sustainable development strategies attempt to recognize this as being integral to any approach to preserving biodiversity. Almost all cultures have their roots in our biological diversity in some way or form.

The Sundarbans has the world's largest single stretch of mangrove forest. However, due to exploitation of the forest for timber, the mangroves are suffering ecological challenges. The Sundarbans mangrove forest is the lifeline for the 3.2 million people living around it. These mangrove forests help mitigate the negative impact of some of the biggest cyclones, resulting in comparatively less damage to the community. Unfortunately, the same community has been engaged in exploiting the resources of Sundarbans due to poverty and lack of job opportunities. Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF) and BEDS are now implementing a project to conserve mangrove biodiversity while reducing the poverty of forest-dependent fishermen communities through more effective utilization of natural resources. Fishermen are being trained as part of the project. Our main theme is "**Save Sundarbans Biodiversity through creating alternative livelihoods by the Sustainable use of Natural Resources** " which is very much related to this year IDB themes " Mainstreaming Biodiversity; Sustaining People and their Livelihoods"

Under the project we would like to introduce among the Sundarbans coastal communities about the **International Day for Biological Diversity, International Mangrove Action Day, World Environment Day** etc through discussion, activities, human chain, rally, children drawing competition etc by active participation of fishermen communities, teachers, students, civil society members, local government representative, Forest Department representatives etc.

In a meeting on World Biodiversity Day 2016 the participants put emphasis on conserving the Sundarbans and its biodiversity. The participants said that a lot of lives are revolved and centered on the Natural beauty Sundarbans. But the unsustainable harvesting of the Sundarbans resources

is the reason why the Sundarbans is in threat and causes the destruction of the Sundarbans and its biodiversity. The requested all to come forward to conserve the Sundarbans and its biodiversity.

During 22nd May Sunday we have taken the initiatives of a daylong activity to observe the day at BEDS training center located on Mathurapur Jelley Polli under Shyamnagar sub district in Satkhira district. In the activity there is meeting on the importance of the day, art completion among the children of the fishermen families on why mangroves are important to me and my community, mangrove plantation and rally. Mr. Shyamapada Roy the station officer of Munshigonj performed the duty of the chairman of the discussion. Md. Abul Kashem Morol Chairman of Munshigonj Union, Mr. Hideki Sato and Tatsuhiro Kato from Japan Environmental Education Forum, Md. Maksudur Rahman, the chief executive of Beds and other members of BEDS were present in the meeting. In the finishing speech the chairman expected that Sundarbans and its biodiversity will be conserved through sustainable resource harvesting.

Our taken initiatives:

As our project area is Mathurapur Jelley Polli (Fisherman community) under Shyamnagar Upozilla in Satkhira district, we observed World Biodiversity Day there. We took some initiatives to observe the day. Our initiatives are given below:

1. Distributed the T-Shirt using IDB, KNCF and BEDS logo.
2. Organized discussion about the history of International Day for Biological Diversity, importance of Sundarbans Mangrove Biodiversity and relation between Biodiversity and our daily life
3. Organized Fishermen children art competition on "Why mangroves are important to my community and me"
4. Organized a rally at the Sundarbans coastal area using mask of Sundarbans Biodiversity
5. Create a Sundarbans Mangrove Medicinal Nursery by the participants
6. Published the events news through printing media as well as social media

First of all, we completed the registration process and distributed T-shirts among the villagers. Then the villagers planted 100 medicinal mangroves on the Bank of the river Chunkuri following the plantation rule. Name of the mangroves are Kirpa, Jhana, Singra, Sundori, Kakra, Bain, Ora etc. A fence was prepared to protect the planted mangroves from the cattle. After finishing the plantation activities we conducted a rally from Mathurapur to Harinagar Bazar having a banner on the front. There were 65 people in the rally including the kids. They wore different masks of the Sundarbans biodiversity. From Harinagar Bazar we returned to the BEDS training center at Mathurapur village. We organized an art competition among the students of Mathurapur Jelley Polli. The topic of drawing was **why mangrove is important to me and my community**. There were 63 students who drew different pictures on the topic. Finally, we organized a discussion with the community about the morality of the day and the importance of biodiversity. At the beginning of the discussion we did some group works on the importance of Sundarbans among the participants. We divided the participants into three groups namely Tiger, Deer and Dolphin group. Some important points of their group works are given below:

Dolphin Group:

- Sundarbans is like our mother as we collect honey, fishes and crabs from it and lead our life
- It saves us from different disasters
- There are so many animals live in the Sundarbans like Royal Bengal Tiger, Deer, Crocodile, Dolphin etc.
- So many different trees reflect the beauty of the Sundarbans.

Tiger Group:

- Sundarbans is the source of our earning
- It is the store house of oxygen
- It helps us in various ways
- If we save the Sundarbans the coastal areas will be safe

Deer Group:

- Sundarbans is the world's largest mangrove
- It is the reason we are still alive
- It provides us Oxygen and food
- It mitigates our demand of fuel

Then the discussion on the importance of biodiversity began. Mr. Maksudur Rahman the Chief executive of Bangladesh Environment and Development Society (BEDS) delivered his valuable speech and told the participants why biodiversity is important to us and why should we preserve them. He mentioned how biodiversity help us to live and how human beings destroying the diversity. When the participants were asked to say something about how they can protect biodiversity from their own position; they told a lot of things. Notobor Sana said, as Sundarbans is our natural resource we need to protect it by any means. Whenever we hear that someone is harvesting the resources illegally we will try to make him understand and if he doesn't bother our advice we will snatch his boat, net and other instruments forcefully. Harun Ur Rashid the seed collector from Bangladesh Forest research Institute Munshigonj branch said that it is we who are the reason of our own destruction. If people come to help us then development will be happened in forestation activities. People should be aware about it. Robin Dhali a social worker said, we are helping the forest department by guarding the forest at night and the tree cutting activities have been reduced. Md. Abul Sheikh said, we can conserve the Sundarbans and its biodiversity if there is no pirates and corruption in the government level. Mr. Maksudur Rahman the Chief executive of Bangladesh Environment and Development Society (BEDS) delivered his final speech to the participants and thus the activity ends.

The participants are mainly learned from the events are as follows;

1. We came to know that 100% of the participants did not know that this type of a day is observed in the world.
2. They came to know how biodiversity helps us to live.
3. They realized that how mangroves protect them from natural calamities.
4. They promised to take care of the planted mangroves.
5. They said that they will harvest the Sundarbans resources in a sustainable way.
6. The participants said that they will observe the day by their own initiatives.