

Embankment Plantation... Protecting life and livelihood



The coastal areas of Bangladesh are at high risk due to natural disasters and climate change. The land of the coastal region is relatively low. As a result, Bangladesh Water Development Board has been constructing polders in the entire coastal region since the sixties and seventies with the aim of protecting the coastal areas and agricultural work throughout the year. But the polder embankment was not conducive to tidal surges. The Government is implementing Coastal Embankment Improvement Project, Phase-1, CEIP-1 to make the embankment stronger and more suitable to face natural disasters. Besides, several levels of Afforestation have been done under the project to protect the Embankment from storms, tidal surges and river erosion. About 1.5 lakh trees have been planted in the renovated Embankment of Polder 41/1 and 40/2 in the coastal Barguna District. On both sides of the embankment coconut, palm, mango, amalki, jackfruit, boira, guava, chambal, rain tree etc. have been planted with medicinal plants. Bangladesh Water Development Board, Shushilan NGO and Bangladesh Forest Department have jointly formed a Social Forestry Group and Forest Management Committee to look after and conserve the trees. A total of 28 groups and committees are working to save trees in these two Polders.

Md. Shah Alam Khan, President, Gaharpur Social Forestry Group, Patharghata Upazila, said: We have created the afforestation group with members from landless people, less than 50 decimal landowners, poor women, backward groups, poor tribal, poor forest villagers, indigent freedom fighters or indigent children of freedom fighters and those affected by embankment construction. The BWDB & Forest Department has helped us with trees and money. We guard the forested

trees in front of each house. We do not allow anyone to grow vegetables by the side of the tree. When a tree dies, we pick up the dead tree and plant a new one. If any stump/stem of the tree is damaged, we fix it. These trees will make our embankments sustainable and strong, reduce the disaster risk and Financially benefitted us.

Social Afforestation group member, Tania Akhter said, One day, a cow ran away from barn and destroyed 16 trees. The Afforestation Group has recovered the compensation of the trees from that person and planted 17 new seeds of different trees. A member has been dropped from the forestry group for failing to control his cows despite repeated requests. The people of the area have become very aware after planting trees besides Embankment.

Imran Hossain, president of Paschim Burirchar Social Forestry Group of Barguna Sadar Upazila, said, There are trees and shrubs around the embankment. The scene in the area has changed. The area is green now. Planting trees is empowering and leading women, creating forest resources, reforesting marginal and fallow lands and reaping financial benefits with a positive impact on the environment.

By hard work of all Afforestation group members the people living beside the Embankments realized that this Embankment is for their protection and this forestry is for their development.