

**Protect environment, defend indigenous people!**

## International conference on



### **Indigenous Peoples and Environment in Bangladesh (IPEB). (Adibashi Jonogoshti o Bangladesher Poribesh)**

17-18 December, 2007

Venue:

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Organized by

**Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA)**  
and  
**Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN)**

In association with

Department of Sociology, Dhaka University  
Department of Anthropology, Jahangir Nagar University  
Department of Anthropology, Rajshahi  
University Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, Chittagong  
University Environmental Science Discipline, Khulna University  
Department of Agricultural Chemistry, Bangladesh Agricultural University  
Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology

## **Background**

About fifty-seven indigenous minorities live in the four regions of Bangladesh. Until the 19th century, the majority of indigenous people lived in an ecologically diverse forest environment. Forests, with their many species of animals and plants, provided generations of indigenous people with food, shelter, nutritious animal feed, medicinal herbs, etc. Using the ecological resources of the forests, the indigenous people developed their distinct mode of livelihood, combining foraging, hunting, agriculture, and herding. In the natural setting of forests and hills, indigenous people were able to develop and sustain their traditional and cultural norms, values, rituals, and beliefs. They developed their own languages, and some of them even developed their own scripts.

Unfortunately, the life, livelihood, and ecology of the habitat of the indigenous people of Bangladesh are now under threat. Some of the dimensions of this threat are as follows:

- General displacement and constriction of life and habitat of *adibashis* due to their weak minority status
- Displacement and constriction of life and habitat of *adibashis* through construction of infrastructure and mining projects
- Ecological degradation of the forests and hills as result of imposed and unsuitable changes in economic activities

As a result of the above processes, Bangladesh is losing its valuable ecological and ethnic diversity. Moreover, the above processes led to discontent and insurgency leading to militarization of the entire Chittagong Hill Tract area. Instead of benefiting from ethnic and ecological diversity, Bangladesh has unfortunately converted this diversity into a problem costing the nation dearly in terms of both lives and resources. The above processes have also led to widespread deforestation. Denouement of hills from their forest and vegetation cover has in turn created problems of soil erosion, increased sedimentation in rivers and lakes (as manifested in the loss of water depth in the *Kaptai* lake), and increased incidence of mudslides (as exemplified by the recent tragic incidents). All across the country, evidence of disruption of life and livelihood of indigenous people and the environment of their habitats is becoming prominent.

## **Aim and objectives**

The general aim of the conference is to bring scholars, activists, and stakeholders together to examine the interrelationships between indigenous communities and the natural environment in Bangladesh and to formulate through discussion and consensus building a strategy to safeguard environment and life and livelihood of indigenous peoples in the country. The specific objectives of the conference are as follows:

- To assess the nature of macro level intervention and its micro level impact on indigenous communities and environment in Bangladesh.
- To analyze the nature of social exclusion of indigenous communities in Bangladesh
- To examine the state of land rights and tree tenure rights of the *adibashis*

- To analyze the impact of settlement of major ethnic community and its impact on indigenous communities
- To assess the state of agricultural production system and its transformation
- To identify the causes of changes in the economy of the region
- To identify the state of health, nutrition, water, and sanitation condition of indigenous communities
- To know the state of educational attainment and languages of indigenous communities
- To examine the role and impact of international development partners, NGOs, and activists who are present among indigenous peoples
- To examine the causes of changing social networks and transformations within family and community of the indigenous peoples
- To assess the nature of financial and non-financial economy of indigenous people
- To assess the impact of existing forest management policy on indigenous communities
- To examine the impact of deforestation on indigenous communities
- To examine the nature of legal issues and indigenous people
- To examine the impact of Chittagong Hill Tracts Agreement of 1997 and its aftermath
- To examine the impact of plantations and industrialization on indigenous people
- To assess the state of indigenous peoples' culture and social identity
- To analyze the gender implications of development agenda implemented in the *adibashi* habitats
- To assess the state of herbal medicine and ethno-botanic practices among the indigenous communities
- To assess the impact of deforestation on land slide/mud slide and its consequences

### **Format of the conference**

To achieve the general purpose and concrete objectives, the conference will have two types of sessions, namely:

- *Expert sessions*, for presentations by scholars and other experts in the field, and
- *General sessions*, for presentation and participation by non-experts, including representatives of the *adibashi* communities and their organizations, representatives of government, non-government, and civil society organizations, activists, leaders of political organizations, representatives of donor agencies, leaders of socio-cultural organizations, and representatives of the media.

*Ancillary activities*: In addition to the above, the conference will have exhibitions, photography sessions, poster presentations, display of cultural heritages and objects of different indigenous communities, rallies of different indigenous community people, video and film presentations, cultural programs highlighting cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples, etc.

### **Call for papers for the Expert Sessions**

Papers are hereby invited from experts and scholars for presentation at the Expert Sessions of the conference. These papers can address any of the issues listed above in the concrete objectives of the conference. Papers may be written and presented in either Bangla or English. The time-line for papers is as follows:

*August 30, 2007:* Submission of the abstract (300-500 words) of the paper along with institutional affiliation and contact information of the author(s).

*September 15, 2007:* Selection of abstracts. Once an abstract has been accepted for the conference, it will be subject to review before being included in the program proceedings.

*October 30, 2007:* Submission of the complete paper. The final paper is expected to be between 4000-6000 words if it is to appear in the proceedings.

All abstracts and papers should be in *Word* and sent in electronic form to [mokaddemdu@yahoo.com](mailto:mokaddemdu@yahoo.com), [khan@uwp.edu](mailto:khan@uwp.edu), and [bapa@sdnbd.org](mailto:bapa@sdnbd.org). A pre-conference volume will be published containing a sub-set of papers from among those selected for presentation at the conference. A separate volume containing abstracts of all papers selected for presentation at the conference will also be published.

### **Call for participation in the General Sessions**

Invitation is hereby extended to all who would like to participate in the General Sessions of the conference. Interested participants are requested to inform the conference secretariat about (i) their intention to participate and (ii) any particular idea that they may have with regard to their participation and with regard to the scope and organization of the General Sessions themselves

### **Call for participation in the ancillary activities**

Invitation is hereby extended to all who would like to participate in the ancillary activities of the conference. Interested participants are requested to inform the conference secretariat about (i) their intention to participate and (ii) particular type of activity they intend to engage in.

### **Conference secretariat**

The organizing committee consists of members from both BAPA and BEN. President of BAPA is the Convener of the conference and Professor Mokaddem Hossain from BAPA and Professor Farida Khan from BEN are the Co-conveners.

The address for the conference secretariat is:  
Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA)  
9/12 Block D, Lalmatia, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh  
Tel. + 88-02-812-8024, Fax  
E-mail: [bapa@sdnbd.org](mailto:bapa@sdnbd.org)

First Conference on  
**Indigenous People and Bangladesh Environment**  
**(AdibashiJonogostio BangladesherPoribesh)**

17-18 December, 2007

Venue: Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Registration Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institutional affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. no. \_\_\_\_\_

Fax no. \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Intended nature of participation in the conference:

Please mark one or more from the following: ( ) Expert Sessions, ( ) General Sessions,  
( ) Ancillary activities, ( ) others

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Qualification (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Age (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

The conference is open for attendance and participation by both registered and non-registered participants. The registered participants will receive conference materials and coupons for lunch. The registration fee is Taka 200. Students may register at a reduced fee of Taka 100. Members of the indigenous communities are not required to pay the registration fee and may approach the conference secretariat if in need for help with travel, accommodation, and meals. International participants are requested to make their own arrangements for travel to Bangladesh. However, the conference secretariat may help them with local costs (travel, accommodation, and food), if there is such a need.