



Mid-Term Project Report (February, 2018 to July, 2018)

Project Title: Community-based Conservation Initiative of the Western Hoolock Gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*, Harlan, 1834) in Bangladesh

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1. Project Summary

A community involvement conservation initiative of western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock* Harlan, 1834) is being conducted in southern and northeastern parts of Bangladesh. This is the first community participated conservation work to protect any primate species in Bangladesh. As part of the project, gibbon population surveys were conducted. Furthermore, awareness raising among the local community and relevant stakeholders, and capacity building of local research assistants are being continued along with the Forest Department and local leaders in order to conserve the highly threatened and less known gibbon habitats of the country. These groups of people are actively engaged in the protection of the gibbon habitats, which they support as citizen scientists by providing important information on gibbons. Community consultation programs were arranged to form the Gibbon Conservation Group at Inani and Bangdhepa in southeast and Rema-Kalenga in northeast Bangladesh. Already we were able to create a positive attitude towards gibbon conservation among local community and relevant stakeholders, and initiate plantation of important gibbon food trees in selected gibbon habitats of the country.

Due to lack of adequate funding, the project mainly focuses on gibbon population estimate in northeast Bangladesh, positive behavioral change among the relevant stakeholders to initiate sustainable gibbon conservation efforts, and restoration and protection of the gibbon habitats.

2. Major Achievements of the Project

2.1 Population Census

2.1.1 Identification New Gibbon Habitat of the Country

A baseline field survey has been conducted to confirm the presence of gibbon at different gibbon habitats of the country (Fig. 1). By this time, we have spotted 3 new gibbon localities with the help of our local volunteers. These areas are Chaillatali of Cox's Bazar; Garjania of Nikkhongchar under Bandarban and Shaltila of Habiganj districts. Extensive field visits will be done in these areas and as well as in the northeast part of the country to get more information on the gibbon population.

Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the least known gibbon habitats of the country. Previous studies reveal that only one group of gibbons consisting single individual is present at Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary. Project team has confirmed the presence of two groups of gibbons comprising 5 and 4 individuals from the Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary (Fig. 2). So gibbon conservation activities should be expanded to the Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary.

2.2 Positive Behavioral Change Among the Relevant Stakeholders to Initiate Sustainable Gibbon Conservation Efforts

2.2.1 Awareness Development Activities

We primarily selected the member for the Gibbon Conservation Group and conducted the small-scale awareness raising activities to the local community, forest dependence people and other relevant stakeholders. Three awareness development and open discussion meetings were arranged at Inani and Bangdehepa of Cox's Bazar and Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary of Habiganj districts. Forest Department, Co-management Committee, forest villagers, local community, forest dependence people, eco-tour guide, Community Patrol Group participated the meetings and expressed their positive commitments towards gibbon conservation (Fig. 3). These meetings were presided by the respective Forest Department Officer.

2.2.2 Consultation with Forest Department

The outcome of the project provides information of gibbon population to the respective Forest Department Official for better management and protection (Fig. 4). Local Forest Officials are actively involved in various field activities. In addition, the Chief Conservator of Forests has also officially permitted to carry out our field activities and habitat restoration programs at the three places (two in southern and one in northeast parts) of Bangladesh.

2.2.3 Capacity Building of the Local Community

Local community people are involved in the project as Research Assistants. They have been trained up for monitoring gibbon population monitoring, habitat protection, nursery raising and plantation, and also observing other important wildlife (Fig. 5). They also teach the local community to conserve the gibbon population. Now they are able to conduct gibbon population monitoring and raising awareness among the local community.

2.3 Restoration and Protection of the Gibbon Habitats

Habitat restoration program is one of major achievement of the project. Already three nurseries (two in southern and one in northeastern parts of Bangladesh) have been set up with seedlings of 24 important fruiting trees of hoolock gibbon (Figs. 5 to 8). Fruiting trees were identified through literature review (especially Ahsan 1994), by direct field observations, and indigenous knowledge of local community. The seedlings of major planted trees species are *Ficus benghalensis*, *F. benjamina*, *F. religiosa*, *Syzygium* sp., *Mangifera longipes*, *Garcinia xanthochymus*, and *Dillenia pentagyna*. Plantation is being continued at Bangdehepa and Inani Reserve Forests of Cox's Bazar and also culturing seedlings in the nurseries for the next year as the habitat restoration is a long-term conservation initiative.

We are also providing support to the local Forest Offices in identifying the gibbon habitats for regular patrolling activities. Trained local research assistants regularly monitor the gibbon population at Bangdhepa and Inani Reserve Forests which ensure the better protection of habitats.

3. Future Plan

International Gibbon Day, 2018 will be celebrated jointly with Gibbon Conservation Alliance and IUCN Section on Small Apes. Next plan of the project implementation are:

1. Preparation of poster(s);
2. Monitoring planted seedlings and raising seedlings;
3. Awareness campaigns and open discussion with different stakeholders;
4. Consultation with relevant stakeholders; 4 and 5 are same
5. School Education Program(s) at local level;
6. Conducting population census in the northeast part of Bangladesh;
7. Support for the formation of Gibbon Conservation Group; and
8. Continuation of conservation activities through searching/securing new funds.

4. Financial Statement

Some expenditure of the project site at Inani Reseve Forest was covered by small grant of IUCN Section on Small Apes including the labor cost for plantation and raising nursery, honorarium of local Research Assistant(s), awareness campaign while travel and accommodation, seed and poly-bag purchase costs for the nursery was expensed by GCA. Fund has been disbursed according to proposed budget in the proposal.

Project Expenditure in BDT up to July, 2018 (1 USD = 82.2 BDT)

Type of Expenditure	Expenditure in BDT (up to July, 2018)
Honorarium for local research assistant	11,000.00
Honorarium for local assistants	7,000.00
Honorarium GIS mapping	—
Honorarium for field investigator	23,600.00
Travel	36,705.00
Accommodation	19,600.00
Meals	19,000.00
Meeting and workshop	5,100.00
Awareness Program	10800.00
Printer	10,900.00
Stationery and misc. cost	—
Plantation	35,700.00
Total Expenditure (up to July)	179,405.00
Fund Received	411,000.00
Deposit	231,595.00

Figures



Figure 1: Conducting base line survey to know the presence of gibbon in northeastern Bangladesh



Figure 2: Western hoolock gibbon at the Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary, Habiganj



A



B



C



D

Figure 3: Awareness development program:
A - Awareness meeting and open discussion at Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary, Habiganj;
B - Awareness meeting and open discussion at Bangdhepa, Cox's Bazar;
C - Awareness campaign at Forest Office of Saltila, Habiganj;
D - Showing picture of gibbon to the local people at Bangdhepa, Cox's Bazar



A



B

Figure 3: Discussion with Forest Department Officers for better protection of the gibbon habitats:
A - Divisional Forest Officer, Cox's Bazar North Forest Division;
B - Range Officer, Kalenga Forest Range Office



A



B



C

Figure 4: Capacity building of local research assistant:
 A - Camera trap set up by local community; Bangdhepa;
 B - Gibbon monitoring at
 C - Gibbon monitoring at Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary



Figure 5: Seedbed and seedlings of nursery at Inani Reserve Forest, Cox's Bazar



Figure 6: Plantation activities at Inani Reserve Forest, Cox's Bazar



Figure 7: Plantation activities at Banghdhepa, Cox's Bazar



Figure 8: Seedlings raising at the nursery of Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary