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## **KAPTAI LAKE BASED LIVELIHOOD & THE DEVELOPMENT IN RANGAMATI: A DEVELOPMENT OBSERVATION**

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### **Abstract:**

The Chitagong Hill Tract is a diverse part of Bangladesh for its ethnic diversity. Indigenous community has a fame of simplicity and friendly across the world but in CHT! It has a different political history of peach accord, pre-peach ach accord unrest situation, engagement of military, riot between tribal and non tribal almost the CHT is considered as an unrest zone and hostile in attitude to the people from outside. But many of them are in dark about the about the underlying causes of those situation. Kaptai dam is one of the main causes. Kaptai Lake is a creation of kaptai dam; displaced 10 million of people but creates some opportunity for the inhabitant in Rangamati. Whether the impact of dam is good or bad but should be cleat to the all about the reality of that context. The bad notion to the distinctive life style of indigenous community should be calm through providing proper information and clarification. On the other hand the good impact of the mega project of kaptai dam needs to be analyzed for learning.

### **Key Words:**

*Kaptai Lake, Livelihood, Development, Rangamati.*

## 1. Introduction

The district Rangamati is a legendary name of natural beauty and diversity of indigenous culture, the largest district of 6116.13 square Km to the southeastern part in Bangladesh, it is well known of Kaptai Lake; the largest artificial lake in south Asia, having uniqueness than other hill districts of Khagrachari and Bandarban even from other parts of the country for its spellbound natural site with hill-lake composition and diversified ethnic community with their strong traditional culture and distinct way of life. Almost 508182 (52% tribal and non tribal 48%) people including several indigenous communities of Chakma, Marma, Mmurong, Tripura, Tanchangya, Pankhua, Bom, Chak khiyang, Khumi, Lusai, Rakhain, Gurkha and Bengali Hindu, Muslim Kristina and Barua are the main dwellers here. The indigenous communities are extremely dependent on nature and self-reliant as well. They produce their food and cloth by own; having different language of each indigenous community and speak with their own dialect, having almost different culture and beliefs among them; lead a very simple life with their own production. It is a potential part of Bangladesh economy and environment, now it is considered as a tourism area. Almost year-round visitors are available in Rangamati; most of them prefer to visit Rangamati in early and late winter. One of the most attractive choices of the tourists is to journey by boat in Kaptai Lake; ringed with small and medium green hills. It is almost known to all that before 1959 the beauty of Rangamati today was totally different, there was no lake like today, there were only the river Karnafuly with some tributaries of Kachalong, Subolong, Raingkhank and Chengy, there were inhabitants besides tow bank of the river with their farming land, grazing field, play ground, valley land and forest resource of diversified wild animal and plants. There were land based self relying mood of production mainly farmland & jum cultivation, cattle rearing and gathering of wild resource. In 1956 the inhabitant in Rangamati were being oriented gradually with a new and changed situation of Kaptai Dam construction, a development initiative of Pakistan government, funded by US government with the main objective of Karnafuly Hydro Electric project on the river Karnafuly at Kaptai. At the starting of the dam it was quite unbelievable to the simple indigenous community but the reality differs! The dam was completed by 1962; the area is field with water and caused the largest artificial lake in South Asia of around 68800 hectors of water body; inundated 40% of total agricultural land of the district. The beauty of Rangamati today is really a pathetic creation of that context; it is really charming but enjoyable to all, especially those who have buried everything of their livelihood under the lake water including house, farming land and playground with childhood memories. There

may have many reason of communal unrest but Kaptai Dam is considered as one of the most vital cause of the unrest situation among the indigenous community in CHT.

**Figure 1: visitors at hanging bridge, Rangamati**



## 2. Kaptai Lake

Kaptai Lake is created with the main objective of producing electricity, along with more other six (6) objectives were considered as the additional good impacts of the development project as:

- Extraction of forest resource
- Development of fisheries
- Improvement of waterway transportation with remote areas
- Flood controlling of lower part of the greater Chitagong Hill tracts area
- Opportunity of irrigation and agriculture
- Tourism development in Rangamai

**Table: 1 Some basic information on Kaptai dam and Lake:**

Construction period of Kaptai Dam	1957-1961
Land acquired during dam construction	227400 acre
Total area of Kaptai lake	192 square mile
Number of Victim families	Around 18000
Number of victim people	Around 100000
Rehabilitated by government (1965-66)	11716 (9201 farmer)
Average height of water level	highest 31.1 meter and lowest 21.98 meter
Normal watered area	58300 hectors
Water area	lowest 48300 hectors and highest 68800 hector
Depth	average 9 meter, highest 36 meter

### **3. Objectives**

To comprehend the Rangamati context considering creation of Kaptai Lake and its affect on Socio-culture, & Economy as well as the livelihood of the concern communities and to identify the development opportunity and challenges in the Rangamati.

### **4. Methods**

Transect, interview, Focus Group discussion, large group discussion including tribal and non tribal community people, consultation with the representatives of Working NGO, Nation Building Department, Hill District Council, indigenous governing structure of headman and karbari, Union Parisad, Upazila Parisad and the review of relevant literature.

### **5. Development**

The concept development refers to the collective growth of Social capital, human capital along with the physical capital (existing natural resource) of a targeted area rather than the economic growth only. It should be non excluding and non rival; varies community to community, depends on their believes and practice; not necessary required the same development for all or in a same way as well; depends on the existing resource, pattern of livelihood and the expectation of the targeted community; their culture, norms and way of living should be highly considered for the fretfulness of the development work. Natural resource, livelihood, communal harmony or social cohesion must be considered for sustainable development. The change of geography, economy or orientation with new opportunity of basic education or technology, or limitation of resource causes the new occupation group at marginal level; people receive new occupation due to limitation of inherent resource and occupation or high expectation of better livelihood. People always bound to receive the survivable opportunity from the change situation whether it is socially or culturally adaptable or not!

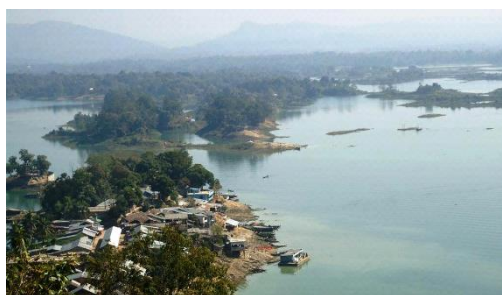
In 1957 the period of Kaptai dam construction a large number of outsiders especially construction labor of different culture and attitude and capacities were there, used heavy and new technologies, machineries at construction site, gradually there was an interaction between the local and the outsider at the local growth center around the construction area. Sudden-outsider with new culture and attitude even different language created conflicting situation in the locality; local people considered it as an aggrieved. In the mean time a class of Chakma community engaged with

Construction Company as worker supplier for the dam construction activities, they collect local people of different class and age even students as construction labor because of good wage rate. Finally the dam was constructed by 1961 and lake was created by 1962.

## **6. Affect & Rehabilitation**

During dam construction period Pakistan government declared the rehabilitation plan and subsidy rate at different category of asset like farmland, garden, trees, and house but the subsidy system is not ensured to all in a same range; many of them deprived of actual measurement and classification of their resource. According to the declaration of government- Households will be resettled according to the choice of victim at the 20 feet of upper side of water level in anywhere in Chitagong hill Tracts area, government will bear the transportation, medical facility and security, on the other hand it was also declared that the victim will be entitled for free electricity. Under the circumstances they had to take the hard decision of family shifting leavening behind close neighbor, playmate, relatives, leaving resource and child hood memories! They started to find out the suitable place to live along with their close relatives and neighbors in CHT area, infect many of them failed to resettle according to their desire; made them isolate of their social bondage had to search new options rather than their inherent and familiar living condition as well livelihoods in a quite new place with unknown situation.

**Figure 2: inundated area Suvolonl to barkal**



As rehabilitation initiative 40 square miles of reserve forest was de-reserved at kachalong area, creates 10000 acres of farmland for the resettles. With the objective of rehabilitating the highest number of victims Government declared not to provide more than 10 acres of land per rehabilitee. After liberation the government of Bangladesh revised the declaration again and decided only 5 acre of land per rehabilitee with the same reason. The district Rangamati is the highest district in size but having limited cultivable land. Almost 100000 households

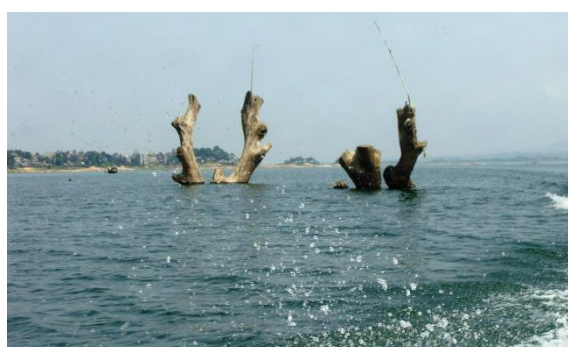
were affected and the Government provided a subsidy to the victims according to the category of asset at the rate mentioned below:

Table: 2

SL	Category of assets	Subsidy rate in BDT
1	1 <sup>st</sup> class land ( year round cultivable land )	600 per acre
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Class land (cultivable but not year-round )	400 per acre
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> class and (grove land)	200 per acre
4	Residence	500 per family
5	fruit garden	10 per tree
6	Non fruit garden	5 per tree
7	Banana garden	.25 Per tree
8	pineapple	.6 Per sucker

According to the Far Eastern Economic Review report-1980, The Pakistan government allocated 51 million dollar of subsidy but spent only 2.6 million of USD in the affected area. In fact many of them were not addressed properly as a result many of them bound to migrate in nearby district and finding no other alternative around 40,000 tribal inhabitant migrate in India. After long time some of them return to their own district but lost their livelihood pattern through adapting new one.

**Figure 3: Trees before 1959 in current lake area**



Before inundation of current lake area there was a very different geography and mood of production .Maximum community residences were at the bottom side of the hill, or beside the two bank of the river karnafuly, having some more opportunity of agricultural activity

including jum and farmland cultivation, cattle rearing, hunting and gathering of wild resource that was inundated finally in 1962-1963; inundated 265 square Kilometers of farmland of 10000 families, 10 millions of people of 18000 households were displaced, caused destruction of wilderness and loss of wildlife and wildlife habitats, almost all inhabitants were the victim of the Kaptai Dam as well as the lake. During the period large number of trees and vegetation were inundated, gradually the water quality became decreased because of fermentation; the quality of fish became decreased of bad smell even some species were avoided to take by the local people, traditional fishing system became almost useless because of wide and deep water body rather than the fishing practice in river which results poor harvesting. The traditional fishers and farmers oriented with a new and hard scenario of fishing and cultivation within a homeless condition! In that context the displaced people had to settle with new, geography, economy and socio-political culture, on the other hand it plays a significant role to the occupant life and influence to the social change through diversified occupation to cope with that changed situation. The old traditional way of life faced a challenge, in some cases they lost their inherent one; caused the social and communal unrest across the area, which resulted a massive change on socio-economy, culture and on political condition.

## **7. Economy**

As usual the people in Rangamati do mainly the land dependent economic activity and local marketing for their self survivability; produce required, foodstuff, fruits, vegetables and spice mainly Rice, Banana, Pineapple, Jackfruit, Mango, orange and olive in hilly land, Turmeric, ginger and green chili in jum on the other hand they rear pig, cow, goat and poultry, gather hill and lake resource like bamboo, Ratan, firewood, fish, snails and crab for their own and sometimes for local marketing. People are in the habit of weaving as a tradition and maximum indigenous women use own made dress with best of their preference; have distinctive dress of each indigenous community. Weaving with their traditional waist loom is a great uniqueness of CHT, for long time they are with this culture but the producers in CHT are less benefited lack of proper marketing facilities as well as modernization of their product.

**Figure 4: weaving with waist loom by women**



**Figure 5: means of transportation**



According to the objectives of Kaptai Dam improved fisheries and water way transportation was considered as an additional income besides electricity production. In 1964 East Pakistan Fisheries Development Corporation (EPFD) take the first initiative of fisheries development through stoking brood, released different local species. EPFDC also work on new technique on fishing in deepwater and marketing channel development for the permanent. By this time fisheries development opportunity is created and EPFDC initiated projects with BDT 1310000.00 named “Kaptai Lake Fish and Fishery” in 1966-67, they started brood stocking, input support and marketing facilities; production becomes increased. At that time the annual gross fish production was around 1206 Tone. In 1972 EPFDC turned into BFDC (Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation) and starts fisheries development through the project focused on increased fish production in Kaptai Lake. Installs about 4 fish landings at Kaptai, Rangamati Mohalchari and Baghaichari and provided some freezer van support for broader marketing. Now it is an enriched water body of diversified local fish species; having 76 kinds of fresh water fish species, 2 kinds of shrimp, 1 type of turtle and dolphin. 42 types of fish are being commercially harvested; govern earning around 300 million of USD as royalty from the lake through BFDC. Current fish production in Kaptai Lake is around 9000 MT; 20, 00000 million USD in cash; there are involved 1100 detect (year round) and 6000 indirect (seasonal and floating) fisherman, 55 big trader (more than one MT per day) and 63 small trader (bellow 500 kg per day). Based on fishing, there are 3 fish treading society named



“Rangamati Fish Trading Society, Rangamati small fish trading society and Rangamai Indigenous Fis Trading society.

A large number of people both indigenous and non indigenous are engaged now with fishing but in a very poor condition; because of inadequate financial solvency, improper marketing facilities, and required technical knowledge. The fish trading syndicate is very strong here! The permanent fisher take cash and fishing material (net, boat, ice and cash) from the fish trader in advance with the hard condition of refunding through selling fish to the trader. The traders get the maximum benefit through control the all the system but the fishers! Sometimes they failed to refund their loan within the time which results bondage to the traders, by this way fishers are always deprived here and living in a very poor condition!

**Figure: 6 wood collection**



**Figure: 7 Effect of Teak monoculture in hill (green desert)**



**Figure: 8 modernized transportation of local product**



On the other hand transportation and processing of wood, fruits and fish creates another livelihood opportunity; changed the way of life in Rangamati. On the other hand large number of people are engaged with wood transportation, carpentry (around 4000), furniture shops (around 750), Wood trading and processing of wood, fruits and fish; creates the another livelihood opportunity.

Resettlement with new condition make them bound in over use of hill with diversified way; started more shifting cultivation and horticulture and gathering of wild resource; started teak monoculture with different wood tree rather than the Dependency on natural forest which results the bad impact on ecology in the area! Natural water source became dry after dry because of deforestation and over harvesting of vegetation and plants. The people in remote location (deep side of the hill) are in water crisis and of wild source of living. Access has been increased for transportation with mechanized boat; People from different remote location started broader interaction and improved marketing of their production as a result the mood of production of Rangamati is being changed gradually; business oriented production is emphasized rather than the self consumption only. Indigenous product is being oriented with people from different location. Now days it has been started modernization of their product with the help of some national and international development organization.

## **8. Some Observations**

- Human intervention through kaptai hydroelectric project as well as submerge a of huge hill resource including 350 square mile of un-classed state forest/ or Community land) under the reservoirs and teak monoculture in hill has changed the feature of hill nature which influences the critical change in indigenous life and livelihood.
- There was good relation between tribal and nontribal community, a large number of non tribal people settled in the district with the privilege of government that causes the communal unrest; the new settled people (especially 80000 rootless people) from different district with new culture, attitude and occupation collide with the old one.
- There have a good opportunity of mixed fruit gardening, fruit processing and ecotourism; lack of storage and preservation facilities the farmers are deprived of reasonable price of their production, by this time private sectors are being encouraged to invest but government should patronized with caution.

- Since the British period here have been invented a special administrative structure of chieftainship (Monarchy) on the other hand Democracy is running parallel with that traditional system since 1997 as a condition of Peace Accord but till today there is a coordination gap and divided people tribal and non tribal; one of a challenge of strengthening local government.

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