

Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in general,
and of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in particular,
during the period since the National Report prepared in 1995
for Ramsar COP6 and 30 June 1998

Contracting Party: **Bangladesh**

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority

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Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF)

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Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1

To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

1.1 Describe any actions your government has taken (such as hosting regional or sub-regional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighbouring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention.

No action taken so far.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2

To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.

2.1 Has a National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan been developed, or is one being developed or planned for the near future? If so:

Yes. A National Wetland policy has been drafted by IUCN on behalf of MOEF. The National Conservation Strategy (NCS) and the National Environment Action Plan (NEMAP) have produced strategies and Action Plans for wise use of wetlands.

a. What are/will be its main features?

The main features of the draft wetland policy are:

**Establishment of principles for sustainable use of wetland resource;
Maintenance of existing level of biological diversity;
Maintenance of the functions and values of wetlands; and
Promotion of recognition and intervalue of wetland functions in resource management and economic development.**

Under NEMAP, community-based sustainable management of wetlands projects have been taken by the GOB.

b. Was it, or is it, intended that the Policy/Strategy/Action Plan be adopted by the whole of Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.

Yes. The Wetland Policy will be adopted by the government through the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF) which is the Administrative Authority for Ramsar Convention in Bangladesh. The Wetland Management Projects are being implemented by the MOEF.

How does it relate/will it relate to other national environmental/ conservation planning initiatives (e.g., National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies)?

**The policy has taken care of the :
Environment Policy
National Conservation Strategy and
National Environmental Management Active Plan (NEMAP).**

2.2 If a policy is in place, how much progress has been made in its implementation, and what are the major difficulties being encountered in doing so?

The drafts are will soon be placed before Inter-ministerial Committee. No major difficulty foreseen.

2.3 If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with :

The draft Wetland Policy mentioned in 2.1 will be implemented by the MOEF. The National Environment Council which is chaired by the Prime Minister will oversee the implementation. The Executive Committee of the National Council is headed by the Minister, MOEF will monitor it's implementation.

- a. a single Government Ministry,
- b. a committee drawn from several Ministries, or
- c. a cross-sectoral committee?

Please provide details.

2.4 For countries with Federal systems of Government, are there Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state or regional levels of Government? Yes/No

If yes, please give details.

Not applicable.

2.5 Has a review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands been carried out, and if so, has this resulted in any changes which assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention? Please describe these.

No review of legislation or practices having impact on wetlands has yet been carried out.

2.6 Describe the efforts made in your country to have wetlands considered in integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management processes at the following levels:

- a. national
- provincial
- local

Planning in Bangladesh is a national subject matter. However involvement of local government institutions for management of wetlands, and coastal zone is recognised.

A large number of documents on location-specific wetland management projects have been prepared under NCS-Implementation Project.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest is implementing the National Conservation Strategy – Follow-up Project (Phase 1) contains programmes for integrated land/water management in 10 freshwater wetlands in the North-east Haor Basin of the country as well as in the coastal regions e.g. St. Martins Island the only offshore coral island, and in the newly accreted islands of the coastal districts in South east of the country.

Have there been any publications produced, or practices documented, which could assist other countries to promote and improve the application of the Ramsar Wise Use of Wetlands Guidelines? Yes/No

Yes.

If Yes, please provide details and copies.

Bangladesh is implementing a project entitled “ Training on Conservation of Wetlands in Bangladesh”. The project is implemented by the Forest Directorate through the MOEF. It is funded by WCF of Ramsar Convention . One of the main objectives of the project is to prepare a Wetland Conservation Training Manual. This Manual will be helpful in training concerned officials / planners conservationists / biologists in wetland management.

2.8 Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advise of the actions taken since then “to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands” (Operative paragraph 9).

The Sundarbans Mangrove forest is the Ramsar site of Bangladesh. The Sundarbans has been suffering from pollution due to oil spill from foreign ships which moves through the Sundarbans to the Mongla Sea Port. This has been noted in the management plans proposed for management of wildlife sanctuaries of the forest. Impact of pollution on other important wetlands are being documented.

2.9 Describe what steps have been taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions.

Preparation of National Water Management Plan has been initiated. Economic valuation of wetlands are expected to be introduced by that project.

2.10 Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country? Yes/No

Yes.

2.11 Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country? Yes/No.

Yes.

If Yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilise resources for restoration or rehabilitation.

A number of wetland restoration projects are being implemented. Notable among them are:

NCS – follow-up (Phase I) project” Forest Resources Management Project” and “Sustainable Environmental Management Programmes” have focused on issues related to wetlands.

Community-based wetland management project being implemented under the sustainable environment management project of MOEF.

Under the Flood Action Plan, the Ministry of Water Resource had restored the condition of the Kawadigton Haor in Sylhet district.

2.12 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage active and informed participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.” (refer to Actions 2.7.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

Under the “Sustainable Environment Management Programme” there are about 6 component projects aimed at involving local communities specially women for management of flood plain and wetlands management.

2.13 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands” (refer to Actions 2.8.1-4 in the Strategic Plan). Has this included a review of fiscal measures (taxation arrangements, etc.) to identify and remove disincentives and introduce incentives for wetland conservation and wise use? Yes/No

No.

If yes, please provide details.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels

3.1 Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country which focuses on, or includes, wetlands? Yes/No? If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4)

Yes. SEMP has an education and public awareness programme.

3.2 Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and Ramsar’s Wise Use principles included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details.

Curricula for educational institutions.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.

4.1 Describe the mechanisms in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the various institutions responsible for actions which can have an impact on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. If one of the mechanisms is a National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee, please describe its composition, functions and modus operandi.

The MOEF is the responsible agency for the overall conservation of environment including wetland conservation in Bangladesh. The MOEF has two Directorates – Forest Department and Department of Environment, who are responsible for environmental and natural resource conservation including the wetlands. IUCN Bangladesh is the main promoter and there are several National NGOs which implement projects on wetland conservation. There is a proposal to the MOEF for formulating a National Ramsar Committee.

4.2 Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:

a. a review to identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands Yes/No? If yes, please indicate the major findings of the review.

This has been seriously felt and a training project entitled “Training on Conservation of Wetlands in Bangladesh” has been drafted. This is being implemented with support of Ramsar Bureau. In addition to the training of officials of concerned departments, ministries, NGOs, a wetland conservation training manual will be prepared under the project.

b. a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries. Yes/No?

No. The wetland Conservation Training Manual to be prepared under the project mentioned in paragraph ‘a’ would create training opportunities towards conservation of wetlands in Bangladesh and other Asian countries.

c. the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details.

Yes. The Wetland Conservation Training Manual will be a model for training on conservation of wetlands in the Asian countries. The Manual will be made for training of managers and planners.

d. people from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. Yes/No? If yes, please give details.

Yes. Two officials one each from MOEF and Forest Department attended the “Regional Training Workshop on Conservation of Wetlands Habitats” held in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, India in November 1997.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).

5.1 Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans:

a. being prepared?

fully prepared?

being implemented?

Bangladesh has one Ramsar site - The Sundarbans Mangrove Forest. The Sundarbans Mangrove Forest has a Forest Management Plan. "Conservation and Management Plan of the Wildlife Sanctuaries in the Sundarbans" has been prepared under the "Forest Resource Management Project" of Forest Department. The Conservation and Management Plan of the wildlife sanctuaries in the Sundarbans is yet to be placed for implementation. Another project entitled "Sundarbans Biodiversity Project" is expected to be taken up very soon.

Please indicate in the attached table of Ramsar sites which sites these are and what category they fall into.

5.2 Of the management plans referred to above, which ones have included a monitoring scheme or programme to allow changes in ecological character to be detected? Please indicate this in the attached table of Ramsar sites also.

The Sundarbans Biodiversity Project.

5.3 Has there been a change in the ecological character (either positive or negative) at any of your Ramsar sites or is this likely to occur in the near future? Yes/No. If Yes, please give details.

Yes. Top dying of Sundri tree (*Heritiera fomes*) and salinity increase due to lack of freshwater flush during the dry months. These are causing the negative effects in the ecology of Sundarbans.

5.4 In the case of Montreux Record Ramsar sites where the Management Guidance Procedure has been applied, what is the status of the implementation of the MGP report recommendations? What is the expected time-frame for removing the site from the Montreux Record?

The Sundarbans of Bangladesh has not been included in the Montreux Record.

5.5 For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, "Ramsar sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties", please provide advice on the actions that have been taken in response to the issues raised at that time.

Not applicable.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6

To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention's criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.

6.1 Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country? Yes/No.

No.

If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No.

Not yet.

Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalized, where it is kept and what information it contains.

6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of "important" wetlands for your country or region? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details of when it was finalized, where it is kept, what criteria for "important" were used, and the types of information it contains.

Not applicable.

6.3 If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities.

Not known.

If this information is available, please indicate what definition of “wetland” was used.

Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and Recommendations that Contracting Parties should give priority to listing Wetlands of International Importance which:

a. meet the criteria for fish habitat (Resolution VI.2),
meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution VI.4),
are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution VI.5),
d. are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)
e. are coral reefs and associated systems (Recommendation 6.7)
are under-represented wetland types (which apart from d. and e. above include mangroves and sea grass beds) (Strategic Plan Action 6.2.3)

Yes/No? If yes, please describe these actions.

No.

6.5 If your government indicated at COP6 that it would be proceeding to list further specific sites, please advise of the status of this action.

Not applicable.

6.6 Please advise which of the sites included in the Ramsar List from your country are transfrontier wetlands (Refer also to 7.1).

The Sundarbans Mangrove Forest of Bangladesh and the Sundarbans of West Bengal, India is the same forest, having an international border through it.

6.7 Describe any plans, or actions being taken for further transfrontier sites to be listed (Refer also to 7.1).

There is a plan to declare the St. Martins Island in the Bay of Bengal in the territory of Bangladesh which has international border with Myanmar.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7

To mobilise international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

7.1 Briefly describe any bilateral or multilateral activities that have been taken, are under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7).

No agreement has yet been made with any country.

7.2 Do you have Ramsar sites that are “twinned” with others, either nationally or internationally?

Yes/No.

If yes, please give details.

No.

Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, describe what mechanism(s) exist to assist regular dialogue and cooperative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:

- a. Convention on Biological Diversity
- b. Framework Convention on Climate Change
- c. Convention to Combat Desertification

Convention on Migratory Species

World Heritage Convention

Bangladesh is a signatory of a, b, c, and e.

The MOEF is the Administrative Authority of the above Conventions. The MOEF initiates dialogues with concerned Ministries and departments for implementing the provisions of the Ramsar Convention.

7.4 Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? Yes/No.

No.

If yes, please provide details.

7.5 Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in your country? Yes/No.

No.

If yes, please provide details.

7.6 Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? Yes/No.

No.

If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget?

Not applicable.

7.7 If your country has a development assistance programme, does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

Yes. The UNDP funded SEMP and NORAD funded NCS Implementation has support.

7.8 Is there a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in your country, where one exists? Yes/No

No.

If yes, what is that process.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.

8.1 Has your government made voluntary financial contributions, other than the invoiced contributions or to the Small Grants Fund, to further the work of the Convention globally? Yes/No.

No.

If yes, please provide details.

8.2 If your country is in arrears with the payment of its annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention, please indicate the reasons for this situation and the prospects for paying these arrears in the near future.

Contribution has been paid up to 1997.

Optional section - Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention

These are optional questions relating to cooperation with and involvement of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

At COP6 some 42 NGOs made the “Brisbane NGO pledge of support for the Ramsar Convention”. The Standing Committee agreed that for COP7 there should be an effort made to gauge the level and type of cooperation which is occurring between government Administrative Authorities and the national and international NGOs with an interest in wetlands issues.

In this optional section of the National Report, you are asked to describe the nature of the cooperation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

9.1 Approximately how many NGOs have wetlands as part of their regular “business” in your country?

Please break this down between international, regional and national/provincial organizations.

About 5 (five); one (IUCN Bangladesh) is international and the rest are national NGOs.

Is there a regular forum or mechanism through which these NGOs express their views on wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation:

- a. to each other? Yes/No
- b. to the government? Yes/No

If yes in either case, please give details.

A Wetland Conservation Forum is being formed as a Network by IUCN Bangladesh.

9.3 Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/No

No.

9.4 Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1).

Yes. Almost all of the above NGOs have educational and awareness programmes.

9.5 Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives?
If yes, please give details

No appropriate Ramsar Management exists now.

9.6 Describe the themes of the Convention (refer to General Objectives 1-8 of the Strategic Plan) where you perceive the national/provincial NGOs to be most active.

In the theme of general objectives of the strategic plan.

Education and awareness programmes.

Final comments:

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

The Administrative authority is strengthening the Ramsar Management in the country. So it can't properly follow up the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

10.2 Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with, and services provided by:

- a. The Ramsar Standing Committee
- b. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel

The Ramsar Bureau

The Ramsar NGO partners

As the Ramsar Convention Management is in the process of build up in the country, so the Administrative authority of Bangladesh is not in a position to make comments on the activities of Standing Committee, STRP, Ramsar Bureau etc.

10.3 Any other general observations and/or recommendations for the future.

Management of Ramsar Convention is in the process of build up in Bangladesh. It is reflected in this report. So external assistance is needed for creation of separate Ramsar Cell in the Ministry of Environment and Forest for management of Ramsar Convention in the country.

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