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Hilsa (*Tenualosa ilisha*) sanctuaries and the governance of coastal ecosystem of Bangladesh

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Sanctuaries are an important management tool for conservation and management of fisheries resources. This study analyze the socio-economic and ecological benefits of hilsa sanctuaries that were declared in the Meghna, Padma and Andharmanik river to protect single most important hilsa species. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from six communities located in five hilsa sanctuaries. Livelihood status of the fishers' was studied and their perceptions regarding the performances of the hilsa sanctuaries were analyzed. Majority of the fishers believe that sanctuaries are important for hilsa conservation and enhanced production but closure of fishing during ban period have stopped their income and enhance sufferings for the community due to extreme poverty, inappropriate fisher's list, inadequate incentive, corruption, nepotism and poor infrastructural development. To achieve the goals, conservation of hilsa fisheries without undermining the sustainability of dependent livelihood - wide ranges of issues need to be taken into consideration. The compensation scheme needs to be sufficient, more transparent, inclusive and equitable for further conservation success along with the access of alternative income generating activities (AIGAs). Thus, a challenge for policy makers is to find a solution that benefits both the fishery conservation and poverty reduction. Involving local fishers and sharing responsibilities among different stakeholders for managing hilsa sanctuaries by introducing co-management approach successfully could be an effective solution.