

Socio-Economic Condition of the People's Involving Murta (*Sekumannianthus dichotoma*) Based Cottage Industries at Gowainghat, Sylhet, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Sekumannianthus dichotoma locally known as murta is an important non-timber forest product of Bangladesh generally grown in the north eastern riparian areas. The study was conducted to find out socio-economic condition of rural people involved in murta collection and murta based cottage industries. The study was conducted in a village of Sylhet, Bangladesh. Village and respondents were selected randomly. A semi structured questionnaire was used in data collection. Secondary data was collected from various sources. The study concluded that murta is very vital source of secondary income and plays a very important role in improving socio-economic condition of people involving it. It is therefore imperative for the state to formulate more policies for the development of the murta sector in the country.

Keywords: Murta; *Sekumannianthus dichotoma*; NTFP; Socio-economic; Cottage industry

Introduction

Non-timber forest products (NTFP) play a crucial role in both forest management and the improvement of living standard of local communities [1]. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated that the worldwide trade of NTFP is US \$11.6 billion and 1.5 billion population in all over the world are dependent on it [2]. The total value of murta products in the international market is US \$3 billion and Myanmar is largest producer and exporter of murta products [1].

Sekumannianthus dichotoma locally known as murta is the raw material for making Shitalpati, a traditional bed mat of Bangladesh. This species is typically found in muddy riparian (Interface between land and a river or a stream) zone. Geographically northeast region of Bangladesh possess the characteristics of riparian zone. It occurs naturally in the swamp forests of Sylhet in Bangladesh.

Murta is used extensively throughout Bangladesh as a raw material in cottage enterprises for making furniture, handicrafts and other household articles, because of its low cost and natural appearance. In Bangladesh, Forest dwellers and local people collect rattan from the forest on payment of royalties to the Forest Department. Murta collection is helping to raise the socio-economic status of the rural people who are related with murta based cottage industries [3]. The objective of the study is to find out the living standard of the worker of murta based industries as well as to find out the impact of murta based industries on the socio-economic condition of the rural people.

Methods

Study area

There are 13 Upazilas in Sylhet district and Gowainghat is one of them which was selected purposively as the villagers are involved in murta based cottage industries. A village name Angarzur was randomly selected for the study (Figure 1).

Field investigation were carried out in Gowainghat Thana of Sylhet district, an important wetland area [4] between 24°55'–25°11' N and 91°45'–92°07' E. Area of the Upazila is 486.5 km² including 6.8 km²

of rivers and 78.5 km² of forest. The area is bounded in the east by Jaintapur and Kanaighat thana and west by Companiganj thana [5]. Annual maximum temperature is 33.2°C and minimum temperature is 13.6°C, average annual rainfall is 3334mm. There are eight unions in Gowainghat thana. About 70% of the household depend on agriculture as the main sources of income. The population of this Upazila is 207000 and from those males are 108230 and females are 98680 [5-9].

Data collection

Data were collected during April 2018. Murta are cultivated in several villages. The village consists of 310 families of which 120 families were involved in murta based industries and murta plantation around homesteads.

Randomly 30 families were selected for direct interview. At least one person from each household or family was interview on the basic of a semi-structured questionnaire. Income from murta cottage industries and other sources were collected as for the basis of comparison.

Data was structured according to following values: Education, Occupation, Income, Gender, Water, Water Resources, Sanitation, Male and Female participation. Education level was also sub-divided into three subgroups: primary (Class 5 or below), secondary (6 to S.S.C.), higher secondary (H.S.C.) and illiterate. Occupation also subgroup as following: Farmers, Businessmen, and others. Local government office provide data to the villagers to make data usable.

Necessary background information was collected from the office of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in Sylhet and Gowainghat. For relevant

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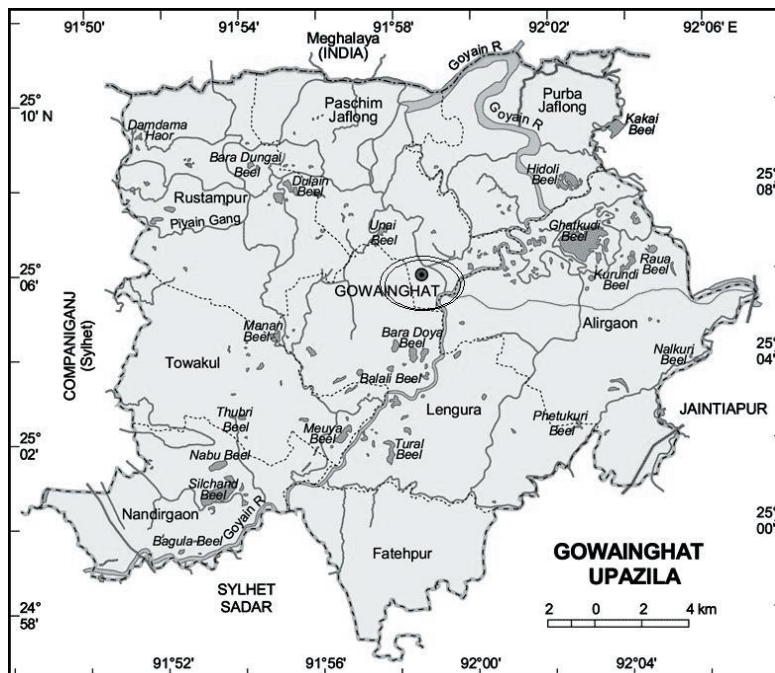


Figure 1: Map of Gowainghat Upazila.

information about the Upazila also collected from different books, articles, journal, research papers, and different websites. Data analysis was done by Microsoft Excel 2013.

Results

Age of the artisans

The total number of artisans who were directly involved in Murta based industry was 135 (Table 1). Average 4.5 artisans from the household involving in this sector. The highest percentage of workers are age between 31-40 years (number 51) which is 37.8%. Among the worker there was worker who works in this sector.

Age class	Total	Percentage
1-10	00	00
11-20	18	13.33
21-30	32	23.70
31-40	51	37.78
41-50	25	18.5
51-60	8	5.93
>60	1	0.74
Total	135	100.00

Table 1: Age variation of workers.

Gender role is the industry

Among the 135 artisans, 83 were female and the other artisans were male (Figure 2). Female workers are preferable than male artisans. Female workers are preferable than male artisans. Female workers show more skill than male workers. Female worker can finish a bet mat within 4-5 day and wherein male worker can finish a bet mat within 6-7 days. Raw materials collection and producing of final products are mostly done by female workers and male workers or artisans take part in mostly marketing process.

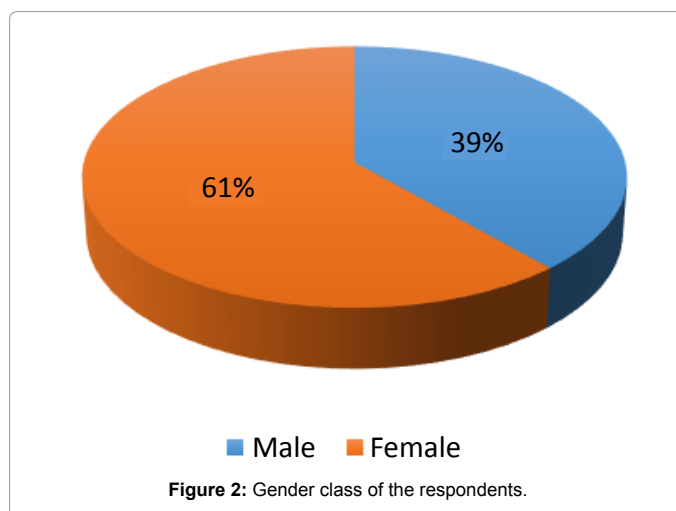


Figure 2: Gender class of the respondents.

Land utilization for murta plantation

Average area for homestead was found 15.76 decimals in the study area. Average area for Murta plantation was 3.12 decimals. Among the homestead they use 14.5% area for Murta plantation (Figure 3).

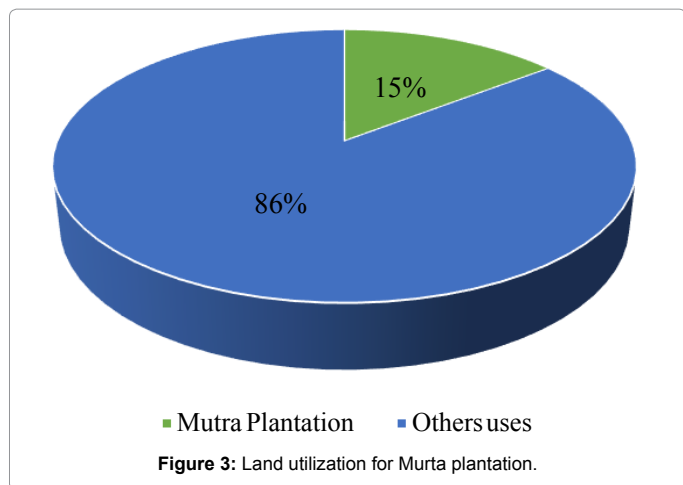
Fallow, low land, submersed land usually use for murta cultivation. The major sources of raw material is government forest by illegal collection. Entrepreneurs sometimes purchase murta from local market.

Water sources and sanitation facilities

About 27.88% people use tube well waters. They use tube well water

only for drinking. For household activities they mostly use ponds or canal waters.

Sanitation facilities also very poor. Only have 28 percentage family and healthy sanitation facilities (Table 2).

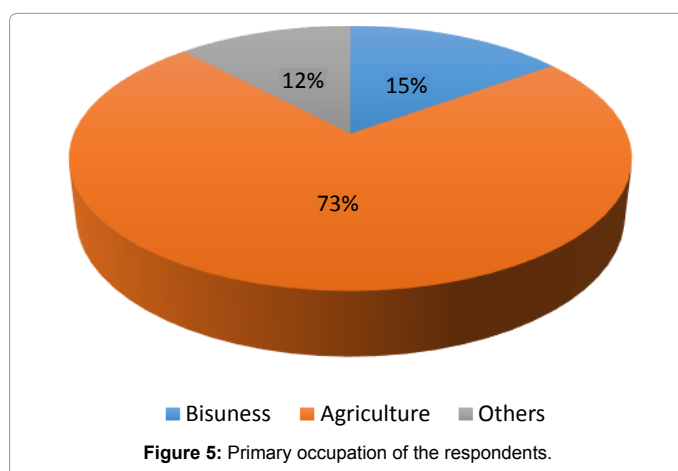
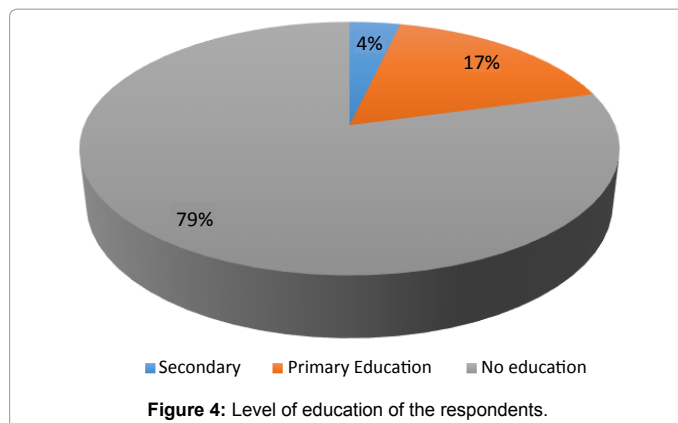


Type	Percentage
Tube well	27.78
Ponds	26.76
Tube well+pond	14.33
Pond+Canal	25.44
River	6.67
Supply Water	00

Table 2: Water sources.

Education level of artisans

Among 135 workers or artisans 109 were found illiterate which is 80.74% of all the Murta Artisans. 23 workers were found have primary education and 5 persons had secondary education. There is no worker who have higher education (Figure 4).



Primary occupation

Murta is the Secondary occupation of all the respondents. They had different types of primary occupation. Most of them were involving in agriculture which is 73% and 15% family were involving with business 12% family involving with other occupation. Murta based cottage industry is more suitable with agriculture. So a huge number of family are involving in agriculture which tend to more suitable for Murta production (Figure 5).

Income class T.K	Number of household	Average Tk.	Total Average
<3000	9	1777	3925
3000-3500	14	3428	
>5000	7	6571	

Table 3: Monthly income from Murta.

Family income from murta

Average income from Murta products is Tk. 3925.47 per month. 30% family's income from Murta are below Tk. 3000. 46.67% family's income class are between Tk. 3000-3500 monthly. Only 23.33% families have income more than Tk. 5000 per month (Table 3).

Income class T.K	Number of household	Average Tk.	Total Average
<5000	2	4000	7166
5000-8000	19	6157	
>8000	9	10000	

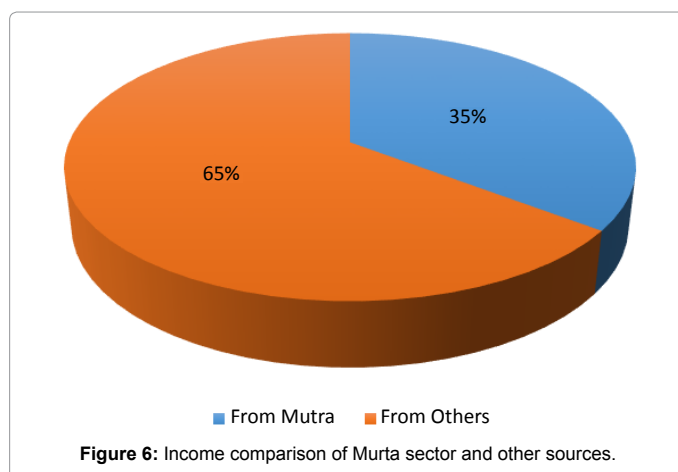
Table 4: Monthly income from other sources (Expect Murta Sector).

Monthly income from other sources

Maximum families earn more money from others sources then Murta sector. About 63.33% family earn or income between Tk. 5000-8000 from others sources. Average income is Tk. 7166 per monthly from other sources 30% families income is more than Tk. 8000 per month (Table 4).

Income comparison of murta sector and others

About 64.61% income of family comes from other sources (Primary Occupation) and 35.39% income from Murta Sector. Income from Murta Sector seems low but it should be considered that there are no family which primary income source is Murta Sector (Figure 6).



Discussion

Murta based cottage industries plays vital role in the rural economy of this region. It contributes on economy as well as to uplift the life style of their families. Agriculture is the primary income source of families but murta also giving a handsome amount of Secondary income.

Most of the respondents were landless, they cultivate others land and share production with the land owner. A huge portion of population engaged themselves in murta sector for their Secondary sources. Average income from their Sector is Tk. 47,100 per year, which helping them to live more secured. Most of artisans were illiterate but it is not major problem because in this sector formal education is not need. Among the participants of murta industries more than 50% are female it indicate that to women plays victor roles in this sector. Along with household works they can easily participate this sector, women workers are for preferable then male because of their high skill. Women can finish more quickly than male. This also gives the Government support to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). This sector are facing raw materials crisis. Only 18% of the totals homestead is used for murta plantation which is not enough. For raw materials lacking the workers have to stop work sometimes. Sometimes they have to collect raw materials from local market high price which reduce their income.

Murta generally grow in low or submerged area which are not suitable for crop production. So there is no possibility of hampering agriculture. In Bangladesh the combined culture of agriculture murta have huge opportunities.

Murta plant support the land by reducing soil erosion, maintaining soil fertility and stable production. Murta plantation is less costly and there is no need of extra labour or management.

The investment is not high in this sector. With small invest to lend to better income. The cost ration of murta articles is 3.5 per year then means the industry priority Tk. 35 by investing one taka for a year. The profit from a single murta articles varies from Tk. 120 to Tk. 400. About 87% of respondents life style have improved before past which indicating the support of this sector. Every family ensure the satisfaction of this sector as the secondary income source.

Conclusion

Murta based cottage industries have a vital role in the improvement

of socio-economic condition of this sector involving people. As a secondary source of income it is more suitable with agriculture sector. Murta cultivation is less expensive and female workers are more involving in this sector which is more acceptable than others. Murta is cultivated in useless land which means it never hamper other sector specially agriculture. Then are a huge possible of this sector if propose management are taken place properly. The addition of technology can bring more production. The collaboration between local people and Forest department is also important for continuous raw materials supply. Murta based cottage industries helps reducing soil erosion which also very important. This industry changed the socio-economic condition of this area. It is also helping by empowering local women, raising the literacy level of people, enhancing income of the family are giving the support to the environment of the area.

Murta based cottage industries are helping to uplift the socio-economic condition science long period and it will be continue a long time by a proper management and by in creating the awareness among the people who are involving in this sector.

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