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Conflict and Corollaries on Forest and Indigenous People: Experience from Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

The South Asian nation of Bangladesh, with a total population of approximately 150 million (mill) and an area of 147,570 km², is one of the most densely populated country in the world. The current population density is ~1,127.3 people km⁻² (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2005), up from 755 people km⁻² in 1991 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 1993). The economy is based on agriculture and the society is agrarian, with approximately 75% of the population living in the rural areas (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2006). Per-capita land holdings are approximately 0.12 ha (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh [GOB], 2002). Moist, humid, tropical-monsoon climate, with moderately warm temperatures, high humidity, and a wide seasonal variation in rainfall prevail in Bangladesh (GOB, 2001a). Bangladesh is prone to frequent natural calamities and is perceived as a major climate change victim.

Forest cover is shrinking Worldwide, despite many efforts to halt deforestation. Forest land and resources in many developing countries are serious pressure due to extreme poverty exacerbated by overwhelming increasing population. The forestry situation is even worse in Bangladesh that biotic and abiotic pressure associated with inter and intra competition between different landuses, conversion of forest land into industrial and other non-forest uses resulted in denudation and degradation of the hills, loss of forest areas, biodiversity and wildlife habitat in Bangladesh. Traditional forest management system failed to improve the forestry situation in the country. Large scale participatory social forestry program was introduced in the early eighties of the past century throughout the country's denuded and degraded forests as well as in marginal and newly accreted land.

Forests are the home to more than half of all species living around including human being. Population estimates show that there are about 300 - 400 mill indigenous people worldwide (Hinch, 2001; United Nations, 2009; World Bank, 2000). In developing countries approximately 1.2 billion people rely on agroforestry farming. They are recognized as the inhabitants of the World's most biologically diverse territories, possessor of unique linguistic and cultural diversity as well as they are in possession of huge traditional

knowledge. However, they suffer from discrimination, marginalization, poverty, hunger and conflicts. More importantly, their indigenous belief system, cultures, languages and ways of life continue to be threatened, sometimes even vulnerable to extinction (United Nations, 2009). There are about 5,000 such tribes/ethnic races worldwide representing 5% of the World's population (Zeppel, 2006). Indigenous people embody and nurture 80% of the World's cultural and biological diversity, and occupy 20% of the World's land surface (United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development [UNCSD], 2002).

In Bangladesh, except for the mangrove forests of Sundarbans, the other major natural forests are the dwelling place of the most of the indigenous communities. Due to lack of substitute products, people in Bangladesh depend on forests and forest resources especially, for fuelwood and timber. Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) are known to be important reservoirs of forests and forest resources in Bangladesh. Apart from the forest resources, this hilly region of the country is bestowed with magnificent natural landscapes, lakes, hilly streams and rivers. Besides, the indigenous people and their huge cultural diversities and unique handcrafts attract clients from home and abroad. So the CHTs are quite important from both economic and ecological standpoints. The Forest Department, being the State agency responsible for forest management in Bangladesh, considers the indigenous people as a major threat to forest management (Roy, 2004). Therefore, an antagonistic relationship has been in existence between indigenous people and Forest Department since long before. Besides, the indigenous people of the CHTs are in constant conflict with Bangladesh Government with regards to land ownership, resource use, and settlement of non-indigenous migrants and other socio-cultural and political discourses, which has made the area unstable and very sensitive.

The indigenous people of the CHTs are alienated from the mainstream society. Hence, it is not possible to utilize properly the forest resources as well as to accrue the full potential of the CHTs under the prevailing circumstances. It is perceived that if a meaningful solution of the problems of the indigenous people of the CHTs can be achieved, forest and indigenous resources may be properly managed to harbour maximum economic gain that could significantly contribute to the economy of Bangladesh. As both the forests and indigenous people of the CHTs are struggling, it was thought necessary to conduct a study in order to explore the root causes and corollaries of the problems with recommendations for possible solutions through several problem-solving approaches. The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- a. A brief review of the forests and indigenous people in Bangladesh.
- b. Historical review of the root causes and corollaries of the conflicts of the indigenous people of the CHTs in Bangladesh.
- c. Review and analysis of the on-going efforts of conflict resolution in the CHTs.
- d. Suggest recommendations for conflict resolution scrutinizing past as well as on-going efforts.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Study area

Geographically, Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh (Fig. 1) lie between 90°54' and 92°50' East longitude and 21°25' and 23°45' North latitude (Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility [CHTDF], 2009). It is bordered with Indian States of Tripura on the North, Mizoram on the East, Myanmar on the South and East, and Chittagong district of Bangladesh on its

West. The CHTs include three hill districts namely, Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari (Fig.1); covering an area of 13,295 km² (10 % of the country's total landmass (BBS, 2001; CHTDF, 2009) and the CHTs represent nearly 50 % of the total national forest area in Bangladesh (Forestry Master Plan [FMP], 1992).

2.2 Methods

Forest dependent indigenous communities of the CHTs in Bangladesh were the main focus of research. Initially a review on Bangladesh forestry and indigenous people are done discussing contemporary global concern. The CHTs region as a part of the undivided India was ruled by the Mughals (1666-1757) followed by the British rulers (1757-1947). Later this region became a part of Pakistan (1947-1971) and finally, it has become a part of Bangladesh since 1971. History suggests that ignorance and abuses to the indigenous people of the CHTs have a long root of development (Uddin, 2010). In analyzing the conflict, a historical review of the three regimes has been made in order to have clear understanding of the root causes and nature of the conflict.

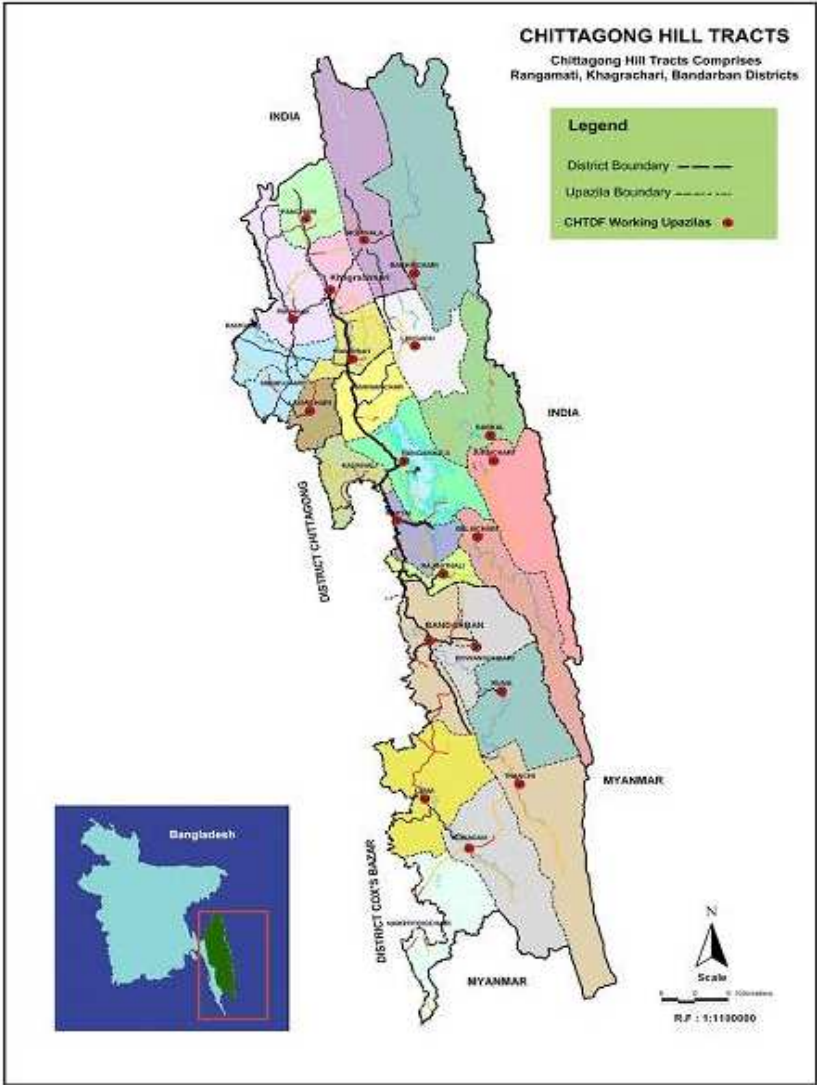


Fig. 1. Study area

Final part of the historical review encompasses an analysis of the Bangladeshi regime. This part of the research was conducted through literature collection and review, empirical analysis based on community survey with open ended and semi - structured questionnaire, key informant interview and focus group discussion. A total of ninety individual respondents were interviewed from nine villages of the three districts viz. Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari of the CHTs. In order to grasp the problem clearly and to know their opinion, three focus group discussions were held. A total of twelve key informants including three educationists, four political leaders, three cultural activists and two representatives from the Local Administration were interviewed in order to obtain expert opinions about the subject. A qualitative evaluation was done in order to know the respondent’s opinion about the factors affecting forest and forest resources in the CHTs. Along with listing the factors, respondents were given a scale of magnitude from 1-5 indicating 1 as very low, 2 as low, 3 as moderate, 4 as high, and 5 as extreme to express the magnitude of effect for each factor.

The survey data encompassed demographic and biophysical data, ethnicity, religion, migration patterns, chronology of conflict, land ownership, etc. An extended and closer stay in the study areas helped particularly to observe, photograph, record the rituals and stories, and also to share experience on the CHTs issues. Additionally, we tried to explore available conflict resolution theories and checked the applicability of such theories in the CHTs context. Current conflict resolution efforts of the Government have been reviewed and analyzed critically to identify its limitations. Based on the analysis, a conflict resolution model has been developed for this region.

3. Bangladesh forestry

Bangladesh – a forest dependent, over-populated country observed a huge loss of forest and forest resources over the past decades (the 1970’s deforestation rate of 0.9% rose to 2.7% during 1984 to 1990) (GOB, 2001b). According to Forestry Master Plan (GOB, 1995), of the

Forest types	Area (000 ha)	% of the forest area
Hill forests	551	23.7
Moist deciduous forests	34	1.5
Mangrove forests	436	18.7
Bamboo forests	184	7.9
Long rotation plantation	131	5.6
Short rotation plantation	54	2.3
Mangrove plantation	45	1.9
Rubber plantation	8	0.3
Shrubs/Other wooded land	289	12.4
Wooded land with shifting cultivation	327	14.0
Village forests	270	11.6
Total	2,329	100.0

Source: GOB, 2009

Table 1. Forest area in Bangladesh by forest types

total area of Bangladesh, agricultural land makes up 64.2%, forest lands account for about 17.8% (2.53 mill ha), whilst urban areas are 8.3%. Water and other land uses account for the remaining 9.9%. However, the last National Forest and Tree Resources Assessment 2005-2007 for Bangladesh (GOB, 2009) indicates a total forest area of about 2.33 mill ha (Table 1) which is about 15.8% (0.02 ha person⁻¹) of the total landmass of Bangladesh. This forest area is categorized as natural forests (1.2 mill ha), forest plantations (0.23 mill ha), Shrubs/other wooded land (0.29 mill ha), wooded land with shifting cultivation (0.33 mill ha) and village forests (0.27 mill ha). Of this forest land, the Forest Department (FD) directly controls 1.44 mill ha with the legal status of Reserved Forest (RF) and Protected Forest (PF), and the District Administration controls more than 0.73 million ha (forest management activities entrusted with FD) of Unclassed State Forests (USF).

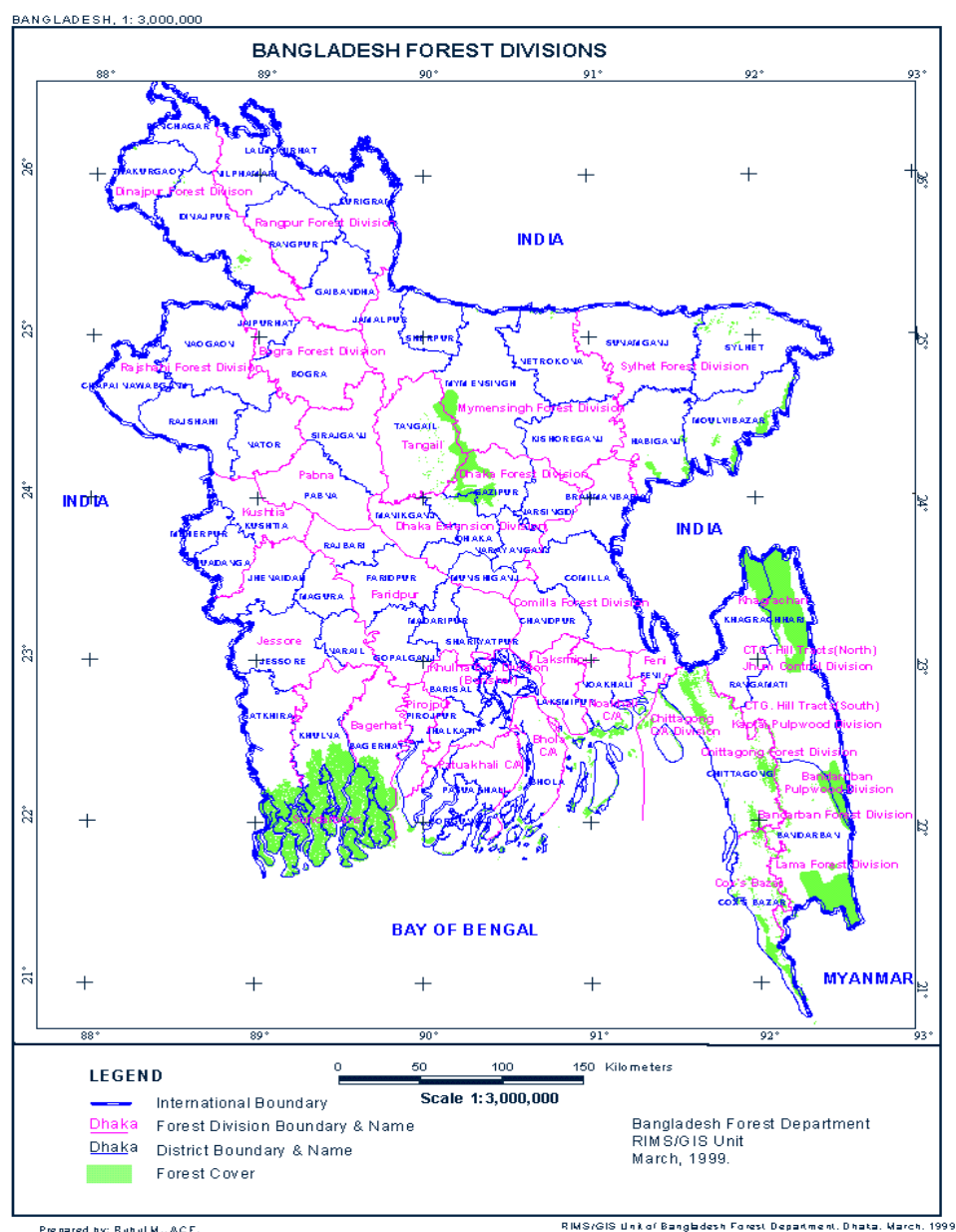


Fig. 2. Map of Bangladesh showing the distribution of forests areas

The distribution of natural forests in Bangladesh is eccentric i.e. the forests are located mostly in the peripheral zones of Bangladesh (Fig. 2). Out of the sixty four districts, there is no forest in twenty eight districts of Bangladesh. Major forest types within Bangladesh include i) tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen hill forests, ii) tropical littoral and mangrove forests, iii) inland moist deciduous Sal forests and iv) freshwater swamp forests (Champion & Seth, 1968). Despite having a century old regulatory forest management, the condition of the forest and forest resources in Bangladesh have been greatly depleted. Almost 50% of the area of Bangladesh has some kind of tree cover. Only 2.3% of the area has a very high tree cover ($>70\%$) and roughly 20% has low tree cover ($<5\%$) (GOB, 2009). The goal of social forestry

Project was to educate, engage and encourage active participation in the management of forest resources, thus creating relevant stakeholders. While traditional forest management resulted in the net loss of forest resource cover, participatory social forestry on the other hand, has the potential in the horizontal expansion of forest cover benefiting thousands of poor people (Salam & Noguchi, 2005; Khan et al., 2004; Muhammed et al., 2008; Muhammed & Koike, 2009). However, the indigenous people in general have been seriously overlooked during the implementation of this program.

4. Indigenous communities in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, there are about 45 ethnic communities (Costa & Dutta, 2007; GOB, 2008a) with distinct language, culture, heritage and abide by own administrating statutes (Mohsin, 1997). Population statistics on the indigenous people in Bangladesh suffers from reliability and validity. According to 1991 population Census (BBS, 1991), indigenous population was about 1.2 mill (1.13% of the total population) of which the CHTs population was 0.56 mill (Table 2). However, subsequent reports show that indigenous population of the CHTs are about 1.3 mill (CHTDF, 2009), 2 mill (GOB, 2008a) or 2.5 mill (Asian Indigenous and Tribal People Networks [AITPN], 2008). Population Census 1991 reported 12 indigenous groups living in the CHTs. However, the correct number is 11 that have been clarified later by Mohsin (2003) and CHTDF (2009). These indigenous races are *Bawm/Bom*, *Chak*, *Chakma*, *Khumi/Khami*, *Khyang*, *Lushai*, *Marma*, *Mro/Mru*, *Murang*, *Pankhu/Pankho*, *Tanchangya* and *Tripura*. *Mro/Mru* and *Murang* categorized into two difference race in the 1991 census which was probably a mistake.

Among the indigenous population of the CHTs *Chakma*, *Marma* and *Tripura* share about 90%. Dominant indigenous race of the CHTs is *Chakma* with a total population ranging from 252,858 (BBS, 1991) to 382,000 (Joshua Project, 2011). *Marma* race of the CHTs consists of a total population of 157,301 (BBS, 1991) to 210,000 (Gain, 2000). *Tanchangya* is another indigenous race of the CHTs constituting a population size of 21,000 and ranking the 5th among the ethnic communities in Bangladesh (GOB, 2008b). Among the other indigenous races, *Khasi* with variable population statistics [e.g. 12,280 (BBS, 1991) and 81,000 (Joshua Project, 2011)] live within the reserved forests of Sylhet region located in the north - eastern part of Bangladesh. A considerable number of indigenous communities including *Garo*, *Hazong* and *Koch* live within the fringe of the plain land *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) forests where *Garo* is the dominant race with a total population of about 64,280 (BBS, 1991).

All the dominant indigenous groups (i.e. *Chakma*, *Marma* and *Tripura*) of the region follow the first way of life (Adnan, 2004) that means they have adopted modern life style like the mainstream society in Bangladesh. Majority of the people (i.e. *Chakma*, *Marma*, *Tanchangya*

and *Mro/Mru*) are Buddhist by religion. *Tripura* follow Hinduism. *Lushai*, *Pankho*, *Bawm* and some of the *Mro/Mru* adopted Christianity. Indigenous people of the CHTs have closer ethno - cultural affinities with other Sino -Tibetan people inhabiting in Myanmar and the Indian States of Tripura and Mizoram.

The tribal economy is basically subsistence in nature primarily based on primitive agriculture. As a result the productivity is low. They cultivate their land under input starved conditions due to lack of financial and technical resources. Historically, the indigenous people are dependent on the forests for their livelihood. Indigenous people of the CHTs

Indigenous groups	Bangladesh	CHTs
<i>Bawm/Bom</i>	13,471	13,471
<i>Buna</i>	7,421	-
<i>Chak</i>	2,127	2,127
<i>Chakma</i>	252,858	252,858
<i>Garo</i>	64,280	-
<i>Hajong</i>	11,540	-
<i>Harizon</i>	1,132	-
<i>Khumi/Khami</i>	1,241	1,241
<i>Khasi</i>	12,280	-
<i>Khyang</i>	2,343	2,343
<i>Koch</i>	16,567	-
<i>Lushai</i>	662	662
<i>Mahat</i>	3,534	-
<i>Manipuri</i>	24,882	-
<i>Marma</i>	157,301	157,301
<i>Mro/Mru</i>	126	126
<i>Murang</i>	22,178	22,178
<i>Munda</i>	2,132	-
<i>Oraon</i>	8,216	-
<i>Paharia</i>	1,853	-
<i>Pankhu/Pankho</i>	3,227	3,227
<i>Rajbansi</i>	7,556	-
<i>Rakhaine</i>	16,932	-
<i>Santal</i>	202,162	-
<i>Tanchangya</i>	21,639	21,639
<i>Tripura</i>	81,014	81,014
<i>Urua</i>	5,561	-
Others	261,743	-
Total	1,205,978	558,187

Source: BBS, 1991

Table 2. Indigenous population in Bangladesh and in the study areas

have been practicing shifting cultivation as their principal economic activity in the denuded hillocks with scattered vegetation. It is estimated that at the beginning of the 20th century the tribal people dwelling in forest areas, obtained about 80-90% of their income from minor forest produce (Dasgupta & Ahmed, 1998). But this income has been reduced drastically in recent years. Cultivation of betel leaf (*Piper betle*) on the forest trees is the main economic activity of Khasi people. Similarly, the Garo community has been shaping their life, art and culture based on *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) forests. Rapid degradation and deforestation of this unique deciduous forests coupled with Government led environmentally adverse development projects are posing immediate threats to this community.

5. Historical review

5.1 British period and Indigenous people of the study areas (1757-1947)

Indigenous people of the CHTs locally known as *Jumma*¹ people were independent before the British colonial period. Bengal region² was ruled by the British from 1757 to 1947. The CHTs areas being an important source of raw materials (e.g., timber and cotton) drew the attention of the British ruler (Huq, 2000). Although there was a sharp physiological and cultural gap between the *Pahari*³ and *Bangali*⁴, geographically the CHTs were close to the Bengal region. After occupation, the British annexed the CHTs with Bengal in 1860 as an autonomous administrative district known as 'The Chittagong Hill Tracts' within undivided British Bengal. Few non-indigenous Bangali people co-existed with the indigenous population of the CHTs as original people of the areas. Non-indigenous Bengali people shared only about 1.74% of the total population in the CHTs in 1872 (CHTDF, 2009).

In 1900 Act, British Government kept special regulation to protect the Jumma people from economic exploitation by non-indigenous people, preserve their traditional socio-cultural and political institutions and also ensure their traditional laws and common ownership of land. This 1900 Act safeguarded the Pahari people prohibiting migration and land ownership to non-indigenous people in the CHTs (Asian Cultural Forum on Development [ACFOD], 1997). Respondent's survey could not provide much information about this period (only 3 respondents were able to discuss a little about this period) because of their age and lack of knowledge on the old history. Nine out of the twelve key informants were able to discuss the CHTs during British period. However, we had an effective discussion in all the three group discussions about this period. The result of the discussion as well the available literature concluded that the Jumma people had very peaceful life during this period. Clear felling followed by artificial regeneration was the only management system for the CHTs keeping revenue earning as the major concern of the British Government. This management system even opposed to biodiversity and wildlife conservation did not create any negative concern because of the abundance of huge forests and natural resources in the CHTs.

¹ refers to indigenous people or the original population of the CHTs. Jumma people means the groups of people who live on shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation in its local term is known as Jhum cultivation.

² refers to the Bengali speaking part of the undivided part of India.

³ Indigenous people or the original population of the CHTs. The CHTs are hilly region. Hill in Bengali term means Pahar. So Pahari means the inhabitants of the hill. They also sometimes addressed as Adivasi (original population of the region).

⁴ People who speak Bengali as their first language.

5.2 Indigenous people during Pakistan period (1947-1971)

The CHTs remained as a part of Pakistan in 1947, although the CHTs being a non-Muslim populated area were supposed to be a part of India on the basis of the provision of the partition. Despite 98.5% of the CHTs population being Jummas (non-Muslims), the Pakistani leadership ceded the CHTs to the East Pakistan violating the principles of partition (The 2-Nation theory based on religious demographics) and against the desire of the Jumma people. Right after the partition, the Pakistan Government started to ignore the Act and Regulations of 1900 for the CHTs and the Jumma people realized that their life would never be peaceful in Pakistan. In the subsequent years, their anger turned into violence, demanding for an autonomous State of Chittagong Hill Tracts. But the Government adopted more hostile attitude towards the Jumma people of the CHTs annulling the CHTs Police Regulation, 1881 that restricted indigenous people in the police force (Uddin, 2008). Additionally, Jummas were discriminated in jobs, business and education. Besides, the Government amended the 1900 Act several times in order to find a legitimate way for allowing migration of non-indigenous people into the CHTs without consulting the Jumma people (Chowdhury, 2006).

5.2.1 Hydro-electric dam of Kaptai and the indigenous people

In 1960s, the Pakistan Government constructed a hydro-electric dam at Kaptai (popularly known as Kaptai dam). Prior to construction it was neither consulted with the local people nor did it forecast the impact of this dam to the neighbouring lands, resources and people precisely. When the hydroelectric project came into effect in 1962, the water level rose beyond the forecasted one and so most of the rehabilitated (incorrect assumption of the engineers on forecasting the areas requiring rehabilitation before launching the hydro electricity production) areas submerged under water. The resettled people along with thousands of people became homeless losing their houses, agricultural land, livestock and forests. Many indigenous people of the CHTs (about 100,000) became possibly the first ever environmental refugees in Indian subcontinent due to this huge hydroelectric project (GOB, 1975; Samad, 1994, 1999). As a result of Kaptai dam many Jumma people were moved into sparsely populated regions of Mizoram, Tripura, Assam and Arunachal of India without legal identity (citizenship rights (Chowdhury, 2002; Uddin, 2008). All the respondents (100%) and key informants were very much aware of the negative impact of Kaptai hydro-electric dam and they considered this dam construction as the starting point of major conflict of the Jumma people with the Government. According to them, this dam not only ruined their life, but also inundated 65,527 ha of land, including 2,590 ha of well stocked reserved forest and about 21,862 ha of cultivable land.

5.3 Bangladesh (1971-) and the indigenous people of the CHTs

The constitution of the sovereign Bangladesh declared Bangladesh as a unitary State and Bengali as the State language. It also declared that citizens of Bangladesh are to be known as Bangali. During that time there was only one representative from the CHTs in the National Parliament who refused to endorse the constitution since it did not recognize the existence of other national communities or sub-national identities (Chowdhury, 2002; Shelly, 1992). Available report suggests that Jumma people remained indifferent to the cause of war against Pakistan (Chowdhury, 2006).

After the liberation, Jumma people demanded for i) autonomy for the CHTs, ii) retention of the CHTs Regulation 1900, iii) recognition of the three kings of the Jummas, and iv) ban on

the influx of the non-Jummas into the CHTs (Chowdhury, 2006). The Government rejected these demands and urged the indigenous people to become Bangali, ignoring their ethnic identities (Chowdhury, 2002). This has been considered as the starting point of new conflict of the Jummas with Bangladesh Government. The Jumma people rejected the imposition of Bengali nationalism. According to the summarized result of the focus group discussion and key informant interview, the failure of the Government to recognize the identity of hill people and their political and economic marginalization led them to form an indigenous people's organisation called 'Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS)' in 1972. A military wing called *Shanti Bahini*⁵ was added to PCJSS in the same year (Mohsin, 1997).

5.3.1 State induced military led mass migration

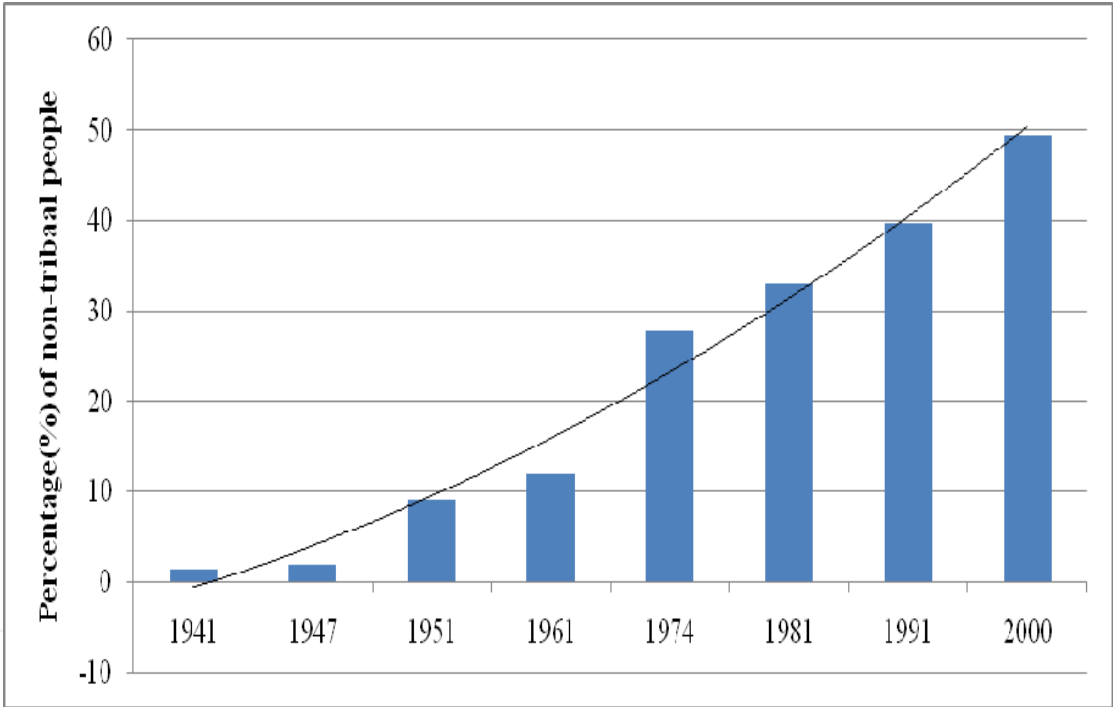
Immediately after the change in 1975 through the assassination of the Father of the Nation and his family, the new Government took more drastic step to militarize the whole CHTs declaring the region a politically special sensitive zone. The Government assumed full military control in CHTs ignoring the local civil administration. In order to earn more control over the region and balance between indigenous and non - indigenous population, the Government adopted a policy of State induced military led migration of non-indigenous poor and destitute folks of other part of Bangladesh to the CHTs without consulting the indigenous people of the CHTs. The establishment of Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) in 1976 for the CHTs development deeply strengthened military occupation and military infrastructure in the CHTs furthermore. The CHTDB was formed and administered by the military command and the military was in charge of implementing all development activities in the CHTs.

A close examination of the CHTDB development projects reveals that more than 80% of the CHTDB development budgets were spent on building military infrastructure through construction of military camps, roads and bridges, office buildings, sports complexes, mosques, cluster villages for Pahari and *Bangali* settlers (Bhikkhu, 2007). All the respondents, key informants and groups discussion opined that the strategy of the new Government after 1975 deploying military administration in the CHTs extended the magnitude of conflicts. During this military led administration, counterinsurgency operations were started throughout the CHTs that ruined the scope for accommodation and co-existence of both the hill people and migrated *Bangali* people in the CHTs (B.H. Chowdhury, 2002). Within two years of the new Government (after 1975) more than 80,000 armed forces were deployed in the CHTs for the cause of 'development and security reasons'. In fact, armed forces facilitated the transmigration of non-indigenous *Bangalis* by displacing the *Paharis* (Uddin, 2008).

This military led huge migration changed the population structure and composition in the CHTs. It is found that 1.74% non-indigenous people of the CHTs in 1872 increased to 9.09% in 1951, 19.41% in 1974 and 60% in the current decades (Bhikkhu, 2007; CHTDF, 2009; Uddin, 2008). Fig. 3 shows the pattern of the increase of the non-indigenous people into the CHTs. Actually, as of the advice of the British Government during 1860s, the Circle chiefs brought *Bangali* cultivators to work on this region in order to teach low land farming to the Chakmas and other indigenous races. At that time only the three Circle chiefs were

⁵ The military wing of the PCJSS formed in 1972 in order to preserve the rights of the indigenous people. 'Shanti' and 'Bahini' are two Bengali term meaning peace and armed force respectively.

permitted to own land and the *Bangali* immigrants became sharecroppers. Even knowing that the CHTs land is not arable and life would be very risky, landless floating people accepted migration in order to get a piece of land and a house of their own, along with other financial and food grains support of the Government (Uddin, 2008). During 1979 - 1984 about half a million non-indigenous people have been settled into the CHTs. Bhikkhu (2007) reported that during late 1970s to the early 1980s, more than 400,000 muslims from various plain districts of Bangladesh were systematically migrated to the CHTs under Government sponsored military led settlement programs. It was found that 92% of the respondents and 100%of the key informants viewed this huge migration as demographic invasion or more specifically 'islamization' of the CHTs. They think that this has been done to diminish their political clout in the muslim dominated Bangladesh. So this State sponsored migration has made the Jumma people a minority in their own homeland. Talukdar (2005) in his study suggested that if this conflict goes on without any resolution, the Jumma people will soon find themselves in a situation of going for unconstitutional struggle.



Source: Talukdar, 2005; Uddin, 2010

Fig. 3. Change in population composition in the CHTs

5.3.2 Land crisis and dispossession of Jumma land

According to the available information on site quality, physiognomy and topography, the CHTs do not allow intensive irrigated agriculture except in the limited valley and lowlands (Roy, 2004). According to the soil survey report, only 3.1% of the CHTs lands are suitable for agriculture and 72.9% are suitable for forestry (GOB, 1966). Besides, Kaptai hydro-electric dam further increased the land crisis inundating 21,862 ha of cultivable land (GOB, 1975). In spite of the shortage of fertile farming land and inundation of the available cultivable land, the Government settled thousands of landless non-indigenous people in the CHTs. Besides, each land less settler family was given a legal ownership of 2 ha of hill land or 1.5 ha of

mixed land or 1 ha of wet rice land (Chowdhury, 2002). A study of Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) found that about 61.44% of the indigenous people still face discrimination, 41.86% are victims of corruption and 18.67% have been evicted from their ancestors land (Zaman, 2003). Land and forests are the very basis of life for the Jumma people, so plundering of land is the question of their existence. Respondents (100%) opined that when the newly settled families cannot make a living from their allocated land, they encroach on Jumma owned land. They adopted various ways to occupy the Jumma land and still now the Jumma people are being dispossessed from their own lands (Table 3).

Sl.	Pattern of land grabbing	Actor (s)
1	Expansion of military facilities	Mostly led by the military
2	Expansion of settlements	Mostly led by the military
3	Expulsion in the name of forest protection	Forest Department or local administration
4	Leases of land by the local administration	Forest Department or local administration
5	Attacks	Bengali migrants with direct or indirect support of the military
6	Expulsion through false cases, harassment & other tactics	Bengali migrants with direct or indirect support of the military

Table 3. Patterns of dispossession of Jumma land in the CHTs

5.3.3 Conflict on forest use and indigenous livelihoods

The CHTs are mostly a forested region and the ownership of the forest land lie with District Administration for land and forest management rights lie with Forest Department. Despite of regulatory forest management practices in the CHTs, the forest and forest resources have been depleted greatly over time. Currently, most of the hills are denuded and degraded. Forest Department complains that the indigenous people and their illegal occupancies in the Government forests, illegal logging and their shifting cultivation are the main causes for depletion of forest resources in the CHTs. On the other hand, the respondents (100%) opinion and the result of the group discussion identified that the systemized corruption of the Forest Department, District administration, military administration and associated ministries and political elites, syndicated illegal logging of the timber merchants, poor transit rules, Jhoot⁶ permit, inappropriate forest management systems (clear felling in the natural forests followed by artificial regeneration mostly with fast growing exotic species like, *Acacia auriculiformes* and *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), etc. are the major reasons for forest depletion in this region (Table 4). Qualitative assessment indicates that systemized corruption and syndicated illegal felling by the timber merchants are the major causes of the forest depletion.

From the focus group discussion, it was found that the indigenous people are frequently harassed with false police case against land encroachment and illegal timber cutting. Most of

⁶ Jhoot means private land. Jhoot permit is the transit rule of the Forest Department which is issued by the Forest Department with necessary approval of the Deputy Commissioner for harvesting, sale and movement of the timber produced in the privately owned land.

the respondents know about the participatory benefit sharing social forestry programs of Forest Department. But they are discriminated to become stakeholders (nine out of the total one hundred two interviewees became the participants). However, the migrated *Bangalis* living in the areas are getting the benefit of such program. Additionally, it was found that most of the saw mills, furniture shops and small scale wood based industries in the CHTs are owned by the non-indigenous migrated population (93%in Ranagamati, 95%in Bandarbands and 94%in Khagrachari).

Sl. No	Factors affecting forests	No. (n) & % of interviewees responded*	**Average magnitude of the effect of each factor in forest degradation				
			1	2	3	4	5
1	Systemized corruption						
a	Forest Department	102 (100)					
b	District administration	78 (76.5)					
c	Military administration	102 (100)					
d	Police Administration	85 (83.3)					
e	Politicians and elites	91 (89.2)					
2	Syndicated illegal logging	96 (94.1)					
3	Poor transit rules	35 (34.3)					
4	Leasing lands to outsiders	25 (24.5)					
5	**Inappropriate management	43 (42.2)					
6	Private forest felling permit	18 (17.6)					

* n=90 (respondents) + 12 (key informants) =102; the figures in the parentheses indicate percentage (%)
** a scale of magnitude from 1-5 indicating 1=very low, 2= low, 3= moderate, 4=high, 5=extreme
*** Inappropriate forest management refers to clear felling followed by artificial regeneration with fast growing species like, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Acacia auriculiformes*

Table 4. Major causes of forest depletion in the CHTs

6. Steps towards conflict resolution

Historical review suggests that the Jumma people have been affected largely by the policies of migration, land eviction, cultural assimilation and ethnic discrimination by successive Governments. In their struggle for autonomy, they have been targets of massacres, extra judicial executions, rape, torture and forced relocation. However, the Government took some initiatives in order to calm the situation. Table 5 summarizes the chronological initiatives for peace in the CHTs. Finally after series of meetings and negotiations, Bangladesh Government and the PCJSS came up with a Peace Accord on December 02, 1997. The 68 points Accord deal with variety of subjects ranging from administration to military status, land question, refugee settlement and others. One of the elements of the Peace Accord was to recognize the rights of indigenous communities to land and other sovereign issues. It was agreed that the Ministry of CHTs Affairs will be headed by an indigenous representative. Government also agreed to repatriate and rehabilitate the CHTs refugees in India, resolve land disputes, and cancel illegal leases of land to non-indigenous people. This Accord endorsed a partial release of power to the indigenous authority declaring creation of the ‘Regional Council’ to look after the entire region. Under the Accord, the militants agreed

to surrender and de-commission their arms for general amnesty (Adnan, 2004). However, the Accord was not protected by the constitutional safeguards, and is open to amendment or revocation at any time. It makes no provision for forest and environmental protection and the existing forest act, rules and regulation were not referred. Besides, it makes no provision for social reconciliation between tribal population and migrated Bangali population.

Time period	Steps towards conflict resolution
Early 1977's	Government took first political measure to appease the insurgents in the CHTs, and appointing the mother of the Chakma king.
1977	A Forum formed in the Tribal Convention in order to negotiate at the official level. After initial interest in the process, the PCJSS withdrew them from the Forum due to their internal conflict.
1982	The new Government formed a committee headed by an indigenous leader but this committee failed because the PCJSS did not approve it.
1985	Some announcements were made by the Government that resulted in holding the ever first dialogue with regards to suspension of Bengali settlement, the granting of amnesty to insurgents, and a proposal for direct dialogue with PCJSS leadership. The dialogue proved ineffective to continue the process.
1987-1988	The Government set up a National Committee for the resuming the dialogue with PCJSS. However, every dialogue ended up without any conclusion.
1989	The Parliament enacted the Chittagong Hill Tracts Local Government Council Act, 1989 and the Hill District Act, 1989. The Special Affairs Ministry was constituted in 1990 to look after the CHTs affairs.
1992	Declaration of a general amnesty for the insurgents along with cash rewards for surrendering arms. Some 2,294 insurgents' surrendered and 30,390 indigenous populations came back from the Indian camps. A committee was formed to oversee the most sensitive issue of land ownership.
1992-1993	About 50,000 families affected by the insurgency were provided various relief and rehabilitation support. This created confidence among Jumma people and encouraged many of them to return back from the camps.
1994	The process of the refugee repatriation stopped.
1997	The new Government after a serious of meetings and concerted efforts found a permanent political solution within the framework of the State sovereignty and came up with a historic Peace Accord.

Source: Chowdhury, 2002; Hosena, 1999; Jumma Net, 2009

Table 5. Summary of conflict resolution initiatives the CHTs

6.1 Pace of progress after the Peace Accord

The CHTs Peace Accord was implemented to some extent in the first three years (1998-2000) like, demobilization of the PCJSS, repatriation of Jumma refugees, enactment of the three revised Hill District Council Acts, the Regional Council Act, establishment of the CHTs

Affairs Ministry, etc. But the most important provisions of the Accord, such as the withdrawal of temporary military camps and resolution of land conflicts, remain unimplemented till to date. Since assuming the power by the new elected Government (2001-2006) who kept themselves out of the treaty, implementation of the Peace Accord was quite ignored. During this period the military began to expropriate vast areas of land defying the provisions of the Accord. However, by now various new issues have appeared and the limitations of many provisions of the Accord are hindering the implementation even under the current Government who signed the Accord in 1997. Individual respondent opinion as well the focus group discussion show that indigenous people have again become more sceptical and are losing their confidence over the Accord. The Peace Accord is facing a number of difficulties regarding implementation as follows.

"It was better for us when the British were here. We were protected by special rules. Even under Pakistan it was better as we were independent. When the CHTs became part of Bangladesh, every right was taken over. These hills that were once the land of Jumma aren't for us now. Slowly the Bengalis have taken over everything."



Ajit Tanchangya (79)

Box 1. Perception of the conflict by an aged indigenous man

- Accord is not recognized by the main political opposition (and their allies) of 1997.
- Implementation Committee can not do their work because of political interferences.
- Political movement of the indigenous people after the Peace Accord have divided into two groups; the PCJSS - the major group of the Peace Accord and the UPDF (United People's Democratic Front) - a group opposing the Peace Accord.
- Land crisis, a very delicate issue of conflict, between indigenous and Bangali migrants continue to remain unresolved.

Though the Accord got acclamation from the World community including UNESCO declaring Houpet-Felix Boigny Peace Award in 1999, the CHTs Jumma people still live under duress because of continuous pressure from the civil administration manned by non-indigenous and non-local officials and communal attacks by the Bangali settlers with direct back up from many camps of the Bangladesh security forces (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization [UNPO], 2004). The non-implementation and in some cases violation of vital clauses of the Accord by the government in one hand and extreme Bengali fanatic fronts float against the Jumma people on the other has seriously deteriorated the CHTs situation in recent months (UNPO, 2004). It is found that the Government does not give

exact picture of the latest status of the Accord to the countrymen and the concerned international communities.

7. Conflict resolutions models and the case of CHTs

Till date scientists from multiple background and many political analysts contributed notably on developing number of general and case specific tools and instruments on conflict resolution. The famous Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) is applicable to two basic dimensions viz., assertiveness and cooperativeness. This model proved effective in five different conflicting modes like, competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborative and compromising. Johan Galtung's seminal thinking on the relationship between conflict, violence and peace which is popularly known as Galtung's model of conflict, violence and peace. Galtung's Conflict triangle works on the assumption that the best way to define peace is to define violence, and its antithesis i.e., this model is effective on both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts (Galtung, 1969, 1996). Ramsbotham and Woodhouse's Hourglass model of political conflict resolution combined Galtung model along with escalation (narrowing political space) and de-escalation (widening political space) approaches. Among the other conflict resolution models, Gail Bingham's Environmental Dispute Settlement Process (Bingham, 1986), coercive and non-coercive third party intervention model, Interest-Based Relational Approach, Lederach's model (Lederach, 1997), multi-track conflict resolution model of Ramsbotham et al. (2005), etc. are well known conflict resolution models.

Although theoretically all the models seem sound and effective, practical application is case sensitive because of the multiple magnitudes of conflicts. If we consider the conflict resolution approach of in the CHTs that finally came up with a Peace Accord, it can be said that a combination of the said approaches and models has been applied. But the participation of all possible social actors, all aggrieved parties, political drivers and international bodies were not involved properly here. Therefore, some of the actors for their socio-political interests can not support the accord. Moreover, some sensitive issues like land settlement, forest use and cultural coherence are not truly perceived in the problem solving process; therefore, the implementation of the accord has not advanced duly. Reviewing the conflict resolution theories and models and applying our studied knowledge (based on interview and focus group discussion) on the CHTs, following model has been proposed in order to conflict resolution in the CHTs (Fig. 4).

According to this model both indigenous people and migrated population have been focused with equal attention. Treaty or agreement, whatever is made, should be done based on the mutual trust and consciousness of all aggrieved sides. The Peace Accord of 1997 was an agreement between the military wing of the indigenous people of the CHTs and Government of Bangladesh lacking of consciousness and agreement of the mass indigenous people and migrated people in the CHTs. According to this model, all the relevant parties will sit together through iterative meetings and discussion to bring out a final agreement. Therefore, it will reduce the chance of any group or political party to stand against the agreement or implementation in future. The Peace Accord of 1997 could not make any provision for a third party monitoring and evaluation which is essential in such political discourse resolution process. Our proposed model keeps provision for local, national and international level monitoring and evaluation. As forest, land and military administration are the main issues in the CHTs; therefore, appropriate representatives from these three Departments need to give more chance for discussion and consultation in order to find

mutually agreed ways of solution to land and forest. Proper application of this model may help solving the problems of the indigenous people bringing sustainability to the forest management and forest use in this region of Bangladesh.

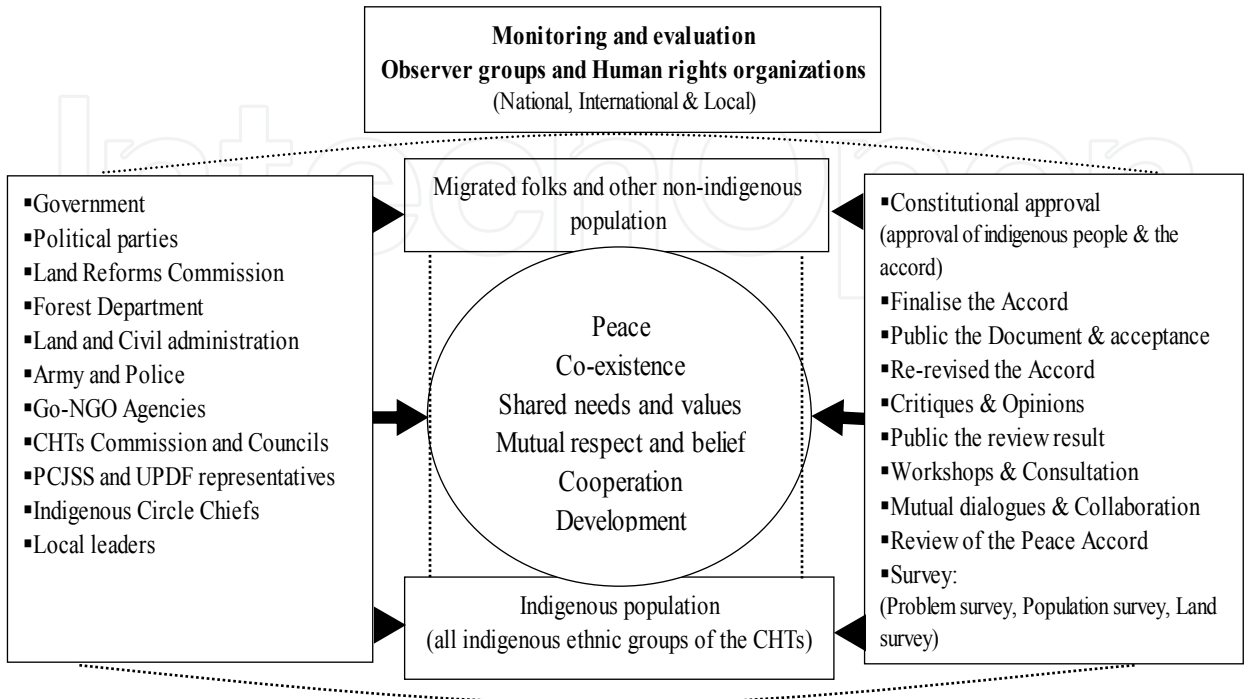


Fig. 4. Proposed model for conflict resolution in CHTs

8. Conclusion

It is understood that the CHTs issue is clearly a political problem created over many decades. The indigenous communities in Bangladesh are left as the most disadvantageous groups by the Government and policy makers. The study shows that the CHTS are one of the resourceful areas with forests, natural landscapes and diversified indigenous people. In order to utilize the economic potential of the areas, both forests and indigenous people are to be treated properly. A strong political will, concerted efforts of all political parties and actors are required to implement the Peace Accord. Land is the one of the major issue of the CHTs conflict which requires more cautious dealing. Empowering indigenous people by resolving the exiting conflicts in the CHTs is essential to help manage forests. Constitutional recognition of the indigenous people in Bangladesh will solve many problems. In order to protect and manage natural forests of the CHTs in a sustainable manner, the cultural and sacred relationship of the indigenous people with the forests must be recognized. Indigenous people should be motivated and be involved in all participatory co-management programs in the CHTs. We believe that our proposed model can be an effective tool for the CHTs conflict resolution. In the proposed model, it is suggested to start with reviewing the Peace Accord. However, before this review, precise surveys on problem situation, population of the region and land and settlement need to be conducted. According to this model, a meaningful discussion of all relevant actors is needed to finalize the revised Peace Accord before getting it approved by the National Assembly. Local, national and third party led international monitoring are required to evaluate the progress of implementation of all programs in the CHTs.

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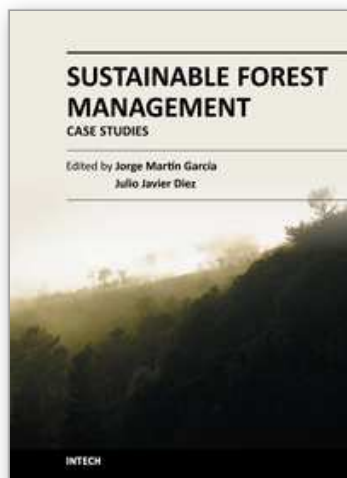
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The concept of forest sustainability dates from centuries ago, although the understanding of sustainable forest management (SFM) as an instrument that harmonizes ecological and socio-economic concerns is relatively new. The change in perspective occurred at the beginning of the 1990s in response to an increased awareness of the deterioration of the environment, in particular of the alarming loss of forest resources. The book collects original case studies from 12 different countries in four continents (Africa, America, Asia and Europe). These studies represent a wide variation of experiences from developing and developed countries, and should clarify the current status of SFM worldwide and the problems associated with its implementation.

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