



WatSan

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Disadvantaged people of Haor Basin: WatSan Situation Analysis and the Way Forward

Shamima Nasreen

The Haor Basin in the North-eastern part of Bangladesh is a wetland ecosystem considered to be of international ecological importance due to the extensive waterfowl population that uses the basin as its habitat. The saucer shaped shallow depression (also known as a backswamp) covers parts of the Sunamganj, Moulvibazar and Habiganj districts, and stretches as far as the Kishoreganj and Netrokona districts of Bangladesh. Bangladesh lies in the floodplain of three major rivers and the Bengali language has a number of terms to describe different bodies of water. These include Haor, Baor, Jheel and Beel. The Haor Basin consists of about 400 haors and beels (small ponds with static water), and includes rivers, streams, irrigation canals, and vast areas of seasonally flooded cultivated plains.

The Haor Basin is estimated to stretch over an area of between 4,450 square kilometers and 2.5 million hectares. It is further estimated that the total area of haor-type wetlands throughout Bangladesh exceeds 8 million hectares. Although a large area around the Haor Basin has been exploited by people, mainly to fulfill fuel needs, the Haor Basin itself has protected status as a Ramsar site under the Ramsar Convention, which provides for the protection of wetlands. A number of government bodies are working together in the interests of preserving the wetlands environment, of which the Haor Basin is one of the most significant that need urgent attention to safe water supply and sanitation facilities.

