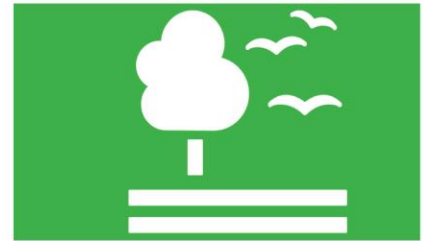


ANNUAL **SDG-15** REPORT

**LIFE
ON LAND**



**UNIVERSITY OF
CHITTAGONG**

Chittagong-4331, Bangladesh

SGD 15: LIFE ON LAND

The Steward of Life on Earth (SDG 15) in Bangladesh through Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration

The University of Chittagong, sprawling across approximately 2100 acres of hilly land on the southern fringe of the Himalayan Mountain range, epitomizes ecological preservation and biodiversity conservation. As an institution deeply committed to Sustainable Development Goal 15: Life on Land, the university's environmental stewardship and sustainable development endeavors are exemplary. The university has started forestry education in Bangladesh by establishing the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences (IFES) in 1976, and it has produced about 40 forestry graduates each year who are leading forest management both in the public and private sectors.

Changing Chittagong University's campus from a state of degradation to a bastion of biodiversity is a remarkable journey. The Department of Botany started the reforestation efforts, spearheaded by full-blown biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration efforts by the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences (IFES). These efforts successfully revitalize over 600 acres of degraded hills and valleys into a thriving habitat reflective of the region's tropical semi-evergreen forests. This restoration initiative has rejuvenated the ecosystem and created a habitat for many birds, animals, insects, amphibians, and reptilian species. IFESCU's plantation office routinely reforests about 10 acres of land yearly with a regular budget, and in some years, planting increases with additional support from outside. This effort brings three national prizes for the University as "1st prize on plantations: Category A".

As the restoration of forest cover is a continuous process, IFES's approach is the involvement of students in the conservation efforts. Every undergraduate at the Institute must plant and nurture 20 trees, embedding a hands-on experience in afforestation within their educational journey. This practice fosters a deep-rooted connection with nature among students while contributing to the greening of the campus. The University of Chittagong has continued its plantation program throughout the campus. IFES has planted 5000 seedlings during the last plantation season on barren hills covering 5 acres of land with 15 different endangered species. Moreover, IFES Nursery distributed 8000 seedlings of various species for plantation outside the campus and for charity purposes. Besides, various campus-based student clubs have initiated and planted seedlings throughout the year. For example, under the Green Wave project, Forestry and Environmental Sciences students distributed and ensured planting more than three thousand tree seedlings in 21 country districts. They were engaged in planting trees inside the campus and nearby metropolitan areas. National daily newspapers published features on their initiatives. The University continued to conserve bamboo and ornamental species in its botanical gardens and surrounding areas and became a famous recreational spot for tourists.

Beyond on-ground efforts, the university excels in capacity building and knowledge dissemination. IFES's nursery, which spans five acres, functions as a pivotal educational facility and a center for propagating endangered species. IFES's recently retired faculty Professor, Dr Mohammad Kamal Hossain, established Bangladesh's only seed bank for forest species. IFES faculty members are engaged in national and international expert panels regarding forest and biodiversity conservation.

A young faculty member from IFES, working as a Quality Assurance and Quality Control expert for 2nd National Forest Inventory under FAO and Forest Department. The team ensures the quality work of the field team providing training, field visit and developing manual for National Forest Inventory. Students of this institute participated in different national competition on green initiatives. For instance, a group of three students of Environmental Science became finalist among 972 teams in Bangladesh of Green Earth Quest program, semifinalist of Hult Prize program and also participated and won funding from Millennium Campus Network. Faculty and researchers of IFES play a critical role in national and international biodiversity conservation, offering advisory services for Village Common Forests (VCFs) and collaborating with the Bangladesh Forest Department. The Institute's prolific output of publications and research articles on biodiversity and ecosystem conservation extends its influence beyond the campus, reaching local and international platforms. Collaboration and community engagement are key facets of the university's strategy. The IFES Alumni Association and the Institute of Foresters Bangladesh actively participate in tree planting, enhancing the green coverage on campus. International partnerships, like the one with Teijin Limited, have led to innovative projects such as establishing a Miyawaki Forest, which focuses on carbon capture and biodiversity enhancement. Teijin has renewed its collaboration by agreeing to support the plantation expansion to capture 67 tons of additional carbon di oxide.

As a member of global networks like ICIMOD and the Himalaya University Consortium, Chittagong University engages in international dialogues and practices related to mountain ecosystems and sustainable development. IFES host a day long workshop at the gallery room including the delegates from ICUMOD member countries and the faculties from various university and disciplines. The university's impact extends through various departments, including Botany, Zoology, Soil Science, and Geography and Environmental Science, each contributing to SDG 15 through research, education, and environmental observance. The influence of its alumni, holding key positions in sectors like the Bangladesh Forest Department, further amplifies the university's conservation efforts. Different departments of the University, like IFES, Department of Soil Science, Department of Geography, and Institute of Marine Science, observe international days related to life on Earth, like World Forest Day, World Environment Day, etc., with due festivity, which helps create awareness. In this precious activity students are similarly engaged, for example, Chittagong University Environment Songsod and Chittagong University Nature Club separately arranged colourful Environment Day 2024 with seminar lectures, rally, and awareness activities in the campus. The observations invariably include plantations of trees.

Looking ahead, Chittagong University is poised to continue and expand its efforts to enhance its contribution to achieving the SDG 15 targets in Bangladesh and globally. Recommendations for the university include enhancing global collaborations to combat desertification and biodiversity loss, systematic documentation and reporting of achievements for international recognition, and broadening community outreach to bolster public awareness and participation in conservation initiatives.