

ANNUAL REPORT

SDG

15

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.

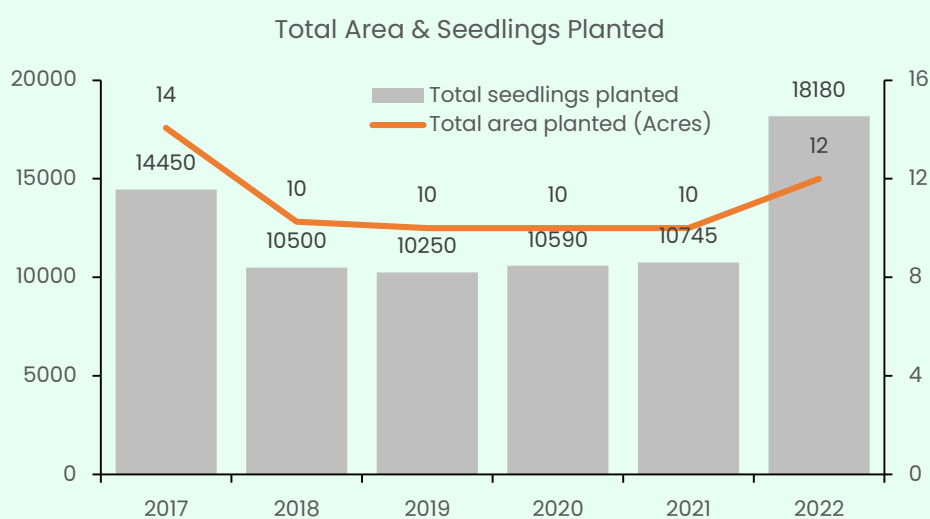


Figure 1: Areas and seedlings planted over the last five years.

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 (figure 1).

An innovative aspect of the IFES's approach is the involvement of students in these 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 (Plate 1).

The university's commitment to species conservation is evident in its initiatives to safeguard various endangered species through dedicated conservation areas, such as Civit, Banspata, and Boilam. Furthermore, preserving 63 indigenous plant species underscores the campus's significance as a biodiversity hotspot.



The campus of the University has conserved all indigenous bamboo and cane species in the campus with help from the Bangladesh Forest Research Institute. The University is now a popular source of seeds for nursery owners and other stakeholders for endangered species of Bangladesh.

Plate 1: Plantation by students as part of their curricular activities

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. 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.

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. 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. The observations invariably include plantations of trees (plate 2).

Plate 2: Tree plantation by the vice-chancellor of the university on World Forest Day 2022.

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.