

Supplementary Report R8210

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This report is a response to the second review of project number R8210, 'the use of sluice gates for stock enhancement and the diversification of livelihoods'. The project ended in February 2005, but this review was sent to the project team in late July 2005. It is therefore too late to incorporate reviewers comments into project reports and project documentation, most of which has already been printed and disseminated. This supplementary report therefore aims to address the three main issues raised in the reviewers report and should be read in conjunction with reports already submitted.

Institutional arrangements covering water management

Data from existing project reports

Considerable information is given in the *Final Sociological Report* on institutional issues surrounding sluice gate and water management. This can be found in the section entitled "The Social/Institutional Framework of Fisheries, Farming and Water Control". Background to institutional structures in Bangladesh can also be found in the *Literature Review*, particularly in the sections "Institutional and Social Arrangements in Rural Bangladesh" and "Fisheries Management in Bangladesh".

The *Final Sociological Report* describes many of the power relations operating at each case study site. This includes groups of farmers or fishers, government officials and institutions, powerful individuals and local elites, and other pressure groups.

The *Final Sociological Report* describes who makes final decisions regarding water management: Sluice gate management committees exist at Talimnagar sluice gate in PIRDP and Jugini sluice gate in CPP. At Bawlakhola sluice gate in PIRDP, the Upazila Water Development Board office instructs the gate operator. Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) officials at Tangail usually instruct the Jugini sluice gate operator. The influence that different stakeholders have over those making final decisions on sluice gate operation is detailed.

Some of the interactions between local politics and local administrative structures are described in the *Final Sociological Report*. Civil society structures include the sluice gate management committees. Local and regional political structures at Union and Upazila levels include the Upazila Water Development Board office and the BWDB. The *Literature Review* provides some general background and historical information to some of these institutions.

Additional information not included in existing reports

Analysis of power relations

As the BWDB has constructed most of the sluice gates, sluice gate management tends to be dominated by BWDB officials. However, in some cases local sluice gate

committees have been set up, and local officials (from the administration, Fisheries Department etc.) participate as committee members. The project recommends that local level sluice gate committees be set up where they do not exist and that they include representatives from poor fisher groups. If these recommendations are implemented it would enhance the voice of poor fishers in the sluice gate operation.

Who makes decisions over water?

Decisions over water management, such as how much water to let into empoldered areas through the sluice gates and when to allow it in, are currently made either by the local sluice gate committee (where it exists) or by BWDB officials. In either case the primary goal is to provide enough water for agricultural crops (almost always rice) rather than for the fishery. The project has recommended that the local sluice gate committees include members of the fishing community so that sluice gate operation can enhance the fishery without harming agricultural activities.

Interaction between local politics and local administrative structures

The local administration consists of Upazila based government officials from different government departments, including Water, Agriculture and Fisheries, while the political or elected representatives are members of the Union and Upazila committees. In cases where there is no functioning sluice gate committee, gates are operated under the instruction of local BWDB officials. However, where sluice gate committees exist, they usually include representatives from both local government officials as well as elected members. The project has recommended that local sluice gate management committees are established where they do not exist already, and that representatives from the poorer fishing community become members. Implementation of these recommendations will push the balance of power between the local administration and local elected (and other) community members in favour of the latter.

Implications for project R8486

The recommendations from Project R8210 have been incorporated into local level messaging and will be implemented at the three case study sluice gate sites this year. In addition, the BWDB is considering a larger project to look at implementing these recommendations on a much larger scale throughout Bangladesh.

Long term social changes

Data from existing project reports

The *Literature Review* provides much detail on social changes observed historically in Bangladesh. The *Final Sociological Report* details this with regards to changes observed in the case study sites. Project documentation is less strong on anticipated social changes in the future.

Additional information not included in existing reports

The polderisation of the floodplain over many years has resulted in a shift in production and benefit from open water common property floodplain fisheries to privately owned land-based, rice production. This has led to both a reduction of floodplain fisheries production and to the further impoverishment of fishing communities which were always less wealthy due to their lack of land ownership. The

project and its recommendations aims to correct this existing bias against open water fisheries by enabling fisheries to regain its place within poldered floodplains through improved sluice gate management with a view to supporting fisheries as well as rice production.

Implications for project R8486

The recommendations from Project R8210 are being currently incorporated into Project R8486 with respect to encouraging the BWDB to change its practices regarding the operation of sluice gates around the country. At the same time, the need to restore open water floodplain fisheries is being promoted. For example, a joint seminar was held with the Department of Fisheries in Dhaka during the National Fish Fortnight in August 2005. The official slogan for the National Fish Fortnight was “Save the Open Water Fisheries”.

Effects of proposed interventions on men and women

Data from existing project reports

Project reports provide little analysis of the gender aspects of livelihoods that the project covered. However, researchers made particular effort to involve women in Focus Group Discussions, and the *Final Sociological Report* describes common livelihood activities amongst women. The *Literature Review* describes a study (IUCN 2002), which portrays the management of fish friendly structures as insensitive to gender issues. The *Literature Review* also touches upon the level of involvement of women in government and civil society institutions and describes how men generally dominate women in family/kinship relationships. The role of women in the fishing industry and their vulnerability to poverty is explained.

Additional information not included in existing reports

Floodplain fishing communities are usually amongst the poorest of local rural communities, and usually own little or no land. While the men usually go to fish with their boats and nets wherever they can, the women have traditionally helped by mending nets and helping process the fish which are caught. In addition, small fishes, which cannot be sold, are brought home to cook and eat. They are a major source of animal protein in the diet of fisher families. With polderisation and the loss of floodplain fisheries, fishers have to travel much further to catch fish. Open water fish production has declined leading to a reduction in employment opportunities for women in the fishing communities as well as a loss of fish protein in their diets.

Implications for project R8486

Messaging for Project R8486 is targeting local level and national level. At the local level, emphasis is on enhancing fish production for poor fishing families. At the national level, the BWDB is being encouraged to promote a policy of managing the thousands of sluice gates around the country in a more fish-friendly manner. This will help the fishing communities, both men as well as women.