

# Fishers and farmers benefit through better floodplain management



Floodplains provide many benefits, both socio-economic and environmental, but are threatened by overuse from a range of competing sectors. Various studies in South and SE Asia have shown a decline in floodplain fisheries production and consequent adverse impacts on the livelihoods of poor fishers. In Bangladesh, fishing is so intense that less than 2% of fish

survive each year. Competition for water for agriculture exacerbates this situation. Over several decades in Bangladesh, floodplains as sources of fish for poor fishers have been neglected in favour of polders protecting rice cultivation and raising questions over the equitable distribution of benefits. Catches per unit area were 60-104% higher outside flood control areas.

FMSP research has conclusively demonstrated that through integrated floodplain management approaches it is possible to vary sluice gate management benefiting both fishers and farmers. It has also shown that by protecting part of the stock in the dry season fish in community managed reserves were 5-21 times more abundant, comprised more species and were 5-6 times heavier, than in fished sites. In collaboration with the Natural Resources Systems Programme, application of alternative IFM options resulted in more equitable distribution of benefits from floodplain resources to poor fishers and farmers. 85 farmers at Narail site and 87 at Charan Beel had by 2005 switched to alternative cropping patterns with more profitable *rabi* rice. Fisher and farmer committees have been formed to address the issues raised. The Bangladesh Water development Board has agreed in principle to promote these approaches providing benefits nationally.

- In 2005/06 Project R8486 adapted and promoted materials guiding the integrated management of floodplain fishery resources in Bangladesh India and SE Asia.
- Floodplain fisheries management tools were developed through a series of projects funded by DFIDs Fisheries Management Science Programme since 1993, and are available at [www.fmsp.org.uk](http://www.fmsp.org.uk)
- FAO Fisheries Technical Papers No. 384/1&2 summarise and present floodplain management guidelines.
- Since 2000 FMSP and NRSP have collaborated to promote integrated floodplain management options through partners in Bangladesh.