



## Management of Aquatic Ecosystems Through Community Husbandry (MACH)

# MANAGING AN AQUATIC NATURAL RESOURCE



Resource management planning and mapping by the Takimari Darabasia RMO.

Call them sanctuary crusaders, leaders, planners, and guardians. The 122 members that make up the Darabashia Resource Management Organization (RMO) take the responsibility of protecting the fish sanctuaries and enhancing fish yields in their area very seriously. “Because of our efforts, the entire community has been made aware,” says RMO president Mumtaz Uddin.

The group has marked its sanctuaries with signboards and red flags, to clearly identify restricted sanctuary areas. They regularly patrol the sanctuaries to prevent fishing, and remove harmful fish traps.

Extremely proactive, they hold village meetings to promote awareness of the value of the improved management and conservation measures, and have developed a resource map to help others identify the sanctuaries and resources in the area. They have also become village philanthropists, distributing relief to flood victims during the monsoon of 2004.



Since 2002, the RMO members, in conjunction with MACH, have established seven sanctuaries that cover a total of 5 acres. MACH provided the RMO with technical support and funded the original excavation of key fish habitats and the introduction of fish aggregating devices. The RMO with support from local government has taken over from there vowing to maintain the new sanctuaries. “We have to guard and maintain our resources,” says Mumtaz Uddin. The members know that this guarding and maintaining consequently requires funding. The RMO's Executive Committee, which meets monthly, and the General Body of all members, which meets every three months, pay dues of 5 taka at each meeting. The RMO also benefits from the five harvest areas that have been established where fish are taken 3 times a year. The group claims that they can earn at least 4,000 taka per year harvesting from these five areas. To date, they have saved 33,676 taka in a “Post MACH” fund so that they can maintain the seven sanctuaries and take up other conservation activities even after MACH has fulfilled its tenure. In addition MACH is setting up with local government an endowment fund, the interest from which may be used by RMOs for critically important ecosystem restoration after the project closes.

Although the group is preparing itself for self-sufficiency, it says it will continue to pursue its links with the wider community, and with the local government, which currently back the group's efforts. Their efforts are now receiving national support and recognition as well. During July of 2005, the Darabashia RMO was featured on a BTV (Bangladesh Television) newscast, detailing the RMO and MACH's combined efforts. “We are proud,” says Mumtaz Uddin. “We are happy that everyone in Bangladesh can see what we are doing, and they can learn from us. We are doing good work here.” It is work that Uddin and the rest of the members plan to continue indefinitely for the betterment of their own community resource.



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