



STAKEHOLDER'S POLICY BRIEF 3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IN CO-MANAGEMENT: LESSONS AND FUTURE ROLE

BACKGROUND

The paper contains policy reflections of MACH stakeholder representatives from all three project sites¹ on the issue of *Local Government support in Co-management: Lessons and Future Role*. The stakeholder views were generated through a workshop held in Sreemangal during the Co-management Convention in May 2006 jointly organized with another USAID environmental project, the Nishorgo Support Project. This Stakeholder Policy Brief, along with five others in this series, on issues related to the processes, problems and impacts of co-management, summarizes the workshop findings of just the stakeholders from MACH project sites. The workshop participants included Upazila government officials, Union Parishad Chairmen, RMO² and FRUG³ representatives. The stakeholder reflections have been assembled into a policy brief with the aim of informing future practice, planning and decisions at policy, program and project levels based on the experience of those actually involved in living and undertaking Community Based Co-management, and to guide formation of new local organizations for natural resources management.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IN CO MANAGEMENT: LESSONS AND FUTURE ROLE

Key Reflections

LGC⁴ Support to the RMOs for Sustainable Resource Management and Capacity Building

It was proposed that the partners in the Local Government Committee should be active in the following ways:

1. Understanding of the local government officials about the RMO constitution, the purpose of the organization and nature of its work should be clear and support provided has to be in accordance to that.
2. Promote RMO activities related to sustainable resource management practices in different forums (e.g. Upazila Development Coordination Council) and seek support.
3. Help in building strong linkages with service providing agencies (e.g. Department of Agriculture and Livestock) and other advocacy institutions.
4. Arrange for training for the RMOs and fishers on alternative trades to reduce fishing pressure.
5. Increase leadership abilities among the RMOs by allowing them more scope to talk in Upazila level meetings.
6. Guide the RMOs in natural resource management and organizational development activities. Ensure regular access rights for communities and RMOs for sustainable natural resources management activities.

1. Hail Haor in Sreemongal, Turag-Bangshi river and wetlands in Kaliakoir and the Kangsha-Malijhee basin in Sherpur.
2. Resource Management Organization.
3. Federation of Resource User Groups.
4. MACH has tried to formally link the RMOs and FRUGs with the Local government through the LGCs (Local Government Committees). The members comprise the leaders of all of the community organizations - the RMOs and FRUGs - in an upazila, the respective Union Parishad Chairmen, and the relevant government officials of the Upazila, including the Upazila Nirbahi Officer and Upazila Fisheries Officer.

7. Provide support for conflict resolution in resource management.
8. Share with the RMOs information on and update practices related to the “Fish Act”⁵ as a routine job.
9. Develop a knowledge base on fish breeding, behavior and favorable environments for fisheries.
10. Help RMOs in fund raising from tolls, grants and other sources.

Support under Endowment Fund.

It was proposed that the Local Government Committee members should:

1. Help RMOs to prepare project proposals and budgets during yearly planning meetings.
2. Timely approval of proposals and budgets in order to avoid backlog.
3. Help form sub-committees on individual schemes and maintain close monitoring of their activities.
4. Timely renewal of the principal amount (Fixed Deposit by the respective DC and DFO) of the endowment fund.
5. Provide regular training in record keeping and accounts maintenance.
6. Undertake regular monitoring of the RMO activities to ensure transparency and accountability.

Coordination between the Union Parishad and RMOs

It was proposed that the concerned Union Parishads should:

1. Be involved during RMO yearly planning, and increase synchronization between RMO and Union Parishad plans.
2. Raise additional funds in their areas for resource management.
3. Act as a mediator in overcoming social barriers such as promoting women's participation in RMO activities.
4. Motivate the wider community in favor of RMO activities.
5. Help RMOs to maintain transparency during physical works and in financial matters.

Scaling-up RMO Successes and Networking

It was proposed that Local Government Committee should:

1. Engage in advocacy on RMO achievements with higher authorities.
2. Identify potential adjacent resource areas and provide support in delineating/demarcating those by the help of administration.
3. Help in establishing fish and bird sanctuaries in the wetlands of the identified areas.
4. Help in building awareness among the resource users.
5. Help RMOs in building networks to address common issues at the local level.
6. Help RMOs in preparing network guidelines and to work accordingly.
7. Guide networks of RMOs to identify potential sources for RMO funds.
8. Help in building strong connections with other similar networks at regional and national levels so that RMOs have a strong voice to achieve their rights.
9. Act as mediator to resolve any conflicting local issues in RMO forums. Union Parishad Chairman and Local Government will attend the network meetings to provide their support when and where required.
10. Provide strong support in observance of relevant international days, particularly World Wetland Day and Environment Day.

5. The Protection and Conservation of Fish Act, 1950



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For more information contact

MACH Headquarters
House No. 2, Road No. 23/A
Gulshan 1, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh
Phone: 8814598, 9887943
Fax: (880-2) 8826556
URL: www.machban.org