



Synthesis of the Round Table Discussion on “Future Plans for Inland Capture Fisheries”



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CIRDAP Auditorium
Dhaka



SUMMARY OF KEY ACTIONS PROPOSED

The round table participants supported the objectives and approach of the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy (ICFS). From the discussion the recommended next steps include:

1. Developing a programmatic approach to the ICFS, under this develop some key projects immediately to take up donor interest and have some projects in the pipeline.
2. Form a small committee from Department of Fisheries and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock to prioritise activities under the ICF action plan and develop projects under a program approach.
3. Hold discussions with Ministry of Land to change the leasing arrangements for waterbodies from revenue generation to controlling access according to the framework and principles set out in the ICFS. Start with those waterbodies where there are successful community based organizations and extend next to priority sites to be supported through the program.
4. Immediately form Upazila Fisheries Committees (UFCs) in Upazilas with community based co-management, by changing the terms of reference and replace Upazila jalmohal committees by UFCs. Expand this quickly all over the country and arrange capacity building for the involved stakeholders.
5. Establish the change in objectives of public waterbody management under the ICFS in policy statements and practice; this is: sustaining productive fisheries through community empowerment.
6. Rename “jalmohals” to reflect the ICFS and the change in purpose of leasing which will no longer be revenue generation.
7. Prepare an updated wetland inventory with appropriate categories, and that identifies critical sites of national importance for fish and wetland habitat requiring protection.
8. Declare key wetland sites (these may include beels, haors, baors, rivers and floodplains) as protected areas with appropriate designations (for example fish sanctuary, Ramsar site) and arrange support for community based co-management.
9. Develop a legal basis for the conservation practices being observed by communities to help recognize their authority.
10. Take steps to protect the natural seasonal floodplain fisheries from encroachment.
11. Identify fisheries affected by pollution and work with Department of Environment to enforce national water quality standards.
12. To address the problems of siltation, loss of fish habitat and declining biodiversity in wetlands, give priority to wetland habitat restoration.
13. Extend the coverage of the ICFS and its provisions for community based co-management to wetlands and community based organizations where other

government agencies have been working (e.g. Department of Environment, Local Government Engineering Department).

14. Regular meetings between agencies concerned with inland fisheries and wetlands centrally, through projects, and through the UFCs to improve coordination.
15. Propose mechanisms for providing micro-credit, training and livelihood support to fishers in the priority locations to be covered under the program.
16. Set up a regular review and updating process for the ICFS and action plan.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Fisheries (DOF) has prepared an Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy (ICFS) as part of a wider fisheries sector strategy through extensive consultations, and this was approved by the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock in early 2006. An action plan for its implementation has been prepared, and DOF is also preparing specific proposals under this framework. However, many key elements of the strategy require supporting decisions and cooperation from other agencies – other ministries and departments, also NGOs and development partners. The round table discussion aimed to reach agreement on some of these issues.

The ICFS cannot be implemented without cooperation of many stakeholders. The objective of the round table discussion was to inform a range of policy makers and development partners who had not been directly involved in the process of developing the ICFS about its justification, vision and main features, and to seek their support, suggestions and agreement on the most important next steps to be taken for improving the management of inland capture fisheries.

The round table discussion was organized by the Department of Fisheries to discuss and agree on the next steps that will accelerate implementation of the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy (ICFS). Key policy makers from government, representatives of development partners and other stakeholders participated in the discussion. Mr Abdullah Al Noman, MP, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock was the chief guest. The round table was chaired by Mr Kamrul Hasan, Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. Dr. Atiq Rahman, Executive Director of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies facilitated the discussion. Three presentations were made to inform the discussion, covering the lessons that had been considered by Department of Fisheries in preparing the strategy, the strategy itself, and the key issues and next steps for its implementation.

PRESENTATIONS

Darrell Deppert presented “Lessons and Successes from Inland Fisheries Management Projects”, based on recent projects including MACH, CBFM-2 and Fourth Fisheries Project. He highlighted the problems facing fisheries, best practices in establishing Fisheries Community Based Organisations (FCBOs), and successful management measures adopted by them such as establishment of sanctuaries and restoration of habitat. This has resulted in increases in fish catches, biodiversity, fish consumption, and benefits for the poor. Mr. Deppert mentioned the importance of providing long term leases as a means of securing access for the poor and the need for alternative income generating activities. He pointed out that the ICFS incorporates lessons from these projects and offers a clear way forward that is consistent with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

Mr Rafiqul Islam, Director, DOF presented an “Overview of the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy”, concentrating on the following key elements:

- Objective for the strategy,
- Necessary planning and administrative support,
- Access policy and access requirements for different types of water bodies,

- Environmental conservation, technical management and community co-management.

The Director General of DOF, Mr Nasir Uddin Ahmed, then presented the “Key Issues Requiring Decisions in Support of the ICFS”. The Director General focused on the issues affecting the implementation of the ICFS and scaling up of successes from the recent projects. In particular he discussed the next steps to be taken in six priority areas:

- Changing leasing from revenue generation to controlling access,
- Establishing Upazila Fisheries Committees (UFCs) for co-management
- Wetland inventories and planning of sanctuaries,
- Regulating changes in wetlands and fisheries,
- Poverty reduction and sustainable fisheries, and
- Scaling up community based organizations for fisheries management.

NEXT STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE ICFS

The following steps are taken from the six briefing papers circulated to the round table participants and presented by the Director General, Department of Fisheries.

Changing Leasing from Revenue Generation to Controlling Access

1. Agreement between Ministry of Land and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and other relevant Ministries on a change in the leasing policy adopting principles in the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy (incorporating the above recommendations).
2. Keep land administration of jalmohals with the representatives of Ministry of Land at local government levels but with changed aims.
3. In priority Upazilas form UFCs with the proposed composition and terms of reference and abolish Upazila Jalmahal Management Committees, and transfer responsibility for jalmohals within those Upazilas to the UFC, covering planning, monitoring, evaluation, and decisions on access and lease issues.

Upazila Fisheries Committees for Co-management

1. Approve and establish UFCs, first for those Upazilas where there are more than one existing FCBO, and expanding to 100 key Upazilas with critical wetlands in ten years.
2. Ensure the UFC composition includes concerned government officers, Union Parishad chairmen and FCBO leaders, as proposed by DOF.
3. Revise the ToR of the Senior/ Upazila Fishery Officers to reflect their roles in the UFC and in overseeing sustainable co-management of fisheries resources.
4. Develop guidelines for the UFCs to review fishery management and FCBOs, for FCBOs to be invited to UP meetings, and for fishers and FCBOs to monitor the progress of UFCs.

Wetland Inventories and Planning of Sanctuaries and Co-management

1. Hold consultations to identify potential key wetlands and then prepare a priority program for funding conservation and co-management.
2. Allocate resources to develop an inventory and use this to identify those Upazilas and waterbodies/wetlands that would be a focus for expanding community based management as a program in the next 10 years.

3. Government decision to move key wetlands from revenue generation to nominal lease payments and reservation for community based conservation smoothly and promptly.

Regulating Changes in Wetlands and Fisheries

1. Strong enforcement of existing laws, rules and directives that could limit damaging changes.
2. Strong cooperation between government agencies so that the remaining quantity and quality of water, especially in the dry season, and its connectivity are maintained wherever there are significant capture fisheries.

Scaling up Community Based Organisations for Fisheries Management

1. Encourage government and external agencies to fund facilitation and development of FCBOs in priority locations where access to waterbodies is assured by government.
2. Make agreements for supporting FCBO development between government and NGOs recognised as being capable of establishing effective, pro-poor, sustainable FCBOs.

Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Fisheries

1. Department of Fisheries develops links with other government agencies, both at local and national levels, and NGOs that can help fishers adopt alternative income generating activities.
2. Identify sites for livelihood support where communities have adopted closed seasons and/or where there are excess numbers of fishers relative to resource potential.
3. Develop partnerships with organisations/agencies to fund support to fishers for alternative income generating activities and grants for wetland restoration.

DISCUSSION

After the presentations, the participants at the round table discussion gave their comments and suggestions.

The *Chief Guest*, Mr Abdullah Al Noman, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock noted that the round table discussion was very timely given that the strategy has been finalized, fisheries are vital for poverty reduction, and that a fisheries sector roadmap has been prepared as part of the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. He also requested that the suggestions and recommendations from the round table should be provided to the Ministry in a concise form so that they can be taken up in implementing the strategy.

The key suggestions and recommendations from the discussion are summarized by theme below, taking themes highlighted in the Secretary, MOFL's summary of the discussion.

Donor support and project design

It was noted that there has to be funding available. The government prepared the PRSP but the funds to implement it have not been made available yet. Now the DOF and MOFL have

prepared the ICFS and the crucial question is whether the funds will be available to carry it forward. There has to be a reasonable size of assistance from both the Bangladesh Government and the development partners.

Financing the scaling up of the ICFS should be considered immediately. Donor support for implementation of the ICF strategy should be sought. It is important to immediately go ahead with the ideas in the strategy. With current projects coming to an end and no major projects in the pipeline, there was concern that under the ICFS some key projects that would fit within its program should be developed and proposed immediately. Donors are willing to fund programs for the development of inland capture fisheries based on a clear strategy and program approach and once they receive a program based request from the MoFL. Also it was recommended that DoF/MoFL should keep specific budgetary allocations for inland capture fisheries.

A broad based programmatic approach was proposed in the discussion under which there would be projects addressing areas under the ICFS, including poverty reduction. This will also promote interdepartmental collaboration.

Danida informed that it is formulating the second phase of its agriculture sector programme which will include institutional support to DOF to assist it with institutional reform, which can address relevant issues for implementing the strategy.

The *World Bank* informed that its country assistance strategy covering 2006 – 2009 is in place and under this it is actively considering having a project to support implementing the ICFS, such as protecting key habitats, once the government is ready with their proposal.

It was proposed to form a *small committee* from DOF, MOFL and Planning Commission to prioritize the ICF action plan and identify what would be achieved through normal activities, projects or program changes, this will save time in clearing proposals.

Prioritisation

With more than 12,000 water bodies, and DOF projects covering only 300, there is a need to *scale up* under the ICFS to have a real impact. However, trying to cover all waterbodies at once is not feasible. It was agreed that there should be a prioritization of key fisheries considering both jalmohals and seasonal floodplains.

As proposed in the ICFS it was agreed that the *wetland inventory should be updated* as a vital first step to implementing the strategy (it dates from 1950). This would involve proper identification and categorization of water bodies, including identification of critical sites.

Environmental management

The discussants confirmed the importance of protecting the environment for fisheries and wetlands, as set out in the ICFS.

Restoration of water bodies to their natural status was also considered important together with establishing sanctuaries and maintaining the ecological balance.

As stated in the ICFS, the *sources of pollution affecting fisheries should be identified*. The DoE should enforce national water standards so that the industries comply with rules and operate effluent treatment plants, and projects to mitigate water pollution should be developed.

Siltation has also changed the character of wetlands. Discussants mentioned this is not only a natural process, the rich and the influential want a water body which is filled with silt to be declared agricultural land so they can control that land and profit from it. Requirements on leaseholders to maintain the character of waterbodies would be needed.

Much of the focus of the ICFS is on jalmohals, but it was proposed that there should be more emphasis on *seasonal floodplains* that are critical for inland fisheries. As these are private lands they do not face some of the issues in jalmohals, but there are other problems of changing uses that need to be regulated.

It was also noted that water bodies and wetlands are being lost due to *encroachment*, for example to aquaculture ponds, and the limits on this proposed in the strategy need to be emphasised. In addition, if many water bodies no longer are in the hands of Ministry of Land because it is difficult to take them back from local elites to whom they were leased, then we have to think about how to regain these water bodies.

The ICFS talks about *pro-poor and responsible stocking* that would be limited to smaller areas, but the meanings of these terms need to be clarified.

A *legal basis for conservation practices* observed by the communities such as closed seasons is lacking as they are not covered by the “Fish Act”. The ICFS lays emphasis on local management and decision making but it was proposed that this should be legitimized and given a legal basis.

DOF/MOFL should *declare protected areas* in some wetlands of critical importance and not consider this just an issue for Ministry of Environment and Forests. For example, DOF/MoFL could take a lead in declaring new Ramsar sites where it introduces community based co-management. Some key wetlands should be made permanent sanctuaries, for example at least one such sanctuary in each division.

With over 12,000 water bodies, establishing CBOs in all of them will be a long process. In the meantime most will be under the *existing leasing system*, so the ICFS provision for ensuring that leaseholders do not follow destructive practices should be enforced. The UFCs can be quickly established and then supervise those leaseholders.

Access rights

The need for regulatory measures to establish access rights was agreed to be a key area of the ICFS.

It was agreed that the ICFS approach where *leasing should be used for controlling access* rather than collecting revenue was the way forward¹. There was wide agreement on the problems raised by ever increasing revenue based, short duration leases. The ICFS proposal for 50 year leases at reduced and standardized low rates for acceptable CBOs was widely accepted. Similarly it was agreed with the ICFS that VAT should be exempted.

Leasing of jalmahals should be used as a means of ensuring long term access for local fishing communities on condition that they conserve and sustain the fisheries through improved management. However, local practices such as closed seasons and closed areas should prove successful for long term access to be maintained.

To make these *changes to the leasing arrangement* they should be taken up immediately with Ministry of Land, starting with the waterbodies from different projects where CBOs have shown success.

It was noted that in the past the practical possession of water bodies by CBOs takes a long time to resolve. For example, problems over *demarcation* of water bodies. This should be resolved before reserving water bodies for CBOs, so that the CBOs get complete control over the total demarcated area of the water body.

Institutional development and sustainability

Since most of the projects in this sector are coming to an end, exit strategies that ensure sustainability are vital. The ICFS framework can support this if it is implemented.

The *Upazila Fisheries Committees* (UFC) proposed in the ICFS should be formed immediately by changing the TOR of existing Jalmohal Management Committees, as proposed in the ICFS, so that there is no interruption when projects end. Capacity building for UFCs is essential. They should be formed first where there is already successful community based management, but quickly spread all over the country so that capacity can be built for co-management.

Institutional capacity building at various levels including DOF, CBOs, and UFCs was considered essential.

DOF staff development was proposed to support its function in UFCs. It was noted that DOF has few staff at Upazila level, and to implement the strategy at least in key upazilas more staff will be needed, moreover officers tend not to be in post in remote areas that may have

¹ In the discussion the possibility of a political decision to distribute the water bodies to the fishers similar to the decision to distribute *khas* land (state owned land) to the landless poor was raised. While this may be well intentioned, it was noted that this is not possible as wetlands and fisheries are common resources for which cooperation among users and with government are essential (as laid out in the ICFS) and moreover the fisher population is increasing. Changing the purpose of leasing and reserving water bodies long term for organisations of the users to manage sustainably is appropriate. In fact distribution of khas land in wetlands to individuals has created threats to coordinated sustainable management of those wetlands as a whole.

Similarly the issue of transferring administration of *jalmohals* to the MOFL was raised, but it was noted that the ICFS aimed to achieve a major change in practices and objectives through cooperation with the Ministry of Land and local administration. If that cooperation is forthcoming mass transfers would not be needed.

important fisheries. It was proposed that as the UFCs will review the performance of CBOs the UFCs should include representatives from capable NGOs, and that there should be safeguards for developing the capacity of the poor taking responsibility in CBOs.

The ICFS is based on leasing that will not be for generating revenue, but the word *jalmohal* refers to the traditional revenue based system. Therefore it was proposed to change the name/category used for waterbodies and to rename the jalmohal section in DOF (just as the ICFS plans to rename what were Upazila Jalmohal Committees as UFCs along with a major revision of the TOR and membership). To support implementation of the ICFS that section would also require a budgetary allocation.

It was recommended that all the stakeholders involved in implementing the ICFS including the FCBOs, UFCs, projects, departments, ministries should maintain *transparency and accountability*.

Implementation and Cooperation

It was noted that implementation rather than policy had been a common failing in the past.

Inter-departmental and inter-ministerial coordination are vital to the ICFS. Much of the ICFS concerns regulatory interventions on access and resources, for which there are inter-ministerial issues. At the ministry level, conflict still exists between Ministry of Land and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock in spite of MoUs, which is mostly over the administration of jalmahals, this needs to be resolved (see access).

Lack of *horizontal relationships* between departments is a possible barrier to proper implementation of the ICFS. There are conflict of interest between fisheries, agriculture and environment sectors. The ICFS and water management plans for the whole country need to be fitted together.

More linkages should be established between DOF and other departments that are also involved in inland capture fisheries. For example, several other government departments have also established community organizations or co-management for water bodies (such as the LGED and BWDB), this needs to be coordinated under the ICFS.

Ministry of Water Resources confirmed its total support for the strategy - Badrul Alam Tarafder, Additional Secretary conveyed his ministry's readiness to provide any kind of support sought by the DOF. *LGED* likewise emphasised its support for inter-agency cooperation.

The implementation of the strategy should be periodically evaluated. DoF and key stakeholders should meet every year or alternate years to review implementation and amend and revise the strategy and action plan where needed. Monitoring systems that cover management and institutions, social and technical aspects should be developed.

Community development

The ICFS and presentations were based on developing what were called “Fisheries Community Based Organisations”, but it was recognized in the discussion that other CBOs are also involved in wetland management and in supporting fisher livelihoods (for example through Department of Environment in Environmentally Critical Areas and through Local Government Engineering Department projects). Therefore there should be a broader scope to work with *relevant and capable CBOs* and not just those that are focused on fisheries, and lessons should be shared among relevant projects and agencies.

Sustainability of CBOs is a key issue. So far the CBOs have demonstrated the visible results under projects in the areas of eco-system conservation, livelihoods and increased productivity. When CBOs face problems in future they need help, but DOF staff at Upazilla level are limited. Some small scale support for CBOs after projects end should be available, NGOs could help in this. For example, MACH created endowment funds with this purpose in mind at Upazila level to support CBOs, this could be considered in other areas and projects.

The need for *capacity building* and training for communities and CBOs so they could take on responsibilities was highlighted, along with support to avoid local elites taking over the management of water bodies. Under the ICFS the UFCs would review the performance of FCBOs, but some safeguards should be there to help the poor or they will not be able to perform well.

Different types of CBO are involved, and so the appropriate types of legal entity and *CBO registration* need to be reviewed based on experience, and guidance developed on this.

Alternative livelihoods have been successful in many cases and deserve support, but mechanisms for providing *micro-credit* for non-fisheries activities under the ICFS should be clarified.

Implementation of the ICFS should give due weight to *empowerment of women*.

Conclusion

The Secretary, MOFL, in conclusion noted that there has to be funding available from the donors. The government prepared the PRSP but the funds have not been made available yet. Now the MOFL has prepared ICFS and the crucial question is whether a reasonable size of assistance from the development partners will come. Out of the many recommendations made in the discussion he highlighted the following:

- There has to be a proper survey and identification of water bodies as well as proper categorization keeping in mind changes on the ground.
- Restoration of water bodies to their natural status was considered important together with establishing sanctuaries and maintaining the ecological balance.
- The need to put in place regulatory measures to establish access rights and the legality thereof was another important recommendation.
- Alternative income generating activities were considered important by some of the participants. This has been successful in many cases and should be given proper attention and funding.

- It was pointed out that most of the projects are coming to an end and exit strategies need to be addressed properly for sustainability. The aim of exit strategies should be to sustain what has been achieved.
- The importance of capacity building and institutional reform was mentioned by many participants.
- Interdepartmental coordination was considered very important by the participants.
- Empowerment of women also came up as an important issue.

Finally, the Secretary noted that an approach and model have been developed, but not all of the round table recommendations and details of the ICFS can be implemented at once, so priorities have to be set.

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5. ICFS Gi bwxZ I cŏqM c`wZi mv¶ mvgÄm` ti¶L Lvm Rj vfwgi eZgvb e`vcbv c`wZi cwieZŏ Kiv hv Rb¶Mvŏxi ¶lgZvq¶bi gva`tg tUKmB grm` m`ú` Mto Zj te |
6. ICFS mv¶ mvgÄm` ti¶L ŐRjgnj Ő bvgwU cwieZŏ Kti cpt bigKib Kitz nte Ges ivR`wfwÉK BRviv c`wZi cwieZŏ Kitz nte |
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10. Lvm Rj vfiḡ/ tgšmgx cvebfḡ wdkvixṭRi Lvm Rvḡ A%æ `Lj ṭṭK i qvi e'e-v wḡZ nṭe|
11. ṭh me wdkvixR cwb `ṭṭYi ḡviv qwZMš' nṭ"Q Zv wPwY'Z Kṭi cwiṭek Awā`ḡi i mnṭhwMZvq cwb i ḡRvZxq gvṭvi ḡ ,Yv ,Y i qvi e'e-v wḡZ nṭe|
12. ṭh me Rj vfiḡ cwj Rṭḡ fi vU nI qvi dṭj gvṭQi Avevm ṭj qwZMš' Z nṭ"Q, cḡwvZ `eiPĪ Kṭḡ hvṭ"Q, ṭm me Rj vfiḡi ms-vi Kiv|
13. ṭh me Rj vfiḡṭZ Ab`vb` mi Kvix cōZōvb RwoZ (ṭhgb cwiṭek Awā`ḡi , Gj wRBwM) ṭm me ṭqṭĪ I ICFS Gi Avl Zvq mgvRwfvwĒK mn-e'e-vcbvi gva`ṭḡ Kvhpvṭ cwi Pvj bv Kiv|
14. ṭh me cōZōvb Af`šZixY grm` mæú` I Rj vfiḡ e'e-vcbvi mvṭ_ mæú³ Zvṭ` i mvṭ_ cKí chṭq ev UFC chṭq wḡqḡZ mfv Kṭi cvi ṭúwi K mnṭhwMZv eḡx Kiv|
15. KgḡPxi Avl Zvq AMōwKvi cōḡ Gj vKvq qṭi`-FY I cōkqY cōvb, wēKí Kgḡs-vṭbi cō Zvebv cḡqb KiṭZ nṭe|
16. ICFS Gi Kvḡwi Kí bvi wḡqḡZ chṭj vPbv I nvj bwMv` KiṭYi e'e-v KiṭZ nṭe|

ANNEX

BRIEFING PAPERS

The six papers in this section were circulated to the participants of the round table discussion. They summarise key recommendations from the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy, and next steps to achieve these changes from the action plan prepared by Department of Fisheries and the road map prepared by the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.



BRIEFING PAPER 1

Changing Leasing from Revenue Generation to Controlling Access

Background

The present jalmohal leasing system encourages maximisation of short term income by leaseholders, and makes poor fishers dependent on moneyed and influential people, it does not promote sustainable fisheries management or protect biodiversity. Jalmohal leases now contribute only about 0.07% of total government revenue and legal cases often prevent collection of revenue. Licensing failed to encourage the cooperation among fishers and wetland users that is necessary to conserve and sustain the resource. Free access in flowing rivers encouraged over-fishing and catches are declining. So access control is needed and is most effectively achieved by using the familiar rights conferred by leases but in a new way.

Abandoning revenue maximization would benefit the poor and encourage restoration of the productivity of fishery resources, with little effect on government revenues. The Government decided in 2001 and 2003 in principal to transfer jalmohals in a phased process to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, but this did not happen, and is an administrative burden. The recommendations of the ICFS are consistent with this but take a modified and more practicable approach.

This will involve a phased switch to nominal revenue payments by capable Fisheries Community Based Organisations under the oversight of Upazila Fisheries Committees (UFC), with administrative responsibility retained by the land administration represented by the UNO (chair of the UFC). Jalmohals that have not yet switched into this system would continue to be administered under the existing leasing practices, but the UFC would check whether leaseholders implement appropriate fishery management measures, and in cases of failure would recommend for actions by the leasing authorities.

Recommendations

Jalmohal leases should be used as a means to ensure long term access for local fishing communities on condition that they conserve and sustain the fisheries and that the benefits go to those who fish for a livelihood, recognizing rights of professional and subsistence fishers.

Reserve access at nominal fixed per hectare lease payments for Fishery Community Based Organizations (FCBOs) provided those FCBOs ensure access for poor fishers, are well managed, protect key areas as sanctuaries, and adopt management plans and actions to sustain and restore the productivity of the fishery.

The Upazila Fisheries Committee (UFC) will assess FCBO proposals for the participation of user communities, and ability to manage the resource in a transparent and accountable way.

Where there is an acceptable FCBO and management plan, the UFC will reserve the water body for that FCBO for 50 years subject to renewal every 10 years based on the UFC's assessment.

If the FCBO fails to meet its requirements, the UFC can cancel its reserved access and the jalmohal will return to the traditional leasing system until an acceptable FCBO and plan are available. VAT and income tax will be waived.

Continue the present leasing practice for all other jalmohals until the time that they do have an acceptable FCBO as assessed by the UFC, but set conservation conditions on their leases including introduction of fish sanctuaries.


Extend reserved community management under UFC oversight by phases. Start with upazilas where there are water bodies that have effective FCBOs and expand to connected jalmohals, and in upazilas where there are concentrations of key wetlands and capture fisheries.

Rivers would come under the same system as and when suitable FCBOs are formed.

Jalmohals of less than 20 acres (other than ponds and tanks) would be covered by the same rules and system (a preference for youth groups from the fishing community forming the FCBO may be adopted).

If a water body covers more than one Upazila the UFC where the major part of the water body and/or users are located would be enlarged to include the relevant representatives from the other Upazila. If a major wetland/fishery system covers more than one Upazila separate UFCs may be formed but will hold joint coordination meetings at least once in a year.

Necessary steps

1. Agreement between Ministry of Land and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and other relevant Ministries on a change in the leasing policy adopting principles in the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy (incorporating the above recommendations).
 2. Keep land administration of jalmohals with the representatives of Ministry of Land at local government levels but with changed aims.
 3. In priority Upazilas form UFCs with the proposed composition and terms of reference (see Briefing Paper 2) and abolish Upazila Jalmahal Management Committees, and transfer responsibility for jalmohals within those Upazilas to the UFC, covering planning, monitoring, evaluation, and decisions on access and lease issues.
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BRIEFING PAPER 2

Upazila Fisheries Committees for Co-management

Background

Recent projects working in inland fisheries (MACH, Fourth Fisheries, CBFM-2, etc) have been concerned to ensure the sustainability of local fishery management systems and user organizations they have developed, and to enable the spread of similar approaches. The Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy provides a framework for such a national program. Based on experience in these projects, it proposes that local community based organisations should be complemented by an Upazila level co-management committee, especially where there are several water bodies and community based organisations.

Recommendations

After the exit of any project a committee should remain there to oversee, review and coordinate local community management of fisheries. These functions can be served by expanding and redefining the Terms of Reference of the Upazila Jalmohal Management Committees which were constituted with a specific TOR related to the fixation of lease values and monitoring the performance of management in jalmohals. To avoid confusion regarding their role they should be renamed as Upazila Fisheries Committee.

Upazila Fisheries Committees (UFCs) should be formed as detailed in the ICFS. These are adapted from the existing Local Government Committees (LGCs) formed under the MACH project. These committees have functioned very effectively but were project based, they can be replicated to support community management in other Upazilas.

UFCs will review the activities of the Fishery Community Based Organizations (FCBOs), resolve conflicts, and approve future wetland and fishery management plans at Upazila level.

Government should set aside funds for the operation of the UFCs, and to support local initiatives to restore fisheries, this could be achieved through endowments.

The UFC will have devolved responsibility for reserving access to jalmohals for FCBOs where they are found to be equitable, benefit poor fishing communities, and have sound sustainably fishery management plans. UFCs will oversee and advise the activities of FCBOs, and regulate wetland use to ensure that fisheries are sustainable and productive.

Necessary steps

1. Approve and establish UFCs, first for those Upazilas where there are more than one existing FCBO, and expanding to 100 key Upazilas with critical wetlands in ten years.
2. Ensure the UFC composition includes concerned government officers, Union Parishad chairmen and FCBO leaders, as proposed by DOF.
3. Revise the ToR of the Senior/ Upazila Fishery Officers to reflect their roles in the UFC and in overseeing sustainable co-management of fisheries resources.
4. Develop guidelines for the UFCs to review fishery management and FCBOs, for FCBOs to be invited to UP meetings, and for fishers and FCBOs to monitor the progress of UFCs.

BRIEFING PAPER 3

Wetland Inventories and Planning of Sanctuaries and Co-management

Background

There are reported to be about 12,000 jalmohals of varying sizes and types of wetland. But wetlands are complex systems: some large wetlands contain many jalmohals in a linked fishery, while important local fisheries may comprise other public lands or private seasonally flooded land. Many changes have taken place: some wetlands and jalmohals have silted up or been encroached for other uses (e.g. Chalan Beel). Existing inventories and categorisation of wetlands were made for revenue collection and are outdated. There is no up to date inventory combining administrative, physical, biological and human information on these systems.

A major success of Department of Fisheries and community based organisations in the last 5 years has been establishing fish sanctuaries within part of jalmohals reserved for community management for sustainable exploitation of the jalmohal as a whole. Ministry of Land has taken some key wetlands out of revenue based leasing for protection as sanctuaries, for example Baikka Beel in Hail Haor. However, the only inland wetland with an international conservation designation as a Ramsar site is Tanguar Haor, and there is no clear national framework for recognising wetland and fish sanctuaries.

Recommendations

Prepare an inventory and categorisation of all inland wetlands, jalmohals and fisheries, and prioritise from this upazilas and waterbodies for community based management.

Identify key wetlands of international and national importance for biodiversity and fisheries where conservation measures through community based co-management should be a priority.

Develop a national framework and enact appropriate legislation to enable and protect both national and local fish and wetland sanctuaries (in part or all of a jalmohal, or in other lands).

Establish a national network of sanctuaries to protect key wetlands and “mother fisheries”. Designate these according to their significance, with those of international importance declared as Ramsar sites.

Establish fishery community based organisations and Upazila Fisheries Committees to manage on a sustainable basis these key wetland systems as a whole including the development and implementation of plans to conserve key parts of the systems as sanctuaries.

Necessary steps

1. Hold consultations to identify potential key wetlands and then prepare a priority program for funding conservation and co-management.
2. Allocate resources to develop an inventory and use this to identify those Upazilas and waterbodies/wetlands that would be a focus for expanding community based management as a program in the next 10 years.
3. Government decision to move key wetlands from revenue generation to nominal lease payments and reservation for community based conservation smoothly and promptly.

BRIEFING PAPER 4

Regulating Changes in Wetlands and Fisheries

Background

Fisheries are dependent on wetlands comprising of both jalmohals and privately owned floodplains. They are affected by practices within those areas and in the wider catchments. Past declines in capture fisheries and current threats arise not just from fishing practices, but also factors such as drainage and wetland conversion, pollution, and siltation. For example, pollution from textile dyeing factories reduces dissolved oxygen in the Turag River to negligible levels in the dry season killing fish in sanctuaries there; and parts of Hail Haor have been silting up at a rate of 1 m in 20 years.

Recommendations

The government should make mandatory adoption of practices that minimise soil erosion by those leasing uplands/hill areas (for example, contour cultivation, maintaining tree and vegetation cover in higher lands, and planting native trees along streams and in wetlands).

Ensure that sources of pollution affecting fisheries are identified and that the Department of Environment enforces national water standards so that industries comply with the rules and operate effluent treatment plants where required. Stop further industrial development where this would affect significant fisheries and lacks mitigation investments by those industries.

Regulate stocking such that in open waters it involves restoration of self-reproducing native species, and only in smaller semi-closed waterbodies is there annual stocking. Develop guidelines to prevent stocking with genetically degraded native species, and only permit stocking of exotic species after approval of Department of Fisheries.

Develop guidelines and rules to maintain large floodplain wetlands with significant fisheries as open systems and do not permit empoldering or enclosure for aquaculture in such areas. Permit responsible pro-poor stocking/aquaculture in smaller floodplain areas where it will not affect water flow.

Ensure that embanked floodplains maintain internal canals and connectivity with rivers and beels for easy movement of water and fish. New water control structures should be fish friendly, and measures should be taken where practicable to mitigate adverse impacts of existing embankments on fisheries.

Retain and increase the extent of good quality dry season surface water as far as possible and enable local communities to protect these areas, setting aside key wetlands as Ramsar sites.

Necessary steps

1. Strong enforcement of existing laws, rules and directives that could limit damaging changes.
2. Strong cooperation between government agencies so that the remaining quantity and quality of water, especially in the dry season, and its connectivity are maintained wherever there are significant capture fisheries.

BRIEFING PAPER 5

Scaling up Community Based Organisations for Fisheries Management

Background

Since the early 1990s development projects have formed new community based organisations for fisheries management, recognising that there were serious limitations to past fisher cooperatives. Since about 2000 emphasis has been on building strong, equitable and accountable fisheries community based organisations (FCBOs) as a basis for cooperation among wetland users for better governance and sustainability of fisheries and wetlands.

About 250 such FCBOs exist. They were formed through NGO facilitation linked with Government of Bangladesh projects. Most FCBOs are registered and have successfully made and implemented management plans that aim to ensure sustainable productive fisheries. Not all attempts at community based management have succeeded, any expansion needs to take account of lessons. Experience indicates that 5 years is generally insufficient to establish capable sustainable FCBOs, and that 8 or more years are needed. Establishing FCBOs and their fishery management actions requires funds. Fourth Fisheries Project spent about Tk 120 per fisher per month on community organisation. MACH spent about Tk 240,000 per FCBO per month (Tk 120 per benefited household per month for RMOs covering larger areas).

Recommendations

Provide a legal framework for reserving jalmohals for management by FCBOs endorsed by an Upazila Fisheries Committee (UFC) and registered (social services or cooperative), and that recognises similar community based management of other public and private wetlands.

Develop national guidelines for effective, equitable and transparent FCBOs. Waterbodies and communities are diverse so FCBO arrangements will be adapted to fit the local situation.

Effective FCBOs should be democratic (e.g. regular elections), transparent and accountable through general meetings and links with villages, keep proper accounts, and be capable of planning and managing fishery resources. Women wetland users should be adequately represented in FCBOs, and encouraged and empowered to participate. FCBOs should be encouraged to link together and cooperate to strengthen their voice and capacity.

In each of 100 priority upazilas develop at least five quality FCBOs in ten years. To support this give grants to capable NGOs and in those upazilas post additional fisheries officers. Train and orient fisheries officers to be effective facilitators of FCBOs.

Create a fund that will make grants to qualified FCBOs for works to conserve and restore their fisheries, and help support them through income generating enterprises.

Necessary steps

1. Encourage government and external agencies to fund facilitation and development of FCBOs in priority locations where access to waterbodies is assured by government.
2. Make agreements for supporting FCBO development between government and NGOs recognised as being capable of establishing effective, pro-poor, sustainable FCBOs.

BRIEFING PAPER 6

Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Fisheries

Background

A majority of fishers in inland waters are poor. A survey of 125,000 households by CBFM-2 around 130 waterbodies found 82% of households fishing for income were poor. The same survey found that about 50% of rural poor households living in the floodplains catch fish and other aquatic resources as a source of food and supplementary income.

Poverty is more than just having a low income and inadequate food and shelter, it is multi-dimensional. In the fisheries sector it is associated with economic exclusion from high value waterbodies, social marginalisation of traditional fishers, class exploitation by moneylenders and leaseholders, and political disempowerment from decisions affecting fisher livelihoods.

Local community based management can address all of these dimensions of poverty. To address poverty it needs to be based on restoring the productivity of fisheries, for example in MACH sites fish consumption (of poor households) increased by 52% between 1999 and 2004, and fish catches doubled. Access limits are needed to restore fisheries, but closed seasons cause a seasonal loss for those dependent on fishing for an income. Micro-credit is a common request from poor professional fishers in this situation. MACH experience highlights the value of training, and scope for youth from fishing communities to move into new occupations given the right training, thus reducing future pressure on limited fisheries.

Recommendations

Once poor fishing communities have secure access to fisheries and appropriate management plans, investment in restoring productivity should focus on excavation to expand dry season fish habitat, sanctuaries to protect fish in that habitat, and limits on critical fishing practices (for example, observing a short closed season in the early monsoon and ban on dewatering).

Livelihood support programs for fishers must be linked with improvements in resource management and should focus on activities that generate a non-fishery related income.

Livelihood support should include skill training as well as micro-credit, and must ensure there are adequate market and income opportunities from the new enterprises.

Department of Fisheries lacks capacity to directly support fishers to develop non-fishing alternative income sources, so it should partner with organisations having that capacity.

Necessary steps

1. Department of Fisheries develops links with other government agencies, both at local and national levels, and NGOs that can help fishers adopt alternative income generating activities.
2. Identify sites for livelihood support where communities have adopted closed seasons and/or where there are excess numbers of fishers relative to resource potential.
3. Develop partnerships with organisations/agencies to fund support to fishers for alternative income generating activities and grants for wetland restoration.

ANNEX

PRESENTATIONS

The following pages reproduce the presentation material used during presentations made to the round table on:

Lessons and successes from inland fisheries management projects – Darrell Deppert and Paul Thompson, MACH project

Inland capture fisheries strategy overview – Md Rafiqul Islam and Masood Siddique, Department of Fisheries

Key issues requiring decisions in support of the Inland Capture Fisheries Strategy – Md. Nasir Uddin Ahmed, Director General, Department of Fisheries

ANNEX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON FUTURE PLANS FOR INLAND CAPTURE FISHERIES

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3		Dr. Golam Sarwar	Joint Chief	
4		Ms. Begum Rahima Nahar	Deputy Chief, MoFL	
5		Mr. Kamal Uddin Bhuiyan	PS to Minister	
6	Planning Commission	Mr. Abdus Sobhan Bhuiyan	Joint Chief	Forest, Fisheries & Livestock wing, Planning Commission
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8		Mr. Rafiqul Islam	Director (Inland)	
9		Mr. Shariful Islam Akanda	PCD, Fourth Fisheries Project	
10		Mr. Showkat Ali	DD, Planning	
11		Mr. Masood Siddique	DAD, Jalmohals section	
12		Mr. Md. Mahbubur Rahman Khan	PD, CBFM-2	
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14		Mr. Khandaker Mahbulul Haque	Training section	
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BB	Anarul Haque	Reporter
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Chief Guest: Mr. Abdullah Al Noman, MP, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock

Organised by:



The Department of Fisheries



Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry

Supported by USAID



Community Based Fisheries Management-2

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Event facilitation by: Neeti Gobeshona Kendro