

Water Management and Productive Sectors Innovation Fund

Report of Quarter 1 – 2015

1. Development and introduction of a web-based GIS Information Platform

Between the months of January and March 2015 the Blue Gold team has focused on updating the data of the web-based GIS information platform for all 12 polders of the program. As part of this activity the Blue Gold team purchased a GIS dataset from the Water Resource Planning Organization (WARPO), which is currently being analyzed on its usefulness for the GIS portal. Additionally the data gathered by Blue Gold itself is added to the portal (i.e. WMGs, roads, kahls and structures).

It is expected that this work will be completed by the end of May 2015, after which the third and final N&S expert mission will take place (planned for June 2015).

2. Women-managed Small Household Ponds (SHHP)

On March 2nd 2015, WorldFish submitted a request to extend the contract of the SHHP project, citing that the project was started up later than originally planned which led to unspent funds. It was agreed by Blue Gold to extend the original end date of the SHHP project of March 9th 2015 to 30th June with no additional costs. A final report on the SHHP project is expected by 30th June 2015.

3. Pilot with IWM on Polder Community Water Management (CoWM) in polder 30.

On March 2nd 2015, Martina Groenemeijer finished her four months internship at the community water management pilot in Polder 30 in Khulna District by presenting her findings to the Blue Gold team in the Dhaka office. Martina's main tasks were to carry out a baseline survey, to monitor progress of the pilot and to advise on up-scaling options.

In December 2014 IRRI informed that their proposal for additional funding (US\$ 750,000) under the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land, and Ecosystems (WLE) has been successful. Blue Gold is supporting this initiative, which includes IRRI, WorldFish, IWMI, IWM and a number of NGO's. The inception workshop for the IRRI research initiative took place in February 2015. The start of the integrated field visit is planned for April 2015.

4. New initiatives

4.1 Reconnaissance visit of the Dutch Water Authorities to the Blue Gold program

The Dutch Water Authorities (DWA) and Dienst Landelijk Gebied (DLG) visited the Blue Gold program between 16 – 28 January 2015. The focus of the reconnaissance mission was to explore possibilities for mutual cooperation with the Blue Gold program.

DWA and DLG found that their working methods and content of work are comparable to the activities undertaken in the Blue Gold program, and identified three possible areas of cooperation:

- Develop and execute a training for Bangladesh Water Development Board staff on life cycle costing, creating maintenance awareness in design, implementation and operation of assets. The introduction of a plan-do-act-evaluate cycle is to be stimulated within the institutional setting of BWDB.
- In Polder 2 DWA/DLG will assist in the development of a polder approach through Participatory land use Planning and methods of participatory water management. This is to be organized within the Innovation fund of the Blue Gold project.
- A young Dutch academic will be posted in Bangladesh to cooperate with the Blue Gold project and to assist in abovementioned activities.
- Further cooperative actions will be defined after establishment of a trustful working relation.

A detailed mission report with the background of the visit, program analysis and findings has been delivered to Blue Gold.

4.2 Placement of Young Expert Program Water candidate in Blue Gold

The reconnaissance mission of the DWA and DLG has resulted in collaboration with Blue Gold around the placement of a trainee from the Netherlands within the Blue Gold project, as part of the Netherlands funded Young Expert Program Water program (YEP-Water program).

The trainee is an employee of DWA; as such DWA is the applicant for the participation of the trainee in the YEP-Water program. As part of the YEP-Water program, the trainee will be placed in Khulna. The trainee will be active within Component 2 of the Blue Gold program.

The responsibilities of the trainee include liaising with the Blue Gold Innovation Fund Manager to jointly develop ideas and proposals for innovative (technical) solutions in the field of river erosion protection, climate change mitigation, combatting drainage congestion (water logging) and design of water management structures (sluices, inlets, outlets, culverts) for the coastal polders in southwest Bangladesh.

The trainee will join the Blue Gold program on 16th of August 2015 for a period of one year.

4.3 Analysis on feasibility of water hyacinth handicraft production .

The Innovation Fund Manager and the Leader of Component 3, visited the EKN on Thursday 12th of March to discuss the feasibility of water hyacinth based handicraft production as an income generating activity for WMG members of the Blue Gold program. Based on this visit a report with recommendations and follow-up activities was presented to the EKN on 16th March 2015.

4.4 NICE Foundation submits participatory research proposal on Kawra pig-rearing community

The NICE Foundation has approached the Blue Gold Innovation Fund with a research proposal that focuses on the Kawra pig-rearing community in the South-West of Bangladesh. The proposal has been submitted to the EKN for approval on 29th of March 2015.

The NICE Foundation's research proposal proves interesting as it combines Blue Gold's community empowerment approach with a focus on the practicalities of livestock rearing and the value chain of pork meat in Bangladesh.

4.5 ACACIA Water

Between September 2014 and February 2015, Acacia Water and Dhaka University conducted a feasibility study on the application of MAR technology for agriculture water inside polder 22 of the Blue Gold program. The outcome of this feasibility study shows that the adaptation of MAR technology can provide significant benefit to farmers in polder 22. As such Blue Gold has proposed to pilot the implementation of the MAR technology and field test the practical application.

The benefits of the MAR technology would not only extend to farmers being able to grow an additional crop, but can also have a substantial impact on gender relations, as it allows for a bigger role of women in homestead farming. Additionally, polder 22 could play a role in the production of fodder. Already the surrounding areas feed their cattle with fodder from polder 22, as the shrimp production there limits the growth of sufficient fodder crops.

A draft proposal for a pilot study to be implemented by ACACIA Water within the Blue Gold program has been submitted to the EKN on 29th March.

4.6 Desk study on pearl cultivation in Bangladesh

The final report of the IMARES study on pearl cultivation in Bangladesh was published in January 2015. Based on this report it was decided to discontinue this initiative.

5. Full Time Innovation Fund Manager Appointed

As recommended by the EKN and the annual review mission of 2014, per March 1st 2015 Blue Gold has appointed a full-time Innovation Fund Manager in order to allow the project to make maximum use of this unique instrument and to allow for a limited number of international competitive calls to cater for those initiatives that would exceed the ceiling of EURO 50,000.

The initial assignment of the Innovation Manager is for a period of one year with a potential extension of the contract with another year.. After two years the program will be evaluated and a decision will be taken to recruit again an Innovation Fund Manager through YEP-Water.

The main tasks of the Innovation Fund Manager are to:

1. Stimulate and initiate calls for ideas and proposals from parties in the project areas and elsewhere and inform and liaise with potential Dutch service providers and/or suppliers;
2. Support the Blue Gold team in evaluating the incoming proposals;
3. Draft contracts with the successful service providers;
4. Manage the innovation – i.e. making linkages with parties that could contribute to the up-scaling;
5. Act as liaison between the service (innovation) provider and the concerned Blue Gold component staff and the GoB implementing partner and assist in removing bottlenecks, if any;
6. Facilitate and manage the embedding of the innovation activity in the project area;
7. Set up a robust reporting system in cooperation with the M&E team and the Finance Manager of Blue Gold on:
 - (financial) progress of the contracts concluded under the two funds
 - pipe line projects
8. Participate in strategy and planning meetings of the Blue Gold TA team;
9. Contribute to Progress Reports and Annual Plans of Blue Gold.