24 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

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Briefing Materials



The following materials illustrate concepts, interventions, outcomes and lessons learnt, including through stories from community members.

Slide decks

• Gender equality and women's empowerment

Thematic brochures

• Women's empowerment in the Blue Gold Program

Case studies

• Women water heroes: women championing good water management
• Women's empowerment and gender equality contributing to overall well-being
• Blue Gold Program enhancing women's leadership
• Women in Collective Actions and Market Linkages: increasing benefits and empowerment
• Horizontal Learning empowering women: sharing poultry rearing successes
• Women's empowerment through homestead FFS
• Empowerment and poverty reduction through Labour Contracting Societies
• Feminization of Agriculture, women's workload and sharing domestic work
• Women's leadership in WMA polder organisations

Videos

• Women's Empowerment (Bangla with English subtitles)

Flipcharts

• Gender Flipcharts: Gender equality (Bangla)
• Gender Flipcharts: Gender and agriculture (Bangla)

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Rationale and approach[edit | edit source]

The rationale for addressing gender equality issues and women's empowerment in the Blue Gold Program has always been twofold:

- Gender equality is a basic human right, also embedded in policies of the Government of Bangladesh. Blue Gold therefore aimed to contribute to more gender equality and women's empowerment, also ensuring that both men and women benefit from its interventions.
- Paying attention to gender equality and women's empowerment was foreseen to contribute to better achieving Blue Gold's overall objectives.

Barriers for women's empowerment[edit | edit source]

The Blue Gold Program aimed to empower all polder inhabitants, both men and women. Hereby empowerment is seen as the process to enable people to make own choices and to convert these into desired actions and results. By doing so, people take more control over their own lives, improve their own position, set their own agenda, gain skills, solve problems and develop self-sufficiency. The reason that Blue Gold gave special attention to women's empowerment is because women face more barriers than men to get empowered, such as:

- Women are seen as housewives and are not recognized as farmers. The traditional women's tasks in agricultural production, such as post-harvest work and homesteads production, are often seen as part of women's domestic work rather than as productive work.
- Women have less access to information, knowledge, and resources than men, because women are more confined to their homes, have smaller social networks, and are less targeted by information providers, such as agricultural extension.
- Decision-making on farming and income expenditure, maintaining market linkages, and speaking in public are commonly perceived as male domains.
- Women are often taken less seriously than men, for example, women get structurally lower wages -as wage labourer- even if they do the same amount of work as men do.

Domestic and care work (= reproductive work) are not recognized as work nor hardly shared with male household members. Especially if women also engage in productive work, they are overloaded and have time poverty (report on women's workload). See the below box 24.1 for an example.

Box 24.1 *Women's estimated time use (based on data from 12 women from 3 Blue Gold polders, February 2019)*

- reproductive work: 8.9 hours
- productive work: 4.9 hours
- personal care, including prayer: 2.5 hours
- leisure: 0.5 hours
- training / studies: 0.4 hours
- sleep and rest: 6.7 hours

The Blue Gold Program Document (2012) identified gender as one of the important cross-cutting themes aiming to improve the socio-economic position and status of women in the polders by integrating gender in all BGP components. The Program Document referred in particular to experiences of the IPSWAM project (women LCS groups), to DANIDA (women benefiting from FFS) as well as to BWDB's Guidelines for Participatory Water Management (GPWM 2000) and BWDB's Gender Strategy 2006-2011. BGP's original Logical Framework included several gender (sensitive) indicators such as women as LCS beneficiaries and women as beneficiaries of IGA training (both with targets of 40,000). The staffing schedule included a full-time national gender expert and a part-time international gender expert.

The Inception Report of Blue Gold included a section on gender as part of the cross-cutting themes, whereas gender concerns were also integrated within the four components that were distinguished at that time. The gender approach was much based on IPSWAM experiences, which had been considered successful; Blue Gold's national gender expert at that time had also been involved in IPSWAM. In practice the focus was on including both men and women within Blue Gold interventions, applying quota or targets for women's participation. Examples are the 30% quota for women as WMO executive committee members (from the GPWM), the 40% quota for women as WMG members (internal to Blue Gold); 50% women as FFS participants and aiming for 50% female Community Organizers. This meant that Blue Gold's focus was on empowering women and reducing

gender inequalities through including both men and women in its interventions.

Box 24.2 ***Evidence of IPSWAM's gender approach being effective***[1]

A study of 2014 in coastal areas in Bangladesh -in 5 BWDB polders and 4 LGED projects- where Water Management Organizations had been formed under different projects, learned that about all WMO executive committees included women, though not always the required 30% as per GPWM. However, in practice these women were mainly executive committee member on paper, as they were often not involved in the WMO meetings, sometimes even not being notified. This study found several exceptions in two polders, 22 and 30, which were IPSWAM polders, attributing the better involvement of women to the gender awareness training by the IPSWAM project of both male and female WMO members, which was perceived to have increased the confidence in women engaging as active executive committee members in the WMOs.

At the start of Blue Gold two specific gender activities had been foreseen: (1) the gender and leadership development (GLD) training for all male and female WMG executive members, plus several female general WMG members with potential to become leaders, as well as (2) the update of BWDB's Gender Action Plan 2006-2011, which had been developed with IPSWAM support.

Evolution of the gender approach[edit | edit source]

In the course of the Blue Gold Program the gender approach considerably evolved. Main reasons were (i) the transformation of the Blue Gold approach as an IPSWAM+ program with four components to a more integrated and decentralized approach for participatory water management, also requiring an adjusted gender approach; (ii) a shift in focus from quantitative "outputs" (such as proportion of women participants) to more qualitative "outcomes and impact", such as women's empowerment; (iii) increased insights in the situation and constraints of the (female) polder inhabitants; and (iv) lessons learnt from Blue Gold implementation in the first years. Such insights included the lesson learnt that many women are willing and able to take up activities that are not traditionally considered as female tasks, next to the need for (more) gender specific activities to complement and reinforce gender mainstreaming. The transformation of Blue Gold interventions also meant that the earlier foreseen Polder Development Plans, to be developed for all Blue Gold polders, were replaced by new approaches, which also meant that the development of polder specific Gender Action Plans (GAPs), a main means of implementing BGP's gender approach as foreseen in the Project Document and Inception Report, was no longer pursued.

The following sections first present the gender approach and activities as they have evolved over the years within BGP, first discussing gender mainstreaming, followed by the gender specific activities. Results and impact are discussed thereafter, and the challenges and lessons learnt are presented. The below diagram, figure 24.1, presents how gender has been addressed in the Blue Gold program, contributing both to Blue Gold's overall objectives and to women's empowerment.

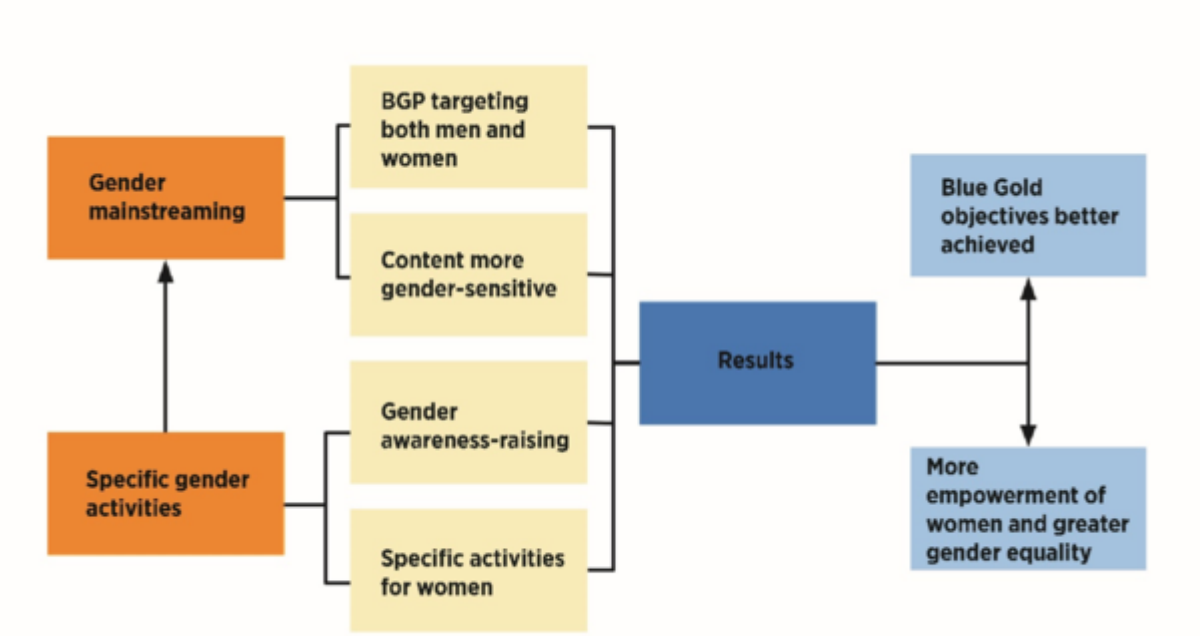


Figure 24.1 Addressing gender in the Blue Gold Program

Gender mainstreaming[edit | edit source]

Gender mainstreaming means that gender issues are taken into account in the core activities of a program. For Blue Gold this meant that both men and women were targeted for inclusion as participants in BGP activities, whenever relevant. It also meant that the content of certain activities was made (more) gender-sensitive.

> **Gender mainstreaming** is the process of systematically recognizing and taking into account gender issues (such as differences between the conditions, roles and needs of women and men) within core activities of projects and programs, covering design, implementation and Monitoring & Evaluation

At the start of BGP, the focus was on including women and men as participants in BGP activities; this was measured by gender-disaggregated monitoring. Examples of such "output" data are included in the following sections; Annex 24.1 to this chapter provides a broader overview of the main gender-disaggregated data. Over time, when also gender awareness within the polder teams gradually increased, more attention was given to gender sensitive content of certain activities. Gender mainstreaming also became supported by specific gender activities, which are discussed further below.

Gender mainstreaming in Participatory Water Management[edit | edit source]

In the context of the institutional development of Water Management Groups, polder teams always targeted men and women for information provision and as potential members of WMGs and executive committee members. The 40% target for women WMG membership motivated polder staff to persuade both men and women community members to join WMG membership, explaining that water management is in the interest of all. Gender courtyard sessions reinforced the message that also women could become WMG members. In conservative areas, where it was difficult to achieve this 40% quota, the national gender expert supported the polder staff by holding motivational talks. By 2019 43% of the membership of all 511 WMGs were women. WMAs had 25% women members, as the rules required that one out of four WMG representatives had to be female, which was usually

understood as the need to have 3 male representatives.

The 30% quota for women as executive members of WMOs made that potential women for leadership positions were searched for. This quota was always achieved, usually with 4 women within the 12 executive committee positions. In the first years of BGP women were often included just to achieve the 30% quota, but over the years it became easier to find suitable and capable women to fill such positions, for example, women who had participated in some BGP training which had triggered their interest and talent. As a result, there are now also WMGs with more than 4 female executive committee members.

A special example *is the Executive Committee (EC) of Kanchan Nagar WMG in Polder 29 in Khulna. In the 2017 elections 10 women were elected out of the 12 EC members. The president is also a woman now, as well as the secretary, vice president and joint secretary. Only the cashier and one general member are male. The women say this happened because they got various training from Blue Gold since 2013, such as FFS, GLD, gender courtyard sessions, etc. and learned many things about water management and agriculture; therefore they started to actively participate in the WMG for different activities.*

BGP also promoted more women in WMG key positions (president, secretary and treasurer), using at least 7% as a target. In 2015 this was 6.4% for Khulna and Satkhira (no data available for Patuakhali), which had increased to 10.2% for these two districts in 2018/19; or to 9% for all 511 WMGs in the three districts. The proportion of female presidents is still small (17 out of 511); women are better represented as treasurers (95 of 511, or 19%).

In their regular contacts with WMGs, including when coaching or participating in WMG meetings, BGP polder staff were expected to encourage the meaningful participation in decision-making of both men and women WMG members; not only the elite. In practice, the extent that this happened depended on the persons of the polder teams, including their awareness and motivation.

Women's participation was also promoted within in-polder water management; experience learnt that once women understand the importance of good water management for agricultural production -and hence for the family income-, they become more motivated to be involved in water management.

Illustration: *"Women dug most of the small channels here" – CDF in Patuakhali about the role of women in improving in-polder drainage*

In O&M Subcommittees also women became involved, even though there is no quota for this; of the subcommittee members who received training, 6.4% were women. WMGs reported that of the 25,520 members involved in O&M activities, 17% were women. They were mainly involved in cleaning *khals* (20%), the excavation of field channels (18%) and in repairs of embankments (17%).

In infrastructure development the emphasis of gender had been in ensuring that also (poor) women got the opportunity for income generation through membership of female LCS groups (Labour Contracting Societies). By 2019, in total 10,766 women had participated in LCS work, corresponding with 34% of all LCS group members, thus achieving the BWDB quota of 30% as per PWMR2014.

Chapter 16 of Section D provides a more comprehensive oversight of women's participation in water management; chapter 26 provides more information about women and LCS.

Gender mainstreaming in improving and commercialization of agriculture[edit | edit source]

Women participation in Farmer Field Schools[edit | edit source]

In Blue Gold's agricultural development interventions both men and women were targeted for acquiring and applying new skills and improved technology. BGP's main approach was the Farmer Field School methodology, which covers the entire production cycle of crops or animals. The FFSs were complemented by other extension approaches, such as Horizontal Learning and demonstrations, for example, Farmer Field Days and the Crop Intensity Initiatives (CII), alongside interventions bringing various actors of the value chain and support functions together.

The set-up of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) favoured a high rate of women's participation:

- The crop FFS as implemented by DAE included 25 couples of husband and wife in each FFS group, whereby the men usually attended the field crop related modules and the women the modules on homestead production and nutrition. This ensured a 50% participation of men and of women but addressed them in rather stereotype roles. This model excluded the participation of single women in FFS groups, women of landless households and/or women with husbands who are otherwise not engaged in field crops, e.g. due to off-farm work.
- The homestead FFS as implemented by the TA of Blue Gold were meant as pro-poor interventions as described in chapter 25, especially targeting the (near to) landless households with homestead land, aiming to improve homestead production such as poultry rearing, livestock production, vegetable cultivation and fish culture. These FFSs were in principle open for those household members who were most likely to actually apply the new skills and the improved technology. Because homestead production is traditionally done by women, these homestead FFS attracted a high proportion of women (88%), but without excluding men (12%).

Following value chains analyses, BGP also implemented a number of market-oriented FFS (MFS) in 2015-2016 (see chapter 21) on selected cash crops, such as mung bean, also addressing commercialization and marketing, topics which were at that time not (yet) included in regular FFS, which only addressed technical skills and improved technologies. The below box 24.3 presents gender related lessons learnt from the original MFS approach.

Box 24.3 Lessons learnt on women and MFS

Because the MFS were meant for farmers with access to sufficient land for commercial crops, Blue Gold staff originally expected that only male farmers would be interested; consequently only men were initially approached as participants. However, soon also women showed up as MFS participants, usually replacing husbands who were unable to attend due to off-farm employment. The *de facto* women's participation in these MFS thus became 15 to 25%.
When developing the curriculum on financial topics, such as on the need for investments and higher labour inputs, the importance to involve the wives of the male participants in decision-making on these subjects was recognized, because of the consequences of growing cash crops for the entire household. As a result, separate sessions for wives of (male) FFS participants were organized to enhance the women's insight in the opportunities and challenges of agricultural commercialization, thereby facilitating better joint decision-making on-farm production.
These MFS experiences learnt that (i) expectations on male household heads as the only MFS participants were not in line with actual needs among beneficiaries; (ii) there are also women farmers who are interested in commercial crops and financial aspects; and (iii) joint decision-making in the household, and the necessary base skills for this, is important, even more in case of commercial farming.

As a consequence, BGP also organized in 2015/16 MFS cycles on production systems in which women were more involved, such as tilapia production, with a high participation of women, usually the wives of male MFS participants. This resulted in an average involvement of 39% women in all MFS. Importantly, the MFS experience reinforced the need to include information on commercialization and marketing in all homestead FFS, which materialized from 2018 (cycle 11) onwards.

Gender issues in content of FFS: The content of the standard FFS curriculum was not particularly gender sensitive. It included nutrition as a module but this was largely meant for the women FFS participants. Under the Blue Gold Program the field staff facilitating FFS were expected to apply basic good practice concepts, such as treating male and female participants equally and avoiding gender stereotyping. Though the integration of gender issues in FFS modules had been occasionally discussed from the start of BGP, it was especially in the second half of BGP, when revising the FFS modules' content, that also several gender messages were actually incorporated. These messages concerned motivating women (and men) to maintain market linkages, including contacting traders by phone, and emphasizing the importance of women's involvement in joint household decision-making and in input management. When in 2018 the gender flip charts became available (see the below section on gender specific activities), FFS facilitators were also oriented on their use and they were encouraged to actually use them during the FFS sessions.

Farmer Trainers, Resource Farmers and Community Animal Health Workers[edit | edit source]

It had always been the intention of BGP to include both men and women in these positions to provide opportunities for men and women, to make use of male and female talents, and to create role models.

- Farmer trainers are well-performing farmers who received ToT training to become FFS facilitators themselves. Of the 215 trained FTs (trained by DAE and TA), 94 (44%) were women. Gender issues were part of their training.
- Resource Farmers were selected from each homestead FFS group to act as a contact person, e.g. to buy inputs. Of the 679 Resource Farmers of cycle 10 – 13, 484 were women, i.e. 71%. This high percentage can be explained because of the high proportion of women participants (88%) in these homestead FFS.
- Two categories of Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) were trained: Community Poultry Workers (CPWs) and Community Livestock Workers (CLWs). All 60 trained CPWs were women; of the 40 trained CLWs only 2 were women; 38 men. However, the 2 female CLWs are not active anymore as livestock workers.

Horizontal Learning and demonstrations[edit | edit source]

Alongside the FFS various forms of "Horizontal Learning" were promoted to further promote the replication of the new skills and technologies, such as field days and FFS exchange visits, attracting 58% and 56% female participants, respectively, see a brief report on impact and a case study on a poultry rearing exchange as an example. The Crop Intensity Initiatives (CII) demonstrated options for crop intensification, and mainly involved male farmers, with 6% female farmers. However, the CII field days presenting the results draw a more balanced mix of men and women.

Collective actions and market linkages[edit | edit source]

The Blue Gold Program aimed to increase the benefits for all farmers (M/F) by promoting collective actions such as jointly buying inputs, jointly selling produce and/or jointly acquiring market

information. Training on market linkages, now mostly integrated in FFS (see above), became increasingly important under BGP. BGP also targeted women here, and as a result about 15,000 women received training on market linkages. About 25,252 women WMG members became involved in collective actions for economic activities, corresponding with 29% of all WMG members involved in collective actions, thus benefiting from better prices for produce and/or inputs.

Illustration: *Lipika sold eggs at BDT 8 before she learnt about marketing and collective actions from a FFS. She now collects her own eggs along with those of other farmers to collectively sell them at BDT 10.*

Innovation Fund[edit | edit source]

Several Innovation Fund projects (see section H) especially focused on women as (main) target group, thereby promoting women's empowerment. Some of these IF projects were more successful than others, contributing to a varying extent to women's empowerment. Examples of such projects are:

- **Ecopond project on fish production in homestead ponds** (2015-2016) by women, implemented by WorldFish. 60 women farmers were trained in establishing and managing small household ponds stocked with several varieties of fish. Through the learning sessions, the women gained knowledge and better understanding on natural habitats and fish production. As a result, the role of these women to support their household changed: the pond became an important source of fish for household consumption and women's increased knowledge enhanced their participation in decision-making, especially in their family. Women also got more recognition of (male) household members and their self-confidence increased.

Illustration: *"It is the first time I came out from the premises and talked in front of outsiders and actively participated in the learning sessions" - a participant from Sajiara, quoted in the Final Report of WorldFish*

- **Improving pig rearing for the kawra community** in Batiaghata, Khulna by Nice Foundation. Kawra people are Dalits, in particular, a minority of pig rearers. The IF project aimed to improve pig rearing by increasing hygiene and production, also addressing social barriers and targeting women. In total 8 pig rearing FFS were conducted, with 167 women among the 200 participants (84%). As a result, improved and more hygienic practices increased pig production and improved the attitude of the wider community. The project raised gender awareness among women, but the resulting impact on actual empowerment was quite mixed, as illustrated by the below case study. This confirms the need to also address men to enhance awareness on the advantage of improved technologies (in this case: keeping at least 2 pigs) and to change gender norms.

Illustration: *One woman participant planned for 2 pigs at her house by constructing a hygienic pig shed. She managed money but her husband did not allow her to have 2 pigs because he is only interested in one pig as then it is easier for him to collect roughage. In the FFS sessions the facilitator had informed the participants that keeping 2 pigs is more profitable than one, but this woman could not exercise her voice even after getting training on pig rearing and gender issues. She said: "I do not need gender training but my husband needs such training, then he may change his attitude" – Final report Nice Foundation*

- **Establishment of four Women's Business Centres** (WBCs) by United Purpose, an INGO, in polder 28, Khulna. This project (2018-2019) established four WBCs, each run by 5 selected and trained women entrepreneurs, increasing rural women's access to services and improving

several value chains women are working in. The new women entrepreneurs are now communicating with a broad range of market actors; they are able to make more decisions and there is more mutual respect in their families.

Specific gender activities[edit | edit source]

Specific gender activities are designed to complement and enhance gender mainstreaming. They aim to contribute towards changing mindsets in men and women, resulting in reducing gender gaps and promoting more equal participation for everyone in all aspects of their lives. A few specific gender activities, in particular the Gender and Leadership Development training and the update of BWDB's Gender Action Plan, had been foreseen from the beginning of BGP. However, their actual implementation started only a few years later. Reasons for this slow start of specific gender activities were various, but they include the high turnover of the national gender expert in the first years and the increased insights over time in the need or opportunities for specific gender activities. Hence various specific gender activities were initiated and designed based on needs identified in the course of BGP. In this sub-chapter the scope and scale of the main specific gender activities of BGP are presented, sometimes illustrated by examples of their use and/or outputs.

"Specific gender activities are as lubricants, enabling changes together with other activities" – zonal staff member of BGP

Gender Courtyard Sessions[edit | edit source]

These gender courtyard sessions (CYSs) are single informal sessions to increase the gender awareness among community members (M/F) in the Blue Gold polders. They were initially designed to enhance overall gender awareness and to especially motivate (also) women to become WMG member, but over time their focus became broader. Now these CYSs promote the more active participation of women in WMGs, including the inclusion of women in important WMG positions, they discuss women's role in agricultural production and income generation, and address gender issues such as sharing domestic work. These sessions are held by the CDFs, who received an orientation to do this. There are usually 15 to 20 participants in such informal and ad hoc sessions, mostly women but men are also targeted. Until the end of 2019 2283 such CYSs had been held with just over 39,000 participants, of whom 69% were women.

Although no structural assessment of the impact of such CYSs was done, there is enough anecdotal evidence that these sessions were effective. In particular, field staff mentioned that CYSs led to more women as WMG members, whereas interviewed women often mentioned that participating in a gender CYS was a first eye-opener to them.

Illustration: *When BGP started in her polder (P47/3) Beauty attended a gender court yard session. This made her realize that she -as a woman- could work to generate income for her family, even more now that her husband suffered from ill health. She then took a loan from BRAC (10,500 taka) and bought 5 small goats. This was the start of income generation for her, as well as taking up a leadership position. Beauty: "BGP was an eye-opener and made women more aware that they can act for themselves."*

Gender and Leadership Development Training[edit | edit source]

The GLD training aimed to increase gender awareness and promote women's leadership. In 2016-2017 the GLD training was mainly based on the IPSWAM approach, but with adjustments in the curriculum. It was a 3-day training, reaching 61 batches of mainly WMG executive committee

members (male and female) of 122 WMGs, complemented by women WMG members showing potential for future leadership. The training was conducted by an external service provider. In total 1789 participants were trained, 47% of whom were women. By the end of 2017 a quick impact assessment of the training was conducted by an external consultant. She concluded that the GLD training was highly valued but that actual changes remained quite small in scale. Continuation of the GLD training was recommended but by an adjusted approach (see box 24.4), which was subsequently elaborated and implemented.

Box 24.4 *Why changing the GLD training modality*

- The external service provider, though qualified as trainers, had not sufficiently internalized the gender messages and tended to present the curriculum in a rather top-down manner.
- The training was conducted over a period of 3 consecutive days involving mainly WMG executive committee members. There was hardly evidence of further dissemination of the newly acquired knowledge among other WMG members.
- Any follow-up by relevant BGP field staff was very limited, as they had hardly been involved in the GLD training, apart from arranging logistics.
- Though the participants still valued the training, the cost-effectiveness was not considered adequate due to the set-up of the training.

The main changes in the training modality were:

1. the new GLD training was provided by BGP's own field staff (CDFs), who received ToT for this and were supported by the national gender expert. BGP's field staff easily related to the training participants and provided follow-up as part of their regular interactions with WMGs;
2. instead of 3 days formal training, the new approach GLD training consisted of 5 more informal court yard sessions spread over a period of several months;
3. the participants were WMG / community members and not (only) executive committee members; and
4. the Blue Gold gender flipcharts, see below, were used as an important tool.

Until December 2019 well over 10,000 WMG members, of whom two-thirds were women, had been trained in at least 1 session, but often in all 5 sessions.

A quick assessment of the new GLD approach in March 2019 had learned that the new approach GLD training was seen as useful and effective by both the GLD participants and CDFs.

Illustration: *Hosneara Rina attended various sessions of the Gender and Leadership Development training. During these sessions she actively participated in the discussions due to her own interest because she realized that women's leadership and joint decision-making in the family and WMG are very important for all women. She is now the Secretary of Amkhola WMG in Patuakhali.*

Gender Flipcharts[edit | edit source]

To achieve a better understanding of the gender messages, gender flipcharts (on gender awareness and women leaders in agriculture) were developed to illustrate and visualize gender issues. These flipcharts consist of artistic drawings depicting real life situations at one side of a page for the audience, with background information and discussion issues on the backside for the facilitator. The following topics are addressed: basic concepts on gender equality; decision-making; women's economic empowerment, including as contributor to agricultural production; sharing domestic work; women's leadership; food and nutrition; and domestic violence. Some drawings depict the traditional situation, to help the understanding on gender inequality, but most drawings reflect a more equal

situations, to which the participating women tend to refer to as their “dream” situation. The above mentioned quick assessment of the new approach GLD training also looked at the flipcharts and their use.

Illustration: *The CDFs all liked the flipcharts very much, in particular because it combines pictures with messages, which is considered more effective than a verbal message alone. The pictures well reflect the local situation. Also the FGD participants appreciated the flipcharts. The picture with all family members (M/F) engaged in domestic work was their favourite (their “dream”) – From assessment report of new approach GLD training.*

The gender flipcharts, in two volumes, were published in 750 copies each and distributed to all TA staff, relevant BWDB and DAE staff, all Farmer Trainers, EKN, etc. In particular the field staff and Farmer Trainers (FTs) received an orientation (ToT) about the use of the flipcharts, including to better understand the messages. The flipcharts were used until the end of BGP as the main tool in the GLD training and in the gender CYS.

Illustration: *“The CYS, GLD and use of the gender flipcharts are very useful, as also easy to understand.” - zonal staff member of BGP*

In addition, CDFs and Farmer Trainers, who facilitate FFS sessions, were also trained and motivated to integrate gender messages into their FFS sessions, also using the flipcharts. In 2019 such gender sessions were held in 340 homestead FFS groups, reaching 8500 participants, about 86% of whom were women.

Illustration: *A CDF in Patuakhali who facilitated 12 poultry FFS groups in 2018-2019 reported that the number of poultry houses constructed during the FFS cycle was proportionally much higher than in previous poultry FFS cycles, i.e. in 81 of the 300 concerned households. The CDF explained that it was the gender session on the importance of women’s involvement in productive work which motivated many more women participants to actually apply the learnings from the FFS.*

Gender training to zonal and polder staff[edit | edit source]

In September and October 2017, all BGP zonal and polder staff participated in a two-day gender training, conducted in four batches, with 111 participants in total, of whom 84 men and 27 women. The lead trainer was a senior gender expert from CARE, who well managed to create more knowledge and enthusiasm on the topic. The training also promoted team building and mutual respect among BGP staff. Participants reported that the training provided insight in what gender actually is, including that gender does not concern women alone. The training motivated and helped them to better integrate gender perspectives into their work. Several participants spontaneously mentioned that the training also had effected their personal life.

Illustration: *A male CDF reported that the training helped him to do his work better, especially in conducting GLD training. But it also impacted his personal life because it convinced him that his wife should continue her job, instead of stopping with her work after their marriage.*

Illustration: *A female CDF reported that after the training several male colleagues supported her better.*

BWDB Gender Action Plan[edit | edit source]

The National Women’s Development Policy of the Government of Bangladesh 2011 confirmed that ministries and other government bodies such as BWDB need to have their own gender policy and

gender action plan. With support of the IPSWAM project the gender strategy for BWDB was developed in 2006, which included a Gender Action Plan (GAP) for 2006 – 2011. In its Inception Report, BGP had committed itself to support the update of BWDB's Gender Action Plan. After BGP and BWDB had jointly developed Terms of Reference, a senior national gender consultant with experience in developing Gender Action Plans for other GoB institutions, started in January 2017 with the updating of BWDB's GAP, in close cooperation with BGP Gender coordinator, the office of the PCD and the BWDB Gender Equity Committee. Information was collected on gender issues within BWDB, including on the status of the implementation of the 2006 GAP, both in Dhaka as well as in zonal offices. In September 2017 the findings and first suggestions for a GAP were presented to BWDB in an inception workshop. After having incorporated the feedback from this workshop, the consultant submitted a draft GAP to PCD. In several rounds feedback from PCD's office and a few other BWDB officials was provided and incorporated. In early 2018 the update of the Gender Action Plan had been completed, and was ready for approval by BWDB's Director, however, this has not yet been materialized (spring 2020).

Box 24.5 ***Selected issues from the updated Gender Action Plan of BWDB***

- Gender in BWDB data and information; gender in M&E
- Gender issues in Human Resources, such as recruitment, posting, women / family-friendly HR policies and social safety and harassment
- Welfare of women staff, such as promotion, posting and transfers, accommodation and facilities
- Gender and training, both by including gender topics in BWDB (induction) training and ensuring that also women staff benefit from training for their professional development
- Gender-sensitive organizational culture
- Gender concerns within projects implemented by BWDB

Activities to enhance women's empowerment[edit | edit source]

Several specific activities were developed by BGP's gender coordinator to empower women. Apart from empowering the participating women as a main objective, the activities were also meant as learning events for the participating institutions (e.g. the Union Parishads), as lessons for Blue Gold (women also interested in market linkages) and to change attitudes of men towards women.

- **Training on market linkage development and women's empowerment** was a 2-day training, targeting selected women as participants, as well as a few men. A main selection criterion was that the women were WMG member involved in crop production and had potential for marketing. This training stressed the importance of linkage development and networking with market actors (traders and input suppliers), provided information about markets and how to bargain, and discussed the importance of women's empowerment. Up till February 2020, 8 such trainings were conducted for 205 participants, of whom 172 were women and 33 men, usually all WMG members. For the women this training acted as an eye-opener, as it was often the first time that they learned how markets work .

Illustration: *We all liked the training very much, especially the subjects of joint decision-making, market linkage development, women's empowerment and market analyses. We all have a cell phone and can call traders. Examples of changes are buying inputs by myself (one woman) and more joint decision-making with my husband (another woman). There is more spending by women on their own. Now we produce cash crops (water melon), we get more respect. The training was very useful; even our husbands would need such training on marketing, women's empowerment and joint decision-making. – Women from the CAWM Women's Group of Dokhin Shonakhali WMG.*

- **Joint 1-day workshops with Union Parishads and BGP on women's empowerment** to enhance women's economic empowerment. The participants of these workshops were poor or destitute women WMG members, who did not had earlier opportunity to participate in BGP activities such as FFS, but do have access to at least a small piece of homestead land. The UP chairman and/or another UP member spoke on opportunities and services they can offer for women, and the UP financially contributed to the workshop, such as providing free vegetable seeds based on the needs of the women. Apart from BGP staff, other speakers included the Upazila Women Affairs Officer and an input supplier. At the end of each workshop an action plan for the use of the vegetable seeds was made, and BGP CDFs provided follow-up by giving practical advice. As a result the women produced vegetables, part of which was sold. Up till March 2020, 4 workshops were held, with about 25 - 30 women per workshop and several men.

Illustration: *The women said that they learned many new things, including that they are a human being in their own right ("manush") like men, and not only someone's daughter, wife and mother, and they also have the right to take decisions. They realized that they can do things for their own, which is also to the benefit of their family and country - From the report on the Fingri workshop, Satkhira.*

- **Horizontal Learning events with a main focus on women's empowerment**: Various HL events were held with the main objective of sharing experiences related to women's empowerment. Examples are the HL event in Chinguria village (in Patuakhali) about sharing experiences on poultry rearing and a special HL event at another location on women's empowerment.
- **Observation of International Women's Day** by organizing rallies and discussion sessions in the BGP zones and/or at the Dhaka office (in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021) to enhance awareness on gender equality and women's rights.

Initiatives by polder teams especially benefiting women[edit | edit source]

Also BGP staff at polder or zonal level took initiatives to support women, such as for income generation benefiting poor women who had little own resources, but also supporting women who demonstrated good potential for entrepreneurship or leadership. Examples of such initiatives are:

- *Basok* leaf collection in Satkhira benefiting poor, landless women, see box 24.6:

Box 24.6 *Basok* leaf collection as earning opportunity for women in polder 2, Satkhira

BGP's business development experts identified *basok* leaves as an income earning opportunity. Pharmaceutical industries use *basok* leaves to produce medicines such as cough syrup. In polder 2 *basok* trees are found as fencing along roadsides. After reaching an agreement with Square Group Ltd as a buyer, BGP organized the collection and drying of *basok* leaves. In 2018 285 poor women from 7 WMGs were involved in leaf collection, selling these to collectors at BDT 5 – 7 per kg of green leaves, depending on the quality. Three women collectors developed the collection and drying as a profitable business, selling dry leaves at BDT 40 to Square, with 1 kg of dried leaves being equivalent to 4-5 kg of green leaves. In 2018 9.5 MT dry *basok* leaf were sold, corresponding to BDT 380,000. The Union Parishad of Fingri cooperated in providing collection point facilities. With *basok* trees also being useful as erosion protection of embankments, there is good scope for expanding the business, ensuring more income for poor women.

- Vegetable sales centre for women in Satkhira (article in the Barta magazine)
- Marginalized and destitute women collectively cultivating climbing vegetables along re-excavated *khals* and on dykes.
- Climate smart vegetable cultivation at homesteads in water logged area (in bags)
- Collective vegetable cultivation by women's groups during the COVID-19 crisis (report)

- Mentoring individual women: Blue Gold polder staff supported individual women with potential in establishing an income generating activity or business, such as poultry rearing, duck rearing or vegetable cultivation, by giving them technical advice and information on inputs and sales.

Illustration: *Alia Begum in polder 47/3 now runs a business of 500 ducks that gives good income to her and her family. She learnt this from coaching by the polder coordinator, who saw opportunities to mobilize her resources and talent - from field visit.*

Cooperation with DAE[edit | edit source]

With DAE as an implementation partner in the Blue Gold Program, regular contacts on gender issues were maintained and mutual support provided when opportunities arose. For example, Blue Gold's national gender expert contributed to the curriculum for the Farmer Trainer (FT) training module on the importance of women in agriculture; she conducted various training sessions on gender and women's economic empowerment as part of DAE's training programs for FTs and SAAOs, DAE's agricultural extension officers at field level. The topic of feminization of agriculture was also discussed with DAE, exploring the option for a study on this topic with special attention to refocusing agricultural extension services to address the implications of feminization of agriculture. However, due to COVID-19 this study -planned for early 2020- could not be realized.

> **Feminization of agriculture** is the phenomenon that the importance of women's role in agriculture is increasing, whether measured as the ratio between men and women working in this sector or whether reflected in the higher proportion of women whose main employment is agriculture. It is a global phenomenon, most pronounced in Africa and Asia, including in Bangladesh. Common reasons for feminization of agriculture are men taking up non-farm employment locally, male out-migration from rural areas to urban areas or abroad, poverty, and/or women's economic empowerment (e.g. through skill training by NGOs).

There have been regular contacts of BGP's gender team with gender experts of other -similar- projects to exchange information. In the first years several gender network meetings were organized, bringing gender experts of water management and food security projects together. In later years interactions with (gender) experts of especially IFMC, the DANIDA funded FFS project, and the Bangladesh Office of the Gender and Water Alliance were maintained, which were useful in view of learning from each other's experiences.

Studies and reports[edit | edit source]

The gender team initiated, facilitated and/or conducted various studies, quick assessments and/or elaboration of reports, such as:

- Working Paper 9 on the Gender Approach of BGP in the first years (September 2016)
- Study by four students from Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU), see their report and our summary of their report
- Study by Dr Sharmind Neelormi on the impact on poverty reduction and women's

empowerment of Labour Contracting Societies (LCSs)
- Article "Earning money is key to women's empowerment" prepared by Dhaka-based journalist Hilde Janssen which was published in two national newspapers
- Rapid Assessment on impact of GLD training by Mouri Nishad Chowdhury.
- Quick assessment of women's workload
- Quick assessment of new approach of GLD training
- Impact assessment of horizontal learning event on poultry rearing
- As part of communicating successes, also a slide deck and a thematic brochure were prepared on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as case studies on specific gender related success stories (2-pagers; 8 up till September 2021, see Briefing Materials at the beginning of this chapter)
- Booklet with 26 case studies on women who became empowered through their WMG membership, participation in BGP activities and/or the improved enabling environment for women (2021)
- Quick survey on the impact of COVID-19 in BGP polders, with a special focus on women.

Gender related issues within the project organisation[edit | edit source]

- Female field staff: Blue Gold started well with 50% female field staff (Community Organizers and FFS facilitators) in the first year; however, all Producer Group Facilitators (PFs) recruited in the second year were men. As a result, when all field staff were merged and designated as "Community Development Facilitators" (CDFs) the proportion of female staff reduced to 33%. Female field staff were important as role models.
- Among the professional / technical staff at the zonal offices, excluding admin and support staff, the proportion of female staff was always low; this even became nil towards the end of BGP for various reasons. At the Dhaka office the proportion of female technical staff fluctuated around one third, and included several women engineers.
- In 2015 an anti-harassment policy was established for BGP staff, also addressing sexual harassment, and orientations for staff on this policy were organized. At all offices "information boxes" (complaint boxes) were placed, where staff could leave a message for the gender coordinator in case she or he felt uncomfortable in the working place. Last but not least, the gender coordinator regularly fulfilled the role of a person of trust for colleagues. Box 24.7 presents suggestions for creating a more harmonious working environment in future projects, based on lessons learned by the Blue Gold Program.

Box 24.7: Suggestions for improving creating a harmonious working environment in future similar projects, based on lessons learned by the Blue Gold Program:

1. The anti-harassment policy should be based on a zero tolerance approach and include effective and swift complaint procedures.
2. Setting an example by dismissing senior staff members found guilty of (serious) misconduct and/or (sexual) harassment helps to reduce negative behaviour towards female and junior colleagues.
3. During the recruitment of new members of staff, the importance of creating a healthy working environment should be emphasised, as well as the consequences of any form of harassment.
4. Equal treatment of male and female 'offenders' should be ensured by adopting the same standards for punishing the same misconduct by male and female offenders in the same situation, instead of being more lenient towards male misconduct - as is sometimes considered more 'normal' in society.
5. Include working environment issues as a standard agenda item in team meetings; and ensure follow-up on any agreements for improvements.
6. Gender equality training and workshops for program beneficiaries, WMO leaders and TA team members was found to be crucial for awareness raising - especially since women became more aware of gender equality and women's rights, thereby becoming less tolerant to discrimination and more eager to raise their voice. It also led to improved attitudes by men.
7. Ensure basic facilities (also) for women in the project area, such as a place to rest in remote polders (with access to a rest room); and a (temporary) restroom and resting place for women LCS workers, eg for breastfeeding.
8. Contractors implementing infrastructure works should be held to account concerning labour conditions, including payment of agreed wages. Relevant standards for this are in place, eg IFC Performance Standard 2 (on Labour and Working Conditions).
9. Ensure that where special poverty reduction initiatives are taken for marginal, landless groups -such as employing them through labour contracting societies (LCSs)- they are properly and timely paid.

Results: outputs, outcomes and impact[edit | edit source]

Outputs and reach-out[edit | edit source]

Outputs: Information on the participation of women and men in BGP activities and in terms of holding positions has -to some extent- already been included in previous sections, often in numbers and/or proportions (percentages). Annex 24.1 provides an overview of such data, mostly from the latest WMG tracker report (June 2019) of Blue Gold's MRL team, who rightly collected gender-disaggregated data for almost all relevant outputs. The data show that the participation or representation of women was often one third or more. In a few cases, such as the key positions in WMOs (president, secretary and treasurer) and the position of Community Livestock Workers, women are barely represented. But in other cases it is the men who were under-represented, for example, in homestead FFS and as Community Poultry Workers. This annex shows that both male and female farmers were involved as plot owner in all kind of trials and in adopting all kind of modern technologies, though certain technologies were mainly adopted by men (86% of adopters of line sowing were men); others mainly by women (92% of users of *hajols* were women). Other modern technologies, such as the use of hybrid vegetable seeds, are about equally adopted by men and women farmers. Such data show that labelling a technology or agricultural tasks as only for men or only for women (gender-stereotyping) does not anymore reflect the actual situation.

Annex 24.1 also shows that the outreach of BGP to women has been quite huge, when defining this in terms of women who participated in BGP activities or events. For example, activities as FFS (all categories) had 55,137 women participants, representing nearly 30% of all households in BGP's polders. Field days draw an even higher number of the women as attendants (see box 24.8).

Box 24.8: Exposure of women to field days as attendants

Over 222,000 persons attended, of whom 128,000 (or 58%) were women. If all women attendants only participated once in a field day (and one woman per household), women of 70% of all 185,000 households in the BGP polders would have been reached. However, the actual percentage will be lower, as part of the women will have attended 2 or more field days, and therefore are double counted.

In the section on women's empowerment -further below- an estimate is made of the number of women who became empowered, making adjustments for double counting.

Outcomes and impact[edit | edit source]

There is ample evidence that the effects of Blue Gold's gender mainstreaming and specific gender activities, including targeting men and women, are twofold: (a) Blue Gold's overall objectives are better achieved and (b) women's empowerment and gender equality are enhanced. The following sections of this report elaborate on this. Because hardly outcome-level indicators for measuring gender related impact were included in the baseline and endline surveys, the findings on outcomes and impact are mainly based on interpretations of quantitative output data and qualitative information from FGDs, observations, informal quick assessments, and information from field staff. However, the amount of the qualitative anecdotal evidence is overwhelming, and such achievements cannot be doubted; only their precise scale remains uncertain, although an attempt to estimate this is done.

Blue Gold's objectives better achieved[edit | edit source]

Illustration: *"If Blue Gold would not have paid attention to women, it would not have achieved its*

objectives so well" – CDF

Participatory water management benefits from "all hands on deck", i.e. involving men and women:

- With men and women as WMG members, the support for participatory water management among local communities is enhanced.
- This also led to a larger pool of potential WMO leaders, with examples of strong and valuable women leaders, who were chosen due to their capacities, taking initiatives benefiting male and female WMO members. The fact that also women became members of O&M subcommittees, which do not have quota for women, demonstrates that they are also elected due to their capacities and potential.

Ilustration: *Monimjan Akter is joint secretary of Boshkhali WMA and was elected as president of a catchment O&M committee because she demonstrated better understanding of water management than many men.*

- With also women in WMO leadership positions, there is better representation of the interest of all polder dwellers (M/F), enhancing inclusivity within WMO decision-making.
- Women are usually more "neutral" and less politically biased than men, also contributing to better decision-making, and in some cases to more successful conflict resolution.
- Women also contribute to in-polder water management and maintenance, for example, by participating in cleaning water hyacinth.

Women contribute to increased agricultural production in various ways:

- Women are the main drivers to **increased homestead production**. This especially concerned women who participated in homestead FFSs, but also women who learnt about improved technologies through Horizontal Learning events and/or from neighbours or relatives. BGP staff observed that women are often more cautious in applying learnings than men.

Illustration: *"Women are very committed and concerned to well apply the learnings from training as they feel this empowers them. They feel that trainers take them as equals, also because the trainers stop men dominating, ensuring that women get attention as well. Then the women feel proud and extra committed to apply learnings. Men are less serious in applying" – BGP staff member*

Illustration: *Her neighbour's success (in poultry rearing) inspired Fatehma to also take up poultry rearing, learning from her about good rearing practices – Impact report poultry rearing HL*

- The below box 24.9 provides an example of production increase due to FFS participation (cycle 11 in 2018), showing that average homestead production roughly doubled from before FFS to after FFS.

Box 24.9: Increase in homestead and fish production of cycle 11 FFS participants (2018)

• Average **egg** production: from 32 to 71 eggs/month (98% female FFS participants)
• Average production of **chicken or ducks**: from 1.5 to 4.5 per month (same)
• Average number of different **vegetables**: from 3.4 to 6.3 (100% FFS female participants)
• Average **fish** production from 49 to 123 kg/season (78% female FFS participants)

- Women's engagement as **family labour in field crops** increased, thus contributing to the increased crop production that has been realized under BGP. Though no hard quantitative data have been measured on women's input as family labour, there is ample evidence for this trend, both reported by field staff and by FGDs with women's groups. Now that field crop production became more intensive, both in term of yield increase and number of crops per year, also more labour is required. Women tended to especially provide labour for non-rice crops, but their engagement in paddy fields has now become more common. Moreover, the role of women in day-to-day farm management, either on their own or jointly with their husbands, is increasing, in particular when husbands are involved in off-farm employment or are otherwise not able to work, such as in families with a disabled husband. Women's increased responsibilities in field crops was often enhanced by BGP training, see the next example.

Illustration: *Layli's husband is disabled, and therefore she does almost all work in the field crops, such as in watermelon, a crop promoted under BGP. She sold the watermelons to a trader accepting the offered price. After she participated in BGP's Market Linkages and Women's Empowerment training, she felt more confident and took more responsibilities. For example, she now bargains about the watermelon price after first checking the prices in Khulna, Jhasore and Dhaka by phone. The wholesaler now pays her a higher price than before.*

- Women's participation in **wage labour work** significantly increased because of the increased demand for wage labour due to increased cropping and because much of the available male labour is already absorbed in the non-farm sector and commercial agricultural enterprises. As a result, women are now hired at a much larger scale and for almost all farm operations replacing part of the male labour, whereas before women were mainly engaged in a limited number of tasks such as post-harvest work. Though this is a general trend, variations in the pattern over the BGP project area were observed.

Illustration: *6 of the 14 women reported to be engaged in wage labour. Since the Blue Gold Program opportunities for such work increased considerably. They estimated that the number of days of wage labour work increased from 15 to 90 on an annual basis - From a FGD with women members of Tolna WMG in polder 25 in February 2019*

Women contribute to reduce poverty and improved livelihoods[edit | edit source]

Women's increased involvement in agricultural production also means that they contribute to increased household income, reduced poverty and improved livelihoods. This applies to most socio-economic categories of households:

- In households with access to crop land, women's contribution to field crop production -both as family and as wage labour- enabled increased production and farm income. Where women work as family labour in field crops, they reduce the need for wage labour, hence reducing production costs.
- In households without access to crop land, but with homesteads, women were key in increasing homestead production, contributing to more household consumption of produce as vegetables, eggs, poultry and/or milk or fish, enhancing nutrition and/or reducing the costs for buying such food items. In addition, many households with increased homestead production sell (more) surplus production, enhancing the households income.
- Women who engage in wage labour work, usually from landless, poor households, now contribute more to the household income as they have considerably more opportunities to be hired. Overall, due to the increased demand for labour, daily wages increased since the start of BGP. Even though women's wages often doubled, while male wages went up with about

50%, women's wages still remain lower than men's wages. NB: In 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, wages dropped again, though probably only temporarily. This was because the supply of labour increased because men who used to be engaged in migrant labour (such as the brickfields near Dhaka) returned to their village.
- Women grabbed income generating opportunities created under BGP, such as by engaging in LCS work, as community poultry workers, and as entrepreneurs.
- When women have own income, they often have a say about the spending. Women use their income for the well-being of their family, spending it on food, children's education, clothing, medicines and house repairs, but also use it as investments in assets and productive resources.

Illustration: *Morjina participated in a Horizontal Learning program about poultry rearing. Now she has 90 chickens and 14 ducks; before only 4 ducks. Per month she now sells for BDT 5000-7000 taka birds and eggs. She spends her income on child education, food, house repair, clothes, other household expenditure and entertainment, also saving some money. She is widow with a son and a daughter. With the income she can maintain her family – From the impact assessment report of the HL poultry event*

More gender equality and women's empowerment[edit | edit source]

Blue Gold contributed to more gender equality and reduced inequalities, and improved women's empowerment and well-being. This has been mainly assessed by qualitative methods, such as through FGDs, interviews and observations, but this is also reinforced by the interpretation of quantitative output data. In addition, 4 students from the Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) conducted in December 2017 a study comparing women's situation in 2 new and 3 old polders of BGP, see Table 24.1 with the summarized findings:

Table 24.1: Findings from a study by PSTU students comparing women's situation in 2 new and 3 old polders of Blue Gold collected through Focus Group Discussions among female WMG members in December 2017

Determinative	New polders (BGP just started work)	Old polders (BGP working for 3-4 years)
Participation of women in WMG meetings	30%	53%
Active participation in decision making process of women who participate in WMG meetings	25%	68%
Women's involvement in income generating activities (such as crop farming, homestead gardening, livestock or poultry)	39%	78%
Husbands contributing to household activities, such as fetching water during cooking and child care.	13%	48%
Women involved in decision-making within the household	19%	62%
Women's mobility	27%	81%
Women reported to have savings	20%	79%

Women's leadership	Low; misconception about the possibility of women's leadership.	Higher than in new polders; more accepted by men

Below the various aspects of increased gender equality and women's empowerment are discussed, in particular women's economic empowerment (WEE), social empowerment and increased confidence, changes in gender norms and the process that lead to empowerment.

Increased economic empowerment of women[edit | edit source]

> **Economic empowerment** refers to the capacity to participate in, contribute to and benefit from economic growth by becoming more involved in productive work. Women's economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources, such as inputs, financial services and assets, to skill development and market information. It also means that their decision-making power, e.g. on purchasing inputs and spending income, is increased.

Women's economic empowerment under BGP is manifested in several ways:

- Women acquired and applied new knowledge and skills. As a consequence, more women are now involved in productive work, they increased the time spent on productive work, and/or they now apply improved technologies, which increased their productivity.
- Women got more or better access to economic resources, such as inputs, assets, as well as to markets. BGP interventions, such as FFS, were often key in getting knowledge about market linkages; increased income from production enabled some women to acquire more own assets.
- Women generate more income and have more decision-making power, both on production and on spending the income: jointly with their husbands or on their own.

Illustration: *Josna Begum participated in a horizontal learning exchange about poultry rearing. Before she had only one chicken; 1.5 years later 40 chicken and 16 ducks. She sells birds and eggs for BDT 5000 monthly. Recently Josna used part of her income to buy land in the name of herself and her husband. Now she can take decisions in her family – From impact study HL poultry event.*

Illustration: *On average, women now have more money to spend on their own – CDF on the impact of FFS.*

- Women also earn more due to new or expanded opportunities for work: more wage labour work, construction work in Labour Contracting Societies (LCS), from new opportunities such as vaccinators, and as entrepreneurs.

Box 24.10: Examples of women as new entrepreneurs

• Women upscaling subsistence production into a real business (eg Alia with 500 ducks) or expanding field crop production (Layli with 240 decimals water melon)
• Women using earnings, e.g. from LCS work, to establish a small shop or rice hotel
• Women taking up key roles in organizing collective actions (such as Binita Roy)
• Women venturing into bigger business such as certified input supplier (Shebika Biswas selling agricultural inputs for BDT 1 lakh monthly)

Social empowerment and changes in gender norms[edit | edit source]

> Women's **social (or socio-cultural) empowerment** refers to the capacity of women to have their own identity, a positive self-image and social status. **Gender norms** refer to the existing ideas about how men and women should be and act.

Changes in the traditional positions and roles of women could be increasingly observed in the course of BGP, as well as in norms about what women (and men) should be and behave. Some of such changes, such as women's WMG leadership, were directly promoted by BGP interventions; others, such as women becoming more respected, were as a consequence of BGP interventions. Major elements of social empowerment and changed norms observed in BGP polders are:

- Increased self-confidence of women, either as a consequence of being taken as equals in training and workshops, and because of being proud on contributing to increased production and income. Many women also became more respected by their husbands, relatives and within their community.

Illustration: *"Amra meye manush na, amra manush" ("We are not just females, we are human beings") – realization of women after attending the training on market linkage development and women's empowerment*

- Women's mobility and social networks increased, e.g. due to participating in BGP interventions, such as court yard sessions or FFSs, by attending WMG meetings or participating in activities organized by WMGs, such as collective actions. The increased emphasis on promoting that also women can maintain market linkages helped to further expand women's networks, even if they maintain market contacts by using their mobile phones.
- More women took up leadership positions; and more women in leadership positions are capable and speak out. Women use their experience as WMG leader to be candidate for local government elections (Union Parishad).

Illustration: *In the 2016 Union Parishad elections in total 25 women WMG executive committee members were elected as UP member; more women had stood as candidates.*

- Evidence of gender norms gradually changing:
  - Labour division became less rigid; women now are found to be engaged in almost all farm tasks, including those that used to be considered as typically male.

Illustration: *The BGP database includes data on adopters of modern technologies. It shows that all categories of technologies, also those considered 'male' such as line sowing or using HYV rice, include women farmers as adopters. – WMG tracking report*

- Men now more accept and value women leaders; men are also more prepared to elect a woman candidate who has the required capacities.
- An increasing number of husbands have more trust in their wives and take their opinion more seriously.

Illustration: *A (male) farmer reported that after his wife got knowledge about agriculture due to participating in a FFS, he now discusses farm decisions with her, as she now better understands these matters – FGD in Polder 25, Khulna*

Process of empowerment within BGP[edit | edit source]

The underlying processes that seemed instrumental for increasing women's empowerment are presented in the following diagram, also linking the empowerment process to the developments within BGP.

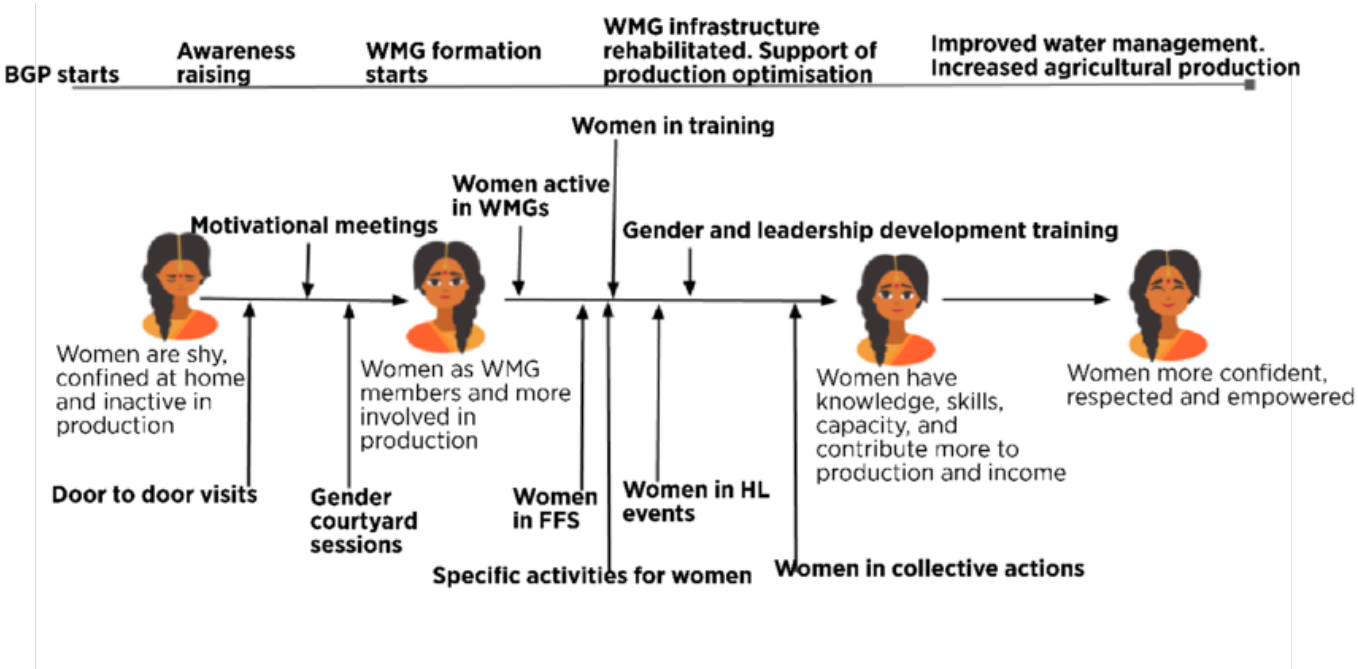


Figure 24.2 Process of women's empowerment as linked to phases in the Blue Gold Program

The diagram (Fig. 24.2) shows that at the start of BGP women generally were shy and confined at home. They did not much contribute to (agricultural) production; if so, it was often limited to low-key homestead activities and/or post-harvest work. Field staff observed that the 40% target of BGP for WMG members to be female prodded them to make extra efforts to mobilise also women for WMG membership. This, in turn, was instrumental to get women out of their house and get them interested in participation in BGP activities, such as FFS. And the participation in such activities lead to increased knowledge and skills of women, including more motivation to engage in productive activities. When women realized that they were taken seriously in trainings and were able to play a role in increasing production and household income, their self-confidence increased, they became proud of their achievements, and they also became more respected by husbands and the community. These processes were enhanced by gender awareness raising (e.g. through court yard sessions, GLD training or women's empowerment workshops) and because an increasing number of women took up leadership roles and thus acted as role models for other women.

The above process description is rather simplified, also because other interventions than by BGP are taking place in BGP polders, which may also contribute to the empowerment of women, such as MFIs issuing loans to women and other projects that also target women (such as IFMC and Max WASH). Still, the relatively intense coverage of the concerned polders through BGP, resulting in having 511 WMGs covering all communities, created opportunities for almost all women in the targeted polders to somehow participate in or benefit from BGP activities, at least, if interested.

Estimate of the number of women empowered due to BGP[edit | edit source]

The number of women who became empowered due to (participating in) BGP activities cannot easily be assessed, also because some same women may have participated in more than one BGP activity,

such as in a FFS and in a GLD training. Still -in Annex 24.2 to this chapter- an attempt has been made, based on criteria and assumptions that are derived from insights in the field situation. For each potentially empowering activity in which women participated two assumptions were made: (i) the proportion of women who became empowered due to that activity; and (ii) the overlap with other activities, i.e. the extent of multiple participation. Several rather passive activities, such as becoming WMG member or attending a Farmers Field Day are not considered to lead to empowerment, and were excluded from this assessment. The activities that potentially empower women include the FFSs, gender and women's empowerment training, being a WMO EC member or participation in collective actions. This exercise led to the conclusion that an estimated 68,173 women have been empowered due to BGP, at least to some extent.

With about 185,000 households in the 22 BGP polders, it is estimated that women in about 37% of the beneficiary households may have been empowered by BGP. It is important to realize that the proportion of women who actually benefited from BGP is considerably higher than this 37%, because also many women benefited without (evidence of) becoming empowered, e.g. from reduced poverty.

Increased well-being of women and their families[edit | edit source]

Women's empowerment is only genuine if it also leads to increased well-being of the women, including more control on their own life. Increased well-being, both of the women and their families, is found to be a consequence of the outcomes achieved by BGP. Various aspects of improved well-being are noticed: some can be deducted from quantitative data (such as the reports on FFS cycles), whereas others are observed and/or reported in FGDs or interviews with individuals (qualitative findings). Examples of improved well-being are:

- Improved quality of life because of increased incomes and reduced poverty

Illustration: *"My quality of life has changed very quickly with the help of Blue Gold" - Zakia*

- Increased social status, including new opportunities for entertaining guests

Illustration: *"We get more honour in the family than before"- Rashida Begum*

Illustration: *Apart from spending her increased income on food, child education, clothes and medicines, Halena Begum can now also spend on entertainment and socializing – Report on impact of Horizontal Learning event on poultry*

- More opportunities for better health, due to increased (homestead) production that is partially used for own consumption (e.g. vegetables, eggs, chicken, milk and/or fish), more attention to nutrition, increased mobility of women improving their access to health services, and increased affordability of medicines due to increased incomes
- More investments in children's education, as many beneficiaries mention this as the first or second objective to spend increased income on
- Improved and more equal position of women, enabling women to more engage in decision-making, also on choices influencing their own life
- More peace in the household due to reduced poverty and more joint decision-making, and reduced domestic violence due to more mutual respect.

Illustration: *The financial position of her family was not good and her husband used to beat her. Now that she is involved in productive activities and contributes to the family's income, her husband respects her and does not beat her anymore – Manjuma Begum*

Analysis, challenges and lessons learnt[edit | edit source]

Analysis of how BGP's gender approach evolved over time[edit | edit source]

There was a clear learning curve over the duration of the Blue Gold Program in addressing gender issues. In the first years of Blue Gold, the focus was on achieving quantitative targets of women's participation, such as WMG members, FFS participants and as LCS workers. Attention to achieving and measuring more qualitative results, going beyond output level, remained limited, even though various ideas were in place, for example, for addressing gender norms. This applies especially to the Gender and Leadership Development training, which was already foreseen in the inception phase, but was only realized since 2016. Based on first years' experiences, including the need to work more towards outcomes and impact than only outputs, BGP's gender approach evolved, including by paying more attention to making content of Blue Gold activities more gender sensitive. In practice this meant that gender messages became better integrated in several core Blue Gold interventions (gender mainstreaming) and that more specific gender activities were initiated to complement and support gender mainstreaming.

However, this did not mean that including women as beneficiaries as per targets was not useful to empower women. As already mentioned, targeting women for WMG membership and as FFS participants enabled women to overcome confinement at home and get exposure to opportunities. The implementation of gender specific activities, such as the gender court yard sessions and GLD training, were found to both strengthen gender mainstreaming and to directly enhance women's empowerment. But it is due to gender mainstreaming, including targeting women, that Blue Gold has reached and empowered such a huge number of women.

The reasons for the slow start of making content more gender-sensitive and for starting-up gender specific activities were various, but includes the high turnover of the national gender consultants in the first years. It was only since January 2016, with the appointment of the fourth national gender expert since BGP's start (who continued until September 2021), that more continuation came in the planning and implementation of gender (sensitive) activities.

Another reason for increased attention to gender issues over time was that TA team members gradually gained more awareness on gender, including more insight in the need for and advantages of (also) targeting women. The gender training for zonal and field staff in 2017, way later than originally planned, turned out as quite instrumental. However, also the observation that working with women could be very rewarding in terms of achieving successes, caused that many field staff became keener on working with women beneficiaries, of course, next to male beneficiaries. The emphasis on joint decision-making on an equal basis (vis-à-vis autonomous decision-making by women only) proved appropriate: not only more acceptable to staff and beneficiaries, but also more in line with the fact that farming is a family business, where husband and wife form a team, rather than two autonomous farmers. The message that joint decision-making is good for a peaceful family was often embraced by female and male beneficiaries.

Apart from the high turnover of the national gender experts in the first years and limited attention to gender mainstreaming in terms of making content more gender-sensitive, looking back with hindsight learned that also in a few other respects BGP's work on gender could have been better. For example, no gender analysis had been done at the start; at that time assuming that enough insight in the gender situation in the polders was still available as many of the key BGP staff had also worked in the IPSWAM project, which used to have quite a good gender component. However, in the course of Blue Gold, the absence of a gender analysis was felt as a miss, though many insights in gender-related gaps and needs were gradually acquired by interacting with (women) beneficiaries

during field visits, from FGDs and in meetings. In this context it should also be mentioned that the baseline survey of BGP collected only limited data that could be used as a proxy to measure empowerment; suggestions for including better gender indicators in BGP's monitoring (eg to measure women's active involvement in WMG meetings) were not always taken up.

Apart from a budget for gender expertise, Blue Gold's original budget did not include special budget lines for gender activities. Within Blue Gold this was hardly a problem because gender activities could be funded from broader budget lines, for example, gender training from the training budget or a gender study from a budget for studies. In the second part of BGP, annual budgets for gender activities were prepared and approved.

The proportion of women as professional staff within the TA team was always quite low, and rather decreased over time, especially in the zonal offices. There also remained room for improvement in the working environment of women staff, despite the anti-harassment policy, even though the presence of this policy reportedly contributed to some improvements.

Challenges[edit | edit source]

At the end of the Blue Gold Program various gender-related challenges remained:

- The phenomenon of feminization of agriculture, with women playing an increased role in agricultural production, requiring an adjusted focus and approaches of agricultural extension services, including women-friendly technologies and/or mechanization.
- The increase of women's total workload due to their increased involvement in productive work combined with their responsibility for domestic work, could be seen as a "negative" impact of BGP, as also impacting their health. Still, women feel proud on contributing to increased production, and they do not consider reducing their role in production as an option. Rather, the idea of sharing domestic work with their male household members, as part of BGP's gender messages, was welcomed by all women. In practice first evidence of some men gradually contributing more to domestic and care work was observed, but the difference in total worked hours per day by men and women remained significant.
- Women's wages remained structurally lower than men's wages, even for doing the same or similar tasks, although some first signals of reducing this gap were reported.

Illustration: *Women are almost always paid less than men – typically being paid between half and 80% of the male wage. Some FGDs reported that the differential between male and female wages has narrowed, at least in relative terms –* *Technical Report 26* *Outcomes of BGP interventions, November 2019*

- Women's representation in key positions in WMOs remain low, even more in higher level organizations, such as WMAs and Catchment O&M committees. At the same time, in all categories of positions, even if there are no quota, at least a few women can be found.
- Women doing LCS work meet many problems. For example, the late issuance of work orders make it more difficult for them -as part time workers- to complete the work before the monsoon rains start. If conditions not improve, it can be wondered whether LCS work for women still should be promoted.

Lessons learned and recommendations for future projects[edit | edit source]

Many lessons can be drawn from Blue Gold's work on gender equality and women's empowerment. They also confirm recommendations of existing guidelines for good gender mainstreaming[Notes 1]. Without being exhaustive, major lessons learned, also as recommendations for future projects or

programs, are presented here:

- Conduct a gender analysis, either as a stand-alone study or as part of a broader situational analysis. The findings from the gender analysis should be used as input for project design, or - if conducted during an inception phase, for making adjustments to project design to allow to address causes of gender inequality and contribute to more equality and empowerment.
- Gender mainstreaming in core project interventions, both in terms of targeting women and men and making content more gender-sensitive, is important to ensure women's empowerment at a robust scale.
- Apart from gender mainstreaming, a package of gender specific activities is essential to support and complement gender mainstreaming, for example, by addressing changes in the mindset of men and women towards changing gender norms.
- Quotas can work, but they should be accompanied by other measures, for example activities to create gender awareness, address gender norms or to support development of women's leadership.
- Make sure that indicators are identified that allow measuring women's empowerment, including to assess the scale of their empowerment, instead of only using estimates based on anecdotal evidence.
- Realise that terms such as "farmer" and "entrepreneur" include both men and women. Blue Gold learned that gender-stereotypical roles, such as typical male or female tasks, can rapidly change, and therefore gender-stereotype approaches should be avoided. This means, for example, that in principle all training should be open to both men and women. This also creates more opportunities for the inclusion of female-headed households.
- It is important to pay attention to women's workload to avoid that they become overloaded with work. However, not including women in project interventions is no option; rather, sharing of domestic work and time-saving technologies should be promoted.
- Gender expertise in the TA team is crucial for support in gender mainstreaming, as is gender training of the staff. Female (field) staff is important, also as role models. Attention needs to be given to a women-friendly working environment; this sometimes may require some special practical arrangements for women staff from an equity point of view. When promoting staff, explicit efforts should be made to ensure that assessment criteria do not favour male staff.
- The commitment of project management towards gender equality and women's empowerment is found to be a major success factor. This is even more so when a project's budget does not include budget lines for specific gender activities, as then project management needs to approve the budgets for proposed gender activities.

Annexes[edit | edit source]

- Annex 24.1 Selected monitoring data, disaggregated for men and women
- Annex 24.2 Outreach of BGP to women: estimate of women who became empowered due to BGP activities

References[edit | edit source]

1. ↑ Dewan, Camelia; Buisson, Marie-Charlotte; Mukherji, Aditi (2014). "The imposition of participation? The case of participatory water management in coastal Bangladesh". *Water Alternatives*. **7** (2): 342–366.

Notes[edit | edit source]

1. ↑ See the minimum criteria for a “gender significant” project according to OECD-DAC gender marker system: https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Minimum-recommended-criteria-for-DAC-gender-marker.pdf

See more[edit | edit source]

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A defined set of temporary activities through which facilitators seek to effect change

Gender equality exists when men and women, boys and girls are attributed equal social value, equal rights and equal responsibilities; and men and women have equal access to the means (resources, opportunities) to exercise those rights and responsibilities. This does not mean that women and men will become the same, but rather that rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether someone is born male or female.

empowerment is a process, enabling people to make choices and convert these into desired actions and results. In doing so, people take control of their own lives, improve their own position, set their own agenda, gain skills, develop self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-sufficiency. Empowerment leads to genuine participation of all actors as it is a process of gaining self-confidence for individual development as well as to contribute towards development of others.

An area of low-lying land surrounded by an earthen embankment to prevent flooding by river or seawater, with associated structures which are provided to either drain excess rainwater within the polder or to admit freshwater to be stored in a khal for subsequent use for irrigation.

Labour that results in goods or services that have monetary value in the capitalist system and are thus compensated by the producers in the form of a paid wage, or otherwise results into (monetary) income. Productive work includes subsistence agriculture and homestead production.

Also known as 'business linkages'. Linkages refer to the trading relationships between and among producers, input providers and traders, and other enterprises in a supply chain or value chain. We

refer to Backward linkages on the input side and Forward linkages on the output side of the producer.

Labour that is associated with the private sphere and involves anything that people have to do for themselves that is not for the purposes of receiving a wage or producing goods. It includes cleaning and repairs, cooking, care, and fetching water and fuel. Reproductive work is also referred to as unpaid care work (UCW) or domestic work and care.

Blue Gold Program

Integrated Planning for Sustainable Water Management

Labour Contracting Societies - Groups of usually landless people who are contracted by an agency to carry out a certain type and volume of earthwork within a given time period. For BWDB, the rules for engagement of an LCS are set down in PWMR 2014 Chapter 6

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Danish International Development Agency

Farmer Field School - A group-based learning process through which farmers carry out experiential learning activities that help them to understand the ecology of their fields, based on simple experiments, regular field observations and group analysis. The knowledge gained from these activities enables participants to make their own locally specific decisions about crop management practices. This approach represents a radical departure from earlier agricultural extension programmes, in which farmers were expected to adopt generalized recommendations that are formulated by specialists from outside the community.

Bangladesh Water Development Board, government agency which is responsible for surface water and groundwater management in Bangladesh, and lead implementing agency for the Blue Gold Program

Guidelines for Participatory Water Management

Income Generating Activity

A process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them.

Water Management Organizations - The common name of organizations of the local stakeholders of a water resource project/sub-project/scheme. The concept WMO typically refers to WMGs and WMAs

(and/or WMFs) together

Water Management Group - The basic organizational unit in Blue Gold representing local stakeholders from a hydrological or social unit (para/village). Through Blue Gold, 511 WMGs have been formed and registered. The average WMG covers an area of around 230 ha has 365 households or a population of just over 1,500.

Local Government Engineering Department

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Gender and Leadership Development (training)

A process by which the local stakeholders are directly and actively involved in identification, planning, design, implementation, operation & maintenance and evaluation of a water management project.

This is the process of systematically recognizing and taking into account gender issues (such as differences between the conditions, roles and needs of women and men) within core activities of projects and programmes and covering design, implementation and M&E. Gender mainstreaming also takes into account the likely implications for men and women of planned interventions.

Any issue where relations, differences, connections and/or inequalities between men and women have either a positive or negative effect or influence

A process by which the local stakeholders are directly and actively involved in identification, planning, design, implementation, operation & maintenance and evaluation of a water management project.

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or a population of just over 1,500.

Water Management Association - In Blue Gold, the polder-level representative of WMGs, and signatory to an O&M Agreement with BWDB

Executive Committee

Members of the Executive Committees of Water Management Organisations, i.e. of Water Management Groups or Water Management Associations. Each Executive Committee consists of 12 members, of whom at least 30% should be women as per government rules

In-polder water management; term used in Blue Gold to describe water management interventions which aim to deliver excess water from the field through field drains to secondary khals and thence to primary khals for evacuation through the sluice/regulator

human intervention in the capture, conveyance, utilisation and drainage of surface and/or ground water in a certain area: a process of social interaction between stakeholders around the issue of water control.

Community Development Facilitator - a member of the Blue Gold technical assistance team who lived and worked in a specific polder, and provided the main point of contact between the project and the polder communities

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Learning from peers; and in the context of Blue Gold, farmer-to-farmer learning in which a host WMG invites representatives from visiting WMGs to witness an event - such as the harvesting of a new variety of rice - to pass on the knowledge and lessons gained from their experience

Farmer Field Day - Exchange events organized at the end of each Farmer Field School to share the FFS learnings with other community members

Cropping Intensity Initiative: Year-long demonstrations with farmers on increasing cropping intensity related to improved water management, also involving market actors, and by organising demand driven sessions and workshops

Value chain - the set of activities that need to be performed in a specific production sector in order to deliver the end product to the consumer. Agricultural value chains typically include input supply, growing/production, processing and marketing/distribution.

Department of Agricultural Extension, a department of the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for disseminating scientific research and new knowledge on agricultural practices through communication and learning activities for farmers in agriculture, agricultural marketing, nutrition and business studies.

assumed in this report to operate up to 0.5 acres (0.2 ha)

Technical Assistance

Any formal or informal structure (not necessarily a physical place) in which buyers and sellers exchange goods, labour, or services for cash or other goods. The word 'market' can simply mean the place in which goods or services are exchanged. Essentially, markets are defined by forces of supply and demand, rather than geographical location

Market-oriented Farmer Field School - Farmer Field Schools dealing with cash crops or other commercial production, such as aquaculture, integrating market orientation. Specific MFS were conducted in the first years of BGP; later all FFS included market orientation.

Farmer Trainer - Well-performing and capable farmers, previously trained in Farmer Field Schools, who became FFS facilitator themselves after ToT training

Resource Farmers (RF) are members of Farmer Field Schools (FFSs). They are selected from the FFS groups to lead other members in organizing different useful collective actions and to maintain networks on behalf of the members. These RFs are given additional capacity building training to enhance their knowlege on simple record keeping and business skills.

Community Animal Health Workers: members of the community who are trained to provide farmers with basic health and production support for their animals

Training of trainers

Farmer Trainer - Well-performing and capable farmers, previously trained in Farmer Field Schools, who became FFS facilitator themselves after ToT training

Community Poultry Workers: members of the community who are trained to provide farmers with basic health and production support for their poultry

Community Livestock Workers: members of the community who are trained to provide farmers with basic health and production support for their livestock

Male / Female

Collective action - by a producer group is one way to partially overcome constraints such as in weak markets, where inputs and services essential to production innovations, are generally scarce, costly to access and/or to obtain. Collective action is working in group instead of individually in order to gain economic or social benefit. Through collective action, farmers can address constraints in their market linkages, organise their activities jointly and use their collective bargaining power to reduce input costs through bulk purchase, or to obtain services from buyers such as farm-level collection of produce

Bangladesh Taka

Innovation Fund

International NGO

courtyard sessions

Community Development Facilitator - a member of the Blue Gold technical assistance team who lived and worked in a specific polder, and provided the main point of contact between the project and the polder communities

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (an NGO)

Focus Group Discussions - in which a group of participants from similar backgrounds or experiences gather to discuss a specific topic of interest, guided by a group facilitator who introduces the topics for discussion and helps the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion amongst themselves

Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the contractual representative of the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands and signatory to the agreement for the Blue Gold Program with the External Resources Division of the Ministry of Finance as the signatory for the Government of Bangladesh

Gender Action Plan

Government of Bangladesh; a donor to the Blue Gold Program

Program Coordinating Director

Monitoring and Evaluation

Human Resources

Community-led Agricultural Water Management - with DAE, Blue Gold established a network of schemes for demonstration purposes where locally-applicable annual cropping patterns are introduced along with water level control facilitated by small-scale water infrastructure, and the development of value chain skills in farmers

Union Parishad - Union Council chaired by an elected Union Chairman

Learning from peers; and in the context of Blue Gold, farmer-to-farmer learning in which a host WMG invites representatives from visiting WMGs to witness an event - such as the harvesting of a new variety of rice - to pass on the knowledge and lessons gained from their experience

metric ton (tonne)

Union Parishad - Union Council chaired by an elected Union Chairman

Farmer Trainer - Well-performing and capable farmers, previously trained in Farmer Field Schools, who became FFS facilitator themselves after ToT training

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Sub-Assistant Agricultural Officer (DAE)

Feminization of agriculture refers to the measurable increase of women's participation in the agricultural sector. This can be due to men taking up non-farm employment locally, male out-migration from rural areas to urban areas or abroad, poverty (need for women to raise income), and/or women's empowerment (women taking own initiatives to engage in agricultural production). The increase in agricultural productivity requiring more labour input (be it family or wage labour) can also contribute to a larger role of women in agriculture.

Refers to socially constructed and therefore learned roles and responsibilities ascribed to men and women, girls and boys based on their sex. Gender is not the same as sex, the physical and biological attributes that make someone female, male or both. Gender comprises the expectations, roles, attitudes and behaviours of women and men. Gender roles change over time and vary within and between cultures, societies and classes.

Integrated Farm Management Component (DANIDA-funded program)

Patuakhali Science and Technology University

The process that women get more control over their own life. The following three dimensions are commonly distinguished: (1) Access to resources, including productive, human and social resources; such as inputs, assets, credit, skills, knowledge and social networks; (2) Increased participation and influence in decision-making, including about strategic life choices; (3) Improvements in well-being resulting from the above. Commonly four dimensions of women's empowerment are distinguished: economic empowerment, social empowerment, political empowerment and physical empowerment.

an environment of policies, regulations, norms, institutions, and overall economic governance which allows market systems to function and perform well

Producer Group Facilitator

Monitoring, Reflection & Learning

contiguous area of land operated as a single unit by a farmer - average area of 27 decimals (0.11 ha), with a normal range between 10 and 70 decimals (0.04 to 0.28 ha)

A hajol is an unfired earthenware nesting vessel for egg hatching, with small receptacles for water and seed to provide the immediate needs. The hajol saves the hen effort and time for searching food, thus ensuring proper hatching in less time, thereby reducing egg waste.

Focus Group Discussions - in which a group of participants from similar backgrounds or experiences gather to discuss a specific topic of interest, guided by a group facilitator who introduces the topics for discussion and helps the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion amongst

themselves

Water Management Association - In Blue Gold, the polder-level representative of WMGs, and signatory to an O&M Agreement with BWDB

actions taken to prevent or repair the deterioration of water management infrastructure and to keep the physical components of a water management system in such a state that they can serve their intended function.

A livelihood is a way of making a living. It comprises capabilities, skills, assets (including material and social resources), and activities that households put together to produce food, meet basic needs, earn income, or establish a means of living in any other way.

Women’s Economic Empowerment - Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Women's economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.

Increase in the capacity of a country or an economic region to produce goods and services. It also refers to the increase in market value of the goods and services produced by an economy. It is usually calculated using inflation adjusted figures, in order to discount the effect of inflation on the price of the goods and services produced

High Yielding Variety - Introduced varieties developed through formal breeding programs. HYVs have a higher yield potential than local varieties but require correspondingly high inputs of fertiliser and irrigation to achieve high yields.

Micro Finance Institute

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Any individual or group who, in one way or another is favourably influenced by the project.

Gender indicators are performance indicators that help assess or measure the effects of a policy, programme or project on changes in gender relations and the status of men and women, and hence the extent of advancement of gender equality and/or women's empowerment. Gender indicators can be quantitative and qualitative.

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Variants

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Blue Gold Program Wiki

The wiki version of the Lessons Learnt Report of the Blue Gold program, documents the experiences of a technical assistance (TA) team working in a development project implemented by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) over an eight+ year period from March 2013 to December 2021. The wiki lessons learnt report (LLR) is intended to complement the BWDB and DAE project completion reports (PCRs), with the aim of recording lessons learnt for use in the design and implementation of future interventions in the coastal zone.

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