Summary of Section G: Project Management

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Earlier sections in BGP's lessons learnt report have consistently demonstrated how the project concept evolved from complementary interventions in community organisation, water security, agriculture and markets into an integrated approach aimed to drive local economic development,

inclusiveness and sustainability in the 22 coastal polders where the project operates. The evolution of the approach required the project management to adapt and refine the organisational structure of the team to meet the changing priorities, and a willingness of team members to operate in multi-disciplinary teams and to refocus on delivering tools for community leadership in agricultural water management with relevant information and access to resources. Mechanisms for project coordination were employed and augmented. Planning evolved from a one-off effort at the project's onset to a recurrent field of attention. Monitoring and evaluation moved towards a position of analysing and reflecting on project survey data to inform project management on implementation progress and impact, with lessons on 'what works' and 'what doesn't work'. And finally, the project's fresh outlook on local economic development changed its communications with beneficiaries and stakeholder; a change that is reflected in training and extension approaches.

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Project coordination – a point of attention[edit | edit source]

The design of Blue Gold, as set down in the GoN Program Document and the BWDB and DAE Development Project Proformas (DPPs), sets out arrangements for Implementation through complementary interventions by BWDB, DAE and the TA team, with mechanisms for coordination to ensure coherence. In addition to dedicated management teams for each implementation unit, a program coordinating director was assigned; steering committees for the BWDB and DAE activities were put in place; and the project performance was externally reviewed each year. Recognising the benefits of working-level coordination of activities, regular meetings were instituted between the BWDB Project Coordinating Director, the DAE Project Director, the TA management team and the Embassy of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Mechanisms were proposed for coordination at zonal and polder levels, but in practice, this continued largely through ad hoc meetings.

Future project interventions in the coastal zone would be well-advised to incorporate arrangements for strong cross-sectoral coordination. This would include a close association with existing coordination structures – especially with government line agencies, Union and Upazila Parishads and local private sector and NGO representatives – complemented by agile structures for strategic coordination at national level.

Planning – sustainability from the start[edit | edit source]

The two separate Development Project Proforma (DPPs) – one with BWDB for investments in flood control and drainage infrastructure, and the other with DAE for the transfer of agricultural technology – were complemented by a substantial Technical Assistance (TA) team with workplan and budget.

The TA team had a budget and organisation structure that could adapt with more flexibility to the changes in the project concept. While the two separate plans for the main implementing agencies

existed throughout the project duration; the TA team was able to do away with its component structure and to plan its work in a more integrated way.

A future integrated 'water management for development'-project should seek to maximise the flexibility of the DPPs of the line agencies (e.g. through block allocations) and should explicitly use technical assistance resources to strengthen coherence between local ambitions expressed by WMOs and LGIs; and line agency plans.

Monitoring & Evaluation – An evolving Theory of Change[edit | edit source]

The M&E system derives from the project plan, and more specifically from its Logical Framework. The indicators of the M&E system had to be adjusted in keeping with the changing project approach. While output indicators were largely unchanged and reported in a monthly Tracker Report, outcome indicators had to be adjusted to the changed view on WMG performance. More emphasis was given to self-monitoring by the WMGs, complemented with in-depth surveys on their performance. Triangulation between data sources provides a deeper understanding of processes – and weaknesses – and helped move the M&E function from 'recording' to 'reflection'.

The impacts of some changes in the project concept can only be partially reviewed, as no baseline is available for these changes. Thus, impacts on inclusiveness and sustainability – which are seen as important by-products of the integrated approach to local economic development – could not be fully captured by BGP's M&E products.

Future projects are advised to use M&E from the onset as a key management tool for reflection by using diverse data and information sources and by a focussed and strongly independent analytical function.

Communication – new perspectives on training and extension[edit | edit source]

The change in project concept pursued local initiatives with respect to water management and agricultural change. Rather than having a central message and disseminating this as efficiently as possible; the project stimulates its intended beneficiaries to use opportunities in water and agriculture in ways appropriate to their specific locality.

Centrally purchased capacity building courses (for leadership, gender and accounting) were replaced by facilitated local planning processes for water management. Such plans develop from an initial replication of a standard WMG plan, to a cascading planning process from sub-catchment, to catchment to polder with particular emphasis on mobilising own resources and obtaining additional support through association with local governments, departments and private sector.

The approach for agricultural extension broadened: in addition to farmer field schools for field crops and for homestead production; use was made of horizontal learning between communities and local resource farmers were mobilised and trained. The field crops FFSs were reviewed to include attention to opportunities in the year-round cropping cycle, to the potential of improved water management in sub-catchments and to farming as a business. Homestead FFSs were split into short and specific courses.

To support a change from dependency on external project-support to local initiative for economic

development; future projects must employ a diverse set of communication interventions, which help people take action; rather than simply telling them to take action.

See more[edit | edit source]

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Section G: Project Management

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Blue Gold Program

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

The inclusion of the (interests of) different types of people and treating them fairly and equally, considering their different roles and interests in water management

Government of the Netherlands; a donor to the Blue Gold Program

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

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.

Development Project Proforma: a formal document which sets out the intention of a GoB organisation to invest in a development project, seeking approval for the investment and, if successful, a budget allocation. The DPP follows a prescribed format, including the project's financial and physical scope, benefits, and proposals for monitoring and internal and external audits. The approval of a development project proposal follows a number of stages: formation with preliminary studies, formulation to develop greater detail and with additional information to make the economic case for the project, scrutiny by the executing agencies and concerned ministries, appraisal by the Planning Commission, recommendation for approval by Project Evaluation Committee (PEC), Minister/ECNEC approval, and inclusion of a budgetary allocation in the Annual Development Plan (ADP).

Technical Assistance

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.

Non-Governmental Organisation

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The strapline of the Blue Gold Program for a transformative approach to smallholder agriculture which combines water infrastructure and locally-led initiatives for better water management, using modern agricultural technology and a business-orientation.

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

Local Government Institutions - Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad etc

Monitoring and Evaluation

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.

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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.

Part of the catchment which is not directly connected to the regulator, and is hydrologically independent from other parts of the catchment.

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.

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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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