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**Draft Minutes of the Workshop on
'Participatory Water Management: Challenges and Way Forward'**
17 November 2021

Support to Implementation of Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (SIBDP), General Economics Division (GED), and the Blue-Gold Program, BWDB jointly organized a workshop titled 'Participatory Water Management: Challenges and Way Forward' on Wednesday, the 17th of November 2021 at NEC Conference room, Bangladesh Planning Commission. Dr. Shamsul Alam, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Planning (MoP), graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Mr. Kabir Bin Anwar, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), presided over the workshop. Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed, Member of the General Economics Division (GED), was present as the special guest. Mr. Fazlur Rashid, Director General, Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) were present as the guest of honor. Mr Folkert de Jager, First Secretary, Water and Food Security, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Mr. Martijn van de Group, Delegated Representative, Water Management, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands were also present in the workshop. The list of participants is attached in Annex II.

Welcome Address and Objective of the Workshop

At the beginning of the workshop, Dr. Robin Kumar Biswas, Project Director, the Blue-Gold Program, welcomed all the workshop participants. Dr. Biswas provided a brief overview of the Blue-Gold program, which is a collaboration program between the Government of the Netherlands (donor) and the Government of Bangladesh. The overall objective of the Blue-Gold Program is "to reduce poverty of 190,000 households living in 119,224 ha area of selected coastal polders by creating a healthy living environment and to pursue sustainable socio-economic development." The twenty-two polders selected for interventions through Blue Gold cover around 119,224 ha of land in the Patuakhali, Khulina, Satkhira, and Barguna districts.

The Ministry of Water Resources implemented the Blue Gold program through the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB, lead agency) and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE). The Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) protects the communities from flooding and surges by ensuring the integrity of the embankments and associated structures and forming and registering water management organizations (WMOs). The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) works alongside farmers to encourage the selection and cultivation of crops and varieties that are well-suited to the coastal environment. Ultimately this mechanism works as part of an interlinked annual cropping system to form the basis for a profitable business. In addition, the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) and Department of Fisheries (DoF) provide specialist advice for the development of training modules to farmer field schools and contribute to other project interventions. Local government institutions (LGIs), especially Union Parishads (UPs), are partners in polder development planning, coordination, and maintenance.

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The Blue Gold Program is working to enhance the socio-economic development in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. The program establishes and empowers community organizations to sustainably manage their water resources. By providing water management support, the Blue Gold program ensured diversified land use, which helped increase employment opportunities in coastal areas. The program has separate components for community mobilization and traditional strengthening, water resource management, food security and agricultural production, business development, and private sector involvement. Mr. Kumar stated that the Blue Gold Program advanced flood protection in polders by rehabilitating embankments and water intakes and outlets. The Blue Gold Program also improved the water distribution and drainage systems and created an effective operational partnership between government agencies and community groups (beneficiaries). Currently, BWDB is responsible for managing large scale water projects. However, BWDB has a limited human resource for managing 870 water sector projects with its limited human resource. It is extremely challenging for BWDB to regularly inspect and maintain water infrastructure projects.

In the long run, Bangladesh needs to adopt a unified approach for PMA. According to Bangladesh Water Rule 2018 and Bangladesh Water Act 2013, District, Upazila, and Union water management committees are formed for the PMA. Also, according to Participatory Water Management Rule 2018, water management groups were created based on catchment areas. It is essential to find a unified approach for water resource Operation and Maintenance (O&M) for developing viable institutional and financial arrangements for O&M. The following three independent thematic studies have been commissioned by MoP:

- Experience with Participatory Water Management (PMA) Approaches - An Institutional Issue
- An Institutional Framework for the PMA An Operation of O&M and
- Sustainability and Financing of Water Management, Operation and Maintenance in Coastal Polders

These three independent studies have been conducted by renowned experts including Dr. Ali, Ashraf Haq, and Wazir Khan, Dr. Sagor Zahir and Tofiqul Alam. Based on these studies, a synthesis has been prepared. The support to implementation of Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (SIBDP) 2100 contributed to this study during the remote development process. SIBDP 2100 is a project of the General Economics Division (GED) of the Bangladesh Planning Commission. SIBDP 2100 emphasizes the involvement of the local people in the operation and management of the water infrastructure for ensuring effective participatory water management. Goal 1 of the SIBDP 2100 focuses on capacity building, institutional development, and equitable water governance issues.

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Draft Minutes of Workshop on 'Participatory Water Management: Challenges and Way Forward'

GoB

MoWR


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.

Government of Bangladesh; a donor to the Blue Gold Program

Ministry of Water Resources

File history

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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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