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Section D: BGP intervention: Participatory Water Management

From Blue Gold Program Wiki

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Participatory Water Management (PWM) in BGP comprises a set of activities that helps gear

infrastructure development to transforming agriculture in the coastal polders; and which therefore forms the central driver for intensified local economic development in the project area. This set of PWM activities includes: **consultation** of communities; capacity building of **water management organisations**; physical **in-polder water management** interventions); and development of a **water management partnership**.

The key message of this section is that presently, Bangladesh does not use the full potential of participatory water management for engendering local economic development. Infrastructure development and agricultural development are generally undertaken as separate interventions, often under a strong central coordination; while the capability of local stakeholders to utilise water resources and associate infrastructure for a dynamic development of agriculture goes largely ignored. In addition to reviewing the PWM activities listed above, this section also looks at how BGP operationalised the **PWM concept** and it concludes with a section on a **way forward** for participatory water management to become the glue that welds water resources infrastructure and local agricultural-based development together.

Consultation and participation in planning

BGP, at its inception, addressed community consultation and participation in planning through a Polder Development Plan and local-level WMG Action Plans. Several lessons are drawn:

Consultation of communities and their representatives is more meaningful if it starts well before the definition of infrastructure investments in implementation budgets;

Local governments and representatives of decentralised departments are relevant and constructive partners in local water resources planning;

Facilitated community planning should be complemented with coaching of community actions, e.g. for better agricultural production. A little encouragement helps people undertake the actions that they have planned for;

Periodic review and adjustment is required to arrive at realistic ambitions, possibly in terms of higher productivity or profitability, and coherent and do-able actions.

Using these insights, BGP in the second half of its implementation period, linked local water management plans to catchment plans and subsequently to polder-level WMA plans. The ensuing plans focus on water management actions at different levels of the polder water system (see: In-Polder Water Management).

WMO capacity building[\[edit\]](#) | [edit source](#)

BGP helped activate 511 water management groups and 36 water management associations in 22 polders. In order to help these organisations to work for better water management, BGP applied the following principles in building their capacity:

Build capacities of groups and teams;

Support both planning and implementation;

Let WMOs take the lead in implementing actions;

Promote WMOs to use their local network for achieving their aspirations.

Women's participation in water management[\[edit\]](#) | [edit source](#)

While the regulatory framework sets quota for women's participation in WMOs, BGP explicitly pursued that women in and above this quota would participate in an active and significant way. This resulted in women taking part with voice and vote in WMO meetings; in a significant number of women being executives in the WMOs; and in experienced female office bearers becoming successful contestants in local government elections.

In-Polder Water Management

Community participation helps shape actions that make better combinations of production practices and water management, at different levels of scale:

Small-scale infrastructure and synchronised cropping at sub-catchments help bring forward the harvest of T.Aman and creates the possibility to grow an additional winter season crop, often of high commercial value. Other combinations of improved production and better water management are possible;

Operation of a sluice combined with keeping the khal functional ensures better water levels for production within the catchment;

Sound plans for catchment management together with active water management associations, helps local communities exercise control over the sluices that serve their areas.

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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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

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

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.

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

Polder Development Plan - presents an integrated analysis and planning for a specific polder covering community mobilization, water management, agriculture, business development, environment, gender, and institutions. A deliverable product under the BWDB Development Project Proforma (DPP). PDPs for all 22 polders are available through the File Library.

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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

A vertical gate to control the flow of water; also referred to as 'regulator'

drainage channel or canal

an idealised hydrologically independent drainage unit within a polder - comprising a network of inter-connected khals draining to a regulator from where water is discharged to a peripheral river. Because the land levels in a polder vary within a small range (typically up to a maximum of 1.5 m), water flows can be affected by downstream water conditions and eventually drain through more than one regulator at different times of year. .

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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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