Summary of Section A: Background and context

From Blue Gold Program Wiki
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This section provides background and context for lessons learnt during the Blue Gold Program by

providing a description of the **project**, its ambitions, resources, and underpinning concepts. It will also detail '**the setting**' (institutions, social and physical context, previous experiences, the enabling environment of policies, laws and regulations) in which the project was implemented, as well as describe how the **Participatory Water Management** approach defined at the project's start evolved during the seven-year implementation period.

BGP postulates that '**water management for development**'- the combining of water infrastructure and locally-led initiatives for better water management with a transformative approach to smallholder agriculture- provides a robust pathway to development.

The purpose of this wiki is to present this pathway and the many lessons that help to describe it. Blue Gold Program lessons serve as input for the definition of future water sector investments in Bangladesh's coastal zone, and as a contribution to policy choices on Bangladesh's water sector governance. Both investment decisions and policy choices take place under the aegis of the Delta Plan 2100.

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The project: the Blue Gold Program[edit | edit source]

Blue Gold Program

The Blue Gold Program (2013-2021) promotes Participatory Water Management in 22 polders in the southwestern coastal belt by:

Improving water management

Increasing and diversifying agricultural production

Increasing income and employment through market-led agriculture

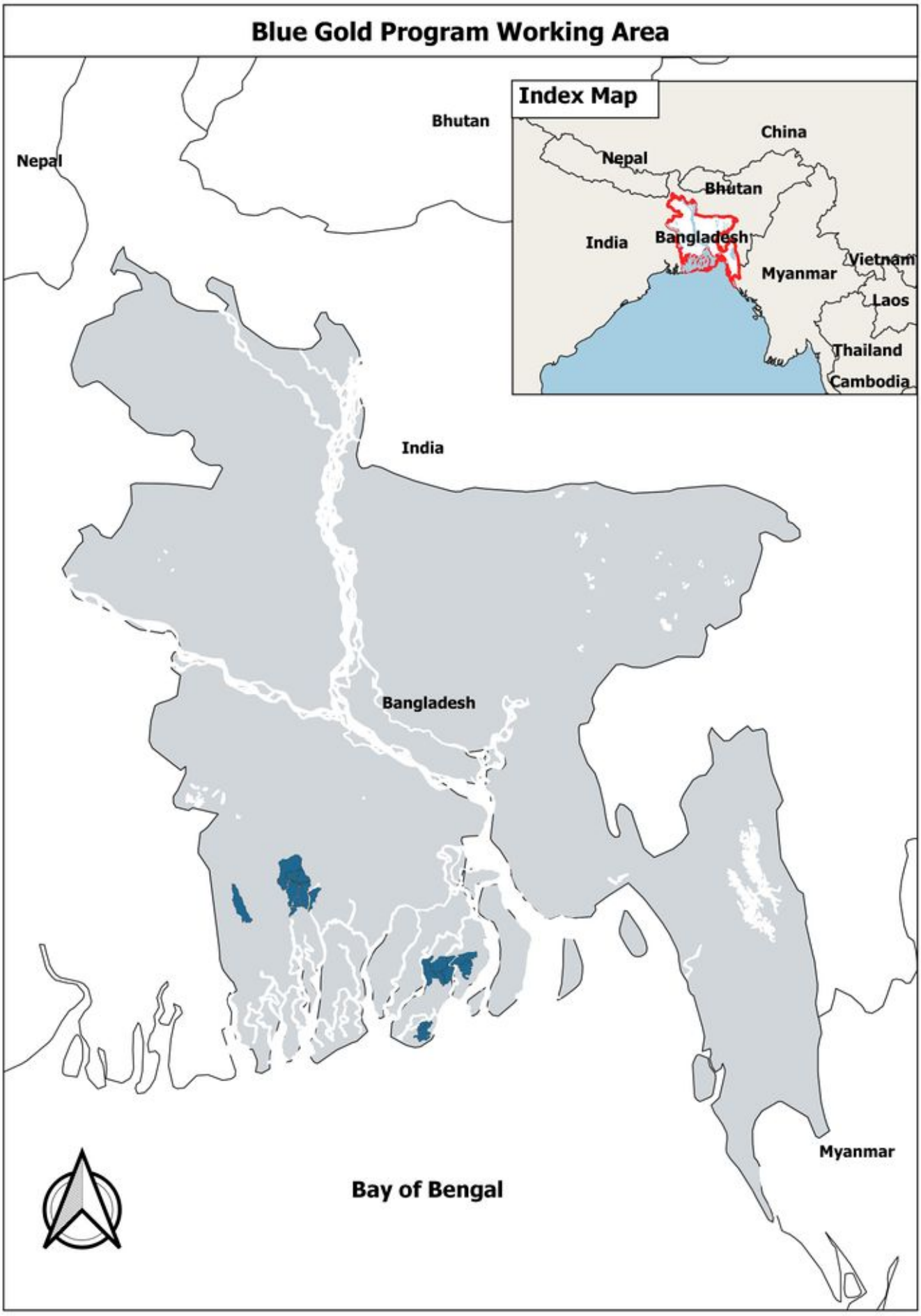
Reducing poverty and improving food security

Using a pro-poor, inclusive approach, targeting men and women, to include all polder inhabitants and also to enhance development outcomes

The Blue Gold Program is funded by the governments of Bangladesh and the Netherlands and aims to reduce poverty for 185,000 households in the coastal districts of Patuakhali, Khulna, Satkhira, and part of Barguna. Blue Gold helps local communities stabilise their environments, and pursue sustainable socio-economic development through participatory water management and diversified farming practices with an increased orientation on markets. It aims to reduce poverty and enhance food security by strengthening the institutional framework, water resources infrastructure and through agricultural transformation.

Setting: the coastal zone[edit | edit source]

Over 1 million hectares of agricultural lands were enclosed in polders in the 1960s and 1970s to provide protection from tidal flooding and saline water intrusion. Now, these polders are home to about 10 million people. Yet, despite the enormous investment in embankments and associated infrastructure, some 38% of rural households in the polders live below the national poverty line. The polders are subjected to flooding during the rainy season, drought and salinity during the dry season, as well as cyclones. As a result, productivity is low. These problems will be exacerbated by climate change and sea-level rise over time.[1]


Blue Gold Program Working Area
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Participatory Water Management[edit | edit source]

The Blue Gold Program functions within the country policy and legal framework for Participatory Water Management (PWM). This framework, of which the basic principles were laid down some 20 years back, structures the involvement of communities in water management through a nested structure of Water Management Groups and Water Management Associations, which are to be formally given responsibility for routine maintenance and operation of water infrastructure.

Water management for development[edit | edit source]

Through its implementation period, BGP sought to bring the benefits of water management to all corners of the polders. Increased agricultural returns through better in-polder water management provide a reason for polder inhabitants to assume operation and maintenance responsibilities and to contribute to their cost.

To promote in-polder water management, BGP intervenes in three realms:

- Infrastructure development: complementing rehabilitation works on embankments, sluices and main drainage channels with small-scale works within the polders' internal water systems
- Institutional development: strengthening recently established water management organisations by the development of their networks and partnerships with local governments, departments and the private sector
- Agricultural development: Aiming to bring the benefits of commercial agriculture through the dissemination of knowledge on field crop production, support to diversified homestead production and support to market linkages.

Purpose of the 'lessons learnt' wiki[edit | edit source]

This wiki records lessons learnt for use in the design and implementation of future interventions in the coastal zone.

The purpose of this wiki is to pass on this knowledge and experience to the planners and policymakers working towards the realisation of the Delta Plan, and to those responsible for the design and implementation of future projects in the coastal zone.

The way forward

The Blue Gold Program and other PWM projects apply the existing legal, regulatory and institutional framework. Given the proven potential of participatory water management for enhancing development, the time has come to reassess the enabling framework for PWM. The experience of BGP suggests rethinking the following:

Participatory water management must be initiated and supported. But where is the institutional capacity to do so at a nationwide scale?

Water Management Groups and Associations flourish when working closely with Local Government Institutions and line agencies. How can this partnership be extended to the whole country?

Water Management Groups and Associations develop small-scale infrastructure but also are stakeholders in the main infrastructure. How can the planning of small and large-scale infrastructure be optimised to complement each other?

New legislation establishes local and regional water resource committees. How can such bodies enhance the synergy between national, regional and local interest?

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1. ↑ "Blue Gold Program". *Blue Gold Program*. Retrieved July 8, 2020.

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

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.

Blue Gold Program

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

tidal flooding is the temporary inundation of low-lying areas during high tide events.

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.

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.

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.

the adjustment of gates in water management infrastructure to control hydraulic conditions (water levels and discharges) in a water management system.

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

agricultural production aimed at meeting market-demands. It is based on establishing a profitable farming unit and involves a multitude of business relations with other actors in the market system. Used in contrast to subsistence farming which focuses mostly on home consumption.

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.

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

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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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