

COMMUNITY BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT THE RIGHT OPTION

The principle behind community managed fisheries is hand over of the management of fisheries resources to community groups and they will manage the resources sustainably and equitably. The benefits of this approach are obvious - it is pro-poor, equitable and sustainable.

Handing over fisheries management to community groups secures access to fisheries resources for those people whose lives depend on them i.e. the poor fishers. This ensures a pro-poor approach supportive of the national goal of poverty alleviation. In addition to this, by making sure that the best fisheries do not forever end up with the few local elites, community managed fisheries guarantees equitable distribution of benefits from fisheries resources. The lives of some millions of people are dependent on fisheries resources and they must be allowed to enjoy the benefits from these resources. Moreover, unlike the current revenue based system of fisheries management, community managed fisheries approach is not driven by the overarching desire for profit. As a result, community groups responsible for managing fisheries resources balance the need for production with conservation which results in sustainability.

A brief comparison of the approaches adopted for fisheries management (presented in the following tabular form) clearly demonstrates the advantages of community managed fisheries approach.



ICF (INLAND CAPTURED FISHERIES) MANAGEMENT OPTIONS



Private Lease

- Revenue based, favours powerful and rich.
- Excludes fishers, not equitable.
- Leads to over fishing, no incentive for conservation, hence not sustainable.

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- Over exploitations, hence not sustainable.
- Difficult to manage.
- Favours powerful and rich, hence not equitable.
- No incentive for conservation, therefore not sustainable.

Community Managed

- Pro-poor and ensures poor fishers' and women's access rights.
- Supports poverty alleviation strategy.
- Conserves bio-diversity, protects the environment.
- Ensures participatory governance.



COMMUNITY MANAGED FISHERIES: THE ACHIEVEMENTS

The project interventions, though in a small number of water bodies, have shown that in the project areas poor fishers' access to water bodies were ensured and established. Advocacy and awareness building component of the projects has resulted in increased and effective observation of fishing ban period, reduction in use of harmful gears and practices, establishment and restoration of fish sanctuaries and fish habitats respectively. Alternative income generating activities for fisher communities in the project areas have led to observation of fishing restrictions and reducing pressure on fisheries. All of these together have resulted in an increase in fish production and bio-diversity in the project areas.



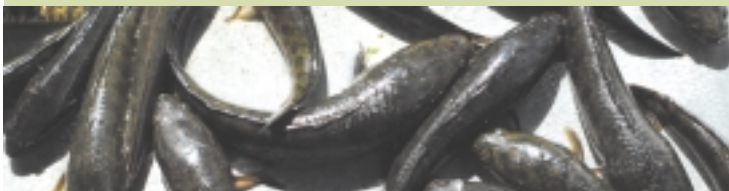
In CBFM-2 project areas, fish production increased in 2003 and 2004 by 41% and 89% respectively. Biodiversity has improved by 28.30%, 14 out of 17 threatened fish species have re-appeared in these water bodies. In Management of Aquatic Ecosystem through Community Husbandry (MACH) project sites, fish catch increased by 2 to 5 times over baseline catch before intervention, from 58-171kg/ha to 315-390kg/ha between 2004-2005. Due to the project interventions, 8-10 threatened fish species have re-appeared.

Increase in income has resulted in enhancement of fishers' assets. Various indicators have validated this finding. An impact survey in CBFM project area has shown that number of low quality houses have declined from 44% to 25%, number of tin walled houses increased from 26% to 44%, tin roofed houses increased from 82% to 94%, number of households without latrine declined from 51% to 20%. Increase of fishers' income has increased their ability and propensity to save.



The Fourth Fisheries Project (FFP)

The Fourth Fisheries Project (FFP) was a major Department of Fisheries project completed in 2006. Its open water fisheries component established 45 Community Based Organisations in 39 water bodies covering about 18,000 ha. They have increased fish catches and biodiversity through fish sanctuaries and in some sites regular stocking of fish. DoF is continuing to support these communities for future sustainability under its inland open water management section.



Community Based Fisheries Management- 2nd Phase (CBFM - 2)

- Established community control over 116 water bodies resulting in 23,000 direct beneficiaries and 135,000 wider project beneficiaries.
- Over 130 Community Based Organisations (CBO)s have been set up.
- Over 80% Community Based Organisations (CBOs) are ready for independent operation.
- Created a revolving fund to support communities to maintain the programme after phasing out of the project.

Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry (MACH) Project

The Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry (MACH) project has since 1998 established 16 Community Based Organisations representing 110 villages that have improved management of about 25,000 ha of wetlands. Fish catches in this total area have more than doubled to about 350 kg/ha. Co-management bodies have been established and endowed to sustain this system.



KEY MESSAGE

Scale up Community Managed Fisheries Approach

This brief overview leads to a clear recommendation to extend the use of community managed fisheries approaches. However, scaling up will require certain changes at the policy level to facilitate the process.

- The number of water bodies under community based management approach should be increased from the current 260 to cover the total of more than 12,000 water bodies.
- Make a policy decision to distribute state owned water bodies to poor fishers similar to the decision to distribute *khas* (state owned) land to landless poor.
- The system of maximising revenue should be replaced with pro-poor management. Leases to water bodies should be used as a means to set conditions for access and conservation rather than as a way of generating revenue.
- Enable long term use of water bodies by fishing communities through affordable, long term lease, waiving VAT and income tax for leases. This will ensure CBO sustainability and continued access to the poor.

Source of Information

1. Workshop Proceedings, Workshop on "Community Based Co-Management of Fisheries and PRSP" 24 June, 2006, BIAM, Dhaka.
2. Workshop Presentation, Workshop on "Community Based Co-Management of Fisheries and PRSP" 24 June, 2006, BIAM, Dhaka.
3. Institutional Options for Empowering Fisher Communities (Booklet), WorldFish Center, 2006.

This Policy Brief is based on the lessons learnt from The Community Based Fisheries Management Project-2nd Phase (CBFM-2), Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry (MACH) and the Fourth Fisheries Project (FFP).

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