

# Community Based (Natural Resources) Management



The Primary Sources of lessons in this document are projects within DFID's Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP). The evidences for these lessons mainly come from evaluations of the projects carried out by the Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership (RLEP). The evidences in this document are included as key findings. The Thematic Lessons Paper (TLP) series documents are available in many formats based on stakeholder demand for product style identified through a communications needs assessment survey. This document is the 'Master' or full version of TLP, which includes more detailed lessons clustered under key issues and their evidences recorded as key findings. The TLP series also has available a two page policy brief or 'Summary Sheet' both in English and Bengali. All the documents produced under TLP series are accessible at [www.lcgbangladesh.org/rlep](http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/rlep).

Thematic Lessons Papers (TLP) are intended for stakeholders who are involved in policy/programme design and influencing, in order to assist them in making informed decisions in the future.

The TLPs draw together experiences of livelihoods programme in a particular thematic context. This paper focuses on the Community Based (Natural Resources) Management theme. The lessons in this document are grouped under the following key issues:

- Project Design and Institutional Arrangements in CBM
- Power Relations in CBM
- Facilitation and Nature of Project Support to CBM and Timescale for Successful CBM Establishment
- Bonding and Bridging Social Capital
- Scaling Up the CBM Approach

**8 PROJECTS  
WITHIN  
DFID'S  
RURAL  
LIVELIHOODS  
PROGRAMME  
(RLP)**

1. Fisheries Training and Extension Project- II (FTEP II)
2. Agricultural Services Innovation Reform Project (ASIRP)
3. Research and Extension in Farm Power Issues (REFPI)
4. Poverty Elimination Through Rice Research Assistance (PETRRA)
5. Support For University Fisheries Education and Research (SUFER)
6. Fourth Fisheries Project (FFP)
7. CARE Rural Livelihoods Programme (CARE RLP)
8. Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM2)

## KEY LESSONS SUMMARY

1. Project design needs to be a community participatory process allowing in-built flexibility and enable community based resource management institutions to respond to local situations. Government and donors need to give an enabling framework.
2. No single CBM model [community based organization (CBO) structure and resource management rules] can be prescribed because communities and resource bases are so diverse, and attempts to follow one design have found this to be a serious constraint. CBM should be seen as a way of thinking or broad approach, the detailed outcome and institutional arrangements for this are space, time and socially bound.
3. Institutional development of CBOs for resource management is necessary for improved and sustained benefits to the poor. Without formalising CBOs there is a risk that benefits will be lost when projects end.
4. CBM creates opportunities for empowering communities and specially the poor resource users. But the CBOs created by fishery management projects have been highly vulnerable to take-over by local elite factions, especially where there are financial constraints for the poor and profit potential for the better off, such as high lease value jalmohals (waterbodies leased out for fishing). Project support and policy changes are needed to protect the interests of the poor.
5. CBM should build links with local champions who are sympathetic to the interests of the poor and with local government. Such people can provide support to CBOs in times of conflict and improve sustainability when NGO support is withdrawn.
6. The community capacity to handle all aspects of CBM in general, and specifically conflict management, is limited. External support and facilitation is needed, and local government can play a role.
7. More consideration should be given to post project sustainability of CBOs at the design stage of projects. Resources are needed for capacity building that is different from traditional NGO programmes. Within the exit strategy of projects, CBOs should be helped to make links with one another and with local government.
8. NGO facilitation in CBM is necessary for social mobilization, credit, broadening livelihood options and alternative income generating support, but a limitation is that NGOs usually do not want to confront local elites in support of poor people in fear of post-project adverse reaction.
9. NGO skills and commitment to help advocate the rights of poor people, challenge local elites, and overcome conflicts cannot be assumed. The 'projectisation' of CBM development tends to mean that NGOs contracted by projects to implement CBM recruit new staff for the job who may lack the range of skills and experience needed, and that support is time bound.
10. More cooperation is required among a range of government agencies and NGOs to build social capital among the wider community. There are overlapping and competing responsibilities and interests that should be coordinated at national and local levels. Similarly, NGOs in particular, and also government agencies need positive attitudes if CBOs are to become self sustaining.
11. Expanding CBM to more sites requires a flexible process and may be best achieved in adjacent waterbodies. For this, coordination and linkages between CBOs need to be developed.
12. Present fishery lease values and tendering process are a disincentive to sustainable management by poorer community members. The system benefits the wealthier who can raise capital and gain more from not having to share profit. Thus the wealthy can 'afford' to pay a higher lease.



Photo Credit: WorldFish Centre (CBFM2)

## INTRODUCTION

**Community based management** is the management of natural resources under a plan developed, agreed to and implemented by the relevant local communities.

An attempt to find new solutions for the failure of top-down approaches to resource conservation and sustainability, Community Based Management (CBM) rests on the recognition that local communities should have direct control over the utilisation and benefits of local resources (in this context land, water and fishery resources) in order to value and use them in a sustainable manner. CBM has been seen as a conservation, empowering, poverty reducing and/or general rural development strategy

The communities in question possess the legal rights, own the local institutions, evolve the rules and regulations, and have the economic incentives to take responsibility for sustainable management of their natural resources. Some form of community authority exists that is capable of enforcing the rules and regulations.

Such community-based approaches create opportunities to strengthen social capital and community relations, and to develop effective institutions for the management of natural resources.

## THEMATIC LESSONS

### Key Issue 1 Project Design and Institutional Arrangements in CBM

#### Key lesson for 'better practice'

If institutional arrangements for CBM are chosen through participatory processes that emphasise the role of poorer users, the community based organisations can manage difficult issues in a better way and local elite control over resources can be limited. For example, smaller well defined resource bases (e.g. beels) can be managed by particular target stakeholders (e.g. fishers), but wider community participation is needed for larger more complex resources.

#### Lessons Learnt

- Community management refers to varying degrees of community participation in management which might in any case be expected to vary according to factors such as environment, scale, property rights and community structure. CBM arrangements should be compatible to local situation, local needs, types of resources, community structure, community culture and local constraints. For this a participatory process-based approach is needed.
- Without a concerted effort to build institutions that empower the poor in a community, the majority of people in that community, particularly the poor, do not have bargaining power or are not clear about their rights.
- To improve benefits to poor people and ensure the long term sustainability of the resource and maintain a benefit stream to the user community, much more emphasis needs to be placed on community organisation and institution development i.e. the 'soft' aspects of CBM, rather than the technical and biological aspects. CBM employed by projects as a functional means to achieve externally set targets undermines the potential for sustainably empowering communities to manage their resources.
- Project designs need to be flexible and process based, they should:
  - Focus on outcome targets, and less on output targets (e.g. community empowerment and ability to manage a resource collectively, not production).
  - Consider how M&E will monitor transformational change in community behaviour (e.g better resource use rules).
  - Ensure there is in-built flexibility for resource management institutions to be tailored to the social, and environmental, situation of different locations. A blueprint for specific committee types should be avoided.
  - Focus more on CBO development and ensuring the sustainability of CBM institutions rather than on technical interventions.
- Even where CBOs that include many poor people are established, financial, social and political factors tend to result in better off and better educated people holding key positions unless special efforts are made to develop the capacity of poorer participants, such as training in record keeping and accounts, adult literacy or understanding legal rights.
- The word 'community' encompasses ideas of groups of people who share common interests, usually located in a defined area. There are common misconceptions about the homogeneity and cohesion with communities. Evidence shows that a homogenous and relatively closed type of community structure is linked with effective institutions for community resource management.

#### Key Findings

- Fourth Fisheries Project prescribed one approach for all locations. It first tried to develop village based multi-stakeholder organizations, but found that these were dominated by local elites, and then with difficulty tried to change them to fishers based organisations. In a number of cases the poor have not gained rights or benefits compared with previous access.
- CARE-RLP prescribed one non-flexible model of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) which turns into benefit-based or self-help groups rather than wider community organisations. These groups develop savings schemes, lobby service providers, access cheaper loans and engage in societal well-being issues within the community.

- Based on past experiences CBFM-2 emphasised flexibility and developed 3 approaches to establishing CBM and gave examples of 7 out of many possible organizational models to fit different types of waterbodies. For example, for closed waterbodies where a lease has to be paid the project formed local membership-based organizations of fishers only for resource management on an equal share basis.
- Community Based Organisations (CBOs) such as Beel Management Committees in CBFM-2 - and rules for resource management (institutions) can be established that empower the poor and provide opportunities for them to manage natural resources, either by targeting and limiting participation to poor users, or by strengthening their role in a broader based organization through additional group-based support for the poor.
- In many of the open water sites, especially stocking sites in FFP, long term use rights over waterbodies have not been established by or for fishers due to the limited ability of poor fishers to participate in the project activities because of high lease costs and lack of financial capacity and support.
- Projects that go beyond the technical intervention (such as stocking water bodies and training in rice-fish production) and instead focus on appropriate institutions that are pro-poor, appear to make better progress in addressing institutional sustainability issues post-project in addition to the biological/environmental sustainability issues that the projects all consider. This has been demonstrated in some CBFM-2 sites, and by CARE-RLP in their move from Farmer Field Schools (FFS) to CBOs.
- The absence of an institutional approach to exit strategies is a further demonstration of the prominence of 'structures' thinking over 'processes' thinking. Both FFP and CARE-RLP focus on structures (Fishery Management Committees and Farmer Field School groups), rather than processes. A process-oriented approach is concerned with empowering communities through a flexible approach to building capacity in the processes necessary for them to undertake CBM.
- Communities are generally diverse, but there is some evidence that CBM and its related organizations are easier to establish in simple more homogeneous communities, for example a successful CBFM-2 site - Goakhola Hatiara Beel in southwest Bangladesh - has only Hindu lower caste people in the community.
- Where communities are diverse participatory planning processes that reflect stakeholder diversity but highlight common shared problems, as used in some CBFM-2 sites, appear to be a way of developing a consensus.
- The timing and nature of fishery (jalmohal) lease payments acts to exclude the poor and tends to involve rich people.

## Key Issue 2 Power relations in CBM

Communities are complex social systems, and so developing an understanding of local power structure before trying to establish community based management is essential. Poor people in rural areas tend to be financially weak and have to depend on powerful people for financial, and social support for resource management. This is especially the case for high value resources where financial involvement is high and therefore control usually goes to the powerful people.

## Key lesson for 'better practice'

If projects are based on detailed understanding of local institutions and power structures, and NGOs provide grants, credit and capacity building for fishers, then elite capture of resources and organisations can be minimized; but this process should also encourage and make use of local champions. To support this strong partnerships between NGOs and Department of Fisheries are important.

## Lessons Learnt

- Understanding of local power structure to establish community based management is a time consuming activity but a very important prerequisite to management interventions.
- Power relations are an integral part of any community and are a basis for existing community institutions which in some cases are ignored by sector based projects.



- Local elites need to be recognised, but their dominance should be minimized by focusing on strengthening the voices and organisations of the poor. This is specially important for high value resources.
- High value resources with high returns from exploitation attract elites. Particularly, subsidised stocking of water bodies. Interference by, or reliance on finance from elites can be removed or significantly reduced by focusing on low-cost interventions e.g. sanctuaries in unleased waterbodies and smaller, non-stocked, water bodies, and alternative means to boost the livelihoods of the poor, e.g. through credit and saving schemes and alternative income generating activities.
- Projects may mitigate the needs for the poor, and their CBOs, to depend on moneylenders to fund lease costs by providing access to grants or credit at this time, as well as encouraging savings and providing support for alternative income generating activities. They should also promote and build capacity in transparent financial planning and management.
- CBM may not be suitable at all sites. History and the nature of the resource may make achievement of real CBM very difficult. During the site selection process it is important to assess the role of social and political elites in access to the resource and their potential responses to the project intervention, and to exclude those sites where conditions appear unfavourable. Sites will be particularly difficult where previous projects have entrenched the interests of elites and created the expectation of a negative outcome among fishers.
- Projects need to move beyond the rhetoric of all elites exerting negative pressures on CBM. There is a need to explore their incentives for involvement and new ways of engaging them which benefit all the players.
- There is growing recognition of the scope and need as part of community management to identify local champions. Projects should identify local champions; elites, opinion leaders and local representatives - that are less exploitative and are sympathetic to the interests of poor user groups and to wide community level benefits rather than elite capture of resources. Such people can provide a valuable link with existing local institutions and can troubleshoot for the community based organisation when project based NGO support is weak or no longer available.
- Existing community institutions (*such as samaj<sup>1</sup> and matbor<sup>2</sup>*), which are rooted in local power structures, have been widely ignored by sector based projects.

### Key Findings

- CARE-RLP made detailed studies of local institutions and power structures to help inform its work, this illustrates how this can be a basis for more appropriate design.
- The community based organisations created by the Fourth Fisheries Project have been highly vulnerable to take-over by local elite factions. Once controlled by elites, these CBOs use the opportunities offered by the project to further the elite interests, often at considerable cost to the project's intended beneficiaries as seen at a number of FFP sites.
- Switching to fish sanctuaries in some FFP sites, and starting with low cost conservation measures in CBFM-2 sites is associated with less domination by a few non-fisher elites over decisions and finance.
- Administrative procedures and technical interventions may favour dependence on or control by elites. For example, full lease value for jalmohals must be paid to the Government at the beginning of the Bengali year. If a community plans to stock its waterbody, this is also when fingerlings must be bought. If the fishery is valuable, fishers cannot themselves afford to pay in advance a high lease cost plus other investments, and so rely on elites and moneylenders, who may obtain a controlling position in the CBO.
- NGOs and projects can mediate the negative effects of elite capture in CBFM-2 sites by providing lease value as a revolving fund or loan. A strong partnership between NGOs and DoF can significantly impact upon elite involvement. For example, in the 20 per cent of 'successful' sites in FFP, success has largely been attributed to local stakeholders having been able to counteract the elite and develop strong partnerships with DOF and NGOs.
- In some cases in FFP and CBFM-2 local elites had controlled access to a fishery for many years, and resisted attempts to challenge their power, for example by using legal cases to stall project activities.

<sup>1</sup> Samaj- An informal but pervasive local institution that exerts power and influence by emphasizing social and religious duty.

<sup>2</sup> Matbor- Respected individuals (sometimes elders) granted the capacity to resolve disputes on behalf of local communities.

- Not all elite involvement is negative. Elites may have incentives other than financial returns for their involvement, such as status and influence. Positive involvement from elites can be highly beneficial as they have the social and political (and financial) resources to commit to CBM. They can act to protect the interests of the less powerful e.g. in CBFM-2 there are women's Beel Management Committees with advisory committees constituted from the local leaders and elite, who help police the community managed water body.

### Key Issue 3 Facilitation and nature of project support to CBM and timescale for successful CBM establishment

The community capacity to handle all CBM in general, and specifically conflict management within it, is limited. External support and facilitation is needed, although there are some examples of indigenous collective resource management.

#### Key lesson for 'better practice'

If projects start with participatory planning among different stakeholder groups and local government this increases social cohesion and consensus, which are necessary for CBM. But developing user confidence in their own new institutions, even with the help of GO and NGO, needs time. Evidence showed that within 8 years CBM can be established. The first two years should be allocated for consensus and confidence building and then 3 years to demonstrate the effectiveness of the local institutions and then 3 years for phasing out while helping the CBOs to be strengthened. NGOs should provide support for Alternative Income Generation (AIG) in the first 5 years and facilitate savings and self-help services from the 3rd year.

#### Lessons Learnt

- NGOs have a key role in facilitating CBM but care is needed in selecting them and too much should not be expected. Their support is also usually time bound.
- Establishing CBOs is a long term process that needs to be based on long term plans and supported by local opinion leaders.
- By providing credit to CBOs, NGOs can help reduce dependence on elites for finance.
- Communities should develop long term participatory plans for improvement of resource management, rather than focusing on maximizing short term production. To support this consensus and conflict resolution are needed. This requires greater emphasis on participatory planning at the outset, and ensuring a role and long term links with local government and thereby recognition of CBM institutions.
- Despite the extensive experience from different projects, there is no clear evidence yet to indicate how much time is needed to achieve successful and sustainable community management systems in Bangladesh. CBOs, donors and government (e.g. Department of Fisheries) question how much time it may take to establish community management systems that do not need special external support.
- Projects are still designed for 5 years at most and after the start up phase barely four years are left for establishing CBM in a form that is expected to sustain and continue to be pro-poor after the project ends. This is insufficient time, at least 8 years appears to be needed. Projects and their partners need to explore mechanism by which CBOs can continue to be supported post-project. Networks and resource centres are possible options, as well as close bridging to local government.
- More often in projects the community has no clear road map for the management of the local resources beyond a plan for the current year, which they are expected to update each year including presumably after the project ends.

## Key Findings

- In all the projects - FFP, CBFM-2 and CARE-RLP - NGOs have played the vital roles and were involved for community mobilisation, awareness building and skill development. The NGOs also provide alternate livelihoods support, this tends to be part of general programmes but is specially important when it is linked with changes in resource management decided by the communities for example credit during closed fishing seasons and lean periods.
- In FFP and CBFM-2 in almost all cases the NGOs have not been willing to challenge local elites, especially local and even national NGOs do not want to make these elites annoyed because they are politically backed and have power to oust those NGOs from the area. Even some local NGOs in FFP were “owned” by or linked with local elites. Therefore at best the NGOs have to negotiate with local power structures and at worst they may be a way for local politicians and rich people to gain more resources and dominate people.
- In FFP and CBFM there is no evidence so far that NGOs will continue to support CBM without project funding. In all the projects - FFP, CBFM-2 and CARE-RLP - NGOs are involved for 5 years - the project period.
- CBOs, donors and government (e.g. Department of Fisheries) question how much time it may take to establish community management systems that do not need special external support. The only evidence so far is that in one site supported by CBFM-1 and CBFM-2 has reached a stage where NGO support could be phased out after 8 years.
- Projects have paid increasing attention to exit strategies in FFP this was emphasised with about 30% of the project time remaining and in CBFM-2 with about 60% of the project time remaining but support for CBM is limited by donor time horizons and lack of long term commitment and programmes that would support a phased approach between government, NGOs and donors.
- The experience to date indicates the need for developing participatory planning and longer term perspective in communities about their future in 10 or 20 years time.
- In most cases, Local Government has not been formally involved in the project activities, and this is a missed opportunity, in some CBFM-2 sites informal support from the Union Parishad has been important in resolving conflicts.
- In several cases where there are different factions lacking any consensus no effective management plan or future plan for improvement of resource management has arisen under CBM. In these cases people tend to focus on maximising harvest, i.e short term income.
- Projects that go beyond the technical intervention (such as stocking water bodies, training in rice-fish production), appear to make better considerations of institutional sustainability issues post-project in addition to the biological/environmental sustainability issues that the projects all consider. This has been demonstrated in some CBFM-2 sites, and by CARE-RLP in their move from FFSs to CBOs. These shifts, or widening of approaches, or less sectoral exit strategies may be considered evidence of a move from CBM towards Community Driven Development.
- Coordination and links beyond the individual CBOs are being recognised as important. In FFP each case of CBM is isolated, but CBFM-2 was designed to establish CBM in adjacent waterbodies in floodplains and to make links for coordination between local institutions, which is showing promise.

## Key Issue 4 Bonding and Bridging Social Capital

### Key lesson for 'better practice'

If social capital among the wider community is built through networking between local CBOs, they can share information and engage in policy dialogue. Awareness building through group discussion and identification of common issues, determination of goals and participatory planning are best practices that can be facilitated by NGOs to bridge the gap between CBM institutions and local government.



## Lessons Learnt

- Each community has its own boundary and can only manage resources within its own boundary. Exchange of information and sharing of experience is mainly limited to within the community. However, knowledge sharing through networking and policy influence through participation in policy dialogue can enable the community to improve its resource management and influence decisions in a changing wider environment.
- To build social capital among the wider community and for the poor within a larger community, institutional coordination and organisational cooperation are essential. This needs to overcome the sectoral approaches of government and tensions between government staff and NGOs.
- Local government (Union Parishad) and local level administration (Upazilla) are powerful agencies for all development work at the grassroots level. However, CBM projects have not emphasised these linkages.
- Communities are normally a heterogeneous group of people, arrayed on axes of wealth, asset base, access to resources, occupation, belief, kin, etc, but linked by some social mechanism. In the context of CBM, the linking mechanism is an interest in the management of the common resource. The strengths of the linkage vary with community homogeneity and range of interests in exploiting the resource.
- There are gaps that could be bridged from both sides to the benefit of local communities and national development programmes. The Upazila level administration has no direct linkages with the community and relies on reporting from line agencies, typically they do not know the needs or constraints of the community. Consequently, although known to be important for development and resolving problems, most poor people do not depend on or trust the administration. Community based approaches founded on participatory planning show some success in overcoming this gap, as seen in CBFM-2. Bridging to local government should improve chances of post-project sustainability of CBM.

## Key Findings

- Social capital may be divided into two types: bonding and bridging. In essence, bonding social capital strengthens 'horizontal' relationships amongst peers, such as full-time fishers, while bridging social capital strengthens the 'vertical' relationships to individuals and organisations usually those with power. NGO-led CBM in CBFM-2 sites has tended to be quite effective at building bonding social capital between peer groups of the poor. Projects have been less effective at building links between CBOs and more influential individuals and organisations.
- In CBFM-2 linkages between CBOs for adjacent beel and river sections or between CBOs managing adjacent river sections are being established through forming "cluster committees". This committee discusses common goals and issues and solves problems mutually and forms a higher level of bonding.
- CARE-RLP has started some "joint FFS" and CARE has established improved linkages and networking with service providers in various aspects of livelihoods to address the isolation of FFS and bridge to established local institutions.
- In FFP, poor fishers have identified high lease value as a key constraint, and through regional workshops are involved in jointly pushing the government to change the policy of lease value calculation and timing to deposit lease value.
- In the participatory action plan development sessions in CBFM-2 project sites, local elites as well as upazila level officials were present, and through this could learn from the community's problem and solution analysis, as well as share the future plans and responsibilities. This is a start, but has not yet resulted in effective ways to make long-term links between CBM institutions and local government that are pro-poor.
- FFP is a government-run project and a top-down system is prominent in the project. However, linkages with communities and the local fisheries officers are developing.
- There is collaboration between two similar types of projects within CARE but there is a lack of coherence in what the programme is trying to accomplish.

## Key Issue 5 Scaling up the CBM approach

Scaling up is not just about covering more sites and communities, but raises issues of how to link resource management and create a movement of CBOs

### Key lesson for 'better practice'

If projects build CBM institutions in adjacent areas that are linked together this networking can be a basis for larger scale CBM and help generate demand from resource users for supportive government policies and NGO programmes.

### Lessons Learnt

- Availability of local resources for scaling up is limited. So far government and NGOs depend heavily on external project funding for scaling up.
- Government is interested in technologies more than social issues. However, donors are interested to see participation of beneficiaries in CBM. In between these two perspectives NGOs play an important middle role, but this is also a source of tensions and potential conflicts. NGOs are also not always the answer as they have limited capacity themselves to expand CBM.
- There is an issue of what scale of resource communities can manage. Typically it is argued that communities are more able to manage resources and take decisions when the resource unit and community are matched and relatively small. This is because the exchange of information, sharing of experience, and decision making between actors that helps CBM work is reasonably straightforward at the single community scale.
- However, CBM within tightly defined boundaries denies the realities of Bangladesh's densely populated floodplains. The common resources (waterbodies) become part of a massive interconnected system in the wet season. Communities are also socially and economically linked. How best to manage such a large system?
- It has been argued that for a large resource, such as a large floodplain-river system, top-down management decisions are needed, yet there are many communities dependent on such resources so this is just the type of situation where top-down approaches have poor compliance. Linking up local CBM offers the most promising potential solution.

### Key Findings

- In both FFP and CBFM-2 there is recognition that NGOs complement government and that community mobilization is not easily done by government, but there are tensions between government and NGOs during project implementation, this raises a question whether NGOs should be contractors or partners.
- The capacity of the NGOs - their resource availability and staff capability have been problematic, particularly in FFP where it was assumed that NGOs experienced in facilitating CBM could be readily found; but in practice many, particularly local NGOs, hired new staff and had little idea of how to work outside of their more familiar group-based credit and training.
- Project experience indicates the need for flexibility in developing CBM institutions to fit each local combination of resource base and communities (CBFM-2), and the problems of expanding CBM following a single model (FFP). Government agencies prefer to have a fixed guideline for implementation and cannot easily be flexible. But the same projects also found that often larger NGOs were also not flexible and preferred to follow one common approach for their easier management, but some sites may not fit with that model.
- Contributions for establishing CBM from government and from NGOs have been very limited so far, and despite an expectation in CBFM-2 that it would be adopted in their policies and programmes, there is no evidence yet of this.
- One issue for scaling up is the size of wetland area/resource base for CBM and the boundaries of such units. CBM is only feasible for local bounded resources, and in general CBFM-2 and FFP found CBM to be more successful in smaller waterbodies with fewer participants. CBFM-2 seeks to overcome this limit in larger floodplain areas by including adjacent connected areas (clusters) each with CBM, and then linking up local CBOs. This has promise but may increase demands on participant's time.

- In larger resource systems there is an issue of how to share up or partition the resources establishing boundaries for communities. For example, FFP started with single CBOs for some large sites but has since divided them to fit feasible areas for more than one CBO, while CBFM-2 started with smaller units each with a CBO and then faced the issue of linking up those CBOs.
- One potential answer may be networking and this is a promising trend. CBFM-2 has initiated forming a series of CBOs for each defined adjacent part of a larger resource system and then helping these units coordinate their local plans through larger forums and committees. Important long term issues are: i) Will government support and recognise such bodies? ii) Do CBOs need to be formally registered organisations?
- Beyond this projects can support knowledge sharing through wider networking among user communities, which has been initiated by CBFM-2, and this may lead to policy influence through participation in policy dialogue, and a demand for further support to communities to improve their resource management.

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## WAY FORWARD?

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- New designs for project support are needed if there is to be a change from support for implementation and outputs to one that is more process orientated with flexibility that aims to empower the poor through CBM.
- Strengthening of local CBOs and capacity building are clear areas where best practice needs to be developed. Mechanisms for networking of CBOs also look to be a good opportunity to strengthen CBM and to enable CBOs to have a role in advocacy and policy influence.
- Institutional reform will be needed from the government side to formalise and recognise the role of CBOs in resource management and to support better participatory processes.
- The legal and institutional entity of the CBOs is vital for the long term sustainability of CBM, this includes formal registration and developing their financial strength and management skills.
- For better community management the NGOs along with the local CBOs should find out the local “champion(s)”; elites, opinion leaders and local representatives that are less exploitative and are sympathetic to the interests of poor user groups and to wider community level benefits rather than elite capture of resources.
- Greater consideration needs to be given to decentralising management of smaller water bodies to the Upazila level of government administration.
- A shift in lease value payment timing should be done by the relevant authority in order to prevent poor fishers from being trapped in an elite net.
- Lease value should be calculated on the basis of biological productivity and be commensurable to the local agricultural land lease rate. The rate should be fair and the purpose should not be to maximise government revenue.
- In future there is scope for more emphasis on coordinating with, building on and modifying existing institutions.
- Coordination among service providers offers new opportunities. For example, integration of management issues around the environmental linkages in floodplains with shared water and fish resources and around the livelihood needs of poor resource users requires cooperation among a range of government agencies and NGOs.
- Coordination among donors is needed if CBM is to be taken up on a larger scale and to avoid a wide range of practices being grouped together that may dilute best practice.
- Development that is demand driven rather than donor driven is a way forward, but it is not sure if CBM will encourage this as it is restricted to project locations. The sponsors, facilitators and implementers of CBM will need to believe in empowering the poor in local communities to demand access to waterbodies and other natural resources, and to demand support for this from government.
- Communities should develop long term participatory plans for improvement of resource management, rather than focusing on maximizing short term production. It is particularly essential for places where there are different factions lacking any consensus.

- Scaling up is obviously part of any way forward but is risky as the more fixed blue print approach tends to be easier to adopt on a larger scale than the necessary flexible process. Situations where CBM can bring greater benefits and is more likely to succeed and sustain need to be identified; it cannot be expected to work everywhere.
- At the same time a more systematic approach to documenting and generating evidence of CBM achievements and impacts, and of targeting information at decision makers is needed if policy is to be influenced.

## FURTHER READING

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More information on these themes and issues can be found in Project Output to Purpose and End of Project Review documents accessible at [www.lcgbangladesh.org/rlep](http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/rlep).