

## Key Lessons Summary

The Primary Sources of lessons in this summary sheet are projects within DFID's Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP)\*. The evidence for these lessons come from evaluations of the projects carried out by the Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership (RLEP). The full version of the Thematic Lessons

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

The TLPs draw together experiences of livelihoods in a particular thematic context. This sheet includes key lessons summary with the way forward on Community Based (Natural Resources) Management theme. The TLP series has more key sheets available on rural

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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 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 Such people can provide support to CBOs in times of conflict and improve sustainability when NGO support is withdrawn.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 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 helping 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.

### \*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)

## Way Forward?

**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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 wide community level benefits rather than elite capture of resources.
6. Greater consideration needs to be given to decentralising management of smaller water bodies to the Upazilla level of government administration.
7. The shift in lease value payment timing is to be done by the relevant authority in order to prevent poor fishers to be trapped in elite net.
8. Lease value should be calculated on the basis of biological productivity and commensurate to the local agricultural land lease rate. The rate should be fair and the purpose should not be to maximise government revenue.
9. In future there is scope for more emphasis on coordinating with, building on and modifying existing institutions.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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
13. 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.
14. 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

More details on each of the lessons can be found in [TLP master document on Community Based \(Natural Resources\) Management](#) or the lessons paper produced under the [Thematic Lessons Paper Series-3](#). Both are

### Further Reading

- Agrawal, A. (2001).** Common property institutions and sustainable governance of resources. *World Development* 29(10), 1649-1672.
- RLEP (2003-2004).** Output to Purpose Reports of CBFM2, CARE RLP and Aide Memoir of FFP. Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Thompson, P.M., Sultana, P., Islam, M.N., Kabir, M.M., Hossain, M.M. and Kabir, M.S. (1999).** An assessment of co management arrangements developed by the Community Based Fisheries Management Project in Bangladesh. Paper presented at the international workshop on fisheries co-management, 23-28 August 1999, Penang, Malaysia.

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