



Conclusion

This, the third in a series of project briefings, provides an update on the selection and implementation of pilot-scale development activities in the East Kolkata Wetlands. In addition to this bulletin, which is given to participants and available from the website, the project team are targeting

national and international stakeholders that might benefit from our findings and knowledge on the approach used. The team gave presentations at the Asian Wetlands Symposium and 7th Asian Fisheries Forum and have published a number of papers, including this one in Urban Agriculture, vol. 14, 24-26, which is available online at www.ruaf.org

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BRIEFING 3: STEPS AND PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES

Consultations with local stakeholders Regions 3 & 4

Locally-prioritised problems & solutions



Problems:

- 1.) adequate sewage
- 2.) pollution
- 3.) poor infrastructure
- 4.) lack of water in 7,8 & 9

Solutions:

- 1.) Divert Chowbagha water station water South (via Chak-kolar Khal, Boynala khal, Kheyadaha 1&2 and Bidyadhari)
- 2.) Desilt Bantala to Tarda, **Paranchaprasai khal**, Ghosher khal & feeder canal.
- 3)Bidyadhari must be desilted for 7,8 & 9



Update

Based on the East Kolkata Wetlands water management action plan further consultation was undertaken with primary and key stakeholders at selected sites to identify preliminary developed activities.

▪ **Preliminary development activities**

- Following extended interaction amongst stakeholders an action plan for water management in the East Kolkata Wetlands was formulated
- The plan addresses the major issues highlighted during our discussions and the most promising solutions put forward by stakeholders in the respective regions
- Based on the action plan 3 pilot development activities were proposed
- It was anticipated that these pilot activities would demonstrate that the various stakeholder groups in the EKW are committed to, and indeed active in working together to solve their problems

▪ **STEPS workshops**

- The first stage in implementing the water management action plan was to convene meetings of stakeholders, user group representatives and community members from 3 regions to discuss proposed pilot-scale development activities



- The meeting was used to verify the feasibility of undertaking the activity as a pilot project; social, technical, financial, environmental, institutional and sustainability issues were considered

- By selecting feasible activities there is more chance of demonstrating quick and beneficial progress that should encourage participants to address more complex issues
- The meeting helped facilitate the structured analysis of the conditions required for implementation and possible problems and bottlenecks

▪ **Feasibility outcomes**

- For each pilot activity several agreements and consents were deemed necessary
- Practical issues such as the need for a feasibility study on the proposed design for Paranchaprasri canal and a hydrological survey (with reconnaissance to confirm the extent and location of settlements on or near embankments) were identified
- Further work is needed to identify vulnerable groups (notably women and people living on or near embankments), to consult with them, and to identify acceptable resettlement strategies or steps to mitigate negative impacts
- During the STEPS workshop it was not always possible to reach agreement on the exact sequence of follow up activities and further work is underway to clarify this; a strategy is also being developed to monitor progress and ensure implementation is adapted and revised as required
- Follow up meetings with stakeholders to discuss issues arising from the 3 STEPS workshop are ongoing
- Dialogue with principal stakeholder groups that participated in the workshops is also continuing and progress with addressing the issues raised in the meeting is being monitored
- Considering the need for further agreements and consents before desiltation can commence, uncertainty regarding several technical issues and funding sources, and the need for further consultation with vulnerable groups, especially

women, none of the proposed activities were considered feasible in the short term

- In all cases the local agreements required should be pursued, and where necessary appropriate problem solving and conflict resolution strategies, potentially involving external mediation or facilitation, should be invoked
- Clarification is being sought regarding the consents that might be required from DoIW and WBPCB
- The participatory planning process invoked here has highlighted areas of concern, for example, the need to assess the likely impact on vulnerable groups, and the need for local level agreement between stakeholders (all user groups, Panchayat members, community-based organisations, political parties). Elements that are frequently overlooked in technocratic and comprehensive planning approaches

▪ **Summary**

- Outcomes of this participatory planning activity agreed amongst primary and key stakeholders are being communicated to potential supporters of future development activities, giving them access to a valuable knowledge-base to help facilitate implementation of the water management action plan, and evidence that stakeholders in the wetlands are working together constructively to solve problems to encourage future investment for development
- A report summarizing the findings from this work is being prepared in consultation with key stakeholders and will be submitted to the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Committee, so they may draw on the findings presented to target resources at the most pressing water management issues, and hopefully advocate a similar process of participatory action planning in addressing future development activities in support of enhanced livelihoods for people living and working in the wetlands