

The PAPD monitoring strategy

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Project R8103

Consensus for a Holistic Approach to improve Rural-livelihoods in Riverine-islands of Bangladesh (CHAR)

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Introduction

The monitoring component of the project has undergone several changes since the inception phase. These changes relate both to practical and logistical considerations (ensuring the collection of data that are manageable and focussed) and to the way in which PAPD and the significance of consensus was viewed by the project team itself. In this last regard, as the team moved its focus from facilitating technical activities through PTD towards the social and institutional changes that might result from PAPD, it became necessary to develop tools to capture this change. This report focuses especially on the development of approaches that attempted to gather qualitative information and the quality of processes and project-related developments through diary-keeping. In this regard, the report also outlines the project's approach to tracking change and its position in relation approaches used elsewhere¹.

Overall, there were three objectives of monitoring; 1) to capture evidence of project-related change relating to the PAPD approach and consensus, 2) to suggest modifications in the approach and strategy of the project team as events evolved and 3) to confirm (or otherwise) achievement of logframe activities and outputs.

1.) Consensus related issues

Project R7562 (*Methods for Consensus Building for Management of Common Property Resources*) focussed on attempting to quantify the extent to which consensus had been built over the lifespan of the project. The R7562 research team made the connection between social capital and consensus early on and devised pre and post-PAPD questionnaire surveys based on hypothetical scenarios of local cooperation, trust, empathy etc. However, in addition to building social capital (the links and networks that create an environment of security) consensus can be forged vertically, drawing in other levels of stakeholders, with their own sets of interests. R8103 attempted to draw on the previous project and explore further the opportunities and obstacles to including secondary stakeholders and service providers (specifically by drawing from institutional and stakeholder analysis).

Related to this vertical form of collaboration and consensus is the notion of political capital. As the theoretical discussion of rights-based approaches and "access to voice" became more sophisticated it became apparent that political influence should be properly considered within policies, institutions and processes (PIPs) or considered a livelihoods asset in its own right².

With respect to R8103 and the charlands context, a major issue is whether PAPD can establish or consolidate the political capital and influence of the poor. The charlands, as representing ephemeral settlements and geographically isolated, suffer especially from poor access to services, markets and political influence. One of the objectives of PAPD in this context was to establish links with service providers and make normal the interaction between local poor and secondary stakeholders such as Union Parishad and Upazilla administrative personnel and the various government line agencies.

The monitoring approaches that evolved during the course of this action research project gradually became more focussed on uncovering changes in the linkages to,

¹ Specifically, Most Significant Change (MSC).

² Baumann (2000) argues that the livelihoods pentagon could be modified to a hexagon because people's access to influence is sufficiently different to access to family and community support networks, for instance.

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and support of, these stakeholders. Feedback was also intended to go some way to help gauge the level of confidence of poor charlands residents and groups in this regard and their ability to influence service providers and political institutions (see later). Finally, it was also deemed important to establish what the project team called “people-centred” monitoring of the process. The Community Monitoring System (CMS) was intended to provide feedback on performance and issues to the wider community, in addition to ITDG.

2.) Tracking change to re-align activities and strategy

As an action research project, the intention was always to apply and modify the PAPD approach to fit the context. In this regard, the use of PAPD in the charlands was being reviewed as the project progressed. One of the main learning processes occurring here was the way in which the ITDG-B team perceived PAPD, its function and potential impact. As a team with strong expertise in small-scale technical development, early on it took time for some of the research assistants to see beyond the visible impacts of their facilitation. Adapting the monitoring format (November 2003) to incorporate more hidden social and institutional developments helped the team focus its attention on the greater significance of PAPD and to look beyond physical achievements in isolation.

As the project progressed, it was intended that record keeping would provide the team a basis on which to follow up encouraging developments and opportunities or to re-assess problems and obstacles to achieving progress. Diary keeping, in particular, would provide the team with memos (“*what follow up action is required?*”) and a reminder to react to changes and events as they happen, as well as a means to document the processes that occurred over the life-span of the project.

Research within R8195 stressed the importance of informal institutional links and processes with regards to ensuring sustainability of NRM initiatives. The project drew on some of the approaches and recommendations developed within R8195, in particular ways to capture the quality of processes (the character of interaction between project staff and project participants, the emergence of spontaneous and positive events in and around project structures, changing relations between target and non-target stakeholders etc.).

3). Monitoring progress against log-frame commitments

Early on in the project, the monitoring approach focussed on the attainment of log-frame responsibilities – both applying the forms of monitoring suggested and capturing evidence of OVIs. However, a problem occurred at this stage because the OVIs taken as performance indicators were related to the attainment of activities as much as to the outcome of PAPD. In other words, project reporting was primarily focussed on the achievement of project activities rather than uncovering and recording any resulting local developments (e.g. evidence of new local consensus, networking with secondary stakeholders or other institutional and social breakthroughs).

As the monitoring strategy developed, the range of tools adopted by the team was intended to cover these log-frame responsibilities but also to record unexpected outcomes. Several of the tools overlapped in their coverage and together were used to build a better “picture” of outcomes and their longer-term significance (Table 2).

Finally, the monitoring strategy was also intended to inform suggested refinements for the char context and the development of training and dissemination materials

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(components of Output 5). Process documentation, through structured diary keeping, helped the project team build their understanding during the lifespan of the project but should also provide a succinct summary of approach and its significance to an external audience.

The following provides a description of all the monitoring approaches adopted (Appendix 3 provides an earlier overview of monitoring and some preliminary findings by Kamal Hossain. Monitoring feedback and data are presented and interpreted in Annex B-i).

The monitoring approaches in detail

1. Stakeholder and institutional analysis

Because the project sought to investigate prospects for institutionalising PAPD and collective planning it was important that the team had an understanding of the key “players” in this context. There are two distinct aspects to this knowledge; 1) knowledge of the pre-project *status quo* i.e. the roles that different actors in society previously played and 2) the reaction to PAPD and the project of these key players.

The team conducted a stakeholder and institutional review, presenting the attitude/stance of secondary stakeholders to each of the micro and macro-PAPD activities. Each stakeholder was scored as positive, negative or neutral in their stance and the exercise was intended to identify opportunities for progress via sympathetic and well-placed individuals or groups. In addition, the matrices and the supporting comments were intended to provide an indication why individuals supported or blocked collective decisions and actions as they became more concrete.

In summary, the purpose of stakeholder analysis was to glean greater knowledge of the level of support and influence of various stakeholders with a view to making PAPD more meaningful and sustainable through up-scaling and embedding it within existing institutions. Findings would relate directly to recommendation regarding policy and coverage in the charlands and the matrices also worked as a checklist for the research team and to help prompt critical assessment of the stance of various players (Table 1.).

Issue	Institution/stakeholder			Actual Role of institution			Potential role of institution			Notes
	Local	Meso	Macro	Local	Meso	Macro	Local	Meso	Macro	

Table 1. The format of the Stakeholder & Institutional matrix. The research team attempted to forecast potential role of different institutional players in relation project activities (micro and macro-PAPD).

2. Gender analysis

Gender analysis was conducted by Salma Begum, Research Assistant to the project. Two small reports were produced retrospectively to encompass a range of issues pre-defined by ITDG-B staff. Women were strongly involved in the PTD activities and as such, PTD and the micro-PAPD activities were the focus of the reports. The bullet-list of gender-specific issues considered was;

- Are women adopting new roles – is this impacting the family?
- Is there evidence women are using new knowledge to enhance their livelihoods?
- Is there evidence women are enhancing their mobility, linkage and voice?
- What are the reasons for their attendance and participation (hidden reasons)?
- What are the advantages (satisfaction) and fears of the women in participating?
- What are the new demands on women that result?
- What role do women have in consensus building?
- Cite evidence of women's decision making capacity?
- What new livelihoods options are women interested in and why?

By combining Ms Salma's notes with feedback from the rest of the research team it was possible to compile a table of the impacts on the livelihoods of women at each of the two sites.

3. Fortnightly diaries

Before the project started, it was intended that PAPD-related developments (technical, social, and institutional) would be recorded systematically. The early diary formats used from November 2002 were intended to capture "*key activities*", "*main events*", "*learning points*", "*action recommendations*" and "*planned actions*". In this regard, in addition to recording events and achievements, the format was intended to stimulate the research team and to elicit careful thinking of the significance of breakthroughs and obstacles to change. For the purposes of the *NRSP Project Review Report 2004* these early diaries were used to formulate case specific "*stories of change*". Because the reasons for the success and limitations of project activities and negotiations were so complex and site-specific, the "stories" were an attempt to acknowledge a need for a qualitative and case study type of reporting for external audiences.

Field visits in early 2003 revealed a number of potentially crucial processes operating "off-stage" but known to the research team. Although the team were able to discuss these issues in detail, and sometimes to recognise their significance to successfully delivering project-related change, it was suggested that a format should be introduced to capture these issues more systematically. There were two other major limitations of the early diaries; they tended to emphasise the delivery of project-specific activities and inputs rather than interesting and spontaneous developments and they were not sufficiently anchored or ordered to enable meaningful analysis.

Field visits with the team to Nandina and Nadagari revealed the level of understanding by the team but also the gaps in what was being reported and commented upon. During a two day brainstorming with the team it was possible to distil the key *types* of outcomes and events that relate to consensus building within the villages and out to other stakeholders. The categories within the diary were now

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“participation” (participation of men/women, good attendance etc.), *“planning and decision-making”* (a plan has been developed, action agreed or action taken etc.), *“linkage”* (discussion between groups, links to local GO & service providers, formation of new groups etc.) and *“consensus”* (overcoming disputes & conflict, settling problems together etc.).

Another modification at this stage was to redirect the research team’s focus from the achievement of technical interventions (e.g. the number of vaccinations achieved, the number of members in the PTD groups etc.) to less visible but potentially more significant institutional change. Any evidence of horizontal interaction between local stakeholders and vertical interaction with secondary stakeholders was to be properly considered and documented.

A full description of this group discussion and the resulting diary format is provided in *“Development of a Process Monitoring Format for LWI-R8103”* (Appendix 1) and a summary of the work with team is presented in *“Developing the New Diary and Meeting Reports”* (Appendix 2).

4. The Major Meeting Report

Prior to November 2003, the main means to track the interaction and relationship between project staff and local residents, PTD and PAPD participants were the Monthly Progress Reports and Plans. These reports grouped together progress with PTAD and PAPD with more administrative responsibilities. Although the categories to be reported were useful, the responses tended to open up other questions and required greater detail.

The Major Meeting Report was developed with the team together with the diary (see above and Appendices 1 & 2). The purpose of this new reporting format was to record public pronouncements regarding the project and its activities and to track the way in which decisions are made or disputes resolved. In developing the reports and piloting them, it was the character of the discussions (which stakeholders and individuals were vocal/quiet/obstructive and why?) rather than more technical and quantitative details that were stressed. In this regard, the reporting format devoted more space to the *“discussion quality”*, *“hopes”*, *“fears”* and *“recommendations”* than *“discussions”* and *“decisions”*.

As with the diary format, to an extent the reports were intended to help the team make decisions on ways to overcome problems and to guide and realign the PTD and PAPD activities accordingly. *“Fears”* and *“recommendations”* operated as a prompt to some members of the team, for instance.

The research team interacted with PTD and PAPD participants almost on a daily basis but it was agreed that formal and more public meetings should receive greater attention as distinct milestones in the path to agreement and action. However, the research team were well aware of the importance of *“off-stage”* remarks (doubts expressed at the village tea shop, alternative approaches discussed among splinter groups etc.) and the team was encouraged to draw on their own observations of informal and *“off-stage”* perspectives in outlining their *“fears”* and *“recommendations”*. Once again, although quantitative information was recorded (the attendance of various stakeholder groups or financial and technical aspects of plans etc.) the main focus was to provide an update of the projects influence and to help compile a timeline of events, obstacles and breakthroughs, retrospectively.

5. The Community Monitoring System (CMS)

A participatory monitoring system of some kind was a fundamental requirement of the project (Output 3: *Participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms established and practised by community institutions, including an end of project assessment of efficacy*) and created some level of debate within the research team.

The Mid-term Review of July 2003 expressed a need to get some form of participatory monitoring system underway but was realistic in stating: *“These [community-identified indicators] may not be sustainable after the project life as extracting this kind of information does not provide clear benefits to the people collecting the data.”*

The character of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) actually established differed significantly from that envisioned during the inception phase. The use of normal PRA tools (mapping and seasonal calendars etc.) was rejected by community stakeholders in preference for simple observations of project and non-project related outcomes and events. The evolution of the project’s PME strategy and the purpose of the changes is summarised well by Kamal Hossain:

“The project RD1 aimed to establish an efficient PME system from the beginning and to identify community indicators and monitoring tools to meet log frame requirements. M&E was to be performed by both of project & community to assess tangible change from the effect of PAPD & NRM in both Chars. Some tools were selected – maps, Venn diagram, flow diagrams, network diagrams, diaries, photograph, matrix scoring – for use by the research team. These were intended to capture the types of change, direct & indirect impacts, to show the degree of contact/ linkage between people services, relationships/linkage between groups, institutions and individuals, changes of live & livelihoods, people’s preference for a set of options or outcomes and how these change.

Regarding PME, community monitoring was intended to be appropriate for the community themselves.

We wanted to test the following questions/hypotheses through community monitoring:

- *How community monitors capture the changes (both positives & negatives) on CB process, Livelihood change & social & institutional aspects.*
- *Can they monitor themselves without external facilitation?*
- *How community monitoring system affect the local/grass root plan (accelerates or slow down)*
- *Local institutional actors incorporate consensus building approaches into their participatory monitoring system.*
- *How community monitoring system could be institutionalised?*
- *Will community people be benefited from this system?*

- Update on Monitoring (Kamal Hossain, September 2004)

The sustainability and relevance of a participatory monitoring system remained a topic of discussion throughout the project. It is likely that local residents will have their

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own informal way of gauging the performance of project-related activities and of the project staff which may not necessarily be reduced to a normal notion of “indicator”. It was decided that community monitoring would be as simple as possible with village representatives gathering overall feedback with respect to positive and negative change. Feedback from the community, via the two voluntary “community monitors”, was then collected by the research team on a monthly basis (November 2003-September 2004).

Although the notion of *what* was significant and what constituted positive or negative change was left completely to the communities to decide, the feedback derived from the CMS was quite useful with respect to the potential institutionalisation of PAPD (i.e. making normal the process of inclusive problem-solving, planning and interaction with secondary stakeholders). In this respect, the feedback focussed on community acceptance and perception of PAPD.

As the confidence of the communities and the monitors grew, useful information regarding formal and informal processes was provided by the CMS. Paradoxically, it is debatable how useful and interesting the CMS was to local residents themselves, however (see Annex B-i for discussion).

6. Case Study compilation

The project case studies (variously described as “*Progress on Macro PAPD on Jalmohal*”, “*Report on Micro-PAPD on Canal*” etc.) have been developed by the senior RAs by drawing on the various monitoring strategies adopted and discussed above. They are intended to provide comprehensive updates on the status of project activities, planning and agreements and to develop local “stories” relating to successes or problems.

As such, the case studies touch on issues relating to change in institutional, group and individual behaviour and outcomes relating to livelihoods. Both the PTD activities and PAPD in each of the villages are considered but the processes of planning and negotiation through PAPD (the use of STEPS analysis and problem census etc.) are the most interesting and significant aspects of the case studies. To some extent, the remainder of the information was concerned with rolling out ITDG’s commitment to technical support.

7. Post-PAPD questionnaire survey

The post-PAPD survey was intended to uncover the attitudes and perspectives of participants and non-participants in relation to the PAPD workshops and related plans and actions. During project R7562, it was felt necessary to seek the feedback of workshop participants in order to ensure that widespread support and adherence to agreements was realistic. Structured questionnaires were developed to test the significance of the workshops for each of the major livelihoods groups participating. In addition, the neighbours of participants were interviewed to test the extent to which the purpose of PAPD was properly communicated throughout the area (testing the extent of what has been termed the “*spread effect*”). In this case, it was found that the level of understanding of the purpose of PAPD was higher than expected with only a very small proportion of respondents believing the workshops were to “*supply free meals*” or to “*stop us fishing*” etc.

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Institutional analysis of projects and the level of local support in project R8195 suggested that project-related institutions (structures and activities) are more likely to outlive external support where they are widely understood and therefore supported. In this regard, the post-PAPD survey was a means to test how effectively the significance of PAPD (or some other, more informal, version of it) was communicated by the project. In addition, the survey was also to provide simple feedback on coverage i.e. the number of people from the various stakeholder groups involved in some form of project activity. In this respect, the post-PAPD survey was intended to provide quantitative data and was designed by Francis Murray for analysis within an Access database and spreadsheet.

Unfortunately, due to redeployment of staff, including the study leave of Mr Faruk Islam for doctoral studies at Stirling University, it has not proved possible to compile the survey findings in the life-time of the project. ITDG Bangladesh have expressed interest in analysing the data with the necessary technical support of Mr Islam before March 2006.

8. Market analysis

Two market survey analyses were conducted on maize and brinjal sub-sectors. (See Annex Two, parts 2 and 3.

Objectives of the maize sub-sector study:

- Explore the potential of maize production in char as a new crop.
- Mobilize the small farmers to undertake village/community based maize farming
- Create better linkage with various market actors related to the product
- Share the information with maize farmers to better identify the opportunities and constraints
- How common issues of maize marketing can sensitise the maize growers towards other community issues.

Survey Methodology:

Initially, a half-day orientation session was organised among the staff to understand the context and issues. A focus group discussion was arranged in the char village to select maize producers and other respondents. 15 maize producers (poor 6, medium 8, rich 1) from isolated char and 2 traders from district level market were interviewed using two sets of questionnaires.

Objectives of the brinjal sub-sector study

- Explore information on opportunities and constraints of brinjal farming (production, processing, marketing, actor interest/relationships and conflicts)
- Use the information to better organise the poor brinjal producers in char areas
- Find how dealing with market issues can contribute to a grassroots planning process?

Methodology of the survey:

Information was collected from 6 attached and 8 isolated char producers (of poor, medium and better off categories). 10 traders from Local, Upazila and District level were also surveyed to explore their perspective on brinjal marketing issues. The survey was conducted between March-April, 2004.

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Logframe Responsibility (adapted from Output level OVIs)	Monitoring tool / approach							
	Stakeholder & institutions matrix	Gender analysis reports	Fortnightly Diary	Major Meeting Report	Community Monitoring System	Case Studies	Market appraisal	Post-PAPD survey
Stakeholders from community to national levels summarised in stakeholder matrix	✓							
Stakeholder interests & institutions mapped	✓	✓		✓				
Gender analysis of planning meetings & workshops								
Participation of at least 2 groups of poor in implementing CBM		✓	✓	✓				✓
Implementation of revised CBM models by 2ndary stakeholders		✓	✓	✓				
PTD established via farmer-fisher group leaders		✓	✓	✓				
Rapid market appraisal reports investigating local & national market opportunities							✓	
Changing practices in integrated resource management; food production; value adding processes & product marketing			✓	✓				
Uptake of technical plans by 1° stakeholders			✓	✓				
250 individuals report improved livelihoods through PTD/PAPD								✓
Community indicators & monitoring tools identified & applied					✓			
M&E records of community initiatives, new technological options, decision making & planning track stakeholder activities					✓			
Participatory review of the efficiency & effectiveness of monitoring & evaluation tools					✓			
Stakeholder analyses of NRM & CPR interests	✓							
Local human & social-organisational strengths & weaknesses including individual training, management etc. determined	✓							
Specific groups of the poor advise the project of acceptability of the management action plans				✓	✓			
Implementation by poor of NRM action plans							✓	✓
Participation in planning workshops & meetings of senior policy makers & advisors				✓			✓	
Technical support to sandbar communities by NGO, private &/or government sectors				✓			✓	

Table 1. The monitoring tools and approaches overlap the various logframe commitments, allowing verification through triangulation.

Tracking Change – balancing a practical approach with the theory

Principles of change and units of analysis

Much of the current debate surrounding the monitoring of project progress and change centres on Rick Davies' discussion of Most Significant Change (MSC). In his paper "*Improved representations of change processes: improved theories of change*" (2002) Davies argues that the influence of projects and programmes is unlikely to be purely a linear one. Processes are more likely to have a parallel or branching structure or to operate within several overlapping spheres concurrently. In reality, projects tend not to adhere to classic hierarchical organogram-type structures but are better described as *heterachies* where people and institutions form their own networks within larger structures. In this respect, it is difficult or impossible to pre-empt the important events and developments that evolve out of projects.

Whilst recognising this complexity, the approach adopted for processes documentation within R8195 chose the local resource management institutions (RMIs) as the fulcrum between target beneficiaries, non-targets and secondary stakeholders such as project personnel and local government institutions. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, considerable time, effort and faith has been invested in RMIs as community based organisations, resource management institutions, user groups etc. with the assumption that local participation in the choice of rules will increase compliance and longevity of new and pro-poor management. In R8195 it was important to understand the working of these units and why they tend to disintegrate or introduce conflicts and differential access to pre-existing or new resources. Secondly, the choice of the RMI as the first or central "port of call" allowed the research team to evaluate its role and status with respect to other stakeholders and sets of stakeholders (or, in institutions-speak, "other players in the game"). The RMI formed a basis of semi-structured interview or discussion, around which additional and related issues and narratives could also be aired. Thirdly, the organogram of almost all project structures assumes a clear and delineated formal and hierarchical structure. As long as the means of recording and eliciting feedback is not too structured, this step-wise visit to key players and groups is an effective means to uncover the *de facto* relationships and interests of numerous stakeholders. Discussion of the RMI helps anchor discussion (creates a basis for developing narratives around what Davies would call "realms of change") and local reality can be discussed by triangulating numerous perspectives of the same structure – the RMI as the interface between the project and the people!³

In this project the approach was slightly different. Because the greater purpose of the project was to investigate the impact of PAPD through consensus and local activities, rather than group or committee building, the meetings themselves were seen as key units within the process. The manner in which issues were negotiated, people were included or excluded in activities, were all relevant to commentating on the impact of PAPD and the project in the two villages. In addition, the team acknowledged that discussions continued locally between group meetings and that some issues were less likely to be aired willingly in public or to project staff. To capture this additional change, the monitoring system adopted a diary format for staff to outline "off-stage" and "on-stage" concerns or issues as they evolved over the course of the project. Both meeting and diary reporting were intended to work towards a narrative for key changes within each of the two villages. These were intended to help compile detailed case studies of how problems or topics were identified and the process by

³ The approach was intended to be similarly anchored in R8306: *Integrated Floodplain Management* where project implementation groups (and meetings) formed the focus of the discussion and analysis.

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which they were then negotiated, resolved or enacted. Of particular interest here, both with respect to local level negotiation and prospects for vertical linkage with local government stakeholders, is the development of a community fishery at the Nandina jalmohal. The process by which different interest groups were included and secondary stakeholders consulted forms one of the key stories of change in the project reporting (see Annex A and Annex B-i).

MSC and the use of indicators

The table below demonstrates that MSC is novel in that it does not attempt to compare reality with predefined models of reality or indicators of preferred outcomes. What Davies refers to as the planning-based approach is normally intended to generate arguments based on the quantification of the attainment (or otherwise) of these indicators. In contrast, the MSC approach does not presume the potential direction of change nor what the key changes may be.

The approach adopted within R8195 and R8103 resembles MSC in that it explicitly emphasises the importance of “unusual outcomes” to the reporting staff. In R8195 outcomes are discussed in relation to “transparency”, “equity”, “pro-poor” etc. and in R8103 outcomes are framed in relation to “decision-making”, “conflict or consensus”, “participation”. In both cases, these indicators may be better described as “indicative domains of change”, however, because they are designed to elicit discussion by both local stakeholders and field staff themselves of unusual events and outcomes relating to these *types* of change. Micro and macro-PAPD activities are not scored in relation to these indicative types but narratives are discussed in relation to these characters.

The rather more directed approach to uncovering change adopted in R8103 (through group-identified indicator types) is probably appropriate given the nature of the project – an intensive, research project to uncover the potential of an existing approach. In other words, indicator types and the stories they let us develop need to be focussed on issues related to community negotiation (meetings, outcomes, conflicts, decisions, actions etc.) – see Table 3.

Parallels between MSC and “process monitoring” in this project

Many of the features of MSC have been re-invented with the project team in the development of the diary and meeting reporting formats in this project. From the early discussions with the field team the emphasis was on trying to uncover change attributable to the project and PAPD, whether this is deemed as positive or negative. In order to do this, the team jointly-identified themes that might be expected to change as a result of project activities. As stated, these were not so much set indicators, rather guidance and the intention here was to structure the field reporting formats to help staff realign their perception of the greater project purpose (social/community, political and institutional linkage and cooperation). Crucially, however, reporting staff were encouraged to develop and follow what they saw as key outcomes and changes and to describe how these stories evolved overtime. The domains of change were initially presented with potential examples but they were ultimately “fuzzy” in that reporting could use these examples to develop stories in any number of directions. The final analysis and discussion of these stories was jointly carried out by UK and Dhaka-based staff.

As a small action research project, the focus of monitoring and reporting within R8103 was to extract key outcomes and lessons learned. The MSC approach emphasises the need to internalise and share learning between the various

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organisational tiers present within projects and programmes. The process monitoring approach here was designed to achieve both a means to report back to DFID and beyond, but also a means by which ITDG staff in the field and in Dhaka can discuss and interpret events in the field. The reporting formats and the significance of the stories will be discussed formally across the whole team during the final workshop.

In summary, with respect to procedure and the way monitoring is implemented on the ground, R8103 has adopted several of the characteristics of the MSC approach. Change is not recorded with respect to the attainment or otherwise of pre-formed indicators. Rather, discussion surrounding the *indicative realms of change* is encouraged. As with MSC, great care was taken in “phrasing the question”. Diary and meeting report formats required project staff to think analytically about outcomes, first by describing what had or had not changed (Davies’ *descriptive* component of the story) and then attempting an explanation for this (Davies’ *explanatory* component of the story).

Planning based approach	Process documentation (R8103, R8195, R8306)	Evolutionary or Most Significant Changes approach*
Set indicators (yes/no) Predominantly quantitative Seeks common themes & tendencies Predictable scope of outputs <i>Deductive</i> – performance rated in relation to desired & pre-defined outcomes Indicators & frames of reference identified by senior staff Information is analysed centrally Data tabulated and removed from context Approach is fixed and repeated	Indicators provide “window” for discussion Predominantly qualitative Seeks themes & unexpected outcomes Predictable output types but scope driven by staff & participants “Desirable” outcomes form basis of reporting real events and processes Indicators & frames of reference identified in conjunction with field staff (thought on explanations encouraged) Field staff are encouraged to respond to their own observations (hopes/fears) Contextual information forms basis of stories Approach is well defined but adaptable (re-directed towards key events etc.)	Stories (significant changes) are uncovered Predominantly qualitative Focuses on outliers (the unusual) Reported issues open-ended <i>Inductive</i> – relevant criteria (stories) drawn from recent and ongoing experiences Indicators & frames of reference Information is distributed within entire project hierarchy Contextual information forms basis of stories Approach is totally adaptive

Deductive ← → **Inductive**

Table 3. The spectrum of monitoring approaches. Process documentation within this project is a more directed, research-oriented, version of a Most Significant Change approach. *Also known as the “Narrative Approach” or “Story Approach”.

MSC and process monitoring in relation to communicating lessons learned

The function of MSC is to reveal unexpected outcomes, explain them and make them available to various levels within the implementing agencies in question (DFID and ITDG, for instance). However, MSC is less specific in this last regard (knowledge-sharing) and its main purpose has been to realign monitoring from the statistically-reliant analysis of predefined themes to the uncovering of extra and unusual outcomes.

As a monitoring approach, MSC is intended to capture useful knowledge during the life-span of projects on behalf of current practitioners, not necessarily prospective users. The diary and meeting reports enable the project to identify and develop key

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narratives surrounding constraints and opportunities to developing consensual actions in the charlands context. The “stories” from these diaries and reports will provide a means to communicate project experience and key lessons for future interventions.

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