

Discussion Paper 4:
Up-Scaling IFM initiatives –
Constraints and opportunities¹

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***Integrated floodplain management –
Institutional environments and participatory methods***

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Up-Scaling IFM initiatives – constraints and opportunities

There is a strong demand from both donors and the Government to increase the impact of NRM development initiatives in Bangladesh but despite several decades of project-based interventions, there are few examples of widely dispersed successes. Where development activities have resulted in long-term beneficial change they have tended to occur as isolated events, with limited geographic spread and influence. Nationally, the GoB is under pressure to halt environmental degradation, increase food security and meet its poverty elimination targets while donors and other implementing agencies must now justify existing policies and approaches in terms of value and coverage. The onus might now be on promoting the uptake of new knowledge from previous research and transferring this to new programmes as they come on line. This paper attempts to identify prospects and opportunities for the future.

Types of “Up-Scaling”

Up-scaling simply means “to efficiently increase the impact of development initiatives from small to large scale coverage” (Hancock & Poate, 2002). In this context, it is obvious that up-scaling relates to geographic area, numbers reached, sustainability, depth of impact and issues of cost.

Approaches to up-scaling have tended to focus on the quantitative, geographic or horizontal aspects of development impacts, probably

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because changes in coverage over time and space are easier to monitor and record. Hancock and Poate (ibid.) identify four strategy types;

- *Replication / expansion* - replication of model projects or organisational growth and learning
- *Devolving and decentralisation* - supporting partners or developing integration
- *Building partners' capacity* - NGO-government partnerships, capacity building etc.
- *Influencing policy change* - advocacy and disseminating concepts and models

Up-scaling strategies in the past have tended to adopt the replication and expansion model but some obvious limitations to this approach have emerged over time. In particular, the growing emphasis on participation in development has identified a need to recognise locale-specific social, political and bio-physical characteristics and to avoid a “blue-print” approach to interventions. The expansion and replication model assumes the universal suitability of new, set approaches, however.

More recently, attention has turned to the latter three models that target change or modifications in current organisational or political structures and to policy itself. This relates directly to the new donor interest in providing a suitable framework of supportive policies, institutions and processes.

Up-scaling of IFM projects

A common theme within the research conducted on up-scaling is the need for greater integration. Farrington and Boyd (1997) stress the need to move beyond what they call open-ended “process” approaches which evolve in isolation from experiences elsewhere, resulting in a series of expensive and unlinked initiatives. Instead, the emphasis should be on “structured” attempts at multi-agency partnerships that build in experience and expertise from previous work and that can properly pre-define the desired roles, objectives and outputs of all those parties involved.

Given the emphasis on participatory development and community-based management approaches, recent debate has moved away from project and programme design to the task of institutionalising good practice and successes on a national scale. The table overleaf presents a synthesis of the recurring themes in the up-scaling literature (Table 1).

Existing Solutions to Up-Scaling IFM in Bangladesh

Discussions with managers of four donor and GoB-managed projects within the fisheries and water sectors revealed characteristics perceived to present obstacles and opportunities for up-scaling. The projects discussed were: the Community-Based Fisheries Management Project (CBFM-2), DoF’s Jalmohal Project, the Integrated Planning for Sustainable Water Management (IPSWM) with BWDB at Polder 22 and the Small Scale Water Resource Development Project (SSWRDP) of LGED.

| Scale | Up-scaling strategy | Examples |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Macro-level (National) | Strong political commitment | Receptive GOs, NGOs & dynamic civil society |
| | Policy change | Sector reform, decentralisation |
| | Capacity building | Institutionalising new link, using new skills & approaches, using past links, reinforcing GOs/NGOs |
| Meso-level | Suitable & directed guidance | Detailed & adaptable manuals & guidelines for implementers |
| | Replication | Attempting expansion / repetition of “islands of success” |
| | Ensuring efficiency | Reducing costs through subsidiarity & localised O&M |
| Local level | Good knowledge-sharing | Ensuring 2-way communication flow & awareness (PME etc.) |
| | Appropriate incentives | Building in financial incentives <i>after</i> positive results |
| | Building in sustainability | Working on fiscal, asset, environmental & social sustainability – internalising responsibility |
| | Improving accountability | Raising local awareness of existing institutions & secondary stakeholders (e.g. PAPD) |
| | Ensuring adaptive processes | Ensuring process monitoring is built in & allows refinements |

Table 1. Strategies for up-scaling NRM initiatives

(sources; Binswanger & Aiyar (2003), Hancock & Poate (2002), Farrington & Boyd (1997) and Gow & Morss (1988).

Successful up-scaling will have national, meso-level and local components and discussions with the project managers were intended to reveal key project-level issues that might span these three levels.

IFM project-level experience

Much of the feedback related to project management issues and constraints to project activity. In this regard the comments focused on constraints rather than opportunities and were concentrated on local rather than national issues (the role of local NGOs, elites, knowledge of GO agencies etc.). Because discussions were project-oriented there was a tendency for project managers to stress “horizontal scaling-up” i.e. issues relating to replication or expansion of existing models. However, the type of responses did relate to the type and scale of the project in question - the CBFM leader expressed a need for improved political and national level support, while the Jalmohal Project directors were more concerned with local management issues, for instance.

The range of identified opportunities and constraints to up-scaling from the CBFM project leader spanned national to local-level issues (see Table 2). The experimental character of CBFM (the range of NGO partners included and the range of local contexts engaged) partly accounts for this spread of key factors. Significantly, the feedback also suggests that there are multi-level opportunities and constraints in attempting co-management but that the key areas seem to be national and local, rather than meso-level². In particular

² “Meso-level” is used here to represent regional structures and agencies. The “political space” at the meso-level is often identified as a key fulcrum for up-scaling responsive and participatory forms of NRM.

government support (legislative, policy and bureaucratic cooperation) and the local institutional environment (NGO ability, LGO inclusion, consensus and community support) were identified as key requirements.

The meso-level opportunities for up-scaling identified from the literature stress the coordination and training of sector-specific service providers in order to increase efficiency in extension or the delivery of new practise and forms of technology. Few meso-level constraints and opportunities were identified by the project managers and this may relate both to the design of the projects in question (for instance, nationally-coordinated co-management initiatives that work directly with national NGOs, but at local level), and the perceived lack of capacity of District-level GOs to deliver change locally. Where meso-level opportunities were identified, they tended to relate to knowledge sharing between NGOs and projects rather than to a new role for GOs³.

The emphasis on project-specific problems and issues was also evident in the feedback from the Jalmohal Project directors. As an independent DoF initiative, the Jalmohal Project provides an interesting contrast to the other case studies. This project has no remit to interact with NGOs and the discussion related more to “scaling-down” activity - it was thought that membership must be strictly limited to ensure financial returns for the participants. As with the Oxbow Lake Project and its strict limits to membership, the production emphasis of the Jalmohal Project seemed to require a reduction in coverage (numbers of participants) at each site.

³ The structure of government and development initiatives in Bangladesh is such that regional (or District) level GOs are less directly involved in project activity than more local structures such as the Union Parishad or Upazilla.

The remit of SSWRDP was also reflected in discussion of up-scaling with managers. In this case, the emphasis is on linkage with LGOs and existing Water Management Organisations (WMOs) to ensure collaborative but small technical interventions. Feedback stressed those national and local level GO constraints to success, particularly resources, manpower and skills. The perceived requirement for inter-agency linkage and communication, long-term planning and adaptability at the local level were emphasised and, in this respect, resembled CBFM up-scaling requirements.

As a geographically focussed intervention, feedback from the IPSWMP at Polder 22 focussed on sustainable local institutions and the wide distribution of benefits to the range of local stakeholders. Other key issues included the capacity of local level NGOs and BWDB and the financial sustainability of Water Management Organisations. As with CBFM, local level power issues were identified as significant obstacles to project activities and longer-term change.

| Scale | Up-scaling strategy | Case Study Responses |
|-------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Macro-level | Strong political commitment | CBFM - Greater GO, NGO support & links |
| | Policy change | CBFM – change to leasing policy |
| | Capacity building | SSWRDP – improved GO (BWDB) focus & improved skills via training |
| Meso-level | Replication | Jalmohal Project – ↑ sites through negotiated lease arrangements |
| | Good knowledge sharing | CBFM – problems sharing records SSWRDP – knowledge-sharing with related projects |
| Local level | Appropriate incentives | CBFM – need to spread benefits Jalmohal Project – deliver gains to “genuine fishers” |
| | Building in sustainability | CBFM – ensure cost-effectiveness in project activities (e.g. CBFM lease vs alternate uses) Jalmohal Project – spread benefits for ↑ support SSWRDP – work with existing WMOs & build links to other LGOs & RMIs IPSWMP – ↑ distribution of benefits |
| | Improving accountability | CBFM – incorporating LGO roles & responsibilities |
| | Ensure adaptability | CBFM – flexibility in models & NGO activity SSWRDP – ↑ flexibility of NGO partners |

Table 2. Project manager comment in relation to theoretical strategies for up-scaling NRM.

Conclusion

The priority areas across the cases studies related to local level support (power issues, conflict etc.), NGO performance and the sustainability of project institutions (particularly financial viability and local support). Where projects operated nationally, or in parallel with GoB partners, national level constraints and opportunities such as inter-department integration and knowledge-sharing were stressed. Extra comments provided to the research team by the CBFM project leader provided a useful insight into past constraints and potential opportunities. Several of these issues are interrelated and, again, focus on local processes rather than national or meso-level factors. In particular, the need to instil sustainability and momentum via visible and carefully facilitated activity is seen as crucial. Interestingly, the project leader believed that it is inevitable that high input / high return activities such as stocking will attract powerful individuals to the decision-making process. It is suggested that membership should be rotated to counteract this type of problem but it is important to recognise the type of local conflict that can result from any attempt to re-align old allegiances and "ways of getting things done".

The key bottle-necks to up-scaling would appear to be political (integration and relations between ministries, NGOs etc. at the national level) and local (relating to the usual types of local processes that evolve in and around project activities and that hamper progress). In relation to political constraints to up-scaling it must be hoped that government bodies and policies are brought closer together to complement one another. The National Water Management Plan (in draft 2002) represents the type of inter-sectoral and inter-departmental initiative that might reduce

constraints to up-scaling good practice. At the local level, primary stakeholders and facilitators must be made aware of the types of issues that arise to block, and interfere with, collective efforts at IFM. Projects should ensure that these issues are identified early on and tackled. Suitable tools such as process documentation should be applied to ensure that local issues are fully understood and accommodated by staff, new resource management institutions and other local stakeholders.

Finally, prospects for up-scaling IFM at the meso-level may, in turn, be reliant on future government policy concerning moves towards decentralisation and redefining roles for existing and new bodies. Currently, there appear to be less "spaces" for up-scaling IFM from this regional or district level.

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