



Conclusion

This, the first in a series of project briefings, provides an overview of the intended direction and coverage of the proposed project.

However, the scope, approach and outputs from the project are intended to meet the needs of stakeholders. Therefore, if you have any comments concerning the

intended project, your experience of being involved with this research or any suggestions of how to improve the project, then please contact one of the project team leaders. Please also contact us if you wish to find out more about the project or have any specific requirements for information, project reports or findings.

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DFID action planning and peri-urban livelihoods project for Kolkata

BRIEFING 1: FACT SHEET



Introduction

Despite a long and productive history threats to farming in the East Kolkata Wetlands have never been as great. Why is this the case when the benefits of employment and food from these systems are known? How can poor communities engage and negotiate with government agencies to deliver equitable plans for development?

▪ Project purpose

Following on from earlier work in which the diversity of livelihoods and natural resources were understood within the DFID livelihoods framework, the project hopes to allow everyone involved in sustaining the wetlands a voice in its future management through a process known as action planning.

Action planning will provide an opportunity for the Government, landowners, labourers and others to meet together and agree upon a set of actions that will benefit all concerned. This is not just a list of hopes, but sets out the process by which these ideas can be implemented.

Potential sponsors will also be consulted as part of the action planning process with a view to securing their support in ensuring that the wishes of all those with an active interest in the management of the wetlands can be met. Active contributions will also be encouraged from those involved in developing the action plan.

If the project is successful it is hoped that the action planning tools developed could be used to assist in the planned management of other wetlands in West Bengal.



▪ At Stake

Farming vegetables, rice and fish around Kolkata, especially in the East Kolkata Wetlands, benefits poor people in several ways:

- direct employment for thousands of men and women, catching fish, weeding vegetables and as casual labourers,

- indirect employment in supply and distribution networks e.g. seed traders and market vendors,
- payment-in-kind for work undertaken on farms e.g. weed clearing or carrying fish to market,
- supplying affordable and fresh fish and vegetables to markets serving poor communities,
- through managed waste reuse, mitigating environmental degradation and reducing health risks,
- the overall improvement in environmental quality due to the existence of peri-urban farming.

The example set by the East Kolkata Wetlands provides an alternative paradigm for solid and liquid waste management in other towns and cities, both in India and worldwide. The global importance of the wetlands was confirmed following the designation of the East Kolkata Wetlands as a Ramsar Site.

Ramsar Sites and the convention

'The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.' Source (www.ramsar.org)

The 12,500 ha East Kolkata Wetlands were designated a 'Wetland of International Importance' on 19th August 2002.

▪ A note of caution

Despite the benefits derived from the wetlands a number of problems face the system and the communities that depend upon its continued operation, including:

- urban encroachment,
- contamination of waste resources,
- limited access to alternative economic activities,
- uneven and incomplete service and infrastructure provision,
- deficiencies in managing the system,
- siltation of canals and waterbodies.



How do we intend to do this study?

Through extended interaction with principal stakeholders the project will generate new knowledge of action planning to implement management strategies for the peri-urban East Kolkata Wetlands that benefit the poor.

A process enabling action planning in this complex social and administrative context will be studied and better understood and pro-poor action plans for key issues developed. Local, national and international awareness of an improved action planning process for use with poor communities and rural and urban government agencies will be raised. Planned project activities include:

July to August 2004 - Meetings with stakeholder groups and representatives

September 2004 - Action planning workshops in peri-urban Kolkata

Why are your views important?

Your views are important to help us better understand the current situation and more importantly to help guide and inform the planning process that is starting – a process in which you as a stakeholder have a key role to play.

We also ask you to support this initiative which is well intended – but as with most things, will have its limitations.