

Service Providers' Perspectives on the Implementation of Government Schemes in Support of Aquaculture for Poor and Tribal Groups (West Bengal)

Principal Investigators

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A PowerPoint presentation of this Case Study, and a film documentary of this and the previous Case Study, are included on the Project CD-ROM. The Case Study text appears on the following pages.

Origin

This Case Study from West Bengal was proposed by:

- Mr Kuddus Ansary, Jankar, Khawasdih Village, Barabazar
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- Dr K P Singh, Field Specialist Aquaculture, GVT Ranchi, Jharkhand
- Dr Snehashish Mishra, Research Assistant, Self Recruiting Species Project, Purulia
- Mr Ashish Kumar, Deputy Director, DOF Ranchi, Jharkhand
- Mr B N Baskey, CEO, FFDA Purulia
- Mr N K Dey, District Fisheries Officer Co-operatives, Purulia
- Mr Nitai Mishra, Manager, Central Fishermen's Co-operative Society, Purulia

In the State-level Workshop, planning discussions with Mr Ashish Kumar and Dr Tripathi were held with Dr T Mandal, Assistant Director of Fisheries, Purulia, Mr N K Dey, Mr B N Baskey and Mr Nitai Mishra.

Duration

Originally proposed to commence in July 2002, the Case Study was to begin in September following its setting up in August. Owing to further delays, fieldwork ran through October and November 2002, with opportunities to report progress and get feedback during the Stakeholders Workshop in January 2003. Final presentation of the Case Study was made at the Policy Review Workshop in Noida, Delhi, in April 2003.

Location

The location initially proposed was Hura Block with the possibility to consider Barabazar and Balarampur Blocks too, all in Purulia District, where both GVT and government support has been available. During discussions, it was decided to cover Keshargarh Village in Hura Block and Chhotogado and Bara Urma Villages in Balarampur Block, as the concerned Fisheries Extension Officers are located in these two blocks.

Key Informants

Key informants included:

- District Fisheries Officer (Co-operatives)¹
- Assistant Director of Fisheries, Purulia District
- Fisheries Extension Officers of the concerned blocks
- Primary fishermen co-operatives
- NGOs such as PRADAN and *Kalyan Krishi Vigyan Kendra* of the Ram Krishna Mission
- Panchayat Raj Institutions (Sabhapati², Pradhan³, Karmadhyakhya⁴)
- Service banks in the proposed blocks including SBI, UBI, NABARD and MGB⁵, and
- Local traders for seed and fish



Purulia and Midnapore Districts

Method

The Case Study methods were individual interviews and small-group discussions around issues emerging from the fieldwork that related to policy and recommendations for changes. The Principal Investigator, Dr S D Tripathi, took charge of conducting interviews and documenting the outcomes. Mr Gautam Dutta and Ms Jhinuk Ray, Co-Principal Investigators, supported the conduct of individual interviews, meetings and writing. All district officials and lead banks were based in Purulia; *gramin* banks were at block level.

Contents

The sections of the Case Study on the following pages include:

1. Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal, Purulia
2. Non-governmental Organizations
3. Fishermen Cooperative Societies
4. Fish Traders
5. Panchayati Raj Institutions
6. Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (CADC) Ltd, Purulia
7. Banks

1 These are fishermen's cooperatives which are often recipients of service provision for aquaculture, including pond leasing, fry sale or receipt and extension.

2 The chairperson of the Panchayat at block level (The district level institution is Zila Parishad and the head is Sabhadhipati).

3 The subdivision-level officer of Panchayat (Pradhan is the head of Panchayat at village level).

4 A West Bengal local government position, head of the village Panchayat, the lowest unit of local governance.

5 The acronyms relate to various local development banks.

Where possible information was sought from each informant (group), on these issues:

- Mechanism for leasing of ponds
- Mechanism for provision of loans
- Process for supply of material inputs
- Timeliness and scheduling of loans, inputs and services
- Process for the selection of beneficiaries including key actors from DOF and Panchayat Raj Institutions and their interactions
- Process for communicating (about government schemes and technical extension messages, any systems for feedback, cross-checking and streamlining the system)
- Marketing support, networking and strategies and the role for farmers, the DOF and banks in decision-making about harvesting and their impacts on market opportunities.

1. Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal, Purulia

Interviews and discussions were held with Dr T Mandal, Assistant Director of Fisheries (ADF); Mr B N Baskey, District Fisheries Officer (DFO), Purulia, with additional charge of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), FFDA; Mr Nabo Gopal Rana, DFO (Training) and Mr N K Dey, DFO (Cooperatives).

Dr T Mandal, ADF, gave a brief on the status, scope and activities of the department in Purulia District (Annexure I).

Fish Farmers' Development Agency

The scheme became operational in Purulia District in 1981 and has by now covered 6,467 ha with 29,570 beneficiaries, the average productivity ranging between 1,500 and 1,800 kg/ha. The seasonal nature of ponds is a serious limitation to productivity. As against the target of 50 ha in 2001-02, the project has covered 48 cases with 50.81 ha and 150 beneficiaries.

The Inland Fisheries Project (FFDA) has four models:

1. No excavation, only culture costs for first year
2. Semi-derelict pond requiring 0.3 m of excavation and culture costs
3. Semi-derelict pond requiring 0.6 m excavation and culture costs, and
4. Derelict pond requiring 1 m excavation and culture costs.

The project cost varies from Model 1 (Rs 35,870) through Model 2 (Rs 72,270), and Model 3 (Rs 1,10,670) to Model 4 (Rs 1,31,200). The subsidy is 20% of the project cost but is limited to Rs 6,000 except in the case of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe farmers, where it is 25% of the project cost but limited to Rs 7,500. The same applies to renovation costs with a ceiling for each model. The culture costs are fixed at Rs 30,670.

Mechanism for Lease of Ponds

The government-vested tanks have been transferred to the Panchayats that lease them through bidding following announcements through drum beating, announcements on Block and Panchayat Office notice boards, and information through Panchayat Pradhan and Panchayat members. There are clear instructions regarding the priority to be assigned to the Cooperative Societies while settling the lease. The lease is, however, on a yearly basis and is settled in May.

Mechanism for Provision of Loans

In the meetings of the Standing Committee and the Gram Panchayat, the availability of loans is discussed. Those desirous make applications on plain paper giving details of ponds, ownership and their status, which is forwarded by the Pradhan to the Block Office who passes it on to the FEO for verification. Once satisfied, the FEO asks the farmer to fill up the prescribed Application Form and provide the required documents. The FEO visits the site and prepares the "Techno-economic Feasibility Report" as per the prescribed proforma. The report of the FEO is submitted to the Standing Committee that recommends the loan to the Panchayat Samiti and sends it to the bank with a copy to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO),

FFDA. The CEO also submits a techno-economic report to the Block Office that is forwarded to the bank with recommendations.

Earlier the banks accepted the oral lease system started by the Government of West Bengal for ponds less than 0.66 ha but this is not practiced any more.

On receipt of the “Techno-economic Feasibility Report”, the bank officers undertake a joint site visit. If the project appears feasible and justified, and the farmer(s) has no background of default, the loan is approved and the CEO informed to release the subsidy. When the bank receives the cheque for the subsidy amount, it releases the loan amount to the farmer or the group.

Process for Supply of Material Inputs

Normally, the Central Cooperative Society is advised by the bank to supply the inputs but owing to distance, non-availability of inputs on time and also its quality, farmers are permitted to purchase from local sources and the payment is effected by the bank on receipt of delivery challans.

Timeliness of Loans, Inputs and Services

It takes at least 3-4 months for the loan to be disbursed. The material inputs take from 15 days to two months. However, training is organized only after the loan is sanctioned and at least for 20 farmers at a time. Training is not arranged until the requisite number are available.

Process for Selection of Beneficiaries

It is the sole prerogative of the Panchayat Samiti, though FEO or CEO may recommend a certain case.

Process for Communicating

The Pradhan and Members of Gram Sansad meet every six months and discuss the government schemes. FEO and CEO are the agencies that disseminate information to farmers through meetings and discussions. All communication is through letters. Farmers may make personal enquiries.

Marketing Support

Neither the FEO nor the CEO provides any marketing support to farmers. The farmer decides when he should harvest and where he should market.

Training and Extension

Mr Nabo Gopal Rana, DFO (Training), indicated that three different categories of training programs are conducted for FFDA farmers:

1. a 4-day program at the block level
2. a 10-day program at block level, and

3. a 30-day training program, held only once in a year at district headquarters which is participated in by trainees from 2-3 blocks. Those who do well in the 30-day program are later sent to the State Centre at Kalyani for advanced training for two months. Each trainee is paid a stipend of Rs 50/day.

Besides these, there are a number of specific training programs for which the duration and curriculum have recently been revised. During 2001-02, under the tribal sub-plan 180, beneficiaries were trained on the ten-day program.

Mr Lal Mohan Banerjee, FEO, Joypur Block, located 26 km from Purulia, indicated that he attends the Block Office for three days in a week and the Head Office (HO) at Purulia for another three days. He is responsible to the ADF Purulia, and to the Block Development Officer for technical services in the field. There are 3,500 ha of water bodies, most of them privately owned, of which 75% are under aquaculture. There is a Fishermen's Cooperative Society in the block that covers about 20 ha of water area comprising six ponds.

There are seven Gram Panchayats in Joypur Block. The Panchayat is headed by a Pradhan who is a member of the block-level Panchayat Samiti that is headed by the block Sabhapati. The Block Development Officer is the Ex-Officio Executive Secretary of the Samiti. Each Sarpanch is a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Animal Husbandry at the block level where all the government programs are discussed and necessary information provided. The information on various issues such as provision for lease of ponds, bank loans and supply of inputs was similar to that provided by the CEO (given above).

Fishermen Cooperatives

Mr N K Dey, DFO (Cooperatives), informed that 47 fishermen cooperatives have been registered in the district so far but only 20 of them are functional; the rest are either inactive or defunct. The membership of these societies varies from 50-700. The procedure for formation and registration of societies is given in Annexure II.

2. Non-governmental Organizations

Only two NGOs – *Kalyan Krishi Vigyan Kendra* and PRADAN – were visited and the information gathered is presented here.

Kalyan Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KKVK), Jahajpur, Purulia

KKVK is affiliated to the Ram Krishna Mission. Discussions were held with Mr Sanjib Kumar Bhattacharya, Training Organizer and Officer-in-Charge, and Dr Bikas Roy, Fisheries. The organization was established in 1992-93 and has been working with village-level youth organizations that exist in the form of clubs. About 200 active clubs in six clusters exist within a radius of 50 km. Each club has, on average, 30 members including men and women. In the last ten years of its existence, 12 villages have graduated with an integrated development program while about 60 villages have had training alone.

The KKVK is not involved in organizing the lease of ponds and provision of loans, nor does it provide any marketing support.

Process of Supply of Material Inputs

Inputs are provided in the form of fry (8,000/ha) and lime (250-300 kg/ha) alone and only to those groups where demonstration is being conducted. The KKVK brings quality spawn from an established hatchery and rears it to fry stage at its own farm. About 30 kg of fry valued at Rs 6,000 were supplied for demonstration during 2001-02. (The fry are sold for Rs 150-200/kg that contains about 1,500-2,500 fry depending on its size.) Farmers transport the fry themselves on cycles or else engage a jeep or a truck depending on the quantity and the distance.

Timeliness and Scheduling of Inputs and Services

A three-day on-campus training is arranged first, followed by one-day off-campus training in the village itself. Such programs are organized 2-3 times in a year. Besides this, an annual ten-day hands-on training for 25-30 participants is also organized annually at the KKVK. This is a prerequisite for demonstration. The inputs are also supplied on time.

Process for Selection of Beneficiaries

A PRA survey is initially conducted and about 20-25 villages are selected at a time for demonstration of various activities. The club members attend the monthly meetings at the Kendra and focus on the needs of the village(rs), whence it is decided as to how available resources in the village could be best utilized. If there is a demand for aquaculture and the resources are available, then it is selected.

Process for Communicating

The monthly meetings and the visits of the KKVK's officers to the villages enable personal discussion.

General Observations

- KKVK has introduced *Labeo bata* in the culture system for which there is a great demand. It brings about 8-10 lakh spawn from Mogra and rears it with 60% survival up to fry stage.
- KKVK ensures seed quality, size and timely distribution, which the villagers greatly appreciate. At least in 12-15 villages, farmers have an extremely good idea of the techniques and follow them religiously, with the result that their production levels are of the order of 2.5-3.0 t/ha/yr. The wholesale rate for 500-g Rohu is Rs 55/kg while that of Catla is Rs 40/kg.
- KKVK also supplies quality fry to other farmers in the locality and the sales for 2001-02 amounted to Rs 37,000.

Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), Purulia

Mr Dinabandhu Karmakar, Manager, provided the following information:

PRADAN is registered as a voluntary organization in Delhi. Its activities are spread over villages in 26 districts in seven states (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal) through 19 projects managed by small teams of professional and motivated experts in agriculture, engineering, veterinary sciences, social work and rural management, based in the field. PRADAN focuses on promoting and strengthening the livelihoods of rural poor people. This involves organizing them, enhancing their capabilities, introducing ways to improve their incomes and linking them to banks, markets and economic services. Of the 19 projects, 11 are located in Jharkhand alone.

During 2001-02, PRADAN worked with 83,000 families excluding those who have graduated with its assistance. From the sectoral approach followed earlier, it has now shifted to an area-based approach promoting and strengthening Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of women. The projects mobilized over Rs 56 million as investment, which included people's own savings, bank loans and grants from the government received directly by the people. It works in collaboration with government agencies and banks at all levels and also other voluntary agencies.

The participants in PRADAN's projects are mainly tribal communities followed by *Dalits* and other disadvantaged groups. PRADAN promotes an informal association of 10-20 socio-economically-homogenous, poor women from a single village or hamlet, who meet regularly to transact the business of savings and credit. About 15 mature SHGs in a geographically contiguous area form a cluster. The cluster is a forum for cross-learning, inter-group problem-solving and solidarity. PRADAN has found that credit and savings is in itself a useful livelihood-enhancing service for "very poor" people and therefore it begins its work by promoting SHGs which can mobilize credit from banks. It has proved to be a highly effective way to organize women for livelihood promotion as well as broader social and political empowerment. During 2001-02 alone, it organized 250-300 SHGs in each project location to work within a compact area. By March 2002, PRADAN had promoted 4,126 SHGs with over 57,000 women members and linked 1,247 groups with the banks. Further, the SHGs mobilized Rs 11.3 million as savings and extended credit worth Rs 24.7 million to their members out of their savings.

In addition, 1,286 people from local communities were also trained to provide paid accounting services to the new groups and 276 support accountants were trained to provide higher order accounting services, such as audit of group accounts.

The inability of people to identify meaningful economic opportunities for investment is a significant constraint in enhancing livelihoods. PRADAN has, for the first time, trained nearly 100 SHGs in 2001-02 in identifying livelihood opportunities for themselves using PRA techniques and behavioral tools. These activities ranged from paddy processing requiring an investment of Rs 20,000 per group to cattle trading requiring an investment of Rs 2 lakhs per group with expected additional incomes ranging from Rs 4,500 to Rs 40,000 per group.

PRADAN has also been involved as a Project Implementing Agency (PIA) in the National Watershed Development Program of the Government of India to enhance the productivity of

land and water resources by conserving and managing rainwater and by introducing more productive and sustainable farming systems. In West Bengal, it is assisting Panchayats, as these have been assigned the role of PIA by the government. By March 2002, seven micro-watersheds were completed in Purulia at a cost of Rs 40 lakhs for 630 families. There is no aquaculture activity so far in these watersheds but it is proposed to examine it now.

PRADAN has constructed some 20 small seepage tanks (30 x 30 m) in the valley area on tribal people's own land in Godda (Jharkhand) and Jhalda (Purulia) that have been found to retain water throughout the year. The ponds will now be utilized for fish and prawn culture. One farmer has already earned Rs 3,000 from his pond during the current season by raising a crop of fry early in the season.

PRADAN trains members of Gram Sansad and Gram Panchayats also, which helps in organizing activities. It does not have an aquaculture program but, when taken up, training in fish and prawn culture will be organized in advance at Midnapore.

PRADAN receives financial support from several Indian and foreign organizations. The major Indian agencies are Ministry of Rural Development, CAPART, NABARD, Central Silk Board, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and Sir Ratanji Tata Trust. Overseas donors are Ford Foundation, ICCO (Netherlands), India Canada Cooperation Organization, OXFAM (India) Trust, AusAID, Embassy of Japan and CARE (India).

3. Fishermen Cooperative Societies

Three Cooperative Societies in Balrampur and Hura Blocks were taken up for the Case Study and visited, along with officers of the Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal.

Chhoto Gadu Matsya Jeebi Samabaya Samiti Ltd, Balrampur

Mr N K Dey, DFO (Cooperatives), and Mr Ujjawal Kanti Ghosh, FEO, organized the visit and discussions and provided the information summed up here. The society was established in 1976 and has a present membership of 117 fishermen. The society has a seven-member Managing Committee with Mr Nepal Chandra Majhi as Manager. Mr Ujjawal Kanti Ghosh, FEO, Balrampur, is the Chief Executive Officer of the society. The society was given the lease of the Hanumata Dam (212 ha) by the government (Panchayat) for 20 years in 1988 for a nominal amount of Rs 3,800 per annum. The dam is under the control of the Executive Engineer, Agri-Irrigation Department.

The Society had received an amount of Rs 14,23,599 towards the project cost from the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) in 1998-99 as detailed below:

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| □ Loan component | Rs 762,080 |
| □ Subsidy | Rs 279,330 |
| □ NCDC's share | Rs 280,319 |

The society has been provided with nets worth Rs 1,102,907 and two boats valued at Rs 43,692. The society has constructed an office building with a godown and some nursery ponds for raising fish seed. The society has been stocking fingerlings (100-150 mm) rather regularly – in 1999-2000: 36,000, 2000-01: 70,000 and 2001-02: 95,000 – but details on

species and size are not available. As the dam is having plenty of submerged aquatic weeds, grass carp (100 mm) were also stocked in 2000. No stocking was done this year owing to seed shortage and drought.

The Manager mentioned that silver carp and bighead are also found in the dam, though occasionally, but no effect of grass carp is noticed so far. This is not surprising as the dam has boal (*Wallago attu*) weighing as much as 10-15 kg. About 8,000 traps are also used for catching prawn and local fish, but no record is kept including that on commercial species. The average daily catch of the miscellaneous fish is about 150 kg of which 20 kg are prawns. The fishermen are unable to catch the fish as they are not adept at handling gill nets. The status of the Society is reflected below:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| □ Fish sale (approx 60,000 kg) | Rs 1,88,762 |
| □ Expenditure | Rs 1,01,870 |
| □ Net profit | Rs 99,810 |

The income per fisherman thus works out to only Rs 853/year.

It is unfortunate that silver carp and bighead (the latter has not been legally introduced in the country) have been stocked in this dam and, if they survive, these will adversely affect the growth of the indigenous Catla and Rohu. Grass carp, it appears, has not had any impact so far as the weeds are still in great abundance and hampering fishing. Though gill nets have been provided, fishermen do not have the required skill to operate them. Predators abound in the dam and no efforts have been made to control them.

Baro Urma Fishermen's Cooperative Society Ltd, Baro Urma Village, Balrampur Block

The visit was made along with Mr N K Dey, DFO (Cooperatives), and Mr Ujjawal Kanti Ghosh, FEO, Balrampur Block, who organized the discussions and made the information on the Society's status available. The Society was registered with 98 members (92 men and six women), all belonging to the *Koibarta* (Scheduled Caste) community. Its Board of Directors comprises six members, including Mr Kanai Koibarta, Chairman; Mr Gurupada Koibarta, Vice-Chairman and Mr Rabi Koibarta, Secretary. The Executive Secretary is the FEO, Mr Ujjawal Kanti Ghosh.

The Society has been given the Kumari Dam on lease for five years at Rs 2,935 per year. The lease amount for the year beginning 1 February has always to be paid in advance. The Annual General Body Meeting was held on 28 September 2002 when the audited report gave the details of fish sales of Rs 10,878 and profits of Rs 1,880. Thus the net income per fisherman works out to Rs 19.18 only.

The Society has received an amount of Rs 1,213,277 in 1998-99 towards the project cost for a five-year period from the NCDC that had these components:

| | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| □ Loan | Rs 6,36,053 |
| □ Subsidy | Rs 1,90,448 |
| □ Share capital | Rs 2,92,695 |

The Society's own contribution is of the order of Rs 84,121. The society has purchased nets worth Rs 983,407, three boats valued at Rs 104,870 and constructed four fish nurseries for Rs 120,000.

There is no record of fish seed stocked in the dam except that Rs 75,000 was spent on seed during 1998-99. Stocking was not done during 2001-02. There is no Catla in the dam but 2.0-2.5 kg of Rohu and 1.0-1.5 kg of Mrigal are caught, though the catches are rather poor. It was reported that a large quantity of fish nets washed during the monsoon when the gates are opened. Weeds are also in great abundance, besides boulders and trees that have been submerged; all these hamper fishing. The neighboring villagers do poach but that is largely limited to weed fish.

The grant-in-aid received from the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairy, has been used for construction of 88 houses at Rs 35,000 each for the fisher families. A community hall is also to be constructed besides four tube wells.

It is a sad story that such massive support has also not yielded any results. If the society does not profit, what is it meant for and what is it providing to its members?

Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd, Keshargarh, PO Rakab, Hura Block, Purulia District

The visit was made along with Dr T Mandal, ADF, and Mr N K Dey, District Fisheries Officer (Cooperatives), Department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal. The FEO, who is in additional charge of Hura Block, could not join the team.

Leasing of Ponds

The Keshargarh Fishermen's Cooperative Society Ltd was registered on 9 February 1977 and had turned defunct by 1995-96 due to running losses on account of poaching in the four privately-owned leased ponds that were at a distance from the village, and also differences among the members. The membership fee was Rs 10 per person.

Provision of Loans

The Society had taken a long-term loan of Rs 240,000 from the PCCB in 1989-90 that was, however, paid in full in six years. Along with the loan, it had also received a subsidy of Rs 30,000 from FFDA and another Rs 30,000 from the DRDA that had remained unutilized.

The Society was revived again in 1999-2000. Its audit for the last ten years from April 1992 through March 2002 has been conducted recently and the Annual General Meeting held on 26 June 2002. Its present membership is 257 with six members on the Board of Directors elected on 18 April 2001. Mr Bhim Chandra Koibarto is the Chairman and Mr Nanda Lal Koibarto, the Secretary. Its present status in terms of assets and liabilities and income and expenditure is given below:

| | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| □ Paid up share capital | Rs 1,840 |
| □ Reserve fund | Rs 31,479 |
| □ Working capital | Rs 261,098 |
| □ Cash in hand | Rs 1,240 |
| □ Net profit | Rs 284,510 |
| □ Fish sale (in ten years) | Rs 71,700 |
| □ Bank deposit | Rs 133,000 |
| □ Value of fish stock | Rs 278,660 |

The FEO posted in the block had prepared the project and recommended it to the Samiti for approval. Since it was the only fishermen's cooperative, it was preferred and selected. The loan was received in about 5-6 months. Inputs were received on time. Training was also received on time though only a few fishermen were trained then at block and district levels. The inputs were received from the Central Cooperative Society. There was no support and the fish was given to a merchant.

Present Status of the Society

The Society with 257 members has presently leased four private ponds (total area of 5.1 ha) for a period of five years beginning in 2001 for a total amount of Rs 10,000/year. This is too small an area for such a big society. The fish is now taken to Purulia and Adra for marketing, unlike in the earlier days.

Suggestions

- The fishermen have no nets of their own and have to pay Rs 200 towards netting charges for each day's harvest. The society wants that it could be supported by nets of various mesh sizes as well as dragnets for fry collection from nursery ponds.
- The 5-ha area is so small for such a big society. It wants to be given more ponds. There are two large (15 ha and 20 ha) ponds in the village. The larger one of them, *Kalia Bundh*, is under dispute as it was on a ten-year lease but the amount for only two years has been paid. It could be cleared by the Panchayat Samiti and given to them.
- Since large quantities of seed would be required, the society wishes to establish a hatchery for which it needs the support of the Fisheries Department.
- For seed rearing they also want a few nurseries to be dug.
- Finally, since quite a few of them do not have proper houses, they want that houses could be constructed for them under the government schemes.

4. Fish Traders

Fish traders of Purulia town are united as a group under a cooperative known as *Shri Durga Matsya Jibi Sambaya Samiti*. The following information was gathered from the Chairman and Secretary of the Samiti as well as one of the oldest and respected traders.

Background Information

An interesting episode – a mix of community interest and business – surrounds the birth of the *Dheebbar Samiti*. Years ago, when some fishermen went to a local temple in Chowk Bazar for *puja* they were not allowed in and the *pandits* refused to oblige them. Feeling deeply aggrieved, they decided to have their own temple. The *Dheebbar Samiti* was thus founded in 1927 with 11 families who built a small temple with their own collections. But none of the local *pandit* were ready to perform the *puja* in their temple as they belonged to a lower caste. Then a *pandit* came from a neighboring village, Mejhia, in Bankura District and the regular *puja* started.

The Samiti made certain rules for donations and contributions to run the temple and create assets for its sustenance. Those who would not have a boy child to continue their generation would donate their entire property to the temple while those who would have daughters would give half of their property as a donation. There were 64 households of which 43 are left now; 21 households have had no next generation. These fishermen were involved in spawn trade, its rearing and culture. The spawn was brought from the *bundhs* in Bankura District and, after rearing, the fry supplied to the neighboring farmers within a radius of 200 km in earthen or aluminum *hundis*. There was a well-established seed market when Purulia town had a population of about 3,000 people with no roads and electricity.

Shri Durga Matsya Jibi Samabaya Samiti, Purulia

The fishermen formed a cooperative society called *Shri Durga Matsya Jibi Samabaya Samiti* and registered it in 1965 with 120 members. The members were having their own ponds of which 80% were sold owing to several problems. Hence, the society started leasing the *bundhs* and the municipal ponds and continued with the seed trade that involves about 70 fishermen seasonally. The *bundhs* were given on a ten-year lease earlier but now it is limited to three years. The society turned non-functional in 1987 and was revived only in August 2002. The membership for the society is Rs 11 per family with Rs 15 as a one-time donation. Today, 1,400 families are its members. The society has been given nets and *hundis* worth Rs 185,000. Though the cooperative societies are entitled to get the first preference for lease, the 20-ha *Bucha bundh*, just by the side of the temple, was auctioned by the municipality for Rs 11 lakhs. The society approached the District Magistrate but the Paur Sabha did not pay any heed even to the DM's orders. The lessee, however, could not undertake the culture operations and the *bundh* is now fully choked with weeds in less than two years.

Mr Maru Dheebbar, one of the oldest and most established traders, mentioned that the seed trade from May to August is of the order of Rs 1 lakh/day or Rs 1.20-Rs 1.50 crores per season. It is the middlemen and those that purchase the seed from here and sell it again in different pockets who are the people who are earning 3-4 times more than the producers. About 300-400 vehicles bring about 300 kg of fry each, thus landing 900-1,200 kg in the spawn market (per day or in the season) that is held in the premises of the Durga Mandir. The Mandir charges a commission of Rs 2 per *hundi* and realizes about Rs 25,000 in a season. This is an additional annual source of income.

The Samiti's members are "very poor", only 20% being in a condition to have food twice daily. The Samiti gives Rs 320 for funeral ceremonies of poor people. It has constructed a Dharmashala for its own community that is rented on special occasions for celebrating

marriages and festivals. A primary school has also been opened for their children where no fee is charged. The government has, however, provided a teacher.

The fisherwomen, however, purchase fish from the *hats* and sell them in different places, with about 126 women involved in marketing.

5. Panchayati Raj Institutions

West Bengal is one state in India where the Panchayati Raj institutions are popular and effective. Officials from seven institutions ranging from Zila Parishad to Gram Panchayat were approached for the Case Study.

Sabhadhipati, Zila Parishad, Purulia

Mr S K Banerjee has been Sabhadhipati without a break ever since he was elected in 1978. He wondered how farmers belonging to the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste categories, who have neither land nor perennial ponds, could be helped. He claimed that the fishermen were given a seven-year lease for the big tanks. He was of the opinion that a breeding center should be established where simple, low-cost seed production techniques could be demonstrated along with seed rearing up to fingerling size. Low-cost feed should be developed, the techniques of preparation demonstrated to farmers and necessary equipment also provided to them. Marketing information should be collected and provided to farmers, and cold storage and processing units established.

Sabhapati, Balrampur Panchayat Samiti

Mr Kokil Rajak, Sabhapati, talked about people “below the poverty line” (BPL) and belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories. Where would they undertake fish culture? Where are the resources? The local culture has been felling the trees and not plantation, fishing but not fish culture, killing birds but not raising them. It is a poor district with no water. No one can claim facilities as a matter of right. Let the people be motivated first. Gram Sansad should construct ponds and line them with clay to prevent seepage so that fish could be cultured there. He would prefer loans and input supplies to be effected in time but this is just not possible in practice.

Sabhapati, Hura Panchayat Samiti, Hura

Mr Johar Lal Das, Sabhapati, gave some general suggestions. While the Gram Sansad proposes the names of the beneficiaries, it is the Gram Panchayat that selects, giving priority to those “below the poverty line”. He mentioned that since those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have no ponds, several have been dug for them but he could not say where.

Block Development Officer-cum Executive Officer, Hura Panchayat Samiti

Mr B N Paul, BDO, clarified some of the doubts on leasing of ponds and mechanism of loan besides suggesting: “There are hardly a few people who are fishery-dependent; it is an additional activity. They should form cooperative societies or SHGs and avail of the micro-credit system of the banks and training facilities of the government”.

Pradhan, Tentula Gram Panchayat, Balrampur Panchayat Samiti

Mr Samtul Tudu, Pradhan, mentioned that there were 51 seasonal ponds having an average size of 0.4 ha in Tentula Gram Panchayat. Mini-kits are provided for short-term culture.

Leasing of Ponds

The ponds are leased by bidding, notices are issued and members informed. The lease amount varies from Rs 50-100 per pond. Sometimes owners also transfer their ponds to the government for excavation and renovation, which are then leased out for a period of three years.

Provision of Loans

Last year three *bundhs* (average size of 1.5 ha) were recommended for loans following the same procedure as in other places.

Selection of Beneficiaries

There are 13 elected members in the Panchayat who make the selection based on the applications received. Sansad Sabha meets twice a year in November and May. Members recommend for training of unemployed youth so that they may undertake fish culture in Panchayat ponds. However, it is only the fishermen (*koibarta*, Scheduled Caste) community that undertakes fishing in the ponds and sells the fish.

Process for Communicating

While letters are issued by the Executive Officer on behalf of the Samiti, the Pradhans themselves inform the beneficiary about his selection.

Karmadhyaksha, Hura Panchayat Samiti, Keshargarh

Mr Madhusudan Sen belonged to a different political party than the Pradhan of the village and the two did not see eye-to-eye. The present Pradhan has taken the matter of the *Kalia bundh* to court and hence it is not available to the society for culture. Hura Block has ten Panchayats.

6. Comprehensive Area Development Corporation (CADC) Ltd, Purulia

The team also had the opportunity to meet and have the opinions of a well-known and respected leader of the area, Mr Manindra Gope, Vice-Chairman, CADC. Outlining the richness of Purulia District – in terms of water bodies that comprise about 70,000 ha belonging to three categories: those that retain water for (1) six months, (2) nine months and (3) round-the-year – he felt that these could be profitably utilized for aquaculture.

He lamented the poor quality of spawn and wanted that a simple, low-cost technology for fish breeding should be developed and demonstrated for production of quality spawn as the establishment cost of a hatchery is quite high. He has established a freshwater prawn hatchery in Tamluk that produces 5-6 lakhs of post-larvae. He contended that the fish from this laterite

zone was tastier than that from 24 *paraganas* owing to the natural availability of rock phosphate that was good for fish growth. However, the soil was deficient in boron. The abundant availability of lac wastes in this region was also a good cheap food for fish and helps fish to grow to 1 kg in a year. He has been using it in his own farm. As the fish grows the fastest between *ashad* (July) and *ashwin* (October), it should have plenty of natural food and effective management. He also lamented the non-availability of small fish (medium and minor carps) owing to pollution from fertilizers, chemicals and pesticides, and failure of natural breeding.

Lastly, finance is vital for development and the natural resources of the district need to be utilized properly. Tribal groups could be provided free spawn under the mini-kit scheme and trained in seed production whereby they would earn much more. The Panchayats could develop such a scheme.

7. Banks

The following five banks were visited and the Managers and Deputy or Assistant Managers contacted:

Purulia Central Cooperative Bank (PCCB), Purulia

Mr A K Datta, Assistant General Manager, informed that the PCCB is an agricultural bank that has helped 12,000 small and marginal farmers, advancing them an amount of Rs 650 lakhs for income-generating activities since its establishment in 1975. Of these, about 500 are fish farmers who have received about Rs 40 lakhs. The bank provides loans to affiliated societies who in turn advance them to farmers. According to him, there are 48 societies in Purulia District with a membership of 4,500 fishermen and fish farmers. However, it is the West Bengal Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Finance Corporation that provides the subsidies, though not in the fisheries sector.

Small Scale Industries and Business, Purulia

The officer who looks after the Fisheries Section, being away on training, could not be interviewed. However, Mr S K Bhattacharjee, Deputy Manager, agreed to provide all information as he was previously connected with the fisheries program. His branch, though catering to rural areas, did not have a big fisheries activity, limited to about 10-15% and covering only those cases that were sponsored by the District Fisheries Officer.

Mallabhum Gramin Bank (MGB), Purulia

Mr S K Roy, Area Manager, indicated that MGB is a regional rural bank for four districts – Bankura, Purulia, Midnapore 1 and Midnapore 2 – with 176 branches and seven Area Offices. During 2001-02, the bank provided loans to 263 farmers in Purulia District alone, amounting to Rs 1.166 million, but the overall rate of recovery has always been poor at about 20%.

Central Bank of India (CBI), Balrampur

Mr S K Roy, Manager, informed that the bank provides loans only to FFDA-sponsored farmers. Only one farmer was provided a five-year loan amounting to Rs 68,000 last year to be refunded in 60 installments.

United Bank of India (UBI), Purulia

Mr Parikshit Subbuddhi, Deputy Regional Manager, mentioned that the bank has 37 branches in Purulia District, but information regarding the total amount of loans advanced during 2001-02 by all these branches was not readily available. He, however, furnished information in respect of only two branches, Dubra and Babugram, where seven farmers were advanced Rs 69,000 during the last six months between 1 April and 30 September 2002.

Service Provision by Banks

Mechanism for Leasing of Ponds

The banks are not involved in the leasing of ponds.

Mechanism for Provision of Loans

As many ponds in West Bengal are under multi-ownership, the government had authorized the Panchayats to issue oral leases in favor of those who were interested in fish culture. The Panchayats settled the issue of sharing profits among different owners and enabled the use of ponds in favor of an individual or a group of owner-farmers for a period of five years. The banks had, until recently, been providing loans on recommendations based on oral leases, but since the issue of oral leases is now *sub judice*, no further loans are given.

The banks rarely provide loans to farmers directly unless they are sponsored. Further, banks do not comment on the projects prepared and recommended by the DFO, except that a bank officer visits the site along with the FEO and verifies the genuineness of the existence of the pond – seasonal or perennial – and its legal status and the farmer. The amount is paid to the farmer based on the recommendation of the DFO as per bank rules, but only after receipt of the subsidy amount from the DFO and information on the farmer's contribution, if any. The loan amount is reduced to that extent. No loan is normally given to a person who is a defaulter but a person already having a loan in his name is considered for a second loan, provided his bonafides are well established and he has been scrupulously following the repayment schedule. Having satisfied, the loan is approved and the farmer informed through a letter. In the case of FFDA farmers, the farmer is informed only on receipt of the cheque pertaining to the subsidy amount. This amount from the FFDA is kept as a fixed deposit by the UBI, on which it pays interest to the farmer at the prevailing rate. The subsidy and interest accrued thereon are paid to the farmer once the loan is refunded.

The refund in case of seasonal ponds is after harvesting, while half-yearly in respect of perennial ponds to be recovered fully in three to seven years. The interest rate varies from 10-14% per annum depending on the loan amount. The recovery rate is low and varies between 15-20%. The bank issues notices to defaulters, organizes door-to-door campaigns, recovery camps and pressure tactics through influential people, but borrowers do not pay much attention to all that.

Process for Supply of Material Inputs

The banks are not involved in the supply of material inputs except placing an order with the Central Cooperative Stores identified by the FFDA effecting the payment on receipt of the delivery challans.

Timeliness and Scheduling of Loans, Inputs and Services

While the CBI pays it within seven days of receipt of the subsidy amount, UBI and MCB pay within 15 days to a maximum of 1.5 months, but the PCCB within three to six months.

Process for the Selection of Beneficiaries

The banks do not select beneficiaries but they do check their antecedents and also satisfy whether the minimum water level of 1 m would be retained during the summer or not. If the eligibility criteria for advancing loans are not fulfilled, the bank has the right to reject such cases and it informs the sponsors about its inability to provide the loan.

Process for Communicating

Communication is always through letters and Field Officers. The repayment schedule is indicated in the loan book given to farmers. For loan recovery, demand notices are issued through the post office or peon books. Other tactics such as persuasion through Panchayats, village headman or political leaders are also practiced but all this has had no results.

Marketing Support

In terms of the roles of banks in decision-making about harvesting and its impact on markets, the banks do not provide any marketing support.

Suggestions

The bank officials made the following suggestions:

- Mass campaigns are required to educate farmers to avail of the loan facilities and refunding on time.
- The Panchayat should not sponsor farmers as some personal involvement comes in the picture and pressure tactics are used. This encourages delay in payments and also the number of defaulters who consider the loan as a right and as their own money.
- At present, loans are not provided to farmers whose ponds are seasonal or do not retain water round the year. Such farmers could be issued a Kisan Credit Card to enable them to draw small amounts of money when required and repay it soon thereafter.
- It was felt that three years was a good enough period for the term loan.

Information on Purulia District

The district covers an area of 6,259 sq km and has a population of about 2.22 million, of which 90.56% is rural. The district comprises 20 blocks with 170 Gram Panchayats. The populations of Tapashil Jati and Tapashil Upjati are almost equal, being 430,513 and 427,766 respectively. There are 76 Fish Production Groups with a membership of 901 who utilize 43,126 ha of water area and 47 Primary Fishermen Cooperatives Societies with 4,100 members under the fold of a Central Fishermen's Cooperative Society.

The total water area in the district is 71,255 ha of which 50,078 ha are cultivable, 14, 299 ha semi-derelect and the rest derelect, besides 35 dams and reservoirs covering an area of 8,000 ha. The district's requirement for fish is of the order of 24,000 t/annum while it produces only 20,000 t. The rainfall ranges from 1,231-1,274 mm/yr and the temperature from 9⁰ to 44⁰ C. There is only one hatchery but 11 portable hatcheries are available with the Fish Production Groups.

The Assistant Director of Fisheries is the head of the district fisheries administration and is supported by these officers:

- District Fisheries Officer (DFO): 3 (Training, Cooperatives and Administration/ Development)
- Fisheries Extension Officer (FEO): 24 (only 15 are presently in position)
- Chief Executive Officer (FFDA): 1 (vacant)

A number of schemes are implemented by the Department of which the major ones are:

1. Fish Farmers' Development Agency (FFDA) } These were discussed with
2. Fishermen Cooperatives } respective officers and are
3. Training } detailed below.
4. Social Fisheries: Fish Production Groups, comprising at least ten members and first established in the 1980s, who raise fish either on their own or in leased pond(s). Along with a copy of the resolution undertaken by the group on fish farming, they fill up a prescribed form and apply to the Panchayat Samiti through the Gram Pradhan. The FEO examines it and puts it up to the Sabhapati with his recommendation. If approved, a copy is sent to the ADF and the group given inputs such as fingerlings and lime. The project cost is Rs 5,000/ha. About 76 Fish Production Groups have been registered in Purulia District so far.
5. Tribal Sub-plan: Tribals are specifically supported through this scheme by way of providing them with six nets, 12 *hundis*, fingerlings and a house. The tribal people have to form groups of 10-15 people to avail of this scheme. This enables them to rear the fingerlings or else catch them from natural resources and sell them after meeting their own requirements.
6. Training for fisherwomen: A 15-day training course for fisherwomen in cast and drag net making at block level. They are also given about 1 kg of twine at the end of the training period for making their own nets.
7. Construction of houses for fishers: The model village scheme of the Government of India (GOI) with 100% contribution is also operated besides the state scheme where a 75% contribution comes from the GOI and 25% is paid by the state.
8. Construction of community halls: These are done for cooperative societies where they could organize their meetings and other functions.
9. Mini-kit distribution: This is meant for "very poor" farmers who are supplied 750 fingerlings, 15 kg of lime and 15 kg of superphosphate per beneficiary with a 5- 10-katha pond. Every year 200 units get this benefit.

Procedure for Formation and Registration of Fishermen Cooperatives Societies and Facilities Available to Them

Society Formation and Registration

The cooperatives are formed by a group of people who are either culturing fish in their own or leased ponds. Based on the prescribed model by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, the group has to conduct meetings, collect admission fees and monthly subscriptions towards purchase of shares, elect office bearers, prepare by-laws, and send the same to the Gram Panchayat Samiti through the Pradhan. The FEO at the block level is asked to examine the proposal and verify the various statements. Based on his recommendations, the application, which is submitted in triplicate, is forwarded to the ADF who, in turn, sends it to the Registrar of Cooperative Societies through the Director of Fisheries. On being registered, one of the copies with the Registration Number is sent to the society and the other to the ADF for record.

Provision of Facilities

As a rule, societies have to be given the first preference while leasing the ponds or *bundhs*. The irrigation *bundhs* and reservoirs are leased to them at nominal rates. Of the 12 societies fishing in the Kansabati reservoir (3,600 ha), each member has to pay Rs 250 only as annual royalty to the Department. Irrigation *bundhs* are given only on an annual lease that is renewable and the society has to stock the seed and harvest the crop.

The societies get considerable facilities from the Department of Fisheries under the grants-in-aid program. Houses, roads and tube-wells, in addition to nets, fish seed, lime and fertilizers that are required for fish culture, are provided but only once.

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) also provides liberal funding based on the project cost that includes loan, subsidy, equipment and culture costs. Training under the NCDC-supported project is also provided.

If the society takes the FFDA project, the same rules are applicable as discussed above under the FFDA.