

Title: **Co-Management and Rights-Based Approach to Fisheries Governance-Lessons From Bangladesh**

Authors: Mustafa Md Golam, The WorldFish Center (Bangladesh)
Khondker Jahan, The WorldFish Center Bangladesh and South Asia (Bangladesh)
Azharul H. Muzumder, USAID, Bangladesh

Abstract: This paper is based on a review and assessment of lessons from three projects on fisheries co-management in Bangladesh: i) Community-based fisheries management (CBFM), ii) Management of aquatic ecosystems through community husbandry (MACH), and iii) Fourth Fisheries Project (FFP). These co-management initiatives established 191 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in 179 water bodies. The review shows that most lessons learned relate to institutions, governance, access rights and the effectiveness of fisheries management measures such as creation of sanctuaries. In most sites, rights-based approaches dominated fisheries management arrangements and enhanced the sustainability of fisheries through agreed measures. The review shows however that these projects were not as successful institutionally as they were in terms of fish production and cost effectiveness. The review also indicates that improved knowledge provided for better management, and that fishers already know the importance of fisheries resources. This makes it possible for communities to take charge of the responsible management and harvest of fishes from their water bodies. Community leaders can function well as leaders of groups of fishers wherever they act transparently and maintain good relationships with local administration. However, the review shows that these initiatives were not a complete triumph in terms of generating policy shifts amongst government bodies. The review reveals that transfers of responsibilities have occurred as a result of the community-management approach, increasing the role of the fishers in the overall application of the fisheries management. Responsibility for participatory monitoring of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) has enabled fishers to defend their legal rights to protect water bodies from traditional lease holders.

Key words - community based organizations; co-management; community-based fisheries management; jalmahals; Bangladesh