

Capacity Development and Resource Mobilization for Sustainable Land Management in Bangladesh

Inception Workshop Report

26th November 2008

Conference Room

Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF)

Introduction

The project “Capacity Development and Resource Mobilization for Sustainable Land Management in Bangladesh (hereinafter SLMP or the project)” is a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assisted National Execution (NEX) Project of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). The Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) is implementing the project along with the Ministry of Land (MoL) and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). A number of government agencies, namely Department of Land Record and Surveys (DLRS), Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA), Soil Research Development Institute (SRDI), Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC), Water Resources Planning Organization (WARPO), Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), and Department of Environment (DoE) are partners of this project and involved in implementation of the planned project activities.

The project is a three year endeavour to contribute towards the achievement of the long-term goal of “The agricultural, forest and other uses of terrestrial-aquatic ecosystems of Bangladesh are sustainable, with productive systems that maintain ecosystem productivity and ecological functions while contributing directly to the environmental, economic and social well-being of the country.”

The objective of the project is stated as follows:

“To strengthen the enabling environment and capacity for SLM while ensuring broad-based political and participatory support for the process”

The project recognizes that it alone will not tackle the capacity and mainstreaming needs outlined above. Instead, it aims to lay the foundation for collaboration between the relevant agencies, NGOs, private sector and most importantly with the community. In addition, there will be particular emphasis in leveraging funding and mobilizing resources through operational partnership with development partners and the public and private sectors in Bangladesh, and expand this current SLM project in to a nation-wide follow-on programme.

The project focuses primarily on capacity and mainstreaming activities as they relate to the implementation and enforcement of the Government’s National Land Use Policy. This project will also place considerable emphasis on developing and sharing best practices and integrating them into the day-to-day management as well as long term planning in land resources management in Bangladesh. As a part of the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Targeted Portfolio Project for SLM, the project will also draw on and share best practices internationally.

The project addresses all three of the outcomes envisaged under the umbrella project, namely: Cost-effective and timely delivery of GEF resources to target countries; enhancement of individual and institutional capacities for SLM; and systemic capacity building and mainstreaming of SLM principles.

The project focuses on the following areas:

- Sharing of SLM experiences, lessons learned, best practices and guidelines;

- Guidance and support on the use of market based instruments and development of natural resource/environmental economics for SLM;
- Guidance and support for the development of knowledge management systems for SLM;
- Guidance and support for the development of monitoring and evaluation systems for SLM.

In gaining momentum and building the working relationship with the project partners as well as letting the project activities to be into effect, an inception workshop was organized by the SLMP on 26th November 2008 at the MoEF conference room. Raja Devasish Roy, Special Assistant to the Honourable Chief Advisor, was the chief guest and Mr. Stefan Priesner, Country Director, UNDP was the special guest. Mr. A. H. M. Rezaul Kabir, ndc, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) presided over the opening session of the workshop. 35 professionals from the partner organizations and from the ministry attended the workshop (Annex 1: list of participants).



Workshop proceedings

Opening Session

The workshop started with the opening statements by Dr. A H M Mustain Billah, Joint Secretary (Development) and the National Project Director, SLMP following the recitation from the Holy Qur'an. Welcoming the distinguished guests and the participants, Dr. Billah gave a brief run down on the SLMP and he reiterated that Bangladesh compared to most nations in the world has a smaller amount of land per person. So that the land management is always a big dilemma in the country's developmental manifesto and provide continuous challenges to the economic emancipation of the country. But the advancement of science and technology, changing socio-economic dynamics and developmental techniques also shows us the developmental horizon with newer ideas and concepts. In his speech he

mentioned that agricultural production is diminishing with the increase in population and loss of agricultural land that is taking place at the rate of roughly one percent per year. With this diminishing rate, after twenty years, land will be more scarce than ever in this country which certainly will create lot of pressure on Bangladesh development and economic potential. Dr. Billah also underscored the importance of the project and requested the participants to come up with a work plan that will help achieve the SLMP and which is in fact the basic objective of this workshop.



In the opening speech Dr. Billah also mentioned about the socio-economic, physio-chemical and ecological impact of the land degradation of Bangladesh (Annex-2). His speech also included the policy, intuitional and legal implications of implementing the SLMP in Bangladesh. Dr. Billah mentioned that SLMP is not only an issue of our country but has trans-boundary issues, that as project implementing personnel we need to focus on those issues, if we want to make it a success.

Mr. Billah in his concluding remarks mentioned that The Sustainable Land Management Project therefore proposes a forward-thinking towards sustainable land management principles. Thus for the project is taken to pursue combating land degradation through enhancing institutional and human capacity, developing an active knowledge base, facilitating coordinated implementation of policies, and raising awareness and advocacy for sustainable land management. Finally he welcomed the participants once again and requested to bring about their experiences and knowledge to make the SLMP an effective project so that the goal of the project could be achieved by the end of the project.

Comments by the Special Guest:

Following the presentation of Dr. Billah, the Country Director, Mr. Stefen Priesner gave his address. In his opening statement, he thanked the MoEF and the SLMP

team for organizing this all important workshop which he thought is also a timely one. Mr. Priesner in his speech emphasized on the competitive concept of effective land management and the growing population in Bangladesh. He felt that the direct impacts of the land degradation at the local level are increasing poverty specifically for the hard core poor. Food insecurity and deterioration of natural resources are adversely affecting socio-economic conditions and livelihood support systems, scarcity of drinking water, deteriorating health and nutrition status of the population and reducing availability of biomass for fuel.

Mr. Priesner also mentioned that the Sustainable Land Management Project therefore is a forward-thinking towards sustainable land management principles and UNDP is particularly happy for being involved with such a significant project of the government of Bangladesh. Mr. Priesner stated that the project is taken to pursue combating land degradation through enhancing institutional and human capacity, developing an active knowledge base, facilitating coordinated implementation of policies, and raising awareness and advocacy for sustainable land management.

In his speech Mr. Priesner also asked the workshop participants to come up with innovative and effective ideas so that the project could be a success and thereby the people of Bangladesh would be benefited from its outcome. Mr. Priesner reiterated the SLM project interventions as (i) mainstreaming sustainable land management principles at the policy and planning process, (ii) initiate implementation of the national land use policy and pilot demonstration of land zoning system, (iii) conduct action researches and studies on land degradation and better management of the ecosystem, and (iv) pilot demonstration on increase productivity of land. He also emphasized on developing regional land-zoning principles while implementing SLM project interventions. Mr. Priesner also pointed out Knowledge management, mobilization of the stakeholder, advocacy and campaign, and capacity building as the major cross cutting issues of the project. Finally, Mr. Priesner hoped that the MoEF and SLMP team will certainly be able to bring about a change in the existing conventional land management concepts of the country and could provide a direction that will contribute in the development of sustainable land management in Bangladesh.

Comments by the Chief Guest:

The chief guest of the opening ceremony of the workshop Raja Devasish Roy then gave his brief speech. In his speech he thanked the workshop organizers for organizing such an important workshop. He acknowledged the overview of the status and trends of land degradation from the presentation made by Dr. A H M Mustain Billah and thanked the UNDP Country Director for mentioning some critical issues relating to land degradation in Bangladesh. Then he surfaced some other important aspects that have a clear relevance to the project. While talking about soil fertility and fertilizer use, Raja Roy shared his experience about the hill track areas, where farmers already started to going back to indigenous, compost fertilizer uses instead of chemical fertilizers. According to the farmers, as mentioned by Raja Roy, chemical fertilizers are not only expensive but also decreasing soil fertility and food production a lot. Washed out chemical fertilizers are also affecting the natural aquatic system as well. He emphasized to

conceptualize the very important interrelationships between the terrestrial land use and aquatic systems and therefore to see the issue in a holistic manner. Because of those interdependencies, we all can understand that sustainable land management has a direct link to country's food security, economic growth and overall national development.

In this connection, he felt, SLM should be a pioneering project for the GoB to take an account for the effective land management system in Bangladesh. He also mentioned that this project certainly has the potential, if implemented effectively, for improving the quality of land management of the country and not only limited to that but can also contribute to change the quality of life of the people of Bangladesh.

Raja Devasish Roy also stressed upon the need of addressing the climate change as it may be one of the major threats for both terrestrial and aquatic systems in Bangladesh, and that he would like to see that this has been properly addressed in this strategic initiative.

Comments by the Session Chair:

The Secretary of the MoEF, Mr. A H M Rezaul Kabir, ndc, in his speech mentioned that he was particularly pleased to chair the opening ceremony workshop. He thought that his colleagues here in the Ministry and the Project Team with collaboration with the Ministry of Land, Ministry of Agriculture and UNDP have initiated an important job that hopefully would open a new vista in managing the country's lands towards attaining water and food security for a sustainable development.



In his speech Mr. A H M Rezaul Kabir, ndc, summarized the thoughts and ideas mentioned earlier by the other speakers and added that the poor management of terrestrial and aquatic resources, increasing population, overuse of resources, poorly planned infrastructure and urbanization along with other types of land use

are key factors of the land degradation of the country. Bangladesh's expanding population destroys critical habitats, causing a decrease in biodiversity. Most of Bangladesh's tropical forests and almost all of the freshwater floodplains have been negatively affected by human activities. So that Mr. Kabir thought the Sustainable Land Management Project is a timely initiative by the government of Bangladesh. He reiterated that further transformation of the country effort now is inevitable to succeed in improving land use and its management which throws us the challenges of two probable concept of being more industrially development or to ensure environmentally sound land management. The honourable secretary mentioned that the closest possible successful idea could be the improvement of environmentally sound and climate resilient land use and management and that is why we all gathered in the workshop to visualize and strategize how effectively we can translate these ideas into reality. It is emphasized in his speech that the land use and sustainable land management yet is a heap of challenges which we all need to win otherwise we altogether may lack behind in terms of developmental attainments. In this regard, he would like to assure that through intensive planning and effective implementation of the policy the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) along with SLMP will give the best effort to prevent the land degradation. In his final words he extended his thanks to the MoEF, UNDP and the SLMP and also the partnering organizations for being committed to make an effective inception of the project. Later the workshop proceeded for the technical sessions.

Technical Session - 1

The technical session dealt with two basic issues, one was the foundation and background of the project for which the project is undertaken and the futuristic issues that would be covered in the project implementation phase so that the project could have a measurable impact on the development of sustainable land management in Bangladesh. And the second issue was the implementation plan, where the participants and the content specialists from various ministries, directorates and institutions could contribute to develop a forward thinking plan in implementing the project effectively and timely.

The first technical session, chaired by the Abu Md. Moniruzzaman Khan, Secretary, Ministry of Land, had two facets, one to explore and quest for existing land use policy and its implications and second was the change management due to environmental effects which embraced issues like climate change, water and food security, sustainable land management and its interrelated and interdependent issues.

The technical session began with the presentation by Md. Aminur Rahman, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Land. In the presentation (Annex-3) the existing land use policy and its policy guideline were discussed. In the presentation it was clarified that the existing land use policy is developed to provide all possible protection for agriculture and the thrust is given to use khas land for developmental activities. Other corner stone of the policy is to use land for poverty reduction and livelihood enhancement while focus is given to resist hill cutting, river erosion and preserve natural forest and obviously provide protection against land degradation. Directives of land use were presented in details. Later the presenter mentioned

about the SLMP objectives which could be the core of the future land use policy of the country.



The second technical session dealt with climate change, water and food security. Mr. Mamunul Haque Khan, Programme Analyst, UNDP made the presentation (Annex-4). In his presentation he stressed upon the climate change and its probable impact on the country. Mr. Mamun mentioned that there are signs of water rise around the coastal belt of the county which is clear indication that Bangladesh would suffer the most for the fact of sea level rise due to global warming. In the presentation he showed data and models that help comprehending the Sea Level Rise (SLR) by 2050 and its effect on the landmass of the country. The presentation also covered the SLR trend in Bangladesh and observed sea level rise Bangladesh. The presentation also emphasized on the issues that requires special attention in developing a sustainable land management programme. Mr. Mamun, in his presentation, tried to accentuate his observation and accumulated available scientific data to lay emphasis on developing forward thinking land management programme, which also resembles expectations of the chairs in the opening session. The presentation also provided an overview on the impact of the climate change on water and food security and underscored the need of synergistic effort in partnering collaboration with interrelated ministries and departments.

Technical Session - 2

Presided over by Mr. M A Akmal Hossain Azad, Additional Secretary (PPC), Ministry of Agriculture, the second part of the technical session dealt with the experiences and knowledge gathered through implementation of programmes on land uses and land management. There were two presentations in the session, one dealt with demonstration of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and the other focused on the knowledge management and institutional capacity development for SLM.

In the first part, Mr. Mokbul Hossain of Soil resource Development institute (SRDI) and Mr. Md. Rakibul Hasan of Directorate of Land Records and Survey (DLRS) together highlighted their experiences and their accomplishments regarding institutional capacity development and SLM in Bangladesh (Annex-5). The presenters showed and how the database on various aspects of SLM is developed and how this database could be used for better and effective planning for SLM. The presenter felt that there is yet potential for the data to be of useful to both

beneficiaries and institutional personnel in making the SLM a success in the country.

Later a presentation (Annex-6) was made by Dr. M A Mannan from the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) focusing on remedies of land degradation in the country. Various land degradation and its effect on crop production and management was the corner stone of the presentation. It is observed in the presentation that the lack of proper knowledge, information and absence of propagation of best practices are the major hindrances for successful implementation of SLM. On the other hand SLM practices are not being demonstrated to create SLM as means of protecting ourselves and thereby the environment as whole of the country. Dr. Mannan also mentioned that these barriers of SLM could be overcome through implementation of integrated pest management (IPM) and integrated crop management (ICM). In the presentation it was discussed that there should be a proper training for the related personnel who would ensure effective SLM in the country. Dr. Mannan assured that DAE will extend its full-capacity support to implement SLM at the field level through DAE's country-wide network at the grass-root level. He also expressed interest in the development of SLM curriculum and training materials to share DAE's expertise in this field.



In this same continuation, Mr. Abdul Latif of Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) shared their experience of land management related interventions in their project areas. In the presentation (Annex-7), BMDA highlighted barind situation before the interventions are made and the changes that happened due to the SLM related interventions. All the interventions were discussed elaborately and the presenter mentioned that should there be any opportunity created through other interventions in the Barind, it would certainly be a success that could be replicated in other areas of the country.

Open Discussion

After the presentations, the chairperson opened the floor for discussing the issues that participants felt is deemed necessary and questions were asked to clarify

various aspects of the presentation. Participants also gave their opinions about the SLMP.

Most of the participants felt that the workshop is timely one and most needed one as land is a scarce resource in Bangladesh and development policies have not given adequate priority to this extremely important issue that has a direct link to country's food security, economic growth and overall national development.

Many participants commented that capacity building for implementation of the existing National Land Use Policy should be the central focus of this project. The project thus far, would improve policymaking, institutional coordination, and compatibility of relevant policy and legal instruments as well as institutional mandates.



All the participants welcome the 'Model Village Concept', implemented and demonstrated by BMDA. Experts also mentioned about the applicability of 'One Village, One Product' model of Thailand. The floor appreciated the replication effort of BMDA under the SLM project and advised that regional variations should be taken into account while selecting demonstration sites.

Other participants commented that eco-system components are not adequately addressed in the project. They also emphasized on sustained capacity development at the local level. Need of capacity assessment regarding impacts of bio-diversity and climate change on sustainable land management was also discussed in the workshop.

Some other participant expressed his concern whether policies are sufficient and complete to implement SLM principles at the grass-root level. The board also re-iterated that effective demonstration of SLM and enactment of law will be the key success factors integration of SLM at the national level.

The distinguished chairs hoped that this SLM project would contribute to integrate sustainable land management in the national development framework and could be a central focus in poverty reduction, and maintenance of ecosystem, even with this huge pressure for increasing food production. In addition, he opined that an important component of the project, to demonstrate sustainable land management through pilot initiative, would encourage a successful SLM in the country and

proper emphasis be given to enhance R&D on land degradation so that capacity of the individuals, institutions are enhanced in order to develop an effective SLM in the country. Along with the participants, the chairs also mentioned that SLM not be just like any other impact less project, rather be an effective one and create a land mark for others.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Following suggestions and recommendations were made by the participants in the workshop:

- There not much regional variation in Bangladesh topography, but yet there are some differences in soil texture and ecosystems, and that emphasis should be given on regional SLM planning
- Knowledge management would be the other important aspect of the project since there is some database already available with related issues but these databases are not designed maintaining appropriate level of compatibility for its effective utilization. There is an urgent need for their further development which includes an agreed, common protocol and the elimination of inconsistencies and duplications
- The issue of land zoning might be one of the effective policy in Implementing SLM in the country and in this regard the DAE would extend their all possible support in implementing this into the field level
- A comprehensive training module should be developed and impart the trainings in order to enhance the capacity of the various institutions and personnel in planning and managing the SLM
- It was discussed and agreed that there would be a comprehensive website with regard to SLM in the country and al possible information including successful SLM experiences would be prime feature of the website and could be used as a ready reference for all walks of people, further to that the website would be updated routinely.
- Finally and most urgently, a two-day workshop with all implementing partners needs to be arranged to identify individual responsibilities and specific project activities, along with budget and particular deliverables. Due to time constraint, it was not possible develop the annual work plan for the individual implementing partners. Funding modalities, along with individual AWP's will also be finalized during the workshop.