

Community-based floodplain management Access and Justice Issues

It is worthy to consider the lessons and experiences learned from community-based resource management approaches, particularly the contribution in designing policy frameworks. Appropriate legal frameworks with institutional arrangements should be evolved to institutionalize the practice.

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LIVELIHOOD of the vast rural poor populace of Bangladesh is supported by its natural resources. The rural livelihood mainly depends on land and land based production systems and sub-systems including agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and so on. But the natural resources have been depleted significantly mainly due to unabated growth of population and, consequently, increasing demand for food, messy use of agro-chemicals, unplanned industrialization and urbanization etc. In addition, existing and potential climate change impacts on natural resources, pose a big challenge for policy responses.

Moreover, due to on hand conflicts in access to and use of natural resources, the poor and marginalised people are continuously losing their traditional rights and entitlement to the resources. Conversely, with undue access, the rich and the power elites of the society overexploit the resources without considering the future productivity and sustainability of the resources. Therefore, in terms of subjective ranking of policy crisis, access and justice issues involved with resource management are identified as the prime concern in the several community based resource management projects implemented previously in Bangladesh.

Hence the issue of conservation and regeneration of natural resources demands appropriate policy responses to the conflicting factors of entitlement, property right and conflict management, access of the poor to resources, sustainable productivity and benefit sharing with participatory management. In response to aforesaid conflicting issues community based

and co-management of natural resource is now well accepted policy approach worldwide, which aims to meet the needs of resource dependent community and manage the resources biologically.

Community based resource management, is also found in Bangladesh as a development strategy to promote the participatory resource management and ensure traditional livelihoods. In the early 1990s several projects were implemented by the government with community based resources management approach. Particularly, community based fisheries management has developed well enough and this concept scaled up the co-management strategy in other resource management including water, forest, disaster preparedness and now in adaptation to climate change.

The Department of Fisheries [DoF] has implemented several projects with community based management approach. One of the major challenges of these projects was to ensure the access and user rights to waterbodies of the poor fishing communities. Hence, these projects assisted to form a large number of community-based organisations (CBOs), with a view to promoting participatory management of natural resources and ensuring access and benefits of genuine fisher folks. The efforts were taken under projects implemented for establishing community based resource management system that could sustain and continue after the project funding ended.

As such, Memorandums of Understanding [MoUs] for about 161 waterbodies were signed between Ministries of Land and Fisheries and Livestock in order to secure the lengthy tenure for ensuring access of genuine fisher folks and biologi-

cal management of the waterbodies. Traditional leasing procedure reveals that the waterbodies are leased out by Ministry of Land to rich landowners with revenue earning approach, who then hire fishers to work on them as labourers.

In accordance with the aforesaid MoUs, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, as the second party of the MoUs handed over the waterbodies to community organizations [CBOs] mostly for 10 years. All these MoUs are endowed with the specific provisions of extension for the next consecutive period providing the required guidelines. Most of the waterbodies handed over to CBOs through the MoUs, would see end of their lease period by 2012. Therefore, uncertainty or loss of access will undermine the investments these communities have made in conserving and restoring natural fishery productivity.

Moreover, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock is endowed with management responsibility under the aforesaid MoUs, whereas Ministry of Land is the line ministry of land management including all the waterbodies. MoUs delegated Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock the handing over responsibility of waterbodies to the right fishers community organizations. Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, under these development projects dealt with required expertise on biological management of waterbodies. As a result, it increased the fishing productivity ultimately, promoting traditional livelihoods of fisher folks with the coordinated efforts of line ministries in collaboration with NGOs and supported by donor agencies.

These projects also identified some new solutions to problems resulting from top-down governance approaches to resource con-



servation and sustainability and suggested community-based co-management where local communities should have direct control over the management, utilization and benefits of local resources in order to value and use them in a sustainable manner. In the last 10-15 years, a large number of community-based organisations [CBOs], have been formed in Bangladesh with legal entity registering under different statutory laws, under the guidance and auspices of the implemented projects to promote participatory management and ensure access to benefits of community people.

At the local level, the CBOs are empowered, to some extent, to influence the decision making process to take into account local communities' interests and hence CBOs are acting as the new alliances/actors to the natural resource governance regime in Bangladesh. Thus, this bottom up approach has provided a new dimension to the governance regime of natural resource management which also now has been extended to community based adaptation to climate change. Therefore, community participation in the resource management provided a new way of governance system, which provides

required guidance to further policy advancement.

Unfortunately, after project support ends most of these CBOs are left to continue their work without contact with other CBOs and with limited contact with other service providers and agencies. In some cases the relevant government agencies try to keep some contact and even organise meetings with the CBOs but this is limited in resources and time, and depends on the interest of the concerned officials.

However, recently, just over 250 of these CBOs from all over the country have been helped to network with support from some NGOs and academics under project initiative and formed a federation with four regional committees. This Federation called 'Society for Water Resource Management [SWRM]', having legal entity under the Society Registration Act, 1860 can also influence the policy making process at the national level.

Therefore, it is worthy to consider the lessons and experiences learned from community-based resource management approaches, particularly the contribution in designing policy frameworks. In addition to project based management approach, it is also important to assess the statutory laws, regulations and

institutional arrangements in order to find out the gaps and constraints in the existing mechanisms for required policy interventions. Appropriate legal frameworks with institutional arrangements should be evolved to institutionalize the new practices like community based management of resources.

The legislative process must put emphasis on harmonizing and bringing in coherence between policy and legal commitments. Immediate decision is needed to extend the lease period of the waterbodies handed over to CBOs for the next consecutive period in accordance with the MoUs signed by Ministries of Land and Fisheries and Livestock. Then it is important to adopt a comprehensive policy framework consolidating all the aspects of signed MoUs to frame a general guideline for all the waterbodies to regulate taking into consideration other issues including high lease rates, water pollution, and demarcation of waterbodies and also other contemporary challenges like climate change.

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Promoting renewable energy sources

Developing countries including Bangladesh are in a vulnerable situation in matters of energy demand. They are also searching for alternative energy sources as well as renewable energies.

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TODAY, energy has become the focus of worldwide debate. At present energy systems generate severe economic, strategic-political conflicts and environmental deterioration. In this context, renewable energies are playing a vital role in the new model of development as well as poverty elimination process -- development that is clean and efficient.

Developing renewable energies can also renew development worldwide including Bangladesh. The first evidence of introducing renewable energies took place in the developed countries back in 1970s or earlier when, in regard of political crises and exponential rise in the price of oil governments became aware of the need for greater energy independence. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA) which analyses the evolution of energy markets in developed countries, the contribution of renewable energies (including large hydroelectric infrastructures) to the energy on offer increased from 141.5 Mtoe (4.6%) in 1970 to 280.9 (5.5%) in 2001.

Over the last three decades of last century, the contribution of renewable energies has increased on average by 2.2% while the total energy on offer has increased by 1.6% over the same period. Whereas the contribution of renewable energies (such as hydroelectric or geothermal) declined, that of new renewable energies (such as solar or wind) increased by 23% between 1980 and 2001. The IEA member governments distributed about 291 billion USD for energy research, development and deployment from 1974 to 2002. In the same period, investments for research development and deployment in renewable energies in developed countries estimated to be close to 23.55 billion USD, 8% of the total funds allocated.

On the other hand, developing countries including Bangladesh are in a vulnerable situation in matters of energy demand. They are also searching for alternative energy sources as well as renewable energies such as solar, wind, biomass, sea water and geo-thermal etc. Because of the constant increase in energy demand, limitation of oil production, global reserves are decreasing. Dependency on fossil fuel imports from countries that are often politically unstable is brought with scar-



city and excessive prices. The growth of renewable energy sources in developing countries has started to be exponential. In 2005 for example, China invested 7 billion USD, and India overtook Japan in terms of installed renewable capacity. China comes out as the leader in annual investments, first for solar heated water, third in ethanol production and fifth in wind energy. India on the other hand is fourth in wind energy and solar heated water investments. Of the 43 countries that have national renewable energy targets, especially eight are emerging economies: China, Brazil, India, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Egypt and South Africa.

According to Renewable Energy Policy of Bangladesh, published on November 06, 2008, the objectives are:

- Harnessing the potential of renewable energy resources and

dissemination of renewable energy technologies in rural, peri-urban and urban areas;

- Enabling, encouraging, and facilitating both public and private sector investment in renewable energy projects;
- Developing sustainable energy supplies to substitute indigenous non-renewable energy supplies;
- Scaling up contributions of renewable energy to electricity production;
- Promoting appropriate, efficient and environment friendly use of renewable energy;
- Training and for facilitating the use of renewable energy at every level of energy usage;
- Creating enabling environment and legal support to encourage the use of renewable energy;
- Promoting development of local technology in the field of renewable energy;



- Promoting clean energy for CDM.
- Setting targets for developing renewable energy resources to meet 5% of the total power demand by 2015 and 10% by 2020.

There are many sources of renewable energy, such as -- solar photovoltaic, solar thermal power, wind energy, biomass, biogas, hydropower and other renewable energy sources including: bio-fuels, gasohol, geothermal, river current, wave and tidal energy etc. Of them, solar power and wind power are very important sources for Bangladesh. Meanwhile, Bangladesh has found small potential windows from the solar power. In June 2008, solar photovoltaic systems were used in the country -- about 200,000 household-level installations having capacity of 12 MW. This is too small in the face of increasing demand. On the other hand for wind power based electric-

ity generation it is 2 MW with installed turbines at Feni and Kutubdia.

Recommendations to promote renewable energies:

- Direct public investment and facilitation
- Market access policies, including price fixing, setting quotas, programs for small producers etc.
- Public-private partnership investment
- Strong incentives to research and development of available renewable energy resources.
- Public awareness and technical training facilities
- Plan of action for the dissemination of use of renewable energies
- Job security by developing the renewable energy sector.

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