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Designation :

Title : Potentials of Rehabilitating a Small Scale Water Resources Development Project Through People's Participation

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Sirajpur Haor project was designed to create opportunities for HYV Boro rice irrigation and develop fisheries through conservation of water in the Sirajpur Nadi. But, post project evaluation by LGED in 2004 showed that about 85% of the irrigation target and only about 7% of the fisheries target were achieved. The purpose of this study was to assess the present status of the project and ascertain the future rehabilitation potentials through technical evaluation and people's participation.

From the analysis of field data it was evident that at present, the project had no area under HYV Boro irrigation and only about 6% of the fisheries target was achieved. Analysis of irrigation potential showed that the available water from Sirajpur Nadi is grossly inadequate to meet the irrigation water demand of 345 ha of planned HYV Boro. From the FGDs it was evident that the farmers of the project never used the water from the river for HYV Boro irrigation and had no plan to also use it in future. HYV Boro is cultivated in the project area using groundwater through STWs. Scarcity of water in the river, conflict with culture fisheries and difficulties in conveying water to the farmers' fields were the main reasons for such non-use. The project's fish production target was not achieved mainly due to illegal settlements in the floodplain and poor management of fish culture by the WMCA. Illegal settlements in the floodplain have reduced the water area for fish culture from 82 ha in the pre-project condition to only about 18.3 ha in 2008.

The WMCA has leased out the river for fish culture and the leasers' cultural practices were inappropriate considering species, stocks, fish feed etc. From the FGDs it was ascertained that the fishers of the project were unable to fish in the river as capture fishery system has been converted to culture fishery. Most of the fishers have either left the project or switched over to other profession. Only a few of them now work for the leasers of the river.

Evaluation of fisheries potential showed that with proper management practices, the fish production can be increased by about five times, even in the present water area. The annual profit from fish culture would be about Tk. 2.15 million and would exceed the annual re-excavation cost of Tk. 1.81 million by Tk. 0.34 million. The profit would be much higher if the re-excavation cost is shared by LGED and a conducive environment for culture fisheries is created through re-excavation. From the FGDs with the stakeholders it was evident that the rehabilitation of Sirajpur Haor project would be feasible if the impediments to fish culture (illegal settlements and river siltation) are removed, the WMCA is allowed to function without any political interference and through proper cultural practices (species, stock and fish feed).