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In many areas of Bangladesh, beels or shallow wetlands are dewatered or drained to allow dry season agriculture. Structural interventions including embankments and sluice gates are often introduced for this purpose, with the main objective to increase crop production with higher economic returns for the farmers who are relatively strong in the community power structure.

However, this arrangement adversely affects fisheries, ecosystem and their livelihood support in the short and long terms. So the water use conflicts between dry season agriculture and fisheries are almost inevitable. The conflicts are more complex where the open access fisheries resources are limited due to intervention of the aquatic ecosystem. Even within a participatory process of decision making for such interventions, the needs and priorities of the fishing communities are often marginalized, mostly because of their weak position in the community.

Based on a socio-technical approach, this thesis provides an understanding of the conflicts between agriculture and fisheries due to structural interventions in a selected water resources development project. Social survey and stakeholder analysis through FGDs and interviews with different groups including farmers, fishermen and women revealed the differences in their realities and identified the conflicts by assessing the impact of project interventions on irrigated agriculture, fisheries, ecosystem and livelihood support. An apparent discontent prevails among the less powerful fishing community as their needs, priorities and alternate livelihood options have not been properly addressed in the project formulation process. Technical analysis revealed conflicting water requirements in the dry season for irrigated agriculture, fisheries and aquatic ecosystem.

This study also attempted to identify a feasible platform for conflict resolution. Two stakeholder workshops were arranged to understand the potential areas and opportunities for conflict reduction. Although such workshops or meetings may be very useful to find agreeable mitigation measures where the social power structure is skewed, participation of the local government in this process and policy interventions are essential to reduce the conflicts.