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5.1 - Policy and regulatory framework for Participatory Water Management

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5 - Project design

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BGP combines a substantial investment in water infrastructure with a strong focus on establishment of Participatory Water Management (PWM). Given this distinguishing feature of the program - a feature which it shares with several other donor-funded water sector projects - this chapter summarises the legal and regulatory provisions, which establish the bandwidth within which PWM can be implemented. Before zooming in on prevailing legislation and regulation for PWM, it discusses the National Water Policy (NWPo), which sounded the starter's gun for promulgating legal provisions for PWM. The chapter concludes with a section that zooms-out again to reflect on today's context for Participatory Water Management.

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National Water Policy (1999)[\[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Status: *The NWPo was formulated upon instruction by the National Water Council chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on March 18, 1997 and was subsequently prepared and published by the Ministry of Water Resources on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh on January 30, 1999.*

The 1999 National Water Policy (NWPo) provides direction to all agencies and institutions that work in or otherwise relate to the water sector. In an apparent break with a decades-long tradition of sector management by master plans only - resulting in recurrent definition of portfolios of investment projects - the NWPo introduces for the first time governance of water resources within a national perspective. In the words of the Prime Minister:

The declaration of the National Water policy is a bold step towards good governance in Bangladesh. In the absence of such a policy, much damage has already been done to the

bio-diversity and environment of the country. Many adverse and counter-productive situations have been created due to lack of coordination in development programs and use of water resources. For a water-dependent country like Bangladesh, this situation is highly detrimental to its overall development and this needs to be remedied urgently. The National Water Policy seeks remedy to this chaotic situation by bringing order and discipline in the exploration, management and use of water resources in Bangladesh. It clearly and unequivocally declares the intention of the government that “all necessary means and measures will be taken to manage the water resources of the country in a comprehensive, integrated and equitable manner.” It sets out the objectives of such a policy and provides the broad guidelines for achieving those objectives. The policy has successfully integrated internationally accepted water management principles, norms and standards, with the demanding social and economic needs of a developing country. The true strength of this policy, however, emanates from its decentralized and democratic nature that gives every user the opportunity to vote for the use and sharing of water in an efficient, equitable and environmentally sustainable manner[i]

The NWPo formulation was part of the Bangladesh Water and Flood Management Strategy (1995), which in turn is the culmination of the wide array of studies carried out under the Flood Action Plan (1990 - 1995).

The severe floods of 1987 and 1988 triggered a debate about the effectiveness of water management interventions. As little was known about the hydrology of Bangladesh and about the performance of existing infrastructure, a 5-year study phase was undertaken under the flag of the Flood Action Plan (FAP). FAP was highly controversial due to its focus on engineering interventions. The opposition to FAP, headed by a number of NGOs, feared that FAP would be the precursor of a vast investment program focussing on large-scale water management works, largely without giving explicit consideration to the vital interests of the weaker segments of the rural population. At the same time, FAP - by virtue of its comprehensive set of studies - was a departure from a purely technical approach to water management.

The Bangladesh Water and Flood Management Strategy recommended peoples' participation, environmental analysis in planning, and multi-criteria analysis for screening of plans. The Strategy recommended that the Government should formulate a National Water Policy that addresses these issues and that a comprehensive National Water Management Plan should be prepared within this framework.

While the NWPo outlines the direction of the overall governance in the country's water sector, this section recalls for the purpose of this BGP Final Report those policy elements that have a bearing on decentralised water management and on the participation of local stakeholders therein.

The NWPo marks a turning point in water resource development in Bangladesh. Earlier experiences in beneficiary participation in irrigation management (e.g. the Manu River Irrigation System and the Ganges-Kobadak Irrigation System); consultation of beneficiaries in FCDI scheme development (e.g. Early Implementation Projects); community-managed small-scale water resources infrastructure (e.g. Local Government Engineering Department); community involvement in rehabilitation and management of schemes (e.g. Systems Rehabilitation Project) and other such experiences led to sector-wide recognition of the need to ensure participation in water resource development. The NWPo promoted an approach including social and environmental considerations, full participation of stakeholders and affected people in planning, and institutional development:

The participation of all project affected persons, individually and collectively, will be ensured in the

planning, design, implementation, and operation and maintenance (O&M) of publicly funded surface water resources development plans and projects.

(...)

*Stakeholder involvement should be an integral part of water resources management, at all stages of the project cycle. Towards that objective there should be a complete reorientation of the institutions for increasing the role of stakeholders and the civil society in decision making and implementation of water projects. The Government has to be at the core of the effort to help build the local institutions and to impart a precise awareness of the issues and an unambiguous understanding of their role in water management. Similarly, Government must lead the effort to ensure greater participation of women in this endeavour.**[ii]**.*

What, in addition to the strong endorsement of stakeholder participation, stands out in above quotes is the explicit reference to 'water resources development plans and projects' and 'project cycle', rather than a formulation that seeks participation in management of surface water systems. It appears that, even after the promulgation of the NWPo, the principle instrument to shape water resources management in Bangladesh continues to be the project-based intervention; and that a more programmatic approach to foster participation in managing water resources is not embraced in full.

The NWPo provides directions for the participation of local stakeholders in two respects: (i) it pursues that community resources are managed by the community concerned, along with local government institutions (unless a greater national interest prevails); and (ii) it pursues a greater role of stakeholders and the civil society in decision making and implementation of water projects.

In terms of ensuring community management, NWPo stipulates that:

(...)

d) The management of public water schemes, barring municipal schemes, with command area up to 5000 ha will be gradually made over to local and community organisations and their O&M will be financed through local resources.

e) Public water schemes, barring municipal schemes, with command area of over 5000 ha will be gradually placed under private management, through leasing, concession, or management contract under open competitive bidding procedures, or jointly managed by the project implementing agency along with local government and community organisations.

*f) Ownership of FCD and FCDI projects with command area of 1000 ha or less will gradually be transferred to the local governments, beginning with the ones that are being satisfactorily managed and operated by the beneficiary/ community organisations**[iii]**.*

In terms of enhancing the role of stakeholders and civil society it reads:

In order to ensure that all stakeholders actively and fruitfully participate in water resources management decision making at all stages, it is the policy of the Government that:

a) The "Guidelines for People's Participation (GPP) in Water Development Projects" be adhered to as part of project planning by all institutions and agencies involved in public sector management of water resources.

b) Guidelines for formation of water user groups (WUG) and similar community organisations will

be formulated.

c) *Generally 25 percent of the earthwork of any public water project will be offered to specific target groups or beneficiaries.*

d) *All opportunities are explored and efforts undertaken to ensure that the landless and other disadvantaged group are directly involved in participatory management of local water resources.*

e) *New projects proposed by a community or local institution will be considered for implementation on a priority basis only when the beneficiaries have mobilised a certain percentage of the total cost as their contribution to the project[iv].*

The delineation in scheme size coincides with a differentiation in responsibility of agencies, with the BWDB being charged with project development for schemes over 1,000ha; and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) being charged with projects for schemes of lesser size. The guidance on upfront beneficiary contributions cited above, is applied in LGED small-scale water sector projects.

The above strategic guidance has been taken in hand by the development of a regulatory framework comprising guidance documents, acts and rules. The principle ones are discussed in the following sections.

The National Water Policy states that it would be reviewed periodically and revised as necessary. Twenty years into the application of the NWPo, the moment for review may have arrived.

Guidelines for Participatory Water Management (2000)[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Status: *the draft Guidelines for Participatory Water Management were prepared by the Ministry of Water Resources and approved by the Executive Committee of the National Water Council on November 28, 2000.*

The 'Guidelines for Participatory Water Management' (GPWM) were developed by the Ministry of Water Resources and issued as Government guidelines applying to all agencies working in the water sector[v]. It replaces the earlier and more generic 'Guidelines for People's Participation in Water Development Projects' (1994). In doing so, it builds on NWPo policy guidance and harmonises previously existing guidelines for participation of inter alia the BWDB and LGED.

The new guidelines use the term 'Participatory Water Management' (PWM) and, directly in its opening paragraphs, makes a useful distinction between 'participation as consultation in decision-making' and 'participation as self-management of specific activities'. This highlights the difference between consultation of stakeholders in making public decisions about investment in water management infrastructure; and the role of stakeholders in caring for and operating infrastructure placed under their control.

The GPWM clearly describe which entities and persons should be considered stakeholder in PWM; what is the process through which stakeholders participate at different stages of the project cycle; and what types of water management organisations (WMOs) should be formed by people within the project area. Some salient features of the GPWM are:

- The GPWM apply uniformly to all agencies in the water sector;
- During initial stages of the project cycle (identification, pre-feasibility study and feasibility study) broad consultation of local stakeholders will take place, including of beneficiaries, project affected people and local government institutions (LGIs). The potential for formation of WMOs will be identified;
- WMO formation and capacity building will be taken in hand during the planning and design stages of the project;
- In each project area there must be at least one and maximum up to three layers of WMO. For schemes up to 5,000ha, two or three layers of organisation are suggested as follows:
 - o Water Management Groups (WMGs) at the smallest hydrological or social unit;
 - o Water Management Associations (WMAs) at the mid-level or apex of a project area;
 - o Water Management Federation (WMF) at the apex of a project area
- While WMAs must formally be registered, WMGs and WMFs do not necessarily need to be registered, However, only formally registered WMOs can enter into agreement with the project implementing agency or LGIs;
- Registration is to be done under the Cooperative Societies Ordinance 1984 and the Cooperative Societies Rules of 1987 (and there future amendments) until such time that the Government will issue separate rules for the registration of WMOs;
- Annexes include sample management transfer agreements and sample WMO bye-laws.

The GPWM provides substantial leeway in its application. The above reference to the number of organisational layers in a project area, and the optionality of WMO registration are points in case. In addition it is worth mentioning that the sample bye-laws for a registered WMO allow the WMO, under strict conditions, to levy a water rate or embankment protection rate from all beneficiaries (member and non-member) within its working area.

Bangladesh Water Development Board Act (2000)[\[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

***Status:** Original act in Bangla, enacted by the Government of Bangladesh and published as such on July 11, 2000*

This Act describes the powers, responsibilities and functions of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and provides an update of the orders with respect to the establishment of BWDB of 1972, inter alia in the light of the NWPo.

The Act describes 'structural' and 'non-structural' functions of the BWDB. The structural functions relate to the infrastructural measures that the BWDB is expected to undertake. The non-structural functions include, in addition to flood and drought warning, hydrological surveys, social forestry and fishery on areas around structures and research activities also the following function with respect to PWM:

f) *Establishment of water user's association and other water users/stakeholders' organisations, their training and participation, in project planning, implementation, operation and maintenance and cost recovery for long-term sustainability of benefits to the beneficiaries of completed projects***[vi]**

In addition, the act reiterates (and thereby for the first time enacts) provisions in the NWPo and the GPWM as follows:

1. *As per provisions of the National Water Policy and within the framework of sub regional and local water management plans, the Board shall only implement projects having a command area of more than 1000 hectares.*
2. *Local Authority shall be entitled to execute FCDI projects having command of less than 1000 hectares if these are compatible with the sub-regional and local water management plans. In the event of a dispute between the Board and a local authority, such dispute shall be resolved by means determined by the Government.*
3. *Management of projects with a command of less than 5000 hectares shall vest with beneficiary organisations, by whatever name it may be called, formed for this purpose following government guidelines.*
4. *Management of projects with a command of more than 5000 hectares shall vest in Joint management Committees comprising of beneficiary organisations formed for his purpose following government guidelines, the Board and other water-related agencies of the Government***[vii]**

The 2000 Act also defines the composition of the Governing Council of BWDB. Chaired by the Minister of Water Resources, the Governing Council includes representatives of relevant Ministries and Departments, of professional organisations and a representative of Non- Government Organisation (NGOs) and two representatives of beneficiary organisations.

The significance of the BWDB Act 2000 is that for the first time, participatory water management is enshrined in legislation. This then also opened the option to develop a formal set of Rules under the act.

National Water Management Plan 2001[\[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Status: *The National Water Management Plan 2001 was prepared by WARPO and has been approved by the National Water Resources Council (NWRC) headed by the Prime Minister on March 31, 2004.*

The National Water Management Plan (NWMP) [viii] has been prepared in a comprehensive and integrated manner to meet the broad objective of the NWPo. The NWMP was prepared with the overall national goals of economic development, poverty alleviation, food security, public health and safety, standard of living for the people and protection of the natural environment. The Plan contains a firm plan for the next five years, an indicative plan for the subsequent five years and a perspective plan to 2025. It is structured in a manner that the objectives of 84 different programs planned for the next 25 years contribute individually and collectively to attainment of both the overall objectives as well as to intermediate sub-sectoral goals. The 84 programs are grouped under 8 clusters of which the clusters on *institutional development of government agencies and other institutions* and on *enabling environment* (including PWM, legislation and public awareness) need particular mention in the context of this report.

The NWMP expected sector agencies, like BWDB, and local bodies to prepare micro-level planning in conformity to the NWMP and other approved government guidelines; and to implement the plan accordingly.

BWDB Participatory Water Management Rules 2014[\[edit | edit source\]](#)

Status: *The Participatory Water Management Rules, 2014 are applicable to projects of the BWDB and constitute the Rules under the BWDB Act 2000. These Rules were gazetted on February 11, 2014*

Fourteen years after the promulgation of the BWDB Act, GoB gazetted BWDB's Participatory Water Management Rules (PWMR). The Rules are similar in nature to the GPWM but deviate from those in a number of respects:

- Registration is now an obligation for all WMO entities, be it WMG, WMA or WMF;
- The registration will take place with the Department of Water Management (a.k.a. Office of the Chief Water Management - OCWM) of the BWDB. The PWMR annexes the relevant forms;
- An implicit consequence of abandoning registration under the Department of Cooperatives is that WMOs are no longer compelled to have shares. This provides the structure for running a Savings and Credit operation in Water Management Cooperative Associations (WMCA), but for WMOs registered under BWDB this is an activity of choice and no compulsion;
- A second implicit consequence is that the new type of registration is not conducive to running the organisation as a commercial enterprise, as the registration does not provide a status vis-à-vis the tax collector;
- Lastly, the PWMR does provide a framework for participation in water resources projects similar to that of the GPWM, but provides little structure for consultation in project planning.

In order to explain the last point, the following text is quoted and analysed:

(1) Water management activities of the water resources projects will be carried out through participation of the local stakeholders, and they will participate in the decision making process of the projects.

(2) In order to achieve the objectives of the sub-Rule (1), development and management of the water resources projects will be ensured through the following steps:

*(a) Organisation of local stakeholders into sustainable water management organisations so as to ensure their participation at different stages of water resources project (...)***[ix]**

WMOs are defined in the above as the sole vehicle for participation of local stakeholders throughout the project cycle, whereas in the GPWM, WMOs appear only at a later stage in the project cycle, whereas in the early stages of the project cycle, the GPWM seeks to consult a wide range of local stakeholders, including LGIs.

For ‘*participation as consultation in decision-making*’ to take place under the PWMR, WMOs would have to be formed ahead of major decisions. However, the resources for establishing WMOs in projects are only allocated in the project document (Development Project Proforma, DPP); i.e. after the key public decision to implement the project is taken. The approval of a project is supported by a DPP that defines the to-be-implemented works (infrastructure) at an advanced degree of detail, thereby reducing the scope for meaningful consultation of WMOs. The PWMR does not provide an alternative mechanism for consultation in early stages of project planning.

Similar to the provisions of the GPWM, LGIs are provided an advisory position towards the WMOs. This means co-opting members of the Union Parishad (UP) as advisor for the WMG, the UP chairperson as advisor to the WMA, and, where applicable the Upazila chairperson as WMF advisor.

Bangladesh Water Act (2013)[\[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Status: *The Bangladesh Water Act of 2013 has been enacted by the Government of Bangladesh as Act 14 on May 2, 2014 in Bangla.*

This Act vests all rights for all water resources within Bangladesh’ territory in the State with the proviso that use of water for drinking and hygiene is a priority right and that the right over surface water on private land can be enjoyed by the owner of that land. The Act then continues by defining the National Water Resources Council (NWRC) and its powers and functions. The NWRC is the highest authority to coordinate water management in Bangladesh and is chiefly responsible to:

(a) *to make policies, and give instructions for integrated development of, proper use of, safe abstraction of, proper distribution of, proper protection of, and proper conservation of, water resources;*

(b) *to give instructions in respect of making National Water Resources Plan, for ensuring integrated development of water resources;*

(c) *to approve the National Water Resources Plan, and ensure the implementation thereof (...)***[x]**

The Act provides a legal basis for governance of integrated water resources and describes the role and function of a high-level coordination body. In this National Water Resources Council, the Ministers of the principal Ministries concerned with water management convene under the chairmanship of the Minister of Water Resources. Secretarial support is rendered by the Director General of the Water Resources Planning Organisation (WARPO[1]).

In addition to the above mentioned functions, the NWRC has the authority to provide clearance for water sector projects; to regulate the use, protection and conservation of water resources through compliance and protection orders, and to impose punishment, fines and compensations for transgression of these orders.

Water Rules (2018) and related Guidelines (2019)[\[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Status: *published by the Government of Bangladesh in the Gazette of August 15, 2018 as rules defined under the 2013 Water Act.*

The Water Rules 2018 describe the formation and composition of integrated water resources management committees at decentral levels, i.e. District, Upazila and Union. These committees are composed of representatives of the civil administration and the line departments; are to be supported by a technical committee at each of these three levels; and include a representative member of WARPO as member-secretary[xi].

It is important to note that the Upazila and Union Committees are including a representative of Water Management Co-operative Association (registered under the Cooperative Act) and makes no references to the Water management Organisations registered under the BWDB, as per Participatory water management Rules 2014.

Detailed Guidelines for these committees have been prepared by WARPO and published by the Government under separate cover for Districts, Upazila's and Unions, respectively. In these guidelines WMOs registered under the BWDB are included as members to these Committees

Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100[\[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Status: *The Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 was prepared by the General Economic Division of the Planning Commission and approved by the National Economic Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, in September 2018.*

The Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP 2100)[xii] aims at “Achieving safe, climate resilient and prosperous delta” by the end of the 21st Century. It’s mission is to ensure long-term water and food security, economic growth and environmental sustainability while effectively reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and building resilience to climate change and other delta challenges through robust, adaptive and integrated strategies, and equitable water governance.

The BDP 2100 proposes three higher level national goals which have also been considered in the upcoming Perspective Plan 2041 and six water, ecology and land use specific goals that contribute to these higher level goals.

The higher level goals are: Goal 1: Eliminate extreme poverty by 2030; Goal 2: Achieve upper middle income status by 2030 and Goal 3: Being a Prosperous Country beyond 2041. BDP 2100 specific goals:

- Goal 1: Ensure safety from floods and climate change related disasters;
- Goal 2: Enhance water security and efficiency of water usages;
- Goal 3: Ensure sustainable and integrated river systems and estuaries management;
- Goal 4: Conserve and preserve wetlands and ecosystems and promote their wise use;
- Goal 5: Develop effective institutions and equitable governance for in- country and transboundary water resources management;
- Goal 6: Achieve optimal and integrated use of land and water resources.

Given the inherent uncertainties of the long term behaviour of the natural forces that influence water, climate change and environmental outcomes, it is essential to adopt a flexible and adaptive approach to converting the long term Delta Vision 2100 to medium term strategies for moving towards this vision. BDP 2100 uses the best available information and develops short to medium term strategies and policy options under different assumptions about the external outcomes. The scenarios and strategies will need to be updated frequently as new information is available on a 5-year cycle. This adaptive approach to delta planning including selection of investment projects provides the link between the short to medium term development targets and investment programs with the long term goals of sustained development based on climate sensitive management.

Immediately relevant for BGP are the following two points:

- BDP2100 includes a portfolio of future investments[xiii], which include water management projects wherein participatory water management lessons from BGP could be meaningfully applied;
- The organisation guiding the BDP2100 implementation, i.e. the General Economics Division of the Planning Commission, seeks to improve governance of water resources. BGP PWM lessons could provide a contribution to this process. To this end, BGP lessons learnt will be discussed in June 2020 under the aegis of the Bangladesh Delta Plan.

Other policies and legislation of particular relevance to BGP[\[edit\]](#) | [edit source](#)

Following legislation deserves a particular mention:

- **Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009 - 2018** was prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to enhance climate change preparedness. It's aims include protection of the most vulnerable; enhanced disaster management, maintenance of assets (infrastructure), research into climate change, mitigation and low carbon development and institutional capacity development. Elements of specific relevance for BGP include (a) improvement of flood forecasting and early warning systems and strengthening of dissemination mechanisms for Comprehensive Disaster Management; (b) repair and maintenance of existing flood embankments; and, continued flood protection activities with flood embankments and ancillary infrastructure; (c) climate change modelling at national and sub-national levels, which also incorporates the water sector.
- **Women in Development Policy 2011** - A clear expression by GoB of its commitment for actions leading to women's empowerment and realisation of their human rights. The principles of gender equality are embedded in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh;
- **BWDB Gender Equity Strategy 2006** - This was prepared by the BWDB in response to its changed approach to planning reflected in the NWPo and GPWM in 2006. The goal of the strategy is: "The BWDB will work to ensure gender equity in the efficient development, conservation and management of water resources in all its activities, through the empowered participation of staff and communities". The strategy aims at describing the process and related actions that are needed to ensure that all the BWDB's programs and activities address gender equity. The document provides short, medium and long term targets and activities for the various areas of work that the BWDB should address in order to attain the overall objective of the strategy.

Enabling framework for PWM today - discussion[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

A narrow bandwidth for participation?[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

The way the present regulatory framework enshrines participatory water management has two consequences:

- Water Management Organisations are defined as the vehicle for ensuring participation. This sits relatively easy with the notion of '*participation as self-management of specified activities*'; as WMOs will manage infrastructure for their local water management. It, however, would also imply that for '*participation as consultation in decision-making*' to succeed, water management organisations would have to be formed ahead of major decisions. However, resources for establishing WMOs in project areas are allocated in the same project document (Development Project Proforma) where the resources and activities for infrastructure are defined to an advanced degree of detail. To fundamentally impact on these investment decisions, consultation would have to start before project formulation; and would then have to rely on other vehicles for participation than the at that stage still to-be-established WMOs. The new Water Resources Management Committees at District, Upazila and Union level may offer a venue for 'consultation in decision-making', but these committees have, as yet, not been activated; nor has their concurrence in decision-making been enforced;
- PWM, as defined by the present regulatory framework, is only applicable in project areas, meaning that its application is tied to both the working area of the project, as well as to its duration. Provisions for public participation in water management applicable outside project areas and their timeframes are not developed;

The regulatory framework that provides structure to and bandwidth for participatory water management is however just an element among several factors shaping the practice of participatory water management. The following sections identify some of these factors.

Communities have always taken initiatives for managing natural resources[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Local collective actions for enhanced water security (reducing flood risks and managing water for crop or fish production) do take place without involvement of projects or technical agencies. Farmers and fisherfolk under local leadership and at times with support from the Union Parishad or Union Chairperson take action to *inter alia* construct minor khals, remove blockages caused by siltation or water hyacinth, or take steps to block the inflow of water into their production areas[xiv].

While such collective action at times create conflict with other water users, and while the effectiveness of measures is curbed by the community's capacity to mobilise human and sometimes financial resources; such actions are a genuine expression of local communities using water as a common resource for securing good production conditions for the greater good of their community.

This 'indigenous' readiness to undertake collective action for better water management conditions - an expression of the local sense of community ('*samaj*') - is a useful point of departure for the more formal PWM approach. PWM can build on and enhance the level of achievement of an existing tradition.

Box 1: LGIs pursue investments

In July 2014, 500 feet of flood control embankment along the Sehakathi River in Patuakhali Sardar Upazila collapsed due to tidal surges. The concerned Union Parishad chairman raised the issue at the Upazila development committee. Subsequently, both BWDB and LGED pledged their support for embankment rebuilding and road reconstruction (The Daily Star, January 1, 2015)

Local governments can be supportive[\[edit | edit source\]](#)

The legal framework for Union Parishads[xv] gives implicit attention to water management. Development, protection and maintenance of rural infrastructure is the second listed function of the UPs. While the clauses mentioning 'water' relate to drinking water, the Unions have standing committees whose purview includes or relates to water resources. This holds especially for the standing committees on (i) agriculture, fisheries, livestock & other economic development work; (ii) rural infrastructure development, protection & maintenance; (iii) social welfare & disaster management; and (iv) environment protection & plantation. The Unions are encouraged to include local representatives and stakeholders in these committees.

It is also worth mentioning that through the Disaster Management Act of 2012 and reiterated in the 2015 Disaster Management Policy, LGIs play a coordinator role in disaster preparedness and management in their constituencies.

While a substantial role of Unions - complementary to the involvement of WMOs - can be assumed on the basis of the legislation in force; Union councils (Union Parishad - UP) and chairpersons are generally unaware of the drift of the regulations for PWM. As there is no consultation procedure for water infrastructure covering more than 1,000ha; the UPs are generally not well-informed of the opportunities for supporting WMOs during project implementation. Closer involvement of LGIs and seeking their support for community-based organisations and initiatives forms an opportunity to enable PWM.

Systemic changes for better water management[\[edit | edit source\]](#)

As indicated in the sections on the regulatory framework, PWM is only pursued within project areas and -timeframes. Projects are generally implemented by national or regional implementing agencies and the support for PWM is much weaker - if not absent - after project completion.

The well-used approach within projects for improving the performance of WMOs is to invest in capacity building, and final project reports generally highlight a continued need for building WMO capacity. Systemic change - resulting in a better enabling environment for PWM - is however not considered, as such change does not 'fit' in a project mandate and timeframe. Thus, systemic change towards enabling PWM has long been a blind spot. Systemic changes for PWM would include developing arrangements for sharing cost between national and local stakeholders; improving the approach to pre-investment consultations; and arrangements to roll-out of PWM outside project areas.

Many of the problems facing water management at the local level (e.g. sedimentation in rivers, salinity intrusion, climate change) are of regional or supra-regional origin and require action at higher levels. Recognising the need for a regional approach towards long-term issues facing water management in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Delta Plan[xvi] proposes to develop a structure for user representation at regional and national levels. These user platforms would then exist in parallel to the committees to be set up under the 2013 Water Act and its 2018 Rules.

While a better connection of PWM to regional and national water management coordination could

help address both systemic challenges for better performance of PWM and supra-local water management issues; it appears that quite some time will be required to establish the proposed structures and to enable them to constructively work together. The re-thinking of national, regional and local water governance is, however, an opportunity for better embedding of the present PWM initiatives.

Water management for development[\[edit\]](#) | [edit source](#)

In the last decade, investment projects that feature PWM interventions have increasingly placed these in a context of socio-economic development. While initially PWM programs were seen to pertain to the exclusive realm of engineering institutions, nowadays agricultural and fisheries' agencies are involved as well, since changing production systems justifies investment in water resources. Moreover, there is a growing realisation that the production shift should not merely aim for higher productivity, but should impact on incomes and thereby on local economic development.

Embracing 'water management for economic development' (not coincidentally the slogan for BGP) enhances the scope of PWM. PWM gains significance - and thereby becomes more sustainable - if it is redefined from merely running the water system to pursuing local development.

Notes[\[edit\]](#) | [edit source](#)

[1] WARPO has been established through the Water Resources Planning Act (1992), which defines its main functions as (i) conducting the general planning of environmentally balanced water resources for the purpose of developing water resources; (ii) determining the national means and methods for the scientific utilisation and preservation of water resources; and (iii) carrying-out other functions relating to advising, collection, disseminating of information, training.

References[\[edit\]](#) | [edit source](#)

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See also[\[edit | edit source\]](#)

5 - Project design[\[edit | edit source\]](#)

- **5.2 - Previous history**
- **5.3 - Project definition**

Section A: Background and context		
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Blue Gold Program

A process by which the local stakeholders are directly and actively involved in identification,

planning, design, implementation, operation & maintenance and evaluation of a water management project.

A process by which the local stakeholders are directly and actively involved in identification, planning, design, implementation, operation & maintenance and evaluation of a water management project.

National Water Policy

A defined set of temporary activities through which facilitators seek to effect change

Flood Action Plan

human intervention in the capture, conveyance, utilisation and drainage of surface and/or ground water in a certain area: a process of social interaction between stakeholders around the issue of water control.

A process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them.

Any individual or group who, in one way or another is favourably influenced by the project.

Flood Control, Drainage and Irrigation

the adjustment of gates in water management infrastructure to control hydraulic conditions (water levels and discharges) in a water management system.

actions taken to prevent or repair the deterioration of water management infrastructure and to keep the physical components of a water management system in such a state that they can serve their intended function.

Operation and Maintenance

hectare

Flood Control and Drainage

assumed in this report to operate up to 0.5 acres (0.2 ha)

Bangladesh Water Development Board, government agency which is responsible for surface water and groundwater management in Bangladesh, and lead implementing agency for the Blue Gold

Program

Local Government Engineering Department

Guidelines for Participatory Water Management

Water Management Organizations - The common name of organizations of the local stakeholders of a water resource project/sub-project/scheme. The concept WMO typically refers to WMGs and WMAs (and/or WMFs) together

A feasibility study is an analysis that takes all of a project's relevant factors into account—including economic, technical, legal, and scheduling considerations—to ascertain the likelihood of completing the project successfully.

Local Government Institutions - Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad etc

Water Management Organizations - The common name of organizations of the local stakeholders of a water resource project/sub-project/scheme. The concept WMO typically refers to WMGs and WMAs (and/or WMFs) together

Water Management Group - The basic organizational unit in Blue Gold representing local stakeholders from a hydrological or social unit (para/village). Through Blue Gold, 511 WMGs have been formed and registered. The average WMG covers an area of around 230 ha has 365 households or a population of just over 1,500.

Water Management Group - The basic organizational unit in Blue Gold representing local stakeholders from a hydrological or social unit (para/village). Through Blue Gold, 511 WMGs have been formed and registered. The average WMG covers an area of around 230 ha has 365 households or a population of just over 1,500.

Water Management Association - In Blue Gold, the polder-level representative of WMGs, and signatory to an O&M Agreement with BWDB

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Water Management Federation - The organization of local stakeholders at the apex level of the water resource project/sub-project/scheme

Water Management Federation - The organization of local stakeholders at the apex level of the water resource project/sub-project/scheme

Earthen dyke or bundh raised above surrounding ground level, for example so that roads or railway lines are above highest flood levels, or so that an area is empoldered to protect it from external floods and saline waters.

A process by which the local stakeholders are directly and actively involved in identification, planning, design, implementation, operation & maintenance and evaluation of a water management project.

Water Resources Plan Organisation

National Water Resources Commission

National Water Management Plan

an environment of policies, regulations, norms, institutions, and overall economic governance which allows market systems to function and perform well

Government of Bangladesh; a donor to the Blue Gold Program

Participatory Water Management Rules (2014)

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Water Management Association - In Blue Gold, the polder-level representative of WMGs, and signatory to an O&M Agreement with BWDB

Office of the Chief of Water Management (in BWDB) responsible for the 'establishment of water user organizations, their training and participation, in project planning, implementation, operation and maintenance and cost recovery'

Water Management Cooperative Association

Development Project Proforma: a formal document which sets out the intention of a GoB organisation to invest in a development project, seeking approval for the investment and, if successful, a budget allocation. The DPP follows a prescribed format, including the project's financial and physical scope, benefits, and proposals for monitoring and internal and external audits. The approval of a development project proposal follows a number of stages: formation with preliminary studies, formulation to develop greater detail and with additional information to make the economic case for the project, scrutiny by the executing agencies and concerned ministries, appraisal by the Planning Commission, recommendation for approval by Project Evaluation

Committee (PEC), Minister/ECNEC approval, and inclusion of a budgetary allocation in the Annual Development Plan (ADP).

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Union Parishad - Union Council chaired by an elected Union Chairman

Union Parishad - Union Council chaired by an elected Union Chairman

Lowest tier of local government

Bangladesh Delta Plan

Increase in the capacity of a country or an economic region to produce goods and services. It also refers to the increase in market value of the goods and services produced by an economy. It is usually calculated using inflation adjusted figures, in order to discount the effect of inflation on the price of the goods and services produced

empowerment is a process, enabling people to make choices and convert these into desired actions and results. In doing so, people take control of their own lives, improve their own position, set their own agenda, gain skills, develop self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-sufficiency. Empowerment leads to genuine participation of all actors as it is a process of gaining self-confidence for individual development as well as to contribute towards development of others.

Gender equality exists when men and women, boys and girls are attributed equal social value, equal rights and equal responsibilities; and men and women have equal access to the means (resources, opportunities) to exercise those rights and responsibilities. This does not mean that women and men will become the same, but rather that rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether someone is born male or female.

Equity strategies refer to the processes used to achieve gender equality. Equity involves fairness in representation, participation, and benefits afforded to males and females. The goal is that both groups have a fair chance of having their needs met and that they have equal access to opportunities for realizing their full potential as human beings.

Collective action - by a producer group is one way to partially overcome constraints such as in weak markets, where inputs and services essential to production innovations, are generally scarce, costly to access and/or to obtain. Collective action is working in group instead of individually in order to gain economic or social benefit. Through collective action, farmers can address constraints in their market linkages, organise their activities jointly and use their collective bargaining power to reduce input costs through bulk purchase, or to obtain services from buyers such as farm-level collection of produce

Typically undesirable increase in concentration and deposition of water-borne silt particles in a body of water.

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Sedimentation is the process by which fine particles of silt and clay suspended in river water settle out, for example when there is a drop in velocity.

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The wiki version of the Lessons Learnt Report of the Blue Gold program, documents the experiences of a technical assistance (TA) team working in a development project implemented by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) over an eight+ year period from March 2013 to December 2021. The wiki lessons learnt report (LLR) is intended to complement the BWDB and DAE project completion reports (PCRs), with the aim of recording lessons learnt for use in the design and implementation of future interventions in the coastal zone.

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