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Section H innovation fund

From Blue Gold Program Wiki

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This is the section H of Blue Gold Program
report

Blue Gold Innovation Fund (BGIF)

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This article "Section H - Innovation fund" is part of the articles on Section A-H, based on the Lessons Learnt report of the Blue Gold Program. The original pdf of section H can be found [here](#).

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Summary[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

The Blue Gold Innovation Fund (BGIF) aimed to contribute to the objectives of the Blue Gold Program in terms of more equitable water management and strengthened value chains. Between 2013 and 2020, the fund went through several phases where the approach went from a needs-based approach to a supply driven approach, and back. With EUR 2.45 million the BGIF funded 42 projects, averaging EUR 48 thousand on average per project. The first few years saw mostly small feasibility studies funded, as well as pilot projects. Especially from 2017 onwards, integrated projects as well as pilot projects were mostly funded. A number of conclusions can be observed from this lessons-learnt report.

- Closely aligning BGIF funding criteria with BGP objectives, together with assigning BGP technical leads to each project facilitated horizontal learning between BGP and BGIF projects.
- Organising a solicited call for one specific topic with a larger contract amount is an effective way of receiving a large variety of concept notes from both Bangladeshi and international organisations; The best projects under BGIF were led by consortia (e.g. Practical Action or MetaMeta with local NGOs), where an international NGO or Dutch company took the lead, and the local organisation did most of the work in the field. The role we performed continuously i.e. clarifying needs, concepts, approaches etc, where implementers learnt just as much from us, as we from them.
- Retrospectively, an early start, with a clear understanding of what innovation constitutes in such a program, and an early involvement of practitioners from a broader range of organisations in the coastal zone. Such a fund should have been considered part and parcel of the operations of such a program, not a stand-alone exercise. It should be part of the project

vision at an early stage, now it came late. A kind of mapping of uncertainties, gaps; could guide it. We might have been able to detail specific needs a lot better (not to straitjacket applications though). At the same time, a solid understanding of local conditions and problems by the team ripened by time. Perhaps more budget should have been retained at the beginning, recognising this natural phenomenon.

- The BGIF management costs were kept at a low level, partially because substantial expert inputs came from regular BGP staff. This also allowed for an increased linkage between BGP and BGIF.
- With innovation projects its almost natural that not all project activities will be implemented according to those designed in the project proposal. It requires adaptive management capacities both from project implementers and from fund managers. There are extremes on either side with allowing for too little change (rigid and unable to act towards opportunities and threats) and too much change (loss of focus and missing out on objectives). With contract addenda we have tried to find a middle way, where we accommodate wishes of the project teams to alter their activities, but we capture this in a formal document to make sure the change is well thought out (with new payment conditions) and will be efficiently implemented.

Introducing Blue Gold and the Innovation Fund[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Main article: [Section H innovation fund introduction](#)

The Blue Gold Program started in March 2013 and will continue to end-June 2020 (with a further six months to end-December 2020 for administrative closure). Its operations concentrate on twenty-two polders in four districts in the southwest of Bangladesh: Patuakhali, Khulna, Barguna and Satkhira. The Program covers 119,000 ha where more than 200,000 households will directly benefit from the Program. The Blue Gold Program addresses poverty and vulnerability in the south west by developing local capacity to manage water resources, agricultural production and market access. Lasting cooperation between rural communities, their organisations, local governments and technical agencies such as DAE and BWDB forms the core of this capacity.

The Blue Gold Innovation Fund (BGIF) is an instrument created to accelerate the development process in the geographical area of the Blue Gold Program. It finances innovative approaches and new initiatives to socio-economic development. Innovations submitted to the Blue Gold Innovation Fund are expected to contribute to the outcomes of the Blue Gold Program; The impact is expected to be mostly locally or regionally centered.

The Innovation Fund has been subject to a number of changes since its inception. Not only did the level of funding change from € 4.4 million to € 2.45 million, also the approach to achieve equitable water management and strengthened value chains changed over time.

Projects overview[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Main article: [BGIF Project Overview](#).

An overview of the figures are provided in the following high-level summary table.

Blue Gold Innovation Fund per project type (feasibility study, pilot, scale, integrated project)

# of BGIF projects per type	Total EUR allocated/ spent on projects, per type	% of total EUR allocated to project type	Average BGIF project size, per type
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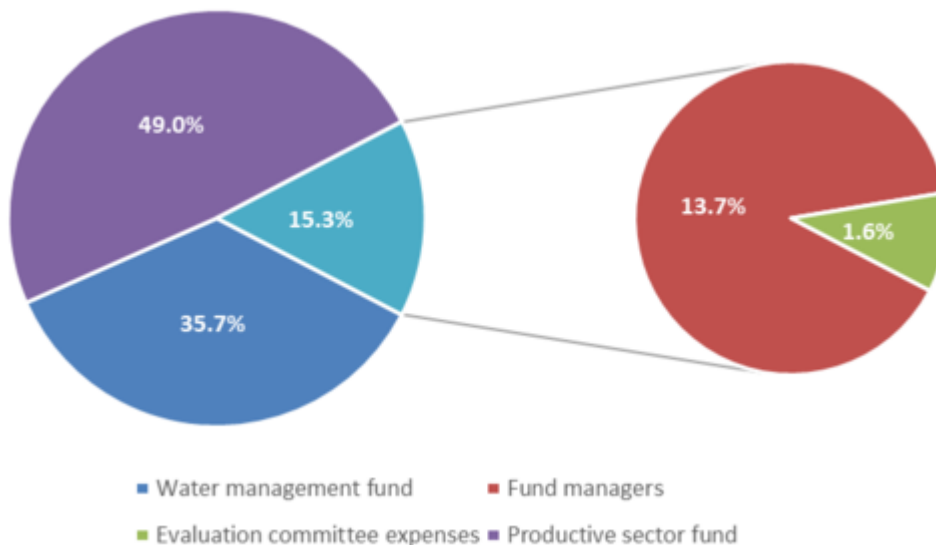
FS	20	395,774	19,789	20%
Pilot	11	529,631	48,148	26%
Scale	2	83,787	41,893	4%
Integrated project	6	541,317	90,219	27%
Other	3	464,770	154,923	23%
TOTAL	42	2,015,279	47,983	100%

Rejected projects and proposals[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Article on rejected projects: [Section H - Appendix 2](#)

This section sheds some light on those project concepts and proposals that were not approved for BGIF funding. For the evaluation criteria of un-solicited concepts and proposals, reference is made to the BGIF procedure manual in [Appendix 5](#). The evaluation criteria for the call for proposals can be found in [Appendix 4](#) and [Appendix 6](#). In total 108 project concepts and proposals were rejected, of which 76 were un-solicited, 32 solicited - see [Appendix 2](#) for list of rejected projects. Here a distinction should be made between concept notes and proposals. Many concept notes were rejected, but a just limited number of proposals.

Management costs[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]



BGIF funds and fund management expenses 2013-2020

The overall fund management costs account for about 15.3% of the whole BGIF. Out of this 90% went to BGIF fund managers and 10% to Evaluation Committee expenses, and occasional expert judgement on unsolicited proposals. This 15.3% does not include the time and expenses of ad-hoc inputs from regular BGP staff involved in project appraisal. In addition, the designated lead technical BGP advisors to individual BGIF projects were full time employed by BGP and therefore also didn't require additional reimbursements from the Innovation Fund.

Lessons learnt[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Main article: [BGIF Lessons Learnt](#).

The main lessons learnt cover 4 years of running the Innovation Fund.

- Organising a solicited call for one specific topic with a larger contract amount is an effective way of receiving a large variety of concept notes from both Bangladeshi and international organisations;
- The best projects under BGIF were led by consortia (e.g. Practical Action or MetaMeta with local NGOs), where an international NGO or Dutch company took the lead, and the local organisation did most of the work in the field.

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

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Blue Gold Innovation Fund

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.

Blue Gold Program

Non-Governmental Organisation

hectare

Department of Agricultural Extension, a department of the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for disseminating scientific research and new knowledge on agricultural practices through communication and learning activities for farmers in agriculture, agricultural marketing, nutrition and business studies.

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

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.

Feasibility Study / Feasibility Stage, especially of Blue Gold Innovation Fund projects

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 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 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.

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.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Learning from peers; and in the context of Blue Gold, farmer-to-farmer learning in which a host WMG invites representatives from visiting WMGs to witness an event - such as the harvesting of a new variety of rice - to pass on the knowledge and lessons gained from their experience

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Blue Gold Program Wiki

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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