

Community Based Resource Management Project Local Government Engineering Department

A brief note

Community Based Resource Management Project (CBRMP) of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under Local Government Division is a development project funded by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) under a loan No: 567 BD. The ultimate goal of the project is to reduce poverty of the rural poor in Sunamganj. The project is for 12 years started in January 2003 and will end in June 2014. The total project's period is divided into three phases. The first phase ended in June 2007. The project underwent Mid-Term Review (MTR) done by IFAD and phase evaluation by Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Department (IMED) under Planning Commission of the Government of Bangladesh in 2007. They found the project's performance was satisfactory and recommended its continuation with some revisions to make the project more effective. A Revised Development Project Proposal (RDPP) was drawn on MTR recommendations and that was approved accordingly by the Departmental Project Evaluation Committee (DPEC) meeting held on 25 July, 2007.

The Project is implementing its activities in Sunamganj district which is one of the poorest and most backward districts in Bangladesh. The district comprises eleven Upazilas with an area of 3670 sq. km and 2 782 villages (BBS, 2006). Out of 350000 rural households, 51 percent households have no land and 35 percent are marginal farmers having land below 2.5 acres (BBS, 2006). The project has included bottom 90000 households from nine most distressed Upazilas as its targeted people.

Sunamganj is a deep floodplain known as *haor* where maximum land goes under water for almost seven months a year. During that time villages in *haor* become islands being locked by water. The strong wave constantly erodes the villages and eventually makes the people homeless. Most of the agricultural lands in Sunamganj fall under single crop land, and those are highly prone to early rain and flush flood. Although the Sunamganj *haor* is rich in fisheries, the resource base is gradually decreasing following regular siltation. The communication is too bad and the people have very limited access to basic civic services. Scopes of livelihoods are inadequate. Men usually commute to nearer cities for four to five months a year in search of works leaving their families behind with hardly any source of income. It causes a big suffering to those families particularly to women and children.

Considering the above situation, Sunamganj has been selected for the project based on an appraisal conducted by IFAD. The inner objective is that on successful implementation of the project, the same approach will be replicated to other areas of the country with a view to keep a positive impact on poverty reduction.

Project Summary

Name of the project:	Community Based Resource Management Project
Ministry/Division:	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives /Local Government Division
Executing agency:	Local Government Engineering Department (LGED)
Project area:	Nine Upazilas of Sunamganj district (Sunamganj Sadar, Dakhin/south Sunamganj, Biswambarpur, Jamalganj, Tahirpur, Derai, Sullah, Dharmapasha, and Dowarabazar.)

Funding		First Phase	Second phase	Third phase	Total project
Project period (fiscal year):		2002-03 to 2006-07	2007-08 to 2010-11	2011-12 to 2013-14	2002-03 to 2013-14
Mode of finance (Lk. BDT)	IFAD	3,094.60	10,688.09	3,302.89	17,085.58
	GOB	873.27	1,602.14	48.68	2,524.09
	Beneficiaries	108.43	291.53	37.00	436.96
	Total	4,076.30	12,581.76	3,388.57	20,046.63
Target people of the project		90,000 farmer and fisher households holding land below 2.5 acre.			
Project type:		Poverty alleviation through participatory community-based approach.			

Objectives of the project

The main objectives of the project are to:

- ✚ Increase the assets and income of 90000 households by developing self-managing grass-roots organizations to improve beneficiary access to primary resources, employment and credit; and
- ✚ Support to the development of available national institutions to replicate the project approach in other areas of Bangladesh.

Major components of the project:

There are five components of the project to meet the project objectives: These are:

- ✚ Labour-intensive infrastructure development;
- ✚ Fisheries development;
- ✚ Crop and livestock production;
- ✚ Micro-credit; and
- ✚ Institutional support.

Labour-intensive infrastructure development: The objectives of the component are to develop infrastructure in project area and create employment for the poor involving them in infrastructural activities. The unique part of this component is extensive participation of the community at all levels of activities including selecting scheme, monitoring the work, ensuring the maintenance and so on. The following activities are being implemented under this component:

- ✚ Installing tube-well for safe drinking water;
- ✚ constructing village protection structure cum rural road to protect villages from wave action and to connect villages with mainstream road network;

- ✚ Constructing Multipurpose Village Centre (MVC) for flood shelter, training, meeting, social gathering and other activities required for socio-economic development of the community;
- ✚ Installing water sealed ring latrine to promote hygienic environment for the community; and
- ✚ Employing rural poor, particularly women, in infrastructure maintenance works for increased income.

Fisheries development: This component is being implemented to ensure access of the poor fisher community to water-bodies. The component is applying participatory Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) approach for sustainable resource usages. The following activities are being undertaken by this component:

- ✚ Identifying and demarking resource bases by mapping, surveying and installing pillars;
- ✚ Excavating/re-excavating water-bodies and *khal* (canal) to restore fish habitat;
- ✚ Transferring water-bodies to the communities with long-term use;
- ✚ Establishing fish sanctuaries to regain diversity and increase production of fish;
- ✚ Rendering training to women for raising swamp tree for restoring swap forestry in *haor* area;
- ✚ Promoting pond fish culture for raising income of indigent women;
- ✚ Extending assistance to local administration and department of fisheries for enforcing Fish Conservation Acts; and
- ✚ Monitoring fish production, consumption, marketing and assessing its impact on people's livelihoods.

Crop and livestock production: The activities under this component are being implemented to promote crop and livestock production to enhance the income and food security of the project beneficiaries. The following activities are being implemented under this component:

- ✚ Undertaking Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to assess the needs of the farmers and identify constraints prior to implement any activities;
- ✚ Initiating participatory research in cooperation with national research institutions to promote improved varieties and farming technologies for farmers;
- ✚ Arranging workshops, training, demonstration and field-days to disseminate results of research to farmers; and
- ✚ Working in partnership with local line departments for arranging training and developing appropriate extension materials for farmers.

Micro-credit: The main objective of this component is to form community organization (CO) of targeted people and bring them under savings and credit. Each CO comprises 20 to 30 members. Men and women COs are formed separately. The members save money in CO and receive credit both from their savings fund and project credit line through Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB). The group members undergo different kinds of trainings for capacity development in group & financial management, and acquiring skill for alternative livelihoods.

Institutional support: Apart from its Project Management Unit at Sunamganj district and a liaison office at Dhaka, there are Upazila offices at all working Upazilas with sufficient numbers of skill staff. SCBRMP has long-term partnership with a good number of development and research institutions and departments such as Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI), Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI), the WorldFish Center, Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Department of Livestock Services (DLS), and Department of Fisheries (DoF).

They are involved to assist the project in promoting need based researches, studies, trainings and developing materials. After the project end to oversee and support the people to their activities a structure will be placed, but that is yet to take any shape.

Project implementation arrangement

The project is governed by three committees one at secretariat level called Project Steering Committee headed by the Secretary of Local Government Division; second one is at district level called the District Coordination Committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner and another one is at each Upazila level called Upazila Coordination Committee headed by Upazil Nirbahi Officer (UNO). All committees comprise members from concern ministries, divisions, departments and development agencies.

Apart from that, for implementing day to day activities and administrative works, there is a Project Management Unit (PMU) headed by Project Director.

Besides, there are some inter-ministerial, District and Upazila Committees to deal the activities of transferring water-bodies from Ministry of Land.

The project activities are monitored against the indicators which are disaggregated by gender.

Major achievements of the project

The project's achievement is significant. The targeted people have considerably been benefited by project's inputs, and many positive changes have come in their lives and livelihoods. The major achievements of the project are:

- ✚ A good number of targeted people have been mobilized, trained and brought under savings and credit, where maximum are women.
- ✚ A large number of fishers have got access to *beel* and established community-based management for sustainable use of resources where women have specific roles.
- ✚ A large number of poor people particularly the women have been employed by innovative labour intensive infrastructural activities
- ✚ People have got access to different public services such as market, educational institutions and that have largely been increased by road construction.
- ✚ Water and sanitation situation have been improved by installing tube-wells and latrines.
- ✚ Production has been increased by introducing improved varieties of crops and livestock.

The future challenges and strategic focus of the project

- ✚ Graduating Community Organization successfully.
- ✚ Expanding sectors of investment to utilize credit considering gender perspectives.
- ✚ Transferring water-bodies to fisher community in time and establishing their management on those.
- ✚ Fish habitat restoration.
- ✚ Addressing the slack period with alternative livelihoods in a bulk form.

- ✚ Increasing productivity and production in agriculture and livestock targeting to improve food security.
- ✚ Addressing the arsenic problem in drinking water with better alternatives.

Project aspiration

Collective efforts can make the poor self-reliant. The deprived poor community of Sunamganj has largely proved that. The project has just encouraged them to become united and initiate efforts. With increasing growth of social, financial and human capacities, the people are now confident to change their lot. If this trend continues, we are hopeful to achieve the ultimate goal of the project.



Their joy knew no bounds - now there is no problem to go to school having the road for all seasons.

CBRMP and GENDER: empowering women to achieve equality

Community Based Resource Management Project (CBRMP) takes gender issues quite critically and try to ensure equal opportunities for the women comparing with the men in the community. The women empowerment is central in CBRMP's development activities and that is being realized through their access to natural resources, entrance to financial market, adapting improved technologies, livelihood skill building and access to other information that promote their rights and opportunities. This approach falls in the line with the IFAD's strategy for gender mainstreaming and women empowerment framework.

IFAD's framework for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment

- Expanding women access to basic assets - Capital, land, knowledge and technology.
- Strengthening women institution - their decision-making role in community affairs and representing in local government institutions.
- Improving women's well-being and easy their workloads by facilitating access to basic rural services and infrastructures.
- Ensuring equal opportunities for women and men to access benefits and services.

After constant efforts of uplifting women the project achievement is not negligible considering the socio-infrastructure context of Sunamganj. Although this area is treated as medium gender disparity zone, the project found many pockets where gender disparity was acute while it started its activities in Sunamganj. That time no NGOs were working as such, the communication was seriously underdeveloped, maximum villages were isolated from each other, hardly women had access to improved agricultural technologies and that had high impact on gender disparity.

Following the intervention of CBRMP the situation has significantly been changed. CBRMP has taken all its development efforts with special focus on increased participation of women. The status within project is given in the table below:

Status: a statistical statement

Activity	Indicators	Target (project total)	Achievement up to March 2010			Ratio between Female and Male
			Female	Male	Total	
Access to Credit/Microfinance						
Group formation	No. of groups formed	3000	2024	835	2859	71: 29
People mobilized in group	No. of members enrolled	90000	57386	24417	81803	70: 30
Savings mobilized	No. of members accumulated savings	90000	57386	24417	81803	70: 30
	Value of total savings accumulated (in LTk.)	2120.00	585.38	308.44	893.82	65: 35
Credit received from savings fund	No. of members received loans	15000	10491	4940	15431	68: 32
	Value of loans given to member (in LTk.)	1060.00	632.39	331.73	964.12	66: 34
Credit received from project	No. of members received loans	52000	15768	8106	23874	66: 34

Activity	Indicators	Target (project total)	Achievement up to March 2010			Ratio between Female and Male
			Female	Male	Total	
credit line	Value of loans given to member (in LTk.)	5700.00	1531.43	730.49	2261.92	68: 32
Skill development in credit management	No. of members received training	56862	21198	10144	31342	68: 32
Infrastructure						
Developed Labour Contracting Society (LCS)members	No. of LCS members trained	4180	2131	1665	3796	56: 44
Developed Implementation Monitoring Committees (IMC)	No. of IMC members trained	2548	1094	769	1863	59: 31
Developed length persons for road maintenance	No. of length persons	300	278	0	278	100: 0
Engaged poor in labour intensive construction works	No. of group members engaged in work	6550	2780	2440	5140	52: 48
Accessed to Natural Resource (beel and pond)						
Accessed to beel/water-body	No. of members accessed	9500	996	3747	4743	21: 79
Accessed to Pond for aquaculture	No. of members involved	750	227	-	227	100:0
Skill developed in fisheries management	No. of members received training	19822	1789	8408	10197	18: 78
Accessed to agriculture technology						
Disseminated improved agricultural technology	No. of members received training	45713	42962	15065	58027	74: 26
Undertaken demonstration	No. of demonstration initiated	7959	3407	1739	5146	67:33
Developed vaccinator	No. of vaccinator	271	63	107	170	38:62

The targeted people mobilized by project in CO are dominantly women. More than 70 percent CO and CO members are women and benefited by project initiatives such as raising savings, taking loan and receiving training for capacity development almost by same percentage.



Women in beel fisheries management with equal rights and roles comparing to men

Women direct access to beel fisheries is new in Sunamganj, if not in Bangladesh. Project has taken a target to ensure their access by 30%. Presently it has reached 21%. In many beels, not only they have enrolled them as BUG members, but are holding executive position and that they have occupied by direct election through secret ballots. Pond fish culture is another area where indigent women are participating successfully to improve their livelihoods adapting improved culture.

The women community group members being aware in social issues are now opting to take part in local government institution such as Union and Upazila Parishad. Meantime from two places the community members took part in Upazila elections and they won the both seats.

In infrastructural development, CBRMP has introduced more labour intensive construction works to accommodate more women and to ensure that an innovative approach has been taken in road building known as Concrete Block Road (CBR). In this type of road more



LCS women member making block to build village road

women through Labour Contracting Society (LCS) are getting involved, around 56%, in work and making income. For supervising the infrastructure work there as well the roles and involvement of women are



Water is now close to their homestead and reduced the work load largely

more than the men. Tubewell and hygienic latrine have been distributed to Community group member with particular objectives to ease the workload and facilitate the hygienic environment for the womenfolk. To each group of 30 members one tubewell and each member of community group one set of water sealed latrine have been being given to meet those objectives. The

Multipurpose Village Center (MVC) at each union has broadened the

scope of the community people, particularly the women to gather

for social causes. Recently with collaboration of a CARE programme ARSHI the MVC is being used for the adolescent girls for their recreation and building mental faculty hardly that facility was available in Sunamganj before this intervention.



Adolescent girl entertaining in MVC

Through agriculture and livestock technology transfer programme a large number of women have adapting new improved technologies side by side with the men. Women are engaging themselves in land crop cultivation beyond the traditional homestead gardening. Apart from that, in livestock and poultry bird development more women are getting involved in backyard poultry and livestock rearing. One new area of livelihoods has been developed for women by the project through creating Para –vet. Total 170 Para-vets so far have been developed and of which 63 are women.



Engaged in cultivating improved variety crop for first time in larger field

The project has conducted a good number of trainings on gender relationship and women development including raising awareness on women rights, violence against women, and gender disparities.

Besides, the special days such as International Women Day, Safe Motherhood Day are regularly being observed to make the community aware about the roles, values and rights of the women. In many cases all those Days are observed jointly with other likeminded organization – like CARE, local NGOs and Local Administration.

The project was committed to put women staff at key position of project management. Initially there were very few women staff in project. But now even at high level women have been being employed. At Upazila level out of nine, three managers are now women (33%) and out of total staff 32% are women



Observing Safe Motherhood Day jointly with other organizations

while during starting of the project the percentage was only 10%. To expedite the mainstreaming of gender in project, CBRMP recruited an experienced woman gender consultant in 2007 on part-time basis for longer period.

Making the women self-reliant the project has continuously been trying with numerous activities and that has recently been appreciated nationally within LGED projects through awarding two of the community organization members for their remarkable achievement in self-development. Out of nine best awardees one stood the best of the best and other occupied the 3rd position from CBRMP community organization. It has brought a significant impact on the overall project's community.



The best of the best award winner Jahanara addressing in IWD at Dhaka in presence of Minister of LGRD&C, Secretary of LGD and Chief Engineer of LGED

Case study 1

LCS of Concrete-Block Road secured her family from poverty

Nurbanu (27) including her has a family of five members – three children and her husband. They are absolutely landless having no land and live in a hut built on other's land. Nurbanu joined a CO formed by CBRMP-LGED in her village Moinpur of Surman union of Sadar Upazila in Sunamganj around two and a half year ago. She has been saving in CO, but has not taken any loan yet having no such regular income that could support her in repaying the loan.

The situation however has changed by availing a opportunity to work in a LCS for making concrete block road in her area. She became enlisted in a LCS and got training and worked as an assistant to Mason. Working 22 days she could make an amount of TK. 2200. Adding with that more Tk.1100 that received as income from LCS work she bought a Van-rickshaw for her husband which came out a potential source of income following road building in their area by CBRMP-LGED. Plying that van-rickshaw Nurbanu's husband started to earn on an average Tk. 3000 per month.

Nurbanu, utilizing her skill gained by LCS training and work by CBRMP-LGED got a further chance to work in LCS work initiated by LGED by 100days working programme. It gave her an income of around Tk. 3000 and she invested the amount to make an iron-made stronger van-rickshaw replacing the previous wooden one. The replace increased the income with more carrying capacity. Now his husband can earn around Tk. 9000 per month.

The family had to starve over the year having no certain and enough income. But the improved road, income from LCS of Nurbanu has totally changed their situation. Now they have enough food and at least 7 to eight times a month they can take improved food such as meat, fish egg and so on. They have opened a DPS with premium Tk.50 per month. They have taken electricity to their house and bought a television. Their children now go to school with food in stomach. They are very happy and had a plan a buy a own land for home and to meet that the return from DPS and loan from CO will be utilised.

Nurbanu is now highly aspired and sanguine for a better future. Her most priority dream is to educate her children. She claims, *"The road, particularly the block road, has brought a mammoth change in our area. Like ours many poor have been benefitted having new scope of livelihoods. Now we have income round the year and easily can go anywhere at any times in our needs. The roads have made us free from many problems and given us many opportunities."*



Nurbanu learning the technology of making block



Nurbanu with her family whom she has made happy by her income and contribution

Cast study 2

Nursery ensured her a secure livelihood

Renu Begum (50) lives in Baggber village of Biswambarpur Upazila in Sangamon district. Her husband Imtaj Ail is a poor farmer and owns a land of 30 decimal including the homestead. They have two sons. Before joining the CO of CBRMP, They had been living from hand to mouth. Joining CO she began to save and got the chance to take a two-day swamp tree nursery training initiated by the project. After taking training she took a loan amounting to Tk 4000 from CO and invested into raising a nursery.



Renu and her family with their nursery

Renu started a hijol (swamp tree) nursery with 5000 saplings at backyard and after one year she earned around Tk.27000 selling only 1500 saplings. The return made her highly encouraged and she leased in a land of 20 decimal and expanded her nursery with an investment of Tk. 8000 that she managed by taking another loan from the project credit line. She and her husband they work together in nursery and she hopes that her nursery will give her an income of Tk. 50,000 a year and will ensure a secure live in future. Renu has a plan to diverse her nursery with more other valuable plants for more income. She is very happy having a very certain scope of income. They have some problem in marketing, but they hope with assistance from CBRMP that they can overcome. The family had immense financial crisis; food deficit was quite severe, but now the situation has been changed. The effort taken by Renu has brought a big change in the family and that has put her in high esteem in the family as well as in the society.

Case Study 3

From Manager of a Small Community Organization to Upazila Vice -Chairperson

Jharna Rani Das (35) was born in a most remote village Penile of Dowarabazar Upazila. Jharna, had to struggle a lot in her childhood. She is 5th among her six brothers and sisters. She could not continue her education after class ten due to acquit poverty in her family. She got married at 17, but deserted soon by her husband and had to be back to her parent's home. Struggle continued that started from childhood. But that could not stop her from conquering the destiny. Opportunity comes when SCRRMP-LGED starts working in her area. She joins a women Community Organization (CO), receives trainings in



Jharna in work at Upazila Parishad Office

Group Development, Accounts and Bookkeeping, Good Governance and other skill development and soon becomes manager of that CO by her commitment and contribution to the organization. The management process of CO develops her to be a good leader and that put her forward with an inspiration to become a leader in the society in future, and that opportunity also comes soon to her.

She competes in recent Upazila election 2009 as a vice-chairperson and wins in the election beating her closest contender by 318 votes. While she was asked to comment on her success, she replies, *"It is SCBRMP that has put me in a process of working with the people, articulated me to work in a group and gave me the skill to lead the people in crisis. Our activities have developed the people's confidence and trust on us along with a strong affinity"*. She claims those are all that in fact has worked for her to win in the Upazila election.

She expresses her strong desire to devote her to attain the needs of the people, such as road, electricity, deep tube-well those they have been always discussing about in the CO meeting. She stresses more on establishing women rights in the society. She highly appreciates the SCBRMP-LGED approach and activities to reduce poverty of the poor in Sunamganj.

She had been dreaming from school life to be an active contributor to the society, but under many constraints that could not become true. Now the chance has come, and she will not lose a bit of that to fulfill her that dream. She seeks cooperation and blessing from every people as she can serve the people successfully. She is grateful to SCBRMP-LGED as it has imparted in her heart a confidence to work for the people with values. Jharna hopes to make her Upazila one of the best developed Upazilas. According to the CO byelaws she is no more the manger of her organization, but an ordinary member. The CO is progressing well in all aspects, and she takes the CO as her entity in the society.

In three Upazilas SCBRMP-LGED CO members competed for the post of Upazila Vic-Chairperson and from two upazilas - one from Dowarabazar and one from Biswambarpur - they have come out successfully.

Case study/Event 4

Event to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the International Women's Day March 08, 2010

Local government Engineering Department (LGED) of Bangladesh arranged a day long programme to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the international women's day. The programme included exhibition of different activities of women in different projects of LGED; discussion on gender and women development issues, video show, cultural programme and acknowledgement of the best nine beneficiary women – three from rural development sector, three from water sector development and the rest three from urban sector - for their achievement in becoming self-reliant and contribution to the society for women development. Out of that nine acknowledged women two - Jahanara and Sadikunnahar - were selected from SCBRMP-IFAD project. One became the best of the best and the other rated 3rd among the best.

JAHANARA BEGUM who got the first position joined the SCBRMP Credit Organization in early 2005. That time her family was too marginal - food insecurity, health crisis, lack of drinking water and uncertainty in livelihoods were prevalent. But slowly with credit, training and technology supports from SCBRMP a big change comes in her life. Initially she raised a small plant nursery with an investment of Tk 4000 taking loan from her CO and now that has turned into an asset of Tk. 500 000. Now her family has no food crisis, her two children are now regular in school and she has bought 30 decimal of cultivating land. The major financial contribution to her family comes from her initiated effort. After meeting all expenses the family now can save average Tk. 50 000 a year. She is planning to expand her nursery and buying a small pickup van for better marketing of her produces. Her effort has significantly inspired many other women in that area to become self-reliant. She is very active member in her group and to assist in the crisis of other women in the locality.



Jahanara sharing her achievements with the audience attended the event

SADIKUNNAHAR has been developed to be a vaccinator. She joined the SCBRMP Credit Organization in late 2004. After getting 15 days training and some practical assistance by experts from SCBRMP and Department of Livestock Services she has become a very successful Para-vet in her area. She has taken it as her regular livelihood with earnings of Tk. 1500 a month. Her present yearly income from vet services and rearing poultry and livestock is around Tk. 40 000 and that is the major income of her family. There were many crises in her family, but that have become past now. There is no food shortage, no want of money for the education of her three children or for other essential needs for the family. Sadikunnahar is now very happy similarly the community getting services from her at door step. She is regarded very highly in her family and society.

The achievement of all the nine best women were acknowledged with crest, certificate and a prize money amounting to Tk. 10 000 (US\$ 148) each.

The event was inaugurated by the Minister of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperative MrSayedAshraful Islam and attended by the Secretary of MOLGRD, MPs, representatives from development partners and other officials from different departments and institutions along with

community people. From IFAD, the Country Programme Manager for Bangladesh Mr. Nigel Brett, consultant Mr. Edward Mallorie and Martina Spisiakova Newsletter Coordinator for 'Making a difference in Asia and Pacific' were present during the occasion. The inaugural session was chaired by the Chief Engineer of LGED Mr. Md. WahidurRahman.



Nigel and Edward from IFAD along with the participants from field in the stall set by SCBRMP to mark the occasion

Case study/Event 5

Sate Minister of Land in their villages to distribute the benefit

Benefit distribution to fisher by State Minister (Ministry of Land, Government of Bangladesh)) Advocate MostafizurRahman MP, SCBRMP-LGEDState Minister Advocate MostafizurRahman MP along with local MP from Sunamganj 1 Mr. MoazzemHossain Raton of Sunamganj; Upazila Chairman and Vice Chairman of Jamalganj; Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Jamalganj met the Bashkar-O-Jolshuka Beel User Group (BUG) members at Lalpur village of Jamalganj on 28 January 2010 and distributed benefit earned by selling fish from Bashkar-O-Jolshuka Beel to the BUG members. It was a partial distribution of the benefit. Each BUG member got an amount of Tk 8,100 and expected to get a total of Tk. 23,000 after final catch of fish.

State Minister highly appreciated the activities of the SCBRMP which he mentioned has ensured the access of real fisher to beel (waterbody) resources in a very transparent and accountable manner. He mentioned the desire of his government that no beel would be allowed to get accessed by other than genuine fisher in future.

SCBRMP has a plan to give access of 300 beels to fisher community. This Bashkar-O-Jolshuka Beel is one of them. The access process of Bashkar-O-Jolshuka Beel started in 2005 and finally SCBRMP could handover the beel to the community in 2009 after winning over a big resistance from the local vested interest group that finally solved with the verdict from higher court. It is a long-term transfer. At first phase they have got the beel for ten years and there is a provision to renew the access for more ten years. SCBRMP became successful in the access due to its commitment and strong determination of the community. To ensure access of the poor to resources is not

an easy task. Almost in all cases of accesses SCBRMP has experienced some resistance. In some cases that could be mitigated locally and few had to be settled in the court. SCBRMP, however, never ended any struggle halfway, but fought to the end taking community in the process.

The Bashkar-O-Jolshuka Beel has its BUG with 43 members of which 29 are male and 14 are female (32%). They are well organized and trained in community based resource management. They have their own byelaws and an elected executive committee comprising 11 members. The beel covers an area of 60.40 acres and is expected to produce fish to the value of Tk.10, 00,000. Its lease fee is Tk. 1, 71,201 per year that the BUG arranges from beel income.

The beel is largely silted and therefore a restoration programme has been taken to re-excavate the beel along with planting of swamp tree on beel side. Besides, to promote production and diversity of fish, a sanctuary will also be installed by the community. The community has many other plans to ensure an increased and sustained income from the beel.

The fisher community is really happy having access to the beel. To them it is a dream that has turned into a reality. Particularly the women, they could not believe that they would get ownership in beel resources. The commitment of the Minister to distribute beels to genuine fishers and the appreciation



State Minister of Ministry of land Advocate MostafizurRahman, MP distributing benefit to Bashkar-O- Jolshuka Beel User women group members



The BUG women members expressing their unity and determination along with fellow male members to safe their waterbody from any illegal interventions

of the work of BUG have largely raised the confidence of the community to combat any illegal interventions in beel if it further been happened by the vested interest classes.