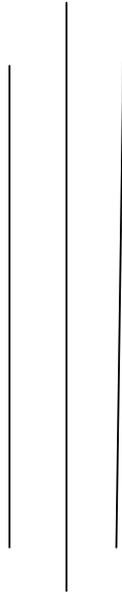


**Resource Management Guideline
for RMOs
during and after MACH project period**



February 2005

1. Introduction

Usually the seasonal and perennial (year-round) waterbodies, such as beel, floodplain, haor, river, and canal, are called wetlands. Crops, fish, birds, snails, frogs, tortoises, water plants, grasses and grazing are some of the main natural resources of these wetlands.

Day-by-day Bangladesh wetlands for over 40 years have been declining in area and quality due to over exploitation and changes made by human beings as well as natural processes. As a result, those who are directly or indirectly dependent on these wetlands, especially poor people, are seriously affected by loss of income and by loss of foods they could collect for themselves and therefore have poorer nutrition.

Local “Resource Management Organizations” (RMOs) for Management of Aquatic ecosystem through Community Husbandry (MACH) have been established to ensure the sustainable management of aquatic resources and maintenance of biodiversity by restoration of wetland habitats, and through proper utilization based on user participation in decision making.

2. Objectives

This guideline has been developed to guide the RMOs to ensure that they can function in a proper and effective way to ensure sustainable management for the benefit of local users of the resources in the areas that they aim to influence. These areas include but are not limited to any specific water bodies that each RMO has responsibility for and will continue to be responsible for in the future after project support ends.

Most of the points incorporate and document practices that the RMOs by themselves already adopted in managing their water bodies and wetlands. At the same time some new ideas are also incorporated as inputs for better management after discussion with each RMO.

It is expected that this guideline will be used to ensure smooth functioning of the RMO as an organization, and for its wetland resource management. The main thrusts are: to build the knowledge and skill of all RMO members so that they can continue the activities of the organization independently and so ensure healthy, productive, sustainable wetland resources and access for poor users to those resources; to ensure the organizations are transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of all aquatic resource users including poor people.

3. Area coverage of RMO

3.1 This should ensure that there is no exclusion of traditional user groups from the area being managed and influenced by the RMO, and after review of the influence area maps. Note that it is possible that there one village will have representatives (different people) in more than one RMO where people from that village are dependent on more than one water body.

3.2 The RMO map should make clear the area where the RMO seeks to influence wetland use – land, water, fish, other aquatic and natural resources. It should distinguish the water resources that the RMO has been devolved responsibility for through leases, other wetland resources and their status (leased to x, open access, controlled by y, etc), locations of interventions by the RMO, locations where collaborative management arrangements with other local institutions or individuals have been

reached, etc. (Example may be given of Takimary Darabasia RMO, where the RMO established a kata with an agreement with a private land owner)

4 Membership of RMO and representation issues

- 4.1 The membership of this organization is essentially voluntary. The members have pledged to work to ensure that the wetland resources of this area and villages are healthy and productive and to ensure that poor people, especially but not only those dependent on fishing, from these villages have fair access to the resources that they have traditionally used. The representation arrangement for membership of the RMO is set out as follows:
- a At least 5 % (where number of villages are many) - 30% (where number of villages are few) of members from each village
 - b As per guideline of the project at least 60% should be members of the RUGs formed by the project
 - c At least 30 % should be from households whose main source of income is from fishing. These 30% may come from RUGs and also may come from non-RUG
 - d At least 30 % should be from households that are functionally landless (under 50 decimals land). These 30% may come from RUGs and also may come from non-RUG
 - e At least 25% members in GB should be women as per guideline of the project
 - f At least 20% members in EC should be women as per guideline of the project
 - g Representatives of all other local interests in the area with the exception of individuals who wish to monopolize the resources for their own advantage and at the cost of the community.
- 4.2 Procedures for changing membership: if a member of the RMO for any reason no longer wishes to be involved in the RMO, then the EC can accept his/her resignation and should hold consultations with the stakeholder group he/she represented for them to chose a replacement in an appropriate way. For example, an RMO member of any RUG resigns as he/she is too busy with FRUG activities, then the members of that RUG elect a replacement representative; or a landless professional fisher from any village moves permanently out of the area, then the professional fishers of that village hold a village meeting in cooperation with RMO members of that village and chose a replacement fisher representative; and so on.
- 4.3 Changes in membership may also be made if the majority of the stakeholder group concerned is no longer happy with the performance of its representative and agree to a change in an appropriate meeting, or in the case of an RUG each year when it elects some of its representatives. If the RMO finds that a member has not attended 3 consecutive EC and GB meetings it may also raise the matter in the GB and request the concerned stakeholder group to nominate a replacement representative. In all these cases the process for choosing the replacement would be the same as above.
- 4.4 Procedures for increasing membership: if the present membership of the RMO does not include sufficient representatives of certain stakeholders/villages as targeted in its ideal composition statement, then additional members to fill these places can be added through meetings with the concerned stakeholder group to choose their representative(s) as above.

- 4.5 If the RMO expands its area of coverage to include additional village(s), then the different stakeholders there should be represented in the RMO, following (as far as possible) the same principles and proportions as for the existing villages and stakeholders. Therefore if the villages of the additional area have in a series of meetings with the RMO expressed their desire to be included in the RMO and its resource management plan/activities, then a majority in a GB meeting (with at least 51% of members present) needs to confirm an expansion of membership where those numbers have also been agreed in meetings with the new villages/stakeholders. Each concerned stakeholder category would then choose its representatives for the RMO.
- 4.6 Procedures for reducing membership: if the RMO EC finds that there are many inactive members and that the RMO GB membership is too large to easily manage GB meetings (example of Aloa and Kewta RMO) with a reasonable attendance, then the EC may propose alternatives or reductions in consultation with the members and concerned villages/stakeholders. For example, in Aloa RMO if the problem is of logistics and the RMO covers several water bodies/sub-units like daha committee within its overall area, then it might suggest the full GB meeting only at the AGM, and at other times (3 other quarters) meeting in each of the sub-units separately. Where the overall number of GB members is reduced, the reduction should ensure that all stakeholders, villages, etc are represented as before and in approximately the same proportions.

5 Accountability

In any organization, it is important that those taking decisions are responsible and responsive to the general membership on whose behalf they take decisions. Thus the organization should be transparent and democratic in its functions, if it is not eventually such an organization turns out to be an autocratic organization and ultimately dies.

The following norms should therefore be observed by all concerned in order to ensure that democratic processes always remain unhindered in the RMO, this will guarantee active participation of the members.

- 5.1 The responsibility for execution of all the activities of the organization shall be vested in the Executive Committee (EC). The EC shall place the progress report of all its activities of the past months including financial transactions in the next General Body (GB) meeting. The GB meeting will examine/scrutinize the report, may raise questions or request changes in future, and accord necessary approval after being satisfied.
- 5.2 The EC will prepare a quarterly report of the RMO and submit it to the Upazila Fisheries Committee (UFC) meeting, reporting on progress and raising any issues that require administrative help; it will report back to the GB and then implement the decisions of that meeting.
- 5.3 The EC will make sure that meetings of its constituent water body area or village based committees (Uthan Boithoks/Village committee/Doho committee/Kur committee/ Kum committee/Section committee) are held regularly. In these meetings, threadbare discussions should be made as to what actions have been taken by the organization for improvement of the wetland and what future programs are being

planned. In return these committees should report back their actions, plans and needs to the EC and GB meetings and will request support and actions of the EC/GB as needed to meet the needs of the wider user community.

- 5.4 The Chairman and secretary on behalf of the RMO will attend at the UP meetings (as per invitation of UP) as the representative of the RMO to maintain network and information sharing.
- 5.5 Apart from this, the wetland resource management plan of the organization shall be discussed in the local UP meeting by the RMO representatives in order to share the information with local government so that the UP is aware of what the RMO is doing, supports the plans, and when needed can extend their helping hand.

6 Composition, formation and duration of sub-committees:

- 6.1 Each sub-committee should be formed with 5 members, except that for a PIC for a temporary task that is small it may have 3 members.
- 6.2 The members will be elected by the GB. One person who is an EC member will be elected as the President of the sub-committee, and the rest of the members will be elected by the GB (at least 3 of a 5 member sub-committee should be non-EC members). No person may be a member of more than one sub-committee at the same time.
- 6.3 The RMO President, Secretary and Treasurer are not allowed to be a member of any sub-committee as the sub-committees will be responsible to submit their reports to them.
- 6.4 The regular sub-committees will be formed in a GB meeting. Temporary sub-committees in special situation can be formed by the EC meeting but the decisions and membership must then be presented in next GB meeting for approval, if this is not approved such a temporary sub-committee must be dissolved immediately.
- 6.5 The tenure of office in a regular sub-committee will be one year, and for a temporary sub-committee not more than 6 months.
- 6.6 No person may stand for membership of the same sub-committee for more than two consecutive terms, and no person may be a member of all various sub-committees for more than 3 continual years.
- 6.7 The general body can dissolve a sub-committee and form a new one at any time if necessary on the basis of a majority vote when at least 51% of the GB is present.

7 Accountability of Sub-committees

- 7.1 Each active sub-committee will make a short verbal report of its work and progress and any recommendations for new decisions at each GB meeting and at each EC meeting. Any necessary decisions will be taken in the EC meeting by reviewing the sub-committee report, and the EC has discretion to take issues up with the GB as appropriate. The key points presented by the sub-committee and any decisions in the meeting should be recorded in the minutes/resolution book.

- 7.2 The responsibilities, roles and power for every sub-committee will be specified in writing. Here draft general examples are given below to be adapted and modified to fit with each RMO individually.

8. Responsibility and Power of Beel Management Sub-committee

The following is a general example; each RMO will need to define each of its regular standing committees for resource areas and their structure, role, responsibilities and accountability, etc. In general sub-committees for resource areas should not be restricted to a sanctuary only but should oversee all of that water body or river section including a sanctuary within it.

The exception to this is where a complete jalmohal has been set aside as a national sanctuary. In these cases a special plan and institutional arrangement will be worked out between the project staff and RMO in consultation also with other nearby RMOs and local government, and a special committee/sub-committee may be formed which may where appropriate include representatives from outside the RMO.

The following are an example of provisions for and responsibilities of a “Beel Management Sub-committee”:

- i. The sub-committee members must be familiar with all the provisions of the resource management plan that are relevant to their physical area of jurisdiction.
- ii. The sub-committee members will agree and then follow a plan for visiting the beel by rotation or altogether. Especially in the dry season they should visit the beel everyday. If necessary with the decision of the organization a night guard can be employed in the dry season to protect any sanctuary.
- iii. Monitor the use of gears that the RMO has banned in the location because they are considered harmful (this may be linked to national law or local RMO agreed plan e.g. current jal, katha jal, etc.), the ban may be year-round or seasonal, and take necessary action to stop use of this gear.
- iv. Monitor if someone is catching fish by dewatering and take necessary action to stop this.
- v. Monitor if someone is creating any form of blockage across the complete width of any channel within or connecting the waterbody under its jurisdiction, for example bund across stream, veshal / chorok / khara jal / bana that completely obstructs fish passage in river or canal. Provided this type of structure has been banned in the relevant resource management plan, then take necessary action to stop this. If such fishing is not presently banned by the RMO, raise the issue with the EC.
- vi. Place and maintain signboard, fix red flag and make clear the boundary of any sanctuary (no-fishing) zone, maintain jalmhal demarcation pillars, maintain any RMO owned katha, and any other job to monitor and protect the fishery including any sanctuary.
- vii. Monitor sub-contractor (fishers or others), if any, to see if they are working according to their contract with the RMO (including how they are collecting any gear based fees if this was included in their contract)
- viii. If the RMO has agreed that this sub-committee will collect gear based fees that it has set, then collect fees according to the agreed rates.
- ix. Regular reports of latest information and any actions/decisions needed, with recommendations, should be submitted to the GB and EC meeting.

- x. After consultations with the fishers and villages using this waterbody, make proposal for new sanctuary (if any) within its jurisdiction area, and present this to the GB and EC meeting (which may, if it approves, then propose the same in the LGC/UFC for funding, advice and recognition).
- xi. If needed in a specific time of the year it may plan and arrange resources for restoration of locally lost/rare fish species. But note that this should in general not be necessary as during the MACH project period self-supporting populations of such fishes should have already been restored.
- xii. This committee will be a watch dog for wetland management and it will give advance recommendations for the EC/GB so that appropriate measures can be taken to conserve and develop its wetland before local adverse impacts or uses cause a problem.

9 Responsibility and Power of Plantation Management Sub-committee

The following are an example of the terms of reference and responsibilities for a “plantation management sub-committee”.

- 9.1. Collecting information and submit update reports to the regular GB and EC meetings about how many saplings have been planted since the start of the organization and how many are presently surviving.
- 9.2. Ensure that for each plantation there are agreements regarding maintenance and benefit sharing made before planting, make agreements for any plantations without an agreement based on the terms in existing agreements for other plantations, and monitor the observance of conditions in these agreements.
- 9.3. Inform all organization members and the wider community about agreements concerning the plantations (existing and planned).
- 9.4. Offer employment as guards and/or shares of benefits from trees that it plants to poor women from RUGs (or outside RUGs where there are insufficient interested in RUGs).
- 9.5. Supervise the guards and inform the GB and EC meeting whether the guards are doing their duty properly.
- 9.6. Propose to the EC for possible approval new areas within the jurisdiction of the RMO where more trees can be planted, the purposes of this, and how such planting can be supported and implemented.
- 9.7. If any tree is destroyed, this sub-committee should take steps immediately for replacement of the tree and take action against the culprit to recover the cost of replacement trees and recommend any other appropriate punishment. At the time of the next EC or GB meeting any emergency action will be endorsed and other actions approved.

10 Establishing a sense of ownership of the organization among all its members and the wider community

At various occasions and in different programs, it observed that, except for a few leading members, most of the general members in most RMOs do not take or are not willing to take an active part in the organization’s affairs. Some inactive members also ask ‘what is our individual benefit in building an organization?’ This should not be thought as irrational. The prime underlying reason behind such questions is that the organization members as yet could not consider the organization as their own body; in other words, GB members do not own the organization as theirs. Also it can be because of a misunderstanding that the organization is for their direct material benefit when they have volunteered or been chosen to represent their community in

the organization and to spend some time for actions that will benefit everyone in the area (more fish, more trees, cleaner water, water for irrigation, etc).

It must to be remembered that a sustainable and successful wetland management program cannot be achieved by a handful of the total members; it needs the willing participation and combined efforts of all members of the organization and the wider community. To accomplish this, the RMO should adopt the following strategy.

- 10.1 The GB members shall always be encouraged to visit and supervise all on-going activities of the organization; occasionally, group visits (Women wetland day) should be organized by the EC so that the GB members and other interested members of the community can practically see the activities in the field with their own eyes to get answers to such questions.
- 10.2 Instead of confining the work only in the hands of a few leaders, responsibility should be distributed among GB members so that they equally feel responsible for the organization's works and to shape them for shouldering future responsibilities.
- 10.3 Who could contribute what for the wetland management and improvement activities should be discussed threadbare in the GB meetings and in the wider community / village meetings. The, nature of contribution of individual members and other people can be identified through participatory discussion at the meeting. Some people may participate by giving cash money, some by donating a bamboo pole or brushwood, some by transporting goods by his boat or rickshaw van, some by functioning as subscription collector moving from door to door, some by his/her physical labor, some by good counseling or establishing contact with others, some by minimizing conflict through exercise of his/her influence or good offices.
- 10.4 For availing of all these contributions, an enabling organizational environment must be a pre-requisite, and a link between members of the RMO and the stakeholders that they represent so that contributions come from more than just the GB members.

11 Continuation of Awareness Raising Activities

This and the next two sections provide general guidance for the RMO in preparing its own resource management plan and for encouraging best practice for protecting and using natural wetland resources.

- 11.1 The organization should continue awareness raising activities every year locally so that the wetland environment is protected, and to achieve a balance between any new agricultural trends and fish production in the wetland.
- 11.2 Encourage people to observe the resource management plan of the RMO (including national rules that it has incorporated). Conduct various awareness raising programs like distribution of leaflets and posters, miking, organizing rural folk song and drama shows, etc., to create mass awareness among the local people.
- 11.3 The organization, in consultation with Upazila Fishery Officer, will take appropriate action to stop catching of brood fish and fish fry.

12 Swamp forest trees

The RMO in general should take particular measures for swamp forest trees that differ from other plantations, since these trees are an important part of the wetland habitat and serve functions for fish and other wildlife, and are often distant from village areas. For achieving these following steps will be taken;

- 12.1 Ensure proper protection of swamp forest trees established by the RMO/in its jurisdiction, by raising awareness of all resource users of the importance of the trees as a community asset.
- 12.2 If need arises for future planting of swamp trees after MACH project ends, raise such needs with the UFC, and organize and execute tree plantation/ reforestation in the periphery of the wetlands with fund arranged from elsewhere or out of the organization's own income.
- 12.3 Any use or harvest of swamp trees growing in the wetland resource management area must be on the principle of 'sustained yield management'. In all those locations where swamp trees grow and fish sanctuaries are also established, no cutting down of swamp trees will be permitted. Fodder collection from swamp trees will be subject to approval of the RMO. While giving such permission, caution shall be exercised so that the trees remain healthy, no conflict arises in the locality, nobody's interest is hurt, and at the same time no one takes advantage of the situation to grab benefits at the expense of the poor (RUG members) and the RMO as a whole.
- 12.4 Preserve/conservate locally scarce trees and plants in the RMO's resource management area. Felling of any such scarce or threatened species shall be subject to prior approval of the organization and should only be given in special circumstances.
- 12.5 Only persons/sub-committee accredited by the RMO shall be authorized to use products of these plantations.

13 Restriction on bird hunting in the wetland resource management area

The RMO and any waterbody sub-committees that it forms should ensure that the following rules are adopted and followed by the community and by outsiders:

- 13.1 Hunting of birds is totally prohibited in the wetland resource management area.
- 13.2 Catching of birds by trap is totally prohibited in the resource management area.
- 13.3 No disturbance whatsoever shall be made by anybody in those parts of the wetland where birds build their nests during the nesting season (for example, any branch cutting of trees should be when birds are not nesting).