



UNIVERSITY  
of  
GREENWICH | Natural  
Resources  
Institute

## Socio-economic case studies: a progress report on the Bay of Bengal Project socio-economic case studies in Bangladesh, 11 - 25 October 1993 (NRI report no. R 2032(R))

---

### **Greenwich Academic Literature Archive (GALA) Citation:**

Blowfield, M.E. (1993) *Socio-economic case studies: a progress report on the Bay of Bengal Project socio-economic case studies in Bangladesh, 11 - 25 October 1993 (NRI report no. R 2032(R)). Technical Report.* Natural Resources Institute, Chatham, UK.

### **Available at:**

<http://gala.gre.ac.uk/12149>

---

### **Copyright Status:**

Permission is granted by the Natural Resources Institute (NRI), University of Greenwich for the copying, distribution and/or transmitting of this work under the conditions that it is attributed in the manner specified by the author or licensor and it is not used for commercial purposes. However you may not alter, transform or build upon this work. Please note that any of the aforementioned conditions can be waived with permission from the NRI.

Where the work or any of its elements is in the public domain under applicable law, that status is in no way affected by this license. This license in no way affects your fair dealing or fair use rights, or other applicable copyright exemptions and limitations and neither does it affect the author's moral rights or the rights other persons may have either in the work itself or in how the work is used, such as publicity or privacy rights. For any reuse or distribution, you must make it clear to others the license terms of this work.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

---

### **Contact:**

GALA Repository Team: [gala@gre.ac.uk](mailto:gala@gre.ac.uk)  
Natural Resources Institute: [nri@greenwich.ac.uk](mailto:nri@greenwich.ac.uk)

Socio-economic Case Studies:  
a progress report on the  
Bay of Bengal Project  
socio-economic case studies  
in Bangladesh

11 - 25 October 1993

M E Blowfield  
R 2032 (R)

Distribution List

AMOD - N MacPherson  
BOBP - D King  
          A Kashem  
          N Haque  
NRI - FARG  
          SSG  
          Library

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. A visit was made to Bangladesh between 11th and 25th October for the Bay of Bengal Post Harvest Fisheries Project.

2. The initial terms of reference for the visit were to conduct field visits to North Selimpur, Cox's Bazaar and Hatia Island in order to review progress and appraise data on the set bag-net communities being collected by the field researcher, Mr Nazimul Haque.

3. On arrival, help was also requested by the BOBP Field Manager in discussing a planned study by a local NGO into the activities of traders in Chittagong market, and in assessing proposals for the BOBP Sustainable Income Enhancement Project.

4. The set bag-net study is being carried out by a local consultant in 3 villages, each representing a different cultural mix. Despite difficulties caused by the weather and subsequent transport difficulties the study is on course and possibilities for future actions are being identified. A series of recommendations, including a library study to provide historical perspective on similar case histories, and methods of dissemination of the findings to interested parties including NGOs, is provided for project management's consideration.

5. The proposed study of itinerant traders in Chittagong was delayed due to a misunderstanding with CODEC, the NGO which is carrying out the work. It is now underway, but will need to be continued into 1994/95 if coverage of the hilsa season is to be obtained.

6. It was found that the purpose of the sustainable income enhancement project was misunderstood by many of the potential participants. There is a risk that if this situation is not rectified, the project will lead to frustration and false expectations amongst both the NGOs and the fishing communities. Urgent attention needs to be paid to the availability of funding in this financial year.

## ACTION POINTS

Paragraph	Action Required	By Whom
30	Further discussions on use of ice boxes on Hatia Island tralwers	N. Willoughby/- D. King with Neil MacPherson
32	Policy decision on involvement in pre-harvest fisheries	N. Willoughby/- D. King with ODA NR advisors
58	Economist to appraise CODEC itinerant trader survey	N. Willoughby to discuss with NRI SSG
70	Clarification of small project funding from BOBP in relation to Supplementary Income Enhancement activity	D. King; A. Kashem; training consultants
81	Planning of final phase of socio-economic case studies in 1994 (analysis and dissemination)	BOBP; NRI FARG; NRI SSG
91	Finalisation of plans for fish-handling training including identification of level of participants	D. King; J. Rogers; A. Kashem

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACTION POINTS . . . . .	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . .	ii
BACKGROUND . . . . .	1
SET BAGNET COMMUNITY STUDY . . . . .	1
Situation in Study Communities . . . . .	3
Trading Relations . . . . .	3
Income From Fishing . . . . .	6
Natural Disasters . . . . .	9
Fisherwomen . . . . .	9
Alternative Income Generating Activities . . . . .	10
Fishing Communities and NGOs . . . . .	12
ITINERANT TRADERS IN CHITTAGONG FISH MARKET . . . . .	14
SUPPLEMENTARY INCOME ENHANCEMENT (SIE) PROJECT . . . . .	15
CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	18
Socio-Economic Study . . . . .	18
Itinerant Traders in Chittagong Fish Market . . . . .	19
Sustainable Income Enhancement Project . . . . .	19
RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	19
Socio-Economic Study . . . . .	19
Itinerant Traders in Chittagong Fish Market . . . . .	22
Sustainable Income Enhancement Project . . . . .	23
Appendix I: Visit itinerary . . . . .	24
Appendix II: Visit Schedule of Nasimul Haque . . . . .	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	27
GLOSSARY . . . . .	27

## **BACKGROUND**

1. The visit was conducted to monitor the implementation of the socio-economic study of set bagnet fishing communities started in May 1993. The visit itinerary is found in Appendix I and the terms of reference were as follows:

- a. To conduct field visits to North Selimpur, Cox's Bazar and Hatia Island;
- b. To review current progress and appraise the data collected by the field researcher.

2. The visit coincided with a visit by Mr Duncan King and Mr George Mathew from BOBP Madras office. Although outside of the original terms of reference, I was asked to accompany Messrs King and Mathew to discuss a study commissioned from the Community Development Centre (CODEC), Chittagong, into itinerant traders in Chittagong fish market<sup>1</sup>. I was also asked to assist Mr King in relation to the BOBP Sustainable Income Enhancement project by assessing proposals drawn up during the second workshop of that project, discussing the proposals with Ms Dilruba Haider (manager of the British High Commission Small Project Scheme), accompanying Mr King to Ghoramara fishing village, Chittagong, discussing the small grants programme with Mr Abul Kashem (BOBP Dhaka) and writing up any results.

3. The above unscheduled work, the breakdown of the Hatia Island steamer plus a one day general strike in Chittagong reduced the amount of time to monitor the socio-economic study by about 25%.

## **SET BAGNET COMMUNITY STUDY**

4. The study commenced with my first visit in May<sup>2</sup> and is going ahead according to schedule although individual visits by Nasimul Haque, the field researcher, were disrupted during the monsoon season by the weather. This affected the work in all villages but especially visits to Hatia Island.

---

<sup>1</sup> Proposed in Rogers and Blowfield, 1993

<sup>2</sup> See Rogers and Blowfield, 1993

5. Three study locations have been chosen based on the following criteria agreed upon in May:

- a. The set bagnet fishery is a major contributor to the livelihood of the fisherfolk in the village.
- b. Villages represent different types of technical and marketing constraints and opportunities.
- c. Each village represents a different religious/cultural mix.
- d. Potential to coordinate study implementation and findings with the BOBP-funded Sustainable Income Enhancement project.
- e. The villages are in stratum covered by the BOBP bio socio-economic study.
- f. Villagers are willing to participate in the study.

6. The communities selected are:

- a. Delipara, a Hindu fishing hamlet on the shores of North Selimpur village, Chittagong;
- b. Rakhainpara, a Buddhist fishing hamlet near Cox's Bazar;
- c. Rahmatbazar, a Muslim fishing hamlet on the south-east coast of Hatia Island.

7. Research is being conducted in each of these three communities simultaneously based on the study guidelines agreed in May.<sup>3</sup> Nasimul Haque makes regular visits to the communities (see Appendix II) and has involved community members in a participatory mapping exercise.

8. Monthly field reports relating to the various points in the study guidelines have been sent to NRI and BOBP Madras for monitoring and supervision purposes. These are not included in this report because the data collected are changing as we come to know the communities more intimately. It is not appropriate at this time to make data available in a format which might lead people to draw firm conclusions about aspects and ideas that are still being developed.

9. However, based on the visits conducted between May

---

<sup>3</sup> See Rogers and Blowfield, 1993

and September plus brief monitoring visits to each village by myself this month, some observations are offered particularly in relation to planning future interventions.

### **Situation in Study Communities**

10. The communities so far have largely been observed during the hilsa season. This season has a different meaning for each community. In Delipara the hilsa are caught mostly with set bagnets and the fishermen work on small, traditional boats belonging to community members. In Rahmatbazar the hilsa are caught by local 'trawlers' belonging mostly to outsiders but using Rahmatbazar as a seasonal base. The fishermen work as labourers on these boats. In Rakhainpara the hilsa are again caught by trawlers, but they are based outside of the village and the fishermen leave the village to work as labourers for most of the hilsa season.

11. Access to the communities is problematic, especially in the rainy season. Delipara is reasonably near the main Chittagong-Dhaka road, but even this community can be hard to reach when the rains are strong. To reach Rakhainpara one must cross a river, travel half an hour by auto-rickshaw and then walk about fifteen minutes, and during heavy rains this journey is impossible. Hatia Island is sometimes cut off during the rainy season. Rahmatbazar itself is about three hours by bus and rickshaw from the main town, and the roads become unpassable in the rains.

12. Such difficulties will apply to many coastal fishing communities, and the amount of implementation time that will be lost because of the weather must be factored in to any realistic project plans.

### **Trading Relations**

13. Most of the hilsa catch is sold to traders, especially larger traders from outside the community (dadandar) who are also money lenders. The dadandar make



contracts with boat operators<sup>4</sup> which give them first right to the catch for the duration of the season. Loans to the owners or operators are a normal part of this contract. Either when the fish are landed, or in the case of trawlers often at sea, the dadandar collect the catch. They do not hand over money when they take the catch, but a part of the proceeds of selling the fish are used to pay off the loan and the interest.

14. As the dadandar provide the loan, set the rate of interest, form the sole outlet for the fish and market the catch themselves, once fishermen have made contracts their room for manoeuvre is very limited. Furthermore, in Delipara where we have a better understanding of the situation at present, the dadandar pursue a conscious strategy of locking the fishermen into restrictive relationships, not simply through loans at high rates of interest but also through their control of the ice market and transport.

15. Another important aspect in relation to any external credit intervention is that in return for loans dadandar claim exclusive purchasing rights to the entire catch. These rights are not dependent on the size of the loan. Therefore a fisherman who borrows Tk 1,000 and one who borrows Tk 100,000 both surrender the first right for marketing fish to the dadandar. This is one reason why the CODEC credit intervention in Delipara has not released fisherfolk from the dadandar monopoly this year. Because the disbursement of CODEC loans was late, many families had to take bridging loans from the dadandar. Although these were often for smaller amounts than in previous years, the dadandar still had the first buying rights to the fish.

16. Some dadandar also use violence and intimidation, and in Delipara have been known to burn down fishing community houses and kill fisherfolk who have resisted them. Some fisherfolk would like to resist this, but common to all the communities is the fact that they are a marginalised minority who fear for their own security. The fisherfolk in Delipara were relocated to their

---

<sup>4</sup> Boat owners who are not operators will normally go to money lenders in the farming communities if they need loans.

present site from further along the coast because of erosion and now live on the edge of a Muslim farming community which they regard as hostile. Those in Rakhainpara were granted land by a local MP and now live in a small settlement in the middle of a Muslim community. Those in Rahmatbazar are illegal squatters along either side of a government-owned embankment. Each community therefore does not wish to antagonise its neighbours for fear of retribution.

17. Yet it is not possible at present to conclude that the relationship between the fishing communities and the dadandar is wholly exploitative. While there is a lot of dissatisfaction amongst the fisherfolk about the dadandar, they are equally very dependent on the dadandar. Alternative sources of credit such as community savings and loans organised by NGOs are at an early stage of development and has not yet proved flexible enough to provide loans when they are most needed. Furthermore, although contracts are negotiated each year, relationships between some fishermen and dadandar go back several years. A loan that cannot be paid off during one bad year binds the borrower to the dadandar the next year but does not preclude the borrower from getting a new loan, something that would be difficult to arrange with formal sources of credit.

18. Therefore, although credit is a major concern to the communities and would almost inevitably have to be part of any programme wishing to address community priorities, it is a complex problem that needs to be thoroughly understood so that the interventions planned are effective. Based on our present limited knowledge factors that will need to be considered are:

- a. Existing credit relations, especially with outside dadandar<sup>5</sup>;
- b. What money is used for;
- c. What credit is used for;
- d. Who has access to credit;
- e. Who uses the credit;

---

<sup>5</sup> There are also money-lenders within the communities. These operate on a smaller scale and their role has not been clear during the dadandar-dominated hilsa season.

- f. When credit is required during the year;
- g. When savings are made (ie there is a surplus of money in the community);
- h. How money circulates within the community;
- i. How credit circulates within the community.

19. It is hoped that by the end of this study we will have a far greater understanding of the above factors. But it needs to be stressed that this is a long process. On an initial visit to any of the communities it is very easy to obtain figures, but as our study shows such figures are meaningless. The fisherfolk and the dadandar do not talk freely about their financial arrangements even to each other, and only now, after about six months, are meaningful figures starting to be compiled.

#### Income From Fishing

20. It is difficult to assess the real incomes from fishing because of the complexity of the credit relations. Prices quoted at landings for fish have little meaning when payment is deferred, is offset against an unknown previous borrowing at unclear rates of interest, is received in both cash and kind, and the prices quoted are not the prices upon which calculations will be made in any case. The study is therefore only slowly building up a body of reliable data on this aspect.

21. Even amongst the waged fish crews in Rakhainpara and Rahmatbazar the situation is not straightforward. A fisherman agrees to work on a certain trawler for the duration of the hilsa season for a stated wage (in Rakhainpara, Tk 8,500 for six months). But all fishermen know that they will receive less than this amount when payment comes to be made at the end of the season. During the season the crew member is given food and clothing while on the trawler exclusive of the wage. But he will also take loans from the boat operator and these will be deducted. Likewise deductions will be made for any days the crew member does not work.

22. Income also varies according to the type of employment. Within the communities there are no large boat owners, but in Delipara some people have motorised boats. Where the owner has only one boat he will operate

this himself but may allow others to use their gear on his boat in return for a proportion of the catch. Where the owner has more than one boat, other boats will be rented to an operator, payment taking the form of a cash payment or a share of the catch. The boat may be rented by an individual or rented jointly, often by brothers or fathers and sons. Again on one boat there may be gears belonging to different people.

23. The operator is responsible for engaging the crew and it is likely that he will be the main source of loans for these people who have nothing to offer the dadandar. In some cases the operator will pay towards the cost of any boat repairs. For light repairs done every year the total amount is between Tk 3,000 - 5,000, while for heavier repairs employing carpenters the cost ranges between Tk 5,000 - 18,000.

24. During the hilsa season, the monopoly of the dadandar means they are the focus of most fish trading activity. The hilsa the dadandar reject is either used by the fishermen themselves or bought up by small traders, salted and sold to local markets. A small part of the catch is taken home by the crews and some may find its way onto local markets, and there are local traders based within the communities that buy hilsa and other fish when they can.

25. As the hilsa season ends, the activity changes. In Rakhainpara, along the shore, bamboo drying fences are being built and smaller fish is being dried on mats on the sand. Again there are large buyers who extend credit to the fishermen in return for the entire catch. But there are also smaller operators from the fishing communities themselves. Some of this fish goes to Cox's Bazar, but most probably goes by sea to Chittagong which is the centre of the dried fish market.

#### **Enhanced Income from Fishing**

26. According to AZAD, one opportunity for fisherfolk to increase their incomes is to assist them in starting up small fish drying operations and it has provided small amounts of seed capital for this to some individuals.

27. CODEC has provided loans to improve the income of

fishermen through the purchase of gears and mechanisation of craft. CODEC is optimistic about this approach although repayments were disrupted by the impact of the 1991 cyclone which resulted in the loss of many capital assets.

28. ODA Dhaka is currently considering funding pisciculture on Hatia Island and says that there are numerous unused ponds that could be used for this.

29. Since 1990 ODA has been funding a trawler building and rental/hire purchase scheme on Hatia Island. This was managed by the NGO, DUS, and has just finished. Over fifteen vessels were built and these were bought on a hire purchase basis by groups of poor fishermen (typically eleven people per group). There is currently a proposal from DUS for ODA to fund the purchase of three carrier vessels which would collect fish at sea from the trawlers and take it to the markets. To test the viability of this approach, DUS has just conducted a one year trial using rented carrier vessels. The financial reports for this trial period show the scheme almost breaking even but there are still doubts amongst both ODA and DUS about long term sustainability.

30. All of the above ideas could profitably be investigated as BOBP considers what interventions to make. Neil MacPherson at ODA, Dhaka, expressed interest in introducing ice boxes on the trawlers similar to those promoted by BOBP in India, and in training to improve fish handling to reduce spoilage.

31. What is clear is that although there may be some other income enhancement opportunities (para. 42), many people do not see their future as being outside fishing.<sup>6</sup> When they discuss ways of improving their livelihoods it is in terms of increasing their exploitation of what they commonly admit is a diminishing resource.

32. In relation to this, one thing that will have to be addressed within BOBP is whether, with the decline in FAO involvement, it can restrict its involvement to post-

---

<sup>6</sup> This feeling is strongest in Delipara and weakest in Rakhainpara where the men have also practised farming in the past.

harvest fisheries and ignore such aspects as credit needs for purchasing gears and boats. Cooperation with other ODA funded projects might help overcome this problem, but at present such funding is limited to parts of Hatia Island.

### **Natural Disasters**

33. Each of the communities was devastated by the 1991 cyclone, but natural disasters are a constant risk. This year in Delipara over fifty houses were damaged by tidal surges in July, all the disaster relief funded latrines on the shore-side of the settlement were destroyed and some houses were washed away.

34. Such natural disasters not only result in material loss (houses, boats, gears) but opportunity loss. The tidal surge meant that two weeks fishing at the peak of the hilsa season were lost as the boats could not go to sea. This in turn impacts upon livelihoods, incomes, credit etc.

35. In these communities such events, while unforeseen, cannot be regarded as freak occurrences. Such events will occur and any realistic programme will incorporate them in its plans from the outset.

36. The large-scale response of relief agencies after the 1991 cyclone was often the first contact these communities had with aid organisations. Until the cyclone there was only one NGO working in Cox's Bazar whereas now there are a whole host of organisations with their individual programmes. In some villages on Hatia Island there are up to twenty separate NGOs operating.

37. The fact that this initial contact was through relief programmes has created perceptions amongst the people about what to expect from outside parties. A welfare/charity orientation is the accepted norm, while there is little understanding of, and an element of frustration with, the more complicated, time consuming development orientation.

### **Fisherwomen**

38. From what has been observed so far, women do not

play the kind of extensive role in post-harvest fisheries that they do, for instance, in India. In Delipara and Rahmatbazar the monopoly the dadandar hold over the hilsa catch means that few women are involved in fish trading, although in Delipara a couple of women trade in other fish and several women have expressed interest in trading if only they could acquire fish.

39. In Rakhainpara the women are engaged in weaving. Many houses have hand looms supplying cloth for traders in Cox's Bazar. Prior to the 1991 cyclone the women had their own looms and sold to the shops. But these were lost in the cyclone and they produce on a piece rate for traders who provide the looms and yarn. So far the men have been working away from the village and as women do not catch fish the role of women will only become evident now the hilsa season is ending and the men return to the village to use set bagnets.

40. Except for the weavers, the majority of women therefore have little direct income. They are however responsible for managing the family finances. In Delipara, husbands who have trouble getting loans from dadandar ask their wives to plead their cases. The women also take out loans from money lenders.

41. It is noticeable that men take out loans for fishing (eg boats and gears) while women take out loans for family needs (eg house repair, food, health care and subsistence needs). This reflects a general situation where men plan for fishing (eg where to place nets) while women plan for their families.

#### **Alternative Income Generating Activities**

42. In all three communities fishing is the main livelihood in terms of both cash and subsistence. However a limited range and number of alternatives are being exploited. In Rahmatbazar some men were paid to look after cattle for landowners, some households had ducks and chickens for eggs and meat, and a few individuals have small shops. In Delipara a few of the younger men have received vocational training and two are working in a nearby town. When boats do not go to sea and especially outside of the hilsa season, poorer members of the community working on others' craft work as

porters for fish traders or as day labourers (eg road construction, food for work programmes). In both Delipara and Rahmatbazar there are examples of men who have gone to work in the Middle East but more common are men who have been swindled into paying money to agents for Middle East jobs that never materialised. The weavers in Rakhainpara have already been described.

43. More evident than fisherfolk engaged in other work are the people from outside the community who come to work. There are hawkers and vendors (eg clothes, cloth, ice cream, food), travelling entertainers, carpenters who come during the hilsa season to repair boats, waged fishermen from other villages and petty traders who establish small shops. In Delipara there is a Hindu priest who also fishes while in Rakhainpara there is an old Buddhist monk who lives in the temple cum cyclone shelter.

44. There are two major problems to alternative income generating activities. First is the lack of control the people have over the higher value fish which is monopolised by the dadandar. Second is the lack of land. In Rakhainpara the fishing community has been allocated land for housing but has no rights to other land. The Delipara community has scarcely enough land for its 1400 people and this is located at the water's edge. Rahmatbazar fisherfolk do not have any legal right to land and have built houses along either side of an embankment with rows of trees to hide them from the authorities' eyes.

45. The farming community surrounding Delipara have offered to sell land at prices so high above the market rate as to effectively state they are unwilling to sell land to the fisherfolk. In Rakhainpara the farming community is prepared to sell land but the fisherfolk do not have enough money. There are however unused government lands nearby which, according to AZAD, the district council is prepared to make available for grazing and fish ponds if the communities can raise the necessary funds. In Rahmatbazar there are government lands that are being used for communal grazing by cattle owners. There are also unused ponds resulting from the excavation of the embankment.



46. These ponds reveal some of the opportunities and constraints relating to the fishing communities. Asked directly why they do not utilise the ponds, they reply that they do not have any skills in aquaculture. However, looked into more deeply they are worried that if the ponds were used this so far worthless land would gain an economic value which in turn would attract more powerful elements from the surrounding society. Rather than provide income generation for the fishing community, exploitation of the land would lead to those elements putting pressure on the local authorities to evict the fisherfolk in order for wealthier entrepreneurs to have free access to the land.

47. Therefore where potential for such interventions exists, it will always be necessary to consider the social ramifications in assessing the feasibility, and to incorporate into project plans means of avoiding negative results.

#### **Fishing Communities and NGOs**

48. There are a very large number of NGOs in Bangladesh<sup>7</sup>, and although the coastal fishing community has not been a priority in the past, there are a number of NGOs working with the coastal fisherfolk. CODEC has been working with the community in Delipara since before the 1991 cyclone providing assistance in education, credit, social organisation, alternative income generation and sanitation. The Association of Zonal Approach Development (AZAD) is a community-based NGO which since the mid-1970s has been working with fishing villages near Cox's Bazar including Rakhainpara. Larger, Dhaka-based NGOs are now also starting to work in this area. Rahmatbazar is not currently being assisted by NGOs, but prior to 1991 World Vision International and a local NGO built a model village there, and Hatia Island was chosen as one of the three sites at the specific request of Mr Neil MacPherson because ODA was already providing support to one fisheries oriented NGO on the island (page 8).

---

<sup>7</sup> There are about 1,500 NGOs registered with the government and probably the same amount of smaller local NGOs.

49. I do not intend to try and evaluate the capacity of the NGOs, but as it is possible BOBP would like to work with such organisations in the future, it is worth commenting in general on the way they work. A major issue, the communities' exposure to relief programmes, has already been mentioned (page 9). In addition it is necessary to note the nature of the NGOs themselves.

50. Each NGO has an internal hierarchy that functions apart from the communities with which they work. In most cases there is a head office with various field offices from which village operations are managed. In the case of AZAD the head office is in the village and although there are board members from Cox's Bazar, the executive and the field workers live in the villages. The field officers have community organisers that work with community groups the NGOs have helped form. Except for AZAD where all workers are voluntary, these organisers are paid staff of the NGOs.

51. Having established contact with a village, the NGOs devise programmes. With the exception of a small proportion of credit schemes these are funded for a certain period by donor agencies and/or wealthy benefactors. Some NGOs have strong links with donors, others have none. The programmes implemented in different villages and by different NGOs are very similar, and seem to form a package. Commonly they include:

- a. Functional literacy;
- b. Water and sanitation;
- c. Primary health care;
- d. Legal awareness;
- e. Some form of forestry;
- f. Relief;
- g. Some form of women's awareness/empowerment;
- h. Credit support.

52. This package approach means that specific needs of individual communities are not properly identified, and that individual activities are often not properly thought through. For instance, none of the above activities seem to have been designed around the specific conditions pertaining to fishing communities, and those that overlap with known concerns of the communities (eg credit) do not

seem to have fully considered the unique nature of fisherfolk.

53. In part this is a reflection of the NGOs' institutional constraints as, while they are reasonably strong at a certain approach to community organising, they have limited technical expertise at their disposal and highly variable planning capabilities. Furthermore, through the formation of community groups reliant upon the NGOs, the NGOs appear to establish a dependency, something that they seem to accept and is reflected in the paternalistic language of their project proposals.

54. This is not to doubt their good intentions and the effectiveness of much of their work, especially given the lack of other services and support for poor communities in Bangladesh. But the fact that NGOs are such a strong part of the status quo in Bangladesh development, that they have their own well-established practices and goals will have to be considered as BOBP starts to plan community-level interventions.

#### **ITINERANT TRADERS IN CHITTAGONG FISH MARKET**

55. The itinerant fish traders were identified in Rogers and Blowfield, 1993, which recommended a study be commissioned from CODEC. The initial plan was that the study would start in May 1993 and cover both the hilsa and non-hilsa seasons so that the results would be available by the end of the year to be used for considering intervention to begin in the 1994/1995 financial year.

56. Due to misunderstandings between BOBP and CODEC, and changes in the BOBP management the study had not been commissioned by the time of my visit. Discussions were held with CODEC involving Mr King and myself, and it has been agreed that the off-season study be conducted this year on a smaller scale than was originally proposed by CODEC.

57. The study will be implemented along the lines set out in Rogers and Blowfield (ibid) using a CODEC appointed Socio Economist for group activities, survey supervisors and data collectors. CODEC will also appoint an Economist to write up the report.

58. Given that CODEC is not a research organisation, it will be necessary to allocate time for a NRI economist to appraise the report and make recommendations for the second stage to be conducted in 1994/1995.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INCOME ENHANCEMENT (SIE) PROJECT**

59. BOBP has a two year project involving workshops and field supervision to assist coastal fishing-oriented NGOs to work with fishing communities (see Rogers and Blowfield, *ibid*). This project has been contracted out to Bangladesh training consultants, and although the activities are in many ways complementary they are quite distinct in terms of responsibility, time and human resources. However, there is a degree of misunderstanding, both from BOBP management and the NGOs met during this visit, that has led to this project being seen as inter-connected with the socio-economic study of fishing communities (see above).

60. The true situation, which needed to be explained several times during this visit, is that the socio-economic study is being conducted by an independently appointed field researcher and supervised by NRI. The SIE project made use of NRI inputs during its first workshop, but no further inputs have been scheduled or requested. It is in neither the terms of reference of the research supervisor nor those of the field researcher to provide direct inputs relating to the SIE project.

61. However, the SIE project is and will continue to affect the socio-economic study, and the following comments are made in this light. It should be emphasised that the comments are made after meeting only those NGOs in Hatia, Cox's Bazar and Chittagong, and visiting some of the communities with which they work.<sup>8</sup> In addition, I was asked to review the proposals submitted by AZAD, Proshika, Bangladesh Samaj Unnayan Samity (BSUS), Gono Unnayan Prochesta (GUP) Jatio Bandhujan Parishad Bangladesh (JBPB), United Development Initiatives for Programmed Actions (UDDIPAN) and CODEC, and discuss these

---

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the NGO working Hatia which attended the first workshop has now pulled out, apparently at the request of its head office in Dhaka.

with the Small Projects Scheme of the British High Commission, Dhaka.

62. To date three workshops have been held and a fourth is scheduled for late November. Each NGO has been asked to identify two new fishing villages in which to work, to start community savings funds and develop a programme of enhanced income generating activities. During the last workshop, held in Cox's Bazar, the NGOs were presented with the proposal format for the British High Commission Small Project Scheme and encouraged to submit proposals before the end of October 1993, the deadline given for proposals by the then head of the programme. Subsequently seven proposals have been sent to BOBP office in Bangladesh for forwarding to the High Commission.

63. What is evident from the proposals is that it was not properly understood that individual grants under the scheme are commonly about £2,000 and the largest about £10,000. Also that these are one-off grants for small projects to be implemented within one year, not long-term support for entire programmes. Consequently the amount of funding requested ranges from £4,000 to £13,000<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore the programmes set out are of up to ten years duration.

64. The Small Projects Scheme does not have priority areas but does emphasise innovation. The current proposals unfortunately reflect the 'package approach' to programme design mentioned earlier (para. 51) and do not emphasise the unique characteristics of the fishing communities. They are also weak on explaining the details of implementation.

65. It has been argued that although the proposals are not perfect, this is part of a learning process for the NGOs. However, some NGOs now have high expectations which are unlikely to be fulfilled; something that might negatively affect their enthusiasm for the remainder of the project. Furthermore, while learning from experience is useful, there is a need to balance this with appropriate guidance.

---

<sup>9</sup> At a rate of £1 = Tk 60.

66. In part the weaknesses in some proposals might reflect some NGOs' limited ability in English so that ideas have been copied from people with a better command of this foreign language. I discussed this with Ms Dilruba Haider of the Small Projects Scheme and she has agreed in future to accept proposals in Bangla provided they have summaries in English. Proposals that are suitable for further consideration would then need to be translated into English, a service that BOBP could provide. Certainly in relation to its own requests for proposals, BOBP would do better to ask for proposals in Bangla that can then be translated rather than asking for proposals in English. Equally, if BOBP wishes to facilitate links between smaller NGOs and other donors, a useful service would be translating from Bangla to English.

67. It also seems that the inability of the NGOs to put together individual and well thought out proposals relates to their own planning weaknesses. This is something that the SIE project should be addressing, not simply to please donors but because good planning is essential to the development process no matter where the financial resources come from.

68. Probably too much has been made of the possibility of receiving Small Project Scheme funding. An additional problem that arose from talks with Ms Dilruba Haider, who is now managing the scheme, is that funding for 1993/1994 financial year has been used up and further submissions will not be accepted until April 1994. This contradicts the information provided to Mr Tim Bostock by Ms Haider's predecessor, but is something that needs to be clarified.

69. It is possible that the proposals, if rejected by the Scheme, might be submitted to other donors after improvements have been made.

70. Apart from external funding, there is some confusion about support from BOBP to NGOs participating in the SIE project. In the project proposal agreed with Mr Tim Bostock, there is a budget item of Tk 1,000,000 to be used as of November 1993 to fund income generating activities by the participating NGOs. In discussions between Mr Bostock, Mr Kashem and the training consultants it was agreed that this money would be

allocated to the NGOs who have been most successful in working with their new villages, and would probably be used to establish revolving funds for fishing community groups to be managed by the NGOs.

71. With the change in field management this original concept has become unclear and Mr Kashem expressed fears that the funding would be cut which would mean it would not be possible to establish village level pilot projects building on the workshop series. I do not know where these fears arise from or if they have any grounds, but it is clear from the original proposal that BOBP agreed to fund village level activities up to Tk 1,000,000 in total beginning in late 1993 and continuing until the end of 1994/1995 financial year.

72. Unless this situation is put right both the SIE project and BOBP's activities in Bangladesh as a whole may be jeopardised due to misconceptions and false hopes.

73. The SIE project is a far-sighted approach to working with NGOs and assisting them to work with fishing communities. It provides sufficient time to build up strong relationships, and by covering both specific training activities and follow-up it has excellent potential as a model of how to access knowledge and provide support during implementation. It would be a great shame if this opportunity was wasted and all that was produced were donor hungry NGOs that wound up frustrated and disillusioned.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

### **Socio-Economic Study**

74. Despite problems with the weather, the study is proceeding as planned. The original guidelines have proved largely appropriate and are being expanded upon as more information is obtained.

75. Along with identifying the severe nature of the problems confronting the communities, certain possibilities for future action have been identified. However, while these need to be borne in mind for the 1993/1994 programme, it would be unwise to make definite recommendations at the present time.

76. During the next few months more emphasis will need to be placed on building up case studies from within the communities. To make up for time lost because of the weather in Rahmatbazar and Rakhainpara, more emphasis will have to be placed on these two communities over the next three months.

77. Another aspect that is important given the hazardous nature of the communities is the historical dimension. Community histories are currently being compiled, but these are only accurate up to a generation ago and a deeper historical understanding of the fishing communities in Bangladesh is desirable.

#### **Itinerant Traders in Chittagong Fish Market**

78. The proposed study was delayed but an agreement has been reached with CODEC which allow the first phase to be completed this year. A second phase covering the hilsa season will need to be conducted next year if the first phase results justify it. However, this delay means that BOBP will need to make a decision on 1994/1995 interventions without having a full understanding of the traders.

#### **Sustainable Income Enhancement Project**

79. The SIE project is going ahead according to schedule. However, after six months of implementation there is considerable misunderstanding about the project's purpose. There is a real risk that if this situation is not rectified the project will lead to frustration and false expectations amongst both the NGOs and the fishing communities.

80. Particularly there is misunderstanding about BOBP financial support to village level activities, the funding of revolving funds for community groups, and accessing funds from other sources.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Socio-Economic Study**

81. In general the study should proceed as planned with the final stage (final analysis and documentation) being



conducted until 17 June, 1994. Refinements to the original study guidelines have been discussed with Mr Nasimul Haque who will also draw up a schedule for the period between November and February. He will continue to provide monthly reports for supervisory purposes to the UK and these will be the basis for any further modifications.

82. In addition, it is recommended that a library study of past studies on similar communities be conducted in the UK to provide a longer term historical perspective.

83. In addition to the research and supervision, thought needs to be given to how the research data will be analysed and documented, and the findings disseminated and utilised. Recommendations for the different components of this process are set out below for incorporation in the 1994/1995 programme budget:

a. **Library study:** see above.

b. **Community dissemination:** The field researcher will discuss the research findings with the communities and their input elicited. Care will need to be exercised so that false hopes of assistance are not raised, but their interest in obtaining the results of the village mapping exercise and village histories in which they have participated in suggests that it will be possible to discuss the results in a realistic manner.

c. **Preliminary report:** Based on the data collected over thirteen months of field research and inputs from discussion with the community, the field researcher and research supervisor will prepare a preliminary report.

d. **NGO/Community workshop:** Using the preliminary report, the field researcher and research supervisor will present the research findings at a two day workshop for NGOs and other parties working with the three communities. The participants will provide further input for the final report, and the workshop will also discuss possible future interventions at a realistic micro-level.

e. **Media dissemination:** Aspects of the research findings will be written up in a popular format for publication in the Bangla and English language press in Bangladesh in order to increase general awareness about the coastal fishing communities in Bangladesh.

f. **Presentation to BOBP management:** A draft final report will be prepared using the preliminary report and inputs from the NGO/Community workshop. The report will include description and analysis of the situation in the communities, the relevance of the findings for other similar communities, and recommendations for future interventions. This will be presented to BOBP management at a one day workshop in either Madras or Dhaka.

g. **Final community case study report:** Subject to any additional inputs from BOBP management, a report covering the three communities will be prepared and submitted to BOBP management.

h. **Methodology report:** A separate report detailing the methodology used for the study will be prepared and submitted to BOBP for use in promoting the study as a model.

i. **Translation of reports:** The field researcher will translate the final reports into Bangla.

j. **Dissemination to NGOs:** Study findings and the methodology will be disseminated by the field researcher in an accessible format to the NGOs participating in the SIE project at one of the schedule SIE workshops.

k. **Dissemination through English language media:** The research supervisor will disseminate the study findings through English language media such as academic journals, NRI publications and UK seminars.

84. The human resources required in 1994/1995 for each

of the above components are as follows:

COMPONENT	MONTH	FIELD RESEARCHER TIME (DAYS)*	RESEARCH SUPERVISOR TIME (DAYS)
Library study (UK)	May 1994		10
Research monitoring and trip preparation	April, May, June 1994		5
Community dissemination	18-30 June 1994	10	
Preliminary report	July 1994	10	10
NGO/Community workshop (preparation and implementation)	July 1994	5	5
Media dissemination	July 1994	time included in report writing	time included in report writing
Presentation to BOBP management	July 1994	3	3
Final reports (community case study and methodology)	July 1994	5	5
Dissemination to NGOs (preparation and implementation)	according to SIE project schedule	5	
Translation of reports	August 1994	12	
Dissemination to English language media	depending on other commitments		**
<b>TOTAL DAYS</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>38</b>

\* Time allocation in addition to research contract.

\*\* Approximately 15 days. Will be funded from SSG publications funds (subject to approval).

85. The above activities will require one return trip UK-Bangladesh, and two return trips Bangladesh-Madras if the presentation to BOBP takes place in Madras. BOBP will need to fund the cost of the NGO/Community workshop. Local transport will be required plus resources for materials preparation and local duplication. It is assumed that final duplication will be covered from BOBP

core funds.

#### **Itinerant Traders in Chittagong Fish Market**

86. No recommendations are required at the present time, but attention should be paid to the comments in the text on timing and NRI staff inputs.

#### **Sustainable Income Enhancement Project**

87. Mr Abul Kashem should check with the Small Projects Scheme about the availability of funding for the current financial year.

88. BOBP should fulfil its agreement to fund village level income generation/enhancement activities in line with the initial project document and budget.

89. The training consultants, Mr Kashem and participating NGOs will have to clarify their policy and implementation strategy for any income activities that involve revolving funds.

90. A mid-term review of the project is required involving BOBP management, the training consultants and representatives of the participating NGOs. Particular attention should be paid to funding and funding sources, BOBP's future plans in Bangladesh, and the project goals and their achievement.

#### **Other Matters**

91. Talking with Mr King and Mr MacPherson, mention was made of training needs in fish handling. Mr King has proposed a training course managed by NRI for January 1994 but it has yet to be finalised who the participants will be. Proper consideration will need to be given as this will have ramifications for any longer term training programmes planned by BOBP.

## Appendix I: Visit itinerary

- 11 Oct: Travel Madras-Bombay-Dhaka, air
- 12 Oct: a.m Met Mr Kashem (BOBP)  
British High Commission  
p.m. Met Mr Nasimul Haque, field researcher BOBP  
socio-economic study
- 13 Oct: a.m. Travel Dhaka-Chittagong, road, arr 15.30  
p.m. Accompanied Messrs King and Mathew (BOBP,  
Madras) to meet Emdadul Haque, CODEC
- 14 Oct: a.m. Accompanied Messrs King and Mathew to meet  
Emdadul Haque to discuss itinerant market trader  
survey  
p.m. Reviewed NGO proposals at request of Mr King
- 15 Oct: a.m. Accompanied Messrs King and Mathew to meet  
Mohamed Ali Sidiqi, CODEC sub-station Latifpur.  
Visited sample fishing village
- 16 Oct: a.m. Travel Chittagong-Hatia Island, sea
- 17 Oct: a.m. Arrive Hatia Island  
Travel Hatia - Rahmatbazar, bus, rickshaw  
Visit to Rahmatbazar fishing community
- 18 Oct: a.m. Travel Rahmatbazar - Hatia, bus, rickshaw  
Travel Hatia Island - Chittagong, sea
- 19 Oct: Visit to North Salimpur fishing community
- 20 Oct: a.m. General strike in Chittagong.  
p.m. Met with participants at South Asian  
Federation of Accountants's seminar on poverty
- 21 Oct: a.m. Travel Chittagong-Cox's Bazar, road  
p.m. Visit to Rakhainpara fishing community and  
other villages where the NGO, AZAD, are working
- 23 Oct: Travel Cox's Bazar-Dhaka, road
- 24 Oct: Discussion on study implementation with Nasimul  
Haque

**Appendix II: Visit Schedule of Nasimul Haque**

May-June 1993	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
PLACE	DATE	DATE
CHITTAGONG	*	20.5.93
COX'S BAZAR	20.5.93	23.5.93
CHITTAGONG	23.5.93	24.5.93
DHAKA	24.5.93	12.6.93
CHITTAGONG	12.6.93	**

\* continuing work from 17.5.93 as counterpart of Mr Mick Blowfield, Consultant ODA (NRI,UK).

\*\* continuing initial mobilization of survey.

June-July 1993	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
PLACE	DATE	DATE
CHITTAGONG	*	27.6.93
DHAKA	28.6.93	6.7.93
CHITTAGONG	6.7.93	11.7.93
COX'S BAZAR	11.7.93	16.7.93
CHITTAGONG	16.7.93	**

\* continuing work in Chittagong since visit on 12.6.93

\*\* continuing work in Chittagong.

July-August 1993	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
PLACE	DATE	DATE
CHITTAGONG	*	21.07.93
DHAKA	22.07.93	26.07.93
CHITTAGONG	26.07.93	28.07.93
COX'S BAZAR	28.07.93	01.08.93
CHITTAGONG	01.08.93	02.08.93
DHAKA	03.08.93	06.08.93
CHITTAGONG	06.08.93	11.08.93
DHAKA	12.08.93	**

\* continuing stay at Chittagong since last arrival on 16.07.93 from Cox's Bazar, but not able to visit

N.Selimpur due to torrential monsoon all through day.

\*\* continuing stay at Dhaka as heavy monsoon disrupts all communication between Chittagong-Cox's Bazar and with Hatia

August-September 1993	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
PLACE	DATE	DATE
DHAKA	*	17.08.93
CHITTAGONG	17.08.93	22.08.93
DHAKA	23.08.93	27.08.93
COX'S BAZAR	27.08.93	03.09.93
DHAKA	03.09.93	07.09.93
HATIA	08.09.93	12.09.93
DHAKA	13.09.93	**

\* continuing stay at Dhaka since arrived from Chittagong on 12.08.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rogers, J & Blowfield, M.E. (1993) Report on a Visit to Bangladesh use of ice and value addition by artisanal communities; NRI, Chatham R1981(R)

## GLOSSARY

AZAD	Association of Zonal Approach Development
BOBP	Bay of Bengal Programme
CODEC	Community Development Centre, Chittagong
dadandar	type of fish trader
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
NGO	non-government organisation
NRI	Natural Resources Institute
SIE	Sustainable Income Enhancement project
Tk	taka (Bangladesh currency)