

STRBAH



Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management



DFID NRSP Research Project R8334
Promoting the Pro-Poor Policy Lessons of R8100 with Key Policy Actors in India
September 2003 – February 2005

Stakeholders Meeting

Ranchi, Jharkhand
18-19 September 2003

In Association With
Gramin Vikas Trust (GVT)

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Graham Haylor, William Savage and S D Tripathi

About the Cover Photograph

This tank, with its renovated bund and outlet, is jointly owned by the entire village of Jabarrah in West Bengal. The village is home to several so-called scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other groups. The patient support to self-selected Self-Help Groups by Community Organizers of the Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project (now the NGO Gramin Vikas Trust) is the backbone of a development process in Jabarrah. Complementing this has been appropriate flexible aquaculture research by farmers with DFID NRSP support and much improved micro-credit opportunities guided by the Federal Bank and implemented with careful vigor by the Maubhum Gramin Bank. Such support has provided opportunities to gain respect and a voice, generate income, savings and security, avoid seasonal migration, and engage with the formal banking sector, which has assisted women and men to implement ideas that just a few years ago were only dreams.

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Acronyms

APCPA	Asia Pacific Crop Protection Association (now CropLife)
CBO	Community-based Organization
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIFE	Central Institute for Fisheries Education
DDG	Deputy Director General
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
DOF	Department of Fisheries
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFDA	Fish Farmers Development Agency
GOI	Government of India
GVT	Gramin Vikas Trust
ICAR	Indian Council for Agricultural Research
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPEDA	Marine Products Export Development Authority
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NACA	Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific
NCDC	National Co-operative Development Corporation
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRSP	Natural Resources Systems Programme
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicators
PRW	Policy Review Workshop
SHG	Self-Help Group
STREAM	Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management

Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to our project partners ICAR, the Government of India and the NGO Gramin Vikas Trust (GVT) for our continuing collaboration. In particular, we would like to thank:

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- Mr Yadav, for facilitating our visit to Jabarrah, and Mr Ajit Banerjee, Manager, Maubhum Gramin Bank, Ludhurka, Purulia, for explaining to us the role of rural banking and changes in the sector, and the exciting experiences from Jabarrah and other clusters of villages.

We thank each participant for working with us in such a productive and collaborative manner, and look forward to continuing our association with these friends and colleagues.

Appreciation is also expressed to DFID and its Natural Resources Systems Programme (NRSP) for the support it has provided to do this work, and for their keen interest in its progress.

Executive Summary

The meetings with policy makers in Delhi, the Stakeholder Meeting in Ranchi and the Jabarrah field visit in West Bengal, all conducted in September 2003 and reported in this document, are the first activities of the DFID NRSP project R8334 which follows on from, and aims to promote together with key policy actors, the pro-poor policy lessons of project R8100.

The meetings and this document discuss the lessons learnt by project R8100 and consider how the follow on project might take these forward. Project staff reminded stakeholders of the project which concluded recently following a Policy Review Workshop in Noida in April 2003 and presented the proposed project goal, purpose and outputs to stakeholders and elicited their feedback and suggestions.

The GOI, had received the policy change recommendations and outcomes of R8100 formally in August, and had already provisionally analyzed these, supported the Deputy Fisheries Commissioner to attend the R8334 Stakeholder Workshop in Ranchi. Representing GOI, Dr Chauhan suggested that a suitable mechanism for carrying forward these change recommendations might be to look at how they could be incorporated into the Fish Farm Development Agency scheme of the Government.

The follow-on project was strongly welcomed and there was good agreement on the elements of the project and some important changes to proposed actions which were highlighted by stakeholders. These included suggestions for more study of existing policies and acts, and calling a meeting of financial and banking representatives including the Reserve Bank of India, NABARD, and the State-level Bankers Committee to discuss rural provision of financial products especially to Self-help Groups. There were many excellent suggestions about communications including addressing communication strategies at state-level. The Policy Working Group concept was welcomed, but it was suggested to call this a Project Working Group (of a pro-poor policy project uniting a range of stakeholders), as policy making is the role of GOI, the role of the project is to advice and support. It was also suggested that PWG's might be conducted at the state level. Policy makers and other stakeholder highlighted that some of the policy recommendations from R8100 could be implemented as changes in ways of working and may form Policy Briefs which could be circulated.

A number of stakeholders from locations across the three states offered spontaneous significant change stories to the stakeholder meeting, illustrating changes that have occurred in the lives of people, as well as illustrating the value of significant change stories.

The meeting journeyed to the village of Jabarrah in rural West Bengal to witness at first hand changes that have occurred over many years of support from EIRFP and GVT, complemented by DFID NRSP research and changes in rural banking approaches.

This document combines the minutes of the Delhi meetings and the Stakeholder meeting in Ranchi, and captures as stories the summary of project R8100 and the visit to Jabarrah. The objectives of R8334 are presented, with comments on these recorded, and the project flow chart and proposed revisions to it are included.

GOI Fisheries, ICAR, GVT and NACA-STREAM Meetings in Delhi

Meetings were held on 15-16 September 2003 at Krishi Bhawan with Mr P K Pattanaik, Joint Secretary GOI, Dr M K R Nair, Fisheries Commissioner GOI, Dr D P S Chauhan, Deputy Fisheries Commissioner GOI, Mr R P Mathur, Fisheries Officer GOI, Dr S Ayyappan, DDG Fisheries, ICAR, Mr Amar Prasad, CEO GVT, Mr J S Gangwar, Additional CEO GVT, Dr Graham Haylor, STREAM Director, Dr S D Triphati, Consultant and Mr William Savage, STREAM Communications Specialist. The purpose of the meetings was two-fold:

- To remind ourselves of the previous DFID-NRSP-funded project “Investigating Improved Policy on Aquaculture Service Provision to Poor People”, which aimed to “contribute to ‘giving people a voice’ in policy-making processes that have an impact on their livelihoods”, and
- To become familiar with and discuss the purpose, outputs and activities of a follow-on project – “Promoting the Pro-Poor Policy Lessons of R8100 with Key Policy Actors in India” – to carry forward recommendations which resulted from working together on the previous project.

William Savage used an informal story-telling genre to remind everyone of the previous project. Graham Haylor outlined the new project using a flow-chart. Mr Pattanaik said that the Government of India had officially received the recommendations from the previous project during the last week of August 2003. They had made a provisional analysis of them and their relation to current and proposed government schemes. Mr Pattanaik welcomed the follow-on project and stressed the importance of the opportunity to work with the state governments as well as the center, as both had a financial commitment to current schemes. Dr Ayyappan highlighted the need to promote a range of ‘good practices’ along with the specific recommendations from R8100. Mr Pattanaik briefly highlighted the mechanisms for policy change based on the project recommendations.

Minutes of the Delhi meetings were written up by Graham Haylor and reviewed by the Joint Secretary and Deputy Fisheries Commissioner (Appendix 1).

The Stakeholders Meeting

The first meeting of stakeholder representatives (Appendix 2) associated with the follow-on project R8334 was held in Ranchi, Jharkhand, on 18-19 September, with a field trip to Purulia district of West Bengal on 20 September. The original agenda for the Stakeholders Meeting is in Appendix 3.

The aim of the meeting, as continued on from that of the previous project R8100, was to “contribute to ‘giving people a voice’ in policy-making processes that have an impact on their livelihoods.” The objectives were to:

- Remind ourselves of the previous DFID-NRSP-funded project “Investigating Improved Policy on Aquaculture Service Provision to Poor People”
- Become familiar with, discuss and provide feedback on the purpose, outputs and activities of a follow-on project – “Promoting the Pro-Poor Policy Lessons of R8100 with Key Policy Actors in India” – to carry forward recommendations which resulted from working together on the previous project

- Consider the establishment of a Policy Working Group
- Begin the conceptualization of Policy Briefs on a Consensus-building Process; R8100 project recommendations; planning, support, information and training and inputs
- Revise the Project Flow-chart and Workplan based on participant feedback, and
- Agree follow-up actions.

Day One

Inaugural Session

Welcoming the participants, Dr Virendra Singh, Project Manager, GVT East, Ranchi, said that the mandate of GVT is rural development and that aquaculture has been its most important component ever since it was incorporated in 1996. The first DFID Natural Resources Systems Program project¹ initiated by Dr Graham Haylor had created considerable interest and now aquaculture is well established in the villages. As a follow-up, the recently-concluded second project² concentrated on bringing people's voices into policy change. Dr Singh felt that it was appropriate that we should now have a policy outcome of these projects and therefore initiate pilot schemes to get the results.

Dr Haylor, STREAM Director, outlined the aim and objectives of the Stakeholders Meeting and the new DFID NRSP project R8334, which followed on from the final event of the previous project R8100, the Policy Review Workshop in May 2003 in Noida, Delhi. While the aims of the two projects are similar, the objectives are different. Graham presented the four objectives through a PowerPoint presentation and indicated that these would be discussed during the two meeting days.

Mr Rajiw Kumar, Director of Fisheries, Jharkhand, in his felicitations, mentioned that the state ranked quite low in terms of fish production, despite its rich resources comprising 30,000 ha of ponds and tanks, both in the public and private sectors, besides some large reservoirs. Seed production is being boosted in the private sector with a buy-back arrangement at Rs 400/1,000 fingerlings of 4-6" size, and are used for stocking reservoirs. The government also provides several facilities to fish farmers such as construction of tanks with a subsidy of Rs 45,000/tank. There is a housing scheme funded to the tune of Rs 516 *laks*³. It is the Fish Farmers Development Agency (FFDA) that is the hub of all aquaculture activities and the project could take advantage of its facilities.

In his felicitations, Dr D P S Chauhan, Deputy Commissioner (Fisheries), Government of India, said that the GOI is the nodal agency for policy issues while ICAR has a similar role in research. The objective of all activities is to take the benefits to the people. Since there are already many projects in aquaculture, of which FFDA is the main one, involvement in the on-going project will enable us to take advantage of the schemes' provisions.

1 DFID-NRSP-funded R6759 – Integrating Aquaculture into Farming Systems of the Eastern Plateau of India, which ran from 1996 through 2000

2 DFID-NRSP-funded R8100 – Investigating Improved Policy on Aquaculture Service Provision to Poor People, which ran from March 2002 through May 2003

3 One *lakh* is 100,000.

Mr A K Ray, Special Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, Department of Fisheries, said that GVT and NACA are involved in a noble cause of improving the economic condition of poor people of Purulia district. He wished the project all success in ameliorating the lot of poor and “backward” communities in the district.

Mr A K Sarkar, Secretary to the Government of Jharkhand, Department of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, in his inaugural address, said that there are several schemes launched by the center, the state alone and by the state and center in collaboration with each other. These are all meant to deliver benefits to people. What is now needed is to assess how much has been done and what remains to be done. To fill these gaps, available technologies have to be identified, as does the kind of training required to utilize the resources properly. Once identified, the government will surely accommodate these needs in the new policies. He believed the workshop would certainly realize these problems in the next two days.

A Reminder of the Previous Project

The previous project was described by William Savage, using the text of “A Story about Policy and People in India” (Appendix 4) and a PowerPoint Presentation.

An Overview of the Follow-on Project

An overview by Graham Haylor of the follow-on project outlined its goal, purpose and outputs and introduced a draft Project Flow-chart. [The original Flow-chart appears in Appendix 6, and the version revised on the basis of the meeting discussions, in Appendix 7.]

Goal (from the Logframe narrative summary): Strategies to provide specific groups of poor people with better access to knowledge that can enhance their decisions on management of natural capital, developed and promoted.

Purpose: Mechanisms for the delivery of improved rural services (critical to the development of rural livelihoods of poor marginalized people with complex and diverse livelihood strategies) developed and promoted at state and national levels in India, with priority given to three target states in eastern India

The following outputs were developed following discussions with NRSP and then with key stakeholders at meetings in Delhi in August.

Output 1: Promotion of process for pro-poor policy formulation – Building on the findings of R8100, key national and state level stakeholders brought to a level of engagement with, and sense of ownership of, the Consensus-building Process (CBP) and its pro-poor features that could engender sustained pro-poor policy formulation, particularly as it relates to the use of water bodies for livelihood enterprises

Output 2: Capacity-building for policy formulation that favors pro-poor service provision, especially for integrated aquaculture – Potential for implementation of the pro-poor recommendations for service provision that R8100 identified further progressed through institutional capacity–building, including improved sharing of policy-related experiences and promotion of the policy recommendations in relevant

government policy-related communication channels

Output 3: Capacity building for transforming policy recommendations into pro-poor service provision (learning-by-doing) – State-level capacity to provide pro-poor services for livelihoods improved through stakeholders designing and pilot testing revised procedures and institutional arrangements for service delivery

Output 4: Assessing progress towards livelihood improvement of target groups of the poor – Government and NGO stakeholder understanding of the quality of their performance in pro-poor service delivery and requirements for pro-poor services further improved through assessment of emerging trends in changes in livelihood circumstances of the poor people targeted in this project

Stakeholder Group Discussion: Questions and Answers

In response to the overview of the project goal, purpose and outputs and the draft Project Flow-chart, participants were invited to comment, seek clarifications and offer questions and feedback in stakeholder groups, i.e., farmers and *jankars*, senior and state government and the NGO Gramin Vikas Trust (GVT).

Farmers and Jankars

- Communications is not reaching beyond the district headquarters. A main area for change would be telecast programs, especially on radio or in some cases via street-plays.
- When fishers and farmers go to the block level for service provision as a group, the system is working better than when they go as individuals.

Senior and State Government

- Some bankers might be usefully included in the project's proposed "policy working group" (PWG).
- Regarding the idea of a PWG – in each of the states of Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal the situation is different, the project should consider three state-level "policy working groups".
- The Gram Panchayat⁴ system is gradually becoming more effective for pond leasing and organizing training (except in Jharkhand where elections have not yet been held) so Gram Panchayats could also be represented in the PWG.

⁴ The decentralization of power to village institutions, as the context in which communities gain access to resources and service providers for aquaculture, is determined initially by state-level policy. This occurs through the state governments enacting the Panchayati Raj Act and instituting Gram Panchayat (local assembly) elections. Orissa and West Bengal have done this, whereas in Bihar and Jharkhand there have been no local elections for more than 25 years. Where Gram Panchayat elections have taken place, fledgling local democracies are still becoming aware of the criteria by which to select good local leadership. The Gram Panchayat should then constitute four times annually a Gram Sabha which is a meeting of all voters of a Gram Panchayat (10% attendance is mandatory to constitute a Gram Sabha; equally a minimum of 30% of attendance should be women). In practice, few Gram Sabhas are constituted currently and communities still play little role in resource management and are unable to articulate service provision needs. The Panchyats Raj remains hierarchical and party political. On the positive side, there are now many more complaints reaching the District CEO (formerly known as the "Collector") as awareness of people's rights is raised. Now communities almost always know which government department is doing what with how much money in the village (previously not the case). Many CEOs expect that voting in Gram Panchayat elections will become more meritocratic and less party political over time.

- Out of the 13 recommendations (from R8100), these issues are all relevant to the Fish Farmers Development Agency (FFDA) scheme (these district level agencies are headed by a CEO appointed by the government, usually from the DOF). If the FFDA is not headed by the DOF representative in a PWG, then the FFDA CEO could be separately represented on a PWG.
- The involvement of the project in influencing implementation of FFDA's should be encouraged to the extent possible.

NGO Gramin Vikas Trust (GVT)

- There is a big communications gap between the block level of government administration and poor people, so some Community-based Organizations (CBOs) should be part of the PWG.
- Extension communications is weak. Information gaps exist between the block level and remote villages; some sort of intermediate needs to help with communications.
- No females are here.
- Traders at the village level (e.g., for fingerlings) could also be involved. [However, there is a need to clarify this point in relation to fingerling supply and the impact of the parts of the system that are detrimental to poor people's livelihoods.]
- Implementation gaps exist; some mechanism is needed to better utilize resources at the local level and to facilitate the selection of beneficiaries, whether or not a Gram Panchayat operates.

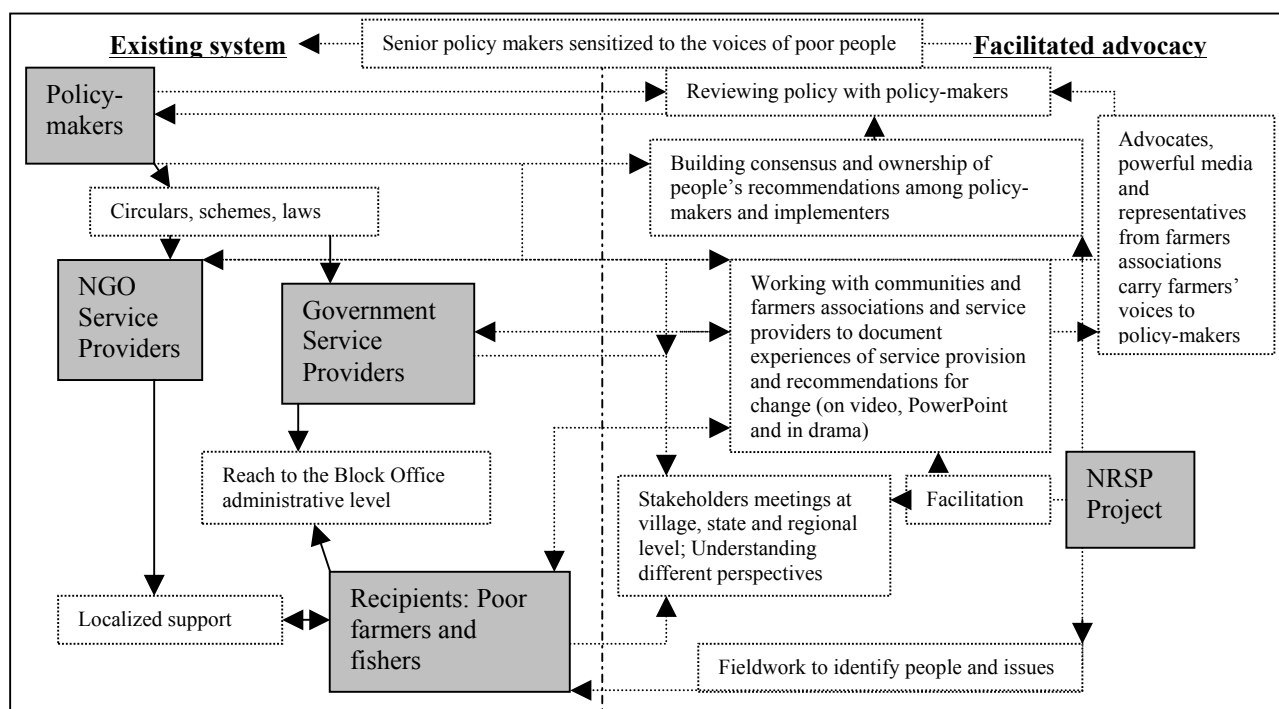
Each of the proposed outputs and associated activities were then presented in turn followed by sessions for discussion and feedback.

Outputs and Activities: Promotion of Process (1)

Graham Haylor described the first output – Promotion of process for pro-poor policy formulation – as a series of activities which aim to build on the findings of R8100 with key national- and state-level stakeholders. The objective is to encourage the use of the kind of Consensus-building Process (CBP) piloted in R8100 to give people a voice in policy-making processes. This time the focus would be at the state level to support pro-poor policy formulation, especially as it relates to the use of water bodies for livelihoods enterprises.

A diagram (Figure 1) was presented that compared the existing system of links between policy-makers and recipients of aquaculture service provision with the addition of facilitated advocacy used in the process of building consensus for policy change options in R8100.

Figure 1: The addition of facilitated advocacy (right-hand side) and consensus-building to the existing system of links between policy-makers and recipients of service provision (left-hand side)



State Group Discussion and Feedback

West Bengal

- The principles of existing policy systems could be followed and built upon.
- In the diagram presented (Figure 1), NGOs are recognized along with government as service providers in Gram Panchayat schemes. This is not currently the case but this should be done.
- Could there be a policy where NGOs (perhaps from an approved list) could be official implementers of some government schemes (some exist, e.g., AVIRAM, SRI) and where Self-Help Groups could play an official role?

Orissa

- The project should invite Ministers to take part in policy matters, e.g., it seems to be emerging that we need state-level meetings in October (proposed State-level Communications Strategy Workshops). [Maybe later in the project we might be in a position to bring together colleagues from the center and each of the states.]
- One communication problem is that there are no computers at district level to share information.
- Agricultural farmers get subsidized fertilizers, why not fish farmers? [Perhaps to be discussed further tomorrow when we discuss implementation.]

Jharkhand

- There are problems regarding price and seed quality for seed growers and farmers who go to centers in West Bengal to purchase seed. Can there be a system of certified seed? Can we work for certification by some agency? There is a certification system in seri-culture.
- In order to make seed available at the local level, can local farmers be trained to produce fish seed? An example might be Ras Behari, an experienced fish nurser.
- Many policies already exist and we perhaps need to think about how these issues can be better addressed by improved ways of working.
- Ensuring fish seed quality issues may need some kind of amendment to the Fisheries Act(s).
- To overcome the fish seed constraint, we could work with full-time fishers.
- Water bodies are there, but check dams would help a lot with trapping water in rainfed areas.
- Renovation of existing water bodies should be done.
- Can we arrange Fish Farmers *Mela* (with awards, e.g., next season's seed free) for successful farmers for awareness-raising?
- An annual census records fishermen (i.e., those who get 90% or more of their income from fishing). These are the ones who should be supported.

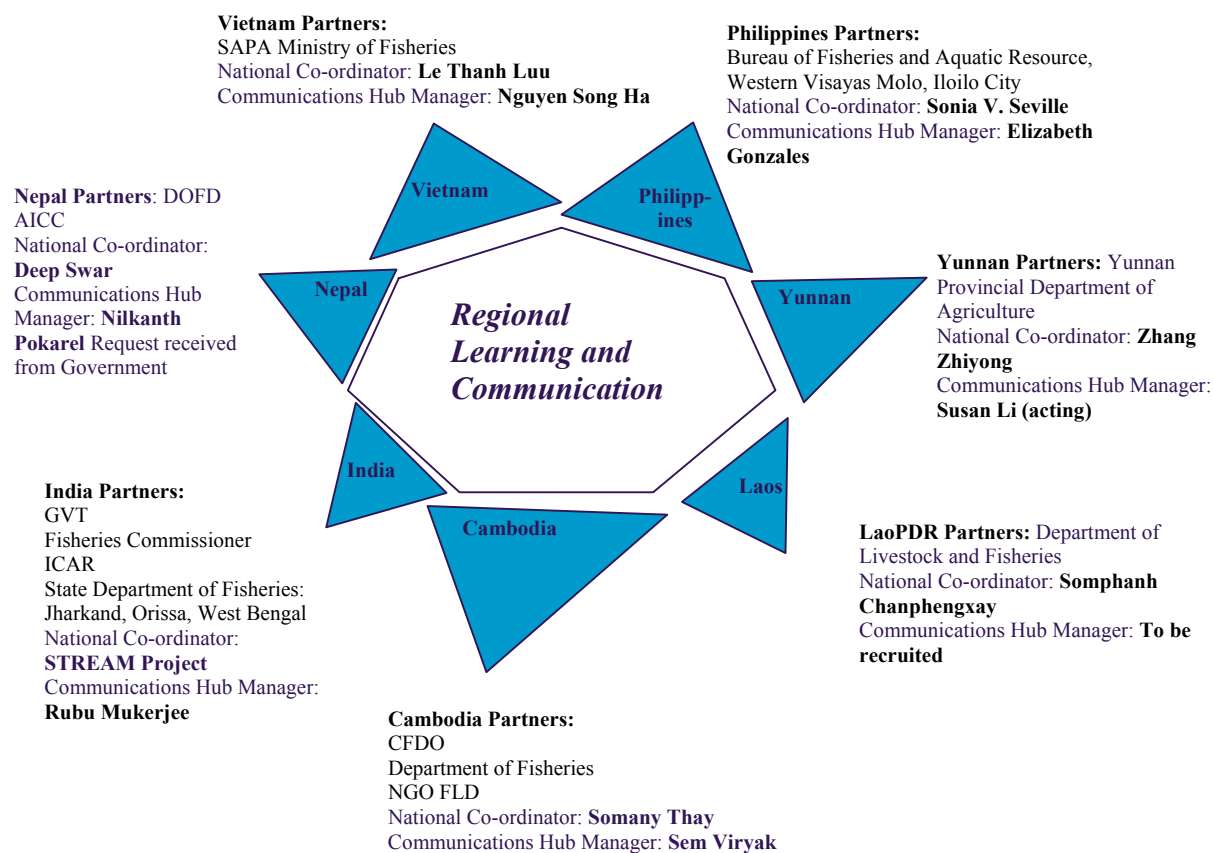
Outputs and Activities: Capacity-building for Policy Formulation (2)

The second Logframe output – Capacity-building for policy formulation that favors pro-poor service provision, especially for integrated aquaculture – was described as the potential for implementation of the pro-poor recommendations for service provision that R8100 identified, being further progressed through institutional capacity-building, including improved sharing of policy-related experiences and promotion of the policy recommendations in relevant government policy-related communication channels.

Graham Haylor explained that the STREAM Initiative has Communications Hubs in many Asia-Pacific countries, which link together to share technologies, processes and ways of working. They are also the focus of a physical network on the ground (e.g., in eastern India, this may be a federation of Aquaculture Self-Help Groups).

The Communications Hubs currently being established around the region were described and are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: STREAM Communications Hubs in Asia-Pacific



The STREAM India Communications Hub has developed in a different way to those in some other countries, having been seen as a need by the GOI, ICAR and an NRSP research project, rather than being a requested entry-point into the STREAM Initiative from a NACA member government. It has been sited in Ranchi (Jharkhand State) to be close to a potential network of Self-Help Groups in eastern India⁵ and as a potential information source in this regard. It will also be able to play a role in supporting the development of a communications strategy for the current work. This will include:

- The development and promotion of Policy Briefs on the R8100 recommendations
- Changes in how information is made available to farmers (involving input of the Fish Farmers Development Agency and possible reform to the FFDA system), and the lessons from GVT (beyond the block office), and
- Agreeing a mechanism for sharing experiences in policy-shaping and service provision revisions.

⁵ These were established by the Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project and the NRSP research project R6759 (The Integration of Aquaculture into the Eastern Plateau of India, 1996-2000), and more recently by GVT.

State Group Discussion and Feedback

Orissa

- Communication skills vary for different stakeholders; there are gaps and language issues. This will require preliminary skills development.
- Currently most communications efforts are for literate farmers (communication does not go beyond block level). More use could be made of posters and diagrams.
- We should consider radio, audio-visual, newspapers, cassettes, TV, video and CDs to build capacity and skills.
- Video conferencing is used effectively to bridge geographic distances, including in India.
- E-mail at district levels would be helpful.
- Sensitization of the process can continue using drama and street-plays.
- Can we try to promote sustainable use of communications “resource centers” where communications aids are available, for networking and extension?
- We should relate communications with the monitoring and evaluation system, especially monitoring the communication itself and its impacts, and for refinement of policies.
- It is important to highlight the importance of communications – in community training programs, and raising awareness of its importance.

West Bengal

- Previous discussions (from the Orissa team) are good.
- In banks and other places, this communications approach has already started, but where there is no electricity and no telephone many of the communications systems discussed are like a dream to Self-Help Groups in remote village clusters, “group meetings are the only source of communication for us”.
- Where we stay (in remote tribal villages in West Bengal) most people are illiterate, and can only know the things from viewing; there is no alternative for that.
- Through the communications strategy, video, CD, e-mail, district-level circulation newspapers, and telecasts in the form of a serial, will help us to know things in a better way.
- If all the above would be possible then it would be good – because this would contribute greatly for development.
- Other sectors, e.g., Land Reform Departments, have kiosks in some central place where information can be delivered directly to villagers.
- We need to consider a system that fits with the communications options available to farmers.
- We need to meet people where they are and find ways of create those links.
- We must also think about human resources development as a component of any communications strategy.

Jharkhand

- In remote villages, where many ponds are, it is only radio and in some cases TV. Often there is not even a newspaper. A radio program 1-2 days a week should be on fisheries.
- Farmers have been involved, sometimes with live programs.
- Leaflets could be printed and distributed in large numbers.
- One-day farmers meetings (with perhaps a target of ten per district per year).
- More and more partners should be in contact with the Communications Hub.

- Distribution of low-cost booklets containing basic information would be good (a government scheme exists which provides Rs 20,000 for 500 books and a provision for Rs 5,000 to an author and Rs 20,000 for the state DOF to implement).
- Translation of good articles has started but other journals like *Aquaculture Asia* and *Fishing Chimes* should also be translated.
- Some center of dissemination should be designated.
- Jharkhand DOF has 56 ponds, some with hatcheries. Together with the resource centers of GVT and Fisheries Co-operatives, these could be used as communications points.

Day Two

Outputs and Activities: Capacity-building for Service Provision (3)

The third Logframe output – Capacity-building for transforming policy recommendations into pro-poor service provision (learning-by-doing) – concerns state-level capacity to provide pro-poor services for improved livelihoods through stakeholders designing and pilot testing revised procedures and institutional arrangements for service delivery.

It was explained that this output intended to involve government and NGO stakeholders in the design and pilot testing of various aspects of improved service delivery that emerged from the priority recommendations from R8100. This would be likely to include:

- Raising awareness of pro-poor service provision (e.g., visit to a SHG that has obtained and manages group-assigned loans from a credit provider).
- Pilot testing plans agreed for the four categories of recommendations from R8100 (i.e., planning, information and training, inputs and other support) with communities, GVT and government.
- Pilot testing at least two R8100 recommendations.
- Organizing study tours for state and national government stakeholders to pilot sites.
- Obtaining feedback and analysis of the findings on the performance of pilot tests.

There was a brief reminder of the thirteen priority recommendations from R8100:

- Develop infrastructure for timely production of fingerlings at local level
- Leases should be given to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for ten years
- Integrated aquaculture may be encouraged and loans and other facilities extended on a priority basis so that farmers may not suffer during aquaculture stress periods
- Site selection for pond construction should be given proper emphasis
- Timeliness of delivery of services, support and materials
- Establishment, defining and identification of model aquaculture villages for benefits to be disseminated to nearby “untouched” villages
- Single-point under-one-roof service provision
- Encourage formation of self-selected Aquaculture Self-Help Groups (ASHGs) based on common interests among farmers and fishers
- Insurance schemes for aquaculture
- Provide support to establish group savings and micro-credit schemes among Aquaculture Self-Help Groups (ASHGs)

- Government needs to change how information is made available to farmers, since information on its schemes to support fish culture is required to be known to farmers
- Water quality testing equipment (should be provided)
- Procedure should be simplified for getting government schemes and bank loans

In the meetings in Delhi, the Joint Secretary had already indicated that some recommendations could be developed in the form of multilingual “Policy Briefs” which would highlight better practices or identify small changes to existing ways of working.

Graham Haylor then led into a whole group discussion by suggesting which recommendations might form the basis for Policy Briefs or “Better Practice Guidelines” and those which might be good for piloting.

It was suggested that an immediate objective should be to share widely, perhaps as a Policy Brief, the realization that *aquaculture* for poorer investors would be an activity *integrated* into the portfolio of necessarily diverse livelihood activities, rather than a large-scale investment in intensive aquaculture which aims to maximize production. This is fundamental, for it is the latter approach that is outside of the scope of poor people, which remains the main focus of aquaculture research and development in India.

Other such recommendations which could be developed into Policy Briefs might include the necessity of *timely delivery of services and support*, especially *fingerlings*, and the development of local infrastructure necessary for their *production*. Amar Prasad, CEO GVT, had suggested at the Delhi meeting that some quality standards be associated with achieving the timeliness objectives, and the development of *site selection* “Better Practice Guidelines”.

Following the receipt of the R8100 recommendations, Mr Pattanaik had informed us that he had prepared and distributed a Government Circular requesting state governments to consider *extending the length of the pond lease period for self-help groups*, and the project might play an advocacy role here with the states.

The NACA STREAM Communications Hub being established with ICAR and GVT, through the NACA Agreement with the Government of India, may be able to support the development of a communications strategy to facilitate this process. This would then begin to address the recommendation which refers to the need to *change the way that information is made available to farmers*.

A fundamental recommendation relates to institutional reform, *simplifying procedures* such that service provision is made more accessible to the proposed recipients. However, more detail is provided by other recommendations representing specific ideas for which procedural reforms are necessary and these center on three main areas of understanding.

The first is the well developed and successful entry point, developed over more than a decade by the East India Rainfed Farming Project and the NGO GVT, of building social capital, specifically *encouraging the formation of self-selected Aquaculture Self-help Groups*.

The second is the realization of the significance of supporting financial capital accessibility for poor people in rural areas and the effectiveness of *group savings and micro-credit among self-help groups* as a precursor to engagement with the formal credit sector.

The third is the suggestion of a *single-point under-one-roof provision of services* based on the realization that the necessary role of bringing together each of the elements of aquaculture service provision currently falls to farmers. This often involves extensive and repeated travel to a range of different locations and institutions.

Graham Haylor also highlighted some of the components of service provision for aquaculture which might be in some way a part of a *single-point under-one-roof provision of services* (or “Aquashop”). These might include information resources (extension booklets, videos, drama, study tours, mentoring) for awareness-raising and Better Practice Guidelines, husbandry and managerial skills development, logistical support (transport, harvesting, marketing advice and regularly-updated market information), financial products (such as savings, loans, insurance, credit), material resources including fish seed, production enhancing inputs (fertilizers, manures, lime, feeds or supplementary feeds) and production-diminishing factors (routine water quality testing procedures, water treatment chemicals, fish disease treatments).

Whole Group Discussion and Feedback

The group discussion concurred with the presented assessment of which recommendations might form the basis for Policy Briefs or Better Practice Guidelines and those which might be good for piloting. The Communications Hub was recognized as an important opportunity to coordinate a communications strategy which would be developed further at a series of State-level Communications Strategy Workshops at the end of October and beginning of November. It was suggested that a pilot involving Self-Help Groups should be conducted in a location previously “untouched” in terms of the concept of building social capital. There was strong support for the notion of piloting the “Aquashop” concept.

Outputs and Activities: Assessing Progress (4)

The fourth Logframe output – Assessing progress towards livelihood improvement of target groups of the poor – relates to government and NGO stakeholder understanding of the quality of their performance in pro-poor service delivery and requirements for pro-poor services being further improved through assessment of emerging trends in changes in livelihoods circumstances of the poor people targeted in this project.

Graham Haylor suggested that this could involve monitoring feedback and evaluating progress towards livelihoods improvement. A project M&E system would need to look at stakeholders, their partnerships and linkages, outputs and impacts, processes and progress. That is:

Stakeholders → Who has been affected by or participated in the activities?

Partnerships and Linkages → What relationships exist among stakeholders? Are assumptions made about these correct?

Progress → Is implementation proceeding as planned? Is it being shaped by new learning? What changes have activities contributed to?

Outcomes → An *outcome* is a positive change in the behaviour of an individual and/or the practice of an organisation.

Impacts → An *impact* is a positive change in the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable aquatic resources users.

Processes → How have these changes happened?

The M&E system could include predetermined indicators (OVIs from the project Logframe) as well as a mechanism to capture unanticipated outcomes and impacts (such as collecting and recording “significant change” stories).

Whole Group Discussion and Feedback

Mr Amar Prasad suggested that the M&E system have a simple format with easily reported key indicators. He suggested that we would also need to go through a process of understanding and development “community indicators”, of how people see changes in their lives.

After discussing the concept of “significant change” stories, our colleague Kuddus Ansary, an extension *jankar* from Kaipara cluster in West Bengal, began to tell us some stories of significant change from his village, which is somewhat remote. Kuddus’s story was followed by some questions and then more stories from other participants.

Kuddus Ansary

My village is 30 km from town so ill people rely on God only for their lives as traveling to hospital is so far. There have been many changes. When children had to walk far to school 30-40 people went to school, now there are local schools and more than 300 people go to school and many more girls than before. Earlier there was no place to ask for help but the formation of Self-Help Groups gave people the strength and confidence to ask for and get the support they need. Earlier the Muslim people in the village, especially the women, didn’t come out from their houses. Now they are becoming somewhat advanced and coming out to work. Migration was common before but now there is more work and people are staying in the village; health is now improved too. Whatever example I can think of, seven years back the situation was different, earlier boys were also not going to the school. Before people used to walk, now boys and girls are using bicycles for school – people are keen to go to school. Earlier there was no money to purchase the cycles, now the financial situation is improved and many people are riding cycles. Before there was no good road; now there are many vehicles coming from outside.

Who is responsible for all this significant change?

The government has not helped so much. It has been from KRIHBCO and GVT; they are able to link with the Panchayat and other agencies.

You are a “dissemination *jankar*”. How many people came to know about your activities?

*People I see have been able to make 70-80 groups and I have disseminated in 36 villages and am asking people to make groups and am disseminating the theme of GVT. These groups, after guidance, are now involved in piggery, goatery and aquaculture. [Kuddus, as a *jankar*, now has his own NGO Kaipara Gran Uyan Samiti.]*

In Kaipara, there is now a private tutor but 20 unemployed graduate boys are there and they have made a “teaching group” and are encouraging parents to take their children to a coaching center where they can be taught. Every month the “teachers” get Rs 700-800. If everyone will get education they will come to know many things and many opportunities. There has been a change in the society. They have applied for registration for the NGO.

Nityo Gopal

If I will say something about significant changes maybe no one will believe me but if people come to my village they will see what has happened. Seven years ago unity was not there among us. Whatever property we were having from the ancestors we were not able to use those resources. We are still illiterate but still we were having some talents and combined together we are now using the hidden talents. It is difficult to do things individually but as a group it can be done.

Before there was no saving schemes but now people are saving and realize that from knowing about the micro-credit system we are able to see a way forward. If an individual saves it is not much but when everyone saves his Rs 5, if there are 10 people we already have Rs 50. This kind of system was never known before. Earlier there were two high schools in Jabarrah but children were not attending. Now 90-100 students are going in each year class. The school is not cemented; it is an earthen floor but from that school one boy has scored more than 80% in maths. Now many private schools are there also.

Earlier there were earthen ponds but now many cemented ponds have been made as a result of group working. People didn't use to know of or use banks, but now people are beginning to save in banks. Getting significant change stories from the bank is good and gives us a financial barometer. Even the persons who used to work each day only to eat are now saving in the bank and we are thankful to the manager of the bank. Earlier before the renovation of the pond, people paid Rs 200 for the lease; now people are prepared to pay Rs 1,600 for the lease. In Jabarrah, one lady Dhanya Mahato has become famous all over India. She is guiding people about the micro-savings and the bank. GVT has trained her.

Earlier there was so much barren land, but now people are using this for fruit plants and forestry and pond construction; 130,000 trees have been grown. Three years back these trees were planted and are growing well and they are selling the trees at Rs30 each and will get much money after some years. The Forestry Department has trained them regarding this. Aquaculture is strong; within two years they will be able to disseminate aquaculture activities within other villages. They have developed one scheme for other farmers who pay some money and can catch fish from two of their ponds on a particular day. For angling, payment is based on the season and conditions. They also organize angling competitions. Fifty percent of the fee is paid in advance as a booking fee and if many participants are involved they will shift to more ponds.

One unexpected thing was that for catching fish, people used to put different types of feed into the pond to attract the fish feeding them for us - this we never expected. It's good business; if we set the fee at Rs 300 then people may take 2 kg or 50 kg but when we calculate the profit, it's ours only and we also get the fish fed. When we harvest the fish in the winter season we get good production from the feed from these competitions.

It was observed that Mr Nityo pointed out that different people see different elements looking at the same situation, relating to their own background and experiences and that all are right. The complete picture comes out when we put them all together, so guided by these comments, we have the beginning of a simple format for an M&E system, which can be related to a communications strategy.

Ashok Kumar Sahoo

When 17 years back I used to give an application to the Block Office (17 km away from my village) it took three days to reach there. Things are now improved. There was only one hospital in the area so people used to travel 17 km for all ailments. Bears and elephants were a danger. Now there is no forest, so there is no more problem from animals. Earlier there was only one high school, now there are so many. One hundred twenty students were there, now there are hundreds and also many more schools. One of the ponds in the village was featured in the R8100 case studies where the proceeds went to the school building. Earlier there was only rice cultivation in one season, now people grow kharif and rabi rice. GVT has given new crop varieties. Irrigation has improved through GVT contributions. Earlier people were not able to meet members of the Legislative Assembly and Parliament but now they are able to do so. So we can say we have improved in many respects.

Mahato Bhagat

Earlier Nehalu was covered with forest and the village was near to the forest. Earlier education was not given importance, but now there are schools from the government. Before there was no good drinking water, now there are hand pumps. Now people know what is education and more people are putting their children in the schools.

Through KHRIHBCO and GVT they have come to know about new crop cultivars and technologies. GVT has introduced the benefit of lift irrigation. Since the 1990s people had wanted to raise fish and through interventions of NRSP and EIRFP from 1996 onwards they have had fingerlings, lime and training in aquaculture. Thereafter they have done this in a good way. Now the Jharkhand government has given them a hatchery – as reported in the R8100 case study. The groups were able to prevent capture of this by one local man who claimed ownership. There were threats, even death threats, but because of the group they were able to resist.

Before they didn't have bicycles, now they have. From profits from fish culture activities some families have now purchased motorcycles. Currently the hatchery is closed down and there is a need of support to get it reopened. Although the FFDA CEO got this money from District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) for the GVT group, the money had to be given back – there was a site selection issue.

State-level Communications Strategy Workshops

Based on the discussions in the Stakeholders Meeting, it was agreed that the Communications Strategy Workshop needed to be held at state-level in each of the three capitals to make it possible for Ministers, Secretaries and Directors to be present. Therefore, the State-level Communications Strategy Workshops will be held in Kolkata, West Bengal on 30-31 October, Ranchi, Jharkhand on 3-4 November, and Bhubaneswar, Orissa on 6-7 November.

“Policy Working Group”

Dr Chauhan, Deputy Fisheries Commissioner GOI, had a comment about the proposal for a “Policy Working Group”. Policy, he said, is decided by government on the basis of recommendations, so the word “policy” maybe could be reconsidered in the “PWG”. He asked if perhaps a GOI person should chair it. According to the draft Project Workplan, the first meeting of a “Policy Working Group” is planned for December 2003. Consideration will need to be given as to whether this group needs to be state-level, and how to link with a “central” group. There should be a briefing of the objectives, and the first meeting can define working methods.

It was noted that the P in “PWG” is there at the suggestion of the DFID NRSP, the funding agency, and may not be appropriate. Perhaps “Project Working Group” (of a pro-poor policy project uniting a range of stakeholders) is more appropriate.

Policy Briefs

The proposal is to develop multilingual, multi-author, government-endorsed “Policy Briefs” which highlight “better practices” or identify small changes to existing ways of working. These might include:

- *Timely delivery of services and support, especially fingerlings, and the development of local infrastructure necessary for their production, perhaps with some quality standards associated with achieving the timeliness objectives, and the development of site selection “Better Practice Guidelines”*
- *Extending the length of the pond lease period for self-help groups, is considered essential by many stakeholders. According to a letter from the Joint Secretary, Mr P K Pattanaik (who has already written to the Secretaries of the state Fisheries Departments on the subject), the project might play an advocacy role here.*
- *The fundamental need to change the way that information is made available to farmers.*
- *Simplifying procedures such that service provision is made more accessible to proposed recipients.*

Others came up during the Stakeholders Meeting, including:

- Promoting the FAO Code of Conduct on fisheries and aquaculture
- Introduction of exotic species
- Use and stewardship of drugs and “chemicals”
- Marketing for small-scale producers

- Federating of Self-Help Groups
- Promoting Self-Help Groups
- Government and NGO partnerships (enlistment)
- Inclusion of landless farmers in aquaculture service provision

Follow-up Actions

The Stakeholders Meeting concluded with a listing of follow-up actions to be taken:

- Holding a gathering of financial institutions and considering the purpose in consultation with state government colleagues and GVT and looking at the linkage with the elements of the project itself, as suggested by Mr Banerjee.
- The need to learn or relearn about existing policies and schemes – including getting access to the current fisheries acts, government order, and circulars of Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. In West Bengal there are two acts, the West Bengal Inland Fisheries Act 1984 and rules framed there under, and the West Bengal Marine Fisheries Regulation Act 1993, as amended thereafter and rules framed there under (copies requested from Mr Pattanaik). Jharkhand has no laws as a new state but a book of orders. Rubu will collect copies of the acts, rules and circulars.
- Information, education and communication materials of the state DOFs will be collected by Rubu.
- Mr Banerjee suggested that, since they would like to expand their pro-poor aquaculture activities, could it be considered that GVT or other agencies expand their activities?
- Graham Haylor would follow up about issues related to the use and stewardship of drugs and “chemicals” in aquaculture (perhaps contacting Croplife in the first instance).
- Bill and Graham will finalize the workshop documentation and circulate to all.
- Rubu Mukherjee, the STREAM India Communications Hub Manager, will now be stakeholders’ first point of contact.
- Graham will give a copy of the minutes of the Delhi meetings to Dr Chauhan for feedback.

Field Visit to Jabarrah Cluster

Following the Stakeholders Workshop, on 20 September, a group of participants journeyed to Jabarrah cluster in Purulia District of West Bengal. A story resulting from the Jabarrah field visit appears in Appendix 5.

Appendix 1 Delhi Meetings Minutes

Meetings of GOI Fisheries, ICAR, GVT and NACA-STREAM
Delhi, 15-16 September 2003 (endorsed by government 6.10.03)

Participants

1. Mr P K Pattanaik, Joint Secretary (only 16th)
2. Mr M K R Nair, Fisheries Commissioner (only 16th)
3. Dr D P S Chauhan, Deputy Fisheries Commissioner
4. Mr R P Mathur, Fisheries Officer (only 15th)g
5. Dr S Ayyappan, DDG Fisheries, ICAR (only 15th)
6. Mr Amar Prasad, CEO, GVT
7. Mr J S Gangwar, Additional CEO, GVT (only 15th)
8. Dr Graham Haylor, STREAM Director
9. Dr S D Triphati, Consultant (only 15th)
10. Mr William Savage, NACA STREAM (only 15th)

Objectives

- To remind ourselves of the previous DFID-NRSP-funded project ‘Investigating Improved Policy on Aquaculture Service Provision to Poor People’, which aimed to “contribute to ‘giving people a voice’ in policy-making processes that have an impact on their livelihoods”.
- To become familiar with and discuss the purpose, outputs and activities of a follow-on project - ‘Promoting the Pro-Poor Policy Lessons of R8100 with Key Policy Actors in India’ -- to carry forward recommendations which resulted from working together on the previous project.

Meeting on 15 September

For the meeting session on 15 September, following introductions, Graham Haylor provided an outline of the meeting objectives and agenda.

Then William Savage provided a reminder of the previous project’s work and outcomes by telling - for the first time - a story written in an informal format in association with pictures as part of a PowerPoint presentation.

After briefly reviewing the “Follow-up Actions and Next Steps” proposed at the Policy Review Workshop (PRW) in April 2003 in NOIDA, and identifying how these had been achieved, Graham Haylor presented an overview of the follow-on project which DFID-NRSP had agreed to fund. Handouts were provided of a draft Project Flow-chart and Workplan.

The meeting then opened a discussion on the follow-on project and its objectives.

Mr Gangwar pointed out that GVT was missing from the draft Project Flow-chart and this was corrected. Dr Chauhan said that the Government of India may encourage involvement of SHGs under ongoing programme of fisheries development through FFDAs.

Dr Ayyappan asked if the project would be able to promote the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries (and aquaculture), as well as the issue of the introduction of exotic species to Indian watersheds, the use of drugs (including those which are banned by MPEDA, the Marine Products Export Development Authority) in aquaculture, and marketing for small-scale producers. Graham Haylor said that FAO were founding partners of STREAM as well as co-funders and that FAO and STREAM would welcome such an inclusion. The meeting agreed that these would be valid and valuable elements to promote through the development of the proposed Communications Strategy. Graham Haylor informed the meeting that Dr Mike Philips of NACA had suggested finding common ground between the MPEDA project which NACA had been supporting in Andhra Pradesh and the new DFID-NRSP project in Eastern India that NACA was also supporting through STREAM - for example, Policy Briefs relating to drug use might involve MPEDA. 'Stewardship' of chemical use is an important safety and public relations issue for industry. Contact might be made with STREAM partners APCPA (Asia Pacific Crop Protection Association, now known as CropLife) on this matter. It was observed that the project could also consider producing statements of 'best practice' in addition to Policy Briefs and pilots.

Dr Ayyappan also encouraged the project to access the State Fisheries Acts which determine laws and policies of the three states. There was a feeling that the current acts are rather sketchy and could require to be more clearly articulated.

There was discussion about the 13 recommendations prioritized by the previous project, with agreement that some recommendations might be progressed through the development of Policy Briefs, whereas other more complex recommendations would require the development of pilots in order to understand their nature and the components and mechanisms involved. Of this later category, the 'one-stop-shop' recommendation, where farmers could access information, financial services, fish seed and other inputs at one location, was discussed.

GVT CEO Amar Prasad and Dr Ayyappan suggested that 'one-stop-shops' should be certified to ensure Quality Control. Dr Ayyappan coined the phrase 'certified Aqua-shops' and suggested that these could be set up where hatcheries are, rather akin to the 'Green Shops' in the agriculture sector.

Dr Chauhan reiterated his statements from the Policy Review Workshop in April, 03 about organizing a workshop to deal with the credit provision issue. William Savage and Graham Haylor agreed and highlighted that as a first step, the Stakeholders Meeting participants in Ranchi, Jharkhand, 18-19 September 2003, would involve the manager of the Purulia branch of the Mallaphumi Gramin Bank, who had built a relationship with a GVT supported Self-help Group that conducts aquaculture in Jabbarah cluster in West Bengal, where the Stakeholders Meeting would visit on 20 September.

Mr Gangwar reminded us that representatives of senior state fisheries officials had made some commitments at the Policy Review Workshop of which it would be interesting to follow up and review progress.

Meeting on 16 September

Dr Chauhan had provided Mr Pattanaik and Mr Nair with an overview of the previous day's meeting. Graham Haylor provided the meeting with an update of the previous project and the activities and developments that had led to the current project proposal. He then talked through the draft Project Flow-chart.

Mr Pattanaik said that the Government of India had officially received the recommendations from the previous project during the last week of August, 2003. They had made a provisional analysis of them and their relation to current and proposed government schemes. Mr Pattanaik welcomed the follow-on project and stressed the importance of the opportunity to work with the state governments as well as the centre, as both had a financial commitment to current schemes.

Mr Pattanaik highlighted the mechanisms in brief for policy change based on the project recommendations.

Joint Secretary (Fisheries) mentioned that some recommendations could already be developed in the form of small changes to existing ways of working.

Mr Pattanaik emphasized that *extending the length of the pond lease period for co-operatives/self-help groups*, was extremely necessary and timely and should be a key discussion point with the state government officials, which he hoped could be passed into state policy. A good water leasing policy involving cooperatives/self-help groups and others was fundamental to provide confidence to invest and develop. He also said that a good mechanism for organizing and working with Self-help Groups - an approach that he agreed with strongly - could be under the umbrella of the FFDA scheme.

The Joint Secretary said that at the moment communications is rather weak and he welcomed the proposal to develop a Communications Strategy and the STREAM Communications Hub. He said that none of us know where communications and communication tools will lead next, and by way of example, that Kerala fishers were now using mobile phones as a safety device. He also welcomed the concept to link financial products and other service provision for aquaculture into a *single-point under-one-roof provision of services* based on the realization that the necessary role of bringing together each of the elements of aquaculture service provision currently falls to farmers. He used the term 'Aqua-shops' that Dr Ayyappan had coined at the previous day's meeting. He relayed that the new Managing Director of the National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC), Dinash Rai, was an advocate for fisheries development and that NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) would be comforted by having 'grass-roots institutions' like self-help groups to work with, such as the one in Jabbarah cluster that the Stakeholders Meeting would visit. A meeting with these organizations and the Department of Banking should perhaps be organized to advance farmers associations' links to financial institutions.

Appendix 2 Participants

Government of India, Delhi		
1.	Dr D P S Chauhan	Deputy Fisheries Development Commissioner
GVT		
2.	Mr Amar Prasad	Chief Executive Officer
3.	Mr J S Gangwar	Additional Chief Executive Officer
4.	Dr Virendra Singh	Project Manager, GVT East
5.	Mr P K Pathak	State Coordinator, Jharkhand
6.	Mr P K Mishra	State Coordinator, Orissa
7.	Mr S L Yadav	State Coordinator, West Bengal
Jharkhand		
8.	Mr A K Sarkar	Secretary of Fisheries, Government of Jharkhand
9.	Mr Rajiw Kumar	Director of Fisheries, Ranchi
10.	Mr Ashish Kumar	Deputy Director of Fisheries, Ranchi
11.	Mr Bhim Nayak	Farmer, Fulwar Toli, Bundu
12.	Mr Ras Behari Baraik	Farmer, Chhota Changru, Silli
13.	Mr Mahato Bhagat	Jankar, Young Generation Group, Amber Toli
Orissa		
14.	Mr P R Rout	Assistant Director of Fisheries, Dhenkanal
15.	Mr Damodar Sahoo	Farmer, Haldikundi village
16.	Mr Ashok Kumar Sahoo	Jankar, Khajuria village
West Bengal		
17.	Mr A K Ray	Special Secretary of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal
18.	Mr Ajit Banerjee	Manager, Maubhum Gramin Bank, Ludhurka, Purulia
19.	Mr Nityo Gopal	Jankar, Jabarrah Nabdaya Group
20.	Mr Kuddus Ansary	Jankar, Khawasdi village, Barabazar, Purulia
NACA-STREAM		
21.	Dr Graham Haylor	Director, Bangkok, Thailand
22.	Mr William Savage	Communications Specialist, Bangkok, Thailand
23.	Dr S D Tripathi	Consultant, Mumbai
24.	Mr Rubu Mukherjee	Communications Hub Manager, Ranchi, Jharkhand

Appendix 3 Agenda (original)

Thursday, 18 September		
0830	Arrival	
0900	Inaugural Session	
	Welcome	Dr Virendra Singh
	Project Brief, Meeting Aim and Objectives	Dr Graham Haylor
	Felicitations	Mr A K Roy
		Mr Rajiw Kumar
		Dr D P S Chauhan
	Inaugural Address by Chief Guest	Mr A K Sarkar
	Vote of Thanks and Introductions	Mr William Savage
1000	A Reminder of the Previous Project: A Story about Policy and People in India	William Savage
1030	<i>Break</i>	
1100	An Overview of the Follow-on Project: Goal, Purpose and Outputs; Project Flow-chart and Workplan	Graham Haylor
1130	Stakeholder Group Discussion: Questions and Answers	All
1230	<i>Lunch</i>	
1330	Outputs and Activities: Promotion of Process (1) [Consensus-building Process]	Graham Haylor
1400	State Group Discussion and Feedback	All
1500	<i>Break</i>	
1530	Outputs and Activities: Capacity-building for Policy Formulation (2) [Communications Strategy]	Graham Haylor
1600	State Group Discussion and Feedback	All
1700	<i>Finish</i>	

Friday, 19 September		
0900	Outputs and Activities: Capacity-building for Service Provision (3) [Recommendations Pilot Testing]	Graham Haylor
0930	Whole Group Discussion and Feedback	All
1030	<i>Break</i>	
1100	Outputs and Activities: Assessing Progress (4) [Monitoring and Evaluation]	Graham Haylor
1130	Whole Group Discussion and Feedback	All
1230	<i>Lunch</i>	
1330	Policy Working Group: Proposal and Discussion	All
1400	Policy Briefs: Discussion	All
1500	<i>Break</i>	
1530	Revisiting Project Flow-chart and Workplan: Roles and Responsibilities	All
1630	Follow-up Actions	All
1700	<i>Finish</i>	

*Appendix 4 A Story about Policy and People in India***Investigating Improved Policy on Aquaculture Services to Poor People**

This story is about a project funded by DFID-NRSP [the Department for International Development of the UK, and its Natural Resources Systems Program]. It operated for 15 months, from March 2002 through May 2003, with tribal villages in the three Indian states of Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal, and culminated in Delhi, the capital. The project had a Logical Framework with a goal, purpose, outputs and activities. This Logframe

Aim

changed as we worked together and learned about “contributing to ‘giving people a voice’ in policy-making processes that have an impact on their livelihoods”.

‘Giving people a voice’ is in quotation marks because we know that people have their own voices, and question whether anyone could think they are “giving a voice” to others. Perhaps the project provided opportunities for people’s voices to be heard as they talked about their experiences of state and central government service provision around fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic resources. The people were fishers and farmers in tribal communities, practitioners who work directly with them, and government officials who make and implement policies which affect their lives.

Activities

The project activities were varied in purpose and place, with a range of stakeholders always involved. They started with an *Inception Visit* by the project implementers to Mumbai, Delhi, Ranchi and Purulia. Stakeholder representatives first came together in a *Rural Aquaculture Service Recipients and Implementers Workshop* in Ranchi. A *Planning Visit* was made before *State-level Workshops* in Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. Following these, everyone gathered again for a *Stakeholders Workshop* in Ranchi.

Central to the project’s learning about service provision and policy were six *Case Studies* carried out with villages and documented in several media: text, CD-ROM film documentaries, photographs and PowerPoint presentations. We also learned

from selected experiences through *A Review of Lessons Learnt in Enabling People's Participation in Policy-making Processes*.

These activity names are also the titles of the 11 publications we wrote to document the project's process and outcomes - the 'voices' of participants. *Indicators of Progress, Consensus-building Process and Policy Recommendations* described how stakeholder participants played an important role in defining indicators of the project's progress, how a semi-anonymous Consensus-building Process was designed and implemented with policy-makers and implementers, and then resulted in 13 recommendations for policy change, the ideas for which had grown throughout the project.

The project explored the use of communications media even further with a street-play written by a tribal playwright and performed by a 15-member theater troupe. Through dialogue, music and dance, *Mahajal - The Big Fishing Net* interpreted the stories told in the Case Studies and the project's policy recommendations. It was performed at the *Policy Review Workshop* in Delhi before an audience of project participants and policy-makers, with advance dress rehearsals in two Jharkhand villages.

Progress Towards Policy Change and Lessons Learnt was written as a discussion document for the Policy Review Workshop and as one of the final project reports for DFID, who later asked us to write a twelfth report entitled *Research Learning and New Thinking*.

Inception Visit

In March 2002, the three NACA-STREAM project implementers came together in Mumbai. [NACA is the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific, and STREAM is Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management, a learning and communications initiative of the inter-governmental network.] The implementers had discussions with the then Director of the Central Institute for Fisheries Education (CIFE). Then they traveled to Delhi to meet the Fisheries Development Commissioner, whose support enabled the project to commence, and also the Deputy Director General (Fisheries) of the Indian Council

for Agricultural Research (ICAR), who is a member of NACA's Governing Council. Upon arrival in Ranchi, discussions took place with the GVT CEO and the Project Manager for GVT East, and a visit was made to a GVT-organized *kisan mela* (farmers' fair) in Purulia. [GVT is the Gramin Vikas Trust, an Indian NGO and the key non-government project partner.] This first round of meetings afforded opportunities for heads of agencies and organizations to become familiar with the proposed project, for us to begin learning "who was who", and for all of us to get to know each other as we began to build relationships.

The resulting Inception Report laid out the particulars of the project and served as the basis for its activities. Demographically, we worked with people known officially as "Scheduled Tribes" and "Scheduled Castes", who are among India's most socially and economically disadvantaged, and politically marginalized. Their livelihoods include raising fish in seasonal water bodies in and around villages. As representatives of fishers and farmers across India who would ultimately benefit from the project, they joined other stakeholders including national and state policy actors, local government and non-government colleagues, all of whom are involved in the provision of aquaculture services and support.

We had a lot to learn! Most importantly was to begin understanding the context and concerns of, and the means of working towards, policy change. We learned about the background to current policy, how the need and time for change was being recognized by the Government of India, funders like DFID and NGOs such as GVT. We were then better positioned to think through possible project mechanisms for transacting change. At the Fisheries Commissioner's request, we drafted a Component Concept Note which explained how we saw the policy constraints and concerns to be investigated. As our first attempt at putting on paper the sorts of changes we understood at the time to be likely, we knew from the outset that we would take these initial ideas,

commissioned by a top government policy-maker, to villagers and other stakeholders from whom we would be learning.

We also revised the Project Workplan and Logframe submitted with the original proposal to DFID, as we did whenever required, and drew a Project Flow-chart to visualize its activities. We paid much attention to the documentation of the work, primarily for recording people's contributions to the policy change process. Reference was frequently made back to statements, information, processes and follow-up actions in the reports. They turned out to be well-read, well-thumbed and well-received histories. We are proud of our CD-ROM compilation and the boxed set of project documents!

Rural Aquaculture Service Recipients and Implementers Workshop

In May 2002, the first all-stakeholder activity took place in Ranchi. In advance of the workshop, we carried out fieldwork in five Jharkhand villages, assisted by two women co-facilitators from GVT, to gain an initial understanding of people's experiences of aquaculture service provision. In the workshop, groups of participants provided feedback on the elements of the project which had already been drafted in the Inception Report. Along with government officials and GVT personnel, important contributions were made by fisher and farmer representatives and *jankars* - village aquaculture specialists trained by GVT. This workshop was our first experience at managing communication across four languages: Bangla, English, Hindi and Oriya. This was made possible by highly capable multilingual co-facilitators, language considerations in participant grouping and transcription in four languages.

Fieldwork

On the Project Workplan, participants strongly advised that, to realize any policy change, we had to engage with colleagues in the states; thus three State-level

Project Workplan, Draft Policy Recommendations and Indicators

Workshops were added. Participants also gave invaluable comments on the policy recommendations in the draft Component Concept Note. We were relieved that our struggle with how to define project indicators was eased when we asked people to

respond to the question: “How will we know if progress is being made towards people’s participation in transacting policy change?” - and they responded with significant contextually-specific contributions.

Participants then suggested the sorts of issues which needed deeper understanding, the groups whose “voices” would be documented in the Case Studies, the organizations and agencies which could conduct the studies, and the methods and media which could be used.

Planning Visit

To set up the three State-level Workshops to be held over five days in three locations at some distances from each other, a trip was made in August-September 2002 to Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. Colleagues were visited in government and GVT offices and villages. Six Case Studies were outlined - three in Jharkhand, one in Orissa and two in West Bengal. Discussions took place on the State-level Workshops, especially to involve state and district government officials and members of tribal communities. These workshops were seen to be essential, since it was perceived that constraints to aquaculture service provision primarily lie in implementation processes at district and state levels, although it was acknowledged that efforts towards policy change at central and state levels were also important. Finally, a briefing document for the Consensus-building Process was prepared in consultation with colleagues.

State-level Workshops

From Purulia to Ranchi and then to Bhubaneswar, three one-day workshops were held in October 2002. As we would see on several occasions, the wisdom of the May 2002 workshop recommendation - that there needed to be these state-level workshops - was borne out in the constructive feedback on the six Case Studies in their various stages of progress. The local Principal Investigators presented their Case Studies - in three translations and English - and an update on their work.

On Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday, the traveling workshop team met for planning discussions before the first workshop in Purulia. They reviewed and discussed the outcomes of previous project activities, with reference to the various documents. They then drafted a statement of “Emerging Indicators of Progress Towards Transacting Institutional and Policy Change”, which incorporated the original policy recommendations in the draft Component Concept Note. Participant responses and reactions to the “Emerging Indicators ...” were compiled through a review of the data - feedback from the discussion groups.

Emerging Indicators of Progress

Stakeholders Workshop

In January 2003, all stakeholders gathered again in Ranchi. The six

Case Studies

Case Studies were presented in their current formats.

Participants gave lots of feedback on these and also on the

Lessons Learnt

drafts of “Lessons Learnt ...” and “Emerging Indicators ...”. Suggested policy changes were included in a document called “Proposed

Emerging Indicators of Progress

Changes for Consensus-building Process”, for initial discussion in the Consensus-building Process which began after the workshop.

Case Studies

Throughout the project, the six Case Studies grew in concept and content, each different in focus and format. It was interesting (and fun!) to trace the progress of the studies, and of participants’ contributions to them, throughout the project documentation. Written texts of all six appear in one

of the publications, with descriptions, illustrated film documentary scripts, text, photographs and maps, which - along with respective Case Study PowerPoint presentations and film documentaries - are also included on the project CD-ROM.

A Review of Lessons Learnt in Enabling People’s Participation in Policy-making Processes

This literature-based study looked at services and support, participation and livelihoods in the context of policy-making processes, in

agriculture and other sectors, with a focus on contemporary thinking in Indian agriculture policy.

Indicators of Progress, Consensus-building Process and Policy Recommendations

This document included the revised indicators and a statement of “Proposed Changes for Consensus-building Process”. A brief was prepared for the Consensus-building Process participants, who included 21 national policy development and implementation stakeholders, and state-level policy-makers and implementers. They were asked to rank the 42 policy change recommendations made by project participants. In a second round, they agreed on and prioritized the highest ranking ones, resulting in 13 policy change recommendations. These were then related to milestones in the “Vision Statement” of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of India.

Mahajal - The Big Fishing Net

A street-play was written in Hindi as an interpretation of the six Case Studies. Act One sets the scene of fisherfolk’s livelihoods and the difficulties they face in a tribal village. Act Two places the project’s policy change recommendations within the context of the characters’ lives and aspirations. Before *Mahajal*’s performance at the Policy Review Workshop in Noida, Delhi, the theatre troupe traveled on two days to Fulwar Toli and Chhota Changru villages in Jharkhand, where Act One was performed and the respective Case Study film documentaries - “A Proactive Village” and “A Progressive Farmer” - were also screened using a lap-top, projector and generator.

Policy Review Workshop

Finally the time arrived to take everything we had learned - if not everyone we had learned from - to the culminating activity in Delhi, the April 2003 Policy Review Workshop. We watched the two Hindi film documentaries (with English captions) from Jharkhand, saw two PowerPoint presentations from Jharkhand and Orissa and then two more PowerPoints and a film documentary from West Bengal. Following each Case Study session,

Case Studies

Statements

we heard statements in turn from three representatives of fishers, farmers and *jankars*, four from GVT state offices and positions, and three representatives of state Departments of Fisheries - these statements reflected their perspectives on the policy change recommendations.

The workshop's first day ended with Act One of the street-play, **Street-play** which set the context of situations commonly found in tribal communities and in particular the livelihoods of fisherfolk. The next morning, a presentation was made on how the indicators of progress **Indicators of Progress** had developed throughout the project, followed by a similarly-focused presentation on the development of the policy recommendations. Then Act Two of *Mahajal* **Policy Recommendations** was performed, incorporating the project's 13 policy change recommendations into the interpretation.

Participants expressed their views on the project and its policy recommendations, at times engaging in lively debate around **Open Discussion** issues of fisher and farmer livelihoods and how they are affected by government policy. People also began talking about different stakeholders' perceptions of the issues and how "trust" needs to be gained through relationship-building. We then talked about the sorts of commitments that **Commitments** could be made to follow up the project and to consider the project's policy recommendations. This was done by posing a two-part question: "How can we commit to taking forward the work? What kind of commitments could be made?" The statements of commitment have **Next Steps** formed the basis of a second project to be funded by DFID.

Progress Towards Policy Change and Lessons Learnt

This assessment was done by considering progress against the project Logframe and by looking at NSRP's generic stakeholder domains that specify the stakeholders with whom the project can achieve either developmental impact or make progress towards developmental impact through

research uptake. The generic lessons learnt were drawn from this investigation of improved policy on aquaculture service provision to poor people in India.

Research Learning and New Thinking

After the project completion, we wrote this 12th document at the request of DFID-NRSP, who encouraged us to build further on our lessons learnt by reflecting on the way the project had planned, worked and actually happened. We came up with a conceptual matrix which suggests - with hindsight - the steps which guided the process as it emerged.

Lessons Learnt

What lessons have we learned about policy change and people's participation? The first is about the importance of

Relationship Building

taking time to build trusting, on-going relationships among all stakeholders. Essential to this was our determination to continue working with the same people,

villages, agencies and organizations - in the words of one of the fishers from Jharkhand: "You came back, no one ever comes back". Listening to such voices

Empowering Less-heard Voices

enabled people to express their views in a supportive and constructive atmosphere. Just like it is not possible for anyone to "give people a voice" as such, whether or not people can be "empowered" by others is also debatable. What we may be able to do is to address issues of power and its use, through activities which enable

Transcending Hierarchical Structures

equitable participation. We all work and live within organizational, political and social structures which largely determine how people at different structural locations interact with each other. Taking people away from their usual places and working together in the "neutral" space of a workshop or meeting room, temporarily eases perceptions of hierarchical constraints. It is also essential to

Lessons from Elsewhere

understand that much can be gained from looking outside our own contexts, learning about how "our" issues are reflected in and dealt with in other projects, sectors and countries.

Behavioral Change - Learning, not Telling

There is a common conception that people working with government agencies, non-governmental organizations and development projects are “experts” whose job is to tell people living in villages “what to do and how” to improve their livelihoods. In reality, it is fishers and farmers who have the “expertise” - through their own life experiences - about their situation and what they think needs to be done to change it. We must learn from them, and any “telling” should be about what we can do to support their own efforts. Such a listening role requires us to reconsider how we

“Pro-poor Policy” Development and Complex Livelihoods Strategies

behave in our relationships. Related to these behavioral changes is the need to understand livelihoods contexts before embarking on policy change. Such an approach is founded on the negotiation of a commitment from policy-makers to build an understanding of the aspirations and complex livelihoods strategies of “recipients”, i.e., poor women, men and youth, including tribal and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Told through the

Case Studies

lives of fishers and farmers, case studies allow us to have this deeper understanding of the realities of people’s lives, providing a rich source of material for policy debate and offering “entry points” for thinking about policy change.

Existing Policy-making Processes

It is important to recognize that policy is usually the current expression of efforts to manage conflicting agenda of a variety of stakeholders. Every effort should be made for all stakeholders to understand the existing policy-making processes that are in place and to engage with policy-making in a spirit of tolerance. An inherent conflict is the diversity of ideological principles and professional stances of a range of stakeholders. Therefore, to promote tolerance amid diversity requires services and resources for coping with difference. Rights-based approaches enshrined in the Indian constitution have an important role to play here in establishing the principle of recognizing and working with diversity.

Rights-based Approaches to Development

Finally, we have learned how the project has been an expression of what have come to be called “rights-

based approaches to development”, where efforts are made to address underlying causes of poverty and social injustice. These may include displacement, loss of livelihood, destruction of local environments and, from the perspective of local people, an intrusive, unsustainable and unplanned influx of outsiders into traditional territories. Rights-based approaches require a high degree of participation from communities, civil society, minorities, local people, women and others. They give due attention to issues of accessibility, including access to development processes, institutions, information and complaints mechanisms. They necessarily opt for process-based development methodologies and techniques, rather than externally-conceived “quick fixes” and imported technical models - in short, approaches that contribute to ‘giving people a voice’ in policy-making processes that have an impact on their livelihoods.

*Appendix 5 Back to Jabarrah***Back to Jabarrah****A closer look at the evolution of successful aquaculture Self-Help Groups in rural West Bengal, the discovery of new uses for local resource systems and the energizing effect of flexible rural credit**

Written by Satyendra D Tripathi, Graham Haylor and William Savage in consultation with Jagdish Saran Gangwar, Virendra Singh, Gautham Dutta and PK Pathak

The village of Jabarrah, and a cluster of neighboring villages of Hura block in Purulia district, lie approximately 20 km east of Purulia town in rural West Bengal, in the rainfed eastern plateau of India. About 1,200 people live in Jabarrah in 220 households surrounded by 400 ha of farmland. A 3-km track, running through once-forested undulating hills, joins the village with the nearest metalled road. During the June-October monsoon the road is muddy and after heavy rain a river prevents the passage of people and vehicles.

A Visit during the Mid-1990s

In 1996, as Aquaculture Development Specialists with the Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project (EIRFP), Satyendra Tripathi and Graham Haylor were taken to Jabarrah by the Aquaculture Field Specialist Gautham Dutta to see its 12 small tanks. At that time, now eight years ago, 60% of households were unable to secure food for the whole year, and most men and some families migrated seasonally to labor for a few cents daily. About a quarter of these households were also indebted to moneylenders, usually having raised emergency loans for food or medicines. Children were walking four kilometers to school; the nearest bank – should anyone have thought to venture there – was five kilometers away.

The Community Organizer Mr Prabhat Kumar Pathak, told us that the local paddy crop always seems to face a dry spell at the time of flowering and yields little in the sandy laterite soil. The climate, people said, is unpredictable, with many recent memories of floods and drought. In spite of this, three-quarters of Jabarrah households farmed rice, the others (and many rice farmers too) sold their labor mainly for *kharif* and *rabi* season agricultural work, brick-making and drumming at weddings. Two-thirds of the men of Jabarrah could read, but less than a third of the women. However, traditional views about education and marriage, we were told, were changing – “literate brides were popular” – and literacy rates among girls were up to 38%.

Supporting People Farming in Rainfed Areas – By Building Social Capital

Some government support had reached the village and a project of the Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation had offered support. Then in 1995, the Indian Fertilizer cooperative, the Krishak Bharti Cooperative (KRIBHCO), in partnership with the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID), had taken on the task of encouraging people to come together in groups to plan how to proceed. The jointly managed Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project (EIRFP), co-ordinated by Dr Virendra Singh in West Bengal is, Mr Pathak, said, supporting people who were farming in rainfed areas – by building social capital. As

Virendra Singh puts it, “social capital is built by and by within the community with a high degree of motivation and awareness campaigning from dedicated Community Organizers”.

Much social capital was already in evidence. About half of the village belonged to so-called scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. There were Kalindi and Sahi scheduled castes and social groups belonging to ‘other backward classes’ including Mahato, Gorai and Mandal. Some of Mr Pathak’s newly built social capital was also emerging, including a Vegetable Seedling Raising Group, a Nursery Raising Group and one pisciculture project was run by a village committee.

On Returning in 2003

In September 2003, we had the opportunity to return to Jabarrah together with the Gramin Vikas Trust (GVT), the NGO that had evolved from the EIRFP, and Mr Ajit Banerjee, the branch manager from the Mallabhum Gramin Bank in nearby Ludhurka. This time our party included Kuddus Ansary, a *jankar*⁶ from Kaipara in West Bengal, Bhim Nayak and Ras Behari, fisher group leaders from neighboring Jharkhand state, and William Savage, who has been facilitating aquaculture farmers groups in the eastern region to contribute to policy change and service provision processes. We gathered in a small meeting hall constructed in Jabarrah with GVT support. From three fledgling groups had grown more than forty well-organized Self-Help Groups. In addition, support had now reached not only the villages in Jabarrah cluster (Jabarrah, Budhudih, Kulabahal and Panchudih), but also since 2000 to twenty-four neighboring ‘dissemination villages’.

The ‘Doba System’

Seven of the Self-help Groups were now conducting aquaculture. One group called Nabodaya had started since 1998 to rear fingerlings in seasonal ponds for stocking in larger ponds and tanks. We asked Mr Nityo Gopal, the group *jankar*, about the experiences of the group over the last five years. He said the idea was introduced by EIRFP, and was called the ‘*doba* system’. Mr S L Yadav, the State Coordinator for GVT in West Bengal, said that research on people’s aquaculture options and the use of *dobas* and seasonal tanks had been conducted in collaboration with a DFID NRSP project called *Integration of Aquaculture into the Farming Systems of the Eastern Plateau of India* from 1996-2000. A street-play called *The Pond of the Little Fishes*, commissioned by the project, had been written by a local tribal playwright, Rakesh Rahman, highlighting the lives of villagers and the potential low-season village-based activity of rearing fish seed in *dobas*, as an alternative to migration. A *doba* is a small pond, a dug-out depression where water collects; many farmers have these near to the house or amid their rice paddies.

Mr Nityo said that in the town of Bankura, the group had purchased fish seed of India Major Carps (the three species of Rohu, Catla and Mirigal sold together). The fish, which eat slightly different pond organisms, also occupy different parts of a pond, effectively using all the pond space and resources; they are also popular food fish. The first problem had been to find other villages that also wanted fish seed because one delivery from the town was sufficient for 3-4 villages.

⁶ A *jankar* is a farmer who has received specialist training and who usually heads a farmers group

Only a Rich Man Will Own a Perennial Tank

Like many local families, members of the Nabodaya Group neither owned nor had exclusive access to large perennial tanks for classical fish rearing as extended by the Fisheries Department. “In rainfed areas,” said Mr Nityo, “Water is much in demand – only a rich man will own a perennial tank.” They have several *dobas* and use five seasonal ponds for their business, which involves releasing seed and rearing them up in the *doba*, then in several small seasonal tanks to fingerling size. Depending on the rains, they use 2-5 *dobas*.

Before the fish arrive, the *doba* is made ready to receive them. At first this was done just by adding cow manure, but over time the group had adapted the system by adding lime, organic fertilizer, urea and superphosphate to create a rich soupy plankton of natural food organisms and by additionally feeding rice bran every 2-3 days. Mr Nityo explained that the fish were easy to care for in the small *doba* but as they grew they quickly became densely packed together and needed to be thinned out into a seasonal pond, prepared in a similar way.

If We Get Rains in September-October, the Water Usually Stays until January

After five years of fish rearing, the group was now quite experienced and Mr Nityo described some of their routine tasks with confidence:

We prepare the doba early, from December. Then as soon as the rains come we buy seed. We test water quality by using litmus paper. If the paper goes pink or red we add lime. We also use a plankton net with a collecting tube every 3-7 days (if the density of fish is high we do it more often). If the tube is full with plankton, we reduce the bran feeding. If it's low, we feed more and add more fertilizer. From April sometimes through June, as the fish density becomes high, we keep “thinning out” the fish into other seasonal ponds. After that, we grow the fish up until September-October, when there's about ten fish to a kilogram. If we have Silver Carp or Common Carp, they will be about 250-300 g; the Rohu, Catla and Mirigal will be 50-100 g. Then if we get rains in September-October, the water usually stays until January. Then the Indian Major Carps are 250-300 g, and some of the Silver Carp and Common Carp are over 500 g.

If You Need to Eat Meat, a Goat is for Many but a Fish Will Feed One or Two

“What is your main market?”, we asked. “We eat fish”, said Mr Nityo, “It’s only Rs 30/kg, whereas poultry is Rs 100/kg. If you need to eat meat, a goat is for many but a fish will feed one or two. We sell many products. Fingerlings vary in price; big ones early in the season go best. When we stock too many in a seasonal pond they become stunted. Everyone knows that when these fish are set out in a bigger pond they grow extra fast [a phenomenon which fisheries biologists call ‘compensatory growth’], so perennial pond owners will buy these from us for Rs 90-100/kg. Harvested fish we sell at the pond for Rs 20-30/kg. Big ones we sell for Rs 60-70/kg to pond owners to release as brooders.”

The Energizing Effect of Flexible Rural Credit

In May 2000, the Reserve Bank of India issued a circular of great interest to Self-Help Groups. It concerned micro-credit in the rural banking sector. The circular instructed rural development banks to work towards the launch of local financial products directly suited to

Self-Help Groups. These would be in the form of rapidly sanctioned loans (within three days), not restricted to individuals but available to groups, requiring no collateral, with flexible repayment schedules where groups can repay any or all of the loan at any time up to a repayment period of three years. The annual interest rate of 12% compared to moneylender terms typically of 5-10% per month. The bank can sanction loans from as small as Rs 500 up to several hundreds of thousands. Now groups could nominate 2-3 people to visit the bank with the group's 'Resolution' certificate (proof of the existence of the group) and details of their savings, their plan (including the amount of the loan requested), and the purpose for which it would be required. The bank would need a loan agreement to be completed and a document called a 'Demand Promissory' note. Any groups repaying 100% of their loan would be eligible for a second.

Self-Help Groups Raising Fish Have the Highest Savings among the Groups

The Reserve Bank rules limit the loan to a sum not exceeding four times the value of the group's savings. Mr Banerjee, the branch manager at Ludhurka, said that the Self-Help Groups raising fish had been especially successful and have the highest savings among the groups, and therefore tended to receive larger loans. For example, the Sidhu Kanu Fishing Group (named after a tribal hero) had assets exceeding Rs 40,000, over and above the value of the tank which they operated. In the Santal tribal village of Deoli, the fishing group Ainul Shalmet, with assets in excess of Rs 200,000, had just applied for a loan of Rs 30,000 for fish culture inputs including feed. The Nabodaya Group itself has assets including a 0.8-ha tank recently purchased by the group and had used a loan for the Rs 16,000 tank registration fee and to stock 2,400 fingerlings.

Loans are Now Considered by Groups as Assets to Utilize and to be Repaid

"A big change," said Mr Banerjee, "is that loans are now considered by groups as assets to utilize and to be repaid, not 'sticky' bad loans." About 80% of groups repay loans on a monthly basis (e.g., for pan *masala* sellers, bamboo crafts and small animal husbandry) and since August 2002, the Bank Manager comes at the end of the month with the Rural Development Officer. An example is the all-women Mahamaya Group which is involved in various income-generating activities such as grinding spices and packaging them for local sale. The group had taken a loan of Rs 6,000 for a grinding machine so that it would save both time and hard labor and also result in increased production. Each member of the group presently earns around Rs 500-600 per month.

One Can Save Only if One Has a Strong Will and It is Each Pie that Matters

A number of the Self-Help Groups have only women members. Ms Thanda Mahato, a *jankar* and one of the most progressive women in the village, said that her group purchases seed from different sources and supplies it for stocking into village ponds that have a 100% share of all villagers. She also sells fish that her husband catches from natural sources or from village ponds and earns a good income personally. "I firmly believe that one can save only if one has a strong will and that it is each pie that matters," she said. She indicated that she has a bank deposit of Rs 40,000 in her name. There are five families in her group who do not have enough to eat and it is remarkable is that they are supported!

Loans to fish culturists are generally repaid on harvest. According to Mr Banerjee, the forty Self-Help Groups in Jabarrah currently have savings totaling hundreds of *lakhs* (millions of

rupees) and bank loans of many *lakhs* (hundreds of thousands of rupees). The sanctioned loans of the many groups are displayed on posters on the walls of the meeting room; a certain amount of peer pressure ensures repayment so that no one jeopardizes the system for others.

We are Happy that We are Listened to and Respected

Talking about changes, one woman said, “The months of the rainy season were a curse, when we would have no money and nothing to eat. We had to mortgage our utensils, bicycles or whatever valuables we had to get a loan from the *mahajan* at exorbitant interest rates. Today, we have no worries of the kind that we faced yesterday.”

In reference to group formation, Ms Lalita Mahato, an elderly woman, said, “There was a time when we could not dare to talk to the men folk of the village not to think of strangers! Today, we can go to the bank and ask for the loan, approach the *Panchayat* authorities⁷ and put up our grievances and can boldly face the challenges. We are happy that we are listened to and respected.”

The people we met were listened to and respected by all those who had traveled to Jabarrah. Kuddus Ansary was deep in conversation with fellow *jankars*, some of whom he had met previously at gatherings like *kisan melas* (farmers fairs). Ras Behari, a well-known fish seed producer from Silli block in Jharkhand, was impressed but also concerned to learn that the women’s group was losing about 30-50% of the seed during transport. He suggested that he could provide them with expertise to transport fish seed without mortality, as from small beginnings he now transports about 13-14 tons of fish seed annually. He also encouraged the group to think of seed production locally.

Bhim Nayak, from Bundu block in Jharkhand, was greatly impressed by the progress that the Jabarrah women had made and wanted them to inspire the women in his village by their example. He invited them to visit his village. “I am also happy that not even one person in the village was drinking (alcohol), the bane of all development in my village,” he said. He showed his eye that he said was spared by God’s grace when he was attacked by a drunkard in his boyhood and had to have eight stitches.

To Implement Ideas that Just a Few Years Ago were Only Dreams

The patient support to self-selected Self-Help Groups – by EIRFP and now GVT Community Organizers – is the backbone of a development process in Jabarrah. This support together with appropriate, flexible technical research by farmers with DFID NRSP support – and much improved micro-credit opportunities guided by the Reserve Bank and implemented with careful vigor by the Mallabhum Gramin Bank has provided several key opportunities. The road to Jabarrah is still blocked after heavy rain but so much has changed. Opportunities have been realized for women and men to gain respect and a voice, to generate income, savings and security, to avoid seasonal migration, to engage with the formal banking sector, and to implement ideas. A few years ago, these were only dreams.

[For more information on participatory aquaculture research conducted in Jabarrah, consult DFID Natural Resources Systems Program, and also see Malene Felsing, Graham Haylor, Gautam Dutta, Brajendu Kumar, Smita Shweta, A Natarajan, Gulshan Arora and Virendra

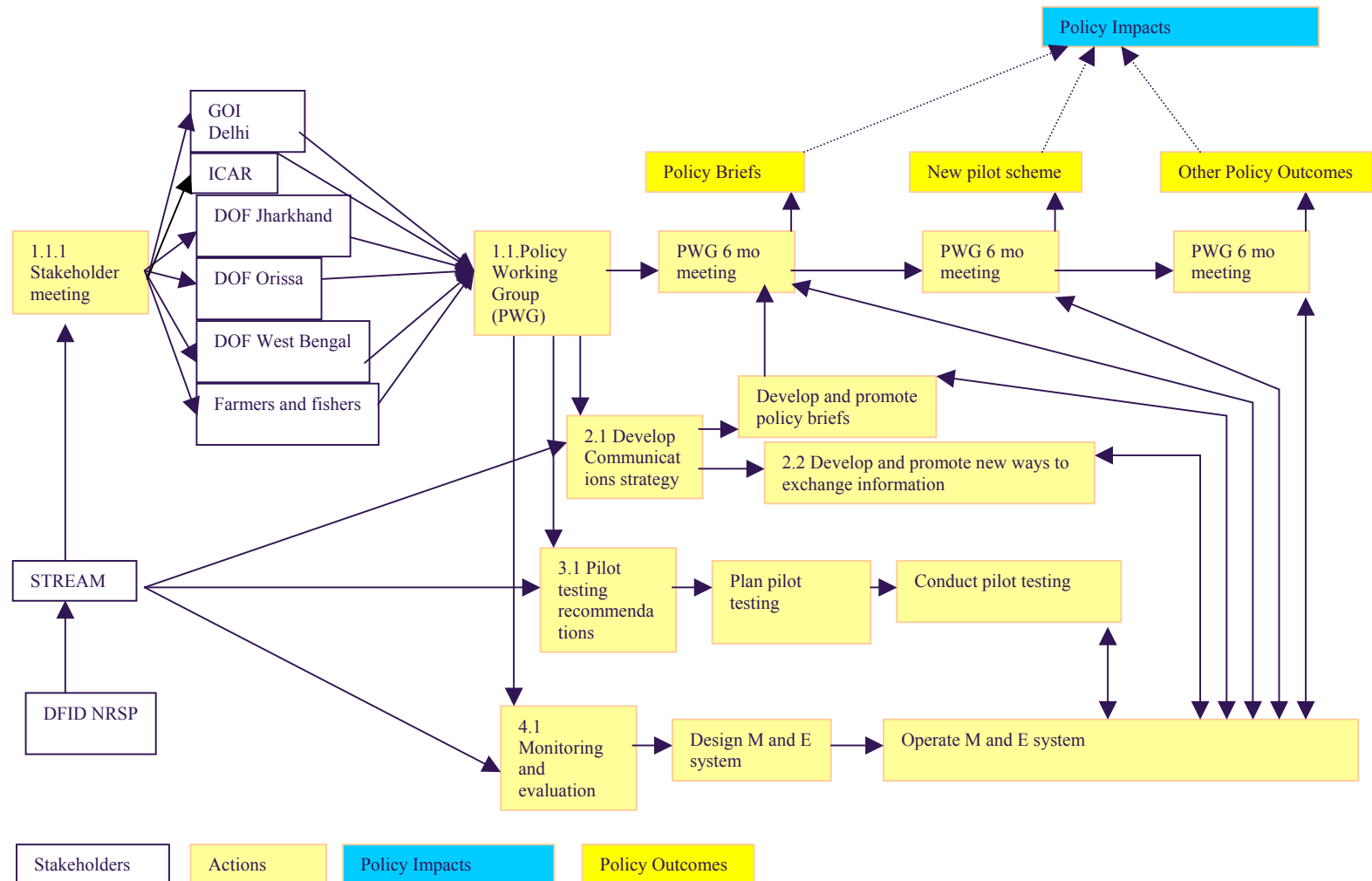
⁷ local administration

Singh (2003) Carp production in seasonal water bodies in Eastern India. Asian Fisheries Science. This can be downloaded from www.streaminitiative.org]

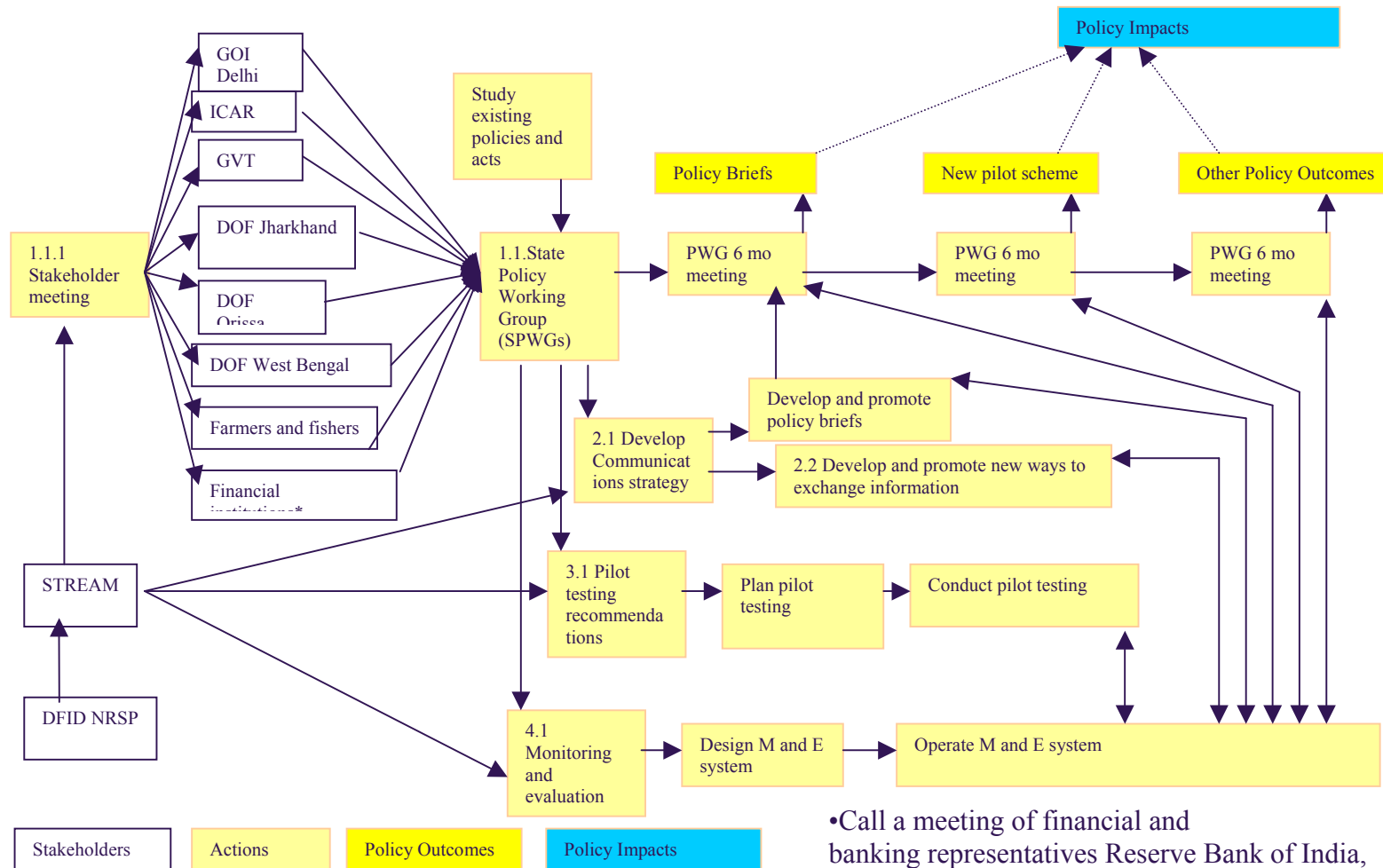
[For more information about building social capital, the Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project or the NGO Gramin Vikas Trust, please contact Mr Amar Prasad, CEO, or Mr J S Gangwar, Additional CEO, at GVT Noida, or Dr Virendra Singh, Project Manager, GVT East, Ranchi Jharkhand.]

We would like to thank Margaret Quin, Arun Padiya and Virendra Singh for their comments on the story.

Appendix 6 Project Flow-chart (original)



Appendix 7 Project Flow-chart (revised)



•Call a meeting of financial and banking representatives Reserve Bank of India, NABARD, State-level Bankers Committee,

