

The Strategy of Empowering Poor for Wetland Resources Conservation in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT The Management of Aquatic Ecosystems through Community Husbandry was demonstrated in three wetlands of Bangladesh that facing a wide range of ecological threats, representing the users' communities of the management areas to participate in the process of wetland governance for restoring resources. A long-term study from 1999 to 2008 was conducted with 5,202 households' members forming 250 Resources User Groups to launch livelihood schemes for alternative income and to reduce dependency on wetland resources. The Resources User Groups were united into 13 Federations of Resources User Groups for institutional sustainability that took over all responsibilities for operating savings of their members and revolving funds for livelihood activities and adopting sustainable conservation measures of wetland resources with oversight provided by the co-management committees. The process of developing management capacities made them efficient and knowledgeable to implement all sorts of activities and to overcome problems. Ownership of the savings and the revolving funds developed confidence, self-identity and skills and boosted up economic empowerment. Adoption of livelihood activities created self-employment opportunities of users for alternative means of earnings that reduced dependency on wetlands to let the resources re-establish. Cohesiveness among the members, networking between community institutions and linked up with co-management committees and service providers generated an effective social capital. The resources users were empowered with a collective effort to build institutions and implement sustainable use practices resulting in wetland resilience of the resources.