



# Assessing policy-oriented research: case study of community-based fisheries management (CBFM) in Bangladesh

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## INTRODUCTION

Fish from Bangladesh's inland waters are a vital source of income and nutrition to millions of people, but catches and species diversity have been declining due to habitat degradation, increased fishing pressure, and destructive fishing methods. This has been exacerbated by short-term, revenue orientated leasing of 12,000 government owned water bodies which excludes poor fishers and encourages leaseholders to over-exploit the fisheries. To improve the resource status and enhance income and livelihoods of smallholder fishermen, research on community-based fisheries management (CBFM) were initiated in the mid 1980s. Under the CBFM approach, the control of the resource is handed over to community groups for an extended period. The major focus of this study is to i) outline and provide evidence for the pathways to policy influence, and ii) document and attribute changes in awareness and opinion of policy makers to activities or outputs of the CBFM project.

## DATA COLLECTION

We conducted interviews with 26 experts from relevant institutions of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), partner NGOs, and representatives of related stakeholders. A written follow-up survey was conducted (returned by 20 respondents) to elicit major communication channels in the information network.

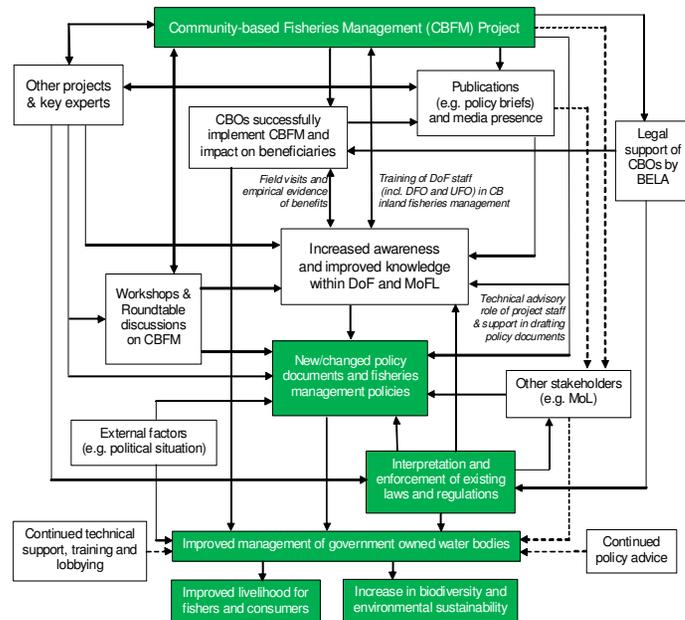


Figure 1: Impact pathway for the policy influence and ultimate impact of the CBFM project

## RESULTS

Experts stated that the awareness of officials in relevant decision making GoB bodies - Department of Fisheries (DoF), Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MoFL), and Planning Commission (PC) - towards inland fisheries management has changed dramatically. All respondents had a good understanding of the general CBFM concepts and a positive opinion of this approach. They further stressed that CBFM works and they had seen this through field visits and in the documentation of especially the CBFM project. While most experts acknowledged several players, there was consensus on the pioneering role of the WorldFish led CBFM projects and technical knowledge which WorldFish contributed even among representatives of other major projects (i.e. MACH, FFP)

WorldFish was crucial as "honest broker" between the involved NGOs and national government institutions. At the same time – as one of the project outcomes – there are now also direct communication channels between some of the NGOs with government bodies, so the profile of the involved NGOs has been raised.

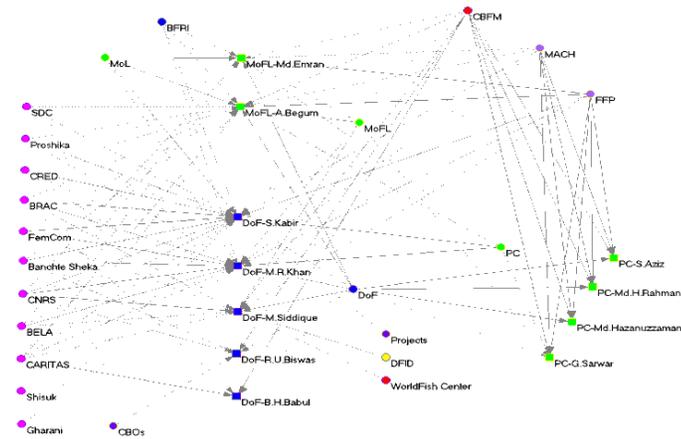


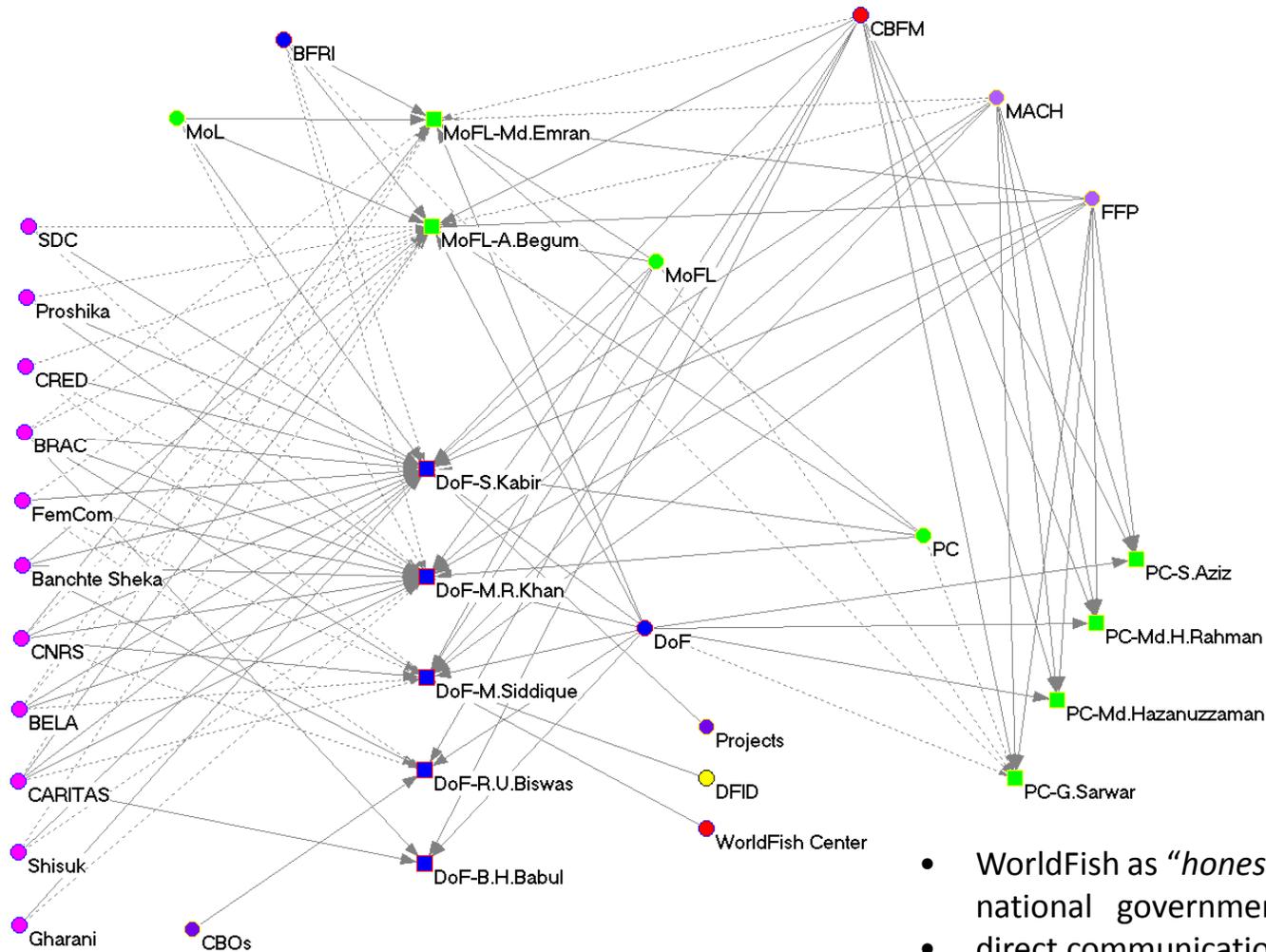
Figure 2: Information sources of GoB on inland fisheries management

## CONCLUSION

The policy-oriented research impact assessment study of CBFM has been able to show changes in opinion and awareness of policy makers. The policy informing and influence role of the project has been successful and major policy documents now make explicit mention of the CBFM concept as viable management approach. It is however still too early to assess if this will really result in a larger scale change in how inland water bodies are managed in Bangladesh. It seems that though major paradigm changes have taken place in the concerned government bodies, especially technical skills, institutional set-up and financial constraints can hamper further up-scaling of CBFM in the future.

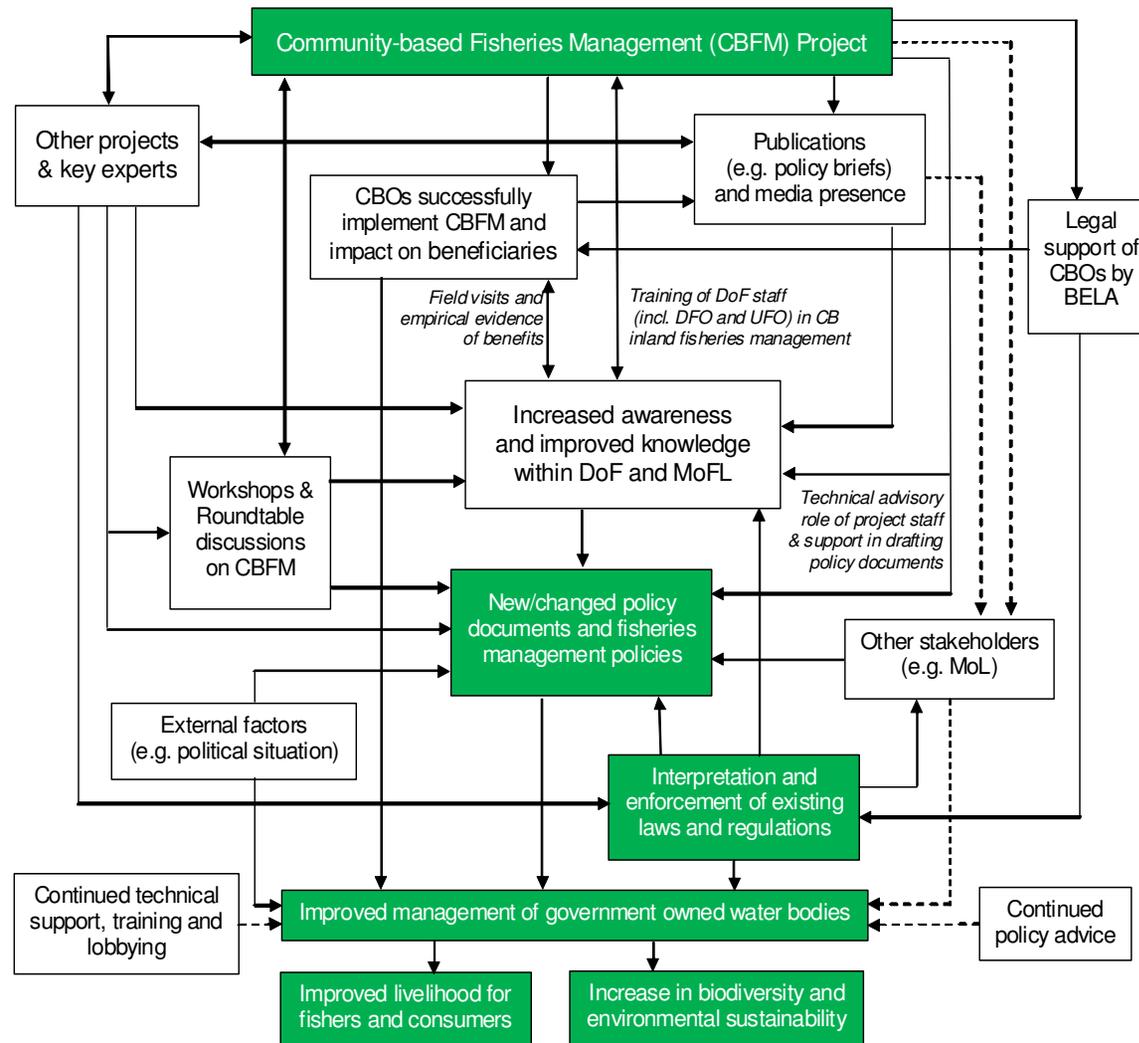
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# Communication network - results



- WorldFish as “*honest broker*” between NGOs and national government institutions
- direct communication channels established between some NGOs and government bodies
- profile of NGOs has been raised

# Policy influence and impact of CBFM project



## Conclusions of the study

- CBFM concept mentioned as viable management approach in major policy documents
- Major paradigm changes have taken place in the concerned government bodies
- Policy informing and influence role of the project has been successful
- New communication channels (e.g. directly between NGOs and government) established
- Profile of NGOs raised
- Technical skills, institutional set-up and financial instruments needed for up-scaling of CBFM in the future