

**ORL-EE&P-10****Reforming Fisheries Extension Services in Bangladesh**

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Bangladesh is considered one of the most suitable regions for fisheries, with the world's largest flooded wetland and the third largest aquatic biodiversity in Asia after China and India. A network of rivers of which the Padma, the Jamuna, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna are important prevails in Bangladesh. All these water bodies have often immense scope and potentiality for augmenting fish production and contribute in livelihood support of the people living around these water. Fisheries sector accounts for 2.43% in national GDP, 22.14% of the agriculture GDP and 1.05% of total export earnings. Many fish farms and hatcheries have been recently established with investment from the government and the private sector. Development and achieving required productivity is relatively easy in these activities and have an impact on socio-economic growth, food security, poverty drop, and employment generation. However, the fisheries sector of the country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is facing the challenges of food security for the increasing population, habitat degradation, urbanization, and rapid industrial development.

Development of responsible fisheries management and optimal use of water bodies can address those challenges. Agricultural advisory services play a crucial role in promoting agricultural productivity, increasing food security, improving rural livelihoods, and promoting agriculture as an engine of pro-poor economic growth. The Department of Fisheries (DoF) is responsible for providing, inter alia, fisheries extension services in Bangladesh. Since the inauguration of the DoF, it has been continuing its role as a front line public sector extension organization for fisheries development in the country. All organized communication efforts by which DoF tries to bring about changes in the knowledge, attitudes, skills and behavior of clientele in order to reach one or more objectives that have been established within the framework of an overall fisheries development policy in Bangladesh. In this regards DoF usages varieties of extension communication approaches like individual contact, group contact and electronic and print media. The DoF provides extension services through the revenue (permanent) set up as well as development (temporary) set up. The revenue set up consists of four Divisional Deputy Directors (DDs), 64 District Fisheries Officers (DFOs) and 492 Upazila Fisheries Officers (UFOs), 492 Assistant Fisheries Officers (AFOs) and 492 Field Assistants (FAs). UFOs are the entry level officers in the fisheries cadre service; the requirement for the post is a BSc in Fisheries (Honors) degree. However, those promoted may have lower qualifications. The entry qualifications for the posts are respectively Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and Secondary School Certificate (SSC) with science, although some AFOs and FAs have higher qualifications. Nevertheless, Upazila (sub-district) level is the practical level and extension personnel working at this level are directly responsible to provide extension services to the fish farmers, fishers and other associated stakeholders. Upazila office of DoF is led by Upazila Fisheries Officer (UFO) or Senior Upazila Fisheries Officer (SUFO) supported with 3-5 subordinate staff which is really insufficient.

Moreover, poor infrastructure and no vehicle, no authority for enforcing fisheries laws are the major challenges for them to provide quality extension services at grassroots level. Thus, it is mandatory to reform the fisheries extension services in Bangladesh for sustainable fisheries sector development.