

## ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, aquaculture continues to diversify and develop rapidly and is seen as the most realistic way to secure the nation's future fish supply needs. Basic fish production techniques are well understood by many farmers, inputs such as seed and feed are widely available and support thriving service provision businesses and lucrative markets exist. Apart from huge structural changes in commercial aquaculture as promising agri-business in the rural areas, a number of cooperative floodplain aquaculture projects have sprung up in recent years. These projects involve the closing of part of the floodplain, (typically 50 -100 ha area), through the construction of an embankment, creating a water body that can be managed through the stocking of indigenous and exotic fish species, feeding, fertilizing and then the complete harvesting of the stock. This cooperative approach can effectively change a seasonal open water resource into a closed productive unit of growth engine contributing considerable income and employment for the local people. The embankment work, crucial to the success of these ventures, is usually financed privately, through the issuing of shares to those landholders with land in the floodplain area. In successful projects, these shares appreciate in value and produce an annual dividend based on profitability.

A short review was carried out in Daudkandi Upazila, Comilla District, Bangladesh, to better understand how recent developments in floodplain aquaculture in the area, spearheaded by the local NGO; SHISUK, were contributing effectively in rural development along with a range of social, economic and environmental issues. Review of the current fisheries policies, legislation and action plans revealed a framework largely supportive of the development of floodplain aquaculture. The review found that the production and economic performance of many floodplain aquaculture projects were impressive and many were having positive effects on local economies, security, nutritional status and employment and service opportunities for the poor. Positive impacts were also noted in agriculture, where rice farmers were obtaining higher yields and using fewer inputs due to residual effect of nutrients applied during the fish production process. Adoption of IPM and practicing organic

**farming by the SHISUK projects was another important positive outcome in terms of safe food production.**

On the negative side, it was found that the initial screening process based on landholding, excluded many of the poorer people in the area, and the opportunity for some traditional livelihood foraging activities, that relied on open access to the floodplain, (e.g. subsistence fishing and duck raising), had been reduced or lost.

Although the spread of floodplain aquaculture in Bangladesh will be limited by certain physical and social constraints, the study concluded that Government funds would be best spent on evaluation and monitoring of floodplain aquaculture, instead of being directly involved in promoting the approach in new areas. It is imperative to take care for those development projects under DOF that intend to use project funds for the construction of initial embankment as opposed to raising funds from local landholders; because, it may be ignoring one of the key elements that have made floodplain aquaculture successful in Daudkandi raising funds from local landholders.