

Bangladesh Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project (IAPP) – Technical Assistance Component

Capacity Development Workshop to Enhance Effectiveness of Results- Based Project Cycle Management (RB-PCM) 26-28 November 2012

Workshop Summary Report

1. The Workshop: Background and Purpose

The workshop was part of the 2012 activities of the GAFSP-financed technical assistance component of the IAPP. The purpose of this component is to improve effectiveness of investment in agriculture, food security and nutrition through strengthened national capacities. This workshop was conceived as a capacity development activity under this component. It took place on 26-28 November 2012 at the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) campus at Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. It was organised jointly by BPATC, IMA International and FAO. The purpose of the workshop was *“to collectively assess current project cycle management (PCM) in Bangladesh in order to identify strengths, weaknesses, challenges and needs as well as possible future interventions for capacity development to strengthen result based PCM”*. The agenda is attached in Annex 1¹

There were 23 participants, including 17 from the relevant Government agencies (from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Disaster Management, Ministry of Food, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Planning Commission and Ministry of Finance), 3 from BPATC, 1 from IMA and 3 from FAO. The list of participants is provided in Annex 2.

The workshop went through the following steps: (i) a series of informative presentations on the IAPP-TA component, PCM and Government of Bangladesh project cycle processes; (ii) a very participatory and lively analysis of the features, responsibilities, strengths and weaknesses of PCM in the Bangladesh context, leading to; (iii) a collective identification of potential solutions and future activities in the form of both formal training activities and other means. These were undertaken in group discussions which then reflected the main outcomes of their respective discussions in plenary. Three groups were formed including two addressing Government-financed projects (groups 1 and 2) and group 3 addressing Development Partner – financed projects.

2. Knowledge Sharing

The workshop participants benefited from a number of informative presentations (provided in Annex 3) that generated discussions and debates, including:

- the **Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project (IAPP)** by the project management unit;

¹ A series of 7 annexes are available on file and provide further details on the workshop. Their list is provided at the end of this Summary Report.

- the **Technical Assistance component of the IAPP**, implemented by FAO, aimed at strengthening national capacities for investment programming in agriculture, food and nutrition security, to which this workshop contributes;
- the **Government of Bangladesh Project Cycle by the Planning Commission**, including the planning process of the Annual Development Plan (ADP), the role of the Planning Commission, and project development and approval procedures. Of particular relevance to the participants were: a review of issues to be considered by project designers in the technical agencies, which would be appraised by the commission; the revision and time extension procedures, the approval process and role of ECNEC.
- **Results-Based PCM** by IMA, in particular the rationale for result based management in PCM and the results chain concept;
- the **Country Investment Plan (CIP)** for agriculture, food security and nutrition by FAO as the Government result based planning tool for investment and as a source of identifying needs for capacity development in the area of investment programming

3. Bangladesh Project Cycle: Key Features and Strengths

Participants formed three smaller groups and were asked to critically analyse the GoB project cycle, both for projects entirely financed by the Government (the ADP) and for projects partly financed by Development Partners (DPs). Participants jointly described the various steps in the cycle associated with specific responsibilities within the Government.

Project cycles are attached at Annex 4a and 4b. In summary, the main steps include; (i) needs assessment / identification of a project; (ii) project design and detailed preparation; (iii) appraisal and approval; (iv) implementation and monitoring; (v) completion, evaluation and impact assessment, thus feeding into a next cycle of projects.

Before reviewing bottlenecks and possible improvements, participants identified the following strengths of current PCM in Bangladesh:

- There exists a wealth of knowledge about needs on which new projects can be identified and developed;
- There is a well established institutional set up that ensures stability and clear assignment of responsibilities: the planning wings in technical departments and ministries; the planning commission; Ministry of Finance / ERD and IMED. Involvement of the latter ensures more neutrality of the appraisal;
- In these institutions, there exists a wealth of experienced staff;
- Clear formats for project documents are in place, such as the Development Project Proforma (DPPs) and the project completion reports (PCRs);
- Two special mentions specifically concern DP-supported projects: the focus on primary stakeholders throughout the cycle, i.e. from initial consultation to implementation and evaluation and the importance of a results based approach when developing project interventions.

4. Priority Identification of PCM Bottlenecks

Each group was asked to identify the three main bottlenecks and proposals to overcome them. Respective group proposals are provided in Annex 5 and summarized here. These might lead to proposals beyond the scope of the project or not directly addressable by specific training but were felt to be of crucial importance by the participants:

- ❖ Some specific skills are missing throughout the project cycle, in particular in relation to participatory needs assessment, participatory monitoring and evaluation and the incorporation of environmental and climate change issues in project design;
- ❖ A relative lack of consultation with and participation of stakeholders and civil society organizations throughout the project cycle.
- ❖ A relative complexity, perceived by project designers, of the appraisal and approval process. Requirements and conditionalities by both the planning commission and DPs were pointed out. This can partly be addressed through increased consultation early enough in the project cycle to avoid problems at approval. This could also lead to guidelines and tools to jointly plan at the beginning of the project development cycle a common timing and coordinated and harmonized development and approval process
- ❖ A constraint to timely implementation relates to costing, financial management, timely release of funds and procurement rules both within the Government and between DPs and Government: issues relate to internal processes, timing and requirements;
- ❖ Project implementation is also often constrained by: (i) a lack of flexibility during the execution of activities; (ii) a relative lack of clarity related to implementation responsibilities; and (iii) problems of coordination between the various agencies involved.
- ❖ Staff in various Government entities are overwhelmed by what is sometimes perceived as an excessive number of relatively small projects;
- ❖ Sometimes a lack of communication and understanding between the Government and DPs related to the way the DPP should be considered.

5. Training Needs and Potential Participants

These bottlenecks led to the identification of training needs that are provided in annex 6, and summarized below:

Needs Assessment: Specifically, there was a need for strengthened capacity in conducting inclusive stakeholder consultation processes, including stakeholder mapping, participatory rural appraisals, targeting, conducting interviews, etc.. Additionally data collection and analysis for use in the identification of needs was included as a need.

Planning and Design: Participants identified needs related to the use of a variety of design tools, including logical frameworks, results frameworks that fit the requirements of development partners, costing and budgets, financial and economic analysis, procurement planning and environmental impact assessments.

Implementation: There was a strong call for capacities in financial management, procurement, team building, management and leadership for project directors and others, as well as in communication skills and reporting.

Monitoring: Practical training related to participatory monitoring was a high priority, in addition to implementing M&E systems and documenting and incorporating lessons learned into future project implementation.

Evaluation: An important need here relates to experience capitalization and how to ensure that project evaluation findings are incorporated into future project design.

Throughout the Project Cycle: Negotiation skills, particularly during appraisal.

During the workshop, the following groups were identified as potential training participants:

- Staff in planning cells of the agencies, departments and Ministries of Agriculture (MoA) and Fisheries and Livestock (MFL), the Ministry of Food as well as the Planning Commission
- The Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED)
- Field level staff from agencies under MoA and MFL
- Local Government representatives and some local NGO staff
- Project Implementers / project management units
- Decision makers in the Government, though it was noted that their participation availability would be limited to half-day workshops, which is not suitable for formal trainings.
- Development Partners

6. Other Capacity Development Needs Identified by Participants

Some of the needs identified during the workshop cannot be addressed through formal training and require other means of capacity development. They include:

- The improvement of participatory monitoring and evaluation through guidelines, tools, as well as the inclusion of associate civil society and independent partners;
- Empowerment of decentralized staff: Revisiting budgeting and planning procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and ensure delegation of authority where it may allow for an increase in efficient delivery;
- The selection and appointment of Project Directors (PDs): briefing, familiarization with the work / project, acquiring of basic management skills;
- Increasing consultation early enough in the project cycle to avoid problems and delays at the approval stage – better inclusiveness, communication through the project development phases between all stakeholders involved: possibly through guidelines and tools to jointly plan at the beginning of the project development cycle a common timing and coordinated and harmonized development and approval process;

- The simplification and timely release of both DP and Government funds. Beyond training in procurement and financial management, should Government and DP rules be harmonized or streamlined?;
- Better communication and exchange to reach a common understanding between Development Partners and the Government of respective formats and requirements, particularly in relation to the DPPs and the Project Appraisal Documents (PADs) (and other DP project documents);
- More specifically, the need was identified to undertake a critical review of the DPP format, its requirements and flexibility as a tool for effective and smooth implementation;
- Shared awareness between DPs and Government on requirements in terms of costing, procurement rules, timing and respective internal processes .

7. Potential Ways Forward

In order to move the work of the PCM workshop forward, several steps have been envisioned:

Two half-day restitution meetings will take place in early March 2013 with Government decision makers and Development Partners, respectively. They will feed back the findings of the PCM workshop to higher-level decision makers in the government, as well as development partners involved in the sector. The idea here is to deliver the findings to those who are able to design, lead and instruct changes in order to strengthen results-based project cycle management within their institution.

A number of activities of the 2013 work programme have been derived directly from the aforementioned conclusions of this workshop. They include: (i) two short term training events on procurement and financial management respectively; (ii) one result based M&E training workshop targeted to M&E officers in on-going investment projects. This is linked with the on-going development of an M&E network between practitioners; (iii) propagation and familiarization of tools on integrating social issues and also climate change dimensions of project design; (iv) management training tailored to project managers and directors; (v) a review of strengths and weaknesses of the DPP, in close consultation with all concerned Government and DP counterparts.

As it emerged that BPATC is already working with another development partner to develop a PCM training curriculum, it was agreed that the IAPP TA component would not duplicate the work of BPATC.

In the meantime, IAPP/TA will design a 2-hour summary training module on Bangladesh PCM that would be delivered at the beginning of main training events delivered on specific topics. The purpose here is to put these events in the context of overall PCM strengthening requirements. In addition, a study tour is under consideration to another Asian country having developed results based PCM during the past few years.

In addition to the half-day restitution workshop mentioned above, the project will continue to involve Development Partners and Government counterparts in discussions around institutional capacity needs related to project cycle management. The aim here is ensure that the efforts of the IAPP TA are in line with other on-going efforts in country, and also to benefit from the knowledge of other partners who have experience in PCM in Bangladesh.

LIST OF ANNEXES (AVAILABLE ON FILE)

Annex 1 – Workshop Agenda

Annex 2 – List of Participants

Annex 3 – Workshop Presentations

- CIP Presentation
- Overview of the IAPP
- Presentation on the IAPP Technical Assistance Component
- Presentation on Results Based Project Cycle Management
- Government of Bangladesh Project Cycle from the Planning Commission

Annex 4 – Bangladesh Project Cycle

Annex 5 - Strengths/Good Practices, Weaknesses/Challenges of the Bangladesh Project Cycle (as identified by groups during the workshop, as well as Development Partners)

Annex 6 – Identification of Training Needs in Support of RB PCM

Annex 7 – Priorities for Improvements In the Project Cycle