



**Blue Gold Program**  
**Technical Report 15**  
**Communication Strategy**

**Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

**Bangladesh Water Development Board  
(BWDB)  
Department of Agricultural Extension  
(DAE)**

**April, 2015**





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# Issue and Revision Record

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# 1. Introduction

The Blue Gold Program is a major water resources management programme aiming to reduce poverty for 150,000 households living on 160,000 ha of 26 selected coastal polders in Khulna, Patuakhali and Satkhira Districts in Bangladesh. It helps local communities to create a safe and healthy living environment and a sustainable socio-economic development.

The project is implemented by the Bangladesh Water Development Board and the Department of Agriculture Extension and supported by the Netherlands Government.

The programme is very ambitious both in scale and in implementation complexity. Communication is an important instrument in connecting the programme to its beneficiaries and stakeholders. During the first 2 years of its implementation communication activities have been initiated and implemented. Now, with more than 4 years to go, the project aims to assess its progress in this field, align communication activities in order to ensure its (cost) effective use and contribute to scaling up impact and sustainability.

This document contains the Blue Gold communication strategy, which gives direction and focus on the planning and implementation of its communication activities. The situation in the remote areas provides extra challenges to this task, because of the limited availability of communication channels directly reaching communities living in difficult circumstances.

Reaching 150,000 households in these regions is a challenge, which requires a comprehensive approach, using direct and indirect communication channels through media and intermediary organisations. At the same time the quality of information reaching the final beneficiaries, with whom the Blue Gold Program has limited direct contact, requires an innovative approach blending modern digital media, like social media and mobile telephones with traditional media like audio-visuals, printed materials and folk theatre, Mela and facilitated community events. The delivery of these materials will be done through Blue Gold staff, local partners, like offices of the Water Development Board and Department of Agriculture Extension, and Union Parishad's, as well as through local markets, street plays organised by the communities themselves.

The development of this strategy is a concerted effort of the Blue Gold communication expert, the institutional expert and the international communication adviser. In November 2014 meetings with Blue Gold staff and stakeholders outside the office in Dhaka have been held and a field visit to the project sites has been done by the team. The outline of the strategy has been presented and discussed with the Blue Gold team and initial plans for the year 2015 have been prepared.

The report consists of

- ✓ A background section on principles of effective communication support to projects, describing current thinking on how communication can link complex projects to stakeholders and beneficiaries
- ✓ A section on the Blue Gold Program, its aims, strategy and stakeholders, which will be the basis for developing a communication strategy. This section also contains a description of the communication activities undertaken so far and the Blue Gold planning cycle.
- ✓ The Blue Gold Communication framework, which provides the aims, key audiences, communication objectives, messages and channels for the different target groups and recommendations on the organisation.
- ✓ In the annexes a matrix, linking communication activities, media and materials to the target groups. Also an initial table has been developed to make a start with planning of its implementation.

## 2. Communication; Linking Blue Gold to stakeholders

### 2.1 International perspectives in effective communication

There are many definitions of communication, but for this purpose we would like to follow one of the simplest.

*'Communication is the exchange of information (ideas, symbols and concepts) between individuals or groups of people'.*

This short definition conveys the essence of communication. Communication transports concepts from one person to another. This superficially simple process is actually rather complicated. Confusion concerning the meaning of words, different use of language and different expectations, can hamper communication. Senders and receivers both are influenced by many factors in deciding what to communicate and in what form. Interference can also occur where third parties disturb the communication process or when intermediaries in the process distort the message as they pass it on.

Communication is increasingly seen as an effective instrument in designing and implementing development programmes. It connects project developers and implementers with beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Communication can help make policy effective on three levels:

- ✓ It can improve people's *knowledge* of all sorts of issues, e.g. the coal mine restructuring programme
- ✓ It can influence people's *attitudes* (e.g. help create a more positive approach to find new work);
- ✓ It can influence people's *behaviour* (e.g. people take initiatives to actively participate in new job creation programmes).

From experience we know that communication can play a leading role in increasing *knowledge*, for example through mass media public consciousness raising, advertisements and distance education. The impact of communication upon *attitudes* is not as strong. Often more penetrating and direct methods are required such as education or (personal) counselling. *Behaviour* can never really be influenced by communication alone. That requires a combination of other stimuli.

#### Conditions for effectiveness

International experience has shown that there are several factors determining the effectiveness of communication as a policy instrument.

- ✓ Integration of communication into policies  
Blue Gold communication should not be used disconnected from the programme's goals, policies and programmes. It should be based on these goals and try to connect these to the goals and interests of its beneficiaries and stakeholders.
- ✓ Integration of communication  
This means that the different ways Blue Gold communicates with its internal and external stakeholders, should be integrated and coherent, both in content and in visual design. It is

important to know that such communication finds place through the communication materials it produces, but also by the way its representatives communicate in their daily work.

✓ Managing communication

Communication should be managed and planned in a professional and systematic way. This means that the function should be organised in a logic way, at the right place in the organisation and that it should be connected to the planning process of different components of the project.

## Directions of Communication

Until now, communication in Blue Gold mainly takes place in a vertical way, mainly top-down, but also bottom-up, during training delivery and M&E activities of field staff. Horizontal communication has proven to be very important to enhance the effectiveness of implementation of the project, but has not yet been applied in the Blue Gold Program yet apart from participating in training activities.

Although communication is something everybody does all the time, planned communication does not happen by itself. Most communication takes place in a top-down manner. If bottom-up communication takes place it often is not connected to the project planning process. Therefore practical tools need to be developed to strengthen bottom-up and horizontal communication.

Another distinction often made in project and programme communication is:

- Communication about Blue Gold, explaining its aims and strategies and its results. For Blue Gold this means donors, other NGO's, but also government and other parties interested in new approaches in blending water resources management and poverty reduction, for a for different aspects of the programme.
- Communication as an instrument of Blue Gold, contributing to achieving its goals, by reaching stakeholder and beneficiaries and strategically enhance awareness, interest, knowledge, perceptions and attitudes and sometimes even behaviour of beneficiaries and key stakeholders.

## Communication modes within government

There are different functions or modes of communication in Government and projects.

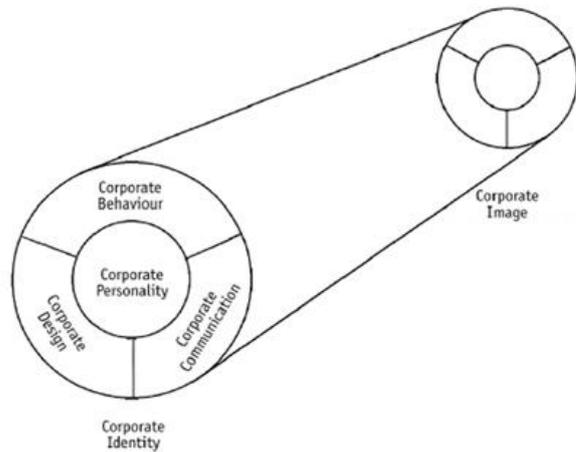
- **Disclosure/publication and dissemination of policies**, through a set of communication activities which provides stakeholders information about the project, its aims and plans and how people can become engaged;
- **Provision of services**, is a more instrumental form of communication, where we provide people with information to be able to do their work; eg WMG's need information how to register, what their roles will be in the Executive Committees , how to become considered for LCS contracts, or other project activities.
- **Participation**, is communication to engage groups of stakeholders in participatory processes, which is one of the core elements of the Blue Gold Program.
- **Influencing attitude/behaviour**, is meant to communicate with stakeholders, who are not interested to become engaged, because they have negative attitudes towards the programme or similar processes.
- **Networking**, is an important mode of communication which is important to make people realise, or confirm that they are part of a larger group;

## The Relationship between Internal and External Communication

The image of an organisation, whether it is a company, or an governmental organisation or a project like Blue Gold is a reflection of its identity. If the identity is fragmented, its image among audiences inside and outside the project will be fragmented as well. Research in the late 90's has shown that the identity of an organisation exists out of the personality, which is the structure, the culture and the strategy of the organisation.

This personality comes to the surface in 3 ways.

- ✓ The communication of the organisation, such as brochures, newsletters, films, websites etc
- ✓ The corporate design and symbolism of the organisation, like how formal, large cars, or modest cars, offices, the use of logo's of different partners;
- ✓ The (corporate) behaviour of the organisation, both as an organisation what measures do they take, but also by the staff who represent the organisation.



Research among banks and insurance organisations by the "Corporate Communication Centre" of the University of Rotterdam has shown that 70% of the image is formed by the behavioural component and 30% by the communication and symbolism. If we look at the budgets used, this is often the other way around. Most resources are put in brochures and offices and little in influencing behaviour of the organisation and its employees.

### 3. Blue Gold Program; strategy, stakeholders and outcome

#### 3.1 The Blue Gold Program

The overall objective of the Blue Gold Program is:

*“to reduce poverty for 150,000 households living on 160,000 ha of selected coastal polders by creating a healthy living environment and a sustainable socio-economic development”.*

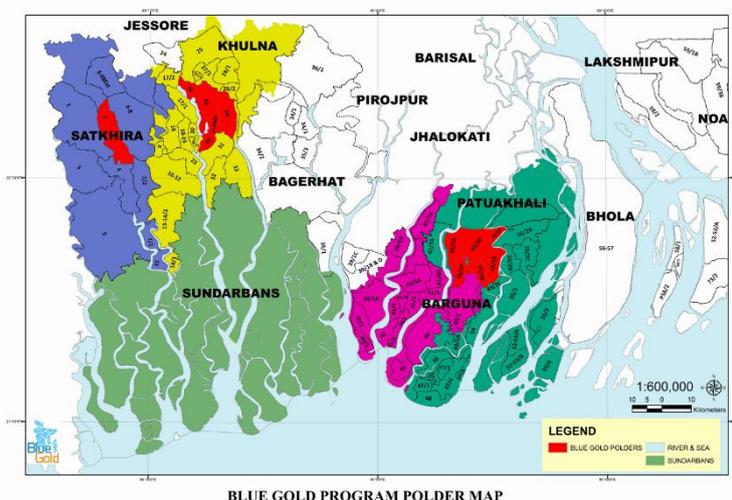
The specific objectives of Blue Gold are:

- *To protect the communities and their land located in polders against floods from river and sea (climate change adaptation) and to optimize the use of water resources for their productive sectors.*
- *To organise the communities in cooperatives which will have to become the driving force for the natural resources based development (agriculture, fisheries and livestock), whereby environment, gender and good governance are effectively addressed.*
- *To increase the household income derived from the productive sectors.*
- *To strengthen the institutional framework for sustained water resources development and related development services in the SW/SC coastal zones*

The project is implemented in 26 selected polders in the Districts of Satkhira, Khulna and Patuakhali.

Blue Gold is implemented by BWDB (Ministry of Water Resources) and DAE (Ministry of Agriculture). At this moment 12 polders have been selected.

The Inter Ministerial Steering Committee (IMSC) of the Blue Gold Program brings all relevant sectors together such as Ministry of Local Government and Cooperatives Division, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries.



The project builds on earlier projects, the most relevant of which is IPSWAM. The objective of IPSWAM was *“to strengthen the capacity of water sector organisations, including local level water management organisations (WMOs), the different offices of the BWDB (headquarters and regional/local level) and to a limited extent local government institutions, responsibly to assume their*

*roles as specified in the NWPo and the Guidelines for Participatory Water Management (GPWM)*".<sup>1</sup>

Where IPSWAM focused at strengthening the capacity of water sector organisations, Blue Gold builds on that by adding an integrated approach on poverty reduction and livelihood development through improved water resources management, enhanced agricultural production and marketing.

The essence of Blue Gold is to establish and empower community organizations/water management organizations (WMOs) to sustainably manage their water resources and to make these resources more productive. The Program aims to create strong cooperatives that will interact with public and private organizations that play a role in the development of the area. Participatory water resources management is the entry point and the initial driver of the community organization process. The explicit objective of Blue Gold is to reduce poverty of the people in the coastal areas by enhanced productivity of crops, fisheries and livestock and increasing incomes by improved processing and marketing of agricultural products including value chain development.<sup>2</sup>

The programme has a compartmental structure at central level and in the zonal offices.

1. Community Mobilization and Institutional Strengthening;
2. Water Resources Management;
3. Food Security and Agricultural Production;
4. Business development.

Cross cutting themes, such as training & capacity building, gender, M&E, communications, Institutional Strengthening, Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Good Governance and Innovation, are also addressed through various activities.

In Dhaka the central Blue Gold office houses 33 full time staff functions and several part time consultants. The project has a Zonal Team in Khulna with 20 staff and in Patuakhali with 16 staff. In the polders Blue Gold has 72 staff, mainly CO's and FO's and field level works in market development.

At the level of WMG, Union Parishad (UP) and villages, contact with representatives takes place through project activities, such as Farmer Field Schools (FSS), WMG training, Project Orientation for Union Parishads and by engagement of CO's and FO's. In all 26 Polders, approximately 26 Water Management Federations and in total 80 WMAs and 850 WMGs will be established. Part of these has already functioned under the former IPSWAM programme.

### **3.2 Blue Gold communication activities until now**

A communication expert has been involved in Blue Gold from the beginning. Several activities were undertaken. A preliminary communication plan was drafted and included in the Blue Gold inception report, blending conventional, traditional and modern (such as ICT, mobile technology) channels and tools for dissemination information.

Blue Gold staff also presents experiences at national and international meetings and conferences. For example the good practices of Blue Gold have been presented at meetings of LOGIN (Local Governance Initiative Network), but also in other networks, like WorldFish, and Horizontal Learning Program (HLP). During the first year of the project, several communication activities and materials have been established.

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<sup>1</sup>IPSWAM, Project Completion Report, July 2012

<sup>2</sup> Blue Gold Website

#### **a. Stationary**

At the beginning of the project stationary was designed. The Blue Gold logo top left for envelopes and top-right for letterhead. There are no “house style” (corporate identity) guidelines yet. The business cards of project staff contain the Blue Gold logo as well as the “Government of Bangladesh” and “Government of the Netherlands” logos. Although that was agreed at an earlier stage of the project, the project partners have expressed that cards of project staff should only have the Blue Gold logo. House style guidelines need to be prepared and approved by the Steering Committee, to prevent confusion during development and design of future communication activities and materials.

In addition to these materials which have been developed, several other initiatives have been taken, designs were made, but they did not reach their final production stage: posters, signboards for Zonal Offices or WMG offices.

#### **b. Leaflet in Bengali and English.**

A Blue Gold leaflet was prepared in Bengali and English. The current version is still too technical to be used for general public. Also the distinct presentation of the 4 components does not give a coherent presentation of the integrated approach of the Blue Gold Program. Furthermore it is not designed in line with other Blue Gold materials.

#### **c. Website (<http://bluegolddb.org/>)**

The website is nicely designed, seems well structured and regularly updated. Agricultural production (Component 3) information is rather “over-represented”, which seems to be caused by a lack of contributions from the other components.

It has been developed in WordPress, which is not very flexible and makes it difficult to prepare a mirror site in Bangla. For a program like Blue Gold it is very important to also have a website in Bangla. The feasibility of preparing such site should be investigated; with the experience the program already has, it should be possible to prepare a website which is more flexible.

Social media use is increasing rapidly in Bangladesh, also in the rural areas. According to a report published on 1 December 2014 (the Daily Prothom Alo), 18 million people use FB, which is three times more than in 2013. Almost 120 million people use mobile phone including 84% farmers. 37% uses internet from their mobile phone. More than 280 million taka is transferred by mobile banking, and the majority of mobile banking is done by the poor. D-net, BIID, BRAC and several NGOs are using social media in communicating development information. With another 4 years to go, Blue Gold needs to engage in this development, in order not to lose channels to reach larger publics.

#### **d. Facebook ([www.facebook.com/bluegoldprogram](http://www.facebook.com/bluegoldprogram))**

Blue Gold Program also has a Facebook page in Bangla which is managed by the communication expert. It seems to be especially appreciated by CO's in the field, although its reach is likely to be extended. (Google analytics have not yet been used for tracking its use).

#### **e. Storing digital documents**

Most digital documents for the public domain have been categorically archived but still need to be uploaded at the Blue Gold website. In principle all important documents should be uploaded. Documents have been digitalized and stored in the server, will be hyperlinked from the Blue Gold website for the Blue Gold staff to use.

#### **f. Farmer Field School (FFS) notebooks;**

The notebooks are meant to be notebooks for FFS participants. It is the only tangible information material which is provided by the project to the (20.000) FFS trainees. It is not sure how well they are used for this purpose, since many of the low-income household members are not able to read or (used to) make notes. It contains 40 A5 pages, the first 14 contain rather technical information which is relatively difficult to comprehend for persons who are not used to reading. FFS participants proposed to provide them a pictorial Handbook with short and important messages, which they can understand even by seeing pictures that might be helpful to them and to explain to others.

#### **g. Posters**

Two posters have been developed; another two have been drafted and pre-tested in the field, explaining the coherence of the different components in a visual way. The design of the posters is nice, but it is not sure how well the posters are understood without explanation. Posters were pre-tested with illiterate people who proved able to understand the message without explanation.

#### **h. Blue Gold films and audiovisuals**

A Blue Gold introduction film is currently under production. The primary audience of the video are the beneficiaries and stakeholders at village/operational level. Another video documentation has been developed by zonal production teams documenting WMG elections.

The program is considering the production of 2-3 minutes 2-D animation films depicting O&M, crop production, marketing etc. Audio-visual communication has proven to be better used and remembered than printed booklets.

#### **i. Calendar (both desk and wall)**

Calendars for 2014 and 2015 were developed and printed. They are professionally produced, its design is related to the Blue Gold themes of water, agriculture and markets and people seem to appreciate receiving them as a promotional material.

#### **j. Piloting community radio program of three months**

A pilot with *Lokobetar*, a community radio in Patuakhali, was undertaken in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2014. The last program has been aired on 2 December. The radio station has prepared a report which will be used to decide how to proceed. Where radio can be very effective in other countries, its use is not yet very common in Bangladesh. It was mainly used for disaster and relief communication, but recently also on locally important development issues like agriculture, education, gender. Fast diffusion of mobile phone, which is a convenient medium to listen to community radio, is likely to increase the number of users leading to create impact. Another strength of community radio is that its community is actively involved in information gathering, programming and all other works; thus they feel an ownership on the medium. Community radio is a new addition to the mass communication media in Bangladesh but getting popularity especially to the people of coastal areas. Reach can be enhanced through re-broadcasting the message either through the same channel at other times, or through podcasts by CO's during village meetings.

#### **k. Community media and activities**

The program is exploring the possibility to develop and facilitate the communities in organizing short street theatre programs, which could be organized during community events, or at markets, especially in the new polders. Also committees with representatives from WMOs and UPs have been formed in four polders to hold Blue Gold Mela due in the middle of February 2015. These Mela's can be powerful tools to create interest and alignment with the Blue Gold objectives.

## I. Promotional materials

Different promotional materials have been developed. The quality seems good and all materials contain the Blue Gold logo. Examples are folder, general notebook, pen, caps, umbrella and bags.

### 3.3 Blue Gold planning process

Although the functional coherence of linking water management, agricultural production and market development is obvious in reducing poverty and improving livelihood of low income households, it is not easy to plan and implement program activities as coherently as desired. The work is structured along the different components of the program, with a different focus and linked to different 'government institutions'. The experts are focused at achieving the outcomes of their component. Finding the balance between reaching the ambitious targets and sharing information with other components is challenging. Also the planning and implementation of the Blue Gold components can vary which requires a great amount of flexibility.

But in order to be able to plan communication effectively, it is important to find a general planning process which is relevant for all project components and can be used as the framework to connect communication planning.

The process of WMO formation, strengthening and sustenance in each polder seems to be the most logical and comprehensive planning cycle of the Blue Gold Program. Simplified it consists of three phases:

Phase 1 "WMO Formation, registration and account keeping" (6-12 months)

Phase 2 "Planning, Implementation of physical works, WMO strengthening and FFS (12-24 months)

Phase 3 "Operation, Maintenance and Sustenance (6-12 months, after which it will be handed over to respective government bodies)

Although it is focused at establishing (or reviving/strengthening) of WMO's and the technical aspects of water works, it can also be used as a 'road map' to 'position' other components in this process.

Agricultural production and value chain development are not organised in a similar way, but those FFS, which are implemented under the framework of the Blue Gold Program somehow will be connected through the WMG's to this process. Planning of FFS works more with a "Menu of activities", the selection of which will be done in consultation with the WMO's and DAE representatives. The activities of component 4 also can be connected to this process, but if, when and how stakeholders will be reached by component 3 and 4 is difficult to anticipate.

At the same time, it is very confusing for stakeholders and beneficiaries if they are approached by Blue Gold representatives from different components. CO's and FO's are the program staff with direct access to program beneficiaries. They should be able to present the Blue Gold Program in a coherent way.

In this paragraph we provide the role of communication in the different phases. Linking the planning of communication and consultation approaches to this process enhances efficiency of its use. It is clear that the implementation of activities often can't wait for other activities if this is not crucial, because progress needs to be made.

Phase 1 "WMO formation, registration and account-keeping"

During this phase CO's liaise with UP and other relevant stakeholders at local level. They will visit the area, sometimes accompanied by other Blue Gold staff, provide information to interested persons, organise village meetings, collect data, conduct focus group discussions. When the WMG boundaries are

determined the actual formation of WMG's can start. This is an election process, with parallel regulatory compliance and approvals, the speed of which can vary significantly from case to case.

The way information will be provided to the people should be comprehensive and include aspects of water management, agricultural production and market development. It should also explain that the speed of the process will vary, that there will be periods with less intensive exchange and that it will take a long time before the results will be visible, and that their engagement in this process is essential.

Also it will be important to manage expectations of the communities.

**Need for communication support:**

- Information materials needed for community mobilization to introduce the project and create interest among the general people to form WMG and participate in the initiative prior to formation and activation of WMG Executive Committee members.
- Information material for WMG Executive members to explain the process of WMO establishment
- Community events, like street play, Mela and others to discuss water resources management issues which are relevant for the community (Note: about issues and not about solutions, with the purpose of explaining why shared management is necessary for durable solutions).
- Audiovisual material about the Blue Gold approach (which is currently under preparation)
- Short (4 min) AV's about issues to raise interest in cooperation for water resources management, agricultural production enhancement and ultimately income generation.

Phase 2 "Planning, Implementation of physical works, WMO strengthening and FFS (12-24 months/1-2 years)

During phase 2, the experts will assess the situation in more detail. Often focus group sessions will be organised to assess problems as perceived by the communities. Community Development planning might start in this phase. It is also the phase where some people will benefit from LCS contracts. More training will take place and WMG members will pass on this information to their respective constituencies. Also activities aimed at those households who have not been directly engaged in WMG meetings and activities need to be informed and engaged. At the end of this phase the physical works have been implemented.

**Need for communication support:**

- Information materials to inform communities about their role, progress of the works and sustainability related issues
- Community meetings organised by the WMG's (supported by CO's) when milestones have been reached in the implementation of water works
- Information materials to be handed out to FFS trainees;
- Posters to create an interest among communities in Blue Gold knowledge and activities
- AV's and fact sheets about lessons learned, best practices

Phase 3 "Operation, Maintenance and Sustenance (6-12 months, after which it will be handed over to respective government bodies)

During phase 3 all works under the project have been completed. O&M agreements will be signed between WMG's and BWDB. WMO's need to sustain resource mobilization activities. WMG Action Plans might have to be modified in order to be able to undertake part of the responsibility for maintenance, operation and sustenance. During this phase FFS and market development activities might be continued. Ideally the system should be sustainable. WMG's will continue to operate and are funded by contributions of the WMG-members and they are expected to lead the process.

#### Need for communication support:

- Event to celebrate the completion of the works; banners, speeches from leaders from BWDB, but also others like UP, Department of Agricultural Extension;
- Because of the assumed ownership of WMO's less support from the project will be required, but the project still is in a position to facilitate and maintain horizontal learning by collecting and sharing good practices, lessons learned, challenges overcome etc.
- O&M Handbook, Organizational Management Handbook and Handing over document
- Mapping and documentation of Good practices/learning emerged after project intervention through preparation of Learning Notes.

## 4. Blue Gold Communication framework

### 4.1 From Program objectives to communication objectives

Blue Gold aims to improve livelihoods of 150.000 households through improved management of water resources and enhanced agricultural production and marketing.

As described in the preceding chapter, the achievement of these ambitious goals requires maximum cooperation between all stakeholders inside and outside government. In some cases cooperation just means facilitation, but in other cases it requires actual cooperation, different ways of working, active participation in WMO's. This requires a positive attitude towards such cooperation and sufficient understanding of the issues and purpose of Blue Gold.

For those polders which have been part of IPSWAM, the challenge is to make stakeholders realise that it is more than the traditional IPSWAM, because it provides support to agricultural production and marketing. For new polders the whole process, including the establishment of WMO's, needs to be explained.

The overall Blue Gold Communication objective is:

“to create sustained awareness of and interest in the Blue Gold Program and strengthen positive engagement of all stakeholders through continuous, systematic and structured communication, so that the Blue Gold Program is able to achieve its objectives: improved livelihood development, through improved water resources management, increased agricultural production and access to markets”

The specific Blue Gold communication objectives are:

- *To make stakeholders and beneficiaries aware of the Blue Gold Program and explain what it entails*
- *To ensure that stakeholders understand its aim, scope and how they can become engaged*
- *To achieve a positive attitude towards engaging with other sectors in order to achieve livelihood development in the Blue Gold polders*
- *To share good Blue Gold successes and challenges among other stakeholders, beneficiaries and implementation partners and similar projects and initiatives.*

### Segmentation of target groups of Blue Gold communication

The main target groups (audiences) of Blue Gold communication are described in this section. For each we provide a description, their relation to Blue Gold and their specific communication objectives.

#### 4.1.1 Households in project polders

The Blue Gold Program aims to have a positive impact on the livelihood of more than 150.000 households. These households are among the poorest in Bangladesh, remote, and in areas which are often flooded and which lack opportunities to raise household income through agricultural production and marketing. The families consist of (grand) fathers/mothers, children. With an average family size in Bangladesh of 5 persons we talk about at least 750.000 people, but probably more.

Obviously this group cannot be reached directly by the programme staff, but the design of Blue Gold with its different components enables it to have direct interaction with approximately 55% (80.000 households) of the targeted households through project activities. The remaining 45% (70.000 households) will benefit from the program investments and interventions indirectly from participating households in their community, through community events, media interventions and intermediary organisations like the offices of the Bangladesh Water Development Board, Department of Agricultural Extension, Union Parishad and other local government institutions.

The group with direct interaction with the Blue Gold Program, through their membership of WMG or other ways through participation in Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Labour Contracting Societies (LCS), will benefit most. The intensity of this communication will vary; members of the WMG Executive Committees are likely to be better informed than regular members of the WMG's, but the outreach will be enhanced through other supporting communication activities, traditional, community and modern, as covered in this communication strategy.

The communication strategy is designed in a way that also those households (70.000) without direct exchange with the Blue Gold Program staff will benefit.

The function of the communication strategy therefore is to put the Blue Gold Program at the agenda of all members of local communities. If this is done community-wide, it will help to create an enabling environment in which Blue Gold experiences and lessons will be shared and discussed within communities, between those with direct personal interaction with Blue Gold staff and those without.

Therefore the project should prepare and share some materials and activities which facilitate (stimulate) passing on this information and bridge the gap between those who have been involved to those who have not. Simultaneously curiosity and some interest could be initiated by the project through group & community events, or through posters and materials at places where people convene.

For those households who have no direct relationship with Blue Gold (because they are not a member of a WMG, and have not had the chance to take part in an FFS), communication materials and activities need to be developed to make them aware of Blue Gold, create an interest to become engaged and inform them how they can become engaged.

Since TV is not widely used, the main digital medium which is used is Mobile Phone. Other channels through which they can be reached are events, Mela's, markets, and at other meetings which are already organised at village or UP level. The services of a call centre could be used to send text, audio texts or even short video messages to people. Nowadays it is even possible to distribute films through downloading to the phone at shops in the communities.

Efforts to use regional Community Radio can be further enhanced. In some more urban areas, the coverage of TV is higher and TV could be used.

#### **4.1.2 Water Management Organizations**

The Water Management Organisations are the most important vehicle that is created under the project. In total during the implementation period of Blue Gold, approx. 850 WMG's will be established. In theory each WMG will consist of minimum 55% of the households of the community, which means that a minimum of 80.000 households will become engaged. WMO's will therefore be an important channel to reach their members, but also – through their members—to reach the remaining audiences.

The WMG members receive a lot of training, ranging from Blue Gold orientation, to training on “management & organisation” and “accounts keeping”. Some 137 WMG's will receive training on “Effective use of agricultural Machineries”, but there is a long list of other training programs planned to be given.

### **4.1.3 Union Parishad**

As the Local Government Representative, with several Standing Committees, the Union Parishad plays an important role in facilitating communication between local stakeholders. This was confirmed in the “Participatory Water Management Rules, 2014”. They can play a role in mediation, and passing on information bottom-up and top-down. It also mentioned in the GPWM that “The Union Parishad will provide the supporting /facilitating/coordinating assistance for project/sub-project/scheme covering one Union for participatory water management. On behalf of the Union Parishad the Standing Committee on Agriculture and other development works will provide such functions.”

Some of the UP’s have been very active and are contributing in several ways, by linking different households, raising the subject at other meetings, offering facilities like Meeting room, Union Information and Service Centres, supporting in organizing Mela, inclusion of WMO members in Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) and Union Development Coordination Committee (UDCC) etc.

### **4.1.4 Blue Gold CO’s and FO’s**

These are the last ‘frontier’ in the project, having direct contact with project beneficiaries. In total there will be approximately 100 staff paid by the project who will liaise with the final beneficiaries. The communication between CO’s and FO’s with WMG’s, local government and individual households is very important. Their main task is to liaise between the project and stakeholders at field level, but in reality they undertake a long list of activities, collecting data for M&E, assisting WMG’s in organising activities and sometimes even in assisting in collecting the WMG fees from households.

## **4.2 Overall strategic Approach**

In this chapter we will provide a set of channels and communication materials with whom we can provide relevant information to the beneficiaries and stakeholders at polder and community level.

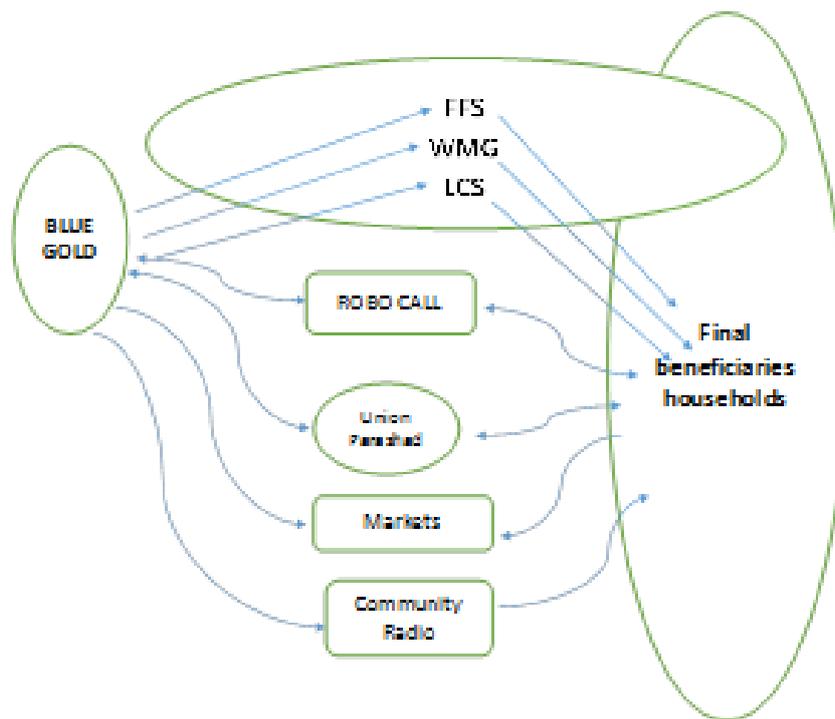
Although the Blue Gold Program will have a positive outcome on livelihoods of 150.000 households, the direct interaction between Blue Gold staff and households will take place with at least 55% of those households, because they are member of a Water Management Organisation. Interaction with the remaining 45% (70.000 households) will be less intensive. Therefore this individual engagement will be supported by a communication programme, which will reach all 150.000 households of the Blue Gold Program. Some will be reached through staff and community members in WMG’s and some will be reached by direct messaging/calling (“Robocall”), media, intermediaries and local/regional community events.

Because of the lack of channels which could be used Blue Gold will undertake two innovative communication pilots.

The first pilot aims to reach (a segment) of the final beneficiaries directly with a 40sec AV, through a call centre (‘Robocalling’).

The second innovative approach is to collect all communication materials on a web-based server, which will be synchronised with the tablets of CO’s and FO’s in the field. In this way they have all relevant materials with them during field visits and at community meetings and events.

Based on an evaluation end 2015, it will be decided whether the use of these channels can be enhanced further.



### 4.3 Content of communication

#### Blue Gold Mission statement

The essence of Blue Gold is to sustainably manage water resources and to make these resources more productive, by establishing and strengthening community organizations/water management organizations (WMOs) to initiate and lead this process.

The Program aims to create strong cooperatives that will interact with public and private organizations that play a role in the development of the area. Participatory water resources management is the entry point and the initial driver of the community organization process. The explicit objective of Blue Gold is to reduce poverty of the people in the coastal areas by enhanced productivity of crops, fisheries and livestock and increasing incomes by improved processing and marketing of agricultural products including value chain development.

Depending on the target groups and the limitations of certain materials, the content will be expanded and adapted. Apart from explaining the Blue Gold project, its aims and activities, the rationale for the program will also be repeated where possible in text which is understandable for people who are not water, agricultural or value chain experts.

### 4.4 Communication channels and materials

The Blue Gold Program produces a wide range of materials using different media, serving different but often overlapping audiences. A division can be made between:

- Communication materials at program (“Corporate”) level, targeting (inter)national audiences, like donors, other ministries, Government, media etc
- Communication materials used indirect communication with final beneficiaries through WMO Executive Members, FFS trainees and possibly LCS workers.
- Communication materials and activities used to reach the final beneficiaries, such as villagers, UP members and Chairmen at polder level.

## **4.4.1 Communication materials at program level**

### **4.4.1.1 Blue Gold Audio-visuals**

Different AV's will be needed, ranging from a corporate film, focussing on the innovative character of Blue Gold, and film to introduce the Blue Gold process at WMG level as well as short 2-3 minute films, to show elements of the programme in more detail.

Currently an introductory film is under production to explain beneficiary households and other local stakeholders the programme, how they can become engaged and what the process of WMG establishment and other Blue Gold activities will look like.

Input:

- Time Blue Gold Communication expert
- Contract Film production company

## **4.5 Blue Gold corporate Brochure**

The current brochure will be rewritten and redesigned into a more professional leaflet, of better quality and easy to understand language. The brochure will focus more on the overall programme, its aims and ambitions and how people can become engaged; less attention will be given on how the programme is organised in different components and the details of all legislation.

The brochure (8 pages, A5) will contain the following sections:

- Cover, with title
- Introduction
- Rationale & justification for the project; Vulnerability of population in the 3 Districts; poverty alleviation, food supply, ...
- Availability of water resources in sufficient quality and quantity
- Increased agricultural yields with little investments
- Developing markets
- Helping communities to become self-reliant
- Back cover with address and contact details etc

Input:

- Time Blue Gold Communication expert
- Design/lay-out
- Copywriter(s) (Bangla/English)
- printer

### **4.5.1.1 Blue Gold Digital Newsletter**

So far no newsletter has been prepared. Since the programme starts making progress and different activities happen in different components, it becomes more important to inform stakeholders and Blue Gold staff about what's happening in the project. It can be an important tool to facilitate horizontal communication between components and at local level between sites in the project polders.

A digital newsletter, which can be printed on normal printers, is most efficient. It prevents printing and distribution costs and allows easy distribution, but still enables those who prefer printed information materials above digital materials.

The purpose of the newsletter is: to inform all project staff and stakeholders at central and zonal level about project activities in order to enhance synergy and cooperation in planning and implementing project activities.

The newsletter will be distributed among all project staff at central, zonal level and CO's and selected stakeholders.

It will be printed in Bangla language. The editorial structure will be:

- Intro of the Team-leader (or the implementation partners BWDB and DAE)
- Agenda of project activities;
- Reports of project activities
- interview with key stakeholder (e.g. BWDB Executive Engineer, UP leader, but also a FFS participant, and a WMG member)
- some success stories, describing the challenge, how difficult it was to do something about it and how Blue Gold has helped

**Input:**

- Time Blue Gold Communication expert
- Design/lay-out (1x)
- Contracted Copywriter(s) (Bangla)
- Contributions Blue Gold staff at all levels

#### **4.5.1.2 Blue Gold website**

The website is of good quality, both visual, graphic and in content. It contains much more information about component 3, which needs to be brought in balance, by adding news from other components.

In order to ensure balanced content reflecting the different components it is strongly recommended to appoint one staff member from each Blue Gold component as liaison to the communication team.

The fact that it is developed in WordPress is not ideal, but at the moment workable. It is maintained regularly, but it is only in English language.

A Bangla version is advisable as soon as possible, especially since access to Internet is growing so rapidly in Bangladesh.

**Input:**

- Time Blue Gold Communication expert
- Time of Communication liaison persons of each Blue Gold component ( 1hr/week)

#### **4.5.1.3 Blue Gold Facebook**

Facebook use is rapidly growing in Bangladesh. At the moment there are 18 million Facebook users. The Blue Gold Facebook page can be further enhanced and used for internal and external communication with stakeholders. It will be maintained by the Blue Gold Communication expert, by uploading Blue Gold achievements and events.

**Input:**

- Time Blue Gold Communication expert

#### **4.5.2 Communication materials for beneficiaries directly in contact with Blue Gold Blue Gold web-based "Resource and communication tool"**

Especially for CO's and FO's, who are closest to our final beneficiaries, we need to develop a web-based resource tool. The Blue Gold resource base consists of two sections. Firstly a section containing information for the CO's themselves: checklists, manuals, etc. The other section will contain all materials which can be used in communicating with stakeholders and beneficiaries at polder and community level.

All material will be put at a section of the Blue Gold website/server, and all tablets from CO's and other staff can be synchronised when they are in a Wi-Fi environment.

- Fact sheets, with technical information in simple language which can be shown or printed before visiting sites.
- Success stories, from all polders, to be used and shared with staff in other polders
- Less successful stories which can provide useful lessons learned for other groups
- Short Audio-visuals (3-4 min's) on relevant subjects

The advantage of this tool above printed tool boxes (like prepared under the IPSWAM project) is that it can be updated centrally and synchronised during the remainder of project implementation. The possibility of sharing documents from the tablets of CO staff by transferring them to telephones of WMG members has improved significantly in recent years.

The further development of this tool, which is very innovative, requires further preparation and planning of design and implementation.

### **Direct messaging and “Robo Call” (Call Centre Direct dialling)**

Nowadays it is possible to reach and select specific groups of people with text messages. With 120 million mobile phone users, this opportunity should be further developed. Providers mention that Bangladesh will be covered with 3G services also in rural areas in the very near future.

It is nowadays possible to use automatic dialling, which is a phone call, that uses a computerized auto dialler to leave a pre recorded message, or even a short 30-40 sec's audiovisual. It is even possible to receive automated responses by entering numeric responses on the mobile phone to facilitate two-way information.

Especially in areas with low literacy this could work very well.

This is the only way of reaching the final beneficiaries with messages from the Blue Gold Program. Some experience has been acquired by other programs like 'English in Action', and Blue Gold would be the first of its kind to plan a pilot in selected polders.

Again this tool would require further planning and development, before a large scale pilot could be done. Possibly we could start with developing a “Robo call” to WMG members and other stakeholders in implementation. After evaluation of this pilot, the project will decide if and in what frequency this tool will be used on a regular basis. It can then also be decided if it would be effective to use this tool also for those not in direct touch with the Blue Gold Program.

### **4.5.3 Communication materials and activities for beneficiaries not in touch with Blue Gold**

#### **Blue Gold Training support materials**

Some of the materials for beneficiaries are being used by Blue Gold in training situations. WMG Executive Members receive extensive training in community mobilization and organisation processes, water management aspects etc. This training could also be used to provide additional information to WMG members and other community members. Training on how to pass on information to their constituting member communities is already provided, but possibly simple material could be distributed to facilitate further communication.

Similarly participants in FFS receive a note book, which could be adapted to the needs of the programme. Some coordination and sharing of approaches between communication and training staff is highly

recommended. This notebook could also be used for information which assist the participants to pass on simple information on homestead agricultural production to neighbours and community members. Adaptation of these FFS booklets should get high priority to be upgraded, since the FFS program is already operational and running.

Input:

- Time Blue Gold Communication expert
- Input from Component 3 experts
- Budget for design and lay-out

### **Blue Gold Fact sheets**

Fact sheets about success stories, lessons learned. Experience has shown that learning from peers often is better. Some of these factsheets could be distributed through WMG's, FFS, UP's and other intermediaries.

### **Blue Gold Posters**

At this moment only 4 posters have been developed to present the Blue Gold Program. The posters are distributed at Zonal offices and in UP offices. More posters will be used to create an interest and curiosity among community members who have not yet been engaged by the programme. The impact on increase of understanding and change in attitudes is limited, but it can create an interest in certain aspects, which could lead to seeking additional information from other sources at internet, in the neighbourhood or otherwise.

### **Direct messaging and “Robo Call” (Call Centre Direct dialling)**

The pilot for direct messaging and Robo Call could also be designed in a way which enables us to also reach stakeholders and beneficiaries, who have no direct connection to the Blue Gold Program.

## **4.6 Organization and planning**

Like in most organisations the communication function works under much pressure. In most organisations, both institutions and projects like Blue Gold, this is caused by a lack of procedures, working arrangements which are not clear and supported by the whole team, unrealistic expectations of communication and a misunderstanding of its contribution and the way it should be managed.

With a more intensified communication programme there will be much more pressure on the communication expert. Part of this increased workload can be reduced by developing and effectively implementing working procedures.

- ✓ The development of and compliance with Blue Gold visibility guidelines
- ✓ Working with certain contractors under a framework contract; eg. design firm, a copywriter to draft texts, a filmmaker to prepare audio-visuals.
- ✓ Adjustment of the Terms of Reference of the Communication expert
- ✓ Establishment of a simple working arrangement linking the Blue Gold components to the communication in all its aspects, top-down (what's new), bottom-up and horizontal. Appointing a communication focal point in each component, which will require 1 hr per week for coordination and facilitating technical input from Component team members.
- ✓ If necessary some extra support at zonal level (either in-house, or contracted locally). Dhaka is too far from the field to be able to expect feedback about implementation and requests for additional support. Two (2) (junior) zonal communication assistants, with an operational TOR, drafting texts, collecting audio-visual etc, can greatly enhance the productivity of the communication function in Blue Gold Program.
- ✓ Regular monitoring of the outcomes and feedback from the international communication expert to support the national communication expert.

- ✓ Quality control through checking all materials by content expert; this should be done before the TOR/briefing for the experts is provided and before materials are being printed/produced.

### **Blue Gold Visual Identity Guidelines**

In order to create more coherence between the different communication materials, draft visual identity guidelines should be established, providing a description of standard formats for visual materials. In most cases it corresponds with the design already used, but in some cases changes will be made when new materials have to be printed. The visual guidelines (visual identity) should give guidance on

- ✓ Use of logos: Only Blue Gold logo + BWDB and DAE logo; Always together with the orange/blue wave at the bottom.
- ✓ For folders Blue Gold logo on front and BWDB & DAE logo at back
- ✓ Certificates also only Blue Gold logo
- ✓ The business cards of project staff for example will only contain the Blue Gold logo; a line at the bottom and the logos of the consultant organisations at the back of the card
- ✓ Further rules and conditions will be prepared by the communication expert.

Compliance with visual identity guidelines will enhance coherence and integration of visual design, which will make sure that audiences relate different materials to the Blue Gold Program.

### **Enhanced Quality control within the communication function**

Improved procedures within the communication team should also lead to more effectiveness and efficiency of the communication function. During the first year of implementation, several communication design efforts have been started, designers were hired, without reaching the production stage. These inefficiencies could be prevented by having some procedures in the communication planning process.

- (i) Request of technical staff for communication support, or initiative of communication expert to start process of preparing a communication tool or activity.
- (ii) Preparation of a briefing sheet (1-2 A4), containing the justification of the communication tool, the audience/users, objective (in terms of knowledge and attitude/perception), summary content, budget and organisational aspects (how distributed, etc)  
Prepared by Communication expert and approved by Team-leader (or Component-leader)
- (iii) Initial design (without involvement of external expertise), to be discussed with component staff/TL
- (iv) Briefing for external specialists (designer, filmmaker, others)

No budget has been made yet. It is recommended to prepare a budget for the activities scheduled in the year 2015. Based on those experiences it will be easier to prepare realistic budgets for 2016 and beyond.

### **4.7 Monitoring Framework**

Monitoring and evaluation of the Blue Gold communication framework will take place on the basis of interpretation of Progress Marker reports. Some questions on Knowledge, attitude and perceptions will be included in the questionnaires for the Boundary partners. If there is not sufficient progress with the boundary partners, we need to adjust the communication effort.

## 5. Next steps in implementation

The Blue Gold Communication strategy provides a framework which needs to be further specified 'on the way'. It should adjust to variations in speed and methodology of the implementation of Blue Gold.

The overall scope of work for a large and complex programme like Blue Gold requires setting of priorities and focus. Based on the mission of the international communication expert the following priorities were identified.

- 1) Finish those activities which are almost ready, or which are needed for future work.
  - a) Visual identity guidelines and get them approved in order to rely on them
  - b) Blue Gold intro video
  - c) Blue Gold corporate brochure
  - d) Mela format and other traditional media/formats to be copied and implemented at UP level.
- 2) Pilot a message to beneficiaries through the UPHL Call Centre "Robo Call". This pilot requires careful preparation to ensure that it will have a meaningful impact on Blue Gold implementation at community level. Possibly a selection of polders can be made based on how far they are in the planning process as described in chapter 3.3. Also a distinction can be made for that polder, between those
  - i) who have a direct relationship with Blue Gold (WMG members, FFS participants, LCS contractors, zonal stakeholders etc) and
  - ii) those who have no relationship, but who live in an area which will be affected by Blue Gold, and where their alignment or engagement is required to ensure long term impact.
- 3) Start designing and filling a "Digital Resource base" for CO's and FO's, which can be used to support communication at community level. The system should be built and maintained at central level and the content could be synchronised with the tablets of field staff when they are in a Wi-Fi environment.
- 4) Blue Gold newsletter
  - a) Agree on format and IT aspects
  - b) Collect stories (from components, from Zonal offices, CO's and FO's)
  - c) Zonal "anchors" for communication
- 5) Develop Bangla website, or expand Facebook into a social media platform. This is urgently required, because at the moment there is no information available in Bangla on online resources.

These activities could be elaborated and supported by the International communication expert. Blending the modern digital approaches with traditional information will strengthen Blue Gold as a large and innovative programme covering water resources management with livelihood development and effective communication and engagement methods.