

Environmental Assessment and Management Framework for BRLPS

Executive Summary

Introduction:

The Government of Bihar has initiated the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Development Project with the support from the World Bank. This is being implemented through the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS). BRLPS through the BRLDP aims to improve rural livelihoods and work towards social and economic empowerment of the rural poor especially women.

Objectives:

The stated objectives of the project are:

- Improving rural livelihoods and enhance social and economic empowerment of the rural poor.
- Developing organizations of the rural poor and producers to enable them to access & negotiate better services, credit and assets from public and private sector agencies and financial institutions.
- Investing in building capacity of public and private service providers and
- Playing a catalytic role in promoting development of microfinance and agribusiness sectors.

Project Components:

The different components of the BRLP are the following:

Community Institution Development: Formation and strengthening of Self Help Groups (SHGs), Producer Groups and Federations; Strengthening and forming producer and economic groups around key commodities, non-farm products and services; and, expanding membership of poor in existing commodity cooperatives and producer groups.

Community Investment Fund: Group level investments for rural livelihood enhancement and for social services and social action.

Technical Assistance Funds: Including Civil Society Organization Capacity Building Fund, Agribusiness Development Facility, Innovations Grant Fund and Micro Finance Technical Assistance and Innovations Fund.

The institutional arrangements for the BRLP include state, district and block level staff. The community institution partners of the BRLP – that is, the SHGs of the poor are federated at the village and block levels.

Objective of the Environmental Management Framework:

The BRLP focuses on rural livelihood enhancement for poverty reduction. Based on an Environmental Assessment (EA) conducted for the activities likely to be supported by the proposed project, an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) has been developed with the objective of ensuring that the project activities are environmentally sustainable, in addition to meeting all regulatory requirements (the laws and regulations of the Governments of Bihar and India as well as the Safeguard Policies of the World Bank).

The orientation of the EMF is on enabling the community institution partners (SHGs and their federations) to utilize the existing (Government schemes) and newly created support systems (CRPs and para professionals) for ensuring environmental sustainability of their livelihoods.

Process of development of the EMF

The EMF has been developed by Centre for Environment Education (CEE) in consultation with the BRLP team and representatives of the World Bank. Discussions were held with a range of stakeholders of the BRLP including: SHG members, community members; BRLP functionaries at the state and block levels; Line department representatives (agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, irrigation, etc.) at the state and district levels; NGOs; and Academic institutions. Field visits were made to Gaya, Nalanda, Muzaffarpur and Madhubani. Secondary research was undertaken. The exercise was undertaken during February and March 2007.

An Environmental Management Framework (EMF) has been devised to address the environmental issues and to mainstream them in the planning, design and implementation of project-supported activities. The EMF includes activity-specific Technical Environmental Guidelines (TEGs), environmental management indicators for the project monitoring and evaluation plan, and capacity-building for environmental awareness and management. A simple organizational and process structure has been developed to ensure adequate and effective implementation of the EMF in the project.

Environmental Profile of Livelihoods

The EA and the EMF are based on the environmental profile of the various livelihood sectors that are the focus of BRLP's intervention (Agriculture, Fisheries, and Small Enterprises), with a view to identify the environmental concerns as well as opportunities for mainstreaming environmental aspects in the design and implementation of the project-supported activities.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

The EMF examines the legal and regulatory framework relevant to the BRLP. This section presents a brief listing of the various Acts, Rules and Policies of the Government of India, Bihar as well as the safeguard Policies of the World Bank. The alignment of the proposed BRLP livelihood interventions with respect to these is examined.

Technical Environmental Guidelines (TEGS):

The EMF includes the Technical Environmental Guidelines (TEGs) that have been developed based on the environmental profile as well as the legal and regulatory requirements. The TEGs are presented district-wise for the key livelihood interventions identified in the 'Livelihoods Study and Value Chain Analysis' conducted for the BRLPS.

The TEGs have been developed for the following activities:

Gaya: Paddy Cultivation, Dairy, Incense stick making

Nalanda: Paddy cultivation, Vegetable cultivation, Dairying

Purnea: Banana cultivation, Jute cultivation, Winter paddy cultivation, Cultivation and processing of aromatic plants (mentha, lemon grass)

Madhubani: Dairying, Fisheries, Vegetable cultivation, Fruits cultivation (Makhana, Mango), Paddy cultivation

Muzaffarpur: Dairying, Fisheries, Vegetable cultivation, Fruits cultivation (Litchis, Mango, Maize, Bee Keeping)

Khagaria: Dairying,

Other livelihood activities: Tourism, Textile weaving, Madhubani paintings, Fruit processing, Betel leaf cultivation, Leather processing, Stone cutting, Artisan handicrafts, Bangles, Aromatic plants, and Sugarcane

In addition to the activity-specific TEGs, the report presents a generic framework for environmental management that can be used for a broad range of activities.

All the TEGs as well as the generic framework for environmental management includes guidelines for mitigating, insuring and coping, with regard to the vulnerability of the supported assets to the threat of floods.

Environmental Management Implementation and Monitoring Manual

The EMF prescribes an Environmental Management Implementation and Monitoring Manual that gives details of the following aspects of the implementation of the Environmental Management Framework (EMF):

- Institutional arrangements
- Capacity building strategy
- Monitoring strategy

Institutional Arrangements

The overall responsibility for implementation of the EMF will lie with BRLPS. It will liaison closely with the community institution partners and ensures that all the provisions of the EMF are adequately met. It will also be responsible for recruitment of additional technical assistance for the implementation of the EMF from relevant government departments, NGOs, and academic institutions in Bihar.

The environmental management process has been developed with the objectives of making it simple and user-friendly. The salient environmental aspects of the activities likely to be supported by the project are captured in the TEGs, which provide the required information to the project functionaries as well as the members of the SHG/producer group/federation which is proposing the activity.

- For each activity, a reference TEG document is to be provided to the BRLP functionaries and community institution members, giving an outline of the issues, and appropriate technical and management guidelines for action.
- A simple front-end TEG document has been prepared for the use of Community Coordinator/Community Resource Person/ Bookkeeper/SHG leaders/ SHG federation members, for discussion with SHG members/Producer Groups preceding the application for credit support. This form will be discussed and

- completed by the SHG/Producer Group members, and attached to the activity proposal/application form for further action.
- The environmental aspects of the proposed activities will be included in the overall appraisal of the proposals. If the environmental aspects are inadequately identified and/or addressed in the proposals (e.g. in the case of activities for which no TEGs are available), the EMF makes the provision for a rapid environmental evaluation and development of appropriate TEGs for the proposed activity, by the state-level environment resource agency.

At the community institution level, the Self Help Group (SHG) and the Commodity Based Groups or Producers' Groups are the key institutions for integration of EMF in livelihoods. The Village Organization (VO) will ensure that all members integrate the TEG into the relevant livelihood activities. The Village/cluster level federation (Gram Sanghatan) is the key institution for liaison with line departments. The Community Resource Persons (CRPs) are the key functionaries for capacity building of community institution partners in the block.

Even though the nature and small scale of the anticipated project investments have allowed for a simple and efficient design of the EMF, awareness-raising and capacity-building for environmental management have been included as integral components of the EMF. Therefore, the capacity for environmental management will be strengthened with the initiation of the project.

Capacity Building Strategy

The capacity building of the various stakeholders in the BRLP and the community institution partners is aimed at enabling them to execute the above mentioned tasks effectively on a continued basis.

In order to make the capacity building strategy resource efficient the following is recommended in the EMF:

- The focus should be more on skill enhancement for environmental management of livelihood activities at the community level so that the expertise generated will be relevant and accessible to the SHGs
- Convergence with existing institutions such as the Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Krishi Vignan Kendras (as well as with NGOs) will make the capacity building efforts sustainable

Initial orientation and refresher programmes for the EMF are planned for the BRLP functionaries at various levels from the state to the block. For the community institution partners the focus of the capacity building will be on enabling them to integrate the recommendations in the TEGs in their livelihood practices. This includes understanding the environmental implications of livelihood activities; awareness of existing technical and financial support available from line departments, NGOs and other relevant institutions; awareness of regulatory requirements; etc. Selected Community Resource Persons will be trained as para-professionals to provide specific skill-based services to the SHGs such as soil testing using mobile soil testing kit, integrated nutrient management, integrated pest management and pesticide safety, fodder cultivation (choice of species and varieties, agronomic practices), shed and compost management, monitoring of flood behavior, potential flood management measures, etc.

Monitoring strategy

The monitoring of the EMF implementation is done at two levels: (i) monitoring by BRLP through its internal monitoring systems and (ii) monitoring by BRLP by sourcing external assistance. The key environmental parameters as well as the frequency of monitoring are specified in the EMF.

While the BRLP is not expected to cause any significant negative environmental impact, an audit of the EMF will be conducted by an external agency in the second, third and fifth years of the project. The audit will include a review of SHG livelihood activities in various sectors as well as the activities taken up by Commodity Groups or Producer Groups. A sample size covering 4% of the ongoing activities in all districts and all livelihood sectors will be drawn up for the purpose.

The EMF is viewed as a dynamic document that will evolve to intelligently meet the environmental management requirements of the BRLP overtime. Efficient implementation of the EMF will contribute to promoting *sustainable* livelihoods.