



Evaluation of the River Basin Programme in Bangladesh

Full Report

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

September 2006

Commissioned by: Oxfam GB South Asia

Evaluators: Oxfam GB

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This Review of RBP has created an opportunity to assess its effectiveness in relation to its impact and understand how the programme benefits the poor and vulnerable groups. This review will certainly help plan future actions to take forward the RBP for the Char and Haor dwellers. The review has been carried out with full participation of RBP partners, programme participants and Oxfam RBP review team.

RBP respectfully expresses its gratitude to Deputy Commissioner of Kishoregonj and Civil Surgeon of Jamalpur district for their sincere cooperation, valuable comments in giving future directions during the review. We will remain ever grateful to Upazila Nirbahi Officers, Upazila Health & Family Planning Officers, Upazila Agriculture Officers, Upazila Family Planning Officers, Upazila Fisheries Officer, and Sub-Assistant Engineers (DPHE) of Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Kishoregonj and Kurigram districts for their valuable comments and cooperation during this review. We have the privilege to express our gratitude to Development Wheel (DEW) for arranging a consultation session with eminent researchers and academicians.

Our sincere thanks go to Professor H. K. S. Arefeen, Department of Anthropology, University of Dhaka and Professor Naseem Akhter, Department of Government and Politics, JahangirNagar University for their invaluable opinions and suggestions. We also gratefully acknowledge the physical presence and valuable contribution of Asst. Professor, Suchita Sharmin, Department of Development studies, Dhaka University in conducting this review.

Once again we are indebted to Group members, VDC members, Producer Group, UP Chairman, UP Members, NFPE School Teacher, VDC Chairman, Flood Shelter Center Committee, Boat Maintenance Committee, Local Elites, Primary School Teacher, Volunteer, NFPE School Management Committee, Local Market Management Committee and NGOs working in RBP area for their opinion and experience sharing regarding the programme review.

Our sincere felicitations are due to chief Executives of MMS, SKS, POPI, GC and SDS, and the staffs of GC, POPI, RSDA and SKS for their active participation and cooperation in the review activities. Indeed, It would not have been possible to complete this review without their inputs.

Acronyms

Boro	Name of Rice
Cheena	A kind of grain mostly cultivated in Char area
Cown	A kind of grain mostly cultivated in Char area
CS	Civil Surgeon
DAE	Department of Agriculture Extension
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DPHE	Department of Public Health Engineering
DS	Development Studies
DU	Dhaka University
EPI	Extended Programme on Immunisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GC	Gonochetona
Govt.	Government
GUK	Gana Unnayan Kendra
Khas Land	Government owned land
LGRD	Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives
Macha	A kind of roof made by bamboo
MMS	Manob Mukti Sangtha
NFPE	Non- Formal Primary Education
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OVA	Own Village Advancement Committee
Oxfam GB	Oxfam Great Britain
Padakhep	A name of a PNGO
PNGO	Partner Non Government Organisation
POPI	Peoples Oriented Program Initiatives
PRA	Participatory Rapid/Rural Appraisal
Pui	A kind of vegetable
RBP	River Basin Programme
RLF	Revolving Loan Fund
RSDA	Rural Society Development Association
SAE	Sub Assistant Engineer
SAAO	Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer
Samitte	Village Organization
SDS	Sariatpur Development Sangtha
SKS	Samaj Kallyan Sangstha
SSSU	Samakal Samaj Unnayan Sangtha
UAEO	Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer
UFO	Upazila Fishery Officer
UHFPO	Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
Upazila	Sub district
UP	Union Parishad
VDC	Village Disaster Committee
Zibika	A name of NGO

Table of Contents

CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	2
List of Acronyms	3
Map of Bangladesh (RBP Locations)-----	5
Executive summary	7
1. Introduction	
1.1 Background- Geographical & Socio-economic context of Char and Haor...	9
1.2 Expected Impact of the Programme-----	9
1.3 Objectives of RBP	10
1.4 Strategies of RBP	10
1.5 Purpose of RBP Review.....	10
1.6 Specific Objectives of Review.....	10
1.7 Methodology of Review.....	11
2. Area of Findings	
2.1. Relevancy of Programme.....	12
2.2 Effectiveness.....	13
2.3 Efficiency.....	13
2.4 Appropriateness	14
2.5 Cost effectiveness	14
2.6 Participation of Local Community.....	14
3. Gender Aspect	15
4. Organizational Capacity building	16
5. Integrating disaster preparedness with Livelihoods	18
6. Impact on Community	
6.1 Disaster Preparedness	19
6.2 Increased income level.....	20
6.3 Increase of vegetable and livestock production	21
6.4 Improvement of livelihood.....	22
6.5 Access of people to different Services	23
6.6 Public Health & Sanitation	25
6.7 Agriculture	26
6.8 Social Aspect	26
7. Internally Mainstreaming HYV/AIDS	26
8. RBP in the eyes of Others	26
9. Lessons Learnt	27
10. Replicability	28
11. Recommendations	28
12. Conclusion	30
Annexes:	
1. Major Achievements of RBP	
2. Recommendations from Different stakeholder	
3. A few case studies	
4. TOR of RBP Review	
5. List of Interviewee and Group interactions	
6. RBP Working Areas	

Executive Summary

The Review of RBP was conducted between July and August 2006. Oxfam RBP team and 4 randomly selected partner out of 11 (who participated in the planning, designing and final implementation of this review) jointly carried out the review.

In 1999, RBP started its operation formally in Char areas with a goal to improve the living condition and to increase flood vulnerable coping capacity of char dwellers. Presently Oxfam GB Bangladesh is working with 11 partner NGOs to implement the RBP in the flood and river erosion affected 8 districts in Bhrahmaputra, Jamuna and Ganges River Basin in order to reduce vulnerabilities, and enhance the livelihoods of Char and Haor dwellers.

Oxfam GB formed a team consisting of RBP Project Officers and partner staffs at different level to conduct the review in 4 different partner locations. The team followed a holistic approach to review the programme at different levels that include targeted and non-targeted project participants, community people, Government officials, PNGOs, CLP officials.

The main purpose was to assess the effectiveness of RBP in relation to the impact. It was also to understand how the Programme benefits the poor and vulnerable groups at the same time understand the changes (positive or negative) in the lives of targeted and non-targeted communities.

Key findings of the review:

- The RBP has created certain opportunities: like flood shelter, homestead raising, rescue boat etc. together with increased knowledge and awareness of the community people in flood management. This is followed by the participation of the community people in decision-making concerning flood management. People are spontaneously safeguarding the flood-shelters and rescue boats that are contributing to the reduction of suffering caused by flood disasters.
- RBP has helped in increasing the preparedness of Char and Haor dwellers that has contributed to protecting life, assets and environment to a great extent.
- In a situation of uncertainty, flood vulnerability, isolation and hard living RBP have created new opportunity for diversified char and Haor friendly livelihood options.
- The unique integration of flood preparedness with livelihoods has enhanced the capacity of the people to fight against the flood. Raised homestead with agricultural livelihoods, cluster village and flood shelter construction, and opportunity for diversified livelihoods options enhanced the coping mechanism of Char and Haor dweller.
- Training on public health & primary health-care, group sessions on public health issues and installation of tube wells and latrines have contributed to increase knowledge and changing practice levels of the beneficiaries. Field observations suggest that cases of water born diseases are decreasing. RSDA, one of RBP partners reported that their sanitation coverage is 80% of programme participants, which is much higher than areas of that locality without programme interventions.
- RBP advocacy work involving community people actively for **'Basic services to reduce char /Haor Poverty'** is making the service provider more responsive to the needs of Char and Haor people. RBP has managed to link community people with the Government functionaries and services. But still government services are not adequate to meet their demand.

- Involvement of women in wide range of income generating activities (IGA) has increased their access to resource and benefit, which has facilitated them to play a significant role in decision- making process. Now women are participating and also contributing to take more role in the household decision making process, which is a tangible shift, from the stereotypical role portrayed of women.
- Within RBP programme participants the conventional attitude of division of labour tends to reduce ensure less separation of male and female work.
- Although the sense of ownership is expressed by and developed among the programme participants, but their dependency on local partner NGOs on some needs to be addressed in future.
- RBP has been able to organize 30970 Char and Haor residents through the formation of 1333 self- help groups. This group approach has helped the grass root people to build their self-esteem, and to be united to raise their voice. Some of the groups now can think to establish the group as an independent organization in the long run. RBP has contributed to open their eyes for fighting against their vulnerabilities to undertake their own development initiatives.

Areas to look at

- RBP interventions have successfully increased the agricultural production specifically vegetable production through adopting new varieties, crop diversification, introduction of appropriate technologies and producer group formation. However farmers are still struggling for better prices of their produced.
- NFPE is playing a vital role for the continuation of “dropped out’ children to bring them in mainstreaming of education. But as compared to demand the number of school is inadequate.
- Geographical expansion is now reality to include other vulnerable char and Hoar areas and to spread the development benefits of RBP among more long neglected people.
- Oxfam can continue this unique integrated approach to bring a meaningful life for the people living in the RBP area.
- Introduction of solar powered electric supply in the Char and Haor for the first time has lightened the life of Char and Haor dwellers and helped remove their darkness. Solar panel has opened their eyes to think more than to live. The modest beginning of this now suggests further extended investment in solar energy development.
- Advocacy work on “Basic services” should be strengthened further.
- RBP has to take closer look at women’s workload resulting due to RBP interventions.
- Char and Haor being distant from the main land and poor communication deprive the farmers of the fair price of their produced. In these connections the situation is worst for women producers. Therefore, development of market linkages and creation of opportunity for women to sell their product directly in local market are now considered as major strategic way to sustainable livelihood development

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background – Geographic & Socio-economic context of Char and Haor

The RBP commenced its activities in the year 2000 covering the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins of three countries Nepal, India and Bangladesh. These three countries are affected by devastating floods every year and incur massive damages to resources as well as sufferings of the poor people. The floods take place between June and September every year in this sub-continent. There are three types of floods, which occur in this area: flash , early and prolonged floods. The flood disaster exacerbates the already pervasive poverty, unequal access to productive resources like land, social exclusion of minorities and gender discrimination in the area. Remote areas, difficult communication and isolation from the market further compound the deprivation of the poor. The flood devastates most critical of life support systems like land, agriculture, and houses and also contaminates water and sanitation systems. The RBP addresses flood related vulnerabilities of poor communities in the Ganges and Brahmaputra river basin covering the southern part of Nepal (Tarai region), east and northeastern parts of India (States of Bihar, Assam, West Bengal), and the riverine areas of Bangladesh (Char and Haor areas). In Bangladesh RBP is currently working in eight vulnerable and poverty stricken districts. The largest concentration is on the poorest disaster affected people locations where floods are part of their lives and almost an annual event. Their survival strategy depends on selling manual labours and large scale of migration. Chronic food insecurity and indebtedness, massive gender discrimination, high rates of unemployment, less or no access to health, education and other services, social exclusion, unequal distribution by land and chronic impact of floods have made the people handicapped. The condition is further intensified due to remoteness, difficult communication and isolation from the market. But people of the working areas (Char & Haor) are hard working, possess indigenous knowledge of agriculture, are resilient and have risk taking ability. Only a conscious effort to invest in the area of social service provision, disaster mitigation and improvement of livelihood is needed. In recognising this context Oxfam has been implementing RBP along with regular partners, non-funding NGOs and networks.

The RBP intends to demonstrate a robust intervention model that reduces vulnerability of people, particularly women living in river eroded and flood prone areas of Kurigram, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Sirajgong, Jamalpur, Kishorgong and Sariatpur districts through interventions at different level preparedness. Also by influencing the service delivery systems, improved livelihood options & more access to markets. The programme is being implemented by 11 partner organisations with the active participation of 40,000 households (HH) as direct programme participants. Main focus areas are:

- Mitigating the effects of flooding by constructing flood shelters & cluster village, homestead raising and increasing awareness on public health related issues.
- Strengthening livelihoods by adopting char friendly appropriate options and providing skill development training, financial support and linking with market.
- Developing effective preparedness for flood events at different level by providing training, emergency stock piling and coordination with govt. and other actors.

Apart from 11 regular partner organisations (Zibika, RSDA,OVA,GUK, SKS, SSSU, GC, MMS, SDS, POPI and Padakhep); networking NGO SEED in Rangpur and Govt. dept. /agencies at different level are also the part of the implementation.

1.2 Expected Impact of the Programme

The flood related vulnerability of small and marginal producers and farmers (including landless) in the river-basin will reduce. They will have improved livelihood options throughout the year. During floods the people will receive quality emergency services in critical areas like livelihood, water and sanitation. Rehabilitation efforts will quickly restore the livelihoods.

1.3 Objectives of River Basin Programme

- To reduce the vulnerability of the poorest communities in a number of most flood affected locations.
- To increase Oxfam's, partners' and communities preparedness to respond to flood emergencies
- To improve the livelihood options of the char dwellers
- To change policies and practices to reduce the vulnerability of the poorest communities

1.4 RBP Strategy

- ◆ RBP implements the programme with the active participation of key actors; particularly programme participants, especially the women.
- ◆ Working on one Programme approach integrating development, emergency assistance, advocacy and campaign.
- ◆ Mainstreaming Gender in Programme cycle
- ◆ Evidencing of good practices and learning from people
- ◆ Char/Haor dwellers have some strengths or potentiality, which will be enhanced, and channellized in development activities.
- ◆ Partnership (funding and non-funding and thematic) with NGOs, alliances institutions, government departments and influential individuals.
- ◆ Capacity building of partners and programme participants is the key theme of RBP

1.5 Purpose of Review

The purpose of this review is to assess the effectiveness of RBP in relation to its impact. And to understand how the Programme benefits the poor, vulnerable group? How it brings about changes (positive or negative) in the lives of targeted and non-targeted communities?

1.6 Specific Objectives of Review

- Determine how far the various aims and objectives of the RBP have been met.
- Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness and cost effectiveness, participation of local community and impact of the programme on the local community.
- Identify lessons learnt and replicating components of the programme across the region.
- Analysis to what extent mainstreaming gender has been achieved in the programme.
- Look into the management arrangements, donor/government relationship management, and media management and consider the efficacy of those arrangements.
- Identify how integration of disaster preparedness and livelihood has been done.

1.7 Methodology of Review

The review was performed through two steps of consultation. During the consultation both 'Participatory' and 'Open ended' discussions were followed to ensure that the project participant, all relevant stakeholders, chief executives, staffs, executive committee members, local administration were able to fully participate in the review process.

The partner organisations and members of RBP team did the first step in the consultation jointly. The following mixture of different methods were used:

- Checklist development
- Interaction with different stakeholders
- Focus group discussion (FGD)
- Group discussion
- Sharing Meeting
- Review of documents
- Case study

Activities carried out for reviewing during this first step is as follows:

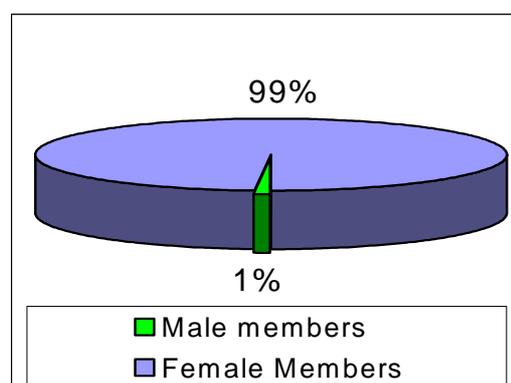
1. Study and revisit the RBP basic documents
 - TOR
 - Annual Progress report of partners
 - Annual Project impact report
 - Evaluation report 2003
 - Report of Review 2002
 - Evaluation of Bangladesh Emergency flood response
 - Case studies
 - Proposal of partners
 - Monitoring reports
2. Organisation of Review workshop with selected partner organisational staffs:
Through this workshop partners' staff were oriented about the TOR and review process. In consultation with partner staff a detailed action plan of review activities was finalised.
3. Development of final checklist and questionnaires after sharing with all selected partners
4. FGD conducted by partner organisation with the project participants in the Char and Haor to understand the outcome, impact and future intervention. In the Char and Haor partner staff conducted 16 FGDs including group discussions with following groups
 - Female general group member
 - Village disaster committee (VDC)
 - Producer group
 - Non target beneficiaries group
5. Interview with key informants, within the Govt., local NGO, local elite, civil society and local governments and other stakeholders.
6. Sharing of information in meeting with four selected partner staffs and Executive committees.
7. Cross visit by other partner Executive Directors in selected partner locations to ensure 'third eye' in the review process.
8. Discussion among Oxfam staffs

The second step involved compilation of information from four-partner organisation review report.

2. Area of Findings

Organization	Districts	Upazilas	Unions	Village	Families
11	8	19	55	342	31530

No of Groups	1331
Male members	364
Female Members	30606
Total Members	30970



2.1 Relevancy of the Project

The RBP is very relevant in terms of Char and Haor natural vulnerability, remoteness, extremely poor communication and very limited livelihood option for the community. The programme is working to reduce vulnerability and enhance livelihood through integrating flood preparedness with livelihood, ensuring different services from Govt. service providers. The project activities are quite relevant for the selected community, like homestead raising, flood shelter construction, rescue the people from natural disaster (early flood, flash flood and prolonged flood), rehabilitation efforts, homestead gardening, IGA, mother & child care, health, hygiene & nutrition, water and sanitation. According to FGD report and key informants opinion, the programme implementation of all its activities are quite important for the community like working with the service provider, local govt., partner organisation and involving the community.

FGD- (Group Member)

The community people of river basin, char and haor areas are taking initiatives and having discussions with local organisations. In the initial stage the people thought that if they join the group then they would have to convert from their religion and follow the Christian culture. Besides, these community people, especially the women have the conservative mentality that talking to other males is a sin. As a result they are not eager to form groups. But when field workers make them understand that this is just a superstition then they have agreed to work with them. Due to groups, there is increased self-confidence and social awareness. Owing to the groups there can be any decision taken easily and made part of the solution. Now they use sanitary latrine, growing vegetables adjacent to their houses to meet their nutrition needs, rear poultry and cows for fund raising and increase their savings. The group is not facing any problems to deal with any office or persons. Meanwhile they have access to participate in different institutions. The average savings of the group is above 22,000/-. Besides this they take loan from organisation if they need.

The community has conversations with different offices and disaster committee to fight against flood. At the time of flood the committees assists and gives them advice to take pregnant mother, child and distressed people to a secured place. and move the cattle and poultry away to high land. Advices to drink safe water, provide saline for diarrhoea, instruction to people to store dry food, built houses and reserve the boat and raft for rescuing. Moreover, after flood they use shallow land for cultivation of different vegetables, sapling and pond for fish culture.

2.2 Effectiveness

In the course of interventions under the flood Preparedness and Management Component of RBP the vulnerability of the Char and Haor Dwellers has been reduced to a certain degree in case of hundreds of targeted families during its more than five years operation:

- Their coping mechanism has been enhanced
- The community against seasonal flood has taken precautionary measures.
- Damage/loss/suffering in terms of lives, properties and resources in the wake of natural disaster has been reduced to a level far less than pre-RBP intervention.

An assortment of structural and non-structural interventions under the Disaster Preparedness and Management Component has impacted well on the lives of the Char and Haor Dwellers. Their needs have been met to a large extent. Sundry disaster preparedness and improved ways and means are in practice.

- Char and Haor dwellers have got both floodwater resistance mechanism and emergency protection facilities.
- Homestead raising, establishing flood shelter, and providing safe water by installing tube well, boat for rescuing people from affected areas, and fishing, formation of different groups and committee, providing training increase skills in agriculture, health, awareness and community based disaster preparedness activities helped them to cope with regular flood and other natural calamities.
- Now they are in a position to serve themselves with aid and assistance from different sources, particularly from Oxfam-GB during post-disaster recovery.
- Diversified livelihood options along with disaster mitigation measures have been made available to Char and Haor dwellers

And all these facilities especially flood shelter and homestead-raising have helped the distressed Char and Haor dwellers with certain development options like tube-well sinking and sanitary latrine installation, vegetables growing, seed processing and storage.

2.3 Efficiency

From both sides of the staff and programme it shows that due to their eagerness, hard labour and competency, the programme has successfully ended. The finding says that partner organisations have recruited a group of most experienced and efficient staff to perform the activities. On the other hand organisations are locally organised with long term experience. As a result they have the ability to carry out their responsibilities as per donor requirements like RBP.

Village Disaster Committee

A number of committee has been formed to get protection from flood and disaster responses, which is similar as village disaster committee (VDC). Community owns the committee and its activities. For disaster preparedness they have distributed their responsibilities among them in both cash and kinds. The main objectives of VDC are to take preparedness of disaster, assessment of damage by flood and coordination with various offices, motivate community using sanitary latrine, identify disaster affected area, ensure boat for rescuing people especially pregnant mother & child and get them in safety places, conserving properties of disaster affected people and manage food and Medicare for the affected people. They meet regularly to

Asses their responsibilities. The VDC member assists flood affected people in the last flood by rescuing and get them in safety places. Besides these they have provided clothing, food, mud made cooker and fuel to distressed people. They have arranged night guards for safety from thieves. As a result people now is making portable cooker, fuel storage, raising their homestead, g tube well and latrine storage of fodder, boat making, forming capital and identifying safety places. They used to build high macha and get ready made rafts by which they can carry cattle, valuable goods to other safer places. The most vulnerable, disable, divorcee, separated and poor day laborers have got preferences incase of relief and rehabilitation in the area. They have had to take assistance and cooperation from the local elite, imam, teachers, NGO staffs, local govt. and other institutions for successful implementation and strengthening of the project. The committee always arranges meeting with govt. and non govt. institution for better implementation of the activities. VDC recommended and planned to fund raising, collecting emergency equipments for rescuing people, building silo and first aid materials for strengthening their committee in future.

2.4 Appropriateness

The RBP has commenced in the most remote, flood-prone and vulnerable areas of Char and Haor covering 19 sub-districts of 8 districts in Bangladesh. The project was designed according to the needs of the people where most of the women and children are neglected and disabled people are deprived particularly during floods. Considering the above elements and data from the field, it is confirmed that the programme has the suitability.

2.5 Cost effectiveness

According to findings reported by the partner organisations, it is the most significant matter that local specific partner whom has the experience in the respective area took the project. Moreover, partner implementing the activities staying beside the community. In most of the cases they recruited the local or belonging to nearby, as a result staffs have the freedom of work, as they are the part of the community.

Hence the organisation is playing it's role halting beside the community when their cost is reducing tremendously as low cost house rent, using local resources, local vehicle and even they are getting support from the Upazila's resources like training, demonstration, fair, field day and various day observances. Considering this situation and the impact of the programme, it can be considered as cost effective.

The programme has brought positive changes in the lives of the hard core poor of the Char and Haor areas, their families and in the environment. Campaign and other awareness activities benefited mass population beyond the target groups.

2.6 Participation of Local Community

It is found from the FGD and one on one-interview contacts that in every stage the partner organisation followed has helped in communication of the local people. At the start of the project, the organisation arranged a large gathering in the locality and selected different groups where both the male and female were present. Before message delivery, day observance, training and fair they discussed amongst them and then they all took decision. It is observed that the community people were engaged in flood shelter process. They have settled in the places, appointed

An overview of Asst. Professor Suchita Sharmin, Dev. Studies-DU.

Village: Dubi, Union: Shingpur, Thana: Nikli, Zilla: Kishorgonj

Approximately 425 families live in the village dubi. People of this village live on fishing during rainy season while depend on agriculture in the dry season. For six months the lands are under water in this village. During flood people take shelter in other places. To go away and to take shelter somewhere else with all the properties (i.e. cattle, poultry etc.) is very costly and difficult. Boro rice is the only crop cultivated. River erosion is common and in 2004 a protection wall was built.

A flood shelter was built with the support of the local NGO, POPI, in 2005. POPI is a partner organization of Oxfam-GB for their River Basin Programme (RBP). RBP started supporting the flood affected haor people through POPI from 1st November 2005. During flood the area is completely under water for six months. The people in the village realized the necessity of a flood shelter and requested one development associate of POPI to support them to build the flood shelter.

POPI with the support of the local people and the TNO and DC built the flood shelter on a government land.

Right the moment; only raised piece of land exists as the flood shelter. The committee hopes to have the shelter to be of help for the people during flood but still need to go a long way to ensure it.

Non-targeted beneficiaries

The lives of the non-beneficiaries have also changed through their learning from the beneficiaries. They have learnt to use hygienic toilet and shoes and sandals, have learnt about cleanliness, vegetable cultivation, good food habit, different diseases and the treatments, importance of using deep tube well water, etc.

FGD (Producer Group)

Mainly farmers of char, haor and river basin areas form the Producer group. The group contains 10/15 members both male and female. It is found generally in char haor and river basin areas that there is lack of proper irrigation and high costs resulting in loss of crops. Moreover, when prices decreases vegetables are damaged. To recover from these problems they have formed group. The group promotes seasonal crops and takes decision for marketing the goods amongst the farmer in-group meeting. They always communicate with agriculture department for good seed and fertiliser and motivates the community for taking initiatives for early crops. The producer group seeks the highest market rate by studying market feasibility or by mobile phone, and advices all to sale their crops there. They also have raised funds to save. They possess some cultivation equipments such as shallow machine, treadle pump, spade, cutter and have taken land on lease and keep proper accounts. They have taken assistance from nearby local NGO. A great change is being seen. Now they are using compost and chemical fertilisers in proper ratio, plant good seed, use modern concepts in vegetable growing, avoid same crops cultivation in the same land again and again, and ensure line wise rice planting. They are growing more food for their area. To control pest they use organic pesticide i.e. Nim, Soap Powder, Tobacco leaf, Cow's urine and many more herbal pesticide. All these have been happening due to field based training and practicing. Their future plan is to provide loans to producers, proper irrigation system, carrier for crop transportation, good seed preservation and provide farmers with modern equipments.

committee members at the time of construction. Even to purchase boat they have taken decision in the committee meeting.

3. Gender Aspects

In Bangladesh's socio economic context the two hardest truths are that: the poorest of the poor live in unstable chars. And the position and the condition of women in this area are far beyond ones' imagination. To change this frustrated scenario, RBP has designed with special focus on empowering women and improving women's socio-economic status in char areas. The programme activities have brought positive impact on women lives in the following manner:

Leadership potential developed for 10.51% poor women group members who have been keeping touch with local Government Authorities and feeling free to share their problems, challenges and future. ***Women are active in the committees, and many committee presidents are women. With short term migration of the men of households for employment, there are opportunities for women to take greater leadership as stated in the Evaluation of the Bangladesh Emergency Flood Response, April 2005***

Over 12% percent females among the group members are linked with Flood Shelter, Cluster Village and Village Disaster & Management Committees, which has enhanced their leadership skills.

Women are now capable of conducting meetings, keeping record of the meetings and maintaining accounts of the savings. Participating in these activities have made women more self-confident. It has also contributed in changing the traditional image of women that they do only domestic work. Females are encouraged to undertake development works with males and equal wages are ensured.

By attending meetings/rallies/seminars and workshops practicing good learning in family and at community level females are becoming more conscious about their rights.

Now they participate in different group meetings and even disaster management activities. In case of taking any decision, male participants respect their judgment and give importance to women's view. Not only the committees honors their opinion but also both husband and wife take family decisions jointly. While interviewing, 50% of women stated that comparatively work load of the women have increased than before. They stated that they work during the day-, cook food, get children to school at the same time they have to attend group meetings and even participate in rally and procession. Male members of the family are encouraging activities of women and helping them to come out from traditional social barriers. In spite of that they have to plan together with their husbands to arrange other family works. Now they're creating employment generation in the villages. The females are connected with IGAs i.e. poultry rearing, vegetables growing, stitching and other hand made work. But they do not get their actual price of their goods. The main problems are low price, bad communication and lack of market near their houses. Nowadays, women can expand their earnings according to their choice but in case of purchasing huge amount of materials, they take joint decisions with their husband. Besides these, the community reserves the provision of toilet facilities

Female UP member

The UP members are very much aware of the disaster activities of the organisation. They have stated that they are working particularly for the most vulnerable people of the area, day labourer, divorcee and the separated. While devastating flood damages the communities' properties, washes away cattle, poultry, trees then the organization come out to help the poor and distressed people mainly building flood shelter, raising their houses, rehabilitation, water supply, health facilities, mother & child care and provide them real training for disaster.

The organizations are very much responsive to empower the women. To develop the women empowerment they are doing awareness program, giving gender training, initiate IGA, increase female participation in various aspects. In addition, the organization is increasing consciousness on family laws, gender discrimination and involves them in various rallies, procession as well as observing Women Day in the area. The organization should play main roles and take more responsibilities to form a Women Forum, abolish dowry system and child marriage protection. At the same time they should take some initiatives like; awareness on female education, legal support and family planning to establish rights of women.

especially for the women in flood shelter. Priority is given to the safety of pregnant mother during flood time. Altogether females are now to some extent getting social acceptance and have the right to take decision in family as well as in the group.

4. Organisational Capacity Building (NGOs & Groups)

One of the main objectives of RBP is to increase the partner's and community capacity. While achieving this through RBP's interventions like training, rescue boat, emergency store, RLF, asset building, etc for capacity building. It gives added impetus to the programme activities of the partner organisation. Now partners have prepared /updated different guidelines, manuals and tools in term of organisational development. They have created savings fund for their

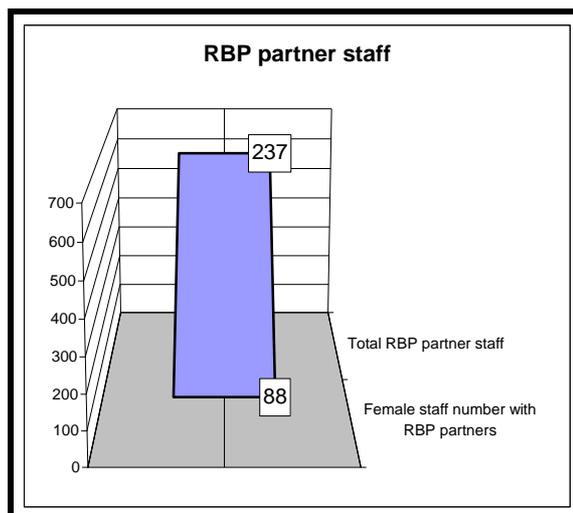
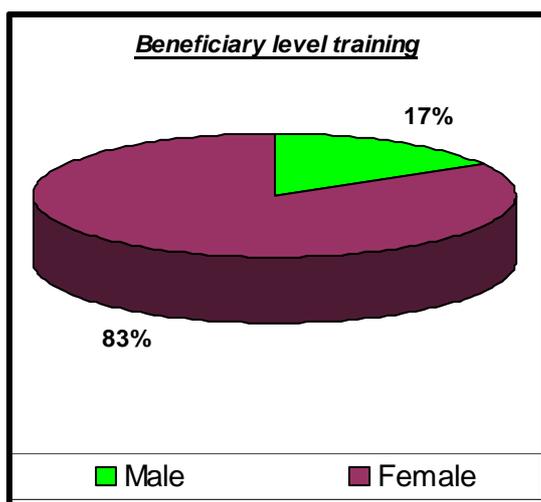


group members and provided credit facilities for economic development of char/ Haor dweller. As a part of capacity building, 1581 staff of the RBP PNGOS have been developed through different training. Improved organisational capacities enable the RBP partner to render proper services to different stakeholders, including RBP project participants, community people and other agencies. Executive committee of PNGOs is plying active role in organisational decision-making process. It is also found that women

members of EC are actively vocal and holding important and even leading position. Even after that number of women member are few and partners should be challenged to include more members in the EC. As a result of capacity building, PNGOs now can think independently to take forwarding steps towards organisational development for themselves and for the development of the 'Char and Haor' dweller as well.

Beneficiary level training as on April 2006

SI	Partner NGO	Name of Training courses	Participants		
			Male	Female	Total
1.	GC	Disaster preparedness, mitigation, rescue operation, gender relation, woman legal rights, family law, land reform, leadership development, vaccination, cow and goat rearing, vegetable cultivation, SRI, integrated pest management, seed production and preservation, primary health care, livestock disease management, group management, food processing, advance disaster management, financial management, TBA, nursery development, local resource mobilization, small entrepreneur development, market management, protection of early marriage, hygiene behaviour, nutrition, basket making, homestead gardening, marketable IGA, cleanness and sanitation, management of VDC-FS-SMC, soybean cultivation, reproductive health, calf patterning, legal aid	518	2927	3445
2.	GUK		159	2457	2616
3.	MMS		100	1391	1491
4.	SSUS		539	1824	2363
5.	ZIBIKA		690	4001	4691
6.	OVA		121	669	790
7.	PADAKHE P		433	1422	1855
8.	POPI		1201	1201	2402
9.	RSDA		5	879	884
10.	SDS		31	2260	2291
11.	SKS		100	1391	1491
	Total		9037	44857	53894



At group level, through the RBP intervention partner organisations have been able to form 1331 groups, 177 VDCs, 19 Flood shelter management committee, 81 producer groups, 3 boat management committees. Group members have received different training and developed their group management guideline. It is noteworthy that through RBP intervention partners have imparted training, orientation and refreshers to **53894¹** project participants of which **83%** are female. It is evident that groups are developing linkage with local government by getting their services. Group have also showed their good sense of ownership and thus the decision-making capacity of group members have increased. The management capacity and mobility of women has increased to a certain degree as they are involved in different types of committees and activities such as VDC, flood shelter committee etc.

Shahin Shomiti members stopped violence against women

Village: Uttar Kalikapur, Pouroshabha: : Dewangonj, Upazila: Dewangonj, District: Jamalpur

A few members of Shahin Shomiti got training on women's right, legal rights, family law, gender relations and leadership. They decided to stop all social diseases that existed in their village. In the village there are several incidences of violence against women (VAW), dowry, divorce, polygamy, early marriage and the like. The members of both Shahin Shomiti and Fokirpara Mohila Shomiti, decided to cooperate with each other in this regard.

Of many successes there is one recent event, which is an example for all. One of the group member's paternal and maternal cousins was married. And they lived near her house. They are her close neighbour and also relatives. Thus she could know about their family affairs. She could also hear the sound of wife beating by the husband and quarrel between them. The mother of the victim one day requested the group members during the monthly meeting to address the matter. A large number of women members of both Shahin Shomiti and Fokirpara Mohila Shomiti went together to the victims house to meet and talk to her. The victim showed her wounds. She told the members that beating has become a part of her life her husband beats her with any excuse. The husband was not there at home that time but the victim's mother-in-law was there. The group members requested her to stop the violence and threatened her of the possible legal consequences. . The members came back after talking to them but later collected information from the victim and were happy to know that they could stop the violent act.

¹ It includes both the direct and indirect project participants and of which 30790 are direct project participants. Indirect project participants only participated in the awareness raising training.

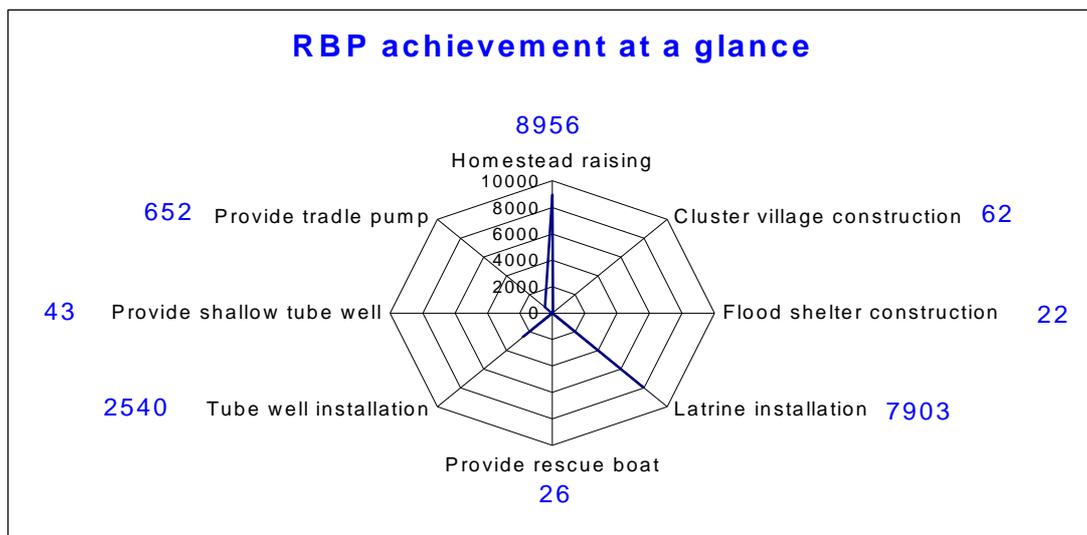
5. Integrating disaster preparedness with livelihood.

The programme was not able to address all aspects but it tried to meet up the needs of the People as targeted. Some evidence are good examples to explain the matter as there is enhanced coping mechanism; , homestead expansion; building of flood shelter; distribution of Fishing equipments in haor areas for surviving when they are unemployed; developed strategy to integrate with the service provider in some extent; emergency food supply from the storage system; where the community used to put a preset quantity of food grain and respond for rehabilitation programme. The components are integrated to enhance the capacity of the people of the programme area to fight against floods through training etc. And all these things will turn them to live in better lives for a long term. Hence, the community is able to understand that without preparedness none can resolve the devastating flood caused by natural disaster. The rapid response comes from the villagers to take precautionary measures in the flood. They formed group as well as took part in every events of the programme and build a strategy to manage the disaster. So, in respect the programme, the strategies have been successful to encourage the active participation of the communities. In course of life security the partner organisations have built a number of flood shelter financed by Oxfam GB. Last year's review says that the shelter number and volume were comparatively for the total number of beneficiaries. From last year's review it was also found that remote places are still remaining in the flood prone area but with limited resources.



shelter number and volume were comparatively for the total number of beneficiaries. From last year's review it was also found that remote places are still remaining in the flood prone area but with limited resources.

shelter number and volume were comparatively for the total number of beneficiaries. From last year's review it was also found that remote places are still remaining in the flood prone area but with limited resources.



So priority has been given to the most vulnerable and important community areas that are damaged significantly. Subsequently flood shelters are not adequate to meet the needs of char and Haor areas. In case of homestead rising the most vulnerable people are saved from sufferings as well as they are able to grow vegetables. They have access to sell the surplus after consumption. The dissimilarity has been found in the different communities' opinion on emergency stores. Some of them have not been happy because of equipment and being situated in a strategic location. On the other hand some of them are very happy with both location as well as equipment. But there was participation from all level. The partner organisations have given more emphasis to raise funds. Being motivated the community formed group and raised a group savings. At the same time the partner organisation have provided micro-credit loan for becoming self-reliance and create earning sources. Finally, it has seen that partner's programme is able to influence government's regular development work to some extent. But still there is limited govt. resources and lack of enough manpower in creating barriers to development work and risk reduction.

Village Disaster Committee

Village: Char Gandar Alga, Upazila: Roumari, District: Kurigram

Village disaster committee (VDC), at Char Gandar Alga of Roumari upazila of Kurigram district was formed in 2001. There are 300 general members of the VDC. All the members meet once a year. Both male and female are there in the VDC managing committee as members. 6 female and 5 male members compose the 11 member managing committee. With the help of the RSDA development associates the villagers formed the VDC of around 300 members with the members of 12 women's group organized by RSDA.

These 300 general members deposit 1 kilogram of rice per head twice a year that amount to a total of 600 kilograms of rice. Selling the rice, the VDC management committee, save the cash. Again when the price of rice is low, the management committee buys more rice with the saved money.

The members of the VDC advise people to prepare for disaster. They spread the information among the people they have access to. These include information about preserving dry food, dry wood for cooking, movable mud stove etc. They tell people about the usefulness of planting trees, fruit trees and vegetables and rearing cattle and poultry to minimize the effects of disasters and encourage them to plant trees and vegetables and rear cattle and poultry.

The VDC management committee and general members listen to the news and try to collect any information on probable disasters from radio, television, market etc. Then they spread the information as soon as possible to make people prepared and ready for the probable disaster. They use megaphone to alert the people.

VDC members rescue people and their properties. They help personally and organize people to help bringing the possessions of the victims. Later, they help in settling them any where they find suitable for staying during the disaster. Last year RSDA supported the VDC with a free boat. The earning from the boat is saved in the VDC fund and its maintenance is done by the VDC fund. For rescuing the victims this boat is a great support.

6. Impact on Local Community

Now there is significant change among the community. Especially RBP intervention has brought positive changes in the lives of the people and had created possibility and opportunities to survive with less level of poverty in the char and Haor areas.

6.1 Disaster Preparedness

It is now routine work for the communities. In every moment they are ready to act in response if any unwanted situation occurs i.e., flood, storm or even river erosion. They sit together to meet and discuss about the upcoming situation or about what may happen. They get ready to struggle and fight against the situation. By now they have the experience to train: on disaster preparedness and management that facilitates them to learn and practice the elementary measures in normal time and guard against bad effect of flood and river erosion. They are now capable to do the needful in the event of disaster and post-disaster situation in order to ensure damage reduction and harness the recovery process. They have created storage system where they put a preset quantity of food grain for mitigation during floods. They think about portable cooker, water purifying tablet, saline, raft making and seed preservation.

From a very low starting point, many of the communities that were observed seemed to have a good understanding of preparedness, certainly in the Chor areas, community's levels of awareness and levels of preparation were high. This is largely due to the support given by Oxfam's River Basin Programme. There is understanding and motivation from communities to exercise the benefits of preparedness and risk reduction (Evaluation report of the Bangladesh Emergency Flood response, April 2005)



Homestead raising for reaching out of flood water level, boat repairing, raft making, fodder processing, marking the water level of the last flood. Besides these, some emergency response interventions like group mobilization, reallocating of the victims to flood shelter and other safe places, making list of the suffering people, rapid shifting of pregnant mother and children, assessment of damages and distribution of responsibility in flood shelter are being

practiced by the community as well as the family level.

6.2 Increased income level

Before starting the project there was poverty shade that takes place everywhere in the area. According to the findings from the FGD and regular monitoring from the donor side there is



Evidence that shows their increased income level. The picture now shows that they are saving some amount of money every month as group savings. Sometimes they use it to buy housing materials. They are able to sell vegetable production after mitigating their demands; tin-shed houses are visible in the area, every family rear some poultry and cattle, and even children are going to school. This determines the real picture of income raising. Due to instability of chars most micro finance institutions are reluctant to operate credit Programme in remote areas like Char and Haor. Credit Programme have given them wider scope to generate their income by

taking initiatives in different sectors i.e. small traders, rice husking and threshing, shopkeepers and others. The competency level of the char and Haor residents increased mainly in the areas of agro-based IGA activities through micro-credit support.

Financial support is most important issues for Char and Haor dwellers to involve in any IGA activity. The small size revolving loan fund (RLF), which can support a certain portion of requirement, which cannot cover the financial needs to support enterprise development initiatives. Therefore, linkages with micro-finance institutions should be strengthened to address the requirements of Char and Haor entrepreneurs.

'RSDA saved me when I was alone and had to survive for my son'

Village: Char Gandar Alga, Union: Gandar Alga, Upazila: Roumari, District: Kurigram

In 2001 Fulmoti got married and came to Char Gandar Alga. Her husband left her with her mother-in-law and brother-in-law. Her husband did not ever give any money. . So from the beginning Fulmoti used to work as domestic helper to earn her living. Fulmoti's husband returned with nothing. So she had to continue her work for others. She had to suffer a lot and tried to survive with her hard work.

She joined Jonaki Dol in 2002. Being a member of Jonaki DOI, Fulmoti was concentrating in learning different IGAs as she was alone and struggling to survive.

Her husband married again. Members of Jonaki Dol tried to protect the second marriage strongly. Then Fulmoti's husband went to Tangail to get married. Later he convinced Fulmoti to accept the marriage and from then on sending some money to Fulmoti from Pabna where he lives for the job. In 2005 a son was born to Fulmoti. Her husband is fond of the son very much.

Fulmoti engages in different work whenever available. But she is engaged fulltime in cattle and poultry rearing. She has ten chickens, 18 cheeks, four goats and a cow. She plans to expand cattle rearing and save to educate her son.

6.3 Increase of vegetable and livestock production

Normally the char and Haor people do not care for any types of agro-based production and livestock resources due to floods. Situation says that people of these areas are living in danger of flood. At the time of flood, lives are in very crucial and critical condition. When flood comes, they do not get enough time to rescue themselves. And it leads them not to think about livestock rearing or agriculture production. They have lost a lot during the past. Now all these things have been made easier because of their lives security, disaster preparedness and increase of self-confidence. Due to homestead raising they have enough yard which is



used for growing vegetables in every season. Pui, lady's finger, cucumber, green chili, bitter gourd, bottle gourd, sweet pumpkin, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower and carrot are the main vegetables that they are growing in their yards and close to their houses. Moreover, rice, maize, wheat, peanut, cown, cheena, potato are produced in char and Haor land. Regarding these, the community people are getting training from RBP partner and valuable suggestions, good seed and often

fertiliser from the UAEO. They now sell their vegetables in the nearby market after meeting their need. Not only that but every family has the poultry or cows and goats. Cow fattening is good earning source in short time in the area. This happened due to raising their homestead and building flood shelter and rescue boat. They feel safer than ever.



Parborti Rani ,Charpara,Mithamoin,Kishore gong

I have two sons and one daughter. We have been homeless five times due to river erosion and floods. Flood wasted away my home and all household resources. During the floods we took shelter in the embankment and starved for days. My husband is a fisherman. POPI raised my homestead. We have to build two rooms to live with my family members. I received training on duck rearing as well as 5 ducks from POPI. Now my ducks have started laying eggs and I earn a income regularly by selling the eggs. This is really a very good source of income for me as it helps me meet the study expenses of my children. We also consume eggs in our food menu.

Rahela relies on homestead vegetable cultivation

Village: Dokkhin Tapur Char, Union: Bondober, Upazila: Roumari, District: Kurigram

In 1992 Rahela was fifteen when she came to this char marrying Mojibor. Mojibor's family was poor and he was living in a straw house after marriage. They were living hand to mouth. Rahela's life changed after the 1998 flood. She became a member of RSDA in 1999. She learnt and implemented different IGAs taught in her group. Rahela got training on homestead vegetable cultivation. Through cash for work (CFW) she earned Taka 1800 after the 1998 flood.

The most successful area of her initiatives is homestead vegetable cultivation. After getting the training Rahela along with her husband devoted themselves in vegetable cultivation. She took loan of taka 1000, 2000, 3000 and 4000 from the group. In different seasons they were cultivating seasonal vegetables. They used composed fertilizer and proper insecticide and planted the vegetables in scientific manner. They take suggestion from the RSDA Agriculture Officer and development associates. She knows that vegetable is an essential part of balanced diet and cooks vegetable everyday for her family. Rahela now has a tin-shed house and a straw kitchen. At her house Rahela has a latrine that she got from RSDA for free. She has taken five katha land as mortgage. Her present savings in the group is taka 760. She wants to be the most successful example for home stead vegetable cultivation.



6.4 Improvement of livelihood

The finding says that there is slow change in their lives but gradually it is improving socio-economic condition in the lives of Char and Haor dwellers. Especially in the working area

and none of them is living without food. Most of the people are using hygienic latrine, drinking safe water from the tube-well, savings for their future, sending their children to school. Females are conscious about their rights, they have access to go to every mass gathering or even in the market places, increase knowledge on health & hygiene. The most of the people are linked with agriculture. The main crops that they grow are mostly rice, peanut, wheat, maize, sugarcane and jute in the main land. Due to high price of chemical fertilizer and insecticide sometimes they suffer. Often the crops are damaged by the flood or draught, traditional farming system and even crops price goes down. Because of these factors they stopped cultivation. But now they are using compost and organic fertilizer and herbal pest controlling which reduces their production cost, high production and are environment friendly.



More or less every woman is engaged with vegetable growing nearby her houses, cow & poultry rearing, stitching and bamboo work. They are earning from there and playing a supporting role in the family. The women can spend their earning without any hesitation and control by their husbands. The vegetables, milk from the cow, eggs and meat are contributing to daily meals. The people are now more conscious about their health, naturally they are used to go to doctors but previous practice was to call quack doctor and Kabiraj. They go to satellite clinic or Upazila's hospital or village camp for getting vaccination to their newborn child. It's a good sign to the dwellers that they are trying to change their lives in a better way.

Fatema, abundant women of Tarabunia, Vedorgong, Sariotpur

“ Now I am 31. My husband left me at the age of fifteen in helpless situation. I was struggling a lot to survive with my child. . I used to pass my days with my children in indescribable misery. Fortunately I got work under cash for work. Where I worked 120 days as daily labor for earth raising @TK.70/-. After getting cash for the first 7 days work I bought four chickens and again bought more. It created employment opportunity for me and helped me to accumulate savings, and build livelihood assets. Now I am no longer helpless but rather self dependent.”



Community people of Madaner Char, Rajibpur express their feelings that
“ Our dream has become a reality when we receive tube well and sanitary latrine ??? From RSDA. Now we can drink safe water and use sanitary latrine. We are safer from water borne disease like Diarrhea, dysentery, and scabies In fact now we lead decent life. We don't need to expense money for treatment purpose as a result we started savings to build our good future.”

To improve their socio-economic status, the project has been providing micro credit support for IGAs in order to better utilise their learning skills and knowledge. The credit facilities have enabled programme participants mainly women to open IGAs where they have gotten new opportunities in capital management, chose of better livelihood options and improvement in skill in managing IGA. The field observation, and reports indicate that the participation of women in economic activities tends to increase and instead of limiting to homestead based activities, some other avenues have also been considered to bring economic and other benefits for the programme participants.



Credit to small trade has also contributed to better lives for programme participants.

6.5 Access of people to different Services

Once upon a time there were lack of facilities from both govt. and non-govt. sides. But the picture is now changed. Govt. staffs are now providing some facilities in their range and to some extent providing the communities health facilities (especially vaccination) with the assistance of partner organisation which is a great part of integration. EPI coverage with immunisation has increased. Women are also taking vaccination during pregnancy. Tendency for adopting family planning facilities are increasing. Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) are more conscious, skilled and give their support to the pregnant mother. Evidence shows that the reduction of child mortality rate has taken place within the community. Paramedics and field workers are actively involved in raising awareness on health related issues within the community. They disseminate message on health & hygiene, antenatal care and safe motherhood.

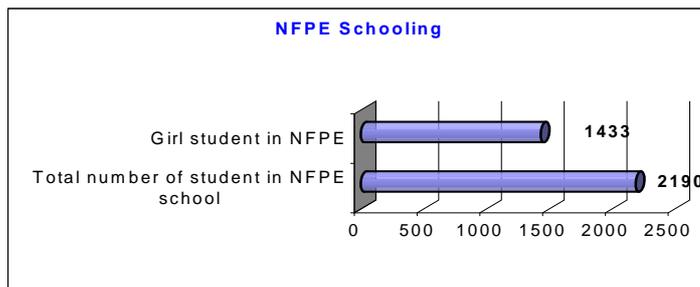
NFPE Centres are run by partners and provide an opportunity to the Char dwellers for sending their children to school for education.



Taslima Begun, Gayenkandi, Tarabunia, Vedorgong, Sariotpur says,

“ Light! It was beyond our imagination. But now my village is lit and our children are reading and writing at night. At the same time this light has brought out the light of education for our children. Now we can enjoy the television for recreation and information collection.

One day we used to sleep immediately after the sunset, now we can work at night that helps us to earn additional income. Really we are delighted with this light.



Farming advice from the agriculture department is now available in the locality. Respective govt. officials are regularising their visit in Char areas. Block supervisors of Agriculture Department are visiting both char and haor areas. They are advising the poor marginal and sharecroppers for adopting advanced modern agricultural technology to bring positive changes, get more yield for using compost fertiliser in place of chemical fertilizer. This will reduce ecological imbalance making the lands fertile again. Concerned veterinary officials have extended their hands and are running only vaccination programmes. Education departments of the government have strengthened their supervision and monitoring of schools in some char areas where partner NGOs can influence them for better service. Due to instability of chars, most of the micro finance institutions are more reluctant to operate credit programme in these remote areas. From the interaction with Govt. officials and programme participants it is now realized and evident that RBP advocacy work shop on **‘Basic Service’** at local and national level helped make the service providers more

Deputy Commissioner of Kishoreganj district states as he is not properly informed about the activities of haor area implemented by POPI and RBP. It seems to him that lack of proper coordination is happening. But he said " the national workshop on the Scenario Basic Services in Haor and it's way forward has created a little noise among the GoB officials". Now he thinks that this workshop has made a little impact in service delivery sectors. In the context of haor area he mentioned that unhygienic water & sanitation system is the prime problem in the haor area that causes different diarrhea and epidemic. To achieve the goal "Hygienic Sanitation for all" it should be further emphasized to address the problem providing hygienic latrine and installing deep tube well. He also mentioned that no hardware activities like; homestead rising, flood shelter will continue without establishment of the flood protection wall. The haor people live in tremendous condition in rainy season when their villages come to the danger point. Often some villages are washed away by the wave. Near about six months they have to stay in the villages surrounding water without any work. In this perspective NGOs can take more initiative to generate employment giving them fishing boats. "For further strategic direction the stated suggestion should be included", he said.

responsive to Char and Haor development. And getting the media involved actively in advocacy work and wide print and electronic media coverage on Basic service workshop sensitised the service providers and even policy makers much more and reminds their responsibilities towards the Char and Haor people.

Even after that govt. facilities are too poor as their demands. Regarding to the FGD findings evidence this is very rare in the locality as sometimes the officials deprive the community from various govt. facilities.

6.6 Public Health & Sanitation

In the recent past, water and sanitation situation was very bad in Char and Haor. People used to defecate in open field, bush or Jungle and hanging latrine. They would mostly use water for drinking and other purposes from open water body like beel, pond and canal and water contaminated with human excreta. Consequently, they suffer from different diarrhoeal diseases like diarrhoea, cholera and dysentery. Currently with increase in awareness and about the bad effect of

using unhygienic latrine and water, they are very much conscious about using safe water



and hygienic latrine. If there is no tube-well then they go a distance to bringing safe water. To mitigate nutrition deficiency they are growing vegetables next to their houses. Upazila public health office provides assistance to the Char areas for arsenic free water with the collaboration of Union Parishad. Consciousness



While interviewing with the Civil Surgeon of Jamalpur he disclosed his opinion that RBP is doing well with its partner organisation to improve lives of the Char people. "People are willing to take their service from govt. but due to remoteness they are unable to provide them", he said. Look at the matter he mentioned as the demand is very high compared to their manpower. In this regard Oxfam should come forward to facilitate the health service through their partner or it may be jointly collaborated with the govt. One of the severe problems faced by the department is mostly in immunization programme implementation. Due to lack of electricity there is no freezing system in the Char area. That is why he put his suggestion to provide solar panel in remote areas to make up freezing facilities and continue the vaccination programme smoothly. He also stressed on media mobilization for health awareness building among the communities especially on TB and vaccination. Lastly, he seeks more coordination with partner organisation as well as the community people.

it is increasing like taking care of pregnant mother and child. Furthermore, they are advising to be neat and clean, get regular clinical check ups and take immunisations from other health facilities from the satellite clinic.

6.7 Agriculture

RBP has generally increased farmer's knowledge level on land selection, fertiliser applying, pesticide controlling, seed production & preservation. On the other hand, they integrate with agricultural sector mostly in making list of seed supplying, demonstration plot making, and enhancing training and arrange Agro-fair. Due to some limitations and unavailability of govt. support facilities are not reaching the doors of the community. In these cases the partner organisation is working directly with char and Haor areas. They are playing main role in developing the deprived farmers resulting in increased production.

6.8 Social Aspects

The dwellers are more conscious and skilled than ever due to good training. Already they are engaged in local seed collection and preservation, vegetable growing, cow & poultry rearing, disaster training, birth attending training and primary health care that is placing an improvement in their family and social lives. Children are now going to school. Women are now more responsive as they came forward and meet with the school management committee, and taking initiatives to protect child marriage and dowry. In case of failure of child marriage they complain to UP Chairman and even go for legal action. Thus the social scenario is changing day by day. Strong social bondage and kinship that exist among the Char and Haor dwellers, need to be considered during their settlement in new Chars and Haors due to erosion and flood. It helps to keep and maintain the social stability in these areas as stated by Professor H. K. S. Arefeen, Department of Anthropology, University of Dhaka.



Consultation meeting with eminent researchers and academicians

7. Internally mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS

Last year RBP started mainstreaming HIV/AIDS internally with 3 partners and since then it has been working on HIV/AIDS issue to build staff capacity both at partners and Oxfam level. During review it is felt that staffs are very free to discuss on HIV/AIDS issues and they are motivated and enthusiastic to transfer this knowledge among the programme participants. Partners have taken initiative to include the issue of HIV/AIDS in their organizational policy as well.

8. RBP in the Eyes of Others

Mr. Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Minister of Local Govt., Rural Development & Cooperative and Alhaj Zillur Rahman Member of Parliament and Former Minister, LGRD appreciated Oxfam initiatives for organizing national workshop on the issue on 'Basic Services', which is very important for the development of neglected people of Haor.



Mr. Kamal – Ibne – Yousuf, honourable Minister, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, in his speech in the national workshop 2005 on 'Scenario of Basic Services in the Char areas

and the way forward' told that this type of workshop on Char areas and Char people should have been organized much earlier. He also advised to organize at least two days long workshop having coordination of all concern Department of the government through which coordinated planning could be chalked out and service could be provided by identifying problems of Char people.

Mr. Mirza Fakrul Islam Alamgir, State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. Of Bangladesh, in his speech in the National Workshop 2005 on " Scenario of Basic Services in the Char areas and the way forward", he said " *such workshop by the participation of all concern sectors and stakeholders is the first ever initiative in the country*".

Prip Trust, an internationally recognized development organization, commented in their Evaluation Report on RBP as follows;

- *The strategic move of Oxfam GB with RBP in the remote and vulnerable char areas itself is a 'MILESTONE' in the development sector, and worked as an "Eye-Opener' to policy makers and Development Actors for Changing their 'MIND-SET'.*
- *In a situation of constant influx, dislocation, and vulnerability of the area, the RBP Programme has created a major impact by exposing the Char Dwellers to different options of livelihood, resources with a very planned and structured practical programme.*
- *Women have become the 'DECISION MAKER' in the HOUSEHOLD, which is a significant shift , from the stereo role of women.*

It is reported in the "Evaluation of Bangladesh Emergency Flood Response" that " There was a successful and coherent approach to advocacy both at local level through partners and at national level".

9. Lessons Learned

- Community participation particularly women in the programme interventions have made the programme implementation easier and sustainable. It is the beginning of shifting the responsibility of development to communities.
- Direction for women's non-traditional interventions and ensuring access in terms of the quality of the products and better price to the market has been essential for the development of charwomen.
- The Char and Haor dwellers are willing to be challenged for enterprise drive to improve their livelihoods.
- Women living in the char and Haor are interested to accept new things and to learn from practical exercise. They are willing to undertake various steps towards good health, employment generation and disaster risk reduction, provide some amount of facilitation / booster reaches them to improve upon the status quo.
- Proper analysis is needed to look at the women's workload as a result of their involvement in out side homework. It is often seen women are shouldering complete responsibilities of the family, as men usually don't share the household work.
- Irrigation facilities/ support for small producers and sharecroppers is extremely useful to scale up the crop production and diversification in Char and Haor areas.
- Establishment of market linkage and farmer's increased access to and control over market are now major challenge for protecting the farmer from income erosion.

- Relationship building and working with national and local governments are very strategic in nature and yields slow results.
- Attention of Government officials, policy makers and donor communities could be drawn through creating and evidencing 'good practices'.
- The way technical support in the area of agriculture is provided by Padakhep needs better coordination between Padakhep and other implementing organisations.
- Direction for women's non-traditional interventions and ensuring access in terms of the quality of the products and better price to the market has been essential for the development of charwomen.
- Semi- Structural works like flooding shelter construction; clustering village needs more discussion at local level involving govt. officials to bring more effectiveness in its construction works.

10. Replicability

The following activities of RBP have brought out positive changes in the lives of Char and Haor dwellers, with exceptional impacts on their livelihoods. These activities can be termed as 'Good Practices' to replicate in other flood prone areas. It is noteworthy that recently CLP has started their huge operation in Char areas and is replicating some of the major activities of RBP and planning to scale up those activities in CLP working areas.

- Homestead raising is now proven to reduce the sufferings of Char people during flood
- Establishment of flood shelter has created opportunity for char people as safer place and its multiple use
- Homestead raising with tube well and sanitary latrine as well as little provision of homestead gardening to ensure safer and healthy dwelling place.
- Group members' organise dowry free marriage.
- Mobilization of local resources by the VDC is a unique approach. Group members under the VDC create an emergency fund by contributing rice or wheat during each harvesting period.
- A number of char friendly crop varieties and technologies have been introduced and in practice by the farmer.
- Nari forum is the platform of female staff that helps them to enjoy their rights by raising their voice in open discussion against gender insensitive acts.
- Producer group association can now produce in a systematic planning so that they are able to take the advantages and extra benefit of early and late variety vegetable production. Their collective bulk production helps get greater market access and better prices.
- Advocacy workshop on Basic services sensitizes the service providers to mobilise their service in Char and Haor areas. They are responsive to the needs of Char and Haor community.
- Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) is now an effective alternative method of educating children and mainstreaming them in Char and Haor.
- Project assets like rescue boat, shallow engine tube well etc. are being used and managed by the community thought the year and these generate modest community fund. This is very important for maintenance and replacement of assets as well as raising the disaster fund. So community fund raising through optimum utilisation of project assets is now seen as a means of sustainability and self-reliant.

11. Recommendations

The findings of the review revealed the following recommendations. The recommendations are categorized at two levels on the basis of their importance and the time to be taken for implementation.

11.1 Immediate

- Increase number of homestead raising, cluster village, tube well sinking, latrine installation etc. to include more vulnerable people.
- Strengthen livelihood assistance programme
- Coverage of skill enhancement training needs to be extended
- Initiate fish culture by netting system where villagers have the facilities of wave protection wall surrounding the villages
- Access of Char and Haor people to char and haor friendly micro-credit services should be enhanced through establishing wider linkages with micro-finance institutions.
- Establish small cottage industry and ensuring its marketing.
- Increase coverage of NFPE School is must
- Vaccination coverage for livestock and poultry needs to be extended
- Formation of association and special advocacy and lobby works to mobilize the local resources in Char and Haor.
- In Haor area maize cultivation has greater economic potentialities than the rice and it can be harvested earlier and thus it is free from early flood damage. It is also recommended to replicate in Char areas.
- More adaptive research/demonstrations/trials should be made at Char and Haor to decide Char & Haor friendly cropping patterns, methods and crop varieties
- Continue Advocacy and lobby works on 'Basic services' at different level for reviewing and implementation of state policy in favour of Char & Haor dwellers.
- Process of ownership by the community to manage RBP must be planned and integrated in the programme
- Involve Executive Committees actively in strategic management and ensure equal participation of each member in all aspects of organizational decisions, and make it gender balanced.
- Strengthening health, water and sanitation programme with special emphasis on arsenic mitigation, child mortality and maternal care.
- Create more opportunity for women to sell their products directly in market to ensure better prices and more access to market.
- Complete gender analysis of RBP and develop gender planning for the programme accordingly. Increase women participation in all respect; arrange training for the men for their clear idea about gender equity and equality.
- GO and NGO coordination and collaborative programme for Char and Haor development should be further strengthened for holistic development of Char and Haor dwellers.

11.2 Long Term

- Establish marketing linkages between rural producers associations and large private enterprises is now challenge to increase the access of poor producers to market and for the sustainability of char and Haor livelihoods.
- More feasible IGAs for Char and Haor women should be identified to develop entrepreneurship among them.
- Now emphasis should be given for male groups to create alternative employment opportunity for reducing migration
- '**Grain store**' should be constructed at community level to preserve the harvested products from flood, which will protect the farmer from income erosion.
- Char and Haor context appropriate livestock and poultry farming should be introduced
- For proper adoption and extension of improve agricultural practices and technologies in Char and Haor household/couple training (female and male) should be arranged specially on System of Rice Intensification (SRI), homestead gardening and vegetable gardening.
- Special programme on right based issues; 'Khas land' and 'public water bodies' needs to be undertaken to establish the rights of marginalized people in public properties.
- Advocacy and lobbying is recommended for the construction of "Protection Wall" in Haor to protect the lives and public assets.

- Establishment of knowledge information centre at community level may increase the people, particularly women access to information. Char and Haor specific broadcasting need to be introduced in regular radio programme. And advocacy and lobby work for this can be taken in RBP activities.
- Programme review should be done at regular interval to incorporate the new ideas, lessons learnt, and to facilitate the scope of programme flexibility. Programme participants should be included in the review process, particularly in exchange visit to ensure that their opinions are heard and considered

12. Conclusion:

According to the review findings it was found that the Char and Haor people responded to the RBP Programme as their survival mechanism through its partner. The review was a step forward to know the key lessons of the programmes. What should be done to improve the effectiveness of the programmes? What should be done to better integrate flood preparedness, livelihood and gender awareness within the programme planning and implementation? In respect of communities they had the opportunities to exposed themselves with new technologies and develop their livelihood condition. Interventions also had been taken considering strategic locations, vulnerability, and duration of partnership in the remote areas of Char and Haor areas. In this moment the outcome of the programme is quiet changed compared to the baseline situation. A few of the partners are now more skilled and experienced to cope with the disaster situation. The govt. also has eagerness to provide their services with the partner organisations. The significant achievement of the programme is that more donor agencies and other stakeholders are now interested to work with the Char and Haor areas that is revealed with the interpretation from the different interviewers. There have been some linkages established with different development agencies, but further strategies to be taken to link with different services for resource mobilisation with the government.

Despite the changes taking place there are wider scopes of work. For further continuation, the programme should be based on the results already achieved and the lessons learnt. Homestead raising has made a remarkable impact, particularly by involving the women. During flood and post flood it was found as community is a healthy and safer place. This programme must continue. NFPE programme has played a significant role in educating Char and Haor children. Having more NFPE school is a must. Considering the nature of Haor vulnerability protection wall is must to save the raised homestead, flood shelters etc.

The ownership process needs to be developed from the grassroots. This needs to be institutionalised by building capacities of Char and Haor people and local stakeholders. Involvement of char and Haor people in a planned manner in Advocacy work as community actors along with the local development partners are necessary to bring greater impact of Advocacy work. There must be concerted efforts by the Oxfam and its partners to build appropriate linkages with the local level district administration, local government, civil society, local NGOs, at the local level and equally at the national level to work as an effective pressure group for POLICY AND ADVOCACY.

There must be conscious efforts for better coordination and integration between partner NGOs and other development agencies to intensify the programme for longer impact. This avoids the overlapping and duplication. Coordination at national level amongst the donors and governments and to come out with a National action plan for the Char and Haor development is highly recommended.

Annexure:1

Achievement at a Glance

River Basin Programme-Bangladesh

Sl	Particular	Quantity
1	Homestead raising	8956
2	Cluster village construction	62
3	Flood shelter construction	22
4	Latrine installation	8147
5	Provide rescue boat	26
6	Tube well installation	3692
7	Provide shallow tube well	45
8	Provide treadle pump	537
9	Number of families who received poultry	825
10	Number of families who received calves	253
11	NFPE school established	122
12	Total number of student in NFPE school	1740
13	Girl student in NFPE	1053
14	Total number of RBP partner staff	620
15	Female number of staffs with RBP partners	68
16	Revolving loan fund with 7 partners	2,58,46,712

Annex: 2

Recommendation from different stakeholder:

Agriculture Sector

- I. The Producer Group has the future plan to provide financial assistance to producers, adopt irrigation system, and hauler for crop carrying, good seed preservation and providing farmers modern equipments. So they need more intensive care from the partner organisation to continue their services. (Producer Group)
- II. The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has stressed on more coordination and joint programme between NGOs and DAE. They wish to involve women in homestead vegetable production for their economic empowerment. Skill development training on vegetable production, seed production and preservation, particularly for women are recommended to increase the homestead production. DAE also suggested establishing market linkage with private agro- industries and city markets so that rural producers can get more market access and fair price.
- III. Considering the Char friendly crops cultivation, organize training; create jobs facilities in agriculture sector and provide more rescue boat. (UNO- Rowmari, Kurigram)
- IV. In Haor area maize cultivation has greater economic potentialities than the rice. It can be harvested earlier and is free from early flood damage. (UAEO-Nikli, Kishoregonj)

Education

- I. Education should get more priority. (UP Chairman and member –Fulchory, Gaibandha)
- II. More school building should be constructed by the Partner organisation. (Elite person)
- III. According to the large number of school going children the school is poor quantity. Due to literacy rate improvement has to be increased with more school and qualitative teaching. (NFPE School Management Committee)
- IV. Consider free books and school dress for the girl students of class vi-x (Staff Meeting-RSDA)
- V. Develop strategy to reduce drop out rates of school children.

Infrastructure

- Rural infrastructure development and maintenance
- I. VDC expects to keep crops away from flood damage ‘**Grain store** ‘should be constructed. (VDC, Flood Shelter Center Committee)
 - II. FWVA mentioned that Rowmari is river erosion area and the community people are out of reach of treatment facilities. Moreover, bad communication creates hazard in proper service, therefore if the organization extends their hands in road improvement then it will be more helpful to poor people to have the facilities within reach. (FWVA, Govt. Primary School Teacher and Volunteer)
 - III. Take consideration of building wider and larger flood shelter with connecting roads to save their losses and lives in Haor areas in the future. (Findings from Ms Suchita Sharmin, Asstt. Prof.–DS-DU. Dubi, Singpur, Nikli-Kishoregonj,)
 - IV. To give more emphasis in homestead rising, village protection wall should be constructed to reduce vulnerability and losses. (POPI-UP member (F), Dampara)
 - V. Provide extra boat for health services in char and Haor area. (UHFPO-)

Public Health & Hygiene

- I. Due to river erosion, limitations of manpower and bad communication in Rowmari area the community people are out of reach of treatment and health facilities. So unless and until govt. facilities are available, NGOs should extend their services .
- II. At the time of flood a full time doctor assignment is most important to stay in Char and Haor areas for treatment support. (Flood Shelter Centre Committee)
- III. Ensure supply of contraceptives for family planning in Char areas (Staff Meeting-RSDA)

Awareness & Training Program

- I. The organisation should play main roles and take more responsibilities to form a Women Forum (WF) to help in abolishing dowry system and child marriage. At the same time NGOs should take some initiatives like; awareness on female education, legal support and family planning and to establish women rights. (Female UP member)
- II. Increase women participation in all respect; arrange training for the men for their clear idea about gender equity. (UP member-Ward 2, Fulchory, Gaibandha)

Others

- I. For the interest of development of the livestock in the Haor and Char areas, the NGOs can take part in vaccination programmes and trainings. They should give more importance to poultry and cattle rearing in the area. (Livestock Officer)
- II. It is true that a part of Char and Haor areas' people being paid facilities from RBP but still there are more areas where RBP can expand its activities. (Practical Action Bangladesh and DEW)
- III. Fund should be raised for flood shelter maintenance. (Dubi, Singpur, Nikli-Kishoregonj, Ms Suchita Sharmin, Asstt. Prof.–DS-DU).
- IV. Programme review should be done at regular intervals to incorporate the new ideas, lessoned learnt, and facilitate the scope of programme flexibility. Programme participants should be included in the review process, particularly in exchange visit to ensure that their opinions are heard and considered. (Development Consultant, DEW)
- V. Establishment of knowledge information centers at community level may increase the people particularly women's access to information. In the Char and Haor specific broadcastings need to be introduced in regular radio programme. And advocacy and lobby work for this can be taken in RBP activities.
- VI. Initiate more awareness programmes on safe water & sanitation for Char areas (SAE-DPHE, Rowmari, Kurigram)
- VII. Increase CFW in char areas (Area Manager-BRAC, Rowmari, Kurigram)
- VIII. Initiate more IGAs (Staff Meeting-RSDA)
- IX. Initiate fish culture by netting system where villagers have the facilities of wave protection wall surrounding the villages. (POPI-Nikli, Kishoregonj)
 - I. Initiate small cottage industry and ensuring its marketing. (UP Chairman and member –Fulchory, Gaibandha)

© Oxfam GB 2006

First published online by Oxfam GB in 2010.

This document is part of a collection of programme evaluations available from Oxfam GB in accordance with its evaluation policy.

This document was originally written for internal accountability and learning purposes, rather than for external publication. The information included was correct to the evaluator's best knowledge at the date the evaluation took place. The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect Oxfam's views.

The text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for reuse in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. Email publish@oxfam.org.uk

For further information on the issues raised in this document email phd@oxfam.org.uk

Oxfam is a registered charity in England and Wales (no 202918) and Scotland (SC 039042). Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International.

www.oxfam.org.uk