



# Evaluation of the River Basin Programme in Bangladesh

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

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## 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

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