



# EMPOWERING WOMEN ON THE CHARS

CLP IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY SERIES



**Chars Livelihoods Programme**

Reducing Extreme Poverty on the Riverine Islands of North West Bangladesh





# EMPOWERING WOMEN ON THE CHARS

The CLP's Contribution



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## How Does CLP Build Women's Empowerment?

An objective of the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) is to increase women's empowerment. The Programme's interventions are designed to build women's confidence, address negative social attitudes and behaviours and increase respect from family members and the wider community.

Activities that aim to achieve this include the provision of an income-generating asset coupled with livelihoods training. CLP also enrolls women in social development groups and provides couples-orientation courses as well as workshops for influential males in the community.







## How Does CLP Measure Women's Empowerment?

CLP's Innovation, Monitoring, Learning and Communications Division (IMLC) is largely responsible for M&E and research which includes assessing progress towards high level results. These results areas have been grouped into themes that include livelihoods, food security, nutrition, women's empowerment, graduation and WASH.

The Programme aims to provide 78,000 extreme poor households with an integrated package of support lasting around 18 months. Because not all of these households can be supported at the same time, six groups (called cohorts) therefore receive the package

through annual cohorts averaging 13,000 core participant households (CPHHs).

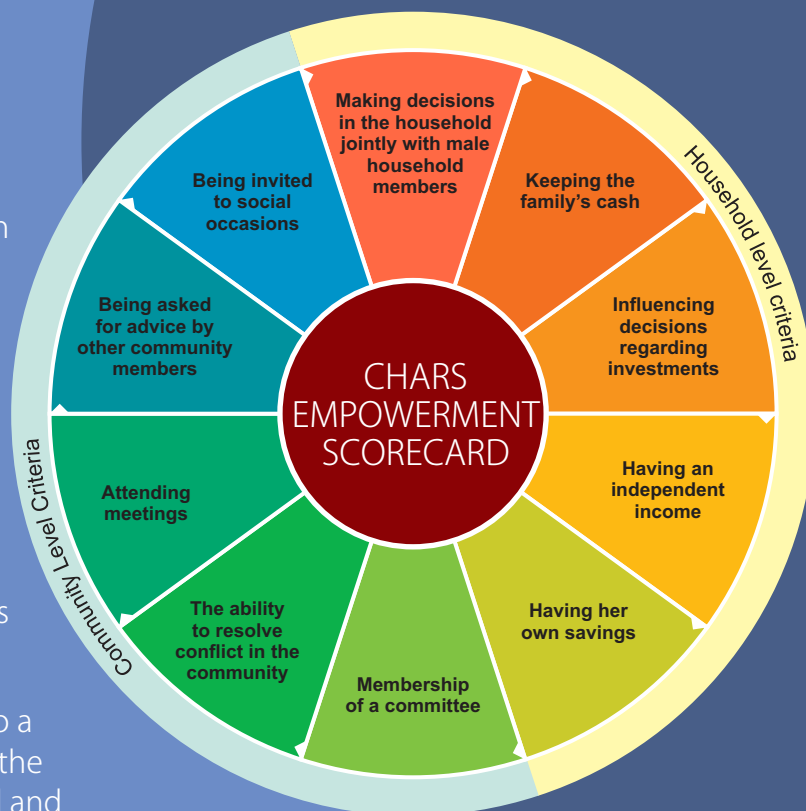
IMLC collects the baseline status of households prior to them receiving CLP's support. This normally takes place during October each year. At the same time, data is collected from a sample of households from previous cohorts which allows the programme to show impact and whether outcomes/impacts have been sustainable over time. The baseline status of each new cohort acts as the control group for all previous cohorts.

# The Chars Empowerment Scorecard

Prepared by CLP in 2012, the Chars Empowerment Scorecard comprises ten indicators that were developed through a series of focus group discussions with women and men. The indicators can therefore be considered context-specific i.e. what empowerment means to those who live on the chars.

- Indicators are separated into two categories: **household-level** indicators and **community-level** indicators.
- The household-level indicators refer to a woman's status within her home and the dynamics of power between husband and wife. They also relate to the influence and control a woman has within the household.
- The community-level indicators relate to a woman's social status, including her participation and influence within the community, as well as the respect she receives from community members.

Women receive one point for each indicator that they meet. If a woman achieves a score of five or more she is considered empowered.



Results from these indicators can then be aggregated into an 'empowerment score'. This empowerment score allows CLP to identify how empowered a woman is: before she joins CLP, after she receives the full eighteen month package of support, and how she progresses years later.

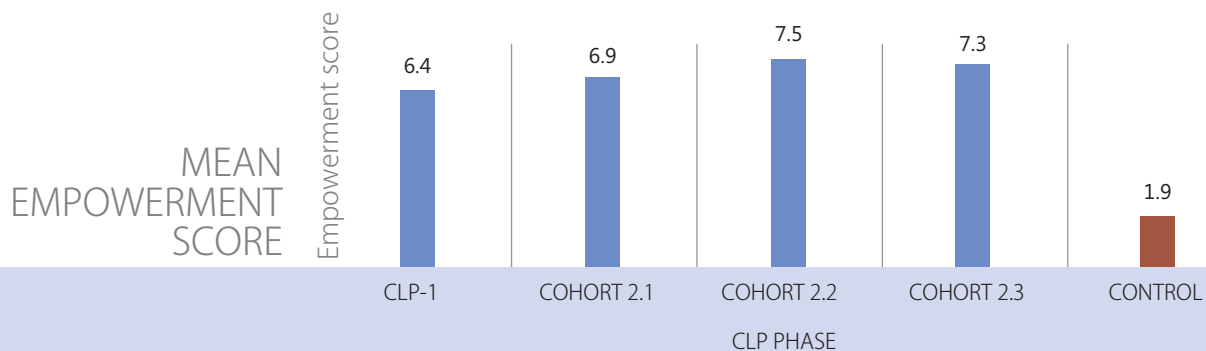




## CLP's Impact on Women's Empowerment

CLP is having a significant impact on women's empowerment. An impressive proportion of CLP's female participants meet five or more of the criteria that define empowerment. Moreover, when compared to the control group, CLP participants have much higher empowerment levels even years after having left the programme.



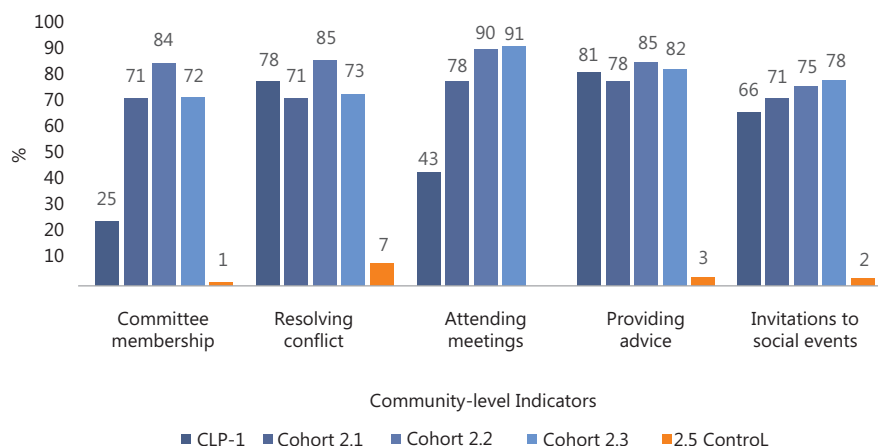


Source: March 2014 Survey



## CLP's Impact on Community-level Empowerment Indicators

Percentage of women achieving community-level indicators



Source: March 2014 Survey

The five community-level indicators of the Chars Empowerment Scorecard are:

- having membership of a committee;
- the ability to resolve conflict in the community;
- attending meetings;
- being asked for advice by other community members; and
- being invited to social occasions.

The percentage of women participants achieving all five community-level indicators is much higher than the control group.



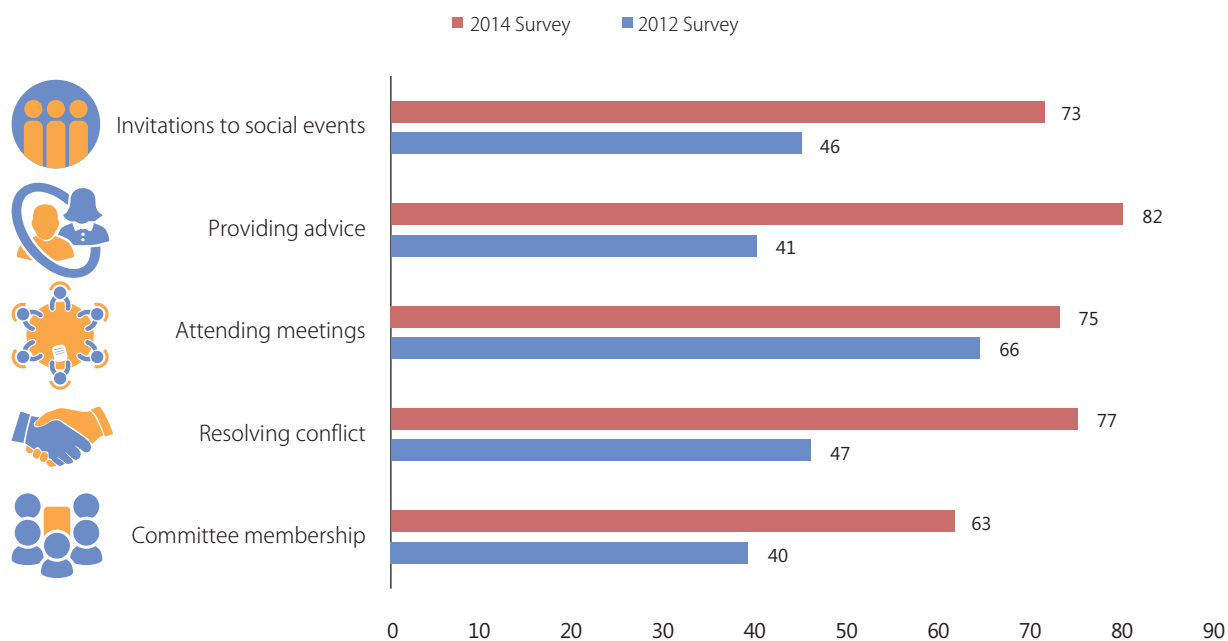


## Sustainability of Impact on Community-level Empowerment Indicators

For almost all community-level indicators, the proportion of women meeting each one increased between the 2012 and 2014 surveys.



## PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ACHIEVING COMMUNITY-LEVEL INDICATORS IN 2012 AND 2014 (COHORT 2.3)



Source: 2012 and 2014 Surveys

## CLP's Impact on Household-level Empowerment Indicators

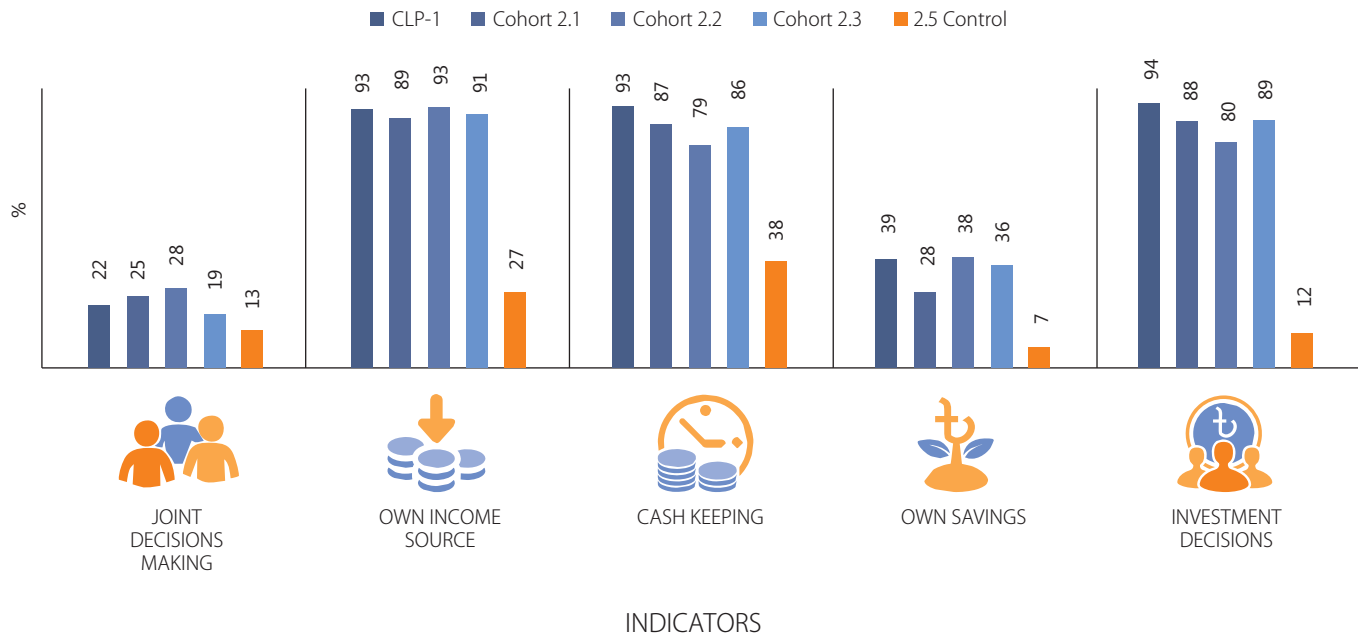
The five household-level indicators of the Chars Empowerment Scorecard are

- making decisions in the household jointly with male household member;
- having an independent income;
- keeping the family's cash;
- influencing decisions regarding investments; and
- having her own savings.





## PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ACHIEVING HOUSEHOLD-LEVEL INDICATORS (2014)



Source: March 2014 Survey

High proportions of CLP's female participants reported having an independent income, keeping the family's cash and influencing decisions regarding investments; much higher than women in the control group.

## Sustainability of Impact on Household-level Empowerment Indicators

The percentage of CLP's female participants achieving four out of the five household-level indicators saw an increase between the 2012 and 2014 surveys.

The percentage of women reporting making joint decisions however saw a decline between the two surveys. This can be explained by the fact that more women started making their own independent decisions. Results show an average of 54% of women making joint decisions in 2012 to the an average of 58% of women making independent decisions in 2014.

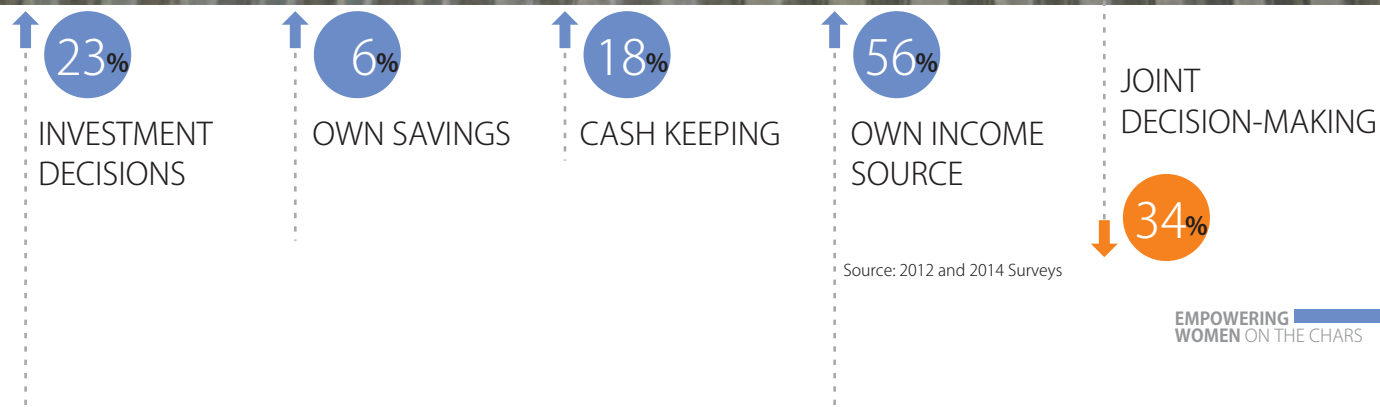
Combining independent decision making with joint decision making, in 2014, results show that close to 100% of women are involved in decision-making in one of these two ways.







## Trends of Household-level Empowerment Indicators for the period 2012-2014







## THE PATH TO EMPOWERMENT SHAZIA'S STORY

Before joining CLP, life was incredibly hard for Shazia Begum. "My husband was working abroad. He took dowry from my parents, but then married elsewhere. He did not support me, and my work as a housemaid did not bring in much money. We would go to bed crying with hunger. It was unbearable. There are no words to describe it."

That was before Shazia heard about the Chars Livelihoods Programme, in 2006, and the start of an amazing journey for Shazia.

As with all core participants of CLP, Shazia received a grant of 17,500 taka (approximately







£145) to invest in an income-generating asset. She, like the majority of participants, decided to invest her grant in livestock; and purchased a bull, a pregnant goat and a pregnant sheep.

"My sheep gave me two lambs; the goat gave me one kid," Shazia explains. "I sold the bull and made 20,000 taka (£165) profit, which I used to buy two more heifers. I managed them well and they produced calves. I also started to invest in chickens and bought an improved chicken roost to keep them safe. With profits from selling calves, I leased 33 decimals of land (about 1/3rd of an acre; 1,335 sqm). I grow fodder, which I feed to my heifers. I learned this from CLP, and now that I'm feeding them properly, I can get three or four litres of milk a day from them. I also grow chillies and other seasonal crops like rice, jute and peanuts. I also grow my own vegetables in my homestead garden."

Shazia reflects on her path, and what changes she identifies regarding her own concept of empowerment; "As well as the training, one of the main things that CLP has given me is confidence. Before CLP, I wasn't confident even to leave my village." Shazia gestures towards us with a smile. "If people wearing shirts came to the village, I was too scared to talk to them. But now here I am talking to you with confidence."

Now Shazia even feels confident enough to offer advice to new CLP participants. "Be active and work hard!" she advises. "People listen to me, because I can show them I did this, and look at how I live now. It makes me quite emotional sometimes when I see how much things have changed, and my children do not have to go to bed without food. Yes, I am a businesswoman now."

"What is empowerment?" repeats Shazia, in response to our question. With a smile, she says simply, "I am empowerment."





The Chars Livelihoods Programme works with extreme-poor households living on island chars in north west Bangladesh. The Programme aims to improve the livelihoods, incomes and food security of at least one million extremely poor and vulnerable women, children and men living on chars. CLP provides a package of interventions with the aim of improving social and economic assets, reducing environmental and economic risks, and increasing access to markets and services. CLP is jointly funded by UKaid through the Department for International Development and the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. CLP is sponsored by the Rural Development and Co-operatives Division of the Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, and implemented through Maxwell Stamp Plc.

For further information on the CLP's impact on women's empowerment, please visit the Publication page of our website. The most relevant documents are:

Haneef, C., Kenward, S., Pritchard, M., Hannan, M. and Alam, Z. (2014). CLP's Impact on Women's Empowerment on The Chars, and its Sustainability. Chars Livelihoods Programme.

Haneef, C., Pritchard, M., Hannan, M., and Rahman, M. (2014). Women as Entrepreneurs: The Impact on Empowerment of Women Having an Independent Income. Chars Livelihoods Programme.

Haneef C., Kenward, S., Hannan, M., Rahman, M. and Halder, P. (2014). CLP's Influence on Dowry and Violence Against Women on The Chars. Chars Livelihoods Programme.

McIntosh, R.A. (2012) Reviewing the CLP's Approach to Measuring Women's Empowerment. Chars Livelihoods Programme.

McIntosh, R.A., Kenward, S., Islam, R., and Alam, Z. (2012) The CLP's Impact on Women's Empowerment. Chars Livelihoods Programme.

This brief is part of the CLP's Impact and Sustainability Series, which outline the CLP's impact and sustainability across the programmes five key thematic areas. Forthcoming briefs in this series will address Livelihoods, Food Security and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).



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## Chars Livelihoods Programme

Rural Development Academy Campus, Sherpur, Bogra-5842  
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