

Influencing Attitudes and Behaviours

Social Development

Influencing the attitudes and behaviour of people on the *chars* is crucial to achieving a number of the CLP’s objectives. The programme has a wide-ranging social development component which aims to facilitate changes in the way people think and behave to support better lives for all chars-dwellers.



The Social Development Curriculum

The objective of the social development project is to achieve social changes through awareness raising and undertaking empowerment-related activities. The central tool used by the CLP to raise awareness on social development themes is the “social development curriculum.”

Empowering women is a central objective of the CLP. Many aspects of the programme’s social development interventions are directed towards tackling gender discrimination among the char people. These aim to change social attitudes towards women’s roles in the household and in society, and reduce incidences of dowry payment, violence against women and of child marriage.

As well as supporting physical infrastructure, such as tube wells and latrines, the success of the CLP’s approach to water, sanitation and hygiene requires changes in the ways that people on the chars behave. The programme’s social development work therefore encourages improved hygienic practices such as

hand-washing with soap and using improved water, as well as discouraging open defecation.

The Government of Bangladesh operates social safety net systems and provides other services that should serve people on the chars. However, the extreme poor on the chars often face difficulties in accessing them. Participants are made aware of these safety nets and services and are told how to access them. They are encouraged to develop their own community-based safety nets. Each Social Development Group will choose a vulnerable member of their community to help. They can decide the type of help they will provide and for how long.

How the Social Development Curriculum is Delivered

The curriculum is delivered in weekly group meetings that take place throughout the 18-month duration of the programme. In each village, CLP core participants are organised into Social Development Groups, and attend social development meetings of around 90 minutes each week.

These meetings are led by the CLP’s Community Development Organisers (CDOs) who live in char villages and are the CLP’s primary point of contact with the community. These meetings use a range of techniques, including group discussions, games, case studies, brainstorming sessions and role-play to influence behaviour.



Village Development Committees

Village Development Committees (VDCs) are formed with the aim of improving social cohesion, and to provide an organisation that can lobby local government for better service provision.



Members of VDCs are selected by the community and must include at least five women (two core participants, one *Char Shasthya Karmi* (*Char Health Worker*), one *Char Pushti Karmi* (*Char Nutrition Worker*) and one non-core VSL group member). Committee members attend an initial three-day residential course covering topics such as WASH, gender, leadership and conflict resolution in order to aid them in serving their functions effectively.

Adolescent Groups

The aim of these groups is to provide advice to 13 to 19-year olds on sensitive topics such as puberty, reproductive health, personal hygiene and the negative effects of child marriage. The groups also build leadership skills and develop the attendees' understanding of their rights. Groups start with a three-day residential course, followed by bi-monthly group meetings. The trained adolescent group members are expected to work as peer educators to disseminate knowledge to other adolescents in their respective villages who are not included in the groups.

Orientation for Couples and for Males

The programme also provides a day-long Couples' Orientation on gender sensitivity that builds awareness in couples regarding issues such as gender discrimination, gender roles within the household and family planning. The objective is to

generate support among men for the empowerment of women and to encourage joint decision-making within the household.

To increase the participation of men in social change and build awareness of dowry, family law and the negative effects of violence and gender discrimination, the CLP offers a day-long course on such topics for influential non-core male adults in the villages.

Opinion Leaders

The project also engages with influential persons (such as local religious leaders, UP member, social leaders) who can act as change agents in the communities. They attend a two-day residential course, which covers topics such as water and sanitation, conflict resolution, social responsibilities, dealing with discrimination, and preventing the practice of violence against women, child marriage and dowry.

Community Melas

"Melas" or community fairs are organised with the objective of raising community awareness of different social issues such as the effects of child marriage, polygamy, dowry, divorce and gender and rights issues. These messages are put across in an interesting and entertaining way through a variety of methods such as drama, folk songs and storytelling. Melas are also used as a tool to inform wider sections of the community about CLP's work through exhibitions of materials from each of the programme's components.



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