

A model for a self-governing and sustainable VDC following a phase out plan from CLP Support

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Operations Division

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Acronyms

AR	Annual Review or Annual Report
CBC	Char Business Centre
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDS	Community Development Supervisors
CLP-2 (or CLP)	Chars Livelihoods Programme, Phase 2
CP	Core Participant
CPK	Char Pushti Karmi, char nutrition workers
CSK	Char Shasthya Karmis, char health workers
DLS	Department of Livestock Services
ED	Executive Director
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HDU	Human Development Unit
HQ	Headquarters
IMLC	Innovation Monitoring Learning and Communications (Division of CLP)
IMO	Implementing organisation
LSP	Livestock Services Provider
NCP	Non-Core Participant
PSC	Para Support Committee
RDA	Rural Development Academy, Bangladesh
SD	Social Development
ToT	Training of Trainers
UP	Union Parishad
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Office
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSL	Village Savings and Loans

Executive Summary

Village Development Committee (VDC) has been operating in CLP since 2005. Between 2010 and 2013 two major studies were commissioned by CLP to look at the capacity, effectiveness and sustainability of these CBOs. The CLP IMLC Division study into the effectiveness and sustainability of VDC in 2013 looked at the formation, functions, capacity and effectiveness of VDCs to understand their sustainability. This study found that 12.5% VDCs on average sustain over time. The study clearly revealed strengths of VDC that earned them acceptance in the community as well as the challenges in achieving sustainability of the CBO and made specific recommendations from sustainability perspective.

Today VDC has a constitution that provides guideline on its formation process, its structure, a 3 member management committee, and its activities. Monthly meeting is a major component of VDC structure, each VDC holds AGM to discuss their achievements so far and the challenges they faced and draw a work plan for the coming year. Now the challenge for CLP is to address how the VDC (as a CBO) can achieve sustainability beyond the CLP assistance period. The objective of this report is to articulate strategies to achieve this objective with a sustainable model for VDC.

The major findings from the analysis in this report include :i) VDC needs an official legal identity to access resources and services from the government and non-government agencies; ii) VDC should remain as a village level CBO and discouraged to evolve in to a bigger federation; iii) Creating linkage with government and non-government agencies would require systematic structured interventions; iv) VDC activities need reform; vi) further training needed for VDC capacity building; vii) VDC needs close supportive supervision from programme before phase out from CLP support.

From December 2014 to March 2016, CLP is left with 16 months¹. National holidays, religious festivals etc. will further reduce working time by more than a month. Preparation for implementing any new decisions and the wrap up process at the end of the project would again take away another 2-3 months. Therefore the 'wish list' would have to be restricted within the most necessary steps only. The following strategies and activities that could be doable and achievable for VDC reform in this short period of time are recommended.

i) VDC need to be registered as Trust either at the Sub-register's or at the Notary Public's offices at Upazila level. A legal official identity will create for VDC greater and easy access to government and private sector resources and services; VDC members will get greater motivation to continue contributing to community development. Registration as Trust involves the most simple process.
 ii) Activities for tangible results. Currently VDCs are carrying out those works that meet the demand of their community and as a result, their role and contribution are appreciated by the community. In a post CLP time when programme assistance will no longer be there, VDC will need a thoughtfully designed activity menu that would help in retaining the momentum of their achievements and would also work as a binding factor for the committee members to stay connected; iii) 5 short duration trainings are recommended here to prepare VDC for a post CLP run. The training are:

- a) Organization development and leadership; b) Roles and responsibilities of Union Parishad, resources available with UP and process of approaching UP; c) Introducing VDC

¹ Source : conversation with Wyn Davies, CLP Operations Director.

to Government and non-government agencies; d) Agriculture input and marketing; e) Family law.

A structured and mandatory time line for executing the training programmes will be critical in maintaining the overall discipline of the broader phase out plan. A detail capacity building plan is recommended in the main proposal.

iv) Linkage with relevant govt. and non-government agencies will be critical. Class room training followed by hands on training through joint visits by VDC and IMO staff are recommended to take the VDCs to a desired level in respect of knowing how to approach these offices, processes and decorum etc. 6 agencies are identified and recommended as critical connections for VDCs: Union Parishad (UP), Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Upazila Social Welfare office, Community clinics, Agro product dealers and the respective IMOs.

A strategic link between IMO and VDC could be created. In this arrangement, IMO could play an honorary advisory role for the VDC in an informal manner. IMOs could also think of developing another special 3-5 year programme on CBO development in the chars and seek for donor funding to work on further capacity building for the VDCs. For chars, it would be an extremely relevant and important work to think about as there is no such platforms for people's voice and emergency support in those chars. Such an arrangement would also address one of the major concerns expressed in all sharing meetings that 18 month was too short time to develop VDC.

The 10 year strategic plan of the Rural Development Academy (RDA) articulates in goal 3 and 4 the scope of working on climate change issues and public-private partnership for poverty reduction respectively. CLP could explore these options to create a link between RDA works and VDC.

v) Supportive supervision. VDC will get a very close and supportive supervision from CDO during April 2015 to January 2016. For this purpose the recommended CDO and VDC ratio is 1:10. One CDO will look after 10 VDC and pay bi-weekly visit to each VDC. In order to make these visits impactful, it will be extremely important for the CDO to follow a work plan and the time line for each activity religiously otherwise it will be difficult to recover from the effect of various external variables, for example limitations imposed by Ramadan timing etc.

vi) Future programming in integrated livelihood development for remote locations can draw significant insights from VDC experience in areas such as dynamics of a CBO formation, capacity building for a CBO, creating community ownership, need and scope for policy advocacy especially in education and health.

1. Introduction

One unique characteristic of the Northern region of Bangladesh, especially the North West is the existence of riverine chars² which are remote, natural disaster prone and in all aspects the most deprived geographical locations in the country. Chars livelihood Development Programme (CLP) was initiated in 2005 to address extreme poverty in the Chars in the North West. The programme is basically built on a livelihood development approach; however the other essential variables that have direct influence on sustainable livelihoods development, were also addressed significantly through various programmatic interventions. From the beginning of the programme, one such critical felt need had been about creating a supportive and enabling environment at village level in order to maximize the results of the livelihoods development supports that went to the targeted extreme poor households. Thus the concept of community based organization (CBO) was introduced in to the programme and eventually the Village Development Committees (VDC) were formed with an aim to mobilize community support to contribute towards ending extreme poverty in the chars.

2. History of VDC

2.1 VDC inception: 2005-2008

CLP first conceptualized VDC back in 2005³. During that period, Para Support Committees (PSC) were formed at Para level which is typically a smaller section of a village. Main reason behind PSC was to encounter the ground realities of scattered, isolated feature of chars as small canals and rivers divided the chars into small Para⁴. Representatives from PSC formed a VDC at the village level. These committees, were quite informal structures. Both PSC and VDC consisted of 11 members. The committee composition confirmed 60% from Core Participants (CP), at that time they were known as Asset Transfer Programme Participant (ATP), and 40% from village elites. The logic behind having 60% of the members from CP was to make sure that the village teacher, Imam of a mosque etc. would participate as members making up the other 40%. At the VDC level UP member from that village was also included in the committee. 2007 CLP project operation and implementation guide line has mention of PSC and VDC.

In 2008 a decision was taken to discontinue PSC because it was found that members became over burdened with the task of attending too many forums like PSC meeting, VDC meeting and SD group meeting. In order to reduce such burden, it was decided that VDC would continue with 13-15 members and PSC be dropped.

² Small Islands in rivers

³CLP Operation Guideline 2007

⁴Source: conversation with two long serving CLP HDU staff : Shafiqul Islam MF Coordinator and Moshir Rahman , SD district Manager. Both joined CLP in July 2005.

2.2 VDC captured in 2010 SD Review, 2012 SD Training module review

In 2010, the Social Development Project Review⁵ recommended a few strategies to make the VDCs stronger and more functional. Major recommendations from this review were on:

- Committee formation process
- Committee size and membership criteria
- Management committee
- VDC activities

The recommendations in this review originated from the ground that it was important to transform VDCs from a CP centred CBO to a Community centred CBO⁶.

In 2012 another review of SD Training Module helped the SD team in developing a comprehensive training module for VDC.

In 2012, from SD Unit a VDC constitution was written, a comprehensive training module for VDC was developed, reporting on VDC by IMOs was introduced, VDC Annual General Meeting (AGM) was introduced⁷. Since then AGM is held as a part of the wrap up process of CLP operations in a village. All IMOs were supplied with these centrally developed guidelines and materials that ultimately brought uniformity in VDC operation across all IMOs. Before that the IMOs enjoyed liberty in translating the PSC and VDC concepts in to actions and such practices created confusion on many occasions. With a vision to ensure greater ownership of the community over VDC, VDCs were renamed as Village Development and Solidarity Centre (VDSC) in July 2012⁸.

2.3 Key features of current VDC

Today VDC is a 13 member CBO at the village level. VDC has a constitution that provides guideline on its formation process, its structure, 3 member management committee, and its activities. Monthly meeting is a major component of VDC structure. In the meeting, VDC members discuss issues in their village, chalk out a plan on how to address those issues. For example if someone required sanitary latrine in their house, the VDC would support the household in this regard, or if there is possibility of an early marriage in the village, the VDC would step-in to prevent it. At the end of 18 month CLP intervention programme in a village, VDC holds AGM. This is a big event with a large section of people from the village, if not all, to discuss their achievements so far and the challenges they faced, and draw a new work plan for the coming year. During the programme intervention phase, VDCs hold monthly meetings regularly under the supervision of programme staff. When the programme support is over, the VDCs become weak and less active.

⁵Social Development Review CLP 2 by Smita Premchander, 2010

⁶Source: Lokman Hossain, Unit Manager, Human Development Unit , CLP

⁷Source: Zohra Khanum, Coordinator SD project, CLP

⁸Source: Zohra Khanum, Coordinator SD project, CLP

2.4 2013 study into the effectiveness and sustainability of VDC

In 2013 a CLP IMLC Study into the effectiveness and sustainability of VDC⁹ looked at the formation, functions and capacity and effectiveness of VDC to understand the sustainability of these entities. This study found that 12.5% VDCs on average sustain over time. The study clearly revealed many challenges and obstacles in achieving sustainability of VDC and at the same time made the following recommendations to strengthen the capacity of VDCs:

- Ensure that during the period of CLP support, priority is given to creating linkages with government and non-governmental agencies. Prior to phase out, identify with the VDC a list of agencies and services that are available to them.
- Inclusivity of NCPs during the period of CLP support. VDCs should be encouraged to hold a three-monthly update meeting where members of the community gather to talk about the VDCs objectives, current plans and any achievements they have made in the period.
- Focus attention on formulating a disaster response strategy with the VDCs and ensure that the community, both CP's and NCP's, are aware of the strategy.
- Increase the independence of members during CLP support phase to promote levels of ownership within the committee. Two specific areas should be addressed: 1) Ensure members take more control over writing meeting minutes and recording achievements in the record book and 2) The VDC should work to cover its own costs. The monthly meeting costs around Tk. 300 to Tk. 500. The CLP should support the VDC to generate this themselves. Prior to phase out a list of ideas of how to generate fund should be drawn up with the VDC members. This should reduce the financial barriers many committees face following phase out.
- The three day residential training should be more tailored to the capacity building of the VDCs e.g. management, community based advocacy and network building. During these trainings identify responsible members of the VDC who could take on the leadership roles after phase out, thus assigning the role to one or two individuals.
- That each committee formulates a long term vision for their VDC at formation and that this vision is revisited towards the end of CLP support.

2.5 Objective of current exercise

As outlined in ToR (see Annex 3), the objective of the current assignment is to develop a detailed phase out plan transitioning the VDC from CLP support and also to develop certain modality to strengthen the current VDC model in order to gear it towards sustainability beyond CLP support. The report is also expected to document lessons from the past and the ongoing VDC to inform future design of such CBO under integrated livelihoods programme.

⁹A Study in the effectiveness and sustainability of Village Development Committees, Haneef C, Pritchard M, Alam Z and Rahman M, 2013.

3. Methodology

This report involved a mixed approach to understanding the evolution of VDC concept in CLP, current VDC practices, lessons from the past and ongoing VDCs that informed the current practices and also the thoughts of CLP management, staff members, IMO management and staff members on VDC sustainability and phase out plan. The approaches involved:

- Literature review
- Discussions held with CLP Senior Management and Operations Team members at Bogra
- Discussions with VDCs, VSL groups, Social development Groups
- Brainstorming session with CLP District level staff and IMO staff (CDO, CDS)
- Meetings with IMO Senior Management
- History digging with two oldest CLP staff.

Details of meetings, sharing sessions, brainstorming session, literature review and history digging session are attached in annex 1.

4. Findings

The major concerns, observations and suggestions expressed by stakeholders in a series of discussion sessions held with VDCs, staff members, SD groups, VSLs, IMO front line staff, CLP district level staff, CLP HQ level programme operation team, CLP senior management and IMO senior management, are outlined below.

- VDC should remain as a village level CBO otherwise a disconnect will be created between VDC and the village community
- VDC membership need to be reviewed in order to meet the objective of the committee
- VDC must have regular activity to keep them motivated and active
- VDC needs an official identity to get access to resources and services of government/ non-government agencies
- A continued connection between VDC and IMO in some form could be explored
- Current level of training is not adequate, VDC needs more specific and focused capacity building training

- Creating linkage with Union Porishad and other relevant stakeholders at the union and Upazila levels is important
- VDC needs economic activity
- 18 months not adequate for nursing VDC.

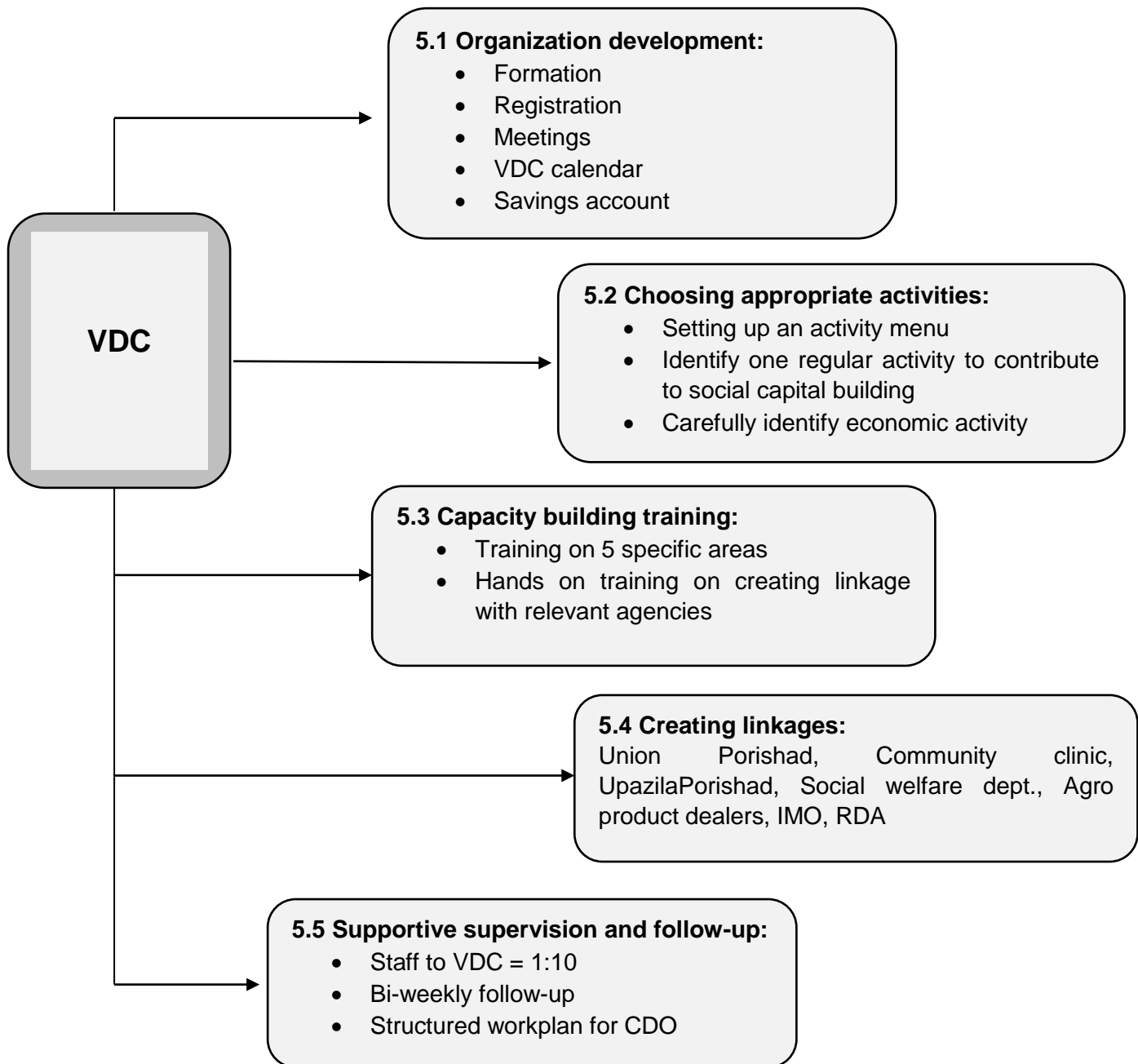
Significance and importance of a CBO like VDC in chars is now well recognized at both, programme level and the char community level. By providing various supports for creating a congenial atmosphere within the community during CLP programme operation period, VDCs have contributed immensely in maximizing the results of CLP input. And they gain trust and acceptance from their community while remote geographical locations like chars usually lack CBOs or any other kind of platform for the community people. Thus, once VDCs are formed and once they succeed in meeting the demand of their community, the demand and dream for such a CBO to continue in the community beyond CLP operation period becomes inevitable. Under such circumstances, to leave behind a land mark of institution building in remote chars for greater benefits of the char communities, it is worth paying attention to the sustainability of VDCs' as a CBO. Following sections of this report depict proposals for a few actions towards creating self-governing and sustainable VDC.

5. Proposed model for self-governing and sustainable VDC

From December 2014 to March 2016 there is a total of 16 months left before wrapping up CLP operations. Any new strategy and action to create stronger VDCs would require at least two months for completing preparations like material development, staff deployment and staff training, before roll out. It can be assumed that during the last two months of the programme, i.e. February to March 2016, field operations might be stopped as a natural part of programme wrap-up process. Because of National Holidays, Eid and other religious festivals all together will further reduce working time by another one month. Thus out of 16 months, actually the programme will get 10-11 months to operate on the suggested strategies. Therefore, the 'wish list' may be long, but the ground reality will not permit to address all of them. This is a constraint and limitation. Discussion with a wide range of staff members from the field and CLP Headquarters in Bogra repeatedly confirms that the team is fully aware of this fact.

Considering the above mentioned realities, reviewing recommendations made in VDC effectiveness and sustainability study as well as analysing the opinions and suggestions expressed by CLP/IMO senior management, staff members, VDCs and community members, the following strategies and activities that are doable and achievable in this short period of time in order to strengthen VDCs, are recommended in the following section.

Figure 1: Recommendations at a glance for a sustainable VDC model



5.1. Organization development

Formation of VDC

After reviewing the current membership pattern elaborated in VDC constitution, it is recommended to continue with the same. Out of 13 members, 3 are CLP core group participants and the rest of the 10 are community people. Therefore there is as such no need to suggest any change in membership pattern. However it is recommended that through the organization development and

Leadership training (recommended in section 3.4), importance of review of VDC membership annually is reinforced.

VDC Meetings

Currently in many VDCs meeting continues for 3-4 hours. VDC meeting duration must be shortened, brought down to 1.5 hours. VDC should be oriented and encouraged to discuss not more than three agenda in each meeting. Out of 3 agenda, one could be a discussion slot for either CSK or LSP or reviewing a SD issue.

Chars are very different context, in many chars there is no existence of public infrastructures like market place, schools etc. for community based meetings. Therefore it is recommended that CLP continue their contribution in building meeting sheds where needed. Two things will be important to look at in this regard:

- Cost sharing with community should be encouraged
- Building such sheds inside someone's own homestead should be discouraged. In case of those sheds already built inside someone's homestead, a formal declaration by the landowner will be necessary to avoid the risk of losing the property.

Registration of VDC as 'Trust'

Registration under a legal frame work will be beneficial to VDC in a number of ways. A legal official identity will create for the committee a greater and easier access to government and non-government resources and services. In addition, VDC members will receive greater motivation to continue contributing to community development. Registering the VDC as a trust could serve the purpose of keeping this platform active and alive when CLP support will be withdrawn from the field. Registration as Trust involves a much simpler process compared to that of the process of registering under Social Welfare Department. A Trust can be registered at either the sub – register's office or the Notary Public, both the offices are Government agencies situated at the Upazila level. Requirements at both the offices include Voter's ID, registration fee between Tk. 200 and Tk. 250, recent photo of committee members, a copy of the committee resolution and Government rules and regulation compliance agreement on stamp paper (Tk. 35 stamp paper for sub-register's office, Tk. 50 stamp paper for Notary Public) and another Tk. 50 – Tk. 70 maximum for other costs. It is recommended that the costs related to registration be borne by VDC.

VDC Calendar

It is recommended that each VDC have a calendar to remind them of their monthly activities/ work plan. A simple format of the calendar could be supplied centrally by CLP, each VDC will draw its own calendar following that format. A sample of VDC calendar is attached in annex 2.

Savings account

VDC will need to run some economic activities to generate its own funds. This will require a savings account for the committee. It is recommended that VDC can follow the VSL's account keeping practice if they are not comfortable with or able to open a bank account, e.g. due to geographic distance from nearest bank on the mainland.

5.2 Choosing Appropriate Activities for VDC

VDC is a voluntary organization. Currently they are oriented to carry out those works requested by CLP to ensure smooth and effective project implementation activities, along with partially to meet the other demands and needs of their community. Their role, function and contribution are thus currently predominantly orchestrated by CLP but nonetheless appreciated by the community people. However, to ensure that in a post CLP time VDC will operate in a manner similar to that of today, and work in a way to meet the needs and demand of villagers in able to remain a sustainable entity, the following strategies are recommended to select the appropriate activities for VDC.

Set an activity menu for VDC

It is important to keep the list short and focused on meeting villager's needs and priorities, instead of asking / expecting the VDC to do almost everything. It is also important to see that VDC have the liberty to develop and choose from the menu the most relevant activities for their village. VDC activity menu may include, but is not limited to the following list:

- Arrange annual sports events / day in the month of December to celebrate Victory Day
- Provide free coaching to poorest children Or provide basic literacy in Bengali and Mathematics if there is no school
- Economic activity for fund raising
- Ensure cattle rearing in every house
- Ensure registration of every new born and new marriage
- Provide support in health related emergency
- Stop open defecation by ensuring sanitary latrine in every house
- Disaster response work when needed.

Identify one mandatory activity for each VDC

Such arrangement will keep the VDC 'active and alive' round the year. **Free coaching for poorest children** could be an ideal choice for this purpose as this work can contribute immensely in children's education by stopping drop out, without having any financial implication.

Economic activity for VDC

VDC will need to operate some economic activities to generate its own funds in able to meet the recurring costs of any organisation / CBO. A grocery shop, shallow machine, horse cart, boat – these examples could possibly be the most suitable options for VDC to undertake as an economic activity. Key principles to follow in establishing and choosing VDC economic activity include: i) that it should not cause 'conflict of interest' with existing private sector service providers operating in the village, and ii) aim to meet a 'need' or fill a 'gap' in the market by offering a service which is not currently available to villagers, thus acting as a 'public good' service, and iii) the economic activity does not become the main function and purpose of a VDC – this is the role of the private sector and entrepreneurs to fulfil. Following these principles the VDC should invest in a business, and

select someone from the community to run the business on their behalf. With regards to profit sharing, there are two possible scenarios:

- i) If the investment is made from the pocket of VDC members, in that case the profit will be divided in to three portions: **a fixed amount will come to the VDC members own account, another fixed amount to VDC account** , the rest of the amount will go to the person who runs the business for the VDC. For Grocery shop, Horse cart and Boat, weekly distribution of profit is recommended instead of monthly for ease of accounts keeping. For Shallow machine the distribution may happen as per local practice.
- ii) If the investment is made with external funds, then the profit will be divided into two portions: **a fixed amount for VDC account**, the rest will go to the person who runs the business for the VDC.

In order to avoid possible confusion and conflict which may arise, it is highly recommended to share profit on a fixed amount basis instead of actual profit sharing.

The above mentioned format for operating economic activities in a VDC would be beneficial for the VDC and for the community in a number of ways. First, this will help in creating employment in the community. Secondly, such businesses will create market and provide services in the local char community. Most importantly, such arrangements will not require full time involvement of VDC in economic activities and thus will significantly reduce the risk of VDC losing its social focus.

5.3 Training for VDC

Further capacity building for VDC was identified as one of the major needs in the phase out process. Keeping the time constraint in consideration, 5 short duration trainings are recommended here:

- Organization development and leadership : 2 day
- Union Parishad’s development agenda, resources available with UP, process of approaching UP : 1 day
- Introducing VDC to Government and non-government agencies : 1 day
- Agriculture input and marketing : 1 day
- Family law : 1 day

Training	Mar '15	Apr '15	May '15	Jun '15	Jul '15	Aug '15	Sep '15	Oct '15	Nov '15	Dec '15
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Table 1: Training Time Line

1.Organization Development and leadership										
2. Union Parishad’s development agenda, resources available with UP										
3.Introducing VDC to Govt. and non-government agencies										
4.Agriculture input and Marketing, how to connect with agro product dealers										
5.Family law										

A structured and mandatory time line for executing the training programmes will be critical in maintaining overall discipline of the broader phase out plan. Such a time line is suggested in table 1 below.

5.4 Creating linkages

Govt. and non-government agencies

It is evident from the views shared by VDC members that they need information about services and resources / support available from relevant govt. and non-government agencies and especially on how to approach these centres, processes and decorum etc. A one shot training would not be adequate to equip the VDCs with enough knowledge and capacity in this regard. A well-structured plan and drive to provide class room training followed by hands on training through joint visits by VDC and CDO will be critical to take the VDCs to a desired level with respect to creating effective connections. Such a plan along with a time line are suggested here. A time line for CDOs is depicted in table 2 under the following section on Supportive supervision.

The offices that would be most relevant for VDC to establish contact with are:

- UNO
- Upazila Social Welfare office/ DWA / DLS / DAE
- UP
- Community Clinic
- Agro product dealers
- IMO

CBC

At the community level, VDC should connect and work closely with the local Char Business Centre (CBC) where established, in able to support villagers business development. In 70 locations where CBC is formed, VDC and CBC could possibly over time and where it is found to be beneficial merge into one platform and renamed. This will require a new constitution for those 70 CBOs. Their objectives could remain same as the current CBC objectives with a few social responsibilities added to them. The membership pattern may change as per requirement.

IMO

CLP could also explore the possibility of creating strategic linkage between VDC and IMO. For example, IMOs could be encouraged for an honorary advisory role towards VDCs. Such an arrangement may introduce a new concept of partnership informal in nature between a registered CBO and an IMO. In this informal structure, VDC would be able to seek advice from the respective IMO and guidance on a problem or whatever as per need.

For IMOs, a VDC would be an excellent readymade CBO to work within their future possible programmes. CLP has created the VDC platform and by making significant level of investments, have taken them up to a certain level. IMOs could even think of developing another 3-5 year programme on CBO development in the chars and seek donor funding to work on further handholding for the VDCs. For chars, it would be an extremely relevant and important work to think about as not only will it provide protection to already made huge investment in those chars, but

also because there is no other platform for people’s voice and emergency response in those remote locations. Such an arrangement may be a way of addressing one of the major concerns expressed in all sharing meetings that 18 month was too short time to develop VDC.

Rural Development Academy (RDA)

The RDA has recently developed its ten year long strategic plan to be executed between 2013/14 – 2022/23. Goal number three and four of this strategic plan articulates the scope for working on climate change issues and public-private partnership for poverty reduction respectively. CLP could explore these options to create a link between RDA works and VDC.

5.5 Supportive supervision and close follow-up

In order for VDCs to receive maximum benefits from the reforms and actions suggested in previous sections, VDCs will need a level of support that is practical, appropriate and frequent with close ‘handholding’ by CDOs during March 2015 to January 2016. For this purpose the recommended CDO and VDC ratio will be 1:10. One CDO will look after 10 VDC and pay bi-weekly visit to each VDC. In order to make these visits most impactful, CDO will strictly follow a work plan for these visits. **It will be extremely important for the CDO to adhere to the work plan and the time line for each activity religiously, otherwise it will be difficult to recover from the effect of various external variables, for example limitations imposed by Ramadan timing etc.**

A recommended work plan typically for a CDO for the 11 months (March ’15 to January ’16) is explained in table 2 below.

Table 2: Work Plan for CDO for the period between March 2015 and January 2016

Activities by CDO	Month												
	Jan '15	Feb '15	Mar '15	Aprl '15	May '15	Jun '15	Jul '15	Aug '15	Sep '15	Oct '15	Nov '15	Dec '15	Jan '16
1.Org. Development and leadership training to VDC													
2. UP's dev. agenda, resources available with UP													
3.Introducing VDC to Govt. and private service resource centres at Upazila level													

4.*Registration of VDC														
5.** Joint visit at govt./private service and resource centres as a part of hands on training for creating linkage														
6. ***VDC meeting and bi-weekly follow-up of VDC calendar														
7. Agriculture input and Marketing														
8. Family law														

* From March - May, out of two visits in a month, one visit will be dedicated to training, another visit for VDC registration.

** As a part of hands on training, joint visits to service and resource centres will take place in two slots: June '15 – August '15. Out of two visits in a month, one will be spent on joint visit, another for regular VDC meeting follow-up.

*** In November '15 – December '15, out of two visits by CDO (in a month), one will be for regular VDC meeting follow-up, another for training on Family law.

6. Structured Phase out plan transitioning the VDC from CLP support

Recommendations made in section 5 to address VDC sustainability would involve time bound interventions. Time line for some interventions have been mentioned in table 1 and 2 as a part of training plan and supportive supervision plan. Table 3 below depicts an overall phase out plan time line.

Table 3: VDC Phase out Plan Line of Action

Phase out Plan Line of Action	Dec '14	Jan '15	Feb '15	Mar '15	Apr '15	May '15	Jun '15	Jul '15	Aug '15	Sept '15	Oct '15	Nov '15	Dec '15	Jan '16
1. Preparing training materials, prog, materials														
2. Staff deployment														
3. ToT														
4. Training to VDC														
5. Bi-weekly follow-up of VDC by CDO			*	*						**			**	
6. Calendar Prepared in all VDCs														
7. VDC Registration of VDC as Trust														
8. Joint visit to govt. and non-govt. agencies as a part of hands on training														
9. Establish free coaching for poorest children														

10. Establish economic activities for VDC														
11. AGM														
12. Wrap up meeting with IMO especially on VDC														***

* Special meeting with VDC on new list of activities, VDC calendar, the new bi- weekly supervision structure for the following months until January.
 ** Special meeting with VDC on their post CLP operation.
 ***A wrap meeting with IMO especially on VDC is recommended before the closing of the programme. Possible IMO / VDC engagement explained in section 5.4 could include in the agenda in the wrap up meeting.

7. Lessons from the past and ongoing VDCs to inform future programming

The experience of VDCs so far have been a mix of successes and failures, challenges and hope. Built on the basic concept of a similar kind of CBO developed by BRAC’s CFPR-TUP programme, CLP’s VDC has eventually evolved into a much suitable community platform for the Chars as Chars are different from the main land. By meeting the demands of the community, solving the problems unique to chars, solving social problems like early marriage and violence against women and by standing beside the people in time of natural disaster like floods, VDCs have earned the trust and acceptance in their community. Challenges still exit on the question of its long term sustainability. However the trust and acceptance of the community and some of the thoughts that have been put on capacitating the current VDCs, do give hope to see VDCs exist and contribute for a long time.

Future programming in integrated livelihood development can draw significant lessons from VDC experience on formation of a CBO. First of all, VDC story tells clearly that formation of a CBO needs special attention to create ownership by the community, not any targeted population, over the CBO. To address this issue, the objective(s) of the CBO should govern over the decision of who within a community should be a member of the committee. The membership should be reviewed and changed if needed at least once a year.

A programme need to have an inbuilt advocacy strategy at the policy level in order to support the CBO activities at the community level especially in the sectors of education and health and market is also deemed key lesson for future programme design.

A well-defined, organised and resourced training intervention is a critical need for the sustainability of a CBO. Training is particularly needed on organization development, leadership development, services and resources available with government and non-government agencies.

Systematic intervention on creating linkage with relevant stakeholders should be an integral part of a CBO development strategy from the beginning.

Adequate time for nursing a CBO and taking it to a level is critical. In CLP although the official life span of a cohort is 18 months but in reality VDCs received only 12 months nursing from the programme because of the time spent on formation etc. Future programming would need to pay attention to this aspect perhaps. Instead of thinking about expanding programme intervention time for each cohort, other alternatives could be explored.

Annex 1

Methodology

Literature review

- Social Development review of 2010 by Smita Premchander
- A study into the effectiveness and sustainability of Village Development Committees, 2013 by Haneef C, Pritchard M, Alam Z and Rahman M
- CLP Annual Reports
- CLP operational Guide, 2007
- Minutes of VDC feedback meetings
- VDC doc. On progress by the CLP HDU on the recommendations made by the IMLC study into the effectiveness and sustainability of VDC
- CBC sustainability Strategy report.

Discussions held with CLP Senior Management and Operation Team members at Bogra

- Introduction meeting with CLP operations Director Wyn Davies and Human Development Unit manager Lokman Hossain on an over view of CLP and especially VDC, its evolution and current status. Thoughts of CLP management regarding a sustainable VDC model and potentials areas for linkage were elaborated from CLP part in the discussions.

- A discussion session with CLP Human Development Unit to get an over view of CLP Management and Operation structure and Organogram, structure of IMO operations, HD unit's work, capacity building process for staff and VDCs.
- Another discussion session with CLP Markets and Livelihoods Development Unit to understand their works and their thoughts on VDC in relation to CBCs CBO development.
- A brainstorming session to capture the thoughts of the CLP staff members on how to create a sustainable VDC model. Participants in the session comprised of Manager Human Development Unit, Manager Markets and Livelihoods Unit, coordinators of Microfinance, Health, Nutrition, Livelihoods, Agriculture, Milk and Meat market sub-units.

Discussions with VDCs, VSL groups, Social development Groups

- VDC from 2.2 cohort. Char Purbo Dhaniram under Kurigram sadar Upazila.
- VDC from 2.3 cohort. Char Shardobe under Fulbari Upazila.
- VDC from 2.5 cohort. Char Khamardamarhat under Nageshwari Upazila.
- VSL groups
- Social Development Groups.

Brainstorming session with CLP District level staff and IMO staff

- Meeting with Programme Managers (PM) from 4 IMOs, CLP District Managers for Microfinance, Milk Market, Livelihood development, Social development and Infrastructure development.
- Meeting with Community Development Officers (CDO) and Community Development Supervisors (CDS).

Meeting with IMO Senior Management

- Meeting with Executive Director , MJSKS
- Meeting with Programme Head , RDRS.

History digging with two oldest CLP staff

- Md. Shafiqul Islam, Microfinance Coordinator, CLP HQ. Joined CLP in July 2005
- Moshir Rahman, District SD Manager, Gaibandha. Joined CLP in July 2005.

Apart from those two managers who provided the key information on evolution of VDC, two more people also contributed in the discussion. They were:

- Zohora Khanum, SD Coordinator CLP HQ. Joined CLP in 2012
- Lokman Hossain, Unit Manger HD Unit, CLP HQ. Joined CLP in 2008.

Annex 2

VDC Yearly Calendar

Description of Activities	Month											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Arrange Annual sports for children to celebrate Victory day												
Provide free coaching thrice a week for the poorest children to help them do their home work <u>OR</u> Arrange basic education on Bangla and maths in those chars where there is no school												
Economic Activity for fund raising												
Ensure cattle rearing in every HHs in the village												
Ensure registration of every new born and new marriage in the village												
Ensure support in health related emergencies	As per need											
Stop open defecation by ensuring latrine in every house hold												
Disaster response work when needed	As per need											