



shiree

Overview of Change Reports and Self-Review Workshops (CMS 4)

May-July 2011 and
August-December 2011

SHIREE BRIEF

Shiree/EEP (Economic Empowerment of the Poorest) is a joint DFID and Government of Bangladesh initiative mandated to enable over 1 million people in rural and urban areas lift themselves out of extreme poverty and achieve sustainable livelihoods. Shiree currently supports 36 projects with 33 different NGOs under the Scale Fund and the Innovation Fund, has a programme of lessons learning and research into extreme poverty, and conducts local and national advocacy to achieve pro extreme poor policy change.

CMS BRIEF

The Change Monitoring System (CMS) is the shiree integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System. The purpose of the CMS is to deliver the informational requirements necessary to manage the shiree programme, to support programme delivery and to gauge success across all 4 outputs contained in the shiree logframe. The CMS can be broken down into 5 key components:

- **CMS 1:** Household Profile
- **CMS 2:** Monthly Snapshot
- **CMS 3:** Annual Survey
- **CMS 4:** Participatory Group Sessions
- **CMS 5:** In depth qualitative life histories and intervention tracking studies

CMS 4 REPORT

This document collates information from the Quarterly Change Reports and Self-Review Workshops of 10 Innovation Fund Round 1&2 partners in July 2011. The document picks out shared experiences of beneficiaries (BHHs) across the portfolio (from the Quarterly Change Reports) and examines these in more depth, taking NGO staff's own accounts from the Self-Review Workshops.

The document does not cover everything, and should not be treated as fact. This is because the accounts of BHHs have been analysed and vetted by NGO staff, and the Self-Review Workshops were again conducted with NGO staff. Additionally, the insightfulness of the reports used to write this overview, was closely related to how well written they were. That said the process flags up issues which were repeatedly experienced across the Innovation Fund portfolio.

OVERALL FINDINGS

Clear trends can be seen across Innovation Fund Round 1 and 2 NGOs during this period. While many are positive:

- Increased income/asset building
- Increased savings and opening of savings accounts
- Diversified food consumption
- Increased empowerment

Underlying challenges have also been highlighted:

- Continued vulnerability to natural conditions
- Lack of WATSAN facilities
- Access to safety nets still a concern
- Reports of assets dying

The common findings are now explored through the key DFID indicators:

Income and Expenditure

What the beneficiaries are saying

Many beneficiaries are reporting increased income from their project IGA, which unlike previous periods are now harvesting/ready to sell. Related to this, beneficiaries are reporting diversified income streams which is connected to new investments and asset building as well as other family members now becoming income earners.

Many beneficiaries have reported increased expenditure which remains a problem related to increased basic commodity prices, as one beneficiary said simply

"I can't buy good food due to high price"

Some beneficiaries link this to decreased capacity to save or worsening conditions. Equally, many beneficiaries report decreased income due to illness of family member and increased expenditure on medicine. One beneficiary reported *"I had to make loan for my husband's treatment. Finally my husband's leg was amputated"*. Some have reported increased expenditure on livestock treatment as a pressure.

Implications

To some extent the different impacts observed under this category are expected given the diversity of project designs, beneficiary groups and locations within the portfolio. It is clear that different households face different pressures and shocks which can dramatically alter household income and expenditure. Given the difference in experiences observed it is important to identify the other factors which deliver shocks households are unable to deal with, and examine ways in which resilience can be built and how each project can contribute to this.

What is being done/will be done about it

NGO: NGOs are continuing to provide support to beneficiaries to manage their IGAs and address the project specific challenges that they face.

Shiree: shiree has developed guidance and training on IGAs appropriate for elderly and disabled beneficiaries. The CMS 2 system is currently being piloted. This will enable the effective monitoring of household changes related to income and expenditure which will improve project monitoring.

Assets and Savings

What the beneficiaries are saying

The majority of beneficiaries are reporting that they are increasing their savings and many are opening a Bank Savings Account/DPS. Savings can also be in the form of increased food stocks which can reduce vulnerability to shocks and can improve nutritional status. Many households are also reporting asset buildings such as more livestock, household items, household repairs or reinvestment in existing IGAs. One beneficiary Laily said ***"I have constructed a house, purchased a cow at Tk. 11,000 and opened DPS of Tk.200. The bio-diversity centre has changed my life"***.

Within a few NGOs there is also evidence of beneficiaries taking new insurance policies. Theft of assets remains a problem, with reports of stolen livestock and crops, and some beneficiaries report that they still cannot save. Many beneficiaries have also reported that their assets have died and that they have been negatively affected by natural disasters/bad weather. Others have chosen to sell assets to pay for medical expenses or dowry.

Implications

Analysis is required into the factors which determine a household's ability to save and build assets. Where particular successes and challenges are being observed – and it is clear there are many instances of both - further analysis is required asking questions such as: What IGAs are particularly successful? Why are they successful? What complementary household/context characteristics can be observed? What NGO activities seem to be having a particularly positive impact on encouraging assets/savings?

What is being done/will be done about it

NGO: One NGO is working on village level interventions to protect beneficiaries from natural disaster (tidal surges). Where assets have died/been destroyed some NGOs plan to develop closer monitoring systems and improved linkages with local government for support. One NGO has highlighted plans to encourage more savings through the regular group meetings. **Shiree:** Shiree have compensated some beneficiaries where natural disasters/illness have damaged crops/livestock. Shiree plan to develop best practice guidance on savings on the basis of experiences thus far within the portfolio and wider practice.

Nutrition

What the beneficiaries are saying

There is a clear message from beneficiaries that they are consuming more diversified food, with a general message that nutrition is improving but remains a problem. Many beneficiaries are consuming their own produce, contributing to nutritional improvements. One beneficiary reported

“Previously we suffer from various diseases. We could not manage simple rice for three meals a day. Now we can take three meals a day. We take vegetables from my own production. Now our diseases have significantly reduced”

Given the period covered by this analysis was during munga, one NGO suggests that cases where nutritional status have stayed the same or improved could be seen as even more significant given the heightened nutritional vulnerability during this period.

Implications

The link between economic empowerment interventions and nutritional improvements within the household seem unclear. Evidence from other shiree studies produced during this period – particularly the CMS 3 report – show a mixed picture in terms of nutritional improvements. Further analysis is required to identify how nutritional advances can be made and the specific relationships between nutritional improvements and project activities.

What is being done/will be done about it

NGO: A number of NGOs are encouraging and supporting homestead vegetable cultivation to improve household nutritional levels.

Shiree: During this period shiree has produced a study assessing the impact of the nutritional package undertaken by NDP

Health and WATSAN

What the beneficiaries are saying

There are mixed responses across the portfolio with regards to Health & WATSAN. Most beneficiaries report that WATSAN is still a major concern but many also report that improvements have been made. Many beneficiaries report illness in the family, with negative consequences on income in terms of lost labour and increased expenditure on medicine. Health is related to the increases in income and assets previously described, as one beneficiary said

“Health condition of my family members have improved and did not suffer any kind of

illness in the last 3 months due to consumption of fresh vegetable from own garden. I have saved few amount of money and it is need to have a latrine, but I have no more space to install due to living in other land”

As mention above there are limitations to improvements in WATSAN given that many extreme poor are landless and do not therefore have space to build latrines. There is also evidence from some NGOs that increased natural disasters/poor weather (such as floods or heavy rainfall) damaged WATSAN facilities.

Implications

It is important to highlight the mixed findings – while it is positive that 55% reported improvements in health, the 23% who reported worsening conditions highlight how vulnerable household remain to health shocks. The very mixed reports related to WATSAN must relate to differences in initial WATSAN conditions between beneficiaries (CMS 3 shows very varied conditions) but may also relate to the NGO activities and the extent to which they've demonstrated good practice or established links with NGOs or local government.

What is being done/will be done about it

NGOs: A number of NGOs have dialogue with local government to improve services. A couple of NGOs have established links with other NGOs to provide latrines to particularly vulnerable beneficiaries.

Access to Safety Nets and Government Services

More numbers

- There was a large difference in month on month figures, with 18% receiving safety nets in June compared to 10% in July.
- The most common safety nets were: Old Age (3.5%), Widows Allowance (2.5%), VGD (2%), Cash for Education (2%).
- The amount of BHHs purchasing subsidized rice fell from 28% in June to 3% in July.

What the beneficiaries are saying

The message from beneficiaries on safety nets and government services is mixed. Beneficiaries are reporting high use of government health facilities, while many report that access to safety nets is still a problem. The majority of NGOs report examples of increased access to safety nets, one beneficiary for example reported

“In last three months I got card for 100 days works. I regularly communicated with UP chairman and member to get a card for 6 pari rice (6 bucket rice-VGF). They committed that they will provide me this card.”

Some NGOs highlight the need for bokshish to gain access. One beneficiary complained,

“The UP representative demands 2000 tk for enlisting onto widow allowance”

What is being done/will be done about it

Shiree: Shiree have recently produced best practice guidance on local government level advocacy for beneficiaries safety net access and run training events for all partner NGOs on the topic.

NGOs: NGOs continue to advocate with local government to improve safety net access.

Confidence and Empowerment

What the beneficiaries are saying

Many beneficiaries describe the transformation that the IGAs have had on their lives, linking increased income and the fact of owning an asset to improved positioning within the household and community. One beneficiary said

“Previously if there is any event in the community, no one invited me. And as my income was very low, so I tried to avoid others. Now my income has increased. People invite me in different events and I also participate”

Some NGOs report references to increased connections between beneficiaries and politics. Some beneficiaries mention themselves or their husband running in a local election, that politicians are more interested in them and give them time or that they have campaigned for a politician, as illustrated below – all examples can be seen as recognition of increased social standing.

“I have spent at least 15 days for election campaign finally the candidate have win as chairman from that my social status and acceptance increased.”

What is being done/will be done about it

Shiree are currently investigating practices related to gender/women's empowerment issues in the portfolio and are in the process of developing best practice and plans for a gender review of all activities.

