

Key Lessons Summary

The Primary Sources of lessons in this summary sheet are projects within DFID's Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP)*. The evidence for these lessons come from evaluations of the projects carried out by the Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership (RLEP). The full version of the Thematic Lessons

Thematic Lessons Papers (TLP) are intended for stakeholders who are involved in policy or programme design and influencing, in order to assist them in making informed decisions in

The TLPs draw together experiences of livelihoods in a particular thematic context. This sheet includes key lessons summary with the way forward on Livelihoods Impact - Reaching the Poor theme. The TLP series has more key sheets available on rural

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1. Poverty and equity objectives must be agreed by stakeholders and clearly expressed in project design, indicators, and expected outputs. Also the process of equity and rights analysis should become central to project design and poverty criteria clearly articulated.
2. Projects need to include a capacity for social analysis to improve their poverty targeting and understanding of the poor (traditionally omitted from natural resource technical projects).
3. More time and human resources need to be allocated to project design and overall duration to deal with elites and the local political economy. Capacity to handle conflict management and understanding of local power structures should become a priority project activity.
4. There are positive examples of services that reach the poor and excluded groups, some evidence of tangible gains for certain groups of poorer people, and some anecdotal evidence of livelihood changes. Most change has been in extension approaches where elite capture is not such an issue, and several extension models proved their effectiveness in reaching poor people.
5. Risk assessment that considers the risks for poor participants or target groups should be mandatory before project inception.
6. Building social capital and knowledge increases demand from the poor for their rights and at the same time improves accountability of the public sector to the poor people. Strengthening social capital for the poor should come before providing resource inputs.
7. Poverty analyses needs to capture broader concepts of well-being and an understanding of social empowerment and not just focus on incomes and physical assets. Changes in social or gender empowerment need to be documented and reflected in monitoring and evaluation.
8. Projects tended to overlook the quality of participation and wider livelihoods impacts, placing more emphasis on quantitative achievements.
9. Regular monitoring systems need to capture differential benefits- how different categories of stakeholder are impacted, particularly different categories of poorer households, and differences between categories of people-women and men, children and elderly, etc. Poverty is fundamentally an issue of power and entitlements to resources which projects may not be ready to address because few people are skilled in political economy analysis and projects with limited life-spans may be unable to afford the necessary time, attention and resources.
10. Before project inception, projects need to translate the process of how inputs should lead to expected benefits to the beneficiaries. Process monitoring should be encouraged with M&E becoming more empowering rather than traditionally extractive.
11. Few projects have captured evidence of livelihood or attitudinal changes among their poor target groups, and there is no shared analysis of wider poverty concepts among projects or with partners and communities.
12. Making the government more accountable for its service provisions, requires a programme approach working on both 'push' and 'pull' factors simultaneously.
13. Experiences suggest a poor record of collaborative working, particularly NGOs working with

*8 projects within DFID's Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP)

1. Fisheries Training and Extension Project- II (FTEP II)
2. Agricultural Services Innovation Reform Project (ASIRP)
3. Research and Extension in Farm Power Issues (REFPI)
4. Poverty Elimination Through Rice Research Assistance (PETRRA)
5. Support For University Fisheries Education and Research (SUFER)
6. Fourth Fisheries Project (FFP)
7. CARE Rural Livelihoods Programme (CARE RLP)
8. Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM2)

Way Forward?

A “**livelihood**” refers to the capabilities, assets and strategies that people use to make a living to achieve food and financial security through a variety of productive economic activities.

Livelihood structures are complex, usually revolving around the incomes, skills and services of all members of the family in an effort to reduce the risks associated with living near subsistence.

In Bangladesh nearly half of its population of 135 million still lives below the poverty line as measured by income, consumption, and ability to meet basic human needs.

Poor people in Bangladesh have a low level of education and limited access to land and hold low-paying and physically demanding occupations of low social status such as wage labour.

Hunger and poverty are the result of various factors that limit the ability of individuals, families and communities to meet their most basic needs. Efforts to improve livelihoods and food security among the poor are premised on: understanding the root causes of their poverty and hunger; enhancing their capabilities, assets, and activities; and contributing to trans-

1. Programme design needs to reflect the importance of improving the responsiveness of government institutions, so that extension services, local administration and local government bodies respond to the needs and interests of the poor.
2. Donors need to be confident that partner organizations already have, or will be able to introduce, the necessary incentives and checks to ensure that common poverty and equity objectives are not diluted. Programme design needs to look at what factors will motivate actors at all levels to bring change.
3. To bring about significant attitudinal change among the actors a system of proper incentives and other motivational activities such as arranging exchange visits for them and allowing them to participate in workshops etc. should be planned.
4. The process for proper accountability of all stakeholders should be generated. Cross monitoring system for activities and finance would be agreed and determined through participatory method.
5. There may be a greater understanding of social and political realities (elite capture, local drivers of change, political capture of government departments) and exclusion and disparity, but the fact that building social capital takes time ought to be recognised and taken care of.
6. Furthermore, improving livelihoods requires fully integrated approaches (such as the BRAC programme on Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty).
7. A number of the projects have shown how, given sufficient resources, it is feasible to make a significant improvement in the livelihoods of small numbers of people, particularly through extension activities. Future uptake of this should address several issues:
 - Department of Agricultural Extension and Department of Fisheries need to use knowledge and experiences of the past projects they must institutionalise organisational learning.
 - Ways to incorporate lessons from pilots into future programmes need to be found. Scale up of the project on the basis of pilot project experience needed to be done with care and with local resources. Project exit strategies do not address scale-up/out adequately.
 - Government departments must try to sustain such improvements through participation of the local stakeholders and paying more attention to the local knowledge and needs.
 - Projects may create false expectations among users and providers. But by being used to higher standards from projects, target groups may keep up pressure and demand more from government.
8. The reviews underlined the importance of improved coordination between government providers, NGOs and private organisations; and better interagency coordination, to reflect the multidimensional nature of poverty and to enable rights based work that addresses the push and pull sides. To do so:
 - Better collaboration and link, particularly between NGOs and government have to be developed. NGOs are funding dependent and GoB project driven better incentives are needed for collaborative work and policy influencing. Both GO and NGO need to coordinate more effectively on the same issues.
 - Institutions should be liberal and maintain coordination and cooperate with different

More details on each of the lessons can be found in TLP master document on [Livelihoods Impact - Reaching the Poor](#) or the lessons paper produced under the Thematic Lessons Paper Series-2. Both are accessible at RLEP.

Further Reading

- Bartlett, A. (2002):** Entry Points for Empowerment. CARE Bangladesh, June 2004. Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Bennet, L. (2002):** Using Empowerment and Social Inclusion for Pro-Poor Growth: A Theory of Social Change. Background Paper for the Social Development Sector Strategy Paper, World Bank.
- RLEP (2003-2004).** End of Project Reports of FTPE II, ASIRP, REFPI and Output to Purpose