

# RLEP

Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership

## CARE – Rural Livelihoods Programme

(A Project funded by Department for International Development UK,  
managed by the CARE Bangladesh)



### First Output to Purpose Review 13<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> January 2004

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Dhaka. 14 February 2004

## Acknowledgement

The RLEP team wishes to thank the support provided by the CARE project staff, their partners, and DFID-B staff during the review period. Appreciation is further extended to the many persons met outside the project, particularly villagers and local officials who gave up their time to provide valuable contributions and insights to how the project activities are impacting upon them. The ensuing discussions, recommendations and content of this document were considerably strengthened by these contributions.

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*This document is an output from a project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of the developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID. The correct citation for this report is:*

Bartlett A., Meyer, J., Kar K., Jay A., Alam Z. and Sarker A. (2004). First Output to Purpose Review Report. CARE Rural Livelihoods Programme. February 2004. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership. 93p.

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RLEP has been established by the Department For International Development (DFID) to: i) manage the project review process for all its rural livelihood projects in Bangladesh, ii) develop a RLEP communications strategy, to identify and facilitate the improvement of systems for lesson-learning and provision of information to decision-makers, iii) facilitate improvements in project monitoring with particular focus on developing project teams' capacity in livelihood outcome monitoring and evaluation and, iv) build up national consultancy capacity.

The Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership is represented by a consortium of three international (ITAD, Social Development Direct and Tango) and two national companies (BETS and Socio Consult) led by the UK based ITAD (Information Training and Development).



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## 2. Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
ANR	Agriculture and Natural Resources
APC	Assistant Project Coordinator
ASIRP	Agriculture Services Innovation and Reform Project
CARE B	CARE Bangladesh
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CO	Community Organiser
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DFID	UK Government Department for International Development
DoF	Department of Fisheries
EoP	End of Project
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FO	Field Organiser
FT	Field Trainer
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GO-IF	Go-Interfish, Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice-Fish Production Systems
HH	Household
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
LE	Local Entrepreneur
LIFE	Local Initiatives for Farmer Extension (CARE project)
LMP	Livelihoods Monitoring Project
Logframe	Project Logical Framework
LRSP	Long Range Strategic Plan
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NF	Network Facilitator
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NOPEST	New Options for Pest Management (CARE project)
NW	Northwest
OD	Organisational Development
OPR	Output to Purpose Review
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicators
PC	Project Coordinator / Team Leader
PCM	Participant Capacity Matrix
PDO	Project Development Officer
PM	Project Manager
PMR	Project Monitoring Report
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PNGO	Partner NGOs
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSE	Participatory Self Evaluation
PO	Project Officer
RBA	Rights Based Approach or Rights Based Activity
RLP	Rural Livelihoods Programme (CARE)
RLEP	Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership (DFID)
RLPC	Rural Livelihoods Programme Coordinator
SDC	Social Development Coordinator
SDU	Social Development Unit
SE	Southeast
SHABGE	Strengthening Household Access to Bari (homestead) Gardening Extension
TCU	Technical Coordination Unit
SHG	Self Help Group
TITAN	The IPM Trainers Association of Nepal
Tk	Taka
TO	Technical Officer
TOR	Terms of Reference
UP	Union Parishad

## Summary

For almost a decade, the agricultural projects managed by CARE in Bangladesh have been some of the best examples in the world of participatory extension aimed at poorer members of rural communities.

In the last three years, CARE has embarked on a challenging transition towards a more holistic approach to rural livelihoods that will give greater prominence to understanding the underlying causes of poverty and greater attention to addressing the rights of poor people.

CARE Bangladesh has also been under-going organizational changes that involve the creation of management structures based on geographical regions rather than technical sectors.

This is the context in which the Rural Livelihoods Programme was created in 2003, consisting of three DFID-funded projects:

- Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice–Fish Production Systems (GO-Interfish)
- Strengthening Household Access to Bari Garden Extension Services (SHABGE)
- Livelihoods Monitoring Project (LMP)

Since the last OPR, commendable progress has been made in improving collaboration between these projects. As a result, there is now greater consistency in approach, reduced duplication of efforts and improved distribution of expertise.

Important lessons are also being learned about the effectiveness of various approaches and strategies, in particular the group learning activities called Farmer Field Schools. RLP Staff are making considerable progress in understanding the impact of their work, and figuring out how it could be improved.

The OPR team employed a consultation process that aimed to assess *and* assist the progress being made by RLP staff. This approach is reflected in this report by the inclusion of a detailed Self Assessment. A large part of the subsequent External Assessment is an attempt to put flesh on a skeleton created by CARE Staff.

Given the relative success of CARE's technical extension activities, a valid argument could be made for maintaining the RLP's focus on agricultural production. The OPR team is cognizant, however, that CARE and DFID want to do something more than this. Consequently, an analysis is presented in this report that compares what is currently happening to what CARE says it wants to do in the future. The analysis would be far less harsh if a comparison was made between the current situation and what the projects set out to do some years ago.

The OPR team has concluded that the development of the RLP has reached a critical juncture and CARE should urgently make some decisions about future directions. This conclusion is reflected in three major recommendations:

1. CARE Bangladesh should undertake a process to explicitly define a *rural livelihoods vision* that which will act as a framework and guideline for RLP. A Vision Statement should be approved within 60 days.
2. With a vision statement as a starting point, the RLP should undertake participatory analyses to examine what interventions have had most impact on rural poverty and gender. This process should lead to the publication of a policy paper on Rural Livelihoods within six months. .
3. Once the vision statement and policy paper has been produced, these documents should guide the subsequent planning and implementation of a future programme, including the formulation of proposals to prospective donors.

One thing that has *not* been recommended by the OPR team is a further revision to the logframe. Although the current logframe is flawed (which is evident in the tables that attempt to measure progress against logframe indicators), it would be more appropriate for CARE to use the available time in developing the vision and policies that will guide the development of a future programme. DFID, meanwhile, will have to accept that the logframe is of limited use in assessing the achievements of the programme.

Other recommendations and suggestions have been made in this report to help RLP plan what needs to be done before the end date in March 2004, including:

- meetings should be held between DFID and CARE management with the aim of sharing expectations and clarifying funding possibilities for a new livelihoods programme to start in 2005;
- a detailed Gantt chart should be prepared as a basis for agreeing priorities and determining what can realistically be achieved in the next 14 months;
- RLP should not start any major new initiatives, nor expand any on-going pilots, that are not directly relevant to the needs of the communities in which CARE staff are currently working;
- the marketing component should be allowed to 'tick over' rather than accelerate its work, and that the priority for the next 14 months be to monitor and evaluate the social impact of the schemes that have been started rather than launch a lot of new schemes;
- Impact assessments should be carried out in communities where FFS have already been completed.
- RLP should bring in outside help to summarize, package and disseminate the experience of SHABGE and GO-Interfish

In addition to the specific suggestions made above, five inter-related themes run throughout this report:

- the prospect for greater application of the concept of *empowerment*, so that staff, partner organisations and participating communities gain the capacity and opportunity to make more decisions for themselves;
- the value of integrating the concept of *learning and changing* more thoroughly into the work of the programme, so that targeted communities and field staff are continually reflecting on what they are achieving;
- the desirability of giving greater attention to the issue of *who benefits* from RLP interventions, with particular attention on how different members of the community benefit, and how this changes over time;
- the potential for mainstreaming *social development*, with the result that gender, equity, and access to entitlements become issues that are fully integrated in the design and implementation of RLP interventions;
- the challenge of giving more attention to *process* and less to structure, so that more emphasis can be given to location-specific interventions rather than blueprints.

An issue of particular interest for DFID is the lessons that can be drawn from the RLP for the new Country Assistance Plan. It must be noted that while two-thirds of the participants of Go-Interfish and SHABGE are women, these are not 'gender projects'. The education and empowerment of women is taking place, but this has not been prioritised. Instead, more emphasis has been given to production, incomes and household food security. To date, a thorough study of the impact of RLP activities on women has not been carried out, although plans for such a study have been prepared. Observations made by the OPR team suggest that while the Farmer Field School has the potential to provide women with skills and social space that can improve their decision-making ability, some of the other activities that have been added to the RLP, such as organisational development and marketing, may be undermining this potential by giving a prominent role to male members of the community.



# 1. Background

## 1.1 Overview of CARE's Rural Livelihoods Programme

The Rural Livelihoods Programme is a relatively new entity, consisting of three projects:

- Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice–Fish Production Systems (GO-Interfish)
- Strengthening Household Access to Bari Garden Extension Services (SHABGE)
- Livelihoods Monitoring Project (LMP)

The GO-Interfish and SHABGE projects began in July 1999 for 5 and 6 years respectively. LMP was launched in December 2000 for 5 years. Between 1999 and 2002 these projects operated in a largely independent manner, although there were many similarities in purpose and methodology, and some geographical overlap.

In November 2002, a combined OPR of Go-Interfish and SHABGE was carried out. The OPR team recommended the appointment of a Rural Livelihoods Coordinator to oversee all three projects. The OPR also recommended that the logframes of the projects be revised to create greater consistency. A Coordinator was duly recruited and started work in May 2003. An RLP Logframe was approved in July and a revised budget was approved in September 2003.

The approved closing date for the Programme is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005. Although the three projects have been formally closed by DFID, they continue to exist within CARE in the form of separate work plans and staff, albeit with much closer collaboration than in the past.

The RLP goals as stated in the new logframe are:

1. *Replicable development models which address the root causes of poverty, and that include measurable livelihood and food security indicators, are developed, piloted, documented and shared by CARE with partners and other organizations.*
2. *Partner organizations and relevant service providers, at all levels, have a greater understanding of how social and civil infrastructure inhibit or impede the rural poor from improving their livelihoods and begin to adopt strategies which address these issues.*

Both of the field projects, GO-Interfish and SHABGE, have food production technologies as an entry point. In the case of GO-Interfish, the entry point is rice-fish cultivation, and in the case of SHABGE it is homestead horticulture.

The strategy used in both of these field projects is the Farmer Field School (FFS). This is a group-based learning activity. Members of the FFS are selected as a result of a 'well-being analysis' carried out by the community. In GO-Interfish, the FFS consists of two sub-groups, 25 men and 25 women who have separate meetings. In SHABGE the FFS are only conducted for women. The FFS groups have meetings every one or two weeks. The meetings are organised by a Field Trainer working for CARE, or a Field Organiser working for a partner NGO.

To date, the projects within the RLP have organised 6,368 FFS with a total of 153,580 participants. Two-thirds of the participants have been women.

During the FFS meetings, the members make observations at a study plot. Subsequently, they analyse their observations, and make their own conclusions about what production practices to use. This process is called 'experiential learning'.

The duration of the FFS is between 18 and 36 months, covering a number of cropping seasons. Once the members have learned the basic production technologies, they learn about other subjects based on their own interests. This might include nutrition, sanitation, poultry management, tree-planting, and women's rights.

Organisational development activities are also carried out, with the aim of making the FFS group sustainable. Many FFS groups have started saving schemes, some are carrying out marketing activities, and a growing number are registered with the Social Welfare Department.

The Livelihood Monitoring Project (LMP) was set up under the framework of the two aforementioned projects to develop a widely applicable system in monitoring change in livelihoods of the rural poor, and disseminate analyses of causes and issues behind livelihood changes.

## 1.2 Some thoughts on OPR methodology

The OPR team met a number of people, in both CARE and DFID, who expressed some concerns about the way in which Output to Purpose Reviews are normally conducted. Questions have been raised about the effectiveness of the OPR as a means for both *assessing* progress and – equally important – *assisting* progress.

Although there is a huge variation in the conduct of OPR, it is possible to fit most of them into a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum there is an extractive fault-finding process that generates a long list of remedial instructions that will dominate the work of the project until the next review. At the other end of the spectrum there is a consultative and supportive process that helps project managers to think more strategically about their work and make better decisions of their own.

The team that carried out *this* review was of the opinion that a process near the consultative end of the spectrum was needed. The reasons for this are:

- The RLP is going through a major transition, from a cluster of projects supported by a single donor towards a more integrated longer-term effort that is owned by CARE itself.
- DFID Bangladesh is seeking ways of establishing a new kind of relationship with organisations: developing partnerships that are different to the contractual type of implementing arrangements that were prevalent until recently.
- RLP staff are exceptionally committed, have a wealth of experience, and are already seeking ways of making their strategies and activities more effective.
- Without wanting to contradict the last point, CARE has often used consultants to solve their problems for them. The response to OPR recommendation has been to get a consultant who makes more recommendations. The resulting lack of ownership leads to the ‘letter’ of recommendations being implemented rather than the ‘spirit’.
- The unwritten goal of RLP is the empowerment of rural people, especially the poor and women, and experiential learning is one of the strategies used by the programme to achieve this goal. The members of the OPR team thought it would be a good idea to ‘practice what we preach’.

The idea of ‘process consultation’ is not a new one. It can be defined as *a set of activities... that help the client to perceive, understand and act upon the process events that occur in the client’s environment in order to improve the situation as defined by the client*<sup>1</sup>. The OPR team applied the idea of process consultation in a number of ways:

- conducting workshops during which RLP staff made their own assessment of what they have achieved, what they have learned, and what they would like to do in the future.
- developing concepts and an analysis that could help RLP staff to think strategically about their work, and enable them to prioritise the various things they are trying to do.
- emphasising throughout the process that OPR recommendations should be seen as one input into the planning process, and not a substitute for prudent decision-making by RLP staff
- attempting to produce a report that (a) might have some sustained usefulness for both CARE and DFID, (b) gives due recognition to the ideas of the people who were consulted during the mission, and (c) doesn’t pretend to be the work of an infallible and omniscient team of reviewers.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Process Consultation Vol 1: Its role in organizational development’ Edgar Schein (1988, Addison Wesley)

Like all OPRs, this review was guided by a Terms of Reference. The consultation process was, therefore, circumscribed by the need to address a number of specific issues that had been delineated in the Scope of Work. All of the issues mentioned in the TOR are addressed in this report (see 1.4) but there has been an attempt to integrate them into a coherent analysis rather than deal with them one by one.

The result of this process is a document that is longer than the OPR team originally planned, and undoubtedly longer than some DFID advisors would wish for. Nevertheless, the team hopes that this will be a useful resource book for the people who are managing the RLP during the challenging months ahead.

### 1.3 How we did it

The OPR Team consisted of the following people:

- Andrew Bartlett - Team Leader, Ag. Extension & Rural Development
- Zaruhul Alam – Governance & Rights Based Approaches
- Alice Jay – Rights and Social Development
- Kamal Kar - Participatory Livelihoods Research
- John Meyer - Monitoring and Evaluation
- Arif Sarkar – Agricultural Markets

The OPR started with briefings at DFIID and CARE offices in Dhaka on 13th January. The debriefing took place on 27<sup>th</sup> January, followed by a Key Findings Forum on 29<sup>th</sup>.

The team had four days of field visits in the North West of Bangladesh, and three days in the South East. During this time the team met with between 40 and 50 field staff of the RLP, and between 400 and 500 rural people who had participated in activities of the GO-Interfish and SHABGE projects. During this period, meetings were also held with staff of more than 15 partner NGOs and a number of Government Line Ministries.

In Dhaka, meetings were held with Senior management of CARE Bangladesh and a number of DFID Advisers.

The Team Leader submitted two documents on 29<sup>th</sup> January, prior to the departure from Dhaka. Firstly, a Debriefing Report containing an analysis of key issues and tentative recommendations. Secondly, a Key Lessons Paper with the title *“CARE’s Rural Livelihoods Programme: trying to get the balance right between structure and process”*.

## 1.4 Terms of Reference

The objectives given to the team were as follows:

- Assess progress towards the achievement of the programme Purpose as set out in the RLP programme logical framework. It will also review the progress against Outputs, consider the validity of these Outputs as currently specified, the need for any modifications and verify that the assumptions (and risks) are still valid using DFID's Office Instructions as a guideline. If appropriate, the OPR will also consider other means of assessing the performance of the projects.
- Assess the validity of the existing approaches and strategies being used to contribute to poverty alleviation and informing and influencing policy for the benefit of the poor and develop recommendations to enable the project to more effectively achieve this.
- Review progress made towards the new strategic direction and project integration under the new programme.
- Assess the progress of milestones and recommendations agreed since the last OPR of January 2002.
- Document and present key lessons learnt and share findings with DFID-B, CARE-B and key partners.

The assessment of progress using DFID's standard tables has been submitted in a separate document. All other objectives are addressed in this report.

As a supplement to the OPR objectives, the team were provided with a Scope of Work that delineated 15 issues. The following table shows the sections of this report that address each of these issues.

i) Review progress towards delivering RLP under the new management structure. Specifically consider key challenges and priorities the management are facing in regard to establishing the new structure.	2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 4.2.1, 4.1.3
ii) Comment on the synergies that have developed between the previous SHABGE and GOIF projects and how the management teams have embraced the potential for wider lesson learning, information exchange and cross-fertilisation.	2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 3.1.2
iii) Review the progress of <i>group development</i> within FFSs with respect to indicators stated in the RLP logframe and with regard to their potential to become future CBOs	2.3, 3.2, 3.3.3
iv) Critically assess the options for FFS (or CBO) representing an institutional model, incorporating a sustainable livelihoods approach, that focus on the participation by the poorest people, ownership and needs of farmers as well as addressing the issues of gender and equity.	2.6, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4.4
v) Comment on specific actions taken and decision made to undertake rights based programming within the RLP. How far has CARE moved in defining its role in using RBA and progress towards providing a framework and guidelines for staff which underpins	2.4, 2.5, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.3.2, 3.4.1, 4.1.3

RBA within the RLP.	
vi) During the last OPR greater emphasis on local capacity building was recommended. Comment on progress made towards enhancing the RLP and PNGO staff capacity to deliver on a more diversified livelihoods approach.	2.6, 3.3.3, 3.4.1, 3.4.4
vii) Comment on how the partnership approach has led to new ways of working (as opposed to sub-contracting) and address changes in PNGOs responsiveness to rural communities.	3.4.2
viii) Comment on progress made towards closer cooperation, collaboration and joint working with local staff of line Ministries and Departments.	3.4.3
ix) Comment on the revised role of LMP component of the programme. To what extent has it achieved and likely to achieve (through assessment of its strategic plans revised logframe?) its primary function as an livelihood monitoring unit able to deliver valuable outcome based information and process indicators for internal programmatic management. How effectively has LMP made it's learning more accessible to a wider audience.	3.5.5
x) Examine reformulation of projects M&E systems presently under the Social Development Unit and consolidation process under the revised LMP component. Compare and review the information which is being collected by the M&E unit and LMP.	3.5.1, 3.5.4
xi) Comment on how the M&E system has been refined to ensure the programme is responding to needs of poor households.	2.6, 3.1.3, 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 3.5.4
xii) Related to the above point # ix., review the progress made in developing innovative communication strategies to ensure these important findings make their way effectively to policy makers and actors in the national poverty debate.	3.3.5
xiii) Review the start-up progress of the RLP Agriculture Markets Initiative essentially focusing during these early stages of implementation on ensuring that the strategies and action plans are in line with achievement of overall purpose. Particular attention should focus on how this initiative will impact on the poor through strengthening business linkages and lead to improving women's market opportunities. Assess and comment on outcome indicators and the monitoring and impact assessment approaches adopted for this largely exploratory initiative.	3.3.4
xiv) Significant efforts have been made to address gender mainstreaming and equity in the RLP pre-cursor projects, SHABGE and GO-Interfish. Comment on how the programme is progressing with implementation of an integrated gender action plan, effectiveness of tracking and monitoring system for gender related benefits and generally what lessons can be learned from processes adopted by RLP to improve women and girl's status. Identify examples of good practice and focus on achievements specifically contributing towards the DFID Country Assistance Plan (CAP). To what extent are other equity concerns addressed through the programmes?	3.2, 3.3, 3.4.1, 3.5.4
xv) Comment on how RLP is orientating itself towards supporting the DFID CAP " <i>Women and Girls First</i> ". DFID Bangladesh Country Assistance Plan 2003 – 2006" and identify areas within the capacity of the project framework where greater focus may be applied to supporting achievement of CAP objectives. Review the revised relevant output drafted at the last OPR with subsequent comments by DFIDB advisers to ensure activities and indicators do focus sufficiently on women and girls.	4.2.1, 4.2.4

## 2. Self Assessment

### 2.1 Changes that have taken place during the last 14 months.

The following information was collected from three workshop sessions involving approximately 30 Field Trainers and 15 Project Officers. Two sessions were held in the North-West (Thakurgoan and Pirgonj) and one session in the South East (Cox's Bazaar).

This is the view from the frontline with regard to what has changed since the last OPR.

- Formation of RLP from three existing projects: LMP, GO-Interfish and SHABGE. Project logframe has been changed.
- The technical teams – SDU and TCU – have been reorganized to support both field projects; joint training and workshops have been conducted.
- Merger of some field offices has taken place; there has been improved collaboration and sharing of experience among staff; some joint activities have been conducted (e.g. agriculture fairs).
- A more holistic approach to livelihoods has been adopted; this includes more attention to fish, poultry, livestock not just rice and vegetables; it also includes more attention to social issues.
- The 'phased FFS approach' is being piloted in order to facilitate experiential learning and an understanding of the science behind the technology.
- A Rights Based Approach is now being implemented in the form of activities that improve access to khas land and open water bodies.
- There is increased female participation in various activities, and women are being provided with more information about social issues, health, family planning and sanitation.
- Organisational development activities have been increased, to create CBOs and Self-Help Groups that will improve sustainability; activities of these groups include savings schemes and income-generating activities.
- The RLP has started some 'joint FFS', conducted by both CARE staff and PNGOs.
- Efforts are being made to improved linkages and networking with service providers in various aspects of livelihoods.
- Marketing activities have been started.

## 2.2 Progress against recommendations of previous OPR

Summary of Recommendations and Progress made OPR 2002 Recommendations for Go Interfish and Shabge Projects (This table was prepared by the RLP Coordinator at the request of the OPR team).

Recommendations	Progress as of January 2004	Remarks or Proposed follow up
<p>1. Appointment of a Rural Livelihoods Programme Co-ordinator by January 2003</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progressive harmonization of the work of existing PCs</li> </ul>	<p>Prior to the recruitment of the RLP Coordinator, the RLP management team was established with leadership and support from the ACD – West. The RLP Coordinator was hired and in place by May 2003. The RLP coordinator had worked previously in Bangladesh for a total of 7 years, including three with CARE Bangladesh.</p> <p>What has been done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RLP Social Development Unit (SDU) and the Technical Coordination Unit (TCU) were reconfigured from staff previously based within the Shabge and Go IF projects. Both units now serve the needs of RLP.</li> <li>PCs and unit coordinators (SDU and TCU) are planning their activities more collaboratively through the RLP Management Team meeting, RLP Coordination Meeting and daily communication.</li> <li>In order to improve oversight over the partnership process the Shabge NW and GO-IF PCs will jointly supervise a Partnership APC.</li> <li>TCU is responsible for capacity building of all partners.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved distribution of technical expertise and advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TCU now provides technical support to both Shabge and Go-Interfish staff through training, collaboration, and oversight. The TCU is overseeing the review of the FFS technical modules for both projects.</li> <li>SDU provides oversight and insight for social (rights, gender, and local governance) issues for RLP rather than the individual projects, as expressed in the Learning and Change document which is explicitly rooted within the program. The SDU also oversees the M&amp;E unit, which is responsible for M&amp;E for both GO IF and Shabge.</li> <li>The future Markets advisor, and Markets APC will provide support to both projects through the Markets TOs and to other CARE projects as well.</li> </ul>	



Recommendations	Progress as of January 2004	Remarks or Proposed follow up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>liason with DFID</li> </ul>	<p>The RLPC maintains regular communication with DFID by arranging topical meetings (ie. Markets and LMP) with the respective advisors, and by contacting the Program Support officer about daily issues and reporting.</p> <p>The RLPC has also been fully available for activities and meetings arranged by RLEP, by attending the sharing session for the cluster 2 OPR, individual meetings on M&amp;E and communication, and by providing feedback on the draft tripartite agreement. Joint field visits by DFID and CARE staff to RLP working areas have been instrumental in furthering insights, particularly regarding girls and women's issues.</p>	
<p>Preparation of proposals</p>	<p>The RLPC is the lead person for developing a NW program strategy within the next 7 months. The NW program team is composed of staff from within RLP, other CARE programs, and partner organizations. Within the context of that process a program proposal will be developed for submission to DFID by July 2004. The planned process for development of the proposal is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The findings from on-going studies (gender, FFS review, social capital etc.) planned and / or already completed by SDU will be shared with the RLP and NW team for incorporation into program strategy.</li> <li>Based on results from the SE baseline, two studies will be implemented on key livelihood issues: 1) debt and migration; and 2) health. Data for the first study in the SE has been collected and analyzed. The research will be continued in the NW from January 04. The health study will be initiated in the north in March.</li> <li>Facilitate a residential workshop with community participants to identify their key concerns and how to address these issues.</li> <li>Facilitate a workshop in February 2004 with key staff and partners in the NW to identify "the root causes of poverty" and the most relevant opportunities to improve the status of women and children.</li> <li>Based on the results of the above, an additional workshop will be facilitated to develop a program strategy logframe and the approach to program implementation</li> <li>The RLPC will then prepare a draft proposal for review by relevant stakeholders, CARE Staff and DFID.</li> </ul>	

Recommendations	Progress as of January 2004	Remarks or Proposed follow up
<p>2. Both projects come to an end Dec 2004 and Revised OVIs to be submitted to DFID for approval end of Dec 2002</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was ultimately agreed that all three program components (Shabge, GO – IF, and LMP) would close by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005. (Reference letter from Duncan King November 27, 2002)</li> <li>A workplan to describe the newly formed Rural Livelihood Program was prepared and approved in April 2003.</li> <li>DFID then suggested that the projects be formally closed and that there would be only one RLP budget, Project Number, Fund Code and one logframe.</li> <li>The RLP logframe was developed and approved in July 2003.</li> <li>A revised RLP budget for October 2003 through March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005 was approved in September.</li> <li>The Shabge, GO IF and LMP budgets were formally closed by the end of September and a new fund code established in October 2003.</li> <li>The Workplan was revised and submitted to DFID in December 2003.</li> </ul>	<p>Submit revised workplan and FD6 to NGO bureau.</p>
<p>3. Collaborative Field Planning in areas of geographical overlap</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TCU is responsible for technical and management training of staff and partners for both Shabge and Go-interfish. Organizational development support through VSO is now provided to both Shabge and GOIF. Joint training by INTRAC has also been organized by the TCU.</li> <li>There is now joint planning in Thakurgoan, Nilphamari, Dinagipur and Rangpur field offices.</li> <li>Until January 2003 there was one PM-partnership, a PM-training, a PM-M&amp;E and two PDOs-advocacy and communication in GO-IF. The positions of PM-partnership and PM training unit then went under the TCU, while the M&amp;E unit &amp; PDOs-advocacy and communication went under SDU.</li> <li>In Thakurgoan office there are two PMs but instead of managing one project or the other, they have divided up the area of the district and are providing support and management to both Shabge and Go IF staff. This process has been initiated since January 2004, with the recruitment of 2 new PMs after the former PMs were assigned to other positions within RLP.</li> <li>PC/APC of GO-IF and PC Shabge-NW have been working in close collaboration and jointly planning activities</li> </ul>	<p>SDU has completed training on rural power structure and resource mapping.</p>

Recommendations	Progress as of January 2004	Proposed follow up
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team-building exercise for staff of both project. Senior project staff participated in a series of joint workshops, which eventually culminated in the RLP Workplan.</li> <li>• In addition to the RLP management team meeting there is also a quarterly RLP coordination meeting, which includes all of the PMs and allows for more detailed discussion and planning of key issues ie. Partnership, training plan, etc. The first coordination meeting was in October and required 2 days. Meeting minutes are available for all RLP management and coordination meetings.</li> <li>• Shabge and GO IF staff participate in LMP data collection processes and studies, as well as, the other studies coordinated by the SDU as described in Learning and Changing.</li> </ul>	
<p>4. Formation of area based learning circles to share ideas and experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Project managers oversee formation of learning circles in their operating areas. A concept paper was written and shared with PMs, but the process has not proved to be practical in implementation.</li> </ul>	<p>RLP plans to do a more in-depth review of the FFS approach as being implemented by CARE. There are two primary issues to be investigated:</p> <p>1) is the FFS approach the most effective approach for establishing sustainable CBOs?, and</p> <p>2) What is the impact of the technical and experiential learning aspects of the approach in enabling farmers to increase their agriculture production.</p>

Recommendations	Progress as of January 2004	Proposed follow up
<p>5. Group development should be an integral part of FFS, and exemplary case studies should be prepared to inform field staff in this area (by March '03)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make LIFE-NOPEST learning sessions on group development available to all Upazila teams</li> <li>• Using Uphoff's tool on 'participatory self evaluation of groups' as a model, the M &amp; E unit has developed a tool that FFS groups can use to set their own goals and monitor progress. This tool is being implemented by SHABGE, and will shortly be implemented by Go-IF.</li> <li>• Shabge also developed OD guidelines.</li> <li>• GO IF is also using Access to Services Inventory and Shabge is using Yenn diagram to assess progress in terms of FFS groups' and FFS paras access to services.</li> </ul>	<p>Within the scope of the FFS review we will go back to phased out FFS to learn how we could have better helped them in OD. Draft TOR is available.</p>
<p>6. Field staff should not be expected to get involved in rights-related advocacy beyond the FFS group, nor engage in any legal, political or social disputes, but field staff should be provided with rights training material to raise awareness of FFS groups on women's rights, entitlements to public services and regulations concerning access to land, water and markets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CARE/DFID workshop to discuss RBA within RLP was held on January 19, 2003. Documentation of this workshop is available. It was concluded that CARE will continue field implementation of rights issues related to household food security (i.e. Access to <i>khas</i> land and water bodies, and sharecropper arrangements). Regarding other rights issues (eg. Dowry, shalish) RLP will only conduct exploratory research to deepen its insight – but not involve itself in field interventions</li> <li>• CARE to continue to execute activities with a bearing on rights as per the needs expressed by FFS groups and capacities of field staff. RLP has identified the right to water bodies as a primary pilot activity, which is being well monitored and documented. FFS members have identified other issues, which are of importance to them, which are more "livelihood" related than "rights" related, for example, water and sanitation. Other issues include access to inputs and government services.</li> <li>• Available training materials for field based staff include: rights and gender training; RBA analytical framework; family law; gender; advocacy; Bangla advocacy tools guide, rural power structures and governance; and marketing.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing: Materials for accessing government services</p>

Recommendations	Progress as of January 2004	Proposed follow up
<p>7. A renewed and combined commitment to gender issues with an integrated action plan prepared by end of March '03</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RLPC to oversee the preparation of an integrated gender action plan by June 2003. <i>RLPC was not in place until May and then finally in July. Unfortunately there were more critical priorities to address before the gender action plan.</i></li> <li>• Literature review on Women in Agriculture was completed in July 2003.</li> <li>• Draft gender study TOR is available.</li> <li>• Four gender action plans (2 Shabge, GoIF, and LMP) which address organizational and programmatic issues. GO-IF and Shabge have a joint RLP gender committee which implements the gender action plan.</li> </ul>	<p>Three FGDs on women's mobility, interactions with others, and access to markets have been completed. Although women wish to increase their incomes and gain control over monies earned, they do not wish to frequent markets to purchase or sell goods, rather they wish to work through middlemen. Loreta, not sure I have time to edit these findings, I'll try. Womens issues will be more comprehensively analyzed within the process of developing a NW program strategy and future proposal by the end of January.</p>
<p>8. Pilot activities to create a tripartite relationship between representatives of FFS groups, UPs and local staff of DAE/other line ministries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CARE and DFID agree on the use of project funds for this purpose. <i>Was decided to not use funds for this purpose, as expressed in DFID's response of November 2002).</i></li> <li>• Livelihoods Challenge Fund guidelines redrafted and disseminated to relevant governmental and non governmental institutions. Seventeen projects on various livelihood related issues have been funded through GO-IF and Shabge projects and are being implemented by the PNGOs in alliance.</li> <li>• Appoint two full time members of staff to oversee the administration of the LCF. <i>One has been appointed.</i></li> <li>• Initiated tripartite governance pilot in district Dinaipur in October 2003. A Report is available. Other districts are in the process of developing pilots.</li> </ul>	<p>A report on the LCF is being drafted.</p>

Recommendations	Progress as of January 2004	Proposed follow up
<p>9. LMP to take the lead in producing a consolidated plan for case studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SDU to work with LMP to determine the focus and siting of CASE studies in the Northwest and with SHABGE staff in the Southeast</li> <li>• Case studies to review the water bodies initiative have been completed and a report is forthcoming.</li> <li>• Following a rationale provided in the RLP workplan, Instead of doing case studies LMP is doing more in-depth thematic studies, specifically: 1) debt and migration; and 2) health.</li> <li>• LMP is also working on identifying key livelihood indicators and means of measurement for these indicators.</li> </ul>	
<p>10. RLPC to take the lead on Publicity, Education and Advocacy Plan</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include relevant responsibilities in the RLPC's job description and determine OVs against which progress can be measured at the 2003 Output to Purpose Review.</li> </ul> <p>Accomplished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since joining RLP the Program Coordinator has focused on understanding the program components, their strengths and weaknesses, and their relationship to the wider CARE mission. While there may be certain issues in which RLP should take the lead with respect to publicity, education and advocacy, this should be undertaken in the wider context of CARE and other projects/programs. As RLP has been "grounded" within the ANR sector, this is an obvious arena for the identification of relevant issues for analysis and advocacy. CARE has been invited to attend meetings and workshops on GMOs, Biodiversity, IPM and Fisheries, by several international organizations, including CGIAR and FAO. These forums require RLP to maintain an expertise on these issues while also trying to address other livelihood issues.</li> <li>• Through the Livelihood Monitoring project and the Social Development unit, RLP is exploring other livelihood issues. Since the last OPR the results of the SE LMP baseline were presented and discussed in Dhaka and Cox's Bazaar with key partners and stakeholders. Much of this learning was referred to in a number of newspaper articles and on television and is being used and referred</li> </ul>	<p>Participate in an international FAO workshop (Thailand – March 2004) on the gender dimensions of rice production. Information available from a variety of documents will be referred to in a workshop with partners and stakeholders in February 2004.</p>

	<p>to as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data on debt from the LMP baseline was referred to when a debate for the emergence of "Micro credit Regulatory Commission" was initiated.</li> <li>• The results of the study have led to a more in-depth study on debt and migration, the results of which we hope to present in March 2004.</li> <li>• Dr. Zulfiqar Ali of BIDS has informed RLP that they are in the process of doing exploratory analysis using the LMP information.</li> <li>• UNICEF used the data in preparing a document called "Social development in Environmental sanitation, Hygiene and Rural water supply project". They also used the data to inform about gender inequality and poverty indicators.</li> <li>• Edward Mallorie (IFAD-Consultant) has been provided with the LMP database (as requested), which he felt would be useful to do some further analysis for future program development for IFAD in Bangladesh.</li> <li>• NW Institutional Analysis, In Pursuit of Power, and the NW baseline reports are all on CARE and other websites and were also presented in workshops, reported in the newspaper, broadcast on television, and discussed in the newsletter.</li> <li>• RLP participated in conference on Extreme Poverty (organized by BIDS) and the Hardcore Poor (organized by Proshika).</li> <li>• The RLPC also participates in the Local Consultative Group for ANR, primarily a donor forum to address broader issues within ANR.</li> <li>• RLP coordinates with colleagues representing CARE in other LCGs for Food Security and the Environment, and supported attempts to become involved in the Gender LCG.</li> </ul>	
<p>11. The next OPR will take place in September 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that enough consultants are engaged to cover all necessary areas in given time</li> <li>• The time of the OPR was changed to January 2004.</li> </ul>	

### 2.3 Progress against the logframe

This table was prepared by the M&E Unit at the request of the OPR team.

OVIS	Progress		Source of Information/ Remarks
	SHABGE	GO-IF	
<b>Goal : Contribute to poverty reduction in Bangladesh.</b>			
1. Replicable development models which address the root causes of poverty, and that include measurable livelihood and food security indicators, are developed, piloted, documented and shared by CARE with partners and other organizations.			Livelihood baseline and follow up reports, finalized set of livelihood indicators, NW program strategy document.
2. Partner organizations and relevant service providers, at all levels, have a greater understanding of how social and civil infrastructure inhibit or impede the rural poor from improving their livelihoods and begin to adopt strategies which address these issues.			Workshop documents and key informant interviews.
<b>Purpose: To improve the livelihood security of men and women living in 221,375 poor and vulnerable rural households in Bangladesh.</b>			
1. Decrease in the percentage of partner households that face difficulties in accessing food during lean periods.	77%	37%	For SHABGE see <b>Participant Profile Re-survey</b> , p. 29-30, Tables 9 and 10. This figure was calculated by combining the percentage of participants who indicated food security from 7-12 months. Please note that the baseline does not break down the number of months that participants were food secure, but provides an average, with participants stating food security for 5, 1 months. It is therefore not possible to compare percentage wise. However, the re-survey found that after 18 months of FFS membership, participants report on average 8.9 months food security. This rise in food security should be understood not just in the context of 'vegetable production', but can be partly attributed to a rise in fruit and timber tree production and poultry rearing. See OVI 2 below.  For Go-Interfish see <b>Participants' Capacity Matrix</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Round), p. 7, Table 13. Please note that this decrease is calculated by adding the percentages of FFS respondents who scored in the capacity scale 3 "can provide food for most of the lean period" and capacity scale 4 those who "can secure food for the whole of the lean period" compared to non-FFS participants who fall into the same scores. (Capacity Area 4, Scores 3, and 4, Table 13). Please note that the types of households that work with Go-Interfish have greater food security to begin with, as access to land is one of the requirements for FFS membership.



OVIS	Progress		Source of Information/ Remarks
	SHABGE	GO-IF	
2. Percentage of FFS participants with declining assets is lower by comparison with non-participants	See Comment	56%	<p>Although SHABGE does not monitor this specific OVI, the <b>Field Monitoring Survey</b> (a re-sampling of the baseline) examines the differences between FFS members at initial membership (July 2002) and at 18 months into the FFS cycle (December 2003) in terms of various types of productive assets:</p> <p>A.) Increases in Fruit Bearing Trees: 100 percent (p. 37, Table 18)                      B.) Increases in Timber Trees: 80 percent (p. 39, Table 20)                      C.) Increases in Poultry Birds: 60 percent (p. 39, Table 21)                      D.) Increases in possession of tube wells or treadle pumps: 7 percent (p.46, Table 28)                      E.) Increases in Ponds and Ditches: 2 percent (p. 46, Table 29)</p> <p>Go-Interfish see <b>Participants' Capacity Matrix</b> (2<sup>nd</sup> Round), Capacity Area 1a, Score 4, (p. 1, Table 1) (FFS Participants – Non-FFS Participants) – 56 percent refers to the difference between FFS participants and non-FFS participants who fall into capacity score 4 which captures the percentage of households who have "increased the diversity and intensity of productive assets" during the last 12 months (2 seasons within the FFS for participants).</p> <p>For SHABGE the <b>Field Monitoring Survey</b> indicated a 8 percent change (combining moderate decision making power and high decision making power, equal to male counterpart) in women's ability to influence decision-making related to children's marriage (p. 56, Table 40), compared to the baseline. The report also indicates a 18 percent change (combining moderate and high decision making power) in women's ability to influence decision-making related to household cash expenditures (p.51, Table 34), compared to the baseline.</p> <p>For Go-Interfish see <b>Participants' Capacity Matrix</b> (2<sup>nd</sup> Round), Capacity Area 2 E, score 4, (p. 4, Table 8. The findings indicate that 49 percent of female FFS participants, compared to 11 percent female non-FFS participants, have the ability to influence "major decisions" made in the households. Here "major decisions" were defined by women themselves.</p>
3. 60 % of women FFS members show higher levels of participation in household decision making related to: a. marriage plans for daughters & sons b. daily cash expenditure	a) 8 % b) 18 %	38%	<p>For Go-Interfish see <b>Participants' Capacity Matrix</b> (2<sup>nd</sup> Round), Capacity Area 1a, Score 4, (p. 1, Table 1). Please note that the question asked does not just inquire about increases in income solely, but also asks about "increases in the diversity and intensity of productive assets". Further, this question is asked of the household, not individuals, in light of Go-Interfish employing a "household" approach, where generally husband and wife are members of the two farmer field schools formed in the para. It is thus not possible to disaggregate this data by gender.</p>
<b>Output 1: Enhanced utilization of local resources for increasing homestead and agricultural production, processing, and other value-added activities.</b>			
1. 75% of target households (at least 10 percent of these are headed by women) increase the portion of their monthly cash HH income on average by 15% by EoP	25%	87%	<p>For SHABGE see the <b>Field Monitoring Survey Report</b> that indicates that there has been a 25 percent increase in 'homestead based income'. (p. 42, Table 24). However, this data does not refer to monthly cash income, but is averaged over time. This data pertains to women only, as it looks at increases in income from homestead production of SHABGE participants.</p>

OVIS	Progress		Source of Information/ Remarks
	SHABGE	Go-IF	
2. 75 % of FFS members (at least 50 percent are women) are applying new option(s) for increasing homestead and/or agriculture production from month 18 of the FFS formation	88%	92%	For SHABGE see <b>Participants' Capacity Matrix</b> , Capacity Area 2A, Scores 2,3, and 4. Here, participants expressed that they have applied some or most of the knowledge they have learnt from the project. Women only.  For Go-Interfish see <b>Adoption Calculation</b> for FFS Members (Amon 2002), which indicates that 92 percent of participating households have adopted at least one new technical component. (Disaggregated data indicates that 85 percent female FFS members and 90 percent male FFS members have adopted at least one new technical component).  For SHABGE see <b>Service Access Inventory</b> (Dec 2003). The data indicates that just over 80 percent of women participants have received at least one homestead production-related service. Report is forthcoming.
3. 50 % of FFS farmers receiving at least one service useful for homestead and agriculture production from month 18 of the FFS formation	80%	DAE 45 % DOL 82 % DOF 15 %	For Go-Interfish see <b>Service Access Inventory</b> (Dec 2002). DAE figures see p. 4; DOL figures see p. 2; and DOF see p. 6). Please note that these percentages refer to primary FFS members, secondary adopters, as well as others in the community (para) who have gained access to any of these services.
4. 15 % of FFS farmers increase their income from other "value added activities".			Although for SHABGE there is no specific data on the percentage increases in income from poultry rearing, fruit and timber tree production, the increases in various homestead-related activities (outlined in the comments column of OVI 2 – Purpose Level) suggest increases in income from "other value-added activities".  Although for Go-Interfish there is no specific data on the percentage increases in income from poultry, the high demand for poultry services indicates that this is a 'popular' income-earning strategy among FFS member that is not directly promoted through the project. In addition, the <b>M &amp; E Cost Benefit Analysis</b> indicates that on average FFS households who have adopted different interventions have had the following increases in annual earnings: Tk. 1,600 from rice production (IPM plots); Tk. 1,960 from vegetable production, Tk. 4,167 from fish production, and Tk. 1,670 from fish seed production.
<b>Output 2. Relevant service providers, institutions, and partner organizations are more responsive to the needs of poor and vulnerable women and men.</b>			
1. FFS participants report increased satisfaction with institutions relevant to their livelihoods by EOP		85-97%	SHABGE.: data is presently being analyzed  For Go-IF see <b>Service Access Inventory</b> , Dec 2002. The percentages indicated here are combining score levels 2 and 3, referring to service recipients' ratings of a service as "a good situation, requiring some improvement" and "a near ideal situation, with little or no room for improvement". (Agriculture: 85 %, Fisheries: 86 %, Livestock: 97 %, Sanitation: 92 %, Health and Family Planning: 90 %)
2. Strategies will be developed to address Government, institutional, and service provider policies and approaches, which prevent improvement in the livelihood of the RLP target group, especially women.			See NWP Program Strategy headed by RLPC

OVIS	Progress		Source of Information/ Remarks
	SHABGE	GO-IF	
3. Potential long-term partners are identified and selected for developing future common livelihood initiatives.	1 NGO		MoU with BRIE. Will also be done through review of PNGOs and development of NW strategy.
<b>Output 3: A simple and replicable system for monitoring change in the livelihoods and entitlements of the rural poor is developed, documented and shared internally and externally.</b>			
1. Key livelihood indicators are identified which effectively represent the most critical/vulnerable areas of livelihood for the poor, and the measurement of which, will allow organizations to effectively ascertain the impact of their programs.			LMP has drafted key livelihood indicators, which will be reviewed, refined, tested and implemented by April 2004.
2. Robust, cost-effective, adaptable tools and systems developed for monitoring effectiveness on Rural Livelihood interventions, which are shared with a range of stakeholders in Bangladesh			Baseline and follow up survey will be reviewed and simplified by April 2004. RLP M&E tools are presently monitoring a number of livelihood indicators, using simple and participatory methods. These means of measurement will be shared in a livelihood indicator workshop in March 2004.
3. At least 5 development organizations and/or relevant GOB departments (BRAC, Proshika, BIDS, Save the Children, WFP, DAE, etc.) join CARE in a dialogue on the identification, measurement and use of livelihood indicators during presentations/workshops			PROSHIKA, Save The Children, BIDS and other organizations participated in the presentation of the SE baseline report and provided feedback on the livelihood issues which were monitored. Presentation is available. They were also provided with the SE baseline report. These organizations and others will be invited to the livelihood indicator workshop in March, which will result in a consolidated and refined set of livelihood indicators. Workshop document will be available. Copies of requests from organization for data and data collection tools. Newspaper clippings. Documents on website.
4. Specific ongoing interventions (such as nutrition, savings, group formation etc.) within RLP projects and other CARE projects are identified and reviewed to ensure that "best practices" are being established and implemented consistently.			See "Learning and Changing" for planned reviews of RBA interventions; also see the Participatory Self Evaluation Tool presently used in RLP, as well as the LMPs work-plan for thematic studies. In order to strengthen existing groups, RLP developed a "participatory self-evaluation tool" through which FFS groups can set their own goals and measure their own progress. SHABGE has implemented this tool and Go-Interfish will proceed shortly. Staff is in the process of developing partnership guidelines. The nutrition modules implemented by SHABGE are under review and will be revised accordingly.

OVIS	Progress		Source of Information/ Remarks
	SHABGE	GO-IF	
5. There will be a greater understanding and more consistent use of commonly used livelihood indicators, that might include: "food security", wealth ranking, diseases, interest rates, nutrient deficiency, quantification of assets, etc. among development organizations			Revised livelihood monitoring tools for CARE and other organizations, based on results of Livelihood indicator workshop.
<b>Output 4: Strategies to improve male and female farmer understanding of markets and their access to potential markets, especially for women, are developed and piloted.</b>			
1. Variety of strategies are documented and tested.			Markets review report by NRI, October 2003 and In-depth review of February 2004.
2. RLP has engaged with and supported commercial services to increase interventions with target groups.			Examples include: private cold storage in Joypurhat, Milk Vita in Nilphamari, SHOGORIP, BRAC dairy and project participants' access to the GoB Local Supply Depot in Dinajpur district.
3. Percentage of households with information and access to services (market, state and NGO) is higher than in non project communities		49 %	For SHABGE see <b>Participants' Capacity Matrix</b> , average of Key Capacity Area 4, Scores 2,3, and 4. The data shows that 39% of surveyed participants have access to services & information; however, there has been no data collection from non-FFS participants.
4. 30% of FFS participants report livelihood gains because of marketing activities attributable to <b>RLP by EOP</b> .		6 %	For Go-Interfish see <b>Participants' Capacity Matrix</b> (2nd Round), average of Key Capacity Area 3, Scores 3, 4. Please see the PCM's attached data sheets for comparison between FFS Participants and Non-FFS Participants SHABGE is not implementing marketing activities. See <b>Go-Interfish Summary Outcome of Marketing Activities</b> (Amon 2003). This percentage has been calculated by averaging the number of men (4,016) and women (1,354) who are involved in marketing activities compared to total participants (89,625) of that FFS cycle (July to December 2003). Please note that the marketing activities have not been limited to FFS members only, but have included residents of the para, totaling 4,900.
<b>Output 5: Improved management of income, savings, assets, production and human capital by partner households to improve their livelihoods.</b>			
1. Number of workdays lost to illness decreases among partner households.			Livelihood surveys planned for NW in April 2004 and December 2004 in SE.
2. Level of savings used for productive activities rather than for crisis management increases.			Livelihood surveys planned for NW in April 2004 and December 2004 in SE.
3. Allocation and nutritional quality of food improves to better meet special needs of women and children.			Livelihood surveys planned for NW in April 2004 and December 2004 in SE.

## 2.4 Potential for further improvement

Field staff were asked what changes they would like to see take place in the next 14 months. The following responses were compiled from three workshop sessions (see 2.1 above). Similar responses have been combined.

- Apply a programme approach instead of working through specific projects. Implement unified management at the field level, to include all CARE RLP staff and Partner NGOs.
- Increase collaboration between the two field projects: SHABGE and Go-Interfish. Have joint meetings for all levels of staff.
- Design a follow-up project.
- Work at the policy level to support the Rights Based Approach.
- Increase the number of women staff at the senior level.
- Document what has been learned, recognize what has succeeded and what has failed, and use these lessons during implementation.
- Carry out skill development for all staff in the implementation of integrated/holistic approaches, including social development issues, advocacy and marketing.
- Review the workload of FTs, decrease the number of FFS to focus on quality not quantity.
- Simplify the monitoring system, while also developing M&E tools that will strengthen partnerships.
- Give more attention to understanding the causes of poverty.
- Make greater efforts to improve the livelihoods of the poor and very poor, including activities for the landless and agricultural laborers.
- Develop and implement activities to provide basic education, health education and skills training to the poor.
- Strengthen partnerships: do more to improve the capacity of partners so that they can increase the area covered by the programme.
- Strengthen collaboration with service providers: Local Government (UP), Line Ministries and NGOs. Sign MOUs with service providers.
- Improve participation in needs assessment and design of project activities.
- Facilitate community interactions: between FFS members and local power structure, and between successful farmers and others.
- Include community volunteers to support the work of FTs in all FFS.
- Continue to work on institutional development at the community level.
- Improve female involvement in marketing activities.

- Expand scope of agricultural activities, to include more poultry, dairy, beef fattening, goat raising, and nursery establishment.
- Expand sanitation activities.

## 2.5 Training priorities

In the workshop sessions, field staff expressed a need for training on various topics. A short exercise was carried with one group of staff in Cox’s Bazaar on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January in order to clarify their training priorities. A total of 15 FTs and POs were asked to rank their current ability, and then rate their greatest needs. The results are shown below.

Current Ability			
Scale 1= highest 10= lowest	On Technological issues	On Social development issues	Ability and skills on Community Empowerment
1	-	-	-
2	√√√√√√√		
3	√√√√	√√	
4	√√√	√√√√√√√√	√√√√
5		√√	√
6	√	√√√	√√√
7	√	√	√
8			√√
9			√√√
10			

Future training priorities		
Technology	Social development	Skills on Community Empowerment
***	+++ *****	+++++++ +++++++

+ = first priority                      \* = second priority

Although this exercise was carried out with a very small sample, the results are consistent with the OPR teams observations regarding the current ability of field staff.

## 2.6 What is being learned?

One of the suggestions made by field staff was: “*Document what has been learned, recognize what has succeeded and what has failed, and use these lessons during implementation*”. With the same idea in mind, the OPR team asked a group of 15 PCs and PMs to explain what they have learned. The session took place a Rangpur on 18<sup>th</sup> January, during which sub-groups were asked to identify lessons under four headings. The responses were as follows:

### Developing strategies

- Interventions should be based on rural people’s needs (context specific) rather than pre-determined; projects and programmes should be developed with active participation of the community.
- emphasis should be on the root causes rather than symptoms.

- strategies should be developed based on organizational capacity (of CARE).
- well-being analysis is an effective tool for targeting the poor.
- the project should not only depend on technical entry points, if we really want to address the priorities of the poor.
- clustering of our work in a limited number of unions brings positive results.
- FFS implementation needs flexibility in group size, duration and content.
- achieving sustainability requires longer than the current duration of 18 month.
- there is a need to work in an integrated manner in line with Household Livelihood Security.

#### Developing capacities

- A long-term strategy is needed if sustainable linkages are to be developed.
- CARE support for NGOs should be designed according to partner's organizational capacity.
- Instead of dominating the relationship, CARE should develop partner's ownership and shared accountability regarding project design, MOU, implementation and monitoring.
- Two-way learning is needed in the partnership objective is to be achieved.
- field staff need a diverse range of skills to address a diverse range of issues.
- cultivating natural leadership at the community level can be an effective way of creating a demand for better services from local government and GOB.

#### Measuring achievements

- more attention is needed on impact level measurement rather than output level.
- field staff, partners and community should be involved in identifying indicators and developing tools; their active participation will increase the ownership and usefulness of data.
- if staff had a clear understanding of the logframe there would be better outputs.
- proper documentation and dissemination is important.
- there is a need for diversity of tools (quantitative and qualitative) if the whole process of measurement is to be effective.
- as an evolving organisation, we should be monitoring institutional changes in CARE, partners and the community.

- approaches to measurement should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in programme structure.
- staff performance evaluation should be separated from the project M&E data, to ensure accuracy and fairness.

#### Managing projects and programmes

- organizational direction from the top requires time, patience and good facilitation to be realized by field staff.
- a successful programme requires a transparent communication system between management actors.
- too much attention on satisfying the logframe can detract from addressing the needs of the rural poor.
- organizational changes will have better chance of success if the grassroots staff can experiment and feed into management decisions.
- projects within the programme should be geographically managed.
- there is a gender imbalance in senior and middle management that needs to be addressed in order to improve performance.
- flexibility in management increases grassroots performance.
- coordination among units needs to be strengthened.



### 3. External Assessment

#### 3.1 Where is the RLP going?

##### 3.1.1 *Coordination arrangements*

Since the last OPR, CARE Bangladesh has succeeded in bringing about a number of organizational changes have led to more effective collaboration between GO-IF and SHABGE staff in the field. Recommendations made in November 2002 have been implemented as follows: i) a Rural Livelihoods Coordinator has been appointed, ii) the work of technical and social development units is now spread across both projects, iii) tools and techniques are crossing over from one project to another, iv) field staff are having joint meetings and – increasingly – sharing office space. As a result, there is greater consistency in approach, reduced duplication of efforts and improved distribution of expertise.

Improved collaboration does not mean that the two projects are working in a fully integrated manner. Full integration was *not* recommended at the time of the last OPR, and it would have been unnecessarily disruptive to attempt it. Consequently, each project still maintains its own logframe and budget, its own management structures and field staff, and its own groups of beneficiaries.

##### 3.1.2 *The need for a clear vision*

Now that GO-Interfish and SHABGE have been brought closer together, the key issue that has emerged is 'where are they going?' During the life of the programme and the preceding projects there has been an accretion of objectives, methods and technologies. At the current point in time there is a lack of coherence in what the programme is trying to accomplish, and this makes it very difficult to measure overall achievements.

The projects started with a focus on participatory extension of new or improved agricultural techniques, but have subsequently developed a broader approach to rural livelihoods, explored ways to improve the rights of the poor, promoted the establishment of community based organisations, and experimented with a range of marketing initiatives. This build-up of objectives has largely been a response to guidance from senior management, OPRs and consultants.

It is possible to take snap-shots of RLP which reveal a great deal of success in doing certain things in certain places. The OPR team has seen groups of farmers - women and men - who have made substantial improvements in their production and income, who are now experimenting with new livelihoods options, and who have greatly increased the interaction among themselves and with service providers. There are also examples of questionable methods (PM&E pilots), failed technologies (dyke cropping) and the possibility of

negative impacts (organizational development with women's groups in conservative areas). Overall, it is difficult to assess the progress of the RLP because it is no longer clear what it is trying to achieve.

The RLP logframe that was approved in 2003 does not provide RLP staff with a set of goals that are clearly understood and accepted by everybody. The reasons for this are explained in the next section of this report. The consequences include:

- field staff, and field schools, that are overloaded with disparate activities,
- an inability to prioritise (a) the groups of people who should be benefiting and (b) the types of benefits that the Programme is trying to bring about,
- a tendency for staff to focus attention on meeting targets and delivering blueprints, rather than making locally specific decisions about what needs to be done, and
- insufficient attention to measuring higher level outcomes. .

With only 14 months remaining before DFID funding comes to an end, the RLP does not need to merely revise the current logframe. Instead RLP needs a vision that will take it beyond the current funding arrangement. A clear vision could improve the effectiveness of the on-going projects *and* guide the design of whatever comes next. It could provide the RLP with a beacon that will help to guide partners and attract new donors.

The significance of a clear vision is further explored in section 4.1.3, and the first recommendation made in section 4.2.1 is the preparation of a vision statement. When preparing the vision statement, CARE Bangladesh needs to provide a coherent explanation of the relationship between Livelihoods and Rights. The OPR team believes that can be done relatively easily [see the box below]. It is essential, however, that CARE finds its own words to explain this relationship, and that every Field Trainer in the RLP should be able to articulate it.

During the OPR, a senior manager in CARE Bangladesh noted that the RLP was like a 'gigantic laboratory'. The OPR team agrees that the Programme has generated a huge amount of learning, but would add that it would be easier to draw lessons from these experiments if we had a clearer idea of what we were looking for. With a vision statement in hand, the RLP will be in a much stronger position to assess the effectiveness of the strategies that have been used over the past few years. New studies may be useful, but it is equally important for RLP to look at existing information in a new light.

### **Rural Livelihoods Security and the Rights Based Approach**

Reasonably new development concepts like livelihoods and rights based development take a long time to 'settle down' and get accepted. One of the reasons is that there are always multiple interpretations of their definition.

There has been some contention around the usefulness, appropriateness and clarity of purpose of CARE's move towards a rights based approach in its programmes. However, if defined and interpreted by the following guiding principles and possible interventions, RBA can be comparable and complementary to a livelihoods approach.

These Guiding Principles of a rights based approach are generally also flagged up as guiding principles in a livelihoods approach:

- participation as both a means and a goal;
- prioritisation of empowerment;
- non discrimination and focus on vulnerable groups;
- goals defined in terms of reducing disparity;
- poor people not beneficiaries, but actors in their own development, and
- outcomes and processes are tracked and evaluated

Rights based approach interventions go beyond expanding the income and resource base of the poor and focus on the empowerment of households and communities to improve their access to services and resources. The poor are encouraged to see themselves as being citizens with rights and entitlements and the state with obligations and duties to deliver these services. A rights based approach involves addressing socio-political, economic and power dynamics that are obstructing poverty reduction of rural poor.

This expressed another way could be a livelihood approach which devises multiple interventions and move from focussing on developing human and financial capital towards a more holistic and sustainable strategy of poverty reduction. The livelihood interventions seek to access all assets - human, financial, physical, natural, social and political capital. In the case of CARE the integration of the RBA could be a tool through which staff can facilitate participants accessing other forms of capital to improve their livelihoods.

### **3.1.3 Comments on the Logframe**

There is a general recognition of the shortcomings of the RLP logframe approved by DFID in the Fall of 2003. Due to imposed time constraints, it was created in a largely non-participatory manner with a few senior managers doing most of the work. As a result, its logic and language are not universally understood and accepted. What was lacking is a subsequent effort, through a participatory team process, into reaching a common understanding and acceptance of the logframe, including some effort to bring its objectives and indicators into better conformity with those of the individual projects.

This OPR was the first occasion for the RLP M&E team to try to measure progress against the new logframe. It was discovered that many of the

logframe indicators do not correspond to the types of data that the projects have been tracking [see section 2.3 of this report].

Another small but important issue with the logframe is the wording of the goal statement: “To contribute to poverty reduction in Bangladesh”. While this is the noble goal, it is too broad and leaves the door open for inequities in the flow of benefits. Assistance to moderately poor farmers certainly would be a contribution to poverty reduction in a certain sector, but could conceivably further marginalize the extreme poor and vulnerable women. The wording of a programme goal statement should be clearer in terms of who is being targeted and should be in close harmony with the vision. As part of a holistic livelihoods and RBA framework, the logframe needs to start with a more explicit reference to equity and gender.

Questions can also be asked about the institutional capacity building objectives in the RLP logframe (see Output #2). As part of a Rights Based Approach, there are two different ways of looking at service delivery. On the one hand, a project could focus attention on the obligations of government agencies. Alternatively, a project could focus on the empowerment of citizens. The later perspective appears to be far more appropriate to the strategies that have been adopted by RLP (eg. FFS, CBOs), but is not reflected in the wording of the logframe. The empowerment perspective does not imply that quality and pro-active agricultural extension services are a basic right to which all citizens are entitled. It does, however, seek to achieve equitable access to whatever services, good or bad, are available and to support the voice of the most vulnerable in demanding the services to which they are entitled. Consequently, it seems unnecessary for RLP to set itself the objective of addressing the policies and approaches used by service providers, something that other DFID projects have done with limited success.

#### **3.1.4 Exit or follow-up?**

At this stage in a project, with little more than a year to go, it is not uncommon for donors to ask review teams to comment on the exit strategy or the proposals for a new phase of funding. DFID has not asked these questions and, even if they had asked them, CARE Bangladesh is only beginning to look for the answers. The OPR team finds this very worrying.

The RLP has been carrying out some excellent work, and it has the potential to do a lot more. The OPR team fully endorses the idea of a follow-up programme based on a renewed vision of livelihoods and rights. But, as far as the OPR team can tell, DFID has not yet allocated any funds for the continuation of the RLP, and CARE has not yet secured any commitments from other donors. This situation requires the urgent attention of Senior Management in CARE Bangladesh.

The OPR team was provided with an RLP work plan that delineates a large number of on-going and planned activities. There are very few references, however, to the duration and completion dates of these activities. The one-

page Gantt chart that is included with the work plan can best be described as 'sketchy'. It would be useful for everybody involved – DFID, CARE management, and field staff – if a far more detailed Gantt chart was prepared, *and used* as a basis for agreeing priorities and determining what can realistically be achieved in the next 14 months.

The 'critical path' over the next 14 months should include all the steps that will be taken to ensure a transition to a new phase of the RLP, with the possibility that funding may come from new sources. Some steps have been outlined in the 'Status Report on OPR 2002 Recommendations', but the logic is unclear. This document states that a proposal will be submitted to DFID by July 2004; it also states that this will be done after reviewing the findings of various studies, some of which will not be finished until at least September. And there is no indication of whether or not proposals will be submitted to other donors. A more coherent and prudent plan is needed, and it should be implemented vigorously. As mentioned above, the OPR team believes that the first step is the preparation of a vision statement.

### **3.2 What kind of impact is RLP having on livelihoods?**

The monitoring and evaluation reports of RLP indicate that since the initiation of SHABGE and Go Interfish, participants have directly increased financial and human assets. Household food security has improved. Productive assets have expanded and diversified by applying new technical options gained in the FFS. Participants income base has increased and economic vulnerability has been reduced. These changes have also had limited impact on their social, political, physical and natural assets. The FFS participants access to government and private sector agricultural and homestead services have increased. Groups are undertaking irrigation projects, pond fishing projects, tree nurseries and setting up off-farm business ventures. Some women participants have improved their ability to influence household decision making and that increase is notably more than non FFS participants during the period of the Go-Interfish project [see Section 2.3 'Progress Against Logframe', Purpose OVI #3]

The FFS begins with a well being analysis that measures the relative poverty of members of the community. The aim of the FFS is to improve the livelihoods of all the group, but the team found that there are differential benefits according to well being status of participants. It appears that the wealthier FFS participants are improving their livelihoods and benefiting to a greater extent than the poorer participants. Through the sale of vegetables, saplings and seedlings produced on their larger land holdings the wealthier participants are expanding their income base. This produces knock on improvements in other areas - for example marketing and accessing other production networks and services and increases in physical capital. Also wealthier participants are able to access credit more easily and even set up their own credit schemes in the para. The wealthier women participants claim that it is via contributing to household income for the first time that they are

gaining respect from their husbands. This in turn increases their ability to influence household decision making.

*This table shows what one group of 15 RLP field staff thought about how different members of the FFS benefited from what they were learning*

Well-being category of FFS members	Could make most use of FFS learning	Moderate use of FFS learning	Little use of FFS learning	Hardly any benefit from FFS learning
Better off with land	***	*****	****	***
Medium with land	*****	***	*	
Poor	*	****	*****	*****
Very poor		*	*****	*****

The poorer participants do not have enough land to produce vegetables to sell. Sharecroppers interviewed by the team stated that landowners are seeking them out as skilled labourers as they are producing more. They claim this has increased their job security, but not their wage rate. As such the landowner is gaining in both quantity and quality without paying for it. One group of women sharecroppers told the team that they had considered 'demanding' a wage rise as a group, but saw the risks involved and had not yet acted.

Go-Interfish and SHABGE have attempted to redress this differential amongst participants by implementing innovative technology modules which are suited to the landless and resource poorer such as the use of fallow land and road side planting and dyke-cropping. Our field visits revealed that these innovations are having a limited positive impact in enhancing the vegetable production for the more resource poor.

There is very limited information within the programme about how the activities are affecting, either negatively or positively, other poorer members of the community. This analysis should be improved and the programme should be analysed in terms of community impact not just how the FFS affects each participants household.

The women involved in this programme are benefiting. One indicator is the high attendance rates, enthusiasm and concentration that the team noted when visiting women's FFSs. This reflects strongly the importance that the women place on this programme and the benefits that it is accruing for them. Poor rural women are pragmatic about participating in learning projects that cut into their busy days. They also have to persuade their husbands that this is a worthwhile use of their time, so they have to be pretty convinced to keep going.

The team spoke in total to about 200 women and there was general consensus about what the top two benefits to their lives were through the FFS: income generation for the first time; and the space that was provided through the FFS. The FFS provides a space once a week where these women can meet outside of their kin groups. This maybe for many the first time that they have been given that chance and are being encouraged to dialogue. This social capital that is being built up should not be underestimated and could be the basis for very interesting and powerful changes in rural dynamics. Another benefit stated to the team by women in many FFSs visited was that since participating in the FFS and bringing home some income, domestic violence had gone down. This is interesting and important and should be being thought about in the RLP.

The participatory capacity matrix provides some gender specific data on outcomes of the programme in terms of women's decision making, control of financial resources, mobility, household food distribution and access to resources. In all of these areas participants state that there is some improvement in women's lives. There is currently limited gender disaggregated data or studies that focus on the comparative impact of Go-Interfish on male and female participants. However, thinking around which interventions have greatest impact in terms of gender has begun in the RLP in different studies and an in-depth gender study and FFS study are proposed for this year to facilitate 'learning and changing' on gender issues. Gender awareness learning sessions are being carried out by field trainers and the women participants told the team that they ranked these sessions as highly as the technical learning.

**Some lessons for the DFID Country Assistance Programme:  
*Women and Girls First***

- Production technologies, such as fish raising and homestead horticulture, can provide a useful 'entry point' for working with women. These technologies generate income that is appreciated by husbands and accepted by community leaders. This may make it easier for project staff to work with the women on other livelihood concerns that touch more structural issues perpetuating discrimination and poverty.
- Group activities, whatever the subject, can provide women with a 'social space' that is otherwise lacking. Even when women are not taking action as a group (which is the desired goal), the members are benefiting as they are accessing new sources of information, sharing problems, establishing new support systems, and being encouraged to have the confidence to communicate their ideas.
- Experiential learning, if properly facilitated, can be an effective process for developing analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, and experimental behaviour. The fact that many women lack a formal education is not a hindrance to this type of learning.
- Project staff have an important role to play, not just as experts and as facilitators, but as role models. The very presence of female field workers is a powerful demonstration of some of the things that Bangladeshi women can achieve: mobility, education, independent action and social responsibility.

Another outcome which is indirect and often passed over is the impact of hundreds of young women working for CARE and PNGOs travelling into conservative communities as field trainers and gaining the respect of those communities to carry out this work with poor women. This cadre of young rural women are having a direct impact on rural attitudes to women's roles.

### 3.3 Could RLP improve the impact it is having?

#### 3.3.1 *Pro-poor participatory implementation*

There has been significant progress since the last OPR in the implementation of the project's strategies and methodologies. The team found that field staff have become more innovative and creative about implementation of the FFS. As a consequence we saw participants doing more effective problem solving through the use of effective tools for observation; working more in sub groups which encouraged joint decision making; and taking more time for analysis. Phased FFS are being implemented as pilots to incorporate improved experiential learning, social development issues and group capacity building.

#### **Roles for Field Trainers**

- Field trainers as process facilitators (meaning not always knowing the final outcome of every intervention and in all situations in advance)
- FTs not as vehicles of transferring knowledge and skills, but more as initiators of process that encourage the emergence of natural leaders and future trainers from within the community
- FTs as observers or capturers of local innovations in technology, social change, participation of poor, weak and marginalized, knowledge dissemination and scaling up.
- FTs promoting local leadership development by handing over the stick to community
- FTs making conscious efforts to reach the marginalized and disadvantaged, and always trying to diversify, decentralize and democratise
- FTs always seeking local people's indicators for measuring social change and empowerment (deviating from the outsiders indicators of measuring change)
- FTs taking pride in taking a back seat and sending new process learning from the community upwards
- FTs measuring success (by self evaluation) in terms of spontaneous spread and adoption of locally developed, pro-poor technology or methods or approaches
- FTs seeking to reach poor and marginalized out side of FFS through the members of FFS
- FTs mastered the skill and art of triggering local collective action both within and outside of FFS



The field staff acknowledge that they are still lacking in capacity and guidance to implement a livelihoods programme that focuses on empowerment [see 'Training Priorities' in the Self Assessment section of this report]. Staff facilitation skills are still wanting and this limits their capacity to carry out participatory sessions. Last year, new training took place to improve staff capacity and understanding of facilitation and experiential learning skills (carried out with assistance from TITAN), but this training has only benefited a minority of field staff.

The methodology of using an FFS is known to have enormous impact on the livelihoods of rural people when the focus and vision of the FFS is empowering people through critical thinking and experiential learning to understand their needs and the benefits of acquiring them through household and collective action. Scale, multiple expectations of field staff and a logframe and monitoring and evaluation targets which do not encourage this process are detracting FTs from the fundamental methodology. There is still too much emphasis on production and off farm income expansion and not enough prioritisation of critical thinking for problem solving or adequate group development. Unfortunately the interventions of the FFS do not therefore appear to be producing empowered heterogeneous groups of women and men who through the Field School have acquired skills, confidence, capacity and new assets which lead them to be 'agents of change' in their communities on a large scale.

The underlying philosophy of the FFS needs to be reiterated and field trainers should prioritise empowerment, participation and reduction of disparities of all participants in the group. The box on the preceding page provides some professional guidelines that FTs might find useful.

### **3.3.2 *Mainstreaming social development***

In general the FFSs continue to focus on training participants for the expansion of productive assets and income and resource base. A fundamental part of sustaining the FFS is the 'buy in' gained by participants, husbands (when they are women participants) and powerful elites within communities through the benefits of the technical learning and income generation in the initial months of the project. However, social development and rights work has been incorporated into the learning and comes in the later stages of the FFS.

According to the last OPR it was considered appropriate that CARE implement awareness training on rights through the FFS, do research into causal issues of poverty and pilot the Rights Based Approach, but it did not encourage CARE to enter into activities in which participants were involved in claims for right or entitlements. CARE has been following that guidance and has been training staff to identify, analyze and research root causes of poverty and power dynamics that are impeding rights realization.

The SDU has carried out extensive research into women and agriculture, rural power structures, social capital and access to water bodies and land. The

findings of the rural power study was turned into a training about elites so that field trainers could understand more clearly the contexts in which they were working and what could be expected. Field trainers told the team that they found this a useful tool at all stages of implementation of the field school as they now have a better understanding of the socio-political and structural obstacles facing communities; local power dynamics; and what rights are not being met and why. The other studies are available for all to read.

Notwithstanding the initiatives of the SDU, the integration of social development issues and interventions to address the root causes of poverty has not been concerted or strategic. The analysis that has been carried out is not feeding back into the implementation of the projects in a coordinated way. It is clear that this work needs to be expanded to have attitudinal and behavioural impact among RLP staff. Although the SDU findings will definitely be part of informing a future programme, there is also an opportunity to gain a greater and more immediate 'buy in' by staff to the process of change towards a livelihoods programme.

To date, the social development training given to field staff has been limited and sporadic. The field trainers understandably lack the confidence to make greater use of learning sessions that are already hard to carry out because they are explicitly challenging difficult social issues. These sessions raise awareness, but they are not carried out within the critical thinking methodology of the FFS. The field trainers have some good tools for these sessions, but in three out of four that the OPR team attended the field trainers highlighted the problems, but did not go on to discuss with the participants how these issues applied to them, what the impact was on their lives or what they thought could be done to change the situation. Furthermore, these social development sessions appear to be a token activity that has been tagged on to the main business of extending agricultural technologies. Any follow up work, beyond a single discussion session, depends on the interest of the group and the will of the field trainer to add activities to a schedule that is already overloaded.

Field trainers recognise that sessions on social issues contribute to the empowerment of groups, but they also know that more attention is needed if awareness is to be translated into decision-making and action. One FT told the OPR team that she had seen a family improve their income through the sale of vegetables grown through the FFS, but that everything she had earned disappeared with a dowry payment. One group of women also revealed to the team that although they were growing vegetables that should have improved nutrition and health, they on the whole did not get to eat the vegetables as historical food distribution customs had not changed. The field staff have ideas of how they might carry out a series of follow up sessions with the women and the men and then with powerful elites in the communities to have greater potential to impact of attitudes and behaviour. These initiatives should be encouraged.

It is clear to the OPR team that more emphasis should be given to 'operationalising' the Social Development Unit and mainstreaming their

livelihoods activities. The RLP is undertaking various governance pilots to set up sustainable relationships to access services and resources. One good example is the Dinajpur governance pilot to improve access to Union Parishad services. This process has a clear objective in terms of accessing social and political capital. RLP is facilitating the process with the goal of community led development decision making and more equitable service distribution.

These initiatives which address development in the wider Union livelihood context should be encouraged. Instead of the staff choosing the paras, thanas or districts who can participate in these livelihood activities, FFSs should be encouraged to talk with each other within a Union, take the lead in Union wide livelihood experimentation and then ask for assistance from the FT or NF in the areas that the community deems useful [see 3.4.3 for more on this issue].

### **3.3.3 Strengthening groups to access livelihood assets**

The purpose of an FFS group is to enhance 'group cooperation and increase the human and social capital of FFS members, thereby opening them up for new livelihood options'.<sup>2</sup> The aspiration of the programme is that once the FFS ends, groups will continue to work together to sustain project benefits for the group and spread benefits to other members of the community.

Unfortunately it appears that empowerment and understanding of the benefits of group action have not been prioritised in the FFS. As such the group development aspect of the FFS comes in as a separate activity in the last phase of the FFS. In the RLP workplan an important question is asked which the phased out groups should determine: 'Should they first focus on basic formal topics such as by-laws and a bank account, or rather postpone the formalities until the group proves itself relevant and able to mobilise the wider community?'. In many cases, weak FFS groups themselves are not answering this question of how to take the group forward. In the absence of group initiative, FTs and NFs are facilitating the set up of CBOs with 'successful' phased out FFS.

Currently, the field trainers are focusing on setting up groups through a model of OD which requires writing a constitution and by laws, establishing committees, setting up savings schemes and bank accounts, and registration with the Social Welfare Department. Field staff are setting targets and evaluating achievements based on the number of FFS groups that adopt the features of the agreed model. The team visited a SHABGE group that had spent a year setting up all the appropriate OD systems and structures. However, when the AGM was held the women were dependent on the field trainer to facilitate the proceedings. He continues to organise the meetings and act as a middleman between the group and other service providers. As they had set up a credit scheme, but could not travel to the bank, they had also brought in a man to be the cashier and control the money. Because both the structure and the activities of the group were created beyond the capacity of the women, they had lost much of their control.

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<sup>2</sup> SHABGE - DFID (NW) PMR July-Sept '02.

Whereas at the time of the last OPR there were many diverse types of groups emerging from diverse FFS, this new RLP model for group development maybe stifling empowerment, diversity and pro poor activities and having negative impact on gender.

Some groups have emerged from the FFS with broad participation in decision-making among the members and they are carrying out activities that are benefiting a larger number of people in the community (e.g. sanitation, vaccinations, tree-planting, access to water bodies). However, there is a concern that many groups become dominated by the interests of a small group who are literate and relatively wealthier than other FFS members. When an FFS has been primarily used as a vehicle for production and income generation for wealthier members, they have the power to then steer the post FFS group to become focused on capital accumulation and income base expansion. Instead of promoting and undertaking activities towards the improvement in the livelihoods of all FFS participants and the wider community, these groups end up with successful businesses that are involved in marketing or income-generating schemes and the provision of credit to members of the community.

This focus on income generation and structures can also override important questions of equity, gender and participation. A GO-Interfish phased out group that the team visited had merged a woman's and a men's FFS. In the new group there were no women on the executive committee, nor had the women participated in the decision making as regards which businesses should be established. The poorer participants of the FFS were now working for the wealthier members in paper bag making and sanitation ring construction.

These concerns must be analysed appropriately and carefully. If the FFS ends up as a new elite group that does not have a socially responsible philosophy, and may even be perpetuating disparities rather than improving them, then CARE needs to revisit what it is doing during and after the FFS.

The phased out stage should be the time when the group has built the capacity to work together and access other livelihood assets. It should be left to the group members to decide what activities they want to carry out and if they need things like bylaws and sub-committees. A true success story of an FFS would be a capable group of community leaders with a set of development strategies accessing services themselves and with a very marginal role of the field trainer.

Diversity, depending on capacity and need, should be embraced. The RLP should be able to work with groups of various types and sizes that are at various stages in their development.

Processes should be supported that respond to a wider range of women's limitations, needs and interests. Groups should be encouraged to move away from just accessing more financial capital with credit, marketing and income-generation activities and towards projects which access other livelihood

assets. For example FTs working with dynamic women's groups could focus on activities which expand their access to social and political capital within the para and beyond. (e.g. a start might be linking up women's FFS within a union)

### **3.3.4 Marketing: 'built in or 'bolted on'?**

RLP appears to have succeeded in laying the foundations for the development of marketing activities that will increase the assets of some of the people who attend Farmer Field Schools, but more attention needs to be given to the social dimensions of these activities.

A special unit has been established to implement the marketing initiative consisting of 1 PDO and 6 TOs. This unit is working with FFS groups and post-FFS CBOs to conduct market feasibility analysis, create linkages with buyers, and secure the necessary support from local government. To date, the RLP marketing schemes include a range of vegetables, rice, fish, eggs, milk, and handicrafts (paper bags, jute mat, bamboo made products). In the case of vegetables, some efforts have been made to 'add value' by producing out of season, improving product quality, grading, sorting and cleaning. Food processing initiatives are also being considered.

A National Consultant reviewed the work of this Unit as part of this OPR. The Consultant concluded that the marketing component is making a worthwhile contribution to the overall achievement of RLP. From a technical and incomes point of view, it is clear that a lot of activity is taking place. It is not so easy, however, to establish what is happening from a social point of view.

Two particular questions need to be answered: who is making the decisions and who is benefiting?

If we consider the first of these questions, a distinction can be made between an 'extension approach' to marketing that results in the adoption of lots of money-earning schemes, or an 'experiential learning' approach that empowers farmers to take more productive decisions and undertake collective action. The results of these two approaches may look the same during the life of the project, but in the longer term there could be great differences in the sustainability of marketing schemes and, in particular, a difference in how farmers respond to changes in the market.

If RLP wants to pursue a learning approach, rather than an extension approach, FFS groups should only undertake marketing initiatives after they had carried out *their own* analysis of livelihood resources and opportunities. This analysis may require facilitation by CARE staff, but the main purpose of the facilitation is to strengthen the analytical ability of the group members, not to carry out an analysis for them. It seems unlikely that this can be done effectively in the early stages of the FFS. Furthermore, CARE staff must be prepared for the possibility that the analysis will lead to decisions that do not fit neatly into the marketing component of the programme. Some groups might want to explore off-farm opportunities for income generation rather than

creating a scheme for selling eggs, fish, rice or milk. Other groups might want to work together to get better access to inputs (water, electricity, seed) rather than getting better prices for outputs. This has been happening in some places over the last two years, and can be seen as a positive outcome of a livelihoods-learning approach. During the remainder of the Programme, however, there is a danger that pressure from DFID to accelerate the work of this component will result in the implementation of a narrower marketing-extension approach.

The marketing consultant has recommended that CARE should produce additional training materials 'focusing on real-life situations'. The OPR team agrees that emphasis should be placed on strengthening the learning process rather than establishing targets for new schemes. CARE is already doing a great job in providing staff with short cases of successful marketing and income-generating schemes, particularly through the RLP newsletter, and this should continue.

The second question raised above was: who benefits? The composition of FFS usually excludes the extreme poor, particularly those who do not have sufficient land to grow rice or vegetables, and those who are busy selling labour and therefore cannot attend training sessions. When a savings or marketing group is formed, this usually involves some FFS members dropping out and other members of the community coming in. This has not been monitored, but the observations of the OPR team suggest that in some cases the group is captured by relatively wealthier and more powerful families, while poorer and weaker members are excluded from decision-making. As noted earlier, marketing groups composed of men and women appear to be dominated by the men. Interestingly, marketing or savings groups that are dominated by an influential sub-group are often considered to be a success by CARE staff because they are assessed in terms of activity and income.

With the above points in mind, the OPR team suggests that the marketing component should be allowed to 'tick over' rather than accelerate its work, and that the priority for the next 14 months be to monitor and evaluate the social impact of the schemes that have been started rather than launch a lot of new schemes.

### **3.3.5 Improving impact outside of the RLP**

The report of the last OPR stated that *"The GO-IF and SHABGE projects are generating important lessons for future policy making and programming in the development community. Insufficient efforts are being made to extract these lessons"*. A recommendation was made that was aimed at capturing and sharing the lessons of the Programme.

The current OPR team believes that the RLP continues to generate important lessons. Unfortunately, limited progress appears to have been made towards the implementation of the recommendation made at the last OPR. Some developments in this area were observed: the newsletter that was previously produced by Go-Interfish now includes information about the work of

SHABGE; the SDU has shared some of its reports with other CARE projects and the wider development community; a lot of effort has been put into the packaging and dissemination of the LMP South-East Baseline Report. All of this is commendable, but a lot more could be done. The suggestions made in section 3.6.5 of the last OPR report are still valid. Additional suggestions could now be made in light of DFID's interest in gender and CARE's interest in promoting a Rights Based Approach. The experience of RLP raises many important questions and illustrates many practical issues that are relevant to these interests across the development community.

Films should be made, reports should be published, seminars should be organised. The current staff of RLP lack the time, the skills and the necessary perspective to do this work. Outside help is needed, and it should be sought in the very near future.

### **3.4 What is being done to develop the organisational and network capacity of the RLP?**

#### **3.4.1 CARE staff capacity**

CARE field staff (FTs and POs) are RLP's greatest asset. Generally speaking, they are well-motivated, hard-working and they have a wide range of useful skills. They are able to analyse their experience and make practical suggestions for improvement (as shown in the Self Assessment section of this report).

In the 14 months following the last OPR, a wide range of training courses have been organised. Examples include training in sanitation, poultry and livestock, vegetable IPM, soil fertility, facilitation skills, advocacy and governance. The OPR team is unable to assess the impact of most of this training, but two observations can be made:

- The sanitation training has resulted in a thorough knowledge of relevant information and techniques, but the implementation is being constrained by the design of the FFS. Greater success would be achieved if the whole community was involved in a short period of intensive activity, rather than depending on meetings with FFS members every two weeks.
- There has been a significant improvement since the previous OPR in the way that experiential learning sessions are conducted, at least in the 'phased FFS'. This can be attributed to training received from The IPM Trainers Association of Nepal (TITAN). FFS members are now working in small groups, spending more time making observations and discussing the results, and using more sophisticated aids for decision-making. Efforts are now needed to assess the impact of these changes, and mainstream what has been learned.

The current planning and management systems within RLP have important implications for the effectiveness of CARE field staff. Staff are capable of designing and adapting interventions that will respond to local needs and

opportunities, but they are not always able to use this capability. Many of them are frustrated by being given targets and policies that they don't understand and/or which they do not think are relevant to local needs and interests. Field staff often feel that their feedback is not welcome and that their performance is evaluated on the basis of compliance with plans and procedures that are imposed on them. Creativity, innovation and responsiveness to local circumstances is not being rewarded. The result is that many FTs are blindly following plans, regardless of whether they are maximizing their potential impact. It is possible that many others are innovating and keeping quiet about it, rather than sharing their experience with peers and supervisors.

At the time of the previous OPR, a recommendation was made about gender issues within CARE. Although an integrated Gender Action Plan has not been produced, the RLP has taken seriously recommendations to institutionalise gender. The Gender Policy is comprehensive. Gender Focal Points have been hired and gender committees established in the SE and NW offices. Gender committees have devised guidelines to which they measure progress on a quarterly basis. There are still calls to recruit more female staff, both into senior management, technical staff and front line staff that facilitate women's FFS. Staff could benefit from more training about what 'mainstreaming gender' means. Concerns were raised that staff maybe perpetuating inequality by continuing to refer to husbands of participants as 'guardians' for their wives.

### **3.4.2 Relationships with NGOs**

CARE has given serious attention to the criticisms that were made in the past about the contractual nature of its relationships with so-called 'partner' NGOs. A number of efforts have been made to improve NGO capacity (particularly through joint training) and to allow greater decision-making by the Partners. It will take some time, however, for these developments to have a major impact on how the Programme operates, because (a) agreements had already been signed, (b) work plans had already been approved, and (c) foundation training had already been conducted. RLP may have to wait until the current projects come to an end before it can establish a significantly different relationship with NGOs.

It must be noted that not all PNGOs were unhappy with the contractual arrangements, and not all of them are seeking a greater 'ownership' of the Programme. Some local NGOs are operating as a service organisation that expects to be told what to do by the funding agency. This is an implementing arrangement, or a form of 'out-sourcing', that should be familiar to most donors. CARE management may want to make a distinction between 'strategic partners', those that share the vision of the RLP and will participate in planning and evaluation, and 'operational partners' that are contracted as part of the RLP delivery mechanism.

It must also be noted that some PNGOs have a limited understanding of the concept of empowerment. They tend to think in terms of *their* communities or *their* farmer groups, and operate in a manner that could create dependencies.



CARE field staff need to be cautious about creating linkages between FFS groups and organisation that might become the sole source of credit, the sole channel for services, and the *de facto* organiser of future group activities.

Another important consideration for the RLP is the *comparative advantage* of direct delivery versus partnerships. In the past, CARE staff and PNGOs have been organising almost identical FFS, regardless of the fact that they have greatly different experience and expertise. Most CARE field staff have a better understanding of technical issues such as vegetable production and fish raising, while many NGOs have a better understanding of local context and social issues, and have experience with micro-finance. It is not very efficient, therefore, for the RLP to create a situation that involves a male CARE field worker struggling to set up a savings scheme and conducting a session about violence against women, when a few kilometres away is a female NGO field worker struggling to teach IPM and composting. Some RLP coordinators and managers are beginning to realise that more might be achieved if CARE staff and PNGOs worked together to conduct 'joint FFS', which involve a better distribution of responsibilities. The opportunities for expanding 'joint FFS' need to be explored, including the possibility of reorganising support for FFS that are on-going and phased-out.

### **3.4.3 Relationships with Government agencies**

The last OPR recommended that "*pilot activities be carried out to create a tripartite relationship between representatives of FFS groups, the Union Parishad and the local staff of the DAE and/or other Line Ministries*". Although this recommendation has not been implemented in the manner that was foreseen, RLP staff have been making commendable efforts to improve linkages with local government and service providers.

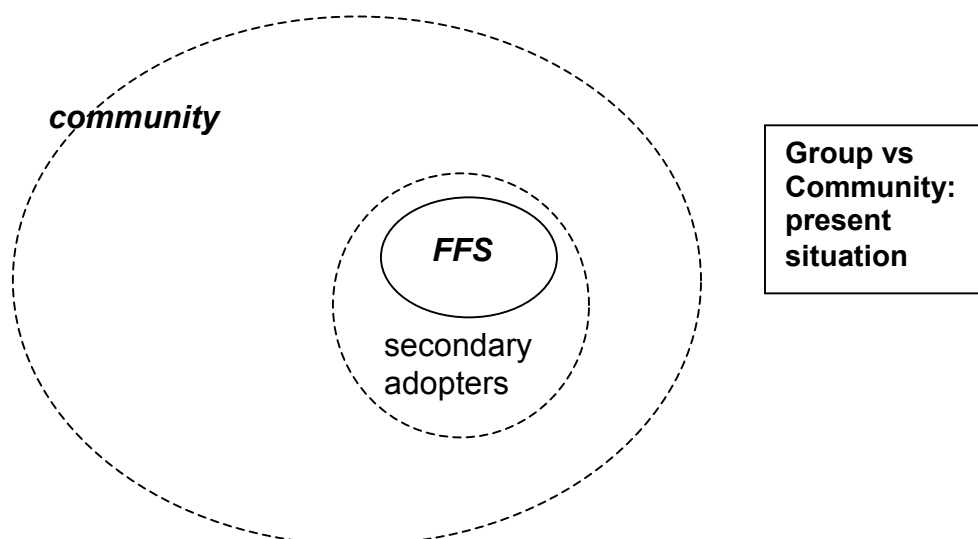
One particularly noteworthy development is the 'road-side tree-planting schemes' that the OPR team observed in the North West. This involves FFS groups negotiating an agreement with the UP that allows group members to plant trees and secure a portion of the future income. This is a good example of collective action that gains access to resources and entitlements, something that RLP had already started and continues with khas ponds. The point that needs to be emphasised here is that the role of CARE field staff is to identify opportunities and facilitate discussions that result in FFS members effectively demanding their rights from Local Government. Field staff do not need to negotiate entitlements on behalf of the group, nor take a leading role in organising the resulting activities.

Another significant development is the expansion of activities that help FFS groups to identify sources of services. The OPR team was able to see how groups are now producing their own 'inventory' of service providers, and making their own efforts to get advice from outside of the community. These efforts appear to be most effective when they involve the group as a whole, rather than being focussed on a few individuals (e.g. LEs, COs and NFs).

Like the tree-planting schemes, the inventory of service providers illustrates the role that RLP staff can play in strengthening the *demand* for entitlements and services. Given the limited success of donor efforts to improve the *supply* of services to rural people (e.g. ASIRP), the RLP would be wise to continue focussing attention on the demand side. This does not mean that Line Ministries should be ignored, but that RLP field staff should be working with communities to increase the *pull* on Line Ministries, rather than working directly with the Ministries to increase the *push* of services.

### 3.4.4 Group versus communities

RLP's involvement in a village or para starts with community meetings at which the benefits of the FFS are explained. Community leaders are involved in the well-being analysis that results in the selection of participants. Subsequently, regular meetings take place with the FFS participants. In summary, RLP's involvement quickly shifts from a community approach to a group approach. That approach is maintained for a period of at least 18 months, and often continues in the 'phased out' period. The OPR team met groups that have been receiving support from CARE for a period of 4 years; it was not clear what the other members of the community thought about this.

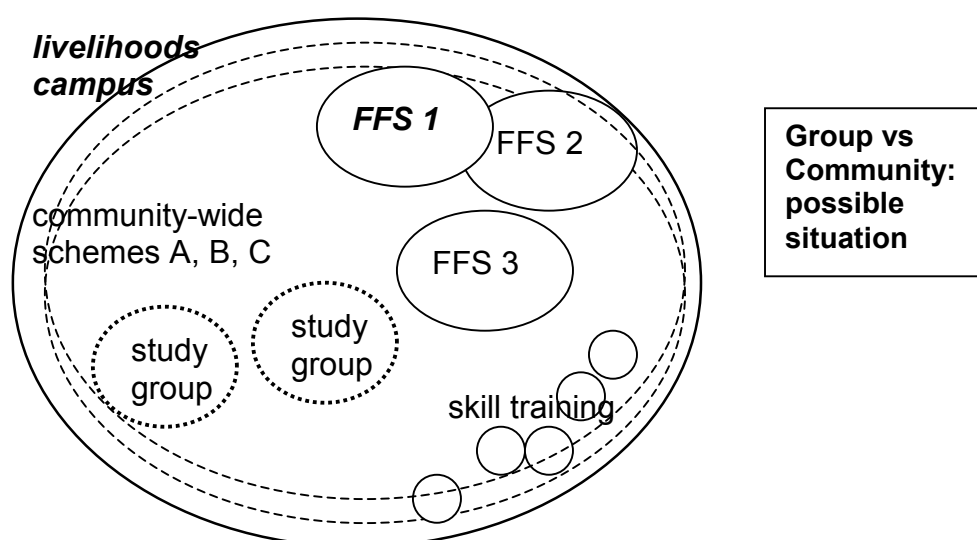


Elsewhere in this report, a number of observations have been made about who benefits from the group approach. At this stage it is not necessary to repeat all of these observations, but it may be useful to point out that the RLP could be doing things differently, in a way that might make better use of available capacity.

Let us imagine that RLP's engagement with a community starts with a discussion about poverty and what can be done to reduce disparities. If community leaders agree, a para could be designated as a 'livelihoods campus' for a certain period of time, such as two years. The FFS then becomes the first of a number of learning activities carried out on the campus. The FFS might last for a single cropping season and focus on a narrow range of interventions (e.g. homestead horticulture), and would give equal attention to two things: an immediate impact on production, and an improvement in

analytical skills. This FFS is a technical and social entry point, but the goal is a far broader impact on rural poverty. The members of the FFS would be expected to play a key role in planning and organising subsequent activities in the community; activities that would involve and benefit a larger number of poorer people, including the landless and women who could not attend the FFS.

Once the first FFS has been completed, other activities that could be carried out include community-wide schemes (e.g. sanitation, tree planting), skills training workshops (e.g. rickshaw repairs, nursery techniques), health and social studies groups (e.g. for women, for youth), and more field schools (e.g. fish ponds, soil improvement). These activities would be increasingly planned, monitored and organised by members of the community, keeping in mind the goal of reducing poverty and disparities.



Using the FFS as a starting point for a range of livelihoods interventions as illustrated in this diagram will, undoubtedly, strike some people as an impossibly complicated approach. But the OPR team is convinced that the capacity to implement such an approach already exists in many places. If RLP can bring together the experience and expertise of CARE field staff, plus PNGOs, plus community members, plus government agencies plus other on-going projects and programmes, then a more effective approach to rural livelihoods is possible. The challenge is for CARE to find ways of doing this, and clearly define the role that the RLP and its staff will play as 'facilitators' of the process.

### 3.5 What is being done to generate the knowledge needed to understand the RLP and plan for a future Programme?

#### 3.5.1 Overview of knowledge generation in RLP

At least five different units of the RLP are involved in collecting data and generating knowledge: SDU, M&E Unit, LMP, TCU, and field trainers. While

relations amongst the players are congenial and some professional sharing takes place, they have not yet been brought into a strategic partnership. RLP lacks a unifying framework demonstrating how all these pieces fit together. None of the pieces are redundant, rather critical gaps exist amongst them in terms of mandate and the data they collect. Furthermore, no overt plans exist to capture learning from disparate reports in higher-level evaluations. Compartmentalized functions may fail to make the links between quantitative and qualitative information, between output and outcome information, between project (process/impact) and the contextual information being generated. If these links were made, the “Learning and Changing” process would be able to make a greater contribution to future programme planning.

To help create a ‘bigger picture’ of what type of information is being collected as a result of the Farmer Field Schools being organised by RLP, the OPR team worked with the staff of the Programme to produce ‘M&E timelines’ for the SHABGE and GO-IF projects. These are shown at the end of this section of the report. The timelines shows that - with few exceptions - no monitoring is planned for the period after FFS phase-out. In other words, very little effort is being made to measure the impact at the community level or assess the sustainability of benefits arising from the FFS. This is especially striking because CARE provides substantial support to phased-out group, and is increasingly involved in organisational development to promote sustainability. Information about what happens *after* the FFS is essential to the development of future strategies for targeting, design of interventions, length of involvement, etc.

#### **Ex-Post Impact Evaluation At The Community-Level**

**Objective:** Generate information (both quantitative and qualitative) about the longer-term positive and negative impacts of RLP activities on diverse segments of participating communities. Use findings and lessons-learnt to shape new programming as appropriate.

**Timing of Study:** Six months to one year after all CARE assistance ends in the community.

**Groups to Study:** Ex-FFS members, members of groups formed out of FFSs, extreme poor/landless, farm labourers and their employers, etc.

**Sample Research Questions:**

1. Who has ultimately benefited the most from RLP interventions; how and why?
2. How do the poverty profiles differ between FFSs and the groups that form after phase-out? Who leaves the groups and who joins and why?
3. To what extent have the technical lessons been retained by different types of FFS graduates and extended to others. Who is more likely / less likely to continue practicing the methods shared and why?
4. To what extent have the practical skills taught during FFS (e.g. problem-solving, critical thinking, innovation) been retained by graduates and extended to others (remembering that the desired outcome of a rice-fish FFS is not just that the members continue doing rice-fish as taught but also that the same attitudes and skills are applied to non rice/fish activities.)
5. To what extent have the linkages with service deliverers formed during the programme been sustained and expanded
6. How has the status of women changed under a wide range of social development indicators? Positive and negative impacts of the FFS experience.
7. What do community stakeholders recommend should have been done differently to make the programme more responsive to their needs.

Consequently, the OPR team feels that new monitoring activities should be started to study the outcomes at the community level after FFS phase-out. The new activities should explore the situation of a broad range of demographic groups. The box on the previous page contains suggestions for the design of ex-post impact studies to meet this need.

### **3.5.2 Comments on Participatory M&E**

Currently participatory M&E activities exist both as a tool of the FTs and as part of the programme's M&E systems. The FTs conduct participatory needs assessments and planning exercises with the pre-selected members of each FFS and, recently, have introduced a participatory self-evaluation (PSE) tool. At least one of the tools managed by the programme M&E unit – the Service Access Inventory – is a participatory group exercise, conducted with FFS members and some non-members deemed to be especially knowledgeable about service deliverers in the area. Although some good things are happening, the OPR team was concerned that the methods applied serve mostly to extract information and are not empowering to the groups.

Past consultants suggested that PSE be added to the FFS toolbox; indeed, self-evaluation seems a necessary element of any successful FFS. A version of PSE is currently being piloted with the current set of phased FFSs. The OPR team observed two sessions. These sessions have some positive features, in terms of enthusiastic FTs and active participation by FFS members, but the OPR team also observed that the approach being used is prescriptive with excessive control by the CARE FT. In addition, the model makes poor use of visual, participatory methods. While the groups provided some good information to the CARE FT and learned some things along the way, they do not own the process and did not gain a capacity to evaluate themselves in the FTs' absence.

An alternative model might be to coach FTs in the philosophy and spirit of PSE but not to provide them with a prescriptive written methodology with its long list of predetermined indicators. Rather they would be asked to make use of their own creativity and ideas generated from FFS members to develop locally relevant methods for group (and perhaps individual) self-evaluation. The group owns the process and products from the start. The FT would be responsible for setting the process in motion, documenting the sessions, sharing what was learned with colleagues and contributing to critical thinking about best practices. So, the overall objective would not be that the FFS was evaluated but that it gained evaluation skills and could independently set goals, select indicators and measure progress.

Alternatively, the RLP may choose to search the CARE-B archives for guidelines and methods on participatory M&E produced by the ANR sector in the mid to late-90s. The team has heard positive remarks about the quality and relevance of the materials produced, particularly for use with an illiterate audience. Even if that previous model proves to be inappropriate for the RLP situation, the "Learning and Changing" philosophy demands that Programme

staff should consult and build upon the previous experience of the organisation.

### **3.5.3 Comments on the 'nuts and bolts' of Programme M&E**

It has been noted elsewhere in this report that the RLP appears to be designed to carry out certain activities, rather than achieve certain goals. It is understandable, therefore, that M&E has focused on those activities and their outputs (e.g. short-term adoption of recommended agricultural practices) rather than longer-term outcomes and impact. With this in mind, the RLP appears to be doing an improved and generally acceptable job of documenting accomplishments. Field offices are tracking activities and outputs and the M&E unit is able to aggregate basic information about numbers and locations of FFSs assisted, characteristics of members, degree to which members have accepted the attitudes and behaviours promoted, extent of "secondary adoption" etc. For the most part, this data can be disaggregated by gender and some comparisons are possible between male and female respondents.

The merger of GO-Interfish and SHABGE M&E systems has been basically successful. A unit was formed to serve both projects and steps were made to harmonize data collection instruments and schedules. A complaint was registered that the new arrangement has isolated the M&E function from the projects making it more difficult for PCs and others to get the information they need promptly. In addition, anecdotal evidence gives a sense of field staff serving the needs of the M&E unit rather than the reverse. More generally though, the past animosity from programme staff towards the M&E units (M&E used to be purposefully mispronounced as 'enemy') has largely disappeared and field staff better understand the importance of M&E to their work in communities.

Basic methodologies employed by the M&E unit, such as tool development, sampling, survey implementation, and data input/analysis, appear to be generally appropriate, particularly in comparison with other projects. Among the positive aspects noted:

- Tools are matched to logframe indicators (at least those from the project logframes), and methods correspond to types of data required;
- Efforts are made to use PRA tools during M&E activities and to link qualitative with quantitative information;
- Most tools have a mechanism for disaggregation of data by gender;
- Efforts are made to identify information needs of stakeholders and the manner in which that information would be best delivered;
- Reports are prepared in both Bangla and English (although often with significant delay.)

M&E staff asked the OPR team to provide some specific feedback or suggestions on their various activities. Some of the most significant comments or suggestions are as follows:

- An overarching M&E strategic plan is necessary that goes beyond describing a set of tools but shows a system for integrating/aggregating the results of the individual studies into higher learning, i.e. shows how it all fits together.
- Much clearer statements of objectives for individual studies are recommended. This is not just for the benefit of outside reviewers on tight schedules, but more importantly leads to better selection of data types, respondents, and data collection cycles and serves to better focus efforts and evaluate the appropriateness of the products.
- Greater use of comparative analyses would be helpful: e.g. before-after, with-without, men-women, comparisons by well-being category, etc. Even descriptive information such as the demographic profile of FFS members needs comparative contextual information for full understanding (hypothetical example: 7% of SHABGE FFS members are from female-headed households compared to 12% for the para population as a whole.)
- Questions were raised during the OPR about how to obtain a sample of non-FFS respondents that would serve as a valid comparison with FFS members. One possible idea would be to identify a “control” population during the well-being analysis. These households would generally have the same characteristics as the 25 households fortunate enough to have been selected.
- Combine quantitative and qualitative data even more than currently taking place. For instance, the numerical ranking in the PCM may be a good way to measure progress towards a quantitative OVI. In a PRA mindset, however, the act of ranking can serve as a catalyst to deeper discussion into the attitudes, social constraints, etc. that form the basis for scores given. This link is currently rather weak.
- Make sure each document, however brief, includes date and author. An uncomfortable number of reports that the team was provided had neither. In addition, tables in some reports were presented in a confusing manner and required a reading of the narrative to understand. Tables should be able to stand on their own.

If there is any complaint regarding the basic monitoring function it is that there are frequent delays in producing the reports, resulting in some difficulty in using the results from the previous year for next year’s planning. Most recently, there seemed to be a “mad rush” to get reports assembled for the OPR team, a fact that may serve as a supporting indication of a bottleneck somewhere between data collection and report dissemination. The OPR team is not in a position to identify the bottlenecks but feels it is incumbent upon the units involved to identify them and take corrective action.

The M&E unit has had a long-term interest in streamlining its processes by decreasing the amount of data collected and the number of tools used to collect those data. If this could be accomplished the problem noted above might be solved. The following are some specific suggestions.

- De-emphasis of production, technology adoption-type indicators with a corresponding increase in emphasis on empowerment, social equity-type indicators. It may make sense to cease completely the monitoring of production-based indicators until some end-of-project summation.
- A good example of a tool that may be unnecessary is the GO-Interfish cost-benefit analysis, which is entirely technology focused (to estimate income increases experienced by FFS participants) and for which empowerment objectives are not in evidence. In a sense, the more important cost-benefit calculation is the one that takes place in the mind of a poor farmer: “Will I adopt this or not?” The project’s intention should be to enhance the critical/analytical thinking of that farmer so that informed decisions will be made. Monitoring would then focus on those factors.
- The M&E unit should revisit the timing of some events. Measuring “adoption” or service access at regular intervals during the FFS seems unnecessary as progress may just be a function of the FT working his/her way through the session list (i.e. output rather than outcome). An interest in sustainable behavioural change would point towards a post-phase-out survey with comparisons made to baseline values and/or to control groups.

Although it may be too late for the RLP, future M&E plans could be more demand-driven by basing information generated and distributed on a more rigorous stakeholder analysis. This would help guarantee that only relevant data are being collected and that the reporting format best meets the needs of end-users.

#### **3.5.4 Measuring Social Development**

The OPR team generally feels that too little emphasis is currently being given to the measurement of relevant social development indicators. The Participant Capacity Matrix (PCM), which asks respondents to give a numerical ranking to wide-ranging questions related to access and power, is a good start but more is needed. The M&E unit should continue its learning process by seeking information on “best-practices” from social development projects/institutions inside and outside Bangladesh. The following types of indicators may better identify/ document the empowerment outcomes sought in this programme.

- Nutrition and health indicators are generally of key importance to women. They have some prominence in LMP studies but are not adequately addressed in programme M&E.
- Women in communities openly discussed the physical violence to which they are subjected, particularly in noting that this has decreased due to their participation in the programme. Indicators are needed to track the changing prevalence of violence to women.



- Access to education can be an important outcome of women's empowerment. In particular, it may be useful to track enrolment rates for girls and to gauge attitudes related to the issue.
- A more thorough consideration of the five types of assets noted in the DFID livelihoods framework (i.e. human capital, financial capital, natural capital, physical capital and social capital) may yield a more complete set of access indicators. The risk might be that too many indicators would result. However, close consultation with beneficiaries would identify a short-list of the most relevant indicators to track.

A few more comments can be made regarding gender. While the team was a bit disappointed with the difficulty in obtaining Gender Action Plans for review, it does seem apparent that the projects and the programme as a whole take the issue seriously. A mission-wide set of gender indicators, for both institutional and programmatic needs, is tracked in field offices. General progress is discussed in periodic management meetings and reported in quarterly project monitoring reports.

A specific point of concern regards female-headed households, a group known to be particularly vulnerable. Staff respondents were unable to clearly describe the programme's approach to assisting this group and did not know if they are being targeted or excluded in any systematic way. M&E reports do not address the issue in any depth. We are left to believe that time and resource constraints have made most female household-heads unsuitable for the activities emphasized in the two projects. This, if true, is worrying.

An additional concern regards the disaggregation of results by sex. As noted earlier, many M&E tools make this possible. Most reports have sections presenting results for questions relevant for women. There is some evidence however that such efforts have not gone far enough. For instance, while the GO-Interfish PCM reports the results of some questions specifically directed towards women (e.g. contribution of women to household decision-making) other indicators that could have gender implications are just reported as an average of all households. For instance, awareness and access to services available from governmental and NGO sources can be gender-based, both within and among households. The survey did not report on gender differences for these indicators.

### **3.5.5 Comments on the Livelihoods Monitoring Project**

LMP has made progress in consolidating its operations, is receiving greater attention from senior management (particularly the RLPC), and has a detailed workplan covering the next 14 months. The team appears reasonably well placed to complete the plan, in the absence of significant new tasks, particularly if additional human resources are provided. Unfortunately, the senior LMP advisory post has not been filled, which could conceivably make it difficult to fully complete the plan. The major elements of LMP's workplan are: completion of a debt and migration study, two baseline follow-up surveys, and compiling lessons and developing a livelihoods monitoring toolbox. The

senior advisor would be particularly useful during interpretation of findings and presentation of results.

A question remains as to how the work of the LMP will contribute to impact evaluation of GO-Interfish and SHABGE. The type of community-level outcome assessment mentioned in the previous section is unlikely to be fulfilled by the follow-up surveys planned by the LMP. This despite an impression amongst project and M&E unit staff that impact assessment at that point in time is the purview of the LMP. LMP is working at a more macro level and unless significantly reshaped would not capture the information described above.

This is not intended as a criticism of the Project, which has been pulled in various directions by the donor, consultants and earlier review teams. The current OPR team had expected a more substantial integration of LMP into the M&E and learning functions of the RLP but perhaps historical, institutional and/or contractual factors made that impossible. In any case, it is highly desirable that the follow-up livelihood surveys planned for the Northwest and Southeast produce information that will help answer the outcome-related questions yet unanswered by the project M&E systems. To make that happen, the team encourages a coordinated planning process (e.g. starting with the LMP indicator workshop planned for March) involving relevant stakeholders, especially those interested in the impact evaluations of the two projects.

LMP should be particularly cognizant of the need to measure impact for rights and social development indicators, given the evolving importance of those outcomes in the RLP. The baseline studies explored those issues in some detail but an admittedly tentative list of streamlined indicators for the follow-up surveys does not yet give much attention to the indicators mentioned above. RLPC has already recognized this gap and has indicated an intention to take some corrective measures. This should be prioritised.

A new rural-urban linkages study, to be led or supported by IFPRI, is in the planning stages. While a critical theme to future initiatives of CARE and others, and one that dovetails well with the debt and migration work, this study may well exceed the capacity of the LMP and might mean that the core tasks set out in the work plan are not achieved by the end-of-project. If CARE chooses to go ahead with the study, it must make sure the burden does not fall upon LMP staff in a way that compromises its other on-going efforts. It may be wise to consider other alternatives for providing the necessary human resources to the job.

*The following tables show the 'M&E timelines' for the SHABGE and GO-IF projects, referred to in Section 3.5.1 above. The timelines shows that – with few exceptions - no monitoring is planned for the period after FFS phase-out.*

MONITORING AND EVALUATION TIMELINE - SHABGE FARMER FIELD SCHOOL<sup>3</sup>

M&E Tool/Activity	Month from FFS Initiation												Comments		
	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	Phase-out	(CBO or Self-help group)					
Well-being Analysis															Participant selection mechanism supported but not conducted by M&E Unit.
Participatory Needs Assess. & Self Evaluation															Planning and evaluation mechanisms internal to FFSs. M&E Unit supports but does not conduct.
Participant Profile Baseline/Follow-up															A set of livelihoods and (a few) empowerment indicators tracked over time for FFS members. Follow-up survey conducted by local contractor.
Service Access Inventory															Inform and raise awareness among FFS members. Assess progress towards Output #1
Participant Capacity Matrix															Assess purpose-level change. SHABGE adopted PCM after creation of RLP so data collection started late.
Technical Adoption and Innovation Matrix															Baseline data for comparisons derived from LMP baseline studies.
Secondary Adoption Monitoring															FTs keep a registry of non-FFS members adopting technologies introduced by CARE. Annual compilation of numbers and a list of technologies adopted.
Project Monitoring Reports / QMRS															Inform multiple stakeholders of progress against activity targets and other programme benchmarks. Identification of constraints and other management/programme issues.

<sup>3</sup> The RLP has other monitoring instruments, including one to measure participation in school-based programmes and another to assess the capacity of PNGOs. They are not included here or in the GO-Interfish table as they do not correspond to the life cycle of a FFS.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION TIMELINE - GO-INTERFISH FARMER FIELD SCHOOL

M&E Tool/Activity	Month from FFS Initiation							Phase-out	(CBO or Self-help group)	Comments
	3	6	9	12	15	18				
Well-being Analysis										A type of wealth ranking and participant selection mechanism supported but not conducted by M&E Unit.
Participatory Needs Assessment										Planning mechanism internal to FFSs. M&E Unit supports but does not conduct. GO-Interfish has not yet incorporated self-evaluation mechanism.
Participant Profile Baseline										Purpose is to describe the selected beneficiaries but not to establish baseline data for evaluation purposes.
Service Access Inventory										Designed to inform and raise awareness among FFS members about the range of services available to them and to discuss issues of quality, access, cost, etc.
Participant Capacity Matrix										Assess output and purpose-level changes of attitudes and behaviours related to livelihoods and empowerment objectives. FFS members and non-members sampled for comparative purposes.
Technical Adoption Monitoring										Results disaggregated by sex and district. Data on adoption by "counterpart" participants were collected in the past.
Secondary Adoption Survey										FT records numbers of adopters per technology and average number of adopted technologies per person. Sampling method unclear.
Cost-Benefit Analyses										Compare input cost against value of products for a range of technologies introduced by the project.
Inventory for Community Mobilization										Basic information collected on CBOs formed post-FFS. To be out-sourced. Timing related to the FFS cycle unclear.
Project Monitoring Reports / QMRs										Inform multiple stakeholders of progress against activity targets and other programme benchmarks. Identification of constraints and other management/programme issues.

## 4. Moving Forward

### 4.1 Ideas that CARE might find useful

#### 4.1.1 Structure versus Process

##### Structure

- The term 'structure' refers to the arrangement of the parts of a system. Within a structure there is a fixed relationship between the components.
- A structural approach to rural development involves a predetermined pattern of activities that leads to the creation of a predetermined set of outcomes.

##### Process

- The term 'process' refers to a series of actions or changes that lead to a certain result. Within a process there is a dynamic relationship between the components.
- A process approach to rural development involves an evolving pattern of interactions that lead to a desired set of capabilities.

##### What difference does this concept make in real life?

- Most rural development programmes consist of structure and process. A process approach can be applied within the framework of a certain structure, and a structural approach can be applied with the framework of a certain process.
- But... there is a tendency for projects and programmes to be dominated by one particular approach, as shown in the following diagram

Attribute	Structural Approach	Process Approach
<i>goal</i>	prescribed behavioural changes	empowerment
<i>strategy</i>	implementation of blueprints and models	experiential learning and action research
<i>management</i>	target-setting	capacitation
<i>field staff role</i>	delivery	facilitation
<i>reward system</i>	based on compliance	based on responsive-ness and innovation

Is the CARE RLP applying a structural or process approach?

- The RLP includes examples of both approaches, but there is tendency towards structural interventions. This is partly a result of the history of the programme.
- The origins of RLP go back more than 10 years, to a time when CARE was playing a leading role in innovative approaches to agricultural extension.
- If RLP was judged as an agricultural extension programme, it would be one of the best in the world, in terms of ...
  - the skills and commitment of field staff
  - the involvement of women and the poor
  - the use of participatory techniques on a large scale
- CARE and DFID are now trying to do something more than just extension. They want to contribute to the empowerment of the poor, not just increase production and income. And they want to promote livelihoods, not just transfer agricultural technologies.
- The evolution in the goals of the programme requires a shift in emphasis from structure to process. In some areas RLP is succeeding in making this shift, but in other areas RLP is facing some difficulties. This is the challenge that managers and field staff are currently facing.
- If we examine some of the strategies used in the RLP - such as FFS, Organisational Development, and Participatory Self Assessment – we will find that although these were designed to strengthen learning and decision-making (processes) they have often become blueprints and set of targets (structures).

What are we learning?

- The experience of RLP supports the idea that the evolution of CARE's goals, from Agricultural Extension to Livelihoods and Rights, requires a shift in emphasis from structures to process.
- When implemented, a process approach can result in interventions that are locally specific, responsive to emerging needs, and consistent with the idea of empowerment.
- But there appears to be factors within RLP that sometimes tip the balance towards structure. When this happens, interventions are delivered that may be irrelevant or ineffective. Or, if the interventions are effective, the benefits are captured by a small number of people.
- This problem is not unique to the CARE - RLP. It affects many organisations involved in rural development, including Line Ministries, NGOs, and donor agencies.

What are the factors that tip the balance towards structure?

- When development interventions do not produce the desired result, the blame is often directed at the capability of field workers. Training programmes are organised, but performance does not always change.

- In the case of CARE, the Field Staff are highly committed and have received training in a wide range of technologies and techniques. If this training has not brought about the desired shift from extension to livelihoods and rights, it is because training addresses the symptoms rather than the causes of a structural approach.
- The causes of the structural approach include:
  - the history of the programme
  - the scale of operations
  - lack of clarity in vision
  - the demands of the donor
  - the reward system for staff

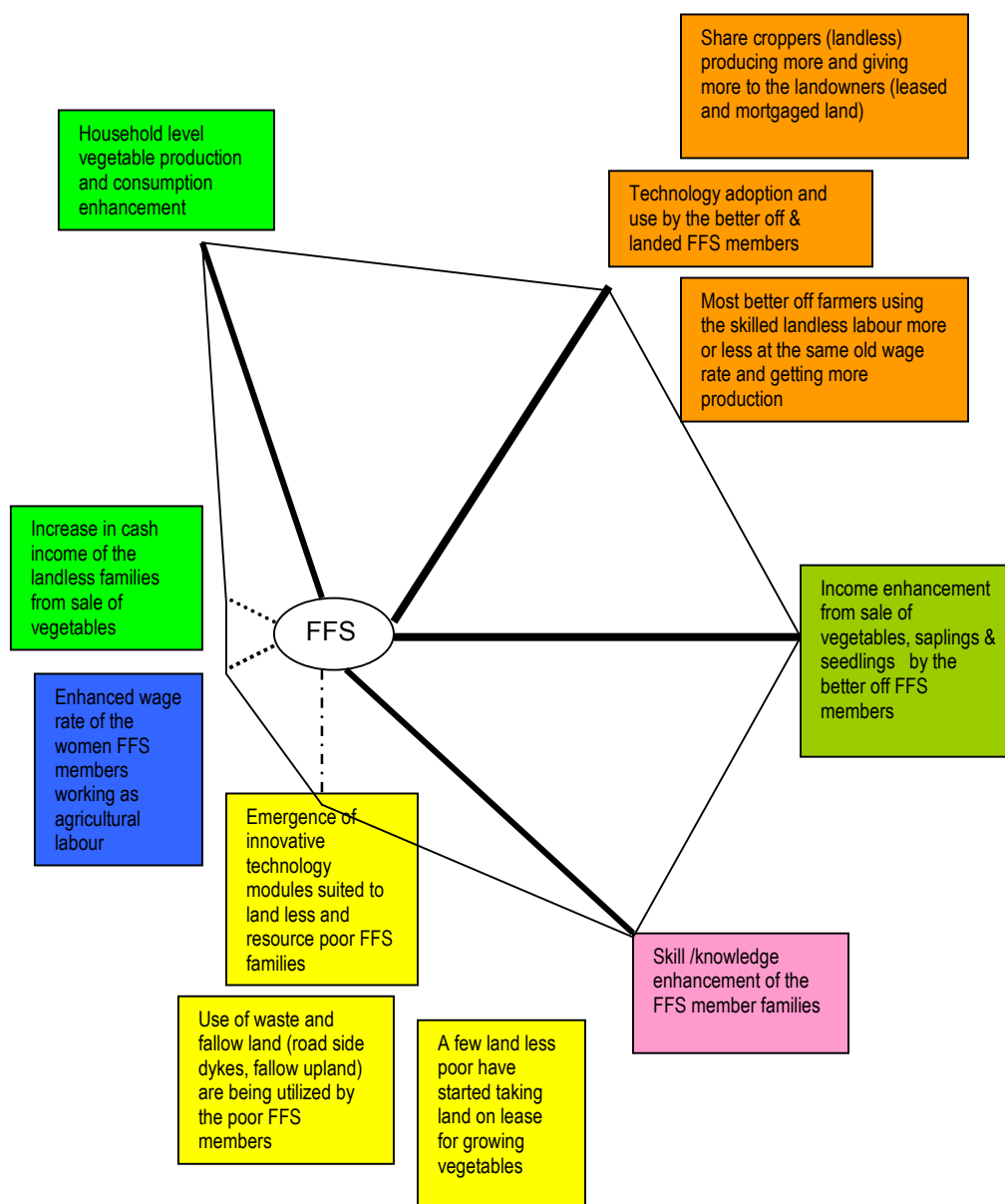
#### Shifting the balance towards a process approach... how can it be done?

- CARE needs to find its own answers to this question.
- Field staff are full of ideas on how it can be done.
- The OPR recommendations are another source of ideas.
- RLP will know it is succeeding when the following occurs:
  - when there is a greater variation in the way that field staff are implementing programme strategies,
  - when communities begin to develop their own strategies, and use the capacity they have developed in unexpected ways, and
  - when the results of these strategies (techniques, technologies, and forms of collective action) spread in an unplanned manner from one part of a community to another.

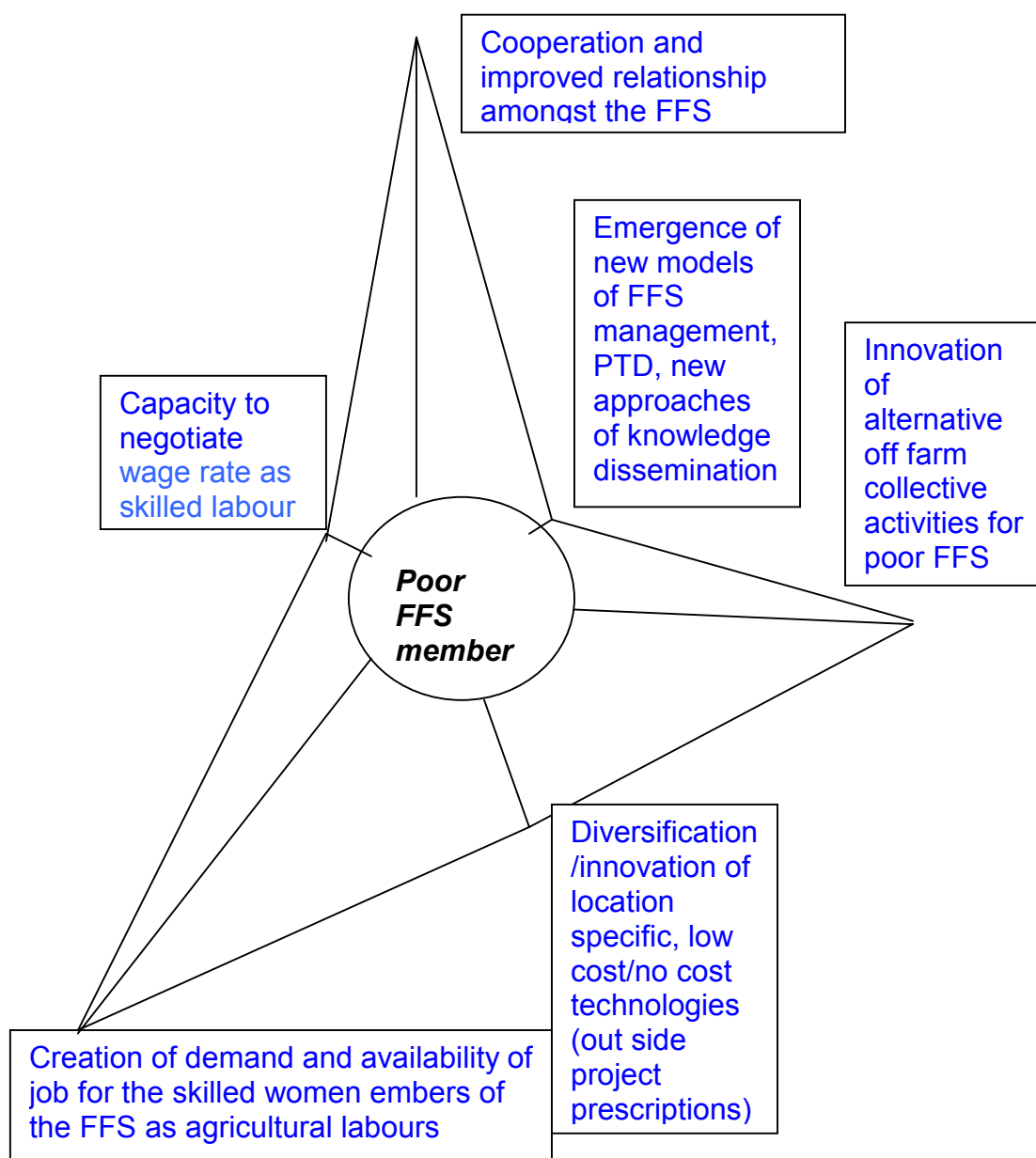
#### **4.1.2 Visualising benefits**

- The RLP is designed to contribute to poverty reduction in Bangladesh. The Programme includes studies that contribute to an understanding of the causes of poverty, techniques that help the Programme to target the poorer members of the community (e.g. well-being analysis), and technologies that can be applied by families with very limited resources (e.g. pit crops).
- Despite the pro-poor design of the Programme, field staff recognise that much of what they are doing is not relevant to the needs of the most vulnerable members of the community, and that the relatively better off members of Field Schools are capturing a greater portion of the benefits. [see table in section 3.2]. These problems are easily observed, but they are rarely documented and analysed.
- If the RLP is to make a more effective contribution to the reduction of disparities in wealth and power, a starting point must be greater openness about who benefits and how. RLP staff should be continually aware of which members of the community are making decisions, gaining access to services, and accumulating assets as a consequence of Programme interventions.

- It may be useful if the Programme developed and utilised a variety of visual tools that will facilitate discussion among staff about this issue. The tools should promote the sharing of experience and an analysis of the implications for future work.
- One visual tool that was used during the OPR was a type of ‘spider diagram’. These diagrams can help groups of people to recognise the relationships between different ideas. A key idea is placed as the centre of the diagram and branches are drawn to indicate subordinate ideas or consequences. The length or thickness of the branches can be adjusted to indicate the extent or a prevalence of the subordinate ideas.
- Two examples are presented below. In the first example, the central idea is an RLP activity, namely the Field School. The branches illustrate how people benefit from the FFS. In the second example, the central idea is a group of people, namely the poorer members of the FFS. The branches show the extent to which this group benefits from the Programme activities.







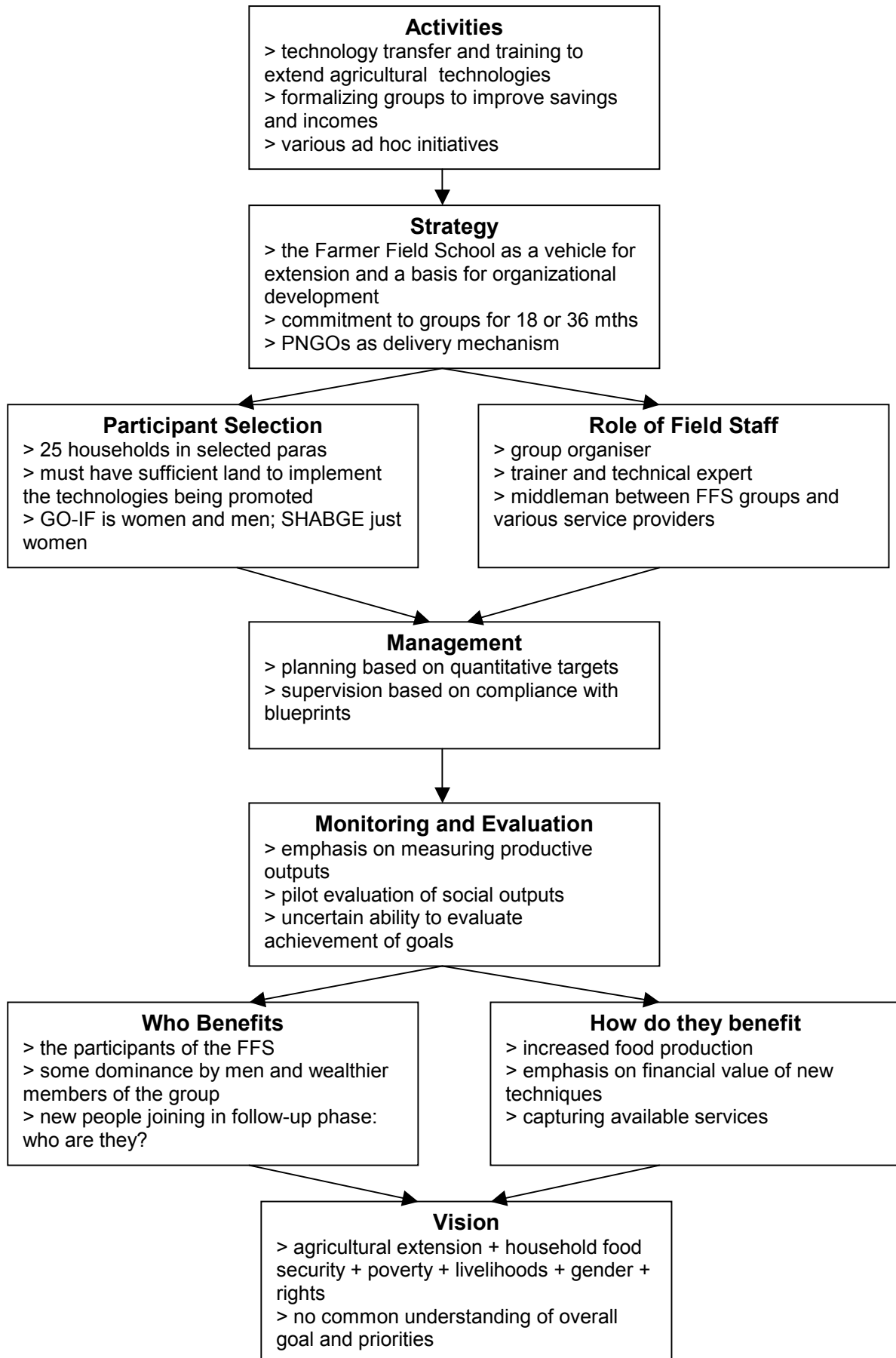
- The OPR Team is not recommending that all FTs should start drawing Spider Diagrams. Instead, we are suggesting that visual tools may help FTs to gain a better understanding what they are doing. The Spider Diagram is one of many possibilities that should be explored

#### **4.1.3 The importance of vision during a period of change**

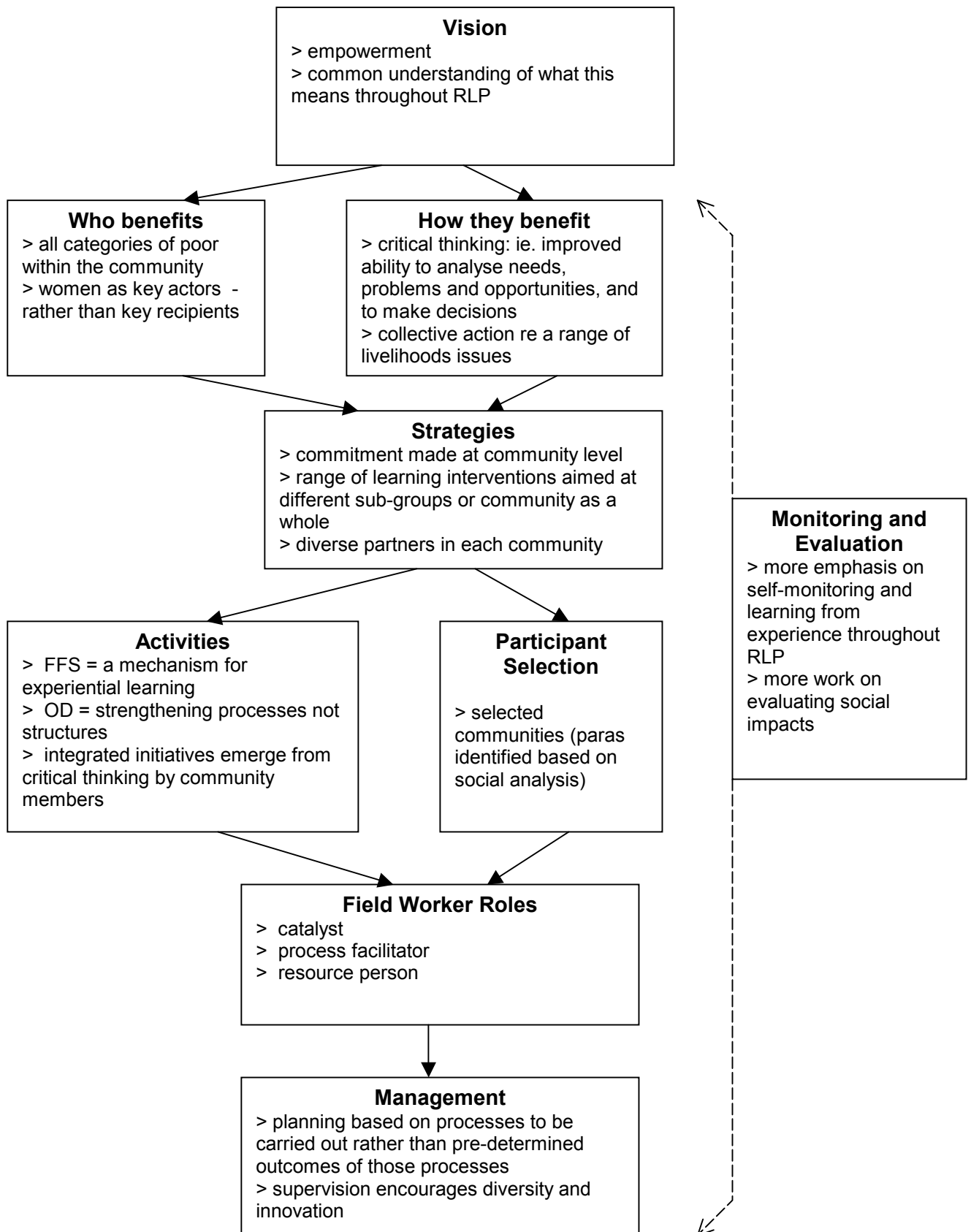
- The RLP as it currently exists is both the outcome of a long period of change, and a foundation for further changes. Three projects have joined together in the context of an organisation that is seeking new directions. A transition is taking place: a huge, difficult process.

- The OPR team has tried to find ways of helping that process. Our assessment focuses more on *directions* rather than *current achievements*. And on *capacities* rather than *work plans*.
- As a means for understanding the directions that CARE Bangladesh is taking, a diagram was prepared that shows how the different elements of the RLP currently fit together [see 'current approach'].
- The OPR team has asked itself the question: *can the current arrangement justifiable be called a 'Rural Livelihoods Programme'*? The answer, it seems is no, not really. The RLP is more like an agricultural extension programme with a lot of extra things added to it.
- A further question that needs to be asked is: *is the programme making a positive impact on livelihoods?* The answer is yes, but some people are benefiting more than others, and those who are benefiting the most may not be the people that CARE and DFID are trying to help.
- If we agree that the transition of RLP hasn't yet reached the point where we are satisfied with the way all the pieces fit together, we need to ask ourselves what needs to be done to move forward? .
- Is the key to add a few more activities: to carry out a few more studies or pilots? No. Is it to make further changes to management structure? No. Should we invent a few more M&E indicators that will hopefully tell us where we are going? No.
- What is needed is a clear vision for the programme. Not in the minds of one person, but in the minds of everybody. Something that, far more than a logframe, will provide staff with a sense of direction. Which will allow them to set priorities, and assess their own performance.
- If RLP could establish a clear vision, the programme could look rather different [see 'potential approach']. Using the same human resources and similar strategies, the programme could focus more effectively on helping to empower the rural poor.

Rural Livelihoods Programme – Current Approach



Rural Livelihoods Programme – Potential Approach



## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.1 *Laying foundations for a future Rural Livelihoods Programme*

1. CARE Bangladesh should undertake a process at the soonest possible date to explicitly define a *rural livelihoods vision* that which will act as a framework and guideline for RLP. The process should involve staff from all branches and layers of the Programme, and be guided by senior management of CARE Bangladesh. The vision statement, which should be approved within 60 days, should unwrap what the RLP priorities are in terms of agricultural extension, the poor and women and how this fits into a livelihoods and rights based approach.
2. With a vision statement as a starting point, and the work of the SDU as an important input, the RLP should undertake participatory analyses facilitated by external experts to examine what interventions have had most impact on rural poverty and gender. These participatory investigations should be guided by two key rights based principles: participation is a means and an end, and strategies that prioritise empowerment and the reduction of disparities in terms of gender and poverty. This process should lead to the publication of a policy paper on Rural Livelihoods within six months. Some of the questions to be answered by the policy paper have already been identified in the planned studies of gender and the FFS. Other important questions that need to be answered are appended to these recommendations. The existing plans for detailed studies of gender issues and FFS performance should be reconsidered in the light of the importance of producing the policy paper by mid 2004.
3. Once the vision statement and policy paper has been produced, these documents should guide the subsequent planning and implementation of a future programme, including the formulation of proposals to prospective donors. As shown in the diagram 'Potential Approach', a clear vision and an understanding of who should benefit and how, is the basis for determining participants, strategies, activities, M and E, field staff roles and management systems.

### 4.2.2 *Strategic Management*

4. CARE senior management and DFID should hold meetings within 30 days with the aim of sharing expectations and clarifying funding possibilities for a new livelihoods programme to start in 2005, building on the work that is now being done by RLP.
5. During the next 14 months, RLP should not start any major new initiatives, nor expand any on-going pilots, that are not directly relevant to the empowerment of women and reducing disparities between the members of the communities in which CARE staff are currently working. DFID should avoid placing any major new demands on RLP

during the time that remains and, instead, should provide whatever support is possible for capturing lessons from work that has already been carried out, and sharing these lessons with the wider community.

6. During the next 14 months, RLP should test a truly decentralized approach for planning and implementation in selected areas. Teams of staff at the Thana level, including partner NGOs, should be allowed to develop their own work-plans. Programme management should allocate resources based on the proposed work plan, and allow the team to manage those resources with a high degree of independence.
7. RLP should bring in outside help to facilitate 'reflective learning' exercises among staff at different levels. These activities are aimed at enhancing the transition to a more dynamic and self-critical organization that has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve, and to explore the extent to which strategies and partnerships are working towards the vision (or not).
8. RLP should also bring in outside help to summarize, package and disseminate the experience of SHABGE and GO-Interfish and, in particular, capture and publicize the lessons that may be of relevance to other projects, other donors and Government policy making.

#### **4.2.3 Pro-Poor Participatory Implementation**

9. All field staff should be encouraged to apply greater flexibility in the design, and implementation of FFS, so that membership, duration, timing and content better meet the needs of the poor within the communities where they are working.
10. The prescribed characteristics of all FFS should be the goal of empowerment, participation, the reduction of disparities of all participants in the group and the process of experiential learning, not the number of participants or the technologies that are included.
11. RLP should consider eliminating all targets and structural models relating to the establishment of CBOs or SHGs. Instead, the SDU and TCU should jointly develop guidelines for field staff on the processes and techniques of group strengthening that will lead to greater participation, equity, decision-making skills and ownership in the process of organizational development. Also, processes should be supported which respond to a wider range of women's limitations, needs and interests. A blueprint approach to organizational development should be avoided, and field staff must be conscious of the possibility that FFS groups will be 'captured' by wealthier or more influential members of the community. If senior staff consider it to be necessary, outside assistance may be sought to develop appropriate learning exercises and materials.

12. The TCU should review the work that has been carried out to improving the participation/facilitation skills of all field staff, and organise activities aimed at making further improvements in this area. A set of professional guidelines should be developed, which will provide FTs with indicators by which they can better judge their own performance. What the RLP has learned from TITAN should be passed on to all FTs, not just those involved in “phased FFS” under SHABGE. RLP should also draw on the experience and expertise of projects and institutions in Bangladesh that are well known for using participatory approaches. Workshops to address this issue should be carried out at the village level under real conditions, where FTs can receive feedback from their peers, PRA experts, and members of the community.

#### **4.2.4 Incorporating Social Development**

13. The SDU is producing very important and interesting research into issues regarding the root causes of poverty and how the RLP may address these issues within a livelihoods framework. This ‘learning’ must be more thoroughly integrated into programming and mainstreamed into a clear process for ‘changing’. Staff across the board should participate in this process as a way of encouraging ownership of the transition taking place from agricultural extension to livelihoods.
14. Research should be undertaken much more as coordinated participatory investigations as opposed to expert studies. This way the lessons in terms of gender, equity and methodology will be part of an empirical process of learning and changing for the field staff. Also, the field staff would benefit if they could receive sessions and materials from the SDU on key findings of the social studies already undertaken and the issues that they throw up for community development.
15. The SDU should develop more detailed modules for each of the social development, sanitation, nutrition and reproductive health sessions. These modules should be included in planning so as to allow for three to four sessions with as many members of the community as the FFS field staff and participants see as necessary. Where possible they should be experiential learning activities (e.g. sanitation). Field trainers should be given extensive strategic support in their social development work.

#### **4.2.5 Accessing Livelihood Assets**

16. RLP staff have been making commendable efforts to improve the linkage between phased-out FFS groups and various service providers. This work should continue, but with greater emphasis on generating ‘demand-driven’ services. The role of FTs is to help improve the capability of groups to identify and access available services for themselves, not to act as a middleman or to build capacity of service

providers. Staff should continue to explore ways in which groups can work with Local Government to receive entitlements.

17. CARE has also been making some progress in improving the nature of the partnership with local NGOs. The experiment with 'joint FFS' is noteworthy. Further innovations that allow local NGOs to make greater use of their comparative advantages, and acquire a higher level of ownership, should be encouraged. The aim should not be to create a set of 'mini-CARE's' but a network of like-minded organisations offering complementary services.
18. Regarding the on-going marketing pilots, the SDU should be helping the TCU to give more attention to the issue of 'who makes decisions' and 'who benefits'. Like other RLP activities, the pilots should apply the principles of empowering women and the poorer members of rural communities through experiential learning and collective action. An 'extension' approach to marketing, that brings greatest benefits to relatively wealthier farmers, would not be appropriate. The marketing component should be allowed to 'tick over' rather than accelerate its work, and the priority for the next 14 months should be to monitor and evaluate the social impact of the schemes that have been started rather than launch a lot of new schemes.

#### **4.2.6 Making M&E more meaningful**

19. RLP should make greater efforts to carry out truly participatory M&E. This requires the establishment of a clearer distinction between participatory M&E that is owned by the FFS members, and project/programme M&E. FTs should be provided with the freedom to work with their groups to set goals and indicators, measure progress and analyse and interpret findings for new local action. FTs should also be encouraged to: a) monitor the assimilation of lessons among FFS members and other members of the community, b) understand context and externalities e.g. keep track of community reactions, intra-household tensions, etc. and c) respond to diversity within FFS groups so that - for instance - poorer women are not marginalized by the process or choice of session themes. It would be helpful if FTs were creating 'mental case studies' on a continual basis: noting innovations and unanticipated outcomes, drop-outs and marginalized members, etc., and to respond in a flexible manner.
20. Programme M&E should begin to focus on outcomes. This requires de-emphasizing the monitoring of technology transfer, production, and income indicators. It is worth considering stopping the measurement of these factors until an end-of-project evaluation is carried out. In place of these indicators, attention should be given to the M&E of outcomes beyond FFS technical themes, beyond FFS membership and with a range of groups after the phase-out of the FFS (particularly in relation to gender and poverty reduction).



21. In the post-FFS environment, information should be generated (both quantitative and qualitative) to learn about the longer-term positive and negative impacts of RLP activities on diverse segments of participating communities, e.g. how FFS principles/lessons (critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, etc.) persist in graduates and extend to others, how FFSs evolve into groups, how intra and inter family gender relations are in terms of issues such as decision making, food distribution and health and how the poverty profile of beneficiaries changes, etc.
22. Systems should be set up to acquire detailed gender disaggregated data in Go-Interfish. Issues of women's nutrition and health as outcomes of participating in the FFS should be incorporated into M and E data.
23. Systems should also be created to acquire greater understanding of how the programme is impacting differently on the poorer and wealthier members of the FFS in both projects and the positive / negative impact it is having on other poorer members of the community. One means for doing this is ex-post impact evaluation exercises that should be carried out at the community level between 6 and 12 months after an FFS group has been phased out.
24. LMP should begin to consider how it can contribute to a deeper evaluation of RLP in 2005 to be carried out at the end of the current DFID funding. In other words, it would be useful to assure that the objectives, sampling methods and data collected by LMP is directly relevant to understanding the impact of the RLP, especially in relation to empowerment and rights issues. LMP's pending workshop to make final indicator selection for baseline follow-up surveys should involve the participation of M&E unit and GO-Interfish and SHABGE staff along with other RLP stakeholders

**Appendix to recommendation #3:  
Some questions to be addressed in the proposed policy paper**

Gender

- Whether the improvement of the livelihoods of women and girls should be the goal of their programme?
- How to build a programme whose proposed actions promote and do not compromise gender equality?
- If the goal is 'women's and girl's first' what are the key issues to rural women in Bangladesh in terms of livelihoods?
- How do intra- and inter-family and community relations restrict the improvement of women's livelihoods?
- How to build on the social capital established by SHABGE and Go Interfish to extend women's social and political networks out of the household to the community and beyond?
- What would be the methodology to achieve that end?- is the FFS a good entry point that can be extended to integrate other livelihood needs or does another strategy need to be developed?
- What is the most appropriate strategy for improving women's mobility and their direct access to services? How to build on the increased mobility of the poorest women as they are having to work outside the home?
- What kind of interventions would need to be carried out to improve women's livelihoods in terms of attitudinal and behavioural change? - for example what is the most effective way of improving the nutrition and reproductive health of poor women? is literacy a necessary part of any empowerment programme for women?

Equity

- How does the RLP define poverty?
- Does the RLP want to work with the extreme poor?
- How is the RLP impacting in terms of poverty on its participants as compared to the poorer members of the community and how is equity being addressed within the FFS?
- Is the RLP working with the appropriate participants - or should it be working with the 'extreme' poor?
- If so what should be the interventions of the programme? Can agriculture and the FFS methodology be effective for sustainably improving the livelihoods of the 'extreme poor'?
- Does CARE have the expertise and capacity to carry out new and varied livelihoods programmes or with whom does it need to make alliances to maximise gender and poverty impact?

### 4.3 Expected Outcomes

This report provides a lengthy analysis of the current situation in the RLP, and includes a number of detailed recommendations. For the sake of clarity, it may be useful to state - as precisely as possible – what the OPR team expects the situation to be in 14 months time, when current DFID funding comes to an end. These are our expectations:

- CARE RLP will have a clear vision, shared by all staff. A vision that helps everybody from PCs to FTs make better decisions about what they do and how they do it.
- CARE RLP will have a much better understanding of who has been benefiting from the work that has been going on, and how they benefit. In particular, there will be a stronger analysis of how the programme impacts on the needs of women and the poorest members of rural communities.
- CARE will be making decisions about future programmes and strategies based on that vision and on the knowledge of what works and what doesn't, rather than based on historical factors.
- Field staff will have empowerment as their guiding principle. They will be facilitating learning processes in such a way that people who currently lack power can make choices and take action that improves their livelihoods.
- An M&E system will be in place that does what M&E systems are supposed to do, which is to help everybody else do a better job. It will help management to assess progress towards higher level goals, and help field staff and communities to make better decisions about what they are doing.

## Annex A: Schedule of OPR

January 2003

Date	Place	Activity
12	Dhaka	<i>Arrival of OPR Team</i>
13	Dhaka	Briefing: DFID Office Briefing: CARE Office <i>Travel: Dhaka-Dinajpur</i>
14	Dinajpur	Field visits: Dinajpur/ Taragonj
15	Dinajpur	Field visits: Thakurgoan/ Baliadaganji/ Boda Workshop: POs & FTs in Thakagoan
16	Dinajpur	OPR team meetings <i>Travel: Dinajpur- Rangpur</i>
17	Rangpur	Field Visits: Barisal/ Pirgonj/ Taltola/ Kalai Workshop: POs & FTs in Pirgonj
18	Dhaka	Workshop: PCs & PMs Meeting: PNGO Executive Directors <i>Travel: Dinajpur- Dhaka</i>
19	Chittagong	Meeting: CARE Senior management Meeting: DFID advisers <i>Travel: Dhaka-Chittagong</i>
20	Cox's Bazaar	<i>Travel: Chittagong- Cox's Bazaar</i> Field Visits: Lohagara
21	Cox's Bazaar	Field visits: Chakaria/ Moheshkali
22	Cox's Bazaar	Workshop: POs & FTs Meeting: PNGO Executive Directors
23	Dhaka	OPR team meeting <i>Travel: Cox's Bazaar-Dhaka</i>
24	Dhaka	OPR team meeting Report writing
25	Dhaka	Report writing
26	Dhaka	OPR team meeting Preparation for Debriefing
27	Dhaka	Debriefing: CARE Office Report writing
28	Dhaka	OPR team meeting Preparation for Forum
29	Dhaka	Learning Forum: BRAC Building Report writing
30		<i>Departure of OPR Team</i>

## Annex B: People Met

The following is a list of the management staff with whom the OPR team had discussions. In addition, the team met approximately 15 Project Officers and Technical Officers, 30 Field Trainers and between 400 and 500 rural people who had participated in activities of the GO-Interfish and SHABGE projects. Meetings were also held with staff of a number of NGOs and Government Ministries.

### CARE

- Steve Wallace Country Director
- Pancho Boeren Assistant Country Director
- Loretta Payne Livelihood Program Coordinator, RLP
- Brigitta Bode Social Development Coordinator, RLP
- Abdus Sobhan Project Coordinator, SHABGE-DFID (NW)
- H.J.M.Kamal Project Coordinator, SHABGE-DFID (SE)
- Abdul Awal Project Coordinator, GO-IF
- Dr. Mehrul Islam Livelihood Monitoring Coordinator
- Shyam Sundar Saha Assistant Project Coordinator, RLP
- Golam Sarwar Assistant Project Coordinator, GO-IF
- Mannan Mollah Project Manager, SHABGE-DFID
- Gias Uddin Talukder Project Manager, SHABGE-DFID
- Mustafizur Rahman, Project Manager, SHABGE-DFID
- Arun Kumar Ganguly, Project Manager, SHABGE-DFID
- Nirjharine Hasan Project Manager, GO-IF
- Kuntal B. Mondal Project Manager, GO-IF
- Nabi Khan Project Manager, GO-IF
- Aminur Rahman Project Manager, GO-IF
- Nurul Amin, Project Manager, GO-IF
- Abdul Wadud Project Manager, SDU-RLP
- Saifuddin Ahmed PDO Communication, SDU-RLP
- Bilash Mitra, PDO M&E
- Zahir Hossain, PDO M&E
- Nikar Howlander PDO M&E

### DFID

- Martin Leach Senior Rural Livelihoods Adviser
- Amita Dey Social Development Adviser
- Tim Robertson Natural Resources & Environment Adviser
- Duncan King Rural Livelihoods Programme Adviser
- Najir Khan Rural Livelihoods Programme Support Officer

## Annex C: Documents Consulted

The following documents were consulted during the OPR mission:

### CARE

- Long Range Strategic Plan 2002-2006
- Project Memoranda for SHABGE and GO-Interfish
- OPR Reports for SHABGE, (December 2000) and (January 2002)
- Combined Output to Purpose Review of DfID-Bangladesh's Rural Livelihoods Projects (November 2002)
- Inception Report for GO-Interfish (May 2000) and OPR Report (June 2001)
- Inception Review: Livelihoods Monitoring Project Aide Memoire (February 2002)
- Proposed Work Plan and Budget for April 2003 – March 2005. (December 2003), Rural Livelihoods Programme
- Southeast Rural Livelihoods Baseline Report (2003). Prepared for CARE-Bangladesh by TANGO Intl.
- Rights in the CARE Rural Livelihoods Programme, Workshop Report (Jan 2003)
- TORs for studies to be carried out by Social Development Unit (all December 2003): (a) Strengthening Farmer Field School Performance, (b) Improving Poor People's Access to Water Bodies, (c) Exploring and Incorporating Gender Issues
- Social Capital in Rural Dinajpur (2003).
- Innovations in Livelihoods Monitoring and Evaluation: Participants Capacity Matrix (2003), RLP
- An update on the development of farmer organizations, (Jan 2004), SHABGE
- Impact Study on FSS Activities, Andrew Bartlett (May 2002)
- Lessons Learnt: Marketing Intervention. Alam, Md.F. (2003).
- In Pursuit of Power: Local elites and union-level governance in rural Northwestern Bangladesh (August 2002)
- Farmer Field Schools to Community Associations: Post-intervention evolution of local groups, Jonathan Otto & Laila Jasmin (April 2001)
- FFS Approach: New Frontiers in Farmer Empowerment, Laila Jasmin Banu and Brigitta Bode, (September 2002)
- Monitoring Frameworks for SHABGE (May 2002) and Go-Interfish (Sep 2002)
- Guidelines for Well-Being Analysis (May 2001 and July 2002)
- PME Handbook. Lewinsky, T. and M. Rahman. (undated). Interfish and GO-Interfish Projects
- The Northwest Institutional Summary Paper, Go-Interfish September 2002
- Report on Different Trials/Experiments carried out by SHABGE, (2002-2003). RLP Technical Coordination Unit

- Some Trials Reports, Go-Interfish (2003), RLP Technical Coordination Unit
- Some Case Studies, Go-Interfish (2003), RLP Technical Coordination Unit
- Role of Women in Agricultural and Related Rural Livelihoods: Review of the Literature. Mallorie, E. (2003)
- Debt and Migration Study: Tools and Guidelines (undated). Livelihoods Monitoring Project
- FFS Membership Profile: FFS Cycle June '01 – December '02. GO-Interfish, Wadud, A., B. Mitra, K. Zillany. (2002)
- Field Monitoring Survey Report: SHABGE-DfID. Capacity Building Service Group (draft, 2004)
- Quarterly Reports (various)

## **DFID**

- Country Assistance Plan: Women and Girls First (2003).
- Rural Livelihoods Strategy (April 2001)
- Programme Poverty Review - Summary and Case Studies (June 2000)
- Participatory Gender Review (October 2000)
- Hands not Land: How Livelihoods are Changing in Rural Bangladesh, Toufique, K.A. and Cate Turton. (2003)
- Supporting the Drivers of Pro-Poor Change, Duncan, A., I. Sharif, P. Landell-Mills, D. Hulme, J. Roy. (June 2002)
- Country Strategy Review - Bangladesh 1998-2002 (August 2002)
- Review of DFID funded projects by CARE Bangladesh, Dee Jupp, (September 2002) and response by CARE (October 2002)

## **Miscellaneous**

- Inception Report. Rural Livelihoods Evaluation Partnership (draft, 2003)
- Subsidy or Self-respect: Participatory Total Community Sanitation in Bangladesh. Kar, Kamal. (2003). Working Paper 184, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, England

**DFID PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT - Annex D**Type of Report: Output to Purpose Review<sup>4</sup>**PART A.**

<b>Country:</b>	Bangladesh	<b>Project:</b>	CARE Bangladesh – Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP)
<b>Project Officer</b>	Christine Marsh	<b>Start Date:</b>	01 Oct 2003
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	12-29 Jan 2004	<b>End Date:</b>	31 Mar 2004
<b>Date of Report:</b>	10 Feb 2004	<b>MIS Code:</b>	
		<b>Risk Category:</b>	

<b>Project Budget</b>	<b>Spend in period under review</b>	<b>Cumulative spend</b>	<b>Forecast for current financial year</b>
£6,993,518			Oct-Mar 2004: £2,560,360 Apr-Mar 2005: £4,433,158

<b>Goal Statement</b>	<b>OVis</b>
Contribute to poverty reduction in Bangladesh.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replicable development models which address the root causes of poverty, and that include measurable livelihood and food security indicators, are developed, piloted, documented and shared by CARE with partners and other organisations.</li> <li>2. Partner organisations and relevant service providers, at all levels, have a greater understanding of how social and civil infrastructure inhibit or impede the rural poor from improving their livelihoods and begin to adopt strategies which address these issues.</li> </ol>

<sup>4</sup> A logframe for RLP was approved in July 2003, bringing together the work of three projects: 1) Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice–Fish Production Systems (GO-Interfish), 2) Strengthening Household Access to Bari Garden Extension Services (SHABGE), 3) Livelihoods Monitoring Project (LMP). The RLP budget was approved in September 2003, at which time the earlier projects were formally closed by DFID. Consequently, this form provides an assessment of only a few months of work by RLP. A more detailed assessment is provided in a separate report produced by the OPR team.



Purpose Statement	OVIS
To improve the livelihood security of men and women living in 221,375 poor and vulnerable rural households in Bangladesh.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decrease in the percentage of partner households that face difficulties in accessing food during lean periods.</li> <li>2. Percentage of FFS participants with declining assets is lower by comparison with non-participants</li> <li>3. 60 % of women FFS members show higher levels of participation in household decision making related to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. marriage plans for daughters &amp; sons</li> <li>b. daily cash expenditure</li> <li>c. major capital expenditures</li> <li>d. food distribution within the household from 24 months following FFS formation</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

Outputs /OVIS	Progress	Actual (including comments if required)	Planned for next period
<p>Output 1. Enhanced utilisation of local resources for increasing homestead and agricultural production, processing, and other value-added activities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 75% of target households (at least 10 percent of these are headed by women) increase the portion of their monthly cash HH income on average by 15% by EoP</li> <li>2. 75 % of FFS members (at least 50 percent are women) are applying new option(s) for increasing homestead and/or agriculture production from month 18 of the FFS formation</li> </ol>	<p>The RLP workplan was only recently finalised (December 2003). Although a draft was prepared some months earlier, RLP staff have not been following plans based on this logframe.</p> <p>Most RLP activities focus on the Farmer Field Schools (FFS). Currently there are 1,239 FFS on-going through Direct Delivery; and 1,568 on-going through Partner NGOs.</p> <p>Total participants of on-going activities is approx 70,175 (70% women).</p>	<p>M&amp;E systems are not currently collecting data based on the RLP logframe, and very different information is available from the two field projects that make up RLP. Nevertheless, RLP's major activity, the FFS, is clearly contributing to enhancing homestead and agricultural production of the targeted households.</p> <p>OVI #1-3: selected data suggests more than 80% of participating households adopt some new technologies, more than 50% receive services, and the increase in HH income is 25% and above</p>	<p>On-going FFS will be completed, plus new batch of 560 FFS through PNGOs starting in Jan 2004.</p> <p>RLP will carry out a thorough review of the FFS methodology.</p> <p>Piloting of more intensive experiential learning will continue.</p> <p>Cross visits are planned with other institutions, to improve understanding of technologies for homestead production.</p> <p>Training to improve staff skills in livestock and sanitation</p>

<p><b>3. 50 % of FFS farmers receiving at least one service useful for homestead and agriculture production from month 18 of the FFS formation</b></p> <p>4. 15 % of FFS farmers increase their income from other “value added activities”.</p>		<p>above. No data is being collected on female headed households.</p> <p>OVI #4: No data available for income from ‘other activities’</p>	
<p><b>Output 2</b> Relevant service providers, institutions, and partner organisations are more responsive to the needs of poor and vulnerable women and men.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FFS participants report increased satisfaction with institutions relevant to their livelihoods by EOP</li> <li>2. Strategies will be developed to address Government, institutional, and service provider policies and approaches, which prevent improvement in the livelihood of the RLP target group, especially women.</li> <li>3. Potential long-term partners are identified and selected for developing future common livelihood initiatives.</li> </ol>	<p>Note what was said under Output #1. Staff have not been following plans based on the RLP logframe.</p> <p>The Technical Coordination Unit and Social Development Unit both have workplans that include training activities for CARE staff and Partner NGOs. Both are involved in a number of pilot activities (e.g. governance pilots, phased FFS, khas ponds) that explore ways of improving the RLP strategies.</p>	<p>Since the last OPR, the programme has given more attention to working with Local Govt and GOB service providers.</p> <p>OVI #1: Satisfaction with services has been rated very highly by GO-Interfish participants, but no before/after comparison available. Data from SHABGE on this issue was not available at the time of review.</p> <p>OVI #2: It is not clear what type of strategies RLP can develop to address the policies of service providers. In practice, RLP staff are linking ex FFS CBO's to service providers.</p> <p>OVI #3: Long-term partners not yet identified.</p>	<p>Training of FFS members and leaders will be carried out to improve an understanding of available services, entitlements and social context.</p> <p>The RLP experience with governance pilots and helping groups to access khas ponds will be reviewed.</p>
<p><b>Output 3. A simple and replicable system for monitoring change in the livelihoods and entitlements of the rural poor is developed, documented and shared internally and externally.</b></p> <p>1. Key livelihood indicators are</p>	<p>The Livelihoods Monitoring Project (LMP) and the RLP M&amp;E Unit both have their own workplans. See OPR report for comments on the work of these units.</p>	<p>The work of LMP has been the subject of evolving demands from CARE and DFID, and the connection with GO-Interfish and SHABGE has not been clear. Since the arrival of the RLPC more attention is being paid to developing a coherent workplan.</p>	<p>LMP will facilitate a review of draft livelihoods indicators at a workshop before April 04. Following which a revised livelihoods survey will be implemented in both NW and SE.</p> <p>Greater collaboration with other institutions and the publication of</p>

<p>identified which effectively represent the most critical/vulnerable areas of livelihood for the poor, and the measurement of which, will allow organisations to effectively ascertain the impact of their programs.</p> <p>2. Robust, cost-effective, adaptable tools and systems developed for monitoring effectiveness on Rural Livelihood Interventions, which are shared with a range of stakeholders in Bangladesh</p> <p>3. At least 5 development organisations and/or relevant GOB departments (BRAC, Proshika, BIDS, Save the Children, WFP, DAE, etc.) join CARE in a dialogue on the identification, measurement and use of livelihood indicators during presentations/workshops and other existing forums.</p> <p>4. Specific ongoing interventions (such as nutrition, savings, group formation etc.) within RLP projects and other CARE projects are identified and reviewed to ensure that “best practices” are being established and implemented consistently.</p> <p>5. There will be a greater understanding and more consistent use of commonly used livelihood</p>		<p>OVI #1: Draft livelihood indicators have been identified, and baseline studies completed by LMP.</p> <p>OVI#2: Simple participatory tools currently being tested by RLP M&amp;E unit. Yet to be shared.</p> <p>OVI #3: More than 5 organisations have been presented with LMP findings, but current situation cannot be described as a ‘dialogue’.</p> <p>OVI #4: RLP newsletter is collecting and disseminating information on best practices.</p> <p>OVI#5: There is still a lack of consistency regarding livelihood indicators <i>within RLP</i>.</p>	<p>more reports is anticipated, but details are vague.</p> <p>A ‘tool kit’ for livelihoods monitoring will be produced with support from external consultants.</p>
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<p>indicators, that might include: "food security", wealth ranking, diseases, interest rates, nutrient deficiency, quantification of assets, etc. among development organisations within Bangladesh.</p> <p><b>Output 4:</b> Strategies to improve male and female farmer understanding of markets and their access to potential markets, especially for women, are developed and piloted.</p>	<p>A separate workplan has been prepared by a small technical unit that has been given responsibility for "making markets work for the poor". See OPR report for comments.</p>	<p>Marketing is a relatively new addition to the programme, and has yet to become a fully integrated part of the interaction between CARE staff and target communities.</p> <p>OVI #1: Marketing schemes are being piloted for a variety of commodities: fish, milk, eggs, rice, vegetables and handicrafts. Currently, there is limited involvement of women in decision-making.</p> <p>OVI #2: links have been established between some target groups and commercial operators (eg. milk processor). But very limited effect.</p> <p>OVI#3: FFS groups clearly get improved access to information and services, but benefits are highly variable among members of the group, and don't necessarily spread to other members of the targeted communities.</p> <p>OVI #4: The figure of "30% of FFS participants" is unrealistic considering that marketing component is a recent and somewhat marginal component. Only 6% of GO-Interfish participants are involved; much lower for SHABGE.</p>	<p>Collaborative action research will continue to be carried out with two other organisations: IDE and KATALYST.</p> <p>New marketing opportunities will be identified and analysed, eg. for food processing.</p> <p>Studies of pesticide residues are planned.</p> <p>RLP will explore ways of improving market information systems</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation of marketing schemes will be carried out, including an assessment of social and gender impacts.</p> <p>Results will be documented and disseminated.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Variety of strategies are documented and tested.</li> <li>2. RLP has engaged with and supported commercial services to increase interventions with target groups.</li> <li>3. Percentage of households with information and access to services (market, state and NGO) is higher than in non project communities</li> <li>4. 30% of FFS participants report livelihood gains because of marketing activities attributable to RLP by EOP.</li> </ol>			

<p><b>Output 5:</b> Improved management of income, savings, assets, production and human capital by partner households to improve their livelihoods.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of workdays lost to illness decreases among partner households.</li> <li>2. Level of savings used for productive activities rather than for crisis management increases.</li> <li>3. Allocation and nutritional quality of food improves to better meet special needs of women and children.</li> </ol>	<p>RLP has adopted the approach of transforming "successful" FFS groups into formal community based organisations (CBOs).</p>	<p>An holistic approach towards the improvement of livelihoods has not yet been adopted, but certain activities have been added on to the FFS. M&amp;E data is not available for these OVs.</p> <p>OVI #1: some sanitation activities have been organised in recent months, but health of participants is not being measured and cannot be attributed to project activities.</p> <p>OVI#2: Savings schemes have become a standard part of the RLP organisational development activities, but it is not clear what the money is being used for.</p> <p>OVI#3: some nutrition sessions are included in the SHABGE FFS. Household food distribution to better meet the needs of women and children is not being measured.</p>	<p>Case studies of post-FFS groups development will be produced.</p> <p>Training of FFS members and leaders in financial management will be out-sourced.</p> <p>Future RLP support to organisational development will be informed by a review of the FFS methodology</p>
<p><b>General progress assessment - Project Purpose</b></p>		<p>2</p>	
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>The purpose is likely to be largely achieved. Different tools and indicators are being used by the projects that make up the RLP, but available M&amp;E data shows that that participating households experience a substantial increase in productive assets and food security. See table at section 2.3 of full report.</p> <p>The targeted number of households is 221,375. Current projections show that the project activities will have a total of 167,580 participants. The number of poor and vulnerable households reached will be less than this, because (a) some male and female participants of Go-Interfish activities come from same HH, and (b)</p>			

some HH are not poor or vulnerable.

Women's involvement in decision making is difficult to measure, but some improvement appears to be taking place (see Progress against Purpose OVIs, below).

<b>General progress assessment - Project Outputs</b>	3 (2+3+3+3+3)
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<b>Justification</b>
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Most project outputs will only be partially achieved. This is largely as a consequence of the way in which the new logframe was formulated, rather than a result of any serious deficiencies on the part of the programme. (See comment under 'quality of scoring below')

## PART B.

Purpose /OVIs	Progress	Comments
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decrease in the percentage of partner households that face difficulties in accessing food during lean periods.</li> <li>2. Percentage of FFS participants with declining assets is lower by comparison with non-participants</li> <li>3. 60 % of women FFS members show higher levels of participation in household decision making related to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. marriage plans for daughters &amp; sons</li> <li>b. daily cash expenditure</li> <li>c. major capital expenditures</li> <li>d. food distribution within the household from 24 months following FFS formation</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>OV1#1: Studies in GO-Interfish indicate that the number of FFS participants who assess themselves as having high levels of household food security is 37% greater than non-FFS participants. Studies in SHABGE show a 77% increase in the number of participants who assess themselves as having high levels of food security between the baseline survey and after 18 months of attending FFS sessions.</p> <p>OV1#2: SHABGE participants have significant increases in productive assets between baseline and re-sampling after 18 months. Eg. 100% increase in fruit trees, 80% increase in timber trees, 60% increase in poultry. In GO-Interfish, 56% of participants state they have increased their productive assets in previous 12 months.</p> <p>OV1#3. SHABGE monitoring suggests an 18 % increase in number of women who influence household cash expenditure between baseline and re-sampling at 18 months. In GO-Interfish there is a 38% difference between the number of female participants who claim they have a major influence on</p>	<p>GO-Interfish and SHABGE are using different indicators, but both depend on the quantification of subjective assessments made by participants.</p> <p>A large amount of information is available regarding the productive behaviour of FFS members during the course of the FFS. Much less information is available about behaviour <i>after</i> the FFS (which would help in the assessment of sustainability) or from non-participants (which would help in attribution).</p> <p>There is a lot of anecdotal evidence about the impact on women' decision-making, but detailed case studies are lacking.</p>

household decisions and the number of non-participants who make the same claim.	
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### Attribution

Learning of new improved technologies as part of Farmer Field Schools is clearly contributing to a significant increase in productive assets and food security for the participating households. The OPR team has not seen any evidence of a significant spread of these benefits to other members of the community.

The productive skills and - possibly – the social status that women are gaining through FFS membership appear to be causing a modest improvement in the influence they have on some household decision-making.

### Purpose to Goal

RLP's direct contribution to poverty reduction in Bangladesh is limited by three factors: (a) the projects are not targeting the poorest of the poor because the FFS technologies cannot be applied without access to some land; (b) the group approach, as currently applied, focuses all benefits on a small portion of the targeted communities; (c) the projects have only recently begun to give significant attention to the improvement of other types of capital, and this is being done in a way that may be providing greater benefits to the relatively wealthier members of the group.

The indirect contribution, through the development of replicable models and a wider understanding of what works and what does not, is potentially very high. But not enough has been done to capture and disseminate the experience of the projects that make up RLP.

### DOES LOGFRAME REQUIRE REVISION?

The logframe developed in mid 2003 does not use indicators that are consistent with the data being collected by RLP M&E units. Nor is the wording fully consistent with planned activities or staff understanding of their job. For example, most staff are unable to explain what the RLP is doing about female-headed households, value-added activities, household food allocations, and government policies towards women, all of which are mentioned in the logframe. Consequently, the logframe is of limited use as a tool for assessing the progress of the programme. (See also OPR report, section 3.1.3 regarding logframe).

At this late stage, with little more than a year left, the OPR team is *not* recommending a revision of the logframe. Instead it would be more appropriate for CARE to give urgent attention to developing the vision and policies that will guide the development of a future programme. (See Key Issues and recommendations below).

### DO PIMS MARKERS REQUIRE REVISION [ Mandatory for projects approved prior to 1.8.98 ]

No

**Quality of Scoring**

The scoring is of very limited value. The projects that make up RLP are highly successful examples of participatory extension, but the logframe includes indicators that are confusing, of questionable relevance, impossible to measure or over-ambitious. With a different logframe, the RLP could be scored very differently. There is a fundamental question that needs to be answered about what CARE and DFID expect to get from the programme. This issue is explored in more detail in the OPR report.

**Lessons learned, and suggested dissemination**

The main report of this OPR is designed to support the changes that are currently taking place in CARE Bangladesh. It should be widely disseminated among RLP staff.

The programme is generating broader lessons about a range of issues relating to livelihoods, gender and rights based approaches to development. As noted above, not enough has been done to capture and disseminate those lessons. This issue has been addressed in the recommendations made by the OPR team.

**PART C.****Key Issues / Points of information**

During the life of the programme and the preceding projects there has been an accretion of objectives, methods and technologies. At the current point in time there is a lack of coherence in what the programme is trying to accomplish, and this makes it very difficult to measure overall achievements. The RLP has reached a critical juncture and CARE should urgently make some decisions about future directions. These decisions should be reflected in a vision statement, policy paper and subsequent programme proposals and work plans.

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
1. CARE Bangladesh should undertake a process to explicitly define a <i>rural livelihoods vision</i> that will act as a framework and guideline for RLP. A Vision Statement should be approved within 60 days.	CARE Bangladesh	31 March 2004
2. With a vision statement as a starting point, the RLP should undertake participatory analyses to examine what interventions have had most impact on rural poverty and gender. This process should lead to the publication of a policy paper on Rural Livelihoods within six months	CARE Bangladesh	31 July 2004
3. Once the vision statement and policy paper has been produced, these documents should guide the subsequent planning and implementation of a future programme, including the formulation of proposals to prospective donors.	CARE Bangladesh	Aug 2004 and onward



4. [See main report for other issues and recommendations made by the OPR team].		
5.		

<b>Review team:</b>	Andrew Bartlett (Team Leader), Zahurul Alam, Alice Jay, Kamal Kar, John Meyer, Arif H Sarker
<b>People met:</b>	DFID-B Livelihoods Advisors, CARE-B Senior management, RLP management and field staff, Executive Directors of Partner NGOs, targeted communities in NW and SE Bangladesh

**Scoring system:**

- 1 = likely to be completely achieved
- 2 = likely to be largely achieved
- 3 = likely to be partially achieved
- 4 = only likely to be achieved to a very limited extent
- 5 = unlikely to be realised
- x = too early to judge extent of achievement

**APPENDIX 1 - Advisory comments on CARE OPR Report  
with responses from the OPR Team Leader**

1. It is well presented and provides much detail of the RLP programme and suggestions for the CARE management. It essentially provides clear expected outcomes for RLP. The approach the team used was very sensible taking a consultative, supportive and participatory process that allowed a more strategic assessment of RLP by CARE staff and they are to be commended for the way they carried this out
2. Our comments relate to the need for a clear vision and the change management process that is taking place within CARE as where we will win or lose this one. The fact is that RLP is not very clear on what it is trying to achieve and how can this be turned around in the remaining period? Can the team to reflect on this and where does the resistance, inertia lie and how committed is CARE to this process? Is it simply a result of the CM process being undertaken by CARE as this has implications for other projects being funded by DFIDB and our future support, is it that the management of RLP lack clear steer from Senior Management, was it pressure from DFID to integrate the programme etc, etc?

*The current lack of vision is not result of inertia, resistance or a shortage of commitment. There is widespread interest, debate and a fair amount of experimentation going on within the RLP. What has been missing is a combination of leadership and a strategic planning process; these are the things that are needed to systematically examine the varied experience of the projects and build consensus about what needs to be done in the future. The fact that this was missing within RLP over the last two to three years is not surprising given the changes that have taken place in CARE: ie. the dismantling of the ANR sector, the merging of three projects, the recent appointment of the RLP Coordinator. The fact that Senior Management were unable to fill this gap can be explained by the scale of operations in CARE-B and the extent of the changes brought about by the LRSP. A period of disruption and uncertainty was inevitable, and the projects making up the RLP have performed rather well under the circumstances.*

*The key question is not 'how did CARE-B get into this situation?' but 'is CARE capable of getting out of it?' The answer is not clear. The Coordinators within RLP have rather different perceptions about approaches and priorities. This suggests that Senior Management needs to play a major role in forging a vision for the future. The discussions that the OPR team had with Senior Management indicated that they understood the situation. Whether or not they are able to address the situation in an effective manner depends on many factors beyond the scope of the OPR.*

3. The expected outcomes can equally be delivered at CARE as an organisation and RLP is but part of that process and may be a guiding light for the organisation but the vision of RLP must support the overall vision of CARE and do we have a sense that this is being seriously addressed.

*Yes. The Team Leader gained a strong impression that Senior Management in CARE has given a lot of thought to how a Rural Livelihoods Programme can contribute to a Rights Based Approach. The observations and recommendations made about RBA during the previous OPR, and the outcome of the workshop attended by DFID Advisors, have been taken very seriously. Two years ago, some staff were worried that the GO-Interfish and SHABGE projects were perceived as anachronistic in the post-LRSP CARE, but this concern appears to have been replaced by greater confidence that they are making a contribution to the overall vision of the organisation. There is a lack of consistency and clarity with respect to how the pieces fit together, but it appears to have been recognised that the RLP can be an important vehicle for achieving the goals of the organisation.*

4. Whilst this was a review of RLP it was recognised that it would be difficult to completely disassociate it from the broader organisational changes occurring within CARE. Indeed RLP was, to some extent, tasked with informing and possibly shaping the wider process and for example both the Brigitta's and Nil's roles were broadened to reflect this.
5. Implicit within the reshaping of the programme under RLP was that it would also support, guide and inform the CARE's CM process. There is no evidence that this has happened. The latest OPR recommends that RLP produce a vision within six months and that CARE will be making decisions about future programmes and strategies based on that vision. To ensure that this really will take place, CARE senior management will have to actively engage in this process. At this stage DFID would need to get a sense of whether there is the commitment towards this within corporate CARE (maybe the RLP vision will be one benchmark) and whether they will support this process within RLP management.

*See response to item # 2*

6. There is much written in the report on the need for more flexibility in the field approach. The report mentions that creativeness and innovation by field trainers is not rewarded in the current management system. How can this be addressed for such a large operation? A big challenge for the management. Would it be better to work in smaller clusters with more autonomy? Suggestions have to come from CARE management.

*Not just from CARE management, but also field staff. The OPR team was very impressed by the scope and quality of the suggestions coming from the field. The OPR team agrees with the idea of "smaller clusters*

*with more autonomy”, which is why a recommendation was made to test a decentralised approach to planning and implementation.*

*At this late stage in the programme it is not feasible to test this approach on a large scale; very few new activities are being launched, and commitments have already been made with target communities and partner organisations. Consequently, the results of the pilot activities will not show if CARE-B is capable of scaling up a decentralised approach. But useful lessons could be learnt that will contribute to the design of a future programme.*

7. The report states that RLP is one of the best agricultural extension programmes in the world. This might be correct but the costs are also very high per FFS member. We know that there are considerable extra benefits but have these been quantified or described and do these justify those costs.

*This is an important issue. There has been considerable debate on the costs and benefits of the FFS around the world. Although CARE staff have attended a number of international meetings at which this issue has been discussed, the organisation has made a rather limited contribution to the debate considering the size of the projects in Bangladesh.*

*Nevertheless, some studies have been conducted by CARE-B. An Impact Study of the FFS was carried out under SHABGE in 2002. A further study is currently being planned by the RLP Coordinator and the Social Development Coordinator; hopefully this will allow decisions to be made about strategies and methodologies for the future implementation of the RLP. The outcome of the study might also be valuable for a wider audience.*

8. The mission gives the impression that marketing was bolted on. We think that the realisation to look at marketing came years ago from the Go Interfish project staff when they worked with the FFS groups and producers expressed their needs. GI involved in marketing for a long time before DFID encouraged an extra push early 2003 and gave CARE the option to put in more appropriate resources and work with other organisations such as Katalyst and IDE which have more experience in working with private sector service providers.

*The title of the sub-heading for section 3.3.4 (Marketing: ‘built in or ‘bolted on’?) is deliberately provocative. It is clear that DFID has a strong interest in the marketing component. But at the time of the OPR, the questions that were being asked by DFID Advisers were of a particular type: eg. ‘when is CARE going to employ an international expert?’ and ‘how will they possibly spend all of the money we gave them?’. These questions are undoubtedly important, but the OPR team wanted to force the debate into a different direction. In particular, it was felt necessary to ask ‘who is benefiting?’. It is far from certain that the marketing schemes*

*that have been launched to date are really benefiting women or the poorest sections of the community. This needs to be examined before launching a lot more schemes.*

*Notwithstanding this explanation, the term 'bolted on' may have been inappropriate. It was not the intention of the team to suggest that marketing was an afterthought; the team was aware that this initiative had a long history. The intention was to question whether the marketing component was properly integrated into other aspects of the programme (experiential learning and group development) or whether it was adopting a different approach and even a different audience.*

9. We fully agree with the mission that CARE needs to look at who is capturing the benefits of the marketing and to what extent the poor and the women are really benefiting. This requires the necessary resources, which are not within the marketing team. Our recommendation is to make best use of the remaining time to learn more about the workings of markets and the private sector as a tool for poverty reduction. This will provide knowledge to CARE for designing future programmes, also outside the livelihoods sector
10. The report makes a number of suggestions for the CARE management. Question is how much is feasible in the remaining project time especially as some field work will start phasing out by mid this year. Care might want to respond to this quickly.

*Agreed. The workplans that were made available at the time of the OPR were not sufficiently detailed for the team to precisely determine what will be achieved by mid 2005, in terms of numbers and types of activities.*

11. The mission recommends no major new initiatives but in the next paragraph propose to test a fully decentralised approach to planning and implementation in selected areas. I support this but it should be done on a fairly extensive scale to make sure it works for a larger programme.

*See response to item # 6*

12. The last chapter 4 of the report provides suggestions on moving forward towards a rural livelihoods vision and possible new programme. The mission recommends regular meetings with DFID to share expectations. However, CARE should also liaise with other donors to find synergies.

*Agreed.*