

3rd Lessons Learning Workshop

23-25 November, 2010



Organised by
Save the Children
And
Uttaran

CSS Ava Centre, 82,
Rupsha Strand Road,
Natun Bazar, Khulna

Shiree/EEP
and
Scale Fund
Partners



Objective

The 3rd lessons learning workshop was jointly organised by shiree scale-fund partners Save the Children (UK) and Uttaran. It brought together members from the scale-fund NGOs, representatives from local implementing partner NGOs and shiree staffs to share approaches, best practices and lessons learned, as well as discuss emerging issues and concerns facing the programmes in the south-western region of Bangladesh.. The objectives of the 3 day workshop included:

- To gain and reconcile our understanding of the learning emerging from the projects in the south-west.
- To share observations, best practices, experiences and engage in discussions regarding certain issues.
- To validate recent outputs and set priorities for future lessons learning.
- To pull together learning areas and best practices for future outside sharing and communications.

Participating Organizations:

Care Bangladesh, Dushtha Shasthya Kendra, NETZ Bangladesh, Practical Action Bangladesh, Save the Children, Uttaran and Shushilan.

Event Schedule

Day 1: November 23, 2010

1. Presentation by Save the Children (UK) on their project activities and achievements.
2. Presentation by Uttaran on their project activities and achievements.
3. Discussion on nutrition interventions.

Day 2: November 24, 2010

1. Field Visit: 8 teams (4 to Save the Children UK project areas and 4 to Uttaran project areas).

Day 1: November 25, 2010

1. Reflection on the field visit: 8 teams presented their findings and learning from the field visits.
2. Presentation on the impact of climate change in the south-west:
Case Study Koyra
3. Presentation by Care Bangladesh on learning from private sector engagement.
4. Presentation on targeting the extreme poor.
5. Reflection and feedback on the shiree November 3rd Poverty Day event.

1. Project Activities

1.1 Uttaran

Participants observed communities in which beneficiary households had received asset transfers (including cows, pigs, sheep, ducks and small businesses), as well as gaining permanent or temporary access to khas land or fishing bodies from the government.

Best Practices

- The project implementation strategy was revised to address the needs of beneficiary households and effective programme implementation. Because of delays to land distribution, the programme now provides simultaneous support for acquiring land along with providing assets for IG activities. Within a short period of time, significant improvements are visible in the lives of extreme poor households who have received land and IGAs.
- Development of IGA analysis and tools with the support of shiree has sped up the implementation process. Household profiles, skills and market analyses have helped to facilitate effective change in the programme.
- Risks are minimised and incomes are diversified by involving beneficiary households into more than one IGA.
- Taking a group approach had yielded better economic and social empowerment of extreme poor households.
- Local level advocacy with the government and elected officials has helped to facilitate land transfer as well as develop linkages to social safety net programmes.

Challenges

- Lengthy procurement of khas Land transfer caused delays in project implementation.
- Information regarding the availability of khas land is very difficult to find.
- Establishing full rights of the extreme poor households for the already transferred temporary land.
- Targeting within the existing selection criteria is a big challenge.
- Changing BHHs' attitude from one orientated towards relied to one of self employment and development.
- Political influence and threats often hinder the land distribution process.
- A long freeze on khas land distribution and change in national policy for registration of fisher folk organisations has made it hard to take the project forward for a long period.
- Limited viable IGAs for the extreme poor households because of environmental degradation and increased salinity.
- Access to safe drinking water is a significant challenge and is impacting greatly on households' productivity.
- Lack of sanitary latrines, educational institutions and sufficient health services.

Lessons

- The khas land transfer model is an efficient model for extreme poverty reduction if permanent arrangements are obtained. The simultaneous approach to livelihoods and land transfer is an improved and better intervention. The combination of settlement of khasland and IGA support enhances the graduation of beneficiary households.

- Detailed livelihood and market analysis is needed to implement a livelihood project, especially in a disaster prone area such as the south-west. Advocacy initiatives are needed for the introduction of climate resilient livelihood options and technology.
- The individual household approach is successful only when complemented with group activities. Group formation is also important for social empowerment and sustainability.
- IGA management and monitoring books is a useful tool for keeping asset distribution and income records. However, these require staff time for updating.

Recommendations

- Most of the khas lands transferred to BHHs are on temporary basis only on one year. Each household has to apply for the land again in the next year. In these circumstances, BHHs feel insecure and powerless. The support to BHHs should continue even after the end of the project until they receive land on a permanent basis.
- Establish market linkages for off-farm IGAs. Recruitment of new staff and capacity building of existing staff is necessary for business development.
- Although the group saving methods was adopted from the already tested model, it gives limited control to the beneficiary groups to manage their savings. Sharing of learning and best practice on savings may be appropriate.
- More innovative and appropriate IGAs such as leasing water bodies for fish culture are needed. There is the need to consider the availability of local resources.
- Group formation needs more facilitation to harness the objective of the group. Skills development of the groups is necessary for sustainability. Groups must be empowered to build relationships with local governments for claiming government services.
- More active relationships need to be developed with local level government officials.

Advocacy Issues

- The state should ensure basic extension services to extreme poor households for whom assets are transferred by various projects (shiree, CLP, EC FSUP and others).
- Inclusion of a NGO representative in Upazilla Land Distribution Committee.

1.2 Save the children

Best Practices

- Court yard sessions with beneficiaries where community mentors discuss health, nutrition, right based issues and review progress.
- Micro Plans for each household which identify better livelihood options and skills levels..
- More than 1 IGA option has resulted in increased disaster resilience and has optimised the use of available human resources in households.

Challenges

- Geographical vulnerability to disaster and climate change.
- Small packages for graduating households within short periods of time.

- Changing behaviour and attitudes from relief to development.
- Difficult to access geographical and vulnerable areas.
- Limited livelihood options for the households creating resource constraints.
- Limited availability of safe drinking water.
- Poor health care and sanitation facilities.

Learning

- More than one livelihood option is necessary for households.
- Need to think about group approaches for improved empowerment. A strategy for market linkages is necessary for sustainability.
- A disaster risk reduction approach is necessary to ensure the regular income of the households and to prepare them for natural disasters.
- Resources are needed to assist households suffering from illness or the effects of disaster.
- Graduation is not possible within the 3 years implementation period. Need continued support to households for sustainability. Need to devise an exit strategy based on learning.

Recommendations

- Review the project implementation strategy for sustainability. A combination of a household approach along with group activities may be adopted for greater sustainability and empowerment. Group formation based on geographical locations or community.
- All beneficiaries should receive equal packages. The information on packages should be available to the beneficiaries.
- Based on geographical consideration, a study is needed to identify appropriate livelihood options for the extreme poor.
- Exposure to new and diversified IGAs (short, mid, long term and regular).
- Devise a plan for engaging local government Institutions and linking to safety nets.
- An income growth monitoring framework may be beneficial learning tool.
- There is the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach by the development partners and the Government in the area.
- The targeting criteria on MFI exclusion may be reviewed for the vulnerable road side inhabitants who have lost everything to disasters (e.g. Koyra area).
- Need for a technical solution to ensure safe drinking water. Linking with government institutions and other development actors may help to solve the problem.
- Community mentors may be a great resource for raising awareness on health, hygiene and nutritional aspects including breastfeeding of complementary feeding.
- Vaccination for chickens and ducks, as many chickens have died due to diseases during last two months.
- Technical resources such as vaccination for the chickens and ducks.

- Savings could be institutionalised. Without savings, household may lose all their achievements in the case of illness or disasters

Advocacy

- Ensure year-round income opportunities for the extreme poor (need for skills development and investment in infrastructures and industries).
- Ensure permanent settlement for embankment dwellers. The responsibility for maintenance should be shared.
- Household preparation for disasters.
- Safe-drinking water.

2. Emerging Issues

2.1 Nutrition

Studies throughout the world confirm that nutrition plays an important role in the intergenerational transmission of poverty. For example, low birth weight perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of undernutrition and disease. Developing countries like Bangladesh lose nearly 2-3 % of their GDP as a result of undernutrition.

Improving nutritional status and ensuring adequate nutritional intake among extreme poor households is an important indicator for development. Improvement in nutrition will contribute towards achieving the MDGs. Better nutritional intake will result in improved health, further impacting on the economic condition of the households.

Instead of looking at nutrition as a separate stand-alone intervention, it should be an integral part of all development initiatives. Better nutritional status depends on improved food security, better health and hygiene facilities and awareness and improved educational infrastructures, especially for girls. For children, improved nutrition is very important during the pregnancy stage of mothers to 18-24 months of age. Beyond two years stunting is largely irreversible.

Viewing nutrition as an integral programme objective can contribute towards improving maternal health, reducing neo-natal and early childhood deaths, and preventing the spread of diseases such as HIV/Aids and tuberculosis. Considering the cost, the impact of nutritional interventions is immense and far reaching for development in the long-term. For example, micronutrient interventions cost less than US\$65 million per year.

Nutritional Status in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has made some progress towards improving the nutritional status of the poor. Unfortunately, in some cases, gains are lost, and improvement in recent years has remained stagnant. Measures of stunting, underweight and wasting are high among children, and anaemia continues to be high among pregnant women. Child malnutrition has reached such a level that it arguably requires an emergency response. Exclusive breastfeeding for children under 6 months is extremely low and holds significant consequences for the later development of a children's mental and physical health. Without a protected intervention for nutrition, the targets of the MDGs cannot be achieved.

Nutrition interventions

Nutritional interventions that can improve the nutritional status of extreme poor households include:

1. Awareness raising campaigns for exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding and hygiene promotion.
2. De-worming, micro-nutrient supplement and fortification.
3. Identification and treatment of severe acute malnutrition.

Other interventions that can improve nutritional status are:

- Interventions that increase households productivity, income and improved access to food such as agriculture/ food security programmes and social protection and safety nets.
- Water and sanitation programmes and hygiene promotion.
- Gender mainstreaming.
- Education, especially for young girls.
- Disaster management and tackling the impacts of climate change.

What can be done?

- Try to identify the need of intervention and where possible include nutritional interventions within existing programmes without additional resources.
- Use existing staffs and community volunteers to deliver health, hygiene and nutrition messages to the community.
- Coordinate with NGOs and local Government to address the nutritional needs.
- Advocate to all stakeholders to meet the needs on the ground.
- Share lessons and best practices within the shiree portfolio and with all external stakeholders.

Challenges

- No available funds for nutrition interventions.
- Engaging in nutrition interventions when the project goal is economic empowerment.
- Limited knowledge and expertise for nutrition interventions.

Way Forward

- A nutrition working group should be organised with 1 representative from each scale-fund partner and shiree's nutrition focal point.
- All scale-fund partners to identify the needs in their working area and devise plans of action for next year by the end of December 2010.
- Care will compile handbooks on nutrition interventions and share with all shiree partners.

2.2 Climate Change: The case of Koyra

The south-west region in Bangladesh is the most vulnerable area of the country to reoccurring disasters and climate change. In recent years this area has seen two disastrous cyclones that have taken lives of thousands and destroyed livelihoods of millions. Increased salinity and reoccurring cyclones has forced many to give up on their traditional livelihood as farmers and fishermen. The majority are now working as day labourers in the ever expanding shrimp industry. The situation in the area is complex, including:

- A high proportion of extreme poor people living on the low-lying islands surrounded by large river systems.

- Increased intensity and frequency of disasters with regular river erosion and tidal surges.
- Limited employment opportunities and income generating activities with widespread landlessness.
- Poor water and sanitation facilities available to the poor. Health services are inadequate to cover needs and often too costly.
- Government services and safety-nets are not available to the most of the population.

Cyclone Aila and Koyra

In May 2009, Cyclone Aila hit the south-western coast of Bangladesh, leaving more than 1 million people homeless. Most of the population were able to recover from their loss by their own effort. However, the cyclone and the tidal surge destroyed much of the 45 year old neglected embankment in many places. Without sufficient reconstruction of the embankment, saline water inundates large areas twice a day during the high tide. Large numbers of people are still unable to go back to their home even 1 and half years after the cyclone. Koyra is one of the upazilas that was hit most severely by the cyclone. The current situation in the area:

- Continued water logging has made it impossible to grow crops. Even the small and medium farmers have become day laborers after losing their cultivable lands.
- Aila and the recent tidal surge destroyed most of the physical infrastructure, like roads and embankments.
- Most of the water sources, such as ponds and tubewells have been damaged resulting in an acute drinking water crisis. Uses of unsafe water have caused the outbreak of water born diseases. There are no dry places for graveyards.
- People are fully dependent on relief materials – GoB or NGOs.

Challenges

- With regular intrusion of saline water, few livelihood options are available in the area.
- Limited availability of safe drinking water.
- Limited resources.
- The selection criteria exclude some people in need.

What needs to be done?

- Without the construction of the embankment, the implementation of a development project remains a large struggle in this area. A coordinated emergency relief work is needed for the entire area. Save the Children (UK) needs to rethink their plans for the affected population. If the project is not able to address the needs, it may need to look for an alternative area to work.
- Current and future projects must think of ways to ensure safe drinking water for the extreme poor.
- Relocation of the effected population to safer areas should be considered. The Government must ensure livelihoods for the displaced people.

- shiree and its partners should advocate to the government and donors for the immediate reconstruction of the embankment and launch a well coordinated aid effort for the effected population. Construction of roads and embankments must consider the continued increase in the water level and the risk of tidal surges.
- Advocate to the Government and donors for increased resources to prepare the population to cope with the impacts of climate change. Investments in climate resilient technology, especially for agriculture such as saline resistant crops, must be introduced immediately.
- While climate change has immense impacts on the lives of the poor living here, local events such as shrimp cultivation are also destroying the environment. Alternatives to the shrimp industry should be sought.

2.3 Private Sector

Objective:

Link the poor and the marginalised with the private sector in ways that enable them to participate in and benefit from economic growth, improving their access to dignified employment, markets, and services. With private sector engagement beneficiary households will have better access to:

- Markets;
- Information;
- Finance and;
- Technology.

How it should be done

- Identify the nature and scope of partnership;
- Monitoring;
- Innovative ways of engaging.

Care best practices

- Bringing production facilities to remote areas to increase employment opportunities.
- Engage BHHs in service delivery of the private sector for increasing income.
- Bringing health, education and other services to the poor through CSR and profit sharing.
- Building capacity of community groups to engage with the private sector.
- Helping communities to build their own enterprises.

Challenges

- The profit orientation of the private sector is often not aligned with the objective of a development programme.
- Monitoring of impacts is often hard as the shiree approach is household-oriented.
- Private sector engagement requires special skills and additional resources.

Recommendations

- Wider sharing of Care's experience with all shiree partners.
- Need a guideline for private sector engagement. Care is preparing a guideline and will share with others.
- shiree may facilitate forums to ensure private sector engagement.

3 Targeting

A lot of learning has taken place in the area of targeting the extreme poor since project inception. How we define and select extreme poor households will be an area for continued learning throughout the projects. Each scale-fund project has a different model of targeting and selection, yet some lessons and best practices can be identified for the purposes of wider sharing and dissemination.

Hypothesis

- The extreme poor have generally been neglected or not meaningfully reached by government and non-government efforts.
- That there is a need for a greater focusing on the extreme poor.
- shiree-supported projects are unique in their commitment to finding the poorest cases of extreme poverty across the country.
- Our learning / model developed so far is relevant to increasing awareness of the extreme poor and improving wider targeting practices.

Lessons

- Targeting the extreme poor is different in urban contexts (lack of space and community integration).
- There has been some shifting of methods based on project and context specific circumstances (DSK, Uttaran and PAB).
- Care's methodology – the extreme poor are found furthest away from 'Primary elites' likely to direct safety nets in their direction.
- Households / communities commonly hide information and objects. But some are also sensitive to admitting their true nature of extreme poverty.
- Targeting has served as local level advocacy with key power holders.
- Criteria needs to be simple. There is no 'one size fits all' - the combination matters.
- Food-based criteria is generally a good reflection of household poverty status.
- Monetary-based criteria has been a source of difficulty to some.
- Difficulties with no MFI-involvement criteria. Conclusion? Helpful but not alone. We need more information on how the extreme poor engage with micro-finance activities.
- Criteria need to start from 'the bottom up' and work upwards, e.g. Uttaran's land ceiling.
- Importance of regional and context specific criteria.
- Need for improved statistical and mapping sources. Points to the value of transect walks.

- Need to take into account the potentially transient extreme poor (in targeting and intervention) who live just on thresholds and are vulnerable to falling into extreme poverty.

Best practice learnings

Step 1 (project planning)

- In identifying areas for selection draw on working knowledge, available information sources on geographic distribution of extreme poverty, and from staff's observations from looking for the extreme poor.
- When selecting working areas, consider time and resource costs, and plan around these. Plan the targeting process in relation to project cycles and graduation models.

Step 2 (identification)

- Encourage the use of participatory approaches (and involving children). Conduct transect walks and door-to-door visits to verify or investigate the possession of physical assets and land. Undertake KIs with identified respondents.
- Provide adequate training to staff on extreme poverty and targeting methodologies. The possession of strong facilitation skills is important.

Step 3 (first level NGO validation)

- Make sure essential and supplementary selection criteria reflect local circumstances.
- Maintain sensitive behaviour and display respect when questioning households. Adopt a style of natural conversation rather than interrogation.

Step 4 (Wide stakeholder engagement)

- Triangulate findings with other sources (e.g. previous lists of landless peoples) through consulting with a broad range of stakeholders including NGOs, MFIs, local government representatives, local elites, religious leaders, and community members.

Step 5 (Independent verification)

- Take into account the productivity of assets owned, as well as inflation and the costs of living in a given area.

Step 6 (Profiling and development of household specific intervention).

- Consider households' abilities to engage with project inputs, and different levels of vulnerability to falling further into extreme poverty, and tailor support accordingly.

Continuing operational challenges

- MFI criteria;
- Time frames and graduation models;

- Methodological issue when community findings differ to those of verification;
- Drawing the line of exclusion;
- Worries over the impact on communities;
- Calculating resources (time and money) of the targeting process.

Recommendations

- Develop project, regional, and context specific toolkit guides to targeting the extreme poor unique to each model. These could be used as local-level advocacy tools.

Annex 1: Opportunities and challenges facing scale-fund projects

These opportunities and challenges were identified by workshop attendees through a participatory exercise.

Opportunities
Scope of employment of extreme poor as labour in the local industry.
Targeting the right people, their needs and aspiration through HH micro plan.
Strengthening the extreme poor households' skills and creating opportunities to get access to social services.
Different projects using diversified approaches/ strategies of development which are helpful to determined appropriate approaches/strategies.
Beneficiaries can have access to resources.
Identify best practices from other scale fund NGOs.
Market linkages.
Ways of involving UP bodies to make the project work to be accountable and to work with government (local & national level).
Learning visit to the field and sharing session / discussions in presence of all NGOs for incorporation of best practices into own project operation.
To share each other's tools/ techniques. Such as: Micro plans (SCUK), private sector linkage (CARE), others (Group approach).
Focus on small enterprise development both joint and individual to create more employment opportunities.
Combination of more than one IGA.
Extreme poverty can be reduced if IGA selection is done based on BHH's existing skills, interest and their environment.
Sharing various strategies with scale-fund NGOs e.g. "Private Sector Engagement" can be explored with others areas of scale fund NGOs.

Challenges

Frequent natural disasters and the poor response of the government towards a permanent solution e.g. embankment repair.

Salinity, safe drinking water for extreme poor people.

Limited understanding and knowledge of the true needs of the extreme poor.

Physically challenged household heads, single headed, or women headed households will be difficult to lift out of extreme poverty.

Involvement/ cooperation from government actors (administration and service providers).

Retaining the IGA assets of BHHs.

Marketing of products created by the extreme poor.

Assets need to be productively used.

As most of the scale-fund spent a lot of time on beneficiary selection, it will be hard to graduate households within the project time frame (3 yrs).

Graduate the last batches of BHHs and sustain the growth of 1st batch BHHs in a sustained manner.

Sustainability of the program after completion of 3 years of project intervention for every scale-fund NGO.

Gaining khas land is a great challenge.

It is difficult to graduate extreme poor households in climatically vulnerable areas within a short period.