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ACRONYMS

BARD	Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development
CB	Capacity Building
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CNRS	Centre for Natural Resources
DAG	Disadvantaged Groups
GIP	Governance Improvement Plans
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HSI	Helvetas-Swiss-Intercooperation
LG	Local Government
LGD	Local Government Division
LGSA	Local Governance Self-Assessment
LGSP	Local Governance Support Project
MTR	Mid-term Review
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NILG	National Institute of Local Government
OB	Open Budgeting
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
PNGOs	Partner Non-Governmental Organizations
PSC	Project Supervision Committee
RDA	Rural Development Academy
SC	Standing Committee(s)
SDC	Agency for Swiss Development Cooperation
TIB	Transparency International Bangladesh
UDCCM	Union Development Coordination Committee Meeting
UP	Union Parishad
UPZ	Upazila Parishad
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development

Executive Summary

RELEVANCE? EFFECTIVENESS? EFFICIENCY? OUTLOOK BEYOND 2013 ?

In September 2009 SHARIQUE, a local governance support Programme within SDC's Bangladesh local governance portfolio, has entered into its second Phase (2009-2013). While in Phase 1 (2006-2009) the programme placed a stronger focus on empowering the supply side of local governance - institutional strengthening and capacity development of the Union Parishads (UP), in Phase 2, while extending activities on the supply side into 30 new UPs, 21 Upazila parishads and 1 new district (Chapainwabganj), it also added a strong emphasis on the demand side of governance. The rationale was to bring together the supply-demand interface by stimulating social accountability, bottom-up civic participation, civic education and giving greater voice to women, the poor and the disadvantaged.

This report assesses SHARIQUE's mid-term results for Phase 2. The authors were requested to evaluate several aspects of SHARIQUE's mid-term progress: i) SHARIQUE's continued validity and relevance for the current context of LG and decentralization in Bangladesh (relevance); ii) its achievements vis-à-vis planned objectives (effectiveness) in the log frame of the Phase 2 - Project Document; iii) efficiency of its strategies, structures and general programme management; and iv) more generally to assess the extent that SHARIQUE pro-poor, socially inclusive, gender sensitive and showing signs of local ownership and longer-term sustainability? Lastly, the MTR team was also asked to provide some recommendations for the implementation of the outstanding phase and future outlook.

Overall Findings

Overall the report concludes that SHARIQUE continues to be relevant for the LG and decentralisation context in Bangladesh. SHARIQUE's hands-on facilitation and strong presence on the ground, its flexibility and continuous efforts to test, pilot and innovate on new concepts has enabled SHARIQUE to adapt the programme tightly to the local governance context in the geographic areas where it operates. SHARIQUE's elaborate M&E system which has been recognized as a local good practice, has for example derived many of its indicators from its hand-on work with the UPs and communities. The MTR team also finds its multi-track approach of accompaniment, capacity building and performance-based grants on both demand and supply sides as comprehensive and pertinent. To be commended is also SHARIQUE's capacity to continue its operations in rather trying circumstances conditioned by several delays and outcomes of the 2011 UP elections as well as significant changes in its managerial

staff in 2010. All the afore mentioned features attest to SHARIQUE's relevance, flexibility and adaptability as a programme.

As to SHARIQUE's performance against the objectives set out in its log frame, SHARIQUE appears to be generally on track. On the supply side (Planned Outcome 1) UP's capacity to raise their revenues through tax collection, to continue the practice of Open Budget meetings and UPs' pro-actively disclosure of UP information in public (e.g. UP budgets, UP project monitoring boards) are notable achievements on a large scale. In this sense it can be that SHARIQUE has strengthened local governance processes by making them more participatory and transparent. Whether SHARIQUE has contributed to poverty reduction and pro-poor change is more difficult to establish. Though pro-poor earmarking in UP budgets, more equitable targeting and distribution of VGD cards and various pro-poor projects have been implemented the extent to which these activities have significantly reduced community based or even individual poverty rates is hard to say. SHARIQUE's work with the Upazila Parishads has been also slowly forthcoming. Though some advances were made, strategic entry points for more active collaboration at the Upazila level still need to be determined and then actioned.

On the demand side (Programme Outcome 2), SHARIQUE has spent significant amount of its time and energy working with ward platforms – voluntary groups of concerned citizens, training them in public speaking, civic education, gender equality and right to information. These initiatives have been paying off as communities and UPs do seem to be enjoying more open and inclusive public spaces. DAG (women, Adhivasis, the poor and the disabled) increasingly do voice their ideas and needs more, women's demands are increasingly being considered at ward planning meetings. Women now being more likely to engage at public meetings and having the confidence to go to the UP or other government offices when in need are other positive developments. The fact that women and members of DAG express eagerness to receive more training in negotiation, advocacy and more public speaking is also a positive sign about their interest in continued community involvement and civic self-empowerment – all essential components of a vibrant democratic civic life.

With respect to knowledge management and policy advocacy certainly SHARIQUE's collaboration with PRDP - JICA in the drafting the Circular on Union Development Coordination Committees, development of official RTI training modules, its signing of an MOU with NILG on various forms of joint cooperation and its work on 'positive news' are outputs that generally satisfy its planned objectives as part of Project Outcome 3. At the same time, the MTR (and other LG actors in Bangladesh) think that SHARIQUE could do more with its wealth of accumulated knowledge and experience. In this sense SHARIQUE has been perceived as insufficiently pro-active and visible in influencing the national and regional policy dialogue on LG issues. One explanation provided for this is the apparent confusion about the division of roles and responsibilities between SHARIQUE, HIS and SDC. SHARIQUE's NCU not having a single dedicated staff position for national advocacy is another. Any form of confusion on the former should be clarified and mutually agreed upon in the future. SHARIQUE using data generated from its elaborate M&E framework more effectively (e.g. programme diagnostics, trends over time and impacts) could also be improved.

On programme management and efficiency, the evaluation findings are mixed. Overall it can be concluded that SHARIQUE executes its many activities on both supply and demand side quite cost-efficiently. Its internal coordination and collaboration with PNGOs also shows to be efficient and in good standing. On the other, its strategic planning, benchmarking and capitalization on results achieved could improve. For example, the original programme log frame did not list any progressive benchmarks nor timelines to which planned outputs were pegged. In other words the log frame was incomplete from the outset. Moreover, though its M&E system is innovative, progressive and recognized as a local good practice, it tends to be largely underutilized by the programme. Capacity development strategy and internal criteria for assessing capacity development effectiveness (of

trainings completed) are also missing. Both aspects should be addressed especially as part of its phase out SHARIQUE should be able to assess what was the programme's value added and impact in different areas.

Outlook into the Future

With respect to the What next? question, for the medium term until the end of Phase 2 (by August 2013) SHARIQUE should continue to implement its existing activities without necessarily adding new ones. It should also begin thinking about an exit or transition post Phase 2 strategy. As an intermediary step before making any decisions concerning Phase III, however, the MTR team proposes for SHARIQUE and SCO-Bangladesh to conduct a joint workshop. The objective of such an exercise would be to sit back and strategically take stock of SHARIQUE's cumulative successes, experiences, results and potentially existing gaps identified in Phases I and II as well as to identify relevant entry points for Phase III. The timeliness of the LG Portfolio Report (May 2012), recommendations of this report as well as the arrival of a new International Advisor of SHARIQUE in July or August should provide a fertile ground of ideas and an opportune moment for the joint strategic reflection and brainstorming session.

As for potential modalities of Phase 3, we suggest a set of three options. The first is to scale up SHARIQUE's experiences, best practices and general approach established in Phases 1 and 2 by rolling it out into new geographic areas; ii) Option #2 proposes for SHARIQUE to remain in its existing geographic area but adding new activities; and the iii) third option would be to wrap up existing activities in under the pretext of designing a new project that would combine series of new entry points and thematic areas. More details on specific ideas are provided in the Section V of the report. Most of the options identified here coincide with SHARIQUE's own ideas expressed in the 2012 Self-positioning Paper for the MTR.

INTRODUCTION

The following report concerns the mid-term review (MTR) of SHARIQUE Programme - Phase 2 (2009-2013). SHARIQUE is a local governance support Programme funded by SDC and implemented by Helvetas-Swiss-Intercooperation (HSI). The programme forms an important part of SDC – Bangladesh local governance portfolio with a particular focus on i) improving the well-being and economic, social and political participation of the poor, poorest and the marginalized as well as ii) the institutional strengthening and capacity development of the Union Parishads (UP) and Upazila Parishads (UPZ). Through coaching, formal training and provision of performance-based block grants SHARIQUE aims to empower UPs on matters of transparency, accountability, improved public service delivery, participation, social inclusion and gender equity.

The purpose of this MTR is to inform SDC and HSI about the programme's ongoing progress with respect to its objectives, mid-term outputs of Phase 2 and its continued relevance for the local governance (LG) and decentralization context in Bangladesh. Evaluation of SHARIQUE's mid-term effectiveness, relevance and efficiency with respect to its key activities form the core pillars of the evaluation. The terms of reference also requested that the MTR team provides preliminary reflections and recommendations on *What next?* after SHARIQUE's Phase 2 in 2013 is completed. Should SHARIQUE continue with a Phase 3 or should a new local governance support programme be conceived?

This review report is informed by a desktop review of relevant programme documents, donor reports and literature on LG in Bangladesh. Quantitative accounts are limited to those provided by programme documents. The more qualitative observations are derived from a two-week (April 1-14 2012) field mission to both North East and North West – Sunamganj and Rajshahi regions where SHARIQUE operates. In each region, the MTR team interviewed a cross-section of UNO officials, UPZ chairmen/ women UPs, standing committee and ward platform members, as well as SHARIQUE's regional staff selected by HSI (please see Appendix I). The mission and the report were jointly collaborated on by two female consultants: a Bangladesh gender and civic participation specialist and a governance and social accountability specialist from Switzerland. Gratefulness is extended to all SDC–Bangladesh, SHARIQUE and HSI staff, UP as well as ward platform members who made this MTR mission a smooth and enjoyable sailing.

The report is structured in four main parts. The first provides an overview of the LG context, the second highlights SHARIQUE's overall relevance and some its key comparative advantages to other existing projects in LG. The third looks at the three key project outcomes – its supply, demand and knowledge management and policy advocacy activities and SHARIQUE's corresponding mid-term performance for the period 2009-2011. Each sub-section first highlights SHARIQUE's achievements followed by areas in which it could improve. Lastly, the report looks at some general questions concerning the programme's sustainability, local ownership but some possible options for its continuity.

PART I. CONTEXTUAL RELEVANCE

As the local governance context and donors' involvement in response is constantly evolving, the following section reflects on SHARIQUE's continued relevance with respect to ongoing developments in the local governance framework in Bangladesh.

The (draft) SDC Portfolio strategy review (2012) notes that the landscape with regard to decentralization and local governance (LG) is different to that 10 years ago and finds that the major political parties now recognize the need for elected local bodies that serve as the interface between the community and central government. The major question now remains how to best structure and empower the local government and improve its relations with other levels of government. The report points to changing dynamics within Bangladesh society leading to increasing expectations of the public sector and more articulate and vocal citizens.

In the immediate past substantive reform took place under the Caretaker Government (2006 to 2008) as well as under the first few years of the current Awami League Government. New ordinances were passed for the Union Parishads (UP) and the Upazila Parishads (UPZ). For urban governance one integrated law was passed replacing six earlier acts. A Local Government Commission was constituted. A block grant system for UPs was established. This was further expanded financially and incentive structures etc. refined with WB assistance through the commencement of the LGSP programme.

Although the Awami League Manifesto was very positive towards LG the initial steps that the AL government took after assuming power following the December 2008 elections, were less positive. The Local Government Commission was abolished and all ordinances relating to LG were abrogated. However fresh acts were enacted in respect of UPs and UPZs within a month of the new government coming into power.[1] The LGSP continued without disturbance. Local government continues to be high on the policy agenda of government and donor (on paper), which is reflected in the 6th Five Year Plan.

The new legislative framework has a significant transfer of key public service delivery functions from national government to local governments at the Union and Upazila levels – including the delivery of primary education, basic health services, etc. However these remain more a statement of intent as the regulations and other needed reform to make this happen are still absent. As mentioned in the draft report of the SDC Portfolio strategy review and by others, an overall national policy on decentralization is lacking. Each of the LG bodies seems to be treated in isolation and implementation of the reform seems to be confined to the stewardship of the Local government Division without the other government ministries and departments being adequately engaged. Hence though there have been positive developments in a number of the key sectors such as health and education, overall service delivery remains highly concentrated.

Another contextual development with implications for SHARIQUE were UPZ elections held in January 2009 after a gap of 18 years. However, no substantive powers were given to the UPZ

[1] Local Government (Union Parishad) Act 2009; Government (Pourashava) (Amended) Act 2010; UPZ (Amended) Act 2011 and the Local Government (City Corporation) (Amended) Act2011.

chairpersons. The GOB has also recently issued executive orders that give members of Parliament the deciding powers on a list of works within their constituencies. A weakness of this Act, however, is that it retains the advisory role of the MP in the UPZ Parishad. This and the lack of clarity in the division of responsibilities between the UNO, UPZ Chairmen, MPs and line agencies have spurred various conflict of interest and *systemic problems* .(2010 SHARIQUE Annual Report). In spite continued attempts, these conflicting web of relations and lack of objective mandates make it challenging for SHARIQUE to work at the Upazila level.

In comparison to the UPZs the UPs seem to have a clearer mandate. The LGSP I has provided financial resources over which the UPs have some discretion. UPs have also assumed a role in convening communities to articulate their needs, undertake plans, formulate budgets to respond to those needs and ensure accountability for public services delivery at the local level. Therefore the provisions in the new UP Act (2011) which mandates UPs to hold ward shavas, undertake participatory planning, budget meetings and their review, form standing committees related to the delegated functions, provide UP the legitimacy to take on stronger roles and responsibilities. SHARIQUE has taken advantage of these openings in seeking to empower the UPs to become more responsive to citizens, especially the poor and marginalized.

A significant contextual constraint in SHARIQUE's Phase 2 has been the three-year delay in the holding of the UP elections, which were finally held in 2011. This led to a "wait and see" attitude in the UP and among UP members. As a result SHARIQUE had to slow down and adjust its activities accordingly, but trying to have some involvement in election monitoring. Interestingly the elections showed an anti-incumbency trend with 84% chairmen and 86% of ward members being newly elected. This reality introduced a new need and challenge – of all the new members needing to be trained. SHARIQUE responded these new circumstances with a fairly smooth transition.

Additional new circulars further specified the roles of UP and UPZ to which SHARIQUE responded promptly. For instance, it has adapted the new circular on the Union Development Coordination Committees (UDCCs) issued in 2011 (bodies bringing together line agencies, standing committee members, private sector and UP members) to its relevant programme activities. It has also responded rapidly to the recent circular regarding the UPZ standing committees and change in their number and composition.

Another important legislative measure ensuring accountability and good governance was the Right to Information Act (RTI) passed in 2009. SHARIQUE seized the opportunity and proved that the UPs are capable of fulfilling their function as providers of information to the public under the Act. It also began strengthening citizen's empowerment in their demands for information and strengthening UP's capacity.

SHARIQUE has also collaborated with the National Institute for Local Government (NILG). In collaboration with other ongoing donor projects, the NILG has drafted a capacity development strategy and a UP training manual with the involvement of various stakeholders (including SHARIQUE). It also agreed that UP's training can be supplemented and that UPs can contract accredited training institutions for training provision. These developments complement SHARIQUE and LGSP's use of block grants which the UPs are encouraged to use for their own capacity building.

Perhaps due to the interest of so many actors in promoting LG there have been several uncoordinated interventions at UP level. For example, "(there is a) lack of convergence in guiding UP: SHARIQUE experienced that UPs were confused receiving different instructions from different agencies with regard to their financial management procedures. Despite this challenge, SHARIQUE

continued to transfer its co-finance grants to UPs' LGSP accounts" (Annual Report 2012) but has sought ways of streamlining various donor interventions at the UP level.

Related to the fact that there is substantive donor interest in furthering LG, a few new major second generation development programmes have been formulated and are being rolled out (LGSPII, UPGP and UZGP financed by UNDP/UNCDF/SDC and EU, HYSAWA financed by Danida/CIDA). While some of them have built on the good practices and lessons introduced by SHARIQUE there is a potential risk to SHARIQUE's longer-term relevance as these larger projects seem to do similar things but on a larger scale.

PART II. MID-TERM ACHIEVEMENTS & OUTPUTS

While the previous section provided an overview of the constantly evolving context in which SHARIQUE operates, the following three sections examine SHARIQUE's programme mid-term outputs in terms of the Programme's Logframe. The supply side activities are evaluated first followed by the demand side.

2.1 PROGRAMME OUTCOME 1: SUPPLY SIDE

The MTR of the supply side (Planned Programme Outcome 1) was guided by several overarching questions: *What are SHARIQUE's key mid-term achievements vis-a-vis the Log frame? And, are the good governance standards introduced and capacity developed by SHARIQUE pro-poor, socially inclusive, gender sensitive and show signs of local ownership and longer- term sustainability*?

On the supply SHARIQUE's provides three modes of support: i) strong facilitation and accompaniment of UPs and UPZs in its activity areas, ii) capacity development and iii) provision of performance-based support grants. More specifically according to the Logframe of Planned Programme Outcome 1, SHARIQUE facilitates and provides capacity development opportunities to both UPs and UPZ in the following key areas:

- Open Budget meetings, UDCC formation and tax assessment and collection
- The development and implementation of Local Governance Self Assessment Plans (LGSA) and Governments Improvement Plans (GIP)
- UP and UPZ members' roles and responsibilities, financial management, disaster risk reduction, right to information (RTI) act, power and gender analysis, women's public speaking and leadership.

In addition to facilitation and capacity development, SHARIQUE's third line of activity on the supply-side includes the disbursement of performance-based block grants to select UPs and UPZs. Though the block grants are fairly small (up to 400,000 Taka – approx. 5000 CHF) UPs and UPZs use them toward development projects listed in their annual plans.

Overall, the MTR team deems the list of activities on the supply-side as certainly generous and highly applicable to needs of UPs and UPZs. Table 3.1 in Annex I highlights some of the key mid-term outputs with respect to these in some more detail. When evaluating the evaluating the

effectiveness and efficiency of SHARIQUE's supply side two factors need to be taken into account, the first is the non-representative selection of UP, UPZ representatives and ward platform members that the MTR team talked to, and second the assessment was rendered more challenging because the original Programme Document's Logframe does not list specific benchmarks and timelines against which SHARIQUE's achievements could be progressively measured. Therefore the following section(s) are based on descriptive figures derived from SHARIQUE's Annual reports and perceptions informant by the MTR team based on the interviews conducted during its mission.

Working during and election period and with new UP members

The first important aspect about Phase 2 to be noted is that SHARIQUE's functioned in rather trying circumstances conditioned by the delays in the 2011 UP elections. UP/UPZ members and communities showed to be distracted by the election period and requested SHARIQUE to put certain planned activities (e.g. training) on hold until after the elections. The fact that 90 per cent of newly elected UP members were not incumbents further affected implementation as new members needed to be trained anew. It is commendable, however, that even under these circumstances SHARIQUE adapted some of its activities to liaising with candidates on good governance and producing a training module on Voters' Education (SHARIQUE PPT presentation, 1 April, 2012).

Working with 21 new Upazila Parishads (UPZ)

As noted earlier, SHARIQUE added 21 UPZ to its work programme in Phase 2. Though the volatile political context and unclear division of responsibilities among different actors at the UPZ level has made collaboration with UPZ somewhat challenging, 94.5% of Upazila Parishads (UZP) successfully exercised public UZP budget meetings. They also entered into an agreement with SHARIQUE to receive SHARIQUE grants linked to their Governance Improvement Plans (GIP). Still as it will be discussed in a later section, much more work can be done in working with UPZ.

Increases in UP's revenue generation through tax collection

While in Phase 1 significant preparatory and sensitization work was done, strengthening the UP tax assessment and increasing tax collection is one of SHARIQUE's notable achievements in Phase 2. In FY 2010-11, collection of the holding tax has on average increased by 45% in the old and 290% in new UPs (2011 SHARIQUE Annual report). This shows that citizens becoming increasingly more willing to pay their UP taxes. UPs interviewed claimed this is largely due to the fact that UP governance processes have become more transparent, participatory and accountable. UP's increased capacity to collect taxes has an empowering and motivational element for UP members as they felt that "*with the money we raised through taxes, we can begin implementing small projects for the community*". In the eyes of citizens UPs capacity to implement projects shows to raise perceptions of accountability where citizens seen and gain concrete benefits from their contributions. This joint realization is novel.

Performance based Block Grants

Gradually the disbursement of grants has increased in Phase 2 where in 2011, the Annual Report shows 95 disbursement rate. In practice, some examples of projects undertaken with the block grants have included: supporting the Union Information & Service Centers (UISC)[2] with small scale IT equipment; provision of IT training to UP members and those servicing UISCs; for setting up of UP sewing training centers where women can get trained on sewing and tailoring and for the installation of public information monitoring boards.

Both UPs and the MTR team view the grants as an important reinforcing pillar of SHARIQUE's approach. They are a means for hands-on capacity development of UPs and UPZs in fund management and resource allocation. They build on the financial training which the UP and UPZ members receive and can directly put into practice in the management of the grants. UPs and UPZs also welcome them because the concrete development projects that the grants (but also tax revenues) enable them to implement are a visible means of accountability toward their communities. They also empower UPs and UPZs financially given the low fiscal transfers from the central government (SDC LG Portfolio Review). Though some glitches were experienced with respect to slow grant disbursements (as UPZ did not have bank accounts) the performance-based grants system is strongly encouraged for the future.

Changing perceptions, increasing trust about political accountability

As part of 'softer outputs' that can be attributed to Phase to by those we interviewed are noted change in perceptions and lower distrust between citizens and UP representatives. This perception was shared by both sides – UP members as well as citizens, or as one ward platform member expressed: "*before we thought that UP members were rich and had lot of money, now through Open Budget meetings we see that UP funds are quite limited. This makes us understand UPs and their situation much better".* Such softer outputs are not to be underestimated as they indicate potential processes of mutual socialization and learning (about transparency, the benefits of participation, and the recognition of roles, responsibilities and governance realities) that are critical for the sustainability of good governance and democracy at the local level.

Increased transparency through pro-active public information disclosure

Both citizens and UP members also see the monitoring and public disclosure boards as significant contributions to increased transparency at the UP level. According to SHARIQUE's Annual Report for 2011, 98% of the 'old UPs' and 70% of the new UPs publicly disclosed Annual Budget allocation boards. The boards are located in central areas accessible to the public and include disclosure of annual budgets and plans, list of currently ongoing development projects, citizens charters, who is who in the UP and

[2] The UISC is a ICT enabled one-stop service outlet introduced in UPs and UPZs intending to provide citizens access to IT mediated services and government information.

important phone numbers, GO-NGO services and safety nets beneficiary lists, among others. Also UPs are also more open to responding to RTI requests: a number have designated Information Officers to respond to RTI requests.

Social Inclusion and Gender Mainstreaming

SHARIQUE addresses gender mainstreaming and social inclusion on the supply side in several ways. UP Council and Standing Committees members receive gender sensitivity orientation through facilitated workshops and several process-based M&E indicators are disaggregated by gender and DAG (Adivasi). In practice, however, SHARIQUE has found it more challenging to implement social and gender inclusion on the supply side than on the demand side (Sikder, Engeli, Byrne, Tabet 2011: p.10). The mixed results on women's and social inclusion reflect this reality. For example, while women's and DAG's participation in safety nets committees or women's representation on Standing Committees has notably increased, the results for women's participation in public meetings, their representation on PICs and PSCs are more mixed and vary by district (pls. refer to Annex 3, 2011 Annual report). One possible explanation for these mixed results is that the gender roles are perhaps more defined hence more difficult to remove within formal power structures than in more horizontal civic spaces at ward level.

At the same time, the MTR interviews with different men and women in the communities and in the UP administration painted a more positive picture where both genders recognized the undergoing visible positive shift in perceptions about women's participation both the UP and community level. Formally opening public spaces (e.g. Open Budget meetings) for women to voice their opinions has led to UP's exposure to women's perspectives, to the issues they may face and specific demands they may have. Therefore, continued consistent gender and social mainstreaming practices at multiple levels is the most realistic way forward. Deeply culturally embedded norms, attitudes and practices on gender roles and social exclusion will take some time hence patience to remove.

Pro-Poor Mainstreaming and inclusion

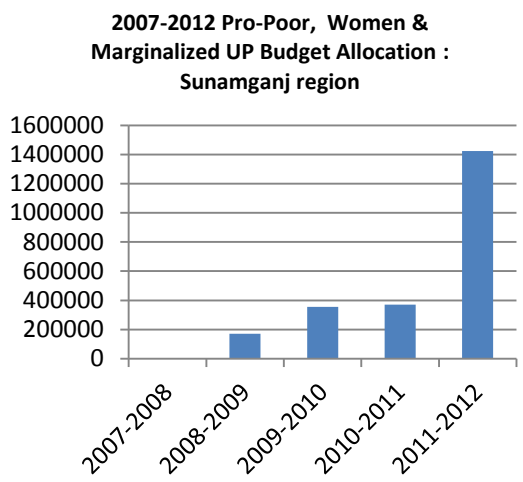
In general it is quite challenging to track concrete poverty reduction outcomes in governance and process driven programmes. In such programmes, poverty reduction effects will tend to be second order in nature. This, however, does not mean that the effects cannot or are not there. They simply need more elaborate tracking and measuring. Moreover, for any effective poverty reduction programme, a reliable baseline of poverty figures in targeted areas would need to be established. It is uncertain whether such information exists in SHARIQUE areas. We were told that some UPs have attempted to conduct poverty assessments. Most are done on the basis of subjective 'best guesses' or in some cases in consultation with the communities. While the attempts are laudable as an experimental intermediary measure, it is uncertain how accurate and reliable they are. Having official numbers to corroborate the latter with

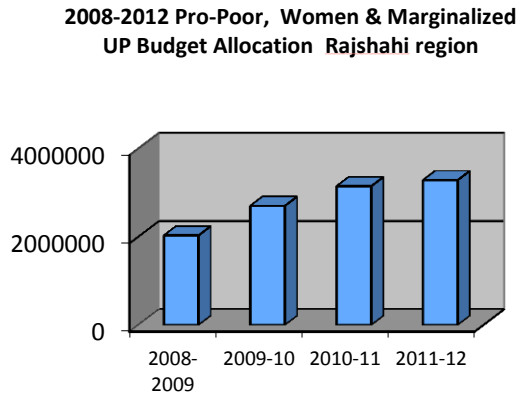
would be more effective. The reason why we mention this point is that without a good baseline, it is improbable that serious attempts at reducing poverty rates in any given area can be reliable attempted.

In addition to some UPs taking the pro-poor matter into their hands, SHARIQUE targets pro-poor governance in several ways. Firstly and similarly to gender, it has integrated pro-poor indicators in its M&E system, (e.g. measuring 'pro-poor budget allocation' expressed as percentage of annual budget allocated for pro-poor projects), and secondly it has focused on strengthening the role and activities of safety net committees which largely benefit the poor and the extreme poor, and UP's accountability to the latter.

The MTR results for Phase 2 show that UPs' pro-poor earmarking has increased from negligible amounts in 2008/ 2009 (see graphs below) to an average of 30% of UP's Annual budgets in 2011, in UPs where SHARIQUE's operates (in 2011). Implementation of various pro-poor projects could also be observed[3]. As UPs become more experienced with participatory budgeting and pro-poor targeting, SHARIQUE staff expects that this trend will go continue to increase. The graphs below show a steady rise in pro-poor budget allocation since 2007. More equitable targeting and distribution of VGD cards and safety nets programs by UPs has also been noted. As one villager expressed "*upon UP's request Ward members now go to villages to identify beneficiaries for VGD cards and other projects, this was not done before SHARIQUE. Before it was unclear how UP distributed VGD cards*". When VGD cards are too limited for existing needs, UPs developed the practice of participatory 'prioritization exercises' for determining which community members are the most 'in need'. This is a very positive development that should be continually encouraged.

[3] Some examples of pro-poor projects include: sewing training and distribution of sewing machine for poor women: Tk. 75,000; computer training, those trained to be employed as UP IT service provide; education material distribution for Adivasi students: Tk. 50,000; goat distribution for disabled people: Tk. 50,000; IGA projects (candle making, basket weaving) for poor men: Tk. 40,000; IGA training on goat and poultry rearing: Tk. 1,40,00; rice thrashing machine for poor men: Tk. 40,000 (SHARIQUE Annual Report 2010, p.10).





Graphs prepared by RCU –Sunamganjand RCU –Rajshahi, April 2012

Nonetheless, during the MTR site visits, it was also noted that many pro-poor projects in different UPs were very similar. Distributing sewing machines, for example was a common project reappearing in several UPs visited. It was difficult for us to determine whether this was due to the uniformity in approach (facilitated by a local NGO) or peer effect (UP to UP replication) or both. Moreover, it was not entirely clear, how the newly distributed sewing machines contribute to income generation or to other poverty reduction effects. The point being made here is to exercise caution against cookie cutter approaches in pro-poor projects that may not always reflect community specific needs. UPs adopting more strategic ways of thinking and tailoring UP poverty reduction and development strategies to their communities' needs should be encouraged. This is an activity that could be built into the long-term strategic planning modules that SHARIQUE plans to introduce in the near future. However increased availability of sectoral service agencies to the people due to much better 'GO-NGO coordination by UP (UDCCM)' can also be considered as the other change area which should have some poverty reduction effects.

SUPPLY SIDE: STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

Overall, in spite the uncertainties and delays in the local elections and continually unresolved division of responsibilities between UPZ chairmen and UNOs that slowed down the implementation of some of SHARIQUE's activities, SHARIQUE has been able to transition, continue and achieve results under these trying circumstances. This is to be highly commended.

Moreover, SHARIQUE's continuity in the implementation of supply-side activities (initiated in Phase 1) is an important component of the programme design in Phase 2. Phase 2 builds on the

experiences gained in Phase 1[4] and brings together the supply - demand interface in a more synchronized way. Some project results achieved in Phase 2 may therefore be also cumulative. For example, training and the practice of Open Budget (OB) meetings in old UPs in Phase 1 may have contributed to the strong results of OB meetings being held (in old UPs) in Phase 2 or relationship building and sensitization efforts on tax collection established in Phase 1 may have contributed to the continuation or increases in UP's capacity to collect taxes in Phase 2. The cumulative effects are to been as positive developments of the programme.

At the same time, SHARIQUE could have done more in several areas:

Limited results working with Upazila Parishads

SHARIQUE's collaboration with UPZ[5] is new in Phase 2. In spite the confusing structural and political context (at UPZ level), SHARIQUE has managed to establish seemingly good working relations with UPZ and to disburse grants to UPZ's development funds. The new grants enabled UPZs to implement some projects. At the same time fruits of SHARIQUE's work with UPZ is still limited. "UPZ still lack skills and knowledge on their roles and responsibilities" (SHARIQUE - MTR Positioning Paper, 2012) while active participation, coordination and accountability of UPZ, line agencies and UPs is to a great extent still missing. These inter linkages are critical for effective local service delivery and good LG. SHARIQUE needs to "find and alternative strategy" on how to work with UPZs more effectively (Ibid.). As part of the strategy it should also try to facilitate stronger inter linkages between UPZ and UPs. This is particularly important given the noted tendency of UPs being negatively perceived by higher level officials. Sensitizing UPZ representatives and UNOs about UP's achievements based on factual evidence and best practices (e.g. via quarterly newsletters) to dispel misperceptions. Further strengthening "positive news" coverage (via MMC) should also be promoted.

Unclear capacity building strategy

Though SHARIQUE has successfully developed and implemented numerous UP and UPZ training modules (e.g. in RTI, financial management, LGSA), during the MTR, SHARIQUE staff was unable to clarify how the team ensures quality standards and sustainability of training outcomes. Consequently, it is unclear to what effect are UPs' skills being developed? Are there any mid-term assessments conducted as to where UP members stand with respect to their capacities developed? What are UP's remaining capacity gaps? Moreover, can it be assumed that training modules (on e.g. financial management) that last half to one day suffice for preparing UPs to effectively assume their duties? One way to measure it would be determining whether annual budgets prepared by UPs are up to official standards. Though refresher courses are offered to UPs, it is unclear as to the strategy behind their timing and to whom (all, some, new, old UP members) they are being

[4] As SHARIQUE staff noted, a significant part of Phase 1 involved "setting up" including sensitization of UPs to the new way of doing things, establishing working relationships and gaining their trust, piloting and testing out concepts.

[5] Other projects working with UPZ include UNDP Bangladesh under its Preparatory Assistance on "Upazila Strengthening". UNDP works through an action research approach and focuses on "Formulation of Upazila Five Year (UZP-FYP) and Annual Development Plan (UZP-ADP)" in 4 UPZs (Chouddaygram, Bramanpara,Sherpur and Gobindagonj UZP). Rural Development Academy (RDA), and the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) are assigned to facilitate the formulation of UPZ plans.

offered?

Strengthening processes vs. projects and clear poverty reduction effects

Some of those interviewed observed that UP development projects facilitated by SHARIQUE are still 'small' hence having low effect on local poverty reduction and expanded service delivery. At the same time, SHARIQUE's primary objective is to strengthen processes and thereby good governance and social accountability standards (transparency, inclusion, participation) among UPs. We have established earlier that SHARIQUE is doing a good job in those areas. Therefore is it realistic to assess SHARIQUE's performance also based on poverty reduction results? If so, what are the criteria and poverty reduction benchmarks? Currently these are not concretely spelled out. Increasing UPs' capacity to think strategically, network, lobby and pro-actively mobilize other potential revenue sources (private sector, NGOs, pooling resources with other UPs) to expand their revenue base and implement bigger local development projects could be one area where SHARIQUE could assist.

Addressing UP's low strategic planning capacity

Though SHARIQUE intended to begin developing UP's capacities in long term planning as part of Phase 2, due to UP elections in 2011, UP long term strategic planning modules could not be piloted in 2011. Still UPs' long-term planning capacity needs to be strengthened though it is unlikely that relevant training modules could be realistically rolled out within the remaining period in Phase 2.

Overall, it can be concluded that the continuation of activities on the supply-side in Phase 2 has brought positive results with respect to old as well as new UP members' capacity development, the further embedding of the practice of Open Budget meetings, UPs' improved capacity to collect taxes, equitable and effective ways of distributing safety nets benefits and in the opening spaces for women's participation. The supply side activities are also very important for the reinforcing effect of the supply-demand interface. While more concrete recommendations will be provided in the last section of this report, most of the current activities at the UP level should be continued 'as they are' until the end of Phase 2. Where the SHARIQUE team may consider focusing more on in the remaining period of Phase 2 is on its work with UPZ. Though the MTR team considers the added activities at the Upazila level in Phase 2 as a positive contribution to the programme, SHARIQUE's support to UPZ needs to be further concretized and strengthened. If successfully implemented, sensitized and trained UPZ officials on issues of fiscal management, participatory democracy and accountability is an important longer-term investment for the systemic strengthening of LG in Bangladesh.

2.2 PROJECT OUTCOME 2: DEMAND SIDE

Expected **Project Outcome 2** addresses the demand side of governance where "the poor, particularly the poorest, men, women and marginalized citizens are empowered to participate more responsibly in UP and UPZ affairs and negotiate their interests". It does so through several lines of activities including: provision of training on RTI, civic education on citizens' roles and responsibilities and voting, training of the trainers in community mobilization-facilitation; strengthening the institutionalization and practice of Ward Shavas.

In response to the recommendations made in the review of Phase 1, SHARIQUE's Phase 2 placed a stronger emphasis on the demand side. In Phase 2, because some activities on the demand side were already initiated in Phase 1, Phase 2 also benefited from lessons learned in Phase 1. One of such lessons was that though participatory planning and budgeting had a successful and enthusiastic uptake among citizens, raising the voices of the poor and marginalized remained a challenge. This was partly due to the project relying on other intermediaries such as LEAF and to the fact that fifty percent of the demand side area was not covered by LEAF. Obstructive power structures unfavorable to DAG also hampered initiatives on the demand side. Moreover, citizens and communities did not actively mobilize around common interests - thought likely due to their lack of awareness about their civic rights and that they *could* participate. Where communities did organize was often facilitated by external actors with their own agendas – e.g. NGO groups set up for the implementation of donor projects.

Establishing Ward Platforms

Although the demand side of the programme initially intended to work with youth and CBO leaders, acknowledging lessons learned (above), in Phase 2 SHARIQUE decided to work directly at the community level with existing or newly formed ward platform groups – e.g. those formed by SAMRIDDHI (formerly LEAF). Ward platforms are "networks of likeminded citizens in their ward (pressure groups)" (Project Document 2009). By 2011, "*818 concerned citizen groups - ward platforms - played an important role in mobilizing citizens for ward planning meetings* (2011 Annual Report, p.5). This is a noteworthy achievement in a relatively short time. Guidelines for the formation of ward platforms ensure the participation of youth, women, Adhivasis, poor and active citizens. The established ward platforms appear to be in touch with their communities and are accepted by UPs. In shared locations, SHARIQUE closely collaborates with SAMRIDDHI and its established ward platforms. SAMRIDDHI and SHARIQUE collaboration shows positive results; community participation and UP accountability shows to be higher in UPs where they work together; DAG h. (Interviews, SAMRIDDHI regional staff).

Coaching UPs on Open Budgets & Ward Shavas

In its design, SHARIQUE has effectively integrated the new "legal" provisions of the UP Act 2009 that mandates UPs to conduct open budgets and ward shavas. Ward platforms support ward shavas in mobilizing and preparing citizens for more effective participation in the ward shavas. Authority and scope of Ward Shava includes the preparation of UP development plans, ward level proposals, prioritization of schemes, development programmes to be implemented and the preparation of priority lists of beneficiaries of various government programmes for

submission to the UP (UP Act 2009).

In Phase 2 the number of annual public ward-level planning meetings (ward shavas) has increased (537 old wards (R: 96% and S: 20%) and 281 new wards (R: 97% and S: 64%) (2011 SHARIQUE Annual Report). UPs and citizens showed to appreciate the process introduced by SHARIQUE for the preparation of the participatory UP development plans. UPs and local administration felt that institutionalizing ward shavas was helping them to implement their statutory duties – and open budgeting OB.

Pro-poor participation & inclusion

The facilitation of the ward shavas also ensures that various categories of citizens, women, men, the poor and the disadvantaged (e.g. disabled) have the chance to be heard. It also ensures an open and transparent community planning process. Citizens and ward platform members monitor the process at the UP level to ensure that their proposals are included in the final UP plan. Though the need for various services, infrastructure or safety net provisions often exceed UPs' authority and finances, expectations appear to be managed by UP members who publicly disclose, discuss their resource limitations and allow the community to prioritize as to how the limited resources should be distributed. These processes are invaluable for building mutual trust and transparency over local resource allocation.

Community participation facilitated by SHARIQUE is monitored in the program through several indicators which show that the absolute number of citizens participating in ward level meetings has been increasing (2011 Annual Report)[6]. People attend the ward shavas and the ward platforms[7] for various reasons among which include the following :

- *Empowerment & community mobilization: making voice heard and bringing about change*
- *Improved access to services*
- *To ensure increased accountability of the UP and service providers*
- *Bottom up beneficiary targeting*
- *Opportunities for community deliberation and collaboration*
- *Women get a chance to participate and influence community discussions and decisions*
- *Various marginalized groups have access to the platforms and ward shavas and are able to make their needs known.*

(MTR site visits and interviews with ward platform members)

[6] Planning meetings were held in 58% of old wards (Rajshahi: 96%, Sunamganj: 20%) and 80.5% (R: 97%, S: 64%) of new wards. A total of 179,039 citizens participated in those meetings, on average 52% were women.

[7] Some of the these included "I'm a village head, I need to be here"; "to gain access to information", "believing that it will enable the community to better mobilize, organize and achieve community development goals"; "to ensure that the voice of the poor and voiceless is heard", to gain more experience on how we can better coordinate as a community and to work together".

Mainstreaming gender and strengthening social inclusion is key to SHARIQUE's activities on the demand side. Women, marginalized persons (poor, disabled, etc) are encouraged to articulate their ideas and needs. Overall. SHARIQUE has been quite successful in opening legitimate participatory spaces for women and DAG through several means.

Women's empowerment and inclusion in LG

An observed growing trend in women's demands being considered at ward planning meetings – at 78% in old UP (up from phase I: 76%) and 60% in new UPs (BL: 0%) – (2011 Annual Report, p.6). Women also received public speaking skills as a result of which they *claim to be able to "speak better in public and to exert more pressure on UP officials*" (Ward platform member). Ward members also noted that women's participation has raised their self-confidence and involvement in community life. Where before women were not able to, nor were encouraged to go to the UPs to enquire about services and benefits – now they actively do (UNO, Sulla UPZ). In some wards women participate more frequently in ward planning meetings than men. While some felt that women's empowerment has also increased the likelihood of women now voting based on their own opinion as opposed to on their husband's, as they did before. Women going to the UP or other government offices is now also seen positively by the male family members as "a contribution to the sharing of family duties with male family members".

In general, it can be concluded that women now participate more in public gatherings and community development than at the onset of the programme. Women's increased representation and participation raised general awareness about women's issues and their views (Sulla UPZ community group; 2011 Annual Report).

While it is positive for women to have the scope to participate in public spaces and events, a question that arises is whether they are sent as a proxy representative for the family or the male head of household because their time is seen as less valuable? Could participation be adding to their workload? Though even if this is so their participation may still give them greater benefits in exposure, self-expression, access to information and eventually access to services. Or is it also easier for women to participate as they are more likely to be in or around their village or ward? In other words, what are the wider implications of gendered inclusion?

Inclusion of the disabled and minority groups

Disabled persons, Adhivasi and the extreme are also pro-actively included in OP planning events, ward planning meetings and in more targeted safety nets distribution (e.g. VGD cards, distribution of sewing machines etc.). The extent to which the disabled and minority play an active role in public meetings would need to be investigated further. In other words, though they are increasingly included, their active participation and voice maybe another matter. The GOB's efforts to recognize disabled peoples' entitlement to social security and a sustainable livelihood seem to have positively influenced social acceptability of disability.

Various institutional means to include citizens' voices and facilitate social

accountability by UPs have been promoted: SHARIQUE has raised UP's use of UP standing committees[8] (SC). SCs bring in locally active youth, women or minority communities (e.g. Adhivasi) to represent their interests at the UP level. Their wider participation is also ensured through project implementation committees and project steering committees. Adhivasis have benefitted from participation, access to information and new resources through their membership in the SCs and ward platforms.

Political empowerment of standing committees is the observation by the regional SHARIQUE teams that significant numbers of Ward platform and CBO members were elected into the UPs in the last elections (although this is not captured in the study that SHARIQUE did on the results of the 2011 UP elections).

Right to Information (RTI) Act and related activities

An effective means of increasing citizen's demand for accountability has been through RTI training and practice. The UP Act 2009 provision on RTI stipulates that "*any citizen of Bangladesh shall have the right to get any information regarding a Parishad, in such manner as may be prescribed*" (Chapter 14)[9]. "It has been used as a tool by communities to articulate and place demands for accountability. RTI is an achievement, overusing this provision to seek data that is readily available makes the use of RTI formalistic and tokenistic.

Capacity building on the demand side

The project has provided a number of training courses to develop the capacities of ward platforms members, women and minorities and thereby to strengthen social accountability. These courses include public speaking for women, citizens' roles and responsibilities but also those of UPs and standing committees, the use of RTI etc. In all ward platforms visited, members were eager to receive more training. Future training on strategic negotiation and advocacy skills were the highest in demand.

… DEMAND SIDE: STRENGHTS & LIMITATIONS

Representativeness of the Ward platforms? While the (non-SAMRIDDHI) ward platforms have been well received and seem to be functioning well, a number of questions arise: how representative are they of the community? How sustainable are they in the long-term? And to what

[8] Each UP is to set up 13 standing committees chaired by the elected UP members with 5-7 members with the members being nominated from the local community "who may possess special qualification for serving in the committee" (UP ACT 2009.)

[9] "If any person requires any information, shall apply to the Chairman of the Parishad in written, in the prescribed form with a fixed amount of fee; The secretary shall deliver the information as asked for within the time allowed, unless the application is disallowed or not settled otherwise." (Chapter 14, UP Act 2009)

extent are they subject to elite capture? The SAMRIDDHI ward platforms have had a longer history and seem better integrated in the community but there seem to be some reservations on whether they are inclusive and representative of all aspects of community life.

Raising expectations. Citizens' expectations are inevitably being raised through participatory processes. Communities are participating with the expectation of receiving or achieving something. However, as the resources and to some extent authority of the UP is limited and unless expectations are managed effectively, disappointed citizens who participated may choose to opt out and gradually withdraw from participatory spaces. Some UPs are aware of this and in response engage in 'prioritization exercises' where community needs, priorities and available resources are realistically discussed. Citizens, the UPs claimed, are cooperative and understanding if the process is participatory and transparent. We see the UPs and citizens' capacity to listen to each other, work together and adjust to (imperfect) circumstances as a positive development if done systematically and across UPs.

Sustainability of participatory and social accountability practices. Although it is still too early to tell, sustaining pluralistic and continuous community 'voice' (e.g. via wards platforms) and turning it into more permanent structure/ pillar in UP's life may prove to be challenging without external facilitation such as SHARIQUE. In the second half of Phase 2, as part of its stocktaking and capitalization on best practices SHARIQUE could try to experiment and test the extent to which communities participate and engage in UP's affairs without SHARIQUE's facilitation.

As outline above, the greater emphasis in Phase 2 added on the demand side has put series of demand for good governance and social accountability processes into motion that are producing results in various ways. In terms of short and longer-term perspectives, however, the formation and composition/representativeness of Ward Platforms requires further thought. Their relationship with ward shavas needs to be further strategized and possibilities of institutionalization explored. In order to strengthen the representativeness of Ward platforms they could link up with other community level groups such as those formed by CNRS in Sunamganj (haor development network). Institutional innovation with respect to Ward shavas and capacity development of Standing Committees – training, clear TOR development, capturing best practices should be also strengthened and promoted. While citizen's expectations about participation need to be more systematically managed so that they are aware about the limitations of the local government bodies, resources, capacity etc and are not unduly disappointed about the gap between expectations and actual delivery of services, resources etc.

2.3 PROGRAMME OUTCOME 3: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT & POLICY ADVOCACY

Knowledge management and policy advocacy refers to Program Outcome 3 for Phase II. It expects that: "*experiences and lessons are utilized to influence policy, practices and public opinion where at least one of SHARIQUE's practices or tools is adopted by local and national LG actors*". Outputs 3.1 - 3.3 and activity lines for this outcome focus on the sharing of experiences from SHARIQUE to non-SHARIQUE UPs and UPZs; media coverage and references to project practices and lessons in policy

dialogue events; another concerns the "number of best practices adopted and/or adapted by programme participants from other LG initiatives.

With respect to results at the national level for this Programme Outcome, three notable achievements need to be highlighted. The first is SHARIQUE's involvement in the collaborative drafting of the UDCC Circular with JICA's Participatory Rural Development Programme (PRDP). The Circular, issued in February 2011 and since rolled out to about 300 UPs, promotes the strengthening of UDCC meetings. The second highlight was SHARIQUE's development and sharing of training modules and materials for UPs, UPZs and communities (e.g. on RTI and local government self-assessment) which it presented at a national event in Dhaka[10]. The modules were also made publicly available on the SDC website and can be flexibly adapted to specific training needs. Thirdly, the built up good working relationship with NILG has produced an MOU. According to the MOU, NILG-SHARIQUE partnership intends to collaborate on the i) organization of training courses and research; ii) validation of SHARIQUE's LG related training modules; iii) regular communication updates and publishing compendium of laws, circulars and guidelines related to UP; iv) organizing learning visits for LG representatives, NILG faculty members and IC officials to learn from 'best practices."

The 1st edition of Compendium of UP related guidelines and circulars was published in 2010 and the 2nd edition with NILG was published in 2011 (though still awaits its launch and distribution); both are appreciated by LG stakeholders. Four SHARIQUE staff have been already trained and accredited as part of NILG resource pool and SHARIQUE's Deputy Coordinator has contributed a chapter on social safety nets to the draft UP training manual. SHARIQUE's influence on the design of UNCDF project on UPZ support as well as on the design of the second phase of LGSP should also be noted. Both are reputable programmes with nation-wide outreach and high replication potential of SHARIQUE's best practices (e.g. its M&E system).

At the district level, SHARIQUE has shared its best practices on LG at annual sharing events (e.g. RTI fairs organized by TIB) which are typically attended by district administration, Upazila Parishad and civil society representatives and well covered by the local and national print media (Annual report 2010; 2012 Strategic Positioning paper). Organizing/ facilitating exchange visit among UPs within SHARIQUE's three districts but also between project regions and non-SHARIQUE areas is another activity that SHARIQUE facilitated in Phase 2. Here partnership with the Horizontal Learning Programme (HLP) has been very strategic as it has enabled SHARIQUE practices related to participatory planning and budgeting as well as tax collection to be shared with various non-SHARIQUE UPs. It has also enabled SHARIQUE to lead the community of practice within HLP on participatory planning.

Where SHARIQUE has been creative in its increased use of the media and focusing on positive rather than negative (as it is most common) reporting on LG issues. It has collaborated with MMC, an SDC partner with whom the collaboration seems to be working well (via a formal MOU) and has resulted in an increased coverage of LG news issues in national and regional newspapers. A documentary on Bahara Union, Rajshahi was broadcasted by ATN and RTV; Boishaki TV also had a

[10] The three RTI modules were produced in collaboration with the World Bank Institute: one for the community, one for the UP and one for the UZP level. The national event was widely attended by the Chief Information Commissioner Bangladesh and representatives from different government, civil society, academics, donor agencies and media participated. SHARIQUE also organized a Training of Trainers (TOT) course on RTI modules in NILG which was attended by 31 trainers and senior staff of different national and international NGO (Annual report 2010). Similar training on the use of RTI was also provided to TIB, YES group.

talk show on SHARIQUE UP participatory process. Such collaboration activities however need to be planned and budgeted for if they are to happen, a recommendation made by MMC.

… KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT & POLICY ADVOCACY: STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

Clearly the listed highlights demonstrate that SHARIQUE has implemented various policy advocacy and knowledge management activities and has to a great extent met its planned outputs listed in the Logframe. At the same time, the MTR team and other active LG actors at national and regional level question whether SHARIQUE could do more? Given its scope has it maximized what it can share with others? Hence were the bars of the objectives in the original Log frame perhaps set too low? Or was SHARIQUE's intention to focus more on the operations and less on policy advocacy intentional from the very beginning? If so, then its moderate influence is deliberate.

Limited visibility and voice?: In spite its many achievements, most of those interviewed felt that SHARIQUE could indeed do more to inform and shape LG policies. The latter observed that although SHARIQUE participates in various national fora, networks and events its voice is not heard and its inputs are not visible enough. Also, because SHARIQUE does not collaborate directly with GOB (e.g. LGD) it is disadvantaged in not being a 'national player'. This reality has been also confirmed by the recent LG Portfolio Review (Boex et. al 2012, p.24). Though SHARIQUE is recognized for its wealth of experience and successful practices in working on both sides of the supply-demand in LG and directly with UPs, UPZs and communities, it should perhaps capitalize more on this comparative advantage. Policy processes could significantly benefit from pertinent evidence derived from field based implementation experiences at the local level.

There are several ways how SHARIQUE could go about strengthening its effectiveness with respect to policy advocacy and in managing its knowledge gained. First of all, SHARIQUE lacks an explicit strategic approach on policy advocacy. Though a communication strategy has been drafted in 2010 which incorporates some strategic ideas, the strategy has not been yet applied. SHARIQUE's outputs could also be more ambitious, targeting two to three strategic policy areas where SHARIQUE, based on its experiences and strengths, could have a voice and influence. In this sense policy advocacy and its influence on policy reforms is not a linear process. It is also not limited to formal interactions. Wielding policy influence can be done in several different ways; it can be done through informal personal interactions, networks, or by simply being at the right place at the right time[11]. Policy advocacy, however, should be strategic, evidence based, and focused on building strong relationships with a wide range of policy reform stakeholders. SHARIQUE's collaboration with local and national media in highlighting 'positive news' should be continued and initiatives such as the UDCC Circular should be replicated. If carried out in a more coherent manner at both regional and national level with a more target intention and plan to "*influence policy, practices and public opinion"* greater impact on policy change might be achieved.

Because HSI is a Swiss NGO which is in a contractual relationship with SDC and is not a government representative, it seems to be somewhat confused and hesitant about the role it should play in policy advocacy matters. Should it be HSI/ SHARIQUE or SDC who pursues policy advocacy and if so how, at what level and in which spaces? Moreover, due to unclear ownership of copyrights, SHARIQUE staff has been unsure about what knowledge outputs generated by the programme (policy briefs, capitalisation of experience documents) can by used for public and policy forming

[11] See study on CSO role in policy influencing by donor working group.

influence. Confusion with respect to these matters between HSI, SHARIQUE and SDC should be resolved.

Having a dedicated position to knowledge management and advocacy would also help. Though the original Project Document (2009) included an Advocacy Coordinator position, the position was later cancelled and converted into the post of a Deputy National Coordinator. This then resulted in the advocacy function being split between the International Advisor and National Coordinator. The effectiveness of this choice is questionable as it demoted the advocacy role to the discretion and workload of two staff members who also have other duties.

Lastly, as it will be discussed in the next section there seems to be no plan or practice in place for aggregating and using the wealth of indicators and data collected through its M & system for assessing more strategic programme diagnostics and impact stories. Though some M&E analysis has been incorporated into annual reports, it has been mostly descriptive of operational outputs rather than bigger picture and strategic. It is recommended that SHARIQUE's management staff conducts a strategic stocktaking exercise to rationalize and synthesize some of the indicators. This will make it easier and more efficient for the actual monitoring (data collection) but also for reporting. M&E indicators should always be meaningful and pegged to desired outcomes and targeted timelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS – KNOWLEDGE MANGEMENT & POLICY ADVOCACY

- **Capitalize on the lessons, good practices and institutional strategies** – by identifying the most relevant ones for replication or policy influence; they should be aligned with GOB's and SDC's strategic objectives and priorities. (MT)

- **Distill relevant 2-3 entry points and plan for an evidence based advocacy strategy**; SHARIQUE's 2010 Communication Strategy to be consulted. The selected issues should reflect SHARIQUE's key achievements. This would prevent misinterpretation of roles and responsibilities, and a more harmonized understanding of the definition of advocacy at all levels could be attained. (MT)

- It is advised that **other projects in SDC's LG portfolio also consolidate and develop a common advocacy and communications strategy** to better target their policy dialogue efforts. This process would also clarify objectives of intended topics; levels and forms of influence. The role of (national) PNGOs (or implementing partners) active in local advocacy could also be strengthened, [1] (MT, LT)

- Understanding of policy advocacy should be deepened; **procedural reform as well as attitudinal changes** should be given as much weight as legal or policy reform. (MT, LT)

- **SDC & HSI should clarify its roles and responsibilities** with regard to policy advocacy and procedural issues with respect to networking – *who does what*. (MT)

- **Maintain pro-active membership and strategic visibility in existing networks.** SHARIQUE/SDC need to play more active roles in such platforms. (MT, LT)

- **The relationships with PNGOs could be further strengthened** - e.g. such as the MOU with MMC and collaboration needs to be budgeted for. (MT, LT)

- **Negative stereotypes about LG** among central and local administration can be better addressed and countered at the district and UPZ through positive media coverage and evidence based awareness building about UP's work (e.g. strengthening the facts based "positive news" such as via MMC coverage). MMC will be setting up regional resource centres at district level. SHARIQUE could pro-actively collaborate with these. (MT, LT)

- **Diversify use of the media**: from working with cable TV to working with community radio (e.g. Padma radio in Rajshahi – SHARIQUE is not yet connected). CBO voices should also be heard in the media. (MT, LT)

- **Staff resources and capacity** in knowledge management and advocacy should be strengthened. (MT, LT)

- **Build on established institutional linkages with NILG and LGD** (through HLP) - use these entry points to promote government recognition of some of its good practices and formalise these through circulars (easier than legal reform). This is all the more possible since SHARIQUE is working within the existing legal framework. [1] (MT, LT)

PART III. EFFICIENCY & PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Efficiency was defined here as SHARIQUE's capacity to implement activities within the project log frame within budget and timelines, to have sound communications and monitoring systems in place as well as its capacity to effectively manage and allocate human resources and coordinate with its PNGOs.

On the Budget Management side SHARIQUE has shown a tendency of under spending (SCO-Bangladesh). With roughly two-thirds into Phase II, SHARIQUE has managed to spend only 43% of the budget (see breakdown below). As can be seen below in Table 4.1 knowledge management and advocacy and grants disbursement show to be the least performing or the most under spent. However, the figures for FY 2011 show to be slightly more promising.

SHARIQUE team attributed its under spending to several factors. Firstly operational setbacks and slow down in project activities e.g. *"an informal moratorium on conducting budget exercises"* was caused by continuously shifting and delayed dates for the 2011 elections. As mentioned in an earlier context section, due to the uncertainties of the election period UPs preferred to postpone certain activities until after the elections (e.g. capacity building). This meant that SHARIQUE had to slow down its activities which in turn affected new contracts for local staff. Secondly, the planned peer exchange-study tour of UP members to India could not take place due to various visa complications, hence a study trip to Nepal, that cost less than the India trip took place. The appreciation of Swiss currency (against Bangladeshi Taka) slightly inflated the budget's value was another significant reason provided by SHARIQUE staff. While indeed these may have caused the under spending, the question arises whether the unspent amounts could not have been turned into adapted activities.

Table 4.1

FY 2011 Annual Budget Summary in %	
Grants to UPs	95%
Local support (local staff)	89%
Supply side related costs	84%
Demand-side related costs	82%
Knowledge Management & Advocacy	81%
Visits and exchanges	17%
GRAND TOTAL	**86%**

Table derived from 2011 Annual report, Annex 2.p, 20

Table 4.2

Phase 2 cumulative (Sept. 2009 - Dec.2011)	
Supply-side related costs	60%
Visits and exchanges	59%
Local support (local staff)	51%
Demand side related costs	46%
Knowledge Management & Advocacy	44%
Grants to UPs	22%
GRAND TOTAL	**43%**

Table derived from 2011 Annual report, Annex 2.

Incomplete original Project Logframe – benchmarking could be improved. Although the Logframe and although semi-annual and annual reports were submitted, SHARIQUE's overall reporting (as apparently demanded by SDC), seems to lack progressive benchmarks – where identified goals (outcomes) are aligned with targeted timelines. This reality is partly due to the quality of the original Log frame for Phase II (Project Document, 2009) which shows to be incomplete – with both 'baseline' and 'target' columns being empty. Even if this was a 'preliminary draft Logframe', when the MTR team asked for the completed version with actual targets and baseline data, we were informed that such a version does not exist. This is unfortunate, especially

given that SHARIQUE has developed a fairly detailed M&E system. However, if the M&E system is monitoring for the sake of monitoring without preset benchmarks and targets, then significant part of its purpose is lost. In other words, it seems that SHARIQUE's detailed M&E benchmarks for Phase 2 have never been fully elaborated and pegged to a set of concrete targets and time lines. As a result, most Programme reports are descriptions of activities that have occurred but which are not put into any strategic or analytical perspective. Are we on track at point A or B? If not what are the consequences and what do we need to change?

Consequently, the **M&E system is elaborate but underutilized for bigger picture programme diagnostics.** On the one hand SHARIQUE's elaborate M & E system is recognized as a local good practice. The LGSP-LIC UNCDF has for example integrated an expanded version of SHARIQUE's M&E indicators into the next phase of its Union Parishad Governance Project (UPGP) and the Upazila Governance Project (UZGP). While others have described SHARIQUE's M&E system as "*not static, the performance indicators often change, it is specific in that it promotes performance beyond the general regulatory framework, it is poverty focused and comprehensive*…" (Steffensen et. al 2011), SHARIQUE's indicators are hence appreciated for being elaborate, detailed and disaggregated at pro-poor and gender level. If effectively collected, this could provide a wealth of information about SHARIQUE's activities and related effects on UPs' and citizens' behavior.

At the same, upon closer examination of the M&E template which is elaborate, detailed, pro-poor and gender sensitive, several important components are missing. Firstly the M&E template shows no signs of the indicators being pegged to specific timelines or strategic targets. Secondly, the M&E template is too detailed with several redundant indicators. Moreover, when SHARIQUE's staff was asked how is the M & E system being used for intra-project diagnostics and planning, the answers were not entirely clear. Lastly, SHARIQUE field staff acknowledged that the M&E takes up substantial amount of their time and that some of the indicators were not useful. On the one hand SHARIQUE's M&E is innovative and progressive within the existing LG practice, but on the other the way it is currently managed, it is underutilized and hence not entirely effective nor efficient. It is therefore recommended that SHARIQUE selects key indicators that best illustrate its impacts and lessons learned. In the future, it should also elaborate and peg planned activities to concrete benchmarks and timelines.

With respect to **HR management and recruitment**, in the early stages of Phase 2 SHARIQUE experienced many transitional challenges which were reflected in recruitment and staff turnover. In 2010 several key positions of the programme changed and PNGO staff recruitment in Sunamganj was only completed at the end of the first semester, some of such changes included:

- National coordinator of Phase I left before the beginning of phase two and was replaced temporarily by the Deputy Delegate of IC
- Regional coordinators were replaced
- Advocacy Coordinator also left. This post was then abolished. The regional coordinator Rajshahi became Deputy National Coordinator, instead.
- IC Delegate left mid 2010
- International Advisor SHARIQUE left mid-2010 and was replaced by new Advisor.
- Change of IC delegate and IC back stopper

Following the staff turnover in 2010, in 2011 staffing returned back to normal. At the time of the MTR both regional units were nearly fully staffed (except for 1 position). Finding an appropriate candidate for the National Coordinator position though proved to be quite challenging. HSI pay

scales are one possible reason for the dearth of suitable candidates as local competition for candidates with similar profiles is high. The MTR team also wonders whether the NCU is not too lean to achieve all its functions? Although the field offices are amply and efficiently staffed, the presence at national level is light which has implications for SHARIQUE's national level outputs, such as policy advocacy.

Overall work atmosphere, team cohesion and team work however appear to be positive with RCU staff taking the responsibility for various thematic issues and being involved in module development and testing. The hiring of staff continues to be gender sensitive in both national and regional units, male to female ratio being nearly 50-50. The internal promotional systems where several staff have been promoted from regional to the national unit (e.g. Deputy National Coordinator) or well performing project officers becoming regional coordinators is encouraging.

However, when it comes to staff's capacity building SHARIQUE and PNGO staff felt that more opportunities for staff training were provided in Phase I than in Phase II. PNGOs raised the need for more training in facilitation, gender, resource mobilization and leadership (Rajshahi PNGO meeting). One possible explanation for the lesser training is that under the fee-based contracts fewer budget provisions are provided for staff capacity building. While HSI could possibly offer such training, currently this element does not feature in its HR plan. Moreover, although the field management seems adequate (apart from some delays in designing and delivering activities and budget under-spending), the presence at national level is light and the ability to engage in national level advocacy inadequate (see section 2.4).

The MTR team, however, deems SHARIQUE's **collaboration and coordination with PNGOs to be effective and efficient.** Working directly with UPs and citizens requires strong contextual understanding and ability to relate to local people and contexts. Collaborating with PNGOs whose staff are often locals themselves is an effective way of ensuring strong contextual know-how. PNGO staff is professional and knowledgeable and the working relationship between SHARIQUE's RCUs and PNGO staff appears to function well and is well structured. Management of regional teams (RCU) has proceeded seemingly smoothly; RCUs hold quarterly meetings with PNGOs where progress is reviewed and quarterly plans are made. SHARIQUE has provided technical support to PNGOs to develop their accounts and HR policies, which was appreciated.

A **Programme Steering Committee** composed of SDC, HIS and the project as members oversees SHARIQUE's planning and reviewing work including orientation of staff at various levels on new developments and tools. However there have been ongoing discussions on how to strengthen the strategic role of the committee by including other key local government actors, either government or non-government, as well as representatives of locally elected representatives. Recently a proposal has been developed for the regions to have Advisory Committees.

Lastly, though SHARIQUE has developed concepts for most of its interventions on both the supply and demand side, the time required for their development appears to be rather lengthy which begs the question how (time) efficient are these processes? The 2010 Annual Report for example stated that SHARIQUE staff was developing UPs' strategic long term planning guidelines that were ready to be piloted, also a draft version of poverty sensitization and mapping module, and a concept for power analyses module. By 2011 these initiatives were not finalized (2011 Annual Report). In April 2012, before the MTR, while the modules on poverty and resource mapping and on power analysis were completed, the strategic long term planning module still had not been operationalized. The 2011 Annual Plan lists that the latter still need to be elaborated and field tested. Other implementation delays included the abnormal flash flood in Sunamganj in 2010 that severely affected locals' livelihoods hence UPs and CBOs had more existential priorities

(Annual report 2010). The delay of the UP elections also has had an effect on project activities and led to the project going slow on activities such as the disbursement of grants to avoid these being misused for election purposes.

Overall it can be concluded that SHARIQUE executes its many activities on both supply and demand side quite cost-efficiently. Its frequent presence and outreach to rural communities is also commendable. At the same time, streamlining (rather than adding) to its activities in the future and thinking about them more strategically, especially in the short term is advised. Progressive benchmarking and capitalization on results achieved is another area where SHARIQUE could do some soul searching. Simplifying the M&E system, stocktaking, destilling key messages and trends about impacts in capacity development (e.g. of UPs, UPZ and ward platforms), participation and pro-poor outcomes should also be considered. Some such activities could be undertaken before the end of Phase 2 and as part of SHARIQUE's stocktaking and self-assessment of its overall Phase 2 achievements. While the 2012 Positioning Paper for the MTR is a step in the right direction, the information and ideas provided could be put into a more strategic perspective about what is it that SHARIQUE considers its chief results to be, the legacy it will leave behind and the comparative advantage it has to other LG programs in Bangladesh now and potentially in the future.

PART IV. OVERALL PERSPECTIVES & ASSESSMENT

While previous sections examined specific sectors of activities the following section looks at the SHARIQUE programme as a whole. It highlights its key achievements and comparative advantages to other LG programs in Bangladesh, but also, some of its limitations or areas that it could further address in the remaining period of Phase 2.

Strong field presence and operationally focused. One of SHARIQUE's notable strengths is its hands-on facilitation or 'accompaniment' and strong presence on the ground. SHARIQUE works closely with three districts, 21 Upazilas(UPZ) and 130 Union Parishads (UP). Each of its Project Field staff is responsible for several UPs and makes frequent field visits. Working closely with UPs enables SHARIQUE to build strong relationships with UPs, ward platforms and communities. It also enables SHARIQUE to address and adjust arising implementation issues in real time which in turn enhances its projects responsiveness.

This brings us to SHARIQUE's second key outstanding feature which is **its continuous effort to testing, pilot and innovate on new concepts.** SHARIQUE's strong operational and limited geographic focus has enabled it to innovate and experiment with concepts close 'to the ground' and thereby to adapt the programme tightly to the local context[12]. Before launching and rolling out new activities, SHARIQUE staff typically first applies and tests them in a smaller geographic area. It also to brings in experiences and knowledge from national and international sources – e.g. the resource mapping module developed by CARE and power relations module based on IDS' power cube. Some of SHARIQUE's innovative concept and practices such as the mentioned elaborate M & E system

[12] Using the piloting method for example was useful in determining how to include the youth in SHARIQUE activities; it was found that the inclusion of youth into UP processes is more effective when integrated in ward platforms than if UPs were to approach them on an individual basis or via CBOs.

have been adopted and replicated by other donors such as UNDP and WSP. This is a positive indicator of SHARIQUE's capacity to innovate within the context of its operational activities.

Collaboration with SAMRIDDHI also enables SHARIQUE to benefit from SAMRIDDHI's established networks, local level linkages with community groups and bodies and training modules it developed. In current geographical areas where SHARIQUE and SAMRDDHI work together communities have also experienced: greater participation by the poor and extreme poor in Open Budget meetings; greater access to social services by DAG; higher promotion and awareness building on DRR and local development plans being integrated and budgeted for in UP Annual plans (Interviews with SAMRIDDHI staff, Rajshani region). Results of SAMRIDDHI-SHARIQUE collaboration therefore seems to be positively mutually reinforcing.

Places an emphasis on governance process(es) rather on more tangible outputs (e.g. concrete UP or community driven projects) by supporting institution building (functioning of PICs, UDCCs, Standing Committees[13]), and ensuring that good governance standards (e.g. effective records keeping, transparency in project selection, financing and supervision, etc) are introduced and upheld in the UPs and UPZs. The governance processes introduced (preparation of budgets and plans) are just as important as the outputs they produce. SHARIQUE also includes process in its capacity development approach first by coaching UPs and UPZs in their own self-assessment process (LGSA), then providing them relevant formal training and finally accompanying them in the implementation of their functions and responsibilities.

The MTR team also deems the **strengthening of the supply-demand interface in Phase 2 and SHARIQUE's multi-pronged approach - accompaniment, capacity building and performance-based grants** to be also very relevant. The three levels complement and mutually reinforce each other. Improving governance processes which depend on regulatory and structural changes but also on changes in peoples' mindsets and old ways of doing things does not happen over night. Tangible results are also more often more difficult to pin down over periods of time. During the MTR site visits, beneficiaries' testimonies (UP members, UPZs, ward members and ordinary citizens) seem to suggest, however, that SHARIQUE has contributed to changes in attitudes (e.g. UPs holding Open Budget meetings and planning together with communities is a new concept in many rural as well as urban communities – "*this was not done before SHARIQUE*"). With respect to political accountability and pro-poor governance UPs are perceived *"to follow regulations more*", " *VGD cards are distributed more transparently and equitably and incidents of* communities *receiving tube wells, cattle subsidies and VGD cards, increased sanitation coverage* were also observed. This body of evidence seems to therefore suggest that SHARIQUE's multi-entry approach contributes to series of political socialization experiences that advance political and social accountability at the local level.

By being integrated within the SDC-Bangladesh LG portfolio SHARIQUE benefits from synergies with other SDC projects such as SHAMRIDDHI, MMC, NILG and Boishaki TV for media coverage on local governance and also has linkages with initiatives such as Horizontal Learning Programme (HLP) through which its good practices can be disseminated. Such collaboration could

[13] Due to the functioning of the GO-NGO coordination meetings, up from the Programme's baseline measure of 2.26, in 2011 on average 3.7 line agency representatives were available in the old UPs providing services at least once a week in Rajshahi and 2.66 staff in the old Sunamganj unions. With regard to the new UPs the situation is also improving. On average, in a new union in Rajshahi 1.8 staff are available (up from the BL of 0.2) and 1.03 staff in the new Sunamganj UPs (up from BL of 0.35). It is notable that 46 out of 53 old UP (86%) in Rajshahi region and 7 out of 43 UP (16%) in Sunamganj began to hold the GO-NGO coordination meetings without SHARIQUE's support. In total, 155 GO-NGO coordination meetings (R 106, S 49) were held without SHARIQUE's support (up from 102) (Annual report 2010).

be further strengthened. The cluster of CSOs supported by SDC such as TIB, ASK, Rupantar and the Women's Leadership Network partners with similar visions could be an additional source of strength for advocacy partnerships. The extent to which mutual-learning and exchanges among the NGO partners is fully realized, however, is not clear.

Longer-term sustainability. One way of assessing the longer term effectiveness of a project is the extent to which its interventions and practices are internalized, sustained and replicated in the long-term. As noted, though SHARIQUE is positively known for its hands-on, operational approach, good relations with UPs and for its elaborate M&E system, the MTR team questions the extent to which SHARIQUE's strong focus on facilitation could be indirectly creating conditions for UPs' and UPZ's dependence on SHARIQUE's support? In other words, to what extent can it be assumed that UPs, UPZs and their respective sub structures (e.g. Standing Committees, Ward Shavas, Ward Platforms) and citizens would sustainably implement the good governance practices if SHARIQUE would withdraw? Answers to this question should particularly inform activities in the remaining period of Phase 2.

When we addressed this issues, SHARIQUE's staff and UP members expressed confidence that enough 'momentum' has been built for UPs to continue the activities introduced in Phase 2 by SHARIQUE. Open Budgeting and more recently the Ward Shavas are practices perhaps the most likely to continue because they are relatively cost-efficient (estimated cost of an Open Budget meeting is approximately 7 USD) and legislatively embedded in the UP Act. Given UP's constrained budgets, cost efficiency is particularly important for local ownership and longer-term sustainability of participatory budgeting processes that are mandatory by the UP Act. SHARIQUE's 2011 Annual Report (p.6) also provides encouraging evidence in that it claims that 41% of OB meetings in old wards and 10% in new wards were conducted without SHARIQUE's support. The latter is apparently low because most of the newly elected UP council members in 2011 elections needed to be trained anew. These trends should be monitored closely but SHARIQUE could also identify criteria[14] on the basis of which it could, in a substantiated and informed way, gradually withdraw from well-performing UPs, UPZs. Such withdrawal could serve both as an enabler – providing UPs, UPZs to appropriate and institutionalize the processes fully as their own, as well as a means of assessing capacities developed by SHARIQUE.

Too focused on operations and a bit insular? Our discussions with various donors in Dhaka suggested that SHARIQUE could do much more in aggregating, capitalizing on and sharing its results and knowledge at the national level. The ins and outs of this observation were covered in the previous section but it is also very well possible that SHARIQUE has been too focused and immersed in operations for too long which has taken up most of its time and resources hence leaving less time for outreach activities. Nonetheless, it is a good question whether 'visibility' and policy influence is something that SHARIQUE and SDC seriously aspire to. While a programme can be strong in both, clear objectives and subsequent alignment of activities and resources is necessary. In the case of SHARIQUE, some key building blocks (e.g. clarity on clear policy objectives, type and level of influence) are still missing. It is therefore advised that they are clarified in the near future. Depending on the outcomes of the latter, feasibility of relevant actions can then be determined.

Expectations gaging. It is common that increases in civic participation may at times produce new volume of demands and possible new sources of pressure for the UPs. While some forms of pressure are constructive and necessary, if civic expectations are too high and the already under-capacitated

[14] Programme based UP performance score cards aligned with UP Act and existing indicators in SHARIQUES's M&E system)monitoring whether quality standards of desirable outcomes (e.g. Open Budget Meetings, annual budgets submitted to UPZ) are being met

UPs (in terms of staff, skills and finances) are unable to meet the new demands, citizens could as a result become disappointed and distrustful of UPs. Such disappointment may potentially lead to citizens' withdrawal from the new participatory spaces created; public authorities could also become frustrated. Some UP members acknowledged to have experienced this dilemma but in response, many have introduced the practice of "prioritization exercises' with communities. The MTR team finds this to be an important innovative practice where UP members are capable of spontaneously adapting to arising challenges. Though this practice speaks more to UPs own capacities than to SHARIQUE's, but the practice of expectations gaging should be encouraged by SHARIQUE where appropriate.

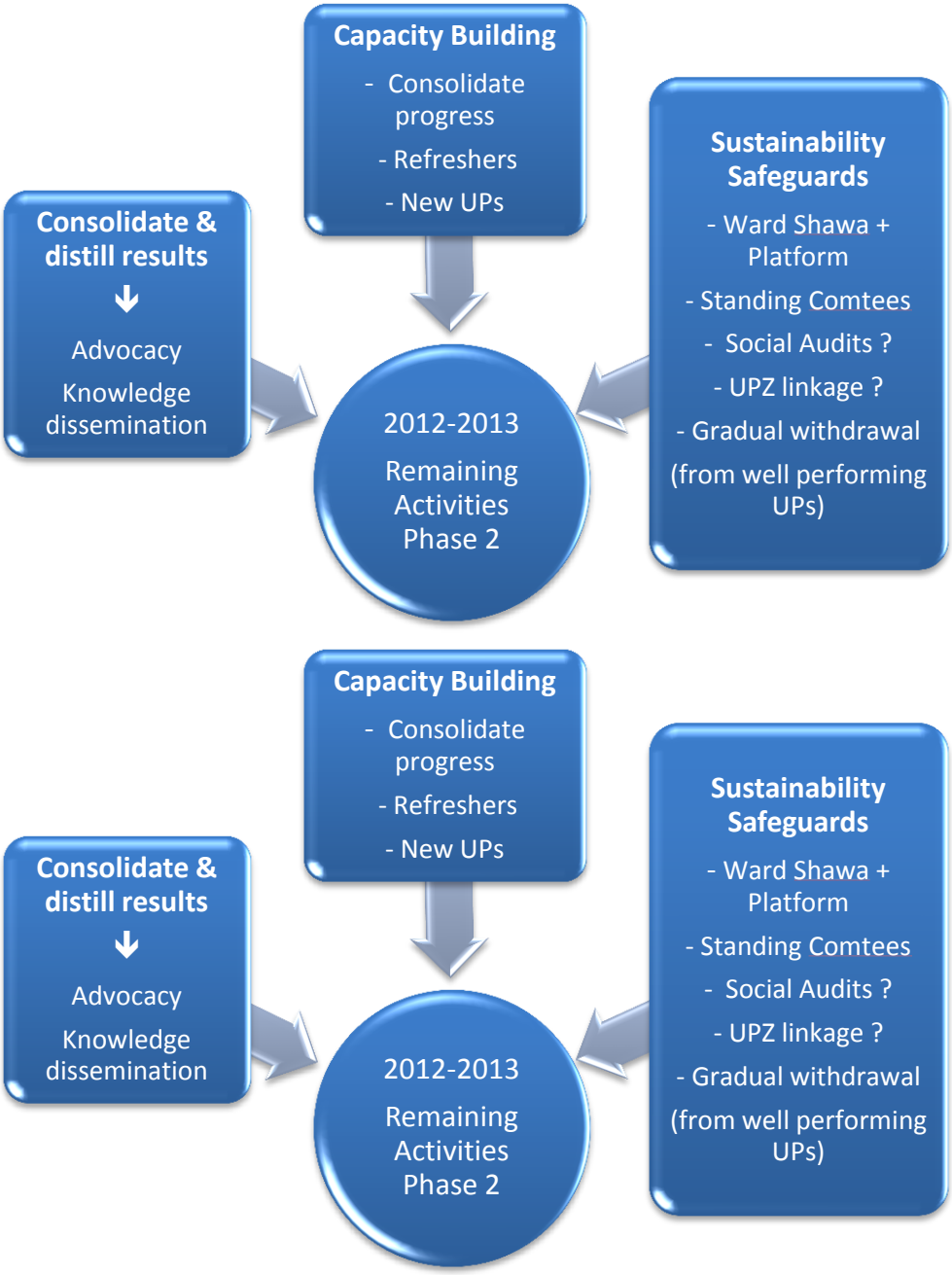
PART V. OUTLOOK: WHAT NEXT?

So, *what should be done next?* In the following section we provide some recommendations on the short-term as well as the long-term future outlook of SHARIQUE. With respect to the short-term, what can SHARIQUE do to ensure an effective and efficient completion of Phase II – until August 2013 will be discussed first. The second part then addresses some longer-term perspectives and potential entry points can be contemplated for SHARIQUE's Phase III.

5.1 SHORT-TERM PERSPECTIVES & RECOMMENDATIONS → AUGUST 2013

As the completion of Phase 2 is approaching in 2013, it is advisable that SHARIQUE continues to implement all of its existing activities but with a focus on their strategic streamlining. To do so it should focus on three cross-cutting activities as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Cross-cutting Areas of Focus → end of Phase 2 (Aug. 2013)



First, it should **begin to consolidate and streamline its results, impacts and best practices.** By consolidating we mean distilling best practices and cumulative results that provide 'meaningful' reflections about SHARIQUE's strengths, its value added to the LG agenda in Bangladesh, and its comparative advantage in comparison to other LG donor programs. Currently, its many achievements and results seem to be scattered and could be organized to tell a more 'meaningful' story. The information gained can be either used to inform policy-making or serve as useful foundation for Phase III. SHARIQUE's elaborate M&E system could prove to be a very useful for this exercise.

One proposed way of taking this process forward is for the SHARIQUE team and SCO-Bangladesh to "briefly stop and reflect" by holding a joint-strategic retreat or brainstorming session that could address the following four issues:

- Taking into consideration recommendations made in the April 2012 LG Portfolio Review, SHARIQUE's own *2012 Self–Positioning Paper for MTR* and outcomes of this report, a strategic stocktaking exercise on what still needs to be achieved and prioritize by August 2013 would be jointly conducted. Though the *2012 Self – Positioning for MTR* paper is a step in the right direction, it merely provides 'lists' of things that SHARIQUE intends to do but without any progressive or prioritized timeframe. It needs to be operationalized more.

- It would identify and aggregate key lessons learned, systemic improvements results, impacts achieved and how to capitalize and disseminate the latter as part of its knowledge management and policy advocacy.

- Based on the previous two activities – the team should also start thinking about how to effectively phase out Phase 2 by designing an effective exit and/or transition strategy and corresponding activities. Way of gradually communicating the latter to UPs and beneficiaries should also be considered.

- Lastly, following the review of conclusions above SHARIQUE would be encouraged to preliminarily design a more concrete Phase III. Here the team would be encouraged to push beyond the status quo and continuation of the same (that has been done in Phase 1 and 2) and come up with additional value adding and innovative activities. Some possible direction are provided in Section 5.3 but most of the activities have been well addressed in SHARIQUE's Self-positioning paper.

As part of the exercise, those present should be encouraged to think 'strategically', taking into account existing and currently planned initiatives by other donors (e.g. LGSP II, UNDP/CDF's (UPGP) and UPZ Governance Project) in LG and asking strategic questions - *What is the current LG agenda? Where is it going? What is its comparative advantage? What successes can it build on and which gaps can it fill? Where does SHARIQUE fit in and what programme legacy does it want to leave behind?*

The second cross-cutting activity proposes **continue capacity building** activities especially targeting new UPs but simultaneously to **conduct an inventory of the effectiveness of its capacity development activities.** In other words, where do UPs, UPZs and Ward platforms stand with respect to their actual capacities built by the programme and as per UP Act 2009/11? Such an assessment could be done either be designing a simple performance scorecard, using the UP Act(s) as a basis for criteria. Evaluations would be done by SHARIQUE staff, UP members themselves, they could be outsourced to a neutral NGO and/or conducted as social audits by citizens. Such an assessment would be also useful for deciding from which UPs/ UPZs SHARIQUE could gradually withdraw from as well as for the final assessment of Phase II[15]. Where capacities are seen lagging in old UPs, refresher modules could be offered (if feasible).

[15] Answering the following questions could help the process: How can the effectiveness of formal training received by UP members be verified? How many UPs received what type of training and to what effect? Do budgets and plans drawn up by UPs meet acceptable quality standards? Has office management improved as a result of the formal training received by UPs, if so how? What are the existing strengths and gaps in UPs' capacity to fulfill their mandates as per the UP Act 2009? By identifying the latter, existing gaps and potential ideas for Phase III can be derived.

Ensuring longer-term sustainability. While there are many reasons to believe that SHARIQUE is catalyzing processes and mechanisms that will be sustained after it leaves, in the remaining Phase 2, SHARIQUE could place more emphasis on instilling institutional safeguards (to the extent possible) that promote future sustainability of practices it has introduced and capacities it has developed. On the demand side, for example, it could further ensure that Standing Committees' TORs are developed, that they are fully operational. On the supply side it could ensure that all UPs' annual budgets include funds for capacity development to build in budgetary allowance for training newly elected UP members who may not be perfectly versed on their roles and responsibilities. While SHARIQUE is supporting this activity now, in the future it should be absorbed by the UPs. Developing post-election guidelines on the transfer of portfolio activities by outgoing UP council chairmen could be also encouraged.

Though as we mentioned, no new activities should be added, depending on its work plan and work load, Tables 5.1 - 5.3 lost some activities that SHARIQUE may consider incorporating in the short-term. Most are slight adjustments to or improvements on its existing activities. The Tables are aligned with SHARIQUE's three core Programme Outcomes.

Table 5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMPLETION OF PHASE 2 – SUPPLY SIDE

GAPS & AREAS TO BE ADDRESSED	RECOMMENDATIONS
UPs' financial constraints to deliver public services (it is to be noted that this a systemic issue rather than a condition created by SHARIQUE)	➢ SHARIQUE LG Portfolio review identified that UPs are significantly underfunded. To offset this limitation, continue providing support tax assessments, tax collection, disbursement of grants and other forms of resource mobilization support. – e.g. ensuring that committee and civic groups/ UP members responsible for tax collection are up and running. Having financial means through which UPs can implement concrete community projects and meet citizens demands as they arise is critical for UP's accountability. ➢ In the more longer perspective, as part of the training on longer-term planning, a module on diversified resource mobilization by UPs could be considered where strategies on how to attract funding to UPs from other than taxes and transfers – e.g. national foundations, private sector, donors, UP licensing and income generating activities would be explored. Revenues generated would be then used toward implementation of Annual and longer-term local development plans; establishing synergies with SAMRIDDHI and its networks could be useful here.
Continue strengthening peer-to-peer learning among UPs	➢ Though SHARIQUE has began implementing some forms of peer-to-peer learning, UPs interactions with UP chair associations for peer-to-peer problem-solving and learning opportunities should be explored further. UP-to-UP exchanges (e.g. Old → new UPs) on best practices should also be continued and encouraged.
Strengthening UPs' capacity to	➢ Linked to the previous activity and if time and work plan

conduct poverty assessments	permitting SHARIQUE could develop and encourage UPs and UPZs to conduct more robust poverty assessments. Currently, though participatory, such assessments are conducted haphazardly as 'best guesses'.
Strengthen its support to UPZ	➢ Brainstorm and identify creative strategies and constructive entry points on how to improve its approach to working with UPZ. Review any existing good practices (e.g. UGPZ)?
UPs and UPZs long-term strategic planning as per SHARIQUE's 2012 Positioning Paper	➢ Strengthening UPs' and UPZs' long-term strategic planning is certainly advised. Because capacity building on long-term strategic planning would likely consist of several modules (e.g. principles of basic local economic development; planning, M&E systems, diversifying resource mobilization etc.) it is questionable whether this is realistic to achieve within SHARIQUE's outstanding Work Plan for Phase 2. We are also not sure how far the team has developed these modules already.

Table 5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMPLETION OF PHASE 2 – DEMAND SIDE

GAPS & AREAS TO BE ADDRESSED	RECOMMENDATIONS
Working with Ward platforms though they have no legitimate legal status (in UP Act 2009/11)	➢ Though it is important to keep on mobilizing Ward platforms as informal agents of civic mobilization, because they are not legislatively recognized, institutionalizing and strengthening of ward shavas as well as Standing Committees is strongly encouraged. Elaborating their TORs, capturing best practices an ensuring that they remain operational are some activities that can be pursued.
Pro-active networking among Ward Platforms	➢ Ward platforms should link up with other community level groups such as those formed by CNRS in Sunamganj (HAOR development network).
Strengthening and innovation on Ward shavas	➢ The various strategies to institutionalize and facilitate the ward shavas should be reviewed and the one with most potential strengthened.
Turning community mobilization into collective action and local development projects	➢ In addition to facilitating deliberative spaces, SHARIQUE may want to (potentially more in the longer term) encourage ward platforms to also collaborate on small community improvement projects (where such needs organically arise) in order to further embed civic life.
Capacity Development gaps to be identified and filled	➢ More capacity development of CBOs and community members in negotiation and advocacy skills, enabling them to effectively communicate and negotiate with UPs and local authorities. Capacity development of ward platform and

	standing committee members should be monitored to assess progress, gaps and weaknesses addressed.
Testing for sustainability - pilot gradual withdrawal from well mobilized ward platforms	➢ Experiment with lighter facilitation and project involvement in well mobilized communities where the demand side is stronger and more organized; monitor closely and capture what 'works' in such communities as opposed to others.
Roles & responsibilities is needed. **SHARIQUE & SAMRIDDHI** explicit specification of each of the programmes'	➢ Both reams expressed that though the two programs share important synergies, clear roles and responsibilities in the areas where the two jointly worked together have not been clarified. This needs to be done as soon as possible in order to prevent complications and missed opportunities during implementation. One way would be for the two teams to jointly discuss and produce a MOU.

Table 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS - KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT & POLICY ADVOCACY

GAPS & AREAS TO BE ADDRESSED	RECOMMENDATIONS
Capitalize on the lessons, good practices and institutional strategies	➢ By identifying the most relevant ones for replication or policy influence; they should be aligned with GOB's and SDC's strategic objectives and priorities.
Distill relevant 2-3 entry points and plan for an evidence based advocacy strategy	SHARIQUE's 2010 Communication Strategy to be consulted. The selected issues should reflect SHARIQUE's key achievements. Continued pro-active membership and strategic visibility in existing networks to be maintained. SHARIQUE/ SDC need to play more pro-active roles in such platforms. Common definition of advocacy should be identified between SDC & HSI.
Clarify SDC-HSI division of responsibilities with respect to national advocacy activities	➢ With regard to policy advocacy, procedural issues and networking – who does what – should be mutually discussed and clear decisions reached. This will prevent misinterpretation of roles and responsibilities as in the past.
Staff resources and capacity in knowledge management (KM) and advocacy should be strengthened	➢ Dedicating a distinct position for KM and policy advocacy is advised. Though this is more likely a longer term consideration, should the existing budget allow for it, it could be considered even in the short term.
Continue public outreach and awareness through diversified, creative and more diverse media channels	SHARIQUE should maintain an partnership with MMC, funding for joint activities to be distinctly earmarked. Other considerations could include working with cable TV, working with community radio (e.g. Padma radio in Rajshahi, as well as new social media; CBO voices should also be heard in the media.
Negative stereotypes about LG	➢ This should be achieved through continued positive media

among central and local administration to be better addressed at the district and UPZ	coverage and evidence based awareness building about UP's work (e.g. strengthening the facts based "positive news" such as via MMC coverage). MMC will be setting up regional resource centers at district level. SHARIQUE could pro-actively collaborate with these.
Other projects in SDC's LG portfolio also consolidate and feed into a common advocacy and communications strategy	➢ To better target their policy dialogue efforts (BDG Portfolio Review 2012). This process would also clarify objectives of intended topics; levels and forms of influence. The role of (national) PNGOs (or implementing partners) active in local advocacy could also be strengthened.

5.2 … NEXT PHASE - PHASE 3?

As a preliminary to making any decisions concerning Phase III, undertaking a comprehensive stock-taking exercise of SHARIQUE's cumulative successes, experiences, results and potentially existing gaps (as mentioned above) is advised. The objective of such an exercise would be to strategically establish what was achieved in SHARIQUE's Phases I and II but also to identify relevant entry points for Phase III. Such activity would provide more informed ideas based on years of SHARIQUE's field experience and SDC's strategic vision for advancing its involvement in LG and decentralization agenda in Bangladesh in the future.

The following options proposed are limited to mere sketches based on observations from the MTR's two-week mission and preparatory work. Making the proposed ideas more coherent and fit for a full-fledged foundation for Phase III would require additional brainstorming, elaboration and alignment of activities which was not within the scope of this MTR. Though as already proposed earlier, holding a strategic brainstorming workshop could do the trick. In principle the MTR team also, for the most part, agrees with ideas proposed in SHARIQUE's own 2012 Self-Position Paper for MTR.

OPTION #1 – SCALING UP AND WIDER GEOGRAPHICAL ROLL OUT

First proposed option is to scale up SHARIQUE's experiences, best practices and general approach established in Phases 1 and 2 by rolling it out into new geographic areas. The new geographic areas could include other UPs/ UPZs in Rajshahi and Sunamganj, SAMRIDDHI locations where SHARIQUE has not worked before[16], or other 'poor' districts in Bangladesh. To prevent duplication, any

[16] **Expanding into SAMRIDDHI areas** however, has seemingly received some resistance from NCU and national SAMRIDDHI staff during the MTR's debriefing. Though granted that both programs are fundamentally different - SAMRIDDHI addressing the bottom up livelihoods, value chain management & economic empowerment while SHARIQUE focuses on governance and social accountability, in the greater scope of things the two are not

decisions should harmonize with the geographic roll out of other donor LG programs (namely UNDP/CDF's – UPGP, and UPZ GP).

The pros of this option would see UPs/ UPZs benefitting from SHARIQUE's experiences and best practices. If successfully rolled out, critical mass of evidence for informing and influencing LG policy dialogue could be gained. Peer-to-peer exchanges between previously trained and well performing UPs/UPZs could be used as a means of reinforcing local ownership of LG peer networks. Roll out to SAMRIDDHI areas could contribute to novel synergies and development outcomes. According to SHARIQUE and SAMRIDDHI staff, projects in current areas both projects work together communities have experienced numerous benefits. While SHARIQUE brings is own experiences, capacity building approaches and facilitating access to UPs hence strengthening governance processes in SAMRIDDHI communities and UPs, SAMRIDDHI strengthens the livelihoods dimension and economic empowerment dimensions hence more targeted ways of reducing poverty. Jointly, they have the potential to mutually complement and positively reinforce each other in enhancing multi-sided support to LG structures and multi-sided effectiveness of LG processes. SHARIQUE's Logistical relocation and dealing with new learning curves by working in new areas however would need to be considered as part of this option.

OPTION #2 – STAYING IN EXISTING DISTRICTS BUT ADDING NEW ACTIVITIES

Option #2 for Phase III suggests that SHARIQUE should remain in existing geographic areas but should add new activities. The logic here is for SHARIQUE to go beyond what it has been doing in Phases 1 and 2 in further strengthening UP and UPZ's competences and their mutual coordination by:

i. **Empowering UPs and UPZ's capacities and functions:**
   - long-term strategic and local development planning
   - UPs & UPZs service delivery functions and accountability in tandem with the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR II) that foresees a heightened role for LG in areas such as rural infrastructure, health, education, disaster management, and empowering indigenous communities.
   - UPs/UPZs resource mobilization, revenue generation and overall financial standing in conjunction with ongoing fiscal decentralization initiatives – LGSP II (e.g. strengthen UPs' capacity to monitor and effectively communicate with central government to ensure timely fiscal transfers)

ii. **Focusing on improving bottom-up intergovernmental linkages and coordination** - UPs ⇔ UPZs ⇔ UNO ⇔ Line agencies (strengthening UDCCs). If it does not exist already, a

mutually exclusive in terms of possible synergies – interestingly RCU staff are already collaborating along these lines in the field; a 1-year pilot phase could also be considered to test the waters.

simple way of addressing this could be designing an intergovernmental newsletter where pertinent news by different levels of government would be shared.

iii. **Keep on capitalizing on SHARIQUE's strength in social accountability activities** - working with the pro-poor and DAG (fully operationalize Standing Committees, ward shavas, womens' groups).

iv. **Developing effective criteria (as per UP/ UPZ Acts) on the basis of which UPs/ UPZs could be evaluated** (by self, social audits) – e.g. UP/ UPZ performance report cards could be an effective way through which to encourage standardized performance expectations and on the way.

v. **Diversifying use of media** including social media in promoting positive and supportive messaging concerning LG's capacities and general image. (e,g. mediatisation of the performance score cards to create publicly enforced performance incentives and LG's public visibility).

In considering this option, to prevent duplication, SHARIQUE may want to evaluate its comparative advantage vis-a-vis other donor supported programs active on the supply side ans select pertinent activities accordingly. As established, SHARIQUE's strength (as is) is in its strong operational capacity and its support of both sides of the supply and demand side interface. This proposed set of activities would build on this strength and take it one step further. Subsequently SHARIQUE's experiences and staff could also be retained. Limitations of this options, however, would be SHARIQUE's continual limited geographic influence and replication of its best practices. The latter could be however offset if SHARIQUE adopted more pro-active knowledge management, public awareness and policy advocacy activities.

OPTION #3 – DESIGN OF A NEW PROGRAMME

A third option would be to wrap up existing activities in Rajshahi and Sunamganj under the pretext of designing a new project that would combine series of new entry points and thematic areas. Though the design of a new program would require more thought, some areas worth considering would be to focus more on the missing links in the existing SDC LG portfolio – such as adding an urban dimension. Focusing on more elaborate, evidence based public awareness campaigns, related knowledge management, the capturing best practices (across different donor projects) and expanding research capacities, university curricula on LG and decentralization by supporting academic and research institutions, is another. In addition to strengthening research on LG, outcomes of the latter could then serve as a means to inform national policies and public awareness building in a more focused and informed way. Another possibility may be to opening up the third phase programme design to a competitive process which could generate new innovative ideas for how to advance the SDC's vision and LG agenda in Bangladesh. The downside of this option would be the loss of the hands-on 'operational', 'pro-poor' and 'field' dimensions of working directly with UPs and UPZs.

CONCLUSION

Overall, as a local governance programme SHARIQUE has a lot to offer. Its particular strength has been its operational focus and field presence by working directly with 130 the Union Parishads and more recently with 21 Upazilas in 3 districts. Through the mobilization and strengthening of civic ward platforms, SHARIQUE's Phase 2 deepened activities on the demand side. The bringing together of the demand-supply interface in a more focused way is seen as a positive development by the MTR team. Through its many activities such as Open Budget meetings, participatory planning and public disclosure of UP information as well as capacity development of UPs, UPZs and citizens in various areas linked to LG, it can be concluded that local governance in the UPs where SHARIQUE operates has become more transparent and participatory. A body of evidence amply supports this. At the same time though pro-poor earmarking of budgets at the UP level has increased over time and has contributed to the implementation to numerous pro-poor projects, SHARIQUE's effects on poverty reduction are difficult to estimate. This is not uncommon in projects focused on governance processes where poverty reduction effects tend to be second order hence need more layered tracing. Moreover, while advances in social inclusion of women and DAG has been easier to influence on the demand side, on the supply side it has proven to be more difficult. Structural power relations in more formal spaces are perhaps more challenging to change in a short period of time than they are in more horizontal civic spaces. Making inroads in working with Upazilas has been also slow and cumbersome due to complex and confusing contextual factors. More work will need to be done here. Lastly, though SHARIQUE has accumulated significant wealth of experience and some traceable forms of impact at the local level, it has been less pro-active in connecting and aggregating the latter to the national level. It could do more here in the future.

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Terms of Reference

Mid Term Review of SHARIQUE

MTR Sharique Phase 2 (2009-2013), April 2012

1 Background

SHARIQUE is a Local Governance support Programme fully funded by SDC and currently implemented by Helvetas-Swiss-Intercooperation in the North East and North West regions in Bangladesh.

Local Governance is a core thematic area of the 2008-2012 SDC's Cooperation Strategy, and SHARIQUE represents an important component within the local governance programme portfolio. It contributes to SDC's key strategic objectives of empowering citizens to negotiate for their interest, strengthening the capacities of the local government to deliver services, and promoting the interaction between citizens and the government institutions at local level. In line with SDC's approach SHARIQUE particularly emphasises the inclusion of the poor and poorest, the need to address existing power relations and the principle of gender equity.

The overall development goal of SHARIQUE is to improve well-being and economic, social and political participation of the poor and poorest – women, man and marginalised. The specific objectives of the programme include institutional strengthening of Union and Upazila Parishads (UP; UZP, sub national elected governments bodies) towards more effective, transparent and inclusive public affairs management through increased accountability and responsiveness to citizens; empowerment of the poor and marginalised citizens to participate actively in Union/Upazila Parishads' affairs by negotiating their interests towards more responsive local governments; and knowledge management to utilise experiences and lessons learnt towards influencing policy, practice and public opinion.

SHARIQUE tightly collaborates with the 'Samriddhi' project in the work with the Demand side (i.e. local citizen groups, communities). Samriddhi is a project also implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation working in value chain development.

SDC is also planning to conduct an overall review of its local governance portfolio in Bangladesh which will be held in March and the draft report will come out during the Sharique MTR. This review will probably have some implications on Sharique and its MTR process especially how Sharique could get maximum benefits from its results.

2 Purpose of MTR

Inform SDC and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation on the project's progress towards the program objectives (effectiveness) and assess if it maintains validity and relevance for the current context of local

governance and decentralization in Bangladesh (relevance)[17]. It shall further assess if project strategies, structures, management and monitoring (efficiency) systems are appropriate for effective results achievement and make recommendations with regards to the remainder of the phase.

Inform on the scope, focus and possible modalities for a future Local Governance support program that builds on the achievements and comparative advantages of SHARIQUE.

3 Objectives

Effectiveness: To review the progress towards the expected outcomes and to assess the effectiveness of the project approaches. The review should analyze the achievements and shortcomings of the project and draw possible adjustments for the remaining project period.

Relevance: To identify the relevance of the SHARIQUE program within the existing local governance landscape with regard to: (i) Citizens' Empowerment; (ii) Capacity Development; (iii) general setting in GoB and (iv) SDC portfolio and other donor initiatives, including the Local Government Support Program LGSP.

Efficiency: To critically review the program (i) structures and resources (management, monitoring, steering); (ii) systems and policies and (iii) monitoring system. Provide short term recommendation for adjustments when necessary.

Outlook: To provide scenarios for capitalizing on the SHARIQUE experience with regards of the program relevance, comparative advantages and sustainability of the results achieved.

4 Review Issues and core Questions

4.1 Effectiveness

The consultant will assess whether the planned results have been achieved in an effective way (quantitative and qualitative perspectives), outline the main success (and failures) of the programme and shape the short term adjustment needed.

In particular:

- Approach & sustainability: The effectiveness of the programme approach to reach and sustain the expected results (decentralised project structure, work on Demand & Supply side, etc.). How far did the project trigger change processes (including behaviour changes) on both the Demand and Supply side of public services provision? To which extent the best practices established with the program support have been carried forward with the new UP councils in place after 2011? How effectively does the project contribute towards inclusion of disadvantaged groups (DAG) of citizens (mainly of poor, extreme poor, women, indigenous, disabled) in local governance processes? How effective is the project GEM strategy?

[17] SDC plans to carry out an extensive review of its Local Governance domain in March-April 2011, including a rapid assessment of the current Local Governance context. The consultants will be able to rely on the preliminary results of such review. Additional secondary information will also be provided by SDC.

- Communication, scaling up & breakthrough: How effective is the project's contribution to creating awareness and building capacity of local stakeholders with regards of local public issues? (Local stakeholders being mainly engaged citizens and Union and Upazila elected representatives and staff). How is the program positioned with regards of external communication, local and national policy debate and the overall program communication strategies and practices? In particular, to what degree is the project able to make relevant contributions at policy level and as inputs to other program's development?
- Knowledge Management, operational alliances: where does SHARIQUE (and Helvetas-Swiss-Intercooperation & SDC) stands with regards to in-house and cross project knowledge management? (e.g. DRR, Gender, capacity development,…). How is the programme performing in term of setting up strategic alliances, participating in local and national networks with the main aim of learn from "peers" and feed to "peers"? In particular, how is the programme working with SAMRIDDHI, NILG, Governance Forum, LGSP, UNDP, WB and other relevant actors at local and national level?
- Gender Equality Mainstreaming: Where does SHARIQUE currently stands with regards of its gender strategy, approach and GEM practices? How effective is the project's contribution to raising women's voices and role in decision making process?

4.2 Relevance

The national and local context relating to local governance and decentralisation has been changing rapidly in the last two years. Relevant law and by-laws have been amended, local election held and the overall political debate on local government issues seems is now high on the policy agenda. The consultant will be asked to locate the SHARIQUE programme in this context, assess its comparatives advantages and weight up its place within the SDC' Local Governance portfolio. Short term recommendations are expected.

- Local Governance: what is the overall relevance – from a political perspective - of strengthening the local governments system and empowering citizens in Bangladesh? In particular the Union Parishads and Upazila Parishad level[18].
- Local Governance Projects & Programmes: What is the relevance of SHARIQUE in regard to fulfilling the gaps in overall local governance donor's landscapes in Bangladesh? In particular the Local Governance Support Programme (LGSP).
- Citizen Empowerment: What is the relevance of Sharique in citizens' awareness building, citizens' participation and community and social mobilization and networking particularly for the poor and disadvantaged women and men?
- Capacity Development: What is the relevance of Sharique in regard to capacity development of UPs, UPz and community groups in order to strengthen local governance and decentralization process at local level.

[18] Cf. Foot note 1

4.3 Efficiency

- Program set-up: How efficient is the overall program set-up; programme management an advisory structure? How efficient the role of National Coordination Unit versus the Regional Coordination Units? Are the "in-house" (within the program and within Helvetas-Swiss-Intercooperation) synergies meaningfully exploited? In particular, assess the thematic collaborations within the SDC' supported project implemented by the same organisations in the areas of DRR, Gender and "Demand side support".
- Management: How efficient is the overall management set-up? Are the human resources of the national and local coordination offices efficiency performing their assignments? Are their profiles up to the task? Is the overall steering mechanism working properly? Are the programme policies (including gender) adequate?
- Operations: Are the capacities of programme staff and Partner Non Government Organisations (PNGOs) adequate to facilitate and supervise the project activities?
- Monitoring system: Do the monitoring system and processes allow for an appropriate management for development results fulfilling functions of accountability, internal decision making and steering, as well as learning?

4.4 Outlook

Based on the assessments done under 4.1 - 4.3, the consultant shall provide the SDC with options for a next phase, if any. The core issues outlined above shall be considered from a longer term perspective, beyond the current project phase.

Thus, focussing on:

- Future development: considering the elements of SHARIQUE which need further consolidation, replication and/or scaling up, how could SHARIQUE (or a similar programme) be further developed in terms of: (i) thematic focus, (ii) key program components (demand – supply set-up), (iii) coverage and (iv) critical issues to be considered to assure the sustainability of the results achieved?
- Knowledge management: Which are the core lessons learned to be carried beyond the current program phase? Which are the best practices and pilots to be scaled up and/or widely communicated? (Assess the scope for a publication).
- Collaboration with SAMRIDDHI: which would be the comparative advantages of SHARIQUE & SAMRIDDHI collaboration in working with the citizens groups (demand side), and other possible thematic synergies with regards to gender and DRR and to what extent has the collaboration with SAMRIDDHI proven to be effective and efficient and what options could be envisaged for the future (e.g. maintain the same set-up, move the community empowerment component of SAMRIDDHI into SHARIQUE, etc.).

5 Methodology and Procedure

5.1 The Review Team

An International consultant will act as a team leader. He has an in depth professional background in local governance (15+ years) and an excellent academic background (at least MA/MS degree, preferable PhD). The consultant will have an in-depth knowledge of local governance and decentralisation processes in the region, particularly on citizens' empowerment, social mobilization issues and knowledge management/capacity building issues. In depth experience in PCM and project review methodologies will also be required. Previous work experience with SDC is preferred.

The national consultant will have to prove a professional track record of PCM and in conducting reviews (10+ years); have knowledge and experience on working with government and policy advocacy framework in Bangladesh; have in-depth knowledge of the political and administrative systems in Bangladesh (National level and Local levels), including the formal/legal framework and current political issues. An in-depth knowledge and working experience at grass root level and Local Government Institution levels also required. Good command of English necessary.

5.2 Period of review, time allocation

The review period is scheduled in March/May 2012, with mission in Bangladesh between the 10th to 24d of April, for a total maximum number of 20 days for the international consultant (including preparation, visit and reporting) and 18 days for the national consultant (including preparation, field and inputs to the report). A tentative mission programme will be developed jointly with the evaluators and SHARIQUE team.

5.3 Work methods

The review is conducted in a "light" and participative way, permitting the sounding out of all relevant stakeholders (from beneficiary level up to the programme management, the government and other relevant stakeholders) to ensure the full benefit from the experience gained during this second phase. The review team applies different work methods to ensure that all the issues are taken up in the best possible manner:

- Literature review: review of the documentation drawn up in the context of SHARIQUE and other documentations as deemed pertinent. A non exhaustive document list is provided under 5.5 below.
- Interviews with all different stakeholders (UP representatives, Upazila representatives, citizens' groups), programme staff (HSI/PNGO), government officials (e.g. UNO), SDC representatives, and key partners as e.g. NILG.
- Meetings with people related to LGSP (Worldbank, UNDP, SDC, GoB) to be able to assess SHARIQUE's relevance in the light of this national programme.
- Field visit (meeting with rural citizens, poor disadvantaged groups, elected representatives of UP and UPZ, local government officials, partner NGOs etc.).

5.4 Deliverables

- An detailed work-plan that will define the specific responsibilities of the single consultants and further tune the work methods.
- A debriefing session at the end of the mission to present and discuss the findings, recommendations and the overall report structure
- A final report of not more than 20 pages plus annexes (tentatively by 30/04/2012) including an executive summary of no more than two pages. This should include the consultant's findings and recommendations. The draft report should be submitted to SDC by April 20, 2012 for SDC's comments and feedbacks.

5.5 Documents to be provided to reviewers

- Project document, SDC Credit Proposal, Progress reports & annual plans of operation of SHARIQUE
- Various guidelines and manuals as developed by SHARIQUE
- Various publications of SHARIQUE
- SDC CS (2008-2012), Local Governance Strategy Note, SDC Gender Policy and other strategic documents
- Documents related to the LGSP programme and the GoB (e. g Five year plan, CaPDev Framework)

5.6 Reporting and Logistics

- The team of consultants reports to, and is guided by the Senior Programme Officer of SDC responsible for the SHARIQUE local governance programme.
- SDC with support from SHARIQUE will develop the overall programme and stakeholder visits.
- SHARIQUE (National Coordination Unit) in collaboration with SDC will develop a programme for the field visits.
- SHARIQUE (National Coordination Unit) will prepare the basic documentation for the consultants.
- SHARIQUE (National Coordination Unit) will facilitate contacts, internal transport and accommodation in the regions.

6 Budget

The review team will be contracted by SDC and the consultants' fees will be defined as per SDC norms and criteria.