
EOP/SHREE - CAPITALISATION - AUGUST 2016

Consultant Report



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Cover Photo: The four “star” beneficiaries – taken by Eamonn Taylor

List of Abbreviations

BHH	Beneficiary Household
CFG	Contributory Group Fund
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CMS	Change Monitoring System
CPK	Community Pusti Karmi
DFID	Department for International Development of the British Government
EEP	Economic Empowerment of the Poorest
HKI	Helen Keller International
SCI	Save the Children International
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SHG	Self Help Group
SHIREE	Stimulating Household Improvements Resulting in Economic Empowerment
VSLA	Village Savings & Loan Associations

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This final version of the report incorporates comments received from SDC on 31 October 2016.

Executive summary

The Economic Empowerment of the Poorest, EEP/Shiree¹, which will terminate in September 2016, was a large, (£84 million) programme that over 8 years succeeded in lifting over 1 million extremely poor people in Bangladesh out of poverty - mainly, but not only, through economic means. Although primarily funded by DFID of the British Government under a bilateral agreement with the Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Rural Development, Cooperatives and Local Governance, EEP/Shiree received co-financing from SDC in its last phase.

This “truncated capitalisation” of the experiences of EEP/Shiree and the lessons that can be learned for the future SDC country programme strategy was conducted in August – September 2016. Key findings are as follows.

- The Challenge Fund model used by EEP/Shiree was generally appreciated by those engaged in programme/project implementation. It allowed for flexibility, a wide variety of approaches and partners, and diverse geographical coverage under one programme. However, the high transaction costs mean that such a model is most appropriate for programmes with a substantial volume of funds.
- EEP/Shiree had a results-based framework and a detailed change monitoring system that measured household “graduation” out of poverty. It generated a large body of data and research on the characteristics of extreme poor households and changes over the period of programme interventions. It is unfortunate that all this ends with the programme; possibilities to continue the annual monitoring of sample households to understand the longer term changes in “graduated” households (under CMS 3) would be worth investigating.
- The most common form of economic empowerment through EEP/Shiree was asset transfer combined with capacity building/training – focusing on individuals and households. In this respect, access to government *khas* land was identified as one of the most effective means of poverty reduction – though difficult to achieve. Collective action (especially through savings groups, but also group action for better wages) was identified as important, but only received significant programme attention in the latter years of operation.
- In addressing extreme poverty EEP/Shiree sought to promote innovation, as well as scaling up proven practices. Perhaps the most innovative aspect of the programme was the very fact that it focused on the needs of extremely poor and marginalised people. Being truly innovative was possibly constrained by the strict results-based reporting requirements.
- Women’s empowerment was confirmed as an essential feature of addressing extreme poverty. Women’s economic empowerment was important in itself, but brought also benefits of greater self-confidence, respect and eventual voice in the community. Health and nutrition serve as a useful, socially acceptable entry point in working with women; through EEP/Shiree a cohort of active local women community health workers (CPKs) has been established. Although currently badly underpaid, they have potential to become significant

¹ The acronym SHIREE stands for Stimulating Household Improvements Resulting in Economic Empowerment. The word Shiree means “steps” in Bangla, and this is how the project was generally known.

change agents if better remunerated and coached in leadership skills. Successful EEP/Shiree beneficiaries could also act as role models inspiring others. As in any women's empowerment initiative, the support of men needs to be sought in a pro-active manner.

- Individuals and groups who are socially marginalised due to their ethnicity (Adivasis), caste (Hindus), age (elderly) or disability can be supported through economic means, but often community engagement in their support is required, including better access to social safety nets.
- The psychological burden of extreme poverty is probably under-rated. The very fact of being visited regularly and treated with dignity is likely to have contributed to beneficiary households' graduation from poverty. Future interventions should factor in the importance of personal interactions and psychological counselling.
- Although EEP/Shiree was anchored within the government in the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division, it nevertheless required sound institutional linkages with many other ministries and departments, including those responsible for land, livestock, fisheries, health, nutrition, women and children, and local governance, to name some of the most important. Field implementation was sometimes hindered by a lack of programme "ownership" by government officials belonging to these different ministries and department. How to overcome such difficulties would be worth discussing with the Government of Bangladesh when planning any future interventions.
- It is widely considered that the work of EEP/Shiree resulted in the Government of Bangladesh recognising in its 7th Five Year Plan that people living in extreme poverty are a separate category of citizens requiring specific support. This is an achievement that makes an excellent topic for future coordinated donor action.

1. Introduction

EEP (Economic Empowerment of the Poorest)/Shiree is a large, mainly DFID funded programme, implemented under the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division (RDCCD) of the Government of Bangladesh. It used a Challenge Fund model, managed by the DFID-contracted management agent Ecorys. Spanning the period 2008 – 2016, the main (revised) programme goal was to lift 1 million people out of extreme poverty. Designed in 2006, the programme represents a large-scale attempt to work with individuals and groups who are the most marginalised and particularly difficult to reach, well ahead of the international focus placed on this challenge under the SDGs.

The total financial envelope of EEP/Shiree was £84 million. Of this, £4 million was contributed by SDC, which began co-financing the programme from late 2012. SDC's expectation in making this contribution was not only to provide a direct support to people living in extreme poverty, but also to learn and share in the process, and to uphold the principle of donor coordination as set out in the Paris Declaration (2005).

This report responds to a Terms of Reference given in Annex 1, in which the key objectives are stated as being to capitalise

- in-depth learnings from the Challenge Fund model in Bangladesh
- programme knowledge on addressing extreme poverty.

A “capitalisation” exercise is a particularly Swiss concept – or at least, not one widely recognised in English-speaking circles. It is best explained in terms of making the most out of – that is, capitalising on - experiences gained. It is not the same as an evaluation; the idea is to provide an opportunity to representatives of key stakeholder groups to reflect and share their experiences and opinions. From this, key lessons should emerge – or at very least, key topics on which there are divergent opinions. A capitalisation should not simply represent the views of the report writer (albeit inevitably coloured by them).

This report does not represent a true capitalisation, given the circumstances in which it was undertaken. The total mandate time was 16 days, which included the period 23 – 31 August spent in Bangladesh. The exercise was informed by interactions (by Skype) with members of the DFID review team, who as independent experts conducted a formal and comprehensive project completion review over late July – August. As was the case for this team, field visits were unfortunately precluded due to the security situation. Thus with the exception of four remarkably successful programme beneficiaries², the views of the most important stakeholders – those who were or remain living in extreme poverty – could only be sourced indirectly. Nevertheless, the EEP/Shiree team managed to organise meetings with a range of programme stakeholders, largely held in the programme's office in Baridhara, Dhaka - but also more informally. The findings from sessions (using cards) are given in Annex 2, along with any personal statements about EEP/Shiree that respondents wished to make, and which could not be included in the main body of the report. A full list of those consulted is given in Annex 3. Important omissions from the stakeholder consultation process were representatives of DFID; of the two British universities integrally involved in EEP/Shiree, Bath and Cambridge; and of the Bangladesh government at district and UP level.

² EEP/Shiree uses the term “beneficiary” and “beneficiary household”, BHH – which is accurate in that the extreme poor individuals/households participating in the programme benefitted from a one-way transfer of assets and other support. Whilst the term “beneficiary” is not one preferred by the author as it implies a one-way relationship rather than a rights-based collaboration, it is retained in this report for clarity.

Regrettably meetings with such persons could not be organised ((although the DFID review team met with all except the latter).

A de-briefing meeting was held at SDC on 30 September, and observations made during it are included. In terms of stakeholder reflections, the parts of this report that come closest to being a capitalisation are sections 3.2, 3.3, 5 and 6.

2. Background on EEP/Shiree

“On its own terms, the programme was a huge success, lifting considerably more people out of extreme poverty than originally targeted.” Juliette Seibold, Team Leader, DFID Review Team

“The EEP/Shiree programme was new in terms of focusing on the beneficiaries and not on the intervention.” Md Asadul Islam, Joint Secretary (Rtd) and former EEP/Shiree Programme Director.

This section highlights a number of important characteristics of EEP/Shiree; there is no shortage of more detailed information on the programme’s website, <http://www.shiree.org/>. The most important point to note, however, is that according to its performance ratings, the programme has been a huge success. At least in the latter period of its operation, it was consistently given A+, even A++ ratings by DFID assessors. This overall perception was upheld by the DFID review team, albeit with certain reservations about programme design and its practical interpretation.

Fund management agency: EEP/Shiree funds were managed by a British agency which established an office in Dhaka, and ran a staff of (at full operations) over 50 persons. This agency was originally Harewelle, which was bought up by Ecorys during the programme implementation. Formally, Ecorys worked in consortium with PTMC-Bangladesh, the University of Bath, the British Council, and Unnayan Shammany. As might be expected, there were various staff changes over the implementation period, with only one member of the senior management team of four, Anwar Chowdhry, being present from start to finish.

Two funding systems - innovation and scaling up: Challenge Funds are expected to promote innovation (see section 3). In the case of EEP/Shiree, this was made even more explicit by having a separate fund, totalling £10.4 million, for innovative ways of tackling extreme poverty – the most promising of which were then selected for scaling up (although not all scaling up interventions first went through the innovation fund; some were anyway known approaches). Some partners successfully bid for both innovation and scaling up; others implemented one or the other. In total, 45 different projects were supported through EEP/Shiree. The scaling up fund totalled £ 55.6 million.

Implementing partners: Over the entire course of the programme, a variety of partners implemented activities through EEP/Shiree – both international and national NGOs. Not all were met. The INGOs who participated in this capitalisation exercise were CARE, NETZ, Concern Worldwide, Helen Keller International, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Oxfam, Practical Action, and Save the Children International. The national NGOs were DSK, Green Hills, MJSKS, Caritas, PRIP Trust, Shushilan and Uttaran.

Geographical coverage: Since extremely poor people are concentrated in a variety of locations in Bangladesh, many of them remote, the programme had a wide geographical spread – including the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the haors (seasonally flooded areas in the North East of the country), the Southern coastal belt, and the slums of Dhaka.

Clear targeting of beneficiaries: EEP/Shiree really did aim to reach the poorest and most disadvantaged individuals and groups – over the years, amassing increasing information about their

characteristics and needs. Targeting was achieved through local community identification (ensuring local “ownership”) combined with stringent base criteria; one that was considered particularly effective in ruling out all but the very poorest was non-membership of any micro-credit programme³. The small average size of Shiree BHHs (some 3.6 persons⁴), though not a selection criterion, reflects the significant number of women-headed households and lone disabled or elderly people⁵.

Research and Learning: Considerable resources were dedicated to monitoring and learning through a whole suite of monitoring tools known as the Change Management System, CMS. They were developed iteratively, over programme evolution, and were as follows:

CMS 1: Household Profile – providing a baseline to monitor change over time.

CMS 2: Monthly Real Time Snapshot – this used an innovative smart-phone based management information tool (developed with a technology partner, mPower) to monitor self-reported progress by all beneficiary households (BHH) on a monthly basis. At the same time, it allowed implementing partners to track the frequency of field staff visits to the BHHs. Overall, the effectiveness and cost-benefit of CMS 2 appears to have been mixed, for a variety of reasons; this is reviewed in detail by Roche, 2015.

CMS 3: Socio-Economic and Anthropometric Surveys – providing annual in-depth information on socio-economic and nutritional aspects of BHH on a sample basis.

CMS 4: Participatory Review and Project Analysis – bringing together innovation fund beneficiary groups and implementing NGOs to review and discuss changes.

CMS 5: Tracking Studies: Providing life stories of beneficiaries to give insights into the dynamics of their experiences of extreme poverty and the impact of project interventions.

Additional monitoring systems were developed for livestock health, nutrition, and monitoring graduation (in order to verify which households needed more support).

Research partners: The university of Bath, with support from the university of Cambridge (on nutritional aspects), played an extensive role in EEP/Shiree research and the documentation of results. They worked in collaboration with Ecorys, PMTC-Bangladesh and Unnayan Shamannay.

Advocacy: EEP/Shiree was expected to produce hard evidence on tackling extreme poverty that could and would be used to inform government policy at local and national level. This is discussed briefly in section 6.

Nutrition: This specific programme component (totalling £ 5.27 million) was integrated into EEP/Shiree from 2012 onwards, in response to a DFID-wide focus on the topic. Whilst including an element of innovation, it chiefly worked on direct nutrition support. Nutrition aspects are also discussed in section 5.6.

EEP/Shiree was not the only DFID-supported programme tackling poverty in Bangladesh, but one of four – all of which are drawing to a close, or have already terminated. The others are the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP 2); Challenging the Frontiers of Urban Poverty (CFPR) in strategic

³ There is some debate on this, as there is evidence that some of the very poorest households are drop outs from micro-credit schemes (Brocklesby, pers. comm).

⁴ Mean household size actually fluctuated somewhat over the programme period, and male-headed households were on average 1.4 family members larger than female-headed households (Mascie-Taylor and Goto, 2015).

⁵ Even so, the number of disabled beneficiaries was less than would be expected on a proportional basis of the population overall (Brocklesby, pers. comm).

partnership with BRAC; and Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR). It is understood that DFID plans to bring together the lessons learned from these large projects into something even larger, but the time taken to bring this about is likely to be substantial. In the meantime, EPP/Shiree will close at the end of September 2016.

3. The Challenge Fund model in Bangladesh

3.1. Characteristics of Challenge Funds

This section draws heavily on two papers reviewing the experience of challenge funds; one published by ODI (Pompa, 2013), and one by Triple Line Consulting and the University of Bath (O’Riordon et al, 2013 – in which the EEP Review Team Leader, Juliette Seibold is a co-author). Both provide far more detail than briefly outlined here.

According to ODI, a definition of challenge funds that is shared by DFID, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is ‘a competitive mechanism to allocate financial support to innovative projects, to improve market outcomes with social returns that are higher/more assured than private benefits, but with the potential for commercial viability’. Triple Line and the University of Bath define a challenge fund as “a grant or a subsidy with an explicit public purpose, between independent agencies with grant recipients, selected competitively on the basis of advertised rules and processes, who retain significant discretion over the formulation and execution of their proposals and, who share risks with the grant provider”.

Whatever the exact definition, the thinking behind the model is clearly market-driven, with the rationale that competition should give rise to better performance, more innovative thinking, and better value for money. Apparently the first use of challenge funds by DFID dates back to the late 1990s; the model is now widely used by DFID across different countries and for different thematically oriented projects. Other donors regularly using challenge funds are Swedish SIDA, AusAid, and USAID. Whilst SDC has not embraced the model in the same way, it does have experience in managing competitive grants through a project modality – as practised, for example, in Nepal through the Sustainable Soils Management Project (1999 – 2014) and the Employment Fund (2007 – 2016).

Key differences between challenge funds and more conventional forms of project/programme tendering and implementation, as generally practiced by SDC, may be deduced to be as follows.

Challenge Fund	Conventional project tendering
A broad challenge and desired outcome is identified, without prescribing the means to achieve it. This allows for varied, locally appropriate proposals – both in terms of thematic focus and geographical coverage.	The goal and expected outcomes tend to be quite narrowly defined from the outset. One project proposal is selected through competitive tender. Thus there is less flexibility (although some can be written into project design). Thematic focus and geographical coverage tend to be more limited.
Implicit in the encouragement of varied	The project design clearly determines the

proposals is a desire for innovation, and with it a potential risk. The criteria for successful proposals can however be used to determine limits.	bounds of innovation and risk; in general both are designed to be relatively low.
The management of the competitive tenders is undertaken by an implementing agency, usually a large financial management firm. The donor only handles the tender for the implementing agency itself at the beginning of the project/programme.	The donor handles the single competitive tender for project/programme management.
Assessing a variety of different proposals takes time and money – especially if there are many applications. Depending on the number of successful proposals, there may be many contracts to manage. Transaction costs are thus potentially high.	Transaction costs are relatively low – although if the project/programme works through many local NGO partners, transaction costs do exist (and will have been factored into the tender).
The donor can take distance from all project/programme management decisions, and focus purely on strategic engagement (which may include field interactions as desired).	The donor generally retains considerable contact with the project/programme management, including field interactions.
Proposals are quite narrowly time bound; almost always this gives the possibility for several rounds of bidding, thus potentially increasing the chance of interesting/innovative proposals.	Generally the period of implementation is longer, in several phases, often with the same implementing partner. This gives stability, but less room for major changes in direction or focus.
Successful applicants (implementing partners) have an opportunity to exchange and learn, facilitated by their common challenge. This must nevertheless be supported and well managed by the implementing agency.	Opportunities for exchange and learning with other projects are less obvious, and must be sought pro-actively.

Although challenge funds can be used for small financial volumes, the argument in favour of them is clearly greater when significant sums of money are at stake, given the high transaction costs. Crucial aspects in this respect include

- Clear eligibility criteria for applications (allowing screening on grounds of financial management, as well as technical issues)
- Clear scoring mechanism for proposals, built on a practical understanding of field feasibility
- Rigorous financial oversight
- Efficient, effective monitoring and evaluation.

The EEP/Shiree Management Team (at least in its current composition) was widely praised by the implementing partner representatives for its professionalism in these aspects.

“Shiree program and financial management is one of the best that ever I handled during the last 25 years of my NGO service.” M. Mujibur Rahman, Adviser, Shushilan

When the Management Team members were asked to conduct a quick SWOT analysis of the Challenge Fund as applied to EEP/Shiree, they came up with the points shown below. It should be stressed that this was a very “quick and dirty” exercise, but it reflects many of the above observations. It also includes a number that are specific to the EEP/Shiree design.

SWOT Analysis of Challenge Fund mechanism as it pertains to EEP/Shiree

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of approaches • High quality results • Flexibility • Bottom Up • High accountability of partners (due to close monitoring) • Wide geographical coverage (allowing work in diverse spatial poverty pockets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High transaction costs (in total, 60 NGOs have participated over time) • Slow start-up (first round took 15 months) • Complex, so high requirement for strong coordination • Inappropriate for short term projects (of 3-5 years)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with a wide variety of actors builds consensus in understanding • Lessons learned have a good chance of being fed into new projects/interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining indicators, measuring results is not easy given the diversity of approaches • Ownership of the data & capacity to analyse it lies with the research institutions – risk to sustainable, long term use

All the EEP/Shiree team were convinced of the benefits of the challenge fund approach, as encapsulated in the following statements.

“The challenge fund management approach through a management agency is an effective method in Bangladesh” Manotosh Kumar Madhu, Programme Officer, EEP/Shiree

“How else could you run a programme of this size in different parts of the country, covering such varied situations?!” Eamoinn Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, EEP/Shiree

Nevertheless, the comment of the former Programme Director is significant, and is further discussed in section 6.1.

“The challenge fund meant that DFID recruited NGO implementers independently – no interface was made with the government. Initially this mechanism was a new thing for us, it doesn’t correspond with government procedure...” “It is good for trying small scale interventions but for scaling up you have to work with the government”. Md. Asadul Islam, Joint Secretary (Retired), former Programme Director, EEP/Shiree

3.2. Supporting innovation through the EPP/Shiree Challenge Fund

“EEP/Shiree was an innovation in itself, actually addressing the bottom 5% of the extreme poor”
Sutapa Paul, Senior Programme Manager, EEP/Shiree

A number of persons remarked that what was really innovative about EEP/Shiree was its original challenge: addressing the specific needs of extremely poor people. This should not be underestimated, as few – if any - projects have done this in such a systematic, carefully monitored manner.

There were four rounds of tenders for innovation proposals, focusing on different issues, as follows:

- Working in peripheral or marginalised regions
- Addressing seasonal hunger (monga) in the monga-prone North West
- Addressing particularly marginalised groups such as physically disabled, elderly and adivasis
- Aiming to achieve sustainable impacts in the lives of extremely poor people, with a focus on the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups.

It was difficult to gain a clear idea from stakeholders as to what had been developed through EEP/Shiree that was truly innovative in reducing poverty. Reports on the activities funded are available on the Shiree website, http://www.shiree.org/lesson-learning-reports-from-innovation-projects/#.V9VMp_keEic ; they contain many details and are thus a resource for other practitioners. On what innovation meant in reality, the following general observations may be made.

Definition of innovation

The original EEP/Shiree design called for ideas that would ‘change relationships and ways of working’, and indeed the first call for tenders apparently sought ‘*creative, innovative and therefore largely untested approaches*’. However, in the second call, ‘innovation’ was modified to being ‘*the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service) or a process*’ which is in line with the OECD definition. The DFID review team noted that this was a considerable dilution of original intentions. The innovations most commonly cited by stakeholders were the introduction of a new, early ripening variety of rice that can be sown and harvested before the monsoon floods; floating gardens; and a fish-based protein supplement for improved nutrition; all essentially fall into the modified definition.

Risk-taking

Innovations are inherently uncertain, and a number of stakeholders expressed concern about exposing very poor people to risk. Thus for example taking a variety of rice that had already been proved in one area and testing it with farmers in a new location was considered innovative, but also not too risky, given that the variety was a proven one. Risk to the beneficiaries was further minimised by providing them with all necessary inputs (advisory and material, including money to lease some land); their input was their labour. Nevertheless, had the crop been fully lost (which was apparently never the case), the beneficiaries would have lost all their invested labour. Assessing who bears what risk is clearly a crucial part of promoting innovation, and deserves greater attention in any similar future initiative. Willingness to accept risk on the part of an implementing organisation may be limited, due to concerns about reputational damage and thus future funding (Brockelsby, pers. comm). There are innovations under which the main risk is born by the promoter, not the user (one example would be a new App device for a mobile phone); these could be more interesting for extremely poor people but the incentives for all concerned have to be clear.

Legal restrictions

Ideas that are truly new can often be subject to patents or other legal restrictions. In the case of nutritional supplements, it was pointed out that any new dietary supplement has to be – quite rightly – approved by the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute. Gaining approval can take many years; before this is given, any trials operate in a legal vacuum.

Technical or social innovation?

Innovation seems to have been largely perceived in technical terms in early calls, whereas later calls – and particularly the last – provided more scope for social innovation. One interesting implementing partner met in this regard is PRIP, which was successful in the final call. PRIP's proposal was to support women migrants engaged in the construction sector to receive a recognised training in a relevant trade, and to organise themselves into a trade union. The training courses (run by GIZ) broke stereotypical roles in that the women became qualified tilers, plasterers, masons, etc. More importantly, the union was the very first for women in the construction sector in Bangladesh. It was therefore innovative in the OECD sense – and early results are very promising. The intervention combines women's empowerment in terms of skills, economic assets and voice; interestingly, equipping them with appropriate tools gives them a source of income when not working, as they can make money from hiring out their tools. A conversation held with PRIP Trust director Aroma Dutta is of interest in shedding light on how EEP/Shiree guidelines influenced innovation.

"The interview was like a PhD thesis examination! The people of Shiree - some of them – did not really understand the concept, and tried to intervene to insist that the women become business people. I still have the dream that one day the women will indeed own their own business, but together, not as individuals. The structure of the Shiree project is so rigid, and I wanted the women to get organised together, to be able to bargain for themselves. If you give them money for a second IGA [income generation activity], you distract them and they may disappear, at least during the lean season." Aroma Dutta, PRIP Trust

This comment is **not** quoted as criticism of the EEP/Shiree team members, who were clearly conscious of reporting guidelines that measure success in terms of the number of beneficiaries who graduate from extreme poverty – and who know from experience that a secondary source of income is important in such graduation, especially where the primary source is seasonal (as in the case with construction work). At the same time, one can see how this preoccupation constrains the vision of women supporting each other in collective action.

3.3. Supporting scaling up through the EPP/Shiree Challenge Fund

The four calls for proposals to scale up proven interventions in addressing extreme poverty focused on slightly different aspects, as follows

- Broad spectrum of activities addressing the challenges faced by extremely poor people in urban and rural areas (two phases, each of three years)
- Focus on the most challenging areas: the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the haors and the Southern coastal belt
- Scaling up innovations proven through the innovation fund
- "Scaling out" existing activities to include further numbers of beneficiary households.

Varied period of support

Clearly as a result of this stepped process, some beneficiary households had a much longer period of support than others. This inequality was remarked by a number of implementing partners and programme managers, who expressed concern that the “latecomers” had not received support for an adequate period. Indeed, the PRIP Trust intervention mentioned above falls into this category.

“The duration of such a project should not be less than 7 years, committed from the beginning, for each and every beneficiary” Delwar Hossain, Programme Manager, EEP/Shiree

Regional specificities

There was wide appreciation amongst stakeholders for the rich variation in activities supported through EEP/Shiree, recognising regional differences and the need for tailored interventions in tackling extreme poverty. Income-generating activities developed through the programme included livestock purchase for fattening or milk; the establishment of small shops or micro-enterprises; the purchase of rickshaw vans, rickshaws or boats and fishing equipment; small scale agricultural activities; access to government land; or other locally pertinent activities such as fish, crab or shrimp rearing. Asset transfer was combined with appropriate training and advisory inputs.

“Shiree is not simply a project for graduation of the extreme poor but rather a basket of poverty graduation models for Bangladesh” Rafiqul Islam Sarkar, SCI

“Region specific and demand led approaches are required to address a complex situation successfully.” Nazmul, Practical Action

Household approach

“Household micro-planning is a crucial tool – this can be illustrated by our work in the coastal area, where three distinct zones can be observed. The first is the natural resource zone, close to the Sundarbans, where livelihoods are based on natural resources. The second is the fish/shrimp cultivation zone, where the big bosses own the business and most men migrate to find work elsewhere as fish cultivation requires little labour input. The third is the agricultural zone, which is much like the rest of the mainland. Clearly different interventions are appropriate in each of these zones.” Rafiqul Islam Sarkar, SCI

The specificity of EEP/Shiree activities extended to household level, so that (at least in theory – and as far as possible to tell, also in practice) field workers discussed options with all household members before coming up with a plan that was suited to their different capacities and experiences. Discussing with **all** household members is a crucial point, as discussing only with the household head could potentially have unintended consequences for other members (especially for women in male-headed households). The variety in household plans is illustrated by the following accounts of the “star performing” beneficiaries.

“As a beneficiary of EEP/Shiree, I received some geese. On selling them, I bought a beef calf for fattening. I have already fattened and sold two, and have one more that I am keeping for sale; the price goes up around religious festivals. Meanwhile I am also active in paddy trade – I buy sacks of paddy immediately around the harvest, and sell them 4-6 months later when the price has risen. This is a good way to make profit. I also worked as a CPK for two years, but gave that up

since becoming a UP representative...” Jasmina, Kishoreganj

“I received Tk 7,500 with which I leased a 50 decimal plot of paddy land. On this I cultivated short ripening paddy (taking 3 months to harvest), in the season before the monsoon. I received support in the cultivation – in seeds, materials and advice – but the labour was my own and I took the lease myself. I sold the paddy at the end, whilst keeping some for us to eat; I used part of the money to buy a sewing machine. I got a training from the UP in sewing, so now I do tailoring to earn money during the off-season. In the second year I leased 75 decimals of land and cultivated paddy again – again it was successful. So now I am raising ducks and poultry, as well as doing tailoring and cultivating paddy. Furthermore, I got a job with Diamond Life Insurance as a representative – and I’m working in a BRAC kindergarten as a teacher for under 5s...” Kulsumata, Sunamganj

“As my husband is a fisherman, we received a net; with this he was able to catch fish on a regular basis, and to save money to buy a boat. Meanwhile, we bought a cow which has now produced two calves. We also bought a sewing machine, so I can run a tailoring business. Once upon a time we had no food, but now we can sometimes gift milk to other members of our community...” Shiuli Mondola, Kulna

“As my husband is a carpenter, we were supplied with Tk 7,900 worth of wood. I worked as a labourer on an earthworks; with the money I made, I bought ducks and chickens – then a goat, and eventually a calf for fattening. After fattening it, I sold it for Tk 90,000, and with this money I invested in a grocery shop. So now as a family we have both a grocery and a carpentry workshop....” Forida Begum, Gaibhanda

As these examples imply, it was common for household support to include a secondary income generation activity to complement the first. Diversification was generally considered important for ensuring a year-round income and withstanding shocks; thus it contributed to resilience – from an economic perspective.

Providing training and advisory input along with asset transfer is clearly important, although the relative importance of one or the other no doubt varies according to circumstances. This is illustrated by the following comments.

“Asset transfer en masse is a big risk – it can create a dependency syndrome. There is potential for social conflict and financial corruption. There should therefore be more support for capacity building and less for cash transfers.” Nararul, Practical Action

“In our working area, there is very little conflict and asset transfer is essential to help people graduate from poverty.” Sultana Oxfam

“Only training without means does not help Extreme Poor. One of the critical success factors of EEP is to address the felt needs and helping beneficiaries the way they think can lift themselves out of extreme poverty.” Najir Ahmed Khan, Chief Operating Officer-EEP

4. Graduation from Extreme Poverty

4.1. Definition of graduation

Although from the beginning, EEP/Shiree sought to lift extremely poor people out of poverty, the DFID external review notes that the concept of “graduation”, as such, was only introduced in 2012. There was no specific definition of graduation in the initial logframe.

The graduation concept was developed over time, based on field testing that began in 2010 with six Scale Fund Round One partners. Combining quantitative and qualitative aspects, it constituted an index of multidimensional indicators. These included food coping strategies; cash; income diversification; savings; productive assets; food consumption diversity; health and nutrition status of household head; gender empowerment; access to safe drinking water and sanitation; and access to cultivable land. A household was deemed “graduated” if it met a set number of characteristics, which differed according to rural and urban settings; see <http://www.shiree.org/extreme-poverty-monitor/graduation-monitoring/#.V9fjbPkeEic> for the summary graduation index.

The main graduation statistic used in EEP/Shiree reporting was derived from CMS 3 - the annual panel survey that used a statistically valid sample number of households (64 randomly selected households from each intervention) and was last conducted in early 2015.

4.2. Resilience

“The real economic world of the extreme poor resembles more a game of “snakes and ladders” whereby they periodically make efforts to climb up the income ladder and are periodically pushed back by various shocks originating in poor health, natural disasters, and personal insecurities”
Binayek Sen and Zulfiqar Ali (2015)

It is not enough for an individual or household to graduate out of poverty; they need to have the resilience to remain that way - and indeed further improve their lives. Although this fact was essentially recognised by both programme designers and implementers, it was not included in the results frame of overall programme monitoring. Furthermore, as noted by the DFID review team, assessing performance by graduation may have had the unintended consequence of distracting from resilience. It is possible that it encouraged implementers to focus on those most likely to graduate, rather than the more difficult cases.

When selected NGO partner representatives and programme managers were asked to identify the most important factors in promoting resilience, the following were the main strategies identified:

- Empowerment of women (5.1)
- Collective action – particularly through savings groups (5.3)
- Long term access to land (6.1)
- Assuring health through adequate nutrition, hygiene and sanitation (5.6)
- Access to government safety nets (6.1)
- Secondary income generation activities
- Vocational skills.

With the exception of the latter two (already noted), these are discussed in the different report sections indicated in brackets.

5. Important findings on addressing extreme poverty

This chapter considers important approaches in addressing extreme poverty that were highlighted through EEP/Shiree experiences. Many of them were already known and recognised at the time of programme planning. Nevertheless, implementation appears to have enhanced existing understandings on the part of stakeholders.

5.1. Gender; women's empowerment

Only 11% of rural households are women-headed, but 28% of the rural extreme poor and 25% of the urban extreme poor households are female-headed. Binayek Sen and Zulfiqar Ali (2015)

"Woman is the key driver of a family if given equal opportunity to exercise her opinion and her dignity valued." M. Mujibur Rahman, Adviser, Shushilan

"To address the injustice of extreme poverty and poverty, gender inequality needs to be addressed." Matin, CARE

"Most EEP beneficiaries are women. The programme has contributed economic empowerment of thousands of women. In my view, this is the door opener of other aspects of empowerment. It has created hope and aspiration among women. Because of their involvement in economic activities, their mobility, freedom, contribution in household decision making and engagement in social activities has been increased." Najir Ahmed Khan, Chief Operating Officer-EEP

The EEP/Shiree planning documents made clear the need to consider gender aspects carefully, and pay particular attention to female-headed households. However, whilst data collection was sex-disaggregated from the start, the programme's gender strategy was only elaborated in 2013. The DFID team reviewers commented critically on this, the fact that the post of gender adviser was dropped by earlier managers, and the general poor representation of women amongst senior decision-makers (including within DFID Bangladesh). During the capitalisation discussions, the importance of women's empowerment in the process of graduation from poverty was emphasised repeatedly, and a number of stakeholders commented that gender aspects could have been better integrated into programme activities.

"CARE supported a women-based group activity called EKATA – it became a platform for women to raise their voice on issues such as equal wages, discrimination, the government safety net programme, etc. However, Shiree did not support this platform, and as a result EKATA no longer operates in an effective or significant manner. Support for such platforms should be emphasised in future." Mahfuza, CARE

Two points that would seem obvious to gender specialists but may not have been sufficiently factored into planning are as follows.

- It is not possible to simply focus on working with women in male-headed households; the other family members also need to be involved. This takes time and effort. In terms of sheer time in consultation, it is generally quicker to work with women who head households,

although they may face other constraints due to the lack of a man in the house. These differences in women's situations need to be factored into field work.

- Different approaches are needed to working with women in different communities, with Adivasi women usually having the least restraints on their mobility, and women living in purdah the most.

"When accessing women in women-headed households, you only have to work directly with one person. But when trying to reach a woman in a male-headed household, you have to visit many times to talk with the man, the in-laws, etc. So it takes more time." Hosne Ara Begum, DHK

"Working with women in male-headed households requires specific targeting." Ekramul Hossain, Shushilan

"The inclusion of parents (in-laws) and male household members would work better to ensure nutritious food, and health check-ups of pregnant women and lactating women as well as their children. Also this can help remove social and family misconceptions, so that health can move forward in future programming." Mohammad Alomgir Husan, Programme Officer (Nutrition), EEP/Shiree

"In the Chittagong Hill tracts, one cannot say that the women headed households are the most vulnerable. Women are not so restricted in their mobility. Thus whether a household is male or female-headed is not so much of an issue; the real issue is political connections, and who has access to government funds as these are distributed very unevenly." Karna Joy, HKI

5.2. Social inclusion – reaching the most marginalised

The aggregate economic cost of disability is sizable, estimated to be 1.74% of GDP in Bangladesh...To eradicate extreme poverty, it is critical to focus on disability. Binayek Sen and Zulfikar Ali (2015)

Particularly in the latter years of implementation, EEP/Shiree pushed the boundaries of the target group to include those who are truly the most socially marginalised. In so doing, the programme supported projects working with women and men with significant physical disabilities, and forged partnerships (directly or indirectly) with specialist organisations such as Handicap International. This work "raised the profile" of disabled people, and highlighted important facts about them. It is shocking, for example, that according to Sen and Ali (opp. cit), women in Bangladesh are 37% more likely than men to have a disability. This is apparently because women and girls are far more likely than men and boys to be injured or mal-treated, resulting in permanent disability.

"Special/different approach may be given to old age/women-headed /disabled households for their graduation" Dr. Md. Nuruzzaman, Project Manager, MJSKS

"The old and disabled cannot manage assets. We have to think whether we are creating a favourable environment or a burden for them" Nazrul, Practical Action

Working with disabled individuals, and particularly with the elderly, demands carefully tailored approaches; often direct asset transfer is not appropriate. It was apparent that not all implementing partners felt that appropriate approaches had been developed. Most cited the importance of community involvement in supporting very marginalised individuals; some, such as Save the

Children International, have tried a form of tripartite agreement under which an active individual (if possible, a relative) receives livelihood support on behalf of an elderly person, and is expected to share the benefits with him or her. This can only really be sustainable if overseen by the community. Thus the arrangement is brokered through a mosque or school management committee – but is of course susceptible to changes in the composition of such committees and/or the motivation and integrity of the active individual.

“It is unsustainable to give cash to elderly people. Instead, you have to work through social linkages – using existing groups within the community.” Rafiqul Islam Sarkar, SCI

“[We need to] strengthen the community in taking care of the most vulnerable” Rafiqul Islam, Caritas

Marginality cannot be fully addressed through income/employment route and would demand social cohesion building measures Binayek Sen and Zulfiqar Ali (2015)

5.3. Close follow-up: the psychology of poverty

“The review of EEP/Shiree reinforced something that has been going over in my mind for a long time - the psychological impact of being socially marginalised. This should be taken much more seriously, and addressed directly.” Mary-Ann Brocklesby, member of DFID review team

“There have been comments about the number of field staff engaged through EEP/Shiree. This, I think, is one of the reasons behind our success – regular, personal follow-up. If you have been treated as worthless all your life, if you regard yourself as at the bottom of the heap, and then along comes someone you regard as a social superior, who shows a genuine interest in wanting to help you, who suggests ways of improving your circumstances, and who comes back regularly to support you – that is a huge motivational driver for self-belief that tomorrow can be better than today.” Eamonn Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, EEP/Shiree

Although the monthly CMS 2 suffered from a variety of technical difficulties, it was appreciated by implementing partners as an innovative form of monitoring. In addition to providing a wealth of detail on household circumstances, it highlighted an aspect that had perhaps not been fully appreciated: the benefit of regular personal contact with extremely poor people as a form of psychological support. This is made clear from the above quotes. It should not be surprising, given the growing use of psychosocial approaches in conflict and post-conflict situations, particularly in addressing sexual and gender based violence. Extreme poverty is, after all, a form of quiet violence (Hartmann and Boyce, 1983).

Under the CMS 3, it was found that whilst 60% of women reported feeling frightened about moving alone outside the village in survey 1, this had fallen to 12-14% in survey 8 onwards (Mascie-Taylor and Goto, 2015). This change is echoed in the comments of the four “star” beneficiaries, three out of four of whom cited psychological issues – greater respect and independence - rather than purely economic circumstances as the most significant change in their lives as a result of EEP/Shiree interventions. (Note that for a Hindu family, the gifting of milk to others has particular cultural significance).

“My social status has greatly increased; I am respected” Jasmina (Kishoreganj – now UP elected member)

"Once upon a time we had no food, but now we can sometimes gift milk to other members of our community." "Now I have a job and respect at community level" Shiuli Mondola (Kulna)

"I have mobility – here I have come to Dhaka on my own, leaving my husband behind. I just said 'Bye' to him" (laughter) Farida Begum (Gaibhanda)

5.4. Collective action

A very common observation on the part of implementing partners was the importance of promoting collective action in the fight against poverty, in addition to the individual and household focus. This was apparently given little attention in the early years of EPP/Shiree, but became more overtly recognised in the latter half of the programme – particularly through support for savings groups. Such groups were commonly cited by stakeholders as an important means of encouraging a sense of common purpose and collective spirit amongst beneficiaries – in addition to their obvious function of generating funds for investment. In "the land of micro-credit", this finding is of course nothing new.

Whilst savings groups were positively regarded by all those interviewed, their generally late establishment has given rise to concerns about how they will be managed after programme termination. It appears that there has been inadequate time for the groups to gain the necessary skills and experience to function without external support. A form of revolving fund initiated through a grant, the Contributory Group Fund or CGF (see comment below) was widely appreciated as a means to help struggling BHH to graduate, but has left questions over continuity that could have been anticipated from the outset. Many of the groups are reported to be insufficiently mature to manage funds without external support.

"If the project had started supporting savings groups from the beginning, they would be in a better position now to run themselves. Actually the savings groups are a very important mechanism for women's empowerment as there are 25 or more members in each, and it is a way for them to raise their voice at UP level. Only CARE started savings groups in the first phase, and it is generally observed and agreed that those groups are the most mature and sustainable. If it was possible to give further support to the savings groups to ensure their sustainability, this would be very beneficial." Shakhawat Hossain, JSKS – Practical Action

"The CGF is a very good approach, and should have been started earlier. It promotes group spirit as members contribute what they can to the TK 20,000 provided by Shiree, and then themselves identify the most in need and distribute the fund accordingly. The fact that the beneficiaries are required to pay no interest, but to return the full amount within 4-6 months is also good. Now the groups are managing their fund for further needy cases, but there is a question as to future sustainability." Joint group observation – 24 August afternoon

Collective action in terms of claiming rights and demanding change seems to have received relatively limited programme support – with some notable exceptions. These include the PRIP Trust initiative, previously mentioned, and work supported by CARE on women's rights (see comment below).

"The extreme poor were not organised earlier. But now at least some of them know where to go, what to do; they know they can raise their voice. For example in Rangpur under CARE the women are raising awareness about many bad practices such as child marriage and violence." Md Asadul

Islam, Joint Secretary (Rtd) and former EEP/Shiree Programme Director.

5.5. Power relations and community engagement

The EEP/Shiree theory of change was essentially based around creating opportunities for individuals and households to gain the human and economic capital to break out of poverty; it is rather silent on the local political realities that militate against them doing so. Rural patron-client relationships and histories of bonded labour or mafia webs within urban slums are not readily overcome. This was eluded to in the following comment, although made in a way that gave a positive slant to the situation.

“Local elites/champions made a good contribution to the project due to their high local acceptance. This helped a lot in the selection [of BHHs], mitigation of problems and tensions, the design of the local strategy, and community ownership” Shamim Ahamed, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

Where local elites did not champion EEP/Shiree projects, it would have course been difficult to operate. There was no time available to elaborate on such issues, but it is likely that in different areas, local elites reacted in different ways to EEP/Shiree projects, depending on the relations cultivated by the implementing partner, and the perceived threat (or otherwise) to vested interests.

5.6. Health and Nutrition

“Integrating nutrition & gender activities in the middle of the programme takes time for effective operation and cope-up by the livelihood staff. Therefore such integration should be from the beginning. The programme should ensure local contextual knowledge of food materials and develop materials considering the context and local language.” Mohammad Alomgir Husan, Programme Officer (Nutrition), EEP/Shiree

There was widespread recognition amongst implementing NGOs and EEP/Shiree staff of the need for improved health and nutrition to graduate from extreme poverty, and regret that these components were only incorporated into the programme from 2012 onwards. Nevertheless, as the DFID review team notes, the achievement of improved nutritional status for children under two and pregnant/breastfeeding mothers and adolescent girls was not as expected. It is likely that there are a range of reasons for this, and the data is still under analysis, but the importance of the issue remains. Reaching adolescent girls has life-long consequences not only for them but also for the next generation; indeed, there was a sense that nationally, far more needs to be done on improving nutrition – both in terms of awareness and access to nutritious food.

Adolescent girls often have an inadequate BMI [Body Mass Index] of 17 or below; they are a vulnerable group who should be covered by the nutritional programme. CPK Group discussion

No doubt in part because it came as an “add on” to existing activities, EEP/Shiree was unable to address health and nutrition in a holistic manner, particularly with respect to drinking water and

sanitation. As pointed out by the CPKs, raising awareness needs to be accompanied by appropriate infrastructure.

“Whether you teach people about safe drinking water or sanitation, at the end of the day if they don’t have a boiler to make water safe or a toilet they can use, there isn’t much point. Any project teaching about hygiene should include the provision of infrastructure.” CPK Group discussion

Only 6% of rural households reported open defecation, but 47% of them are likely to be extreme poor... Binayek Sen and Zulfiqar Ali (2015)

6. Important issues in programme implementation

6.1. Underestimation of the challenges of working with the government

“EEP/Shiree falls under the Division of Rural Development and Cooperatives, within the Ministry of Rural Development and Cooperatives and Local Government. But you must be aware that out of 42 divisions and ministries, at least 17 are involved with poor people. As PD, I managed to achieve MoUs with the departments of livestock and of fisheries – this was important, but I did not manage to achieve MoUs with all necessary departments.” Md Asadul Islam, Joint Secretary (Rtd) and former EEP/Shiree Programme Director.

“A key lesson is that you have to involve all the concerned ministries right from project inception through the writing of a MoU.” M. Mujibur Rahman, Adviser, Shushilan

“There needs to be an enhancement of inter-ministerial working relationships to provide efficient and timely support to the implementing organisations so that these organisations can accomplish the planned tasks in the scheduled time” Manotosh Kumar Madhu

It was a widespread stakeholder observation that in a country with as large and detailed a government structure as Bangladesh, it is impossible to achieve large scale change without working with the government. EEP/Shiree was of course positioned within the government, with a senior government officer as its head, but this alone did not mean that its interventions were embedded within government processes; far from it. Focusing on extremely poor people and their needs was an excellent, logical starting point, but the comments above indicate why it is easier to work on one facet of poverty, through the relevant government structure, rather than attempting to be holistic. Furthermore, “working with government” needs to be unpicked not only in terms of technical or thematic responsibilities, but also the level at which different decisions are made: local (Union Parishad); district; departmental; divisional, ministerial, or otherwise. Field workers naturally stressed the importance of good relations at UP level, while project managers were conscious of the need for good rapport and understanding at district level or higher.

“Local government departments need to be included from the beginning. Their opinion needs to be consulted in the design implementation strategy.” Enamul Haq, VARD

“We should try to avoid conflict at the local level between the UP and project staff. When an externally funded project deals with a government support programme, the local government people do not endorse their success – thinking that it is their mandate to do such work. When the project staff claim the success for themselves, a conflict can arise between them and the

government people.” Mahfuza, CARE

“Working with the UP is crucial – first we have to work with them” Sultana, Oxfam

“District Administration should be actively involved from the beginning for smooth operation/implementation of the project” Zahid Hassan, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

The fact that there was a programme MoU with the departments of livestock and of fisheries seems to have indeed had a positive influence on project activities in these domains. The three most challenging areas of working with government under EEP/Shiree were cited by implementing partners and programme staff as being the allocation of government (*khas*) land; access to safety nets; and health.

Allocation of *khas* land

Land reform is a sensitive topic in any country. At the same time, access to even a small plot of land was identified by stakeholders as one of the most successful ways of graduating out of poverty on a sustainable basis. In Bangladesh, the 1984 Land Reform Act allows for government land to be released to the landless. However, the process is fraught with complications – both bureaucratic and political.

...after the passing of more than 25 years, it is clear that successive governments do not have the courage or political will to pass further laws to enable that these proposed benefits can reach the very poorest, particularly the extreme poor. Khas lands mostly remain unregistered and are controlled by mastaans and lathiyals supported mostly by strong local political backing. Julian Francis, Independent member, EEP/Shiree National Steering Board

EEP/Shiree supported BHH in accessing two types of *khas* land: a 99 year lease, called a permanent lease; and short term for one year. In practical terms, no extremely poor, illiterate or semi-literate person can hope to get an application for *khas* land past the eight or nine step process through the UP, up to the Assistant Commissioner of Land at district level, and back down again. This has to be facilitated by others who know the process – and the EEP/Shiree implementing partners performed this role. All complained that it was time consuming and frustrating; the following are a selection of comments. Yet this is not a “lesson learned”; the difficulties surrounding the transfer of *khas* land are well known and well documented, as the comment of Julian Francis indicates.

“The government department dealing with khas land transfer needs to be sensitised from the beginning of the project. Transfer of khas land is the most time consuming and energy-draining activity for us. But it is also the most effective in terms of poverty eradication. It is a very sustainable support – the beneficiary who receives land has a much greater benefit than under any other intervention. Usually extreme poor people have no possibility whatsoever to interact with government officers, they cannot even pronounce their name. For us, dealing with government officers is also difficult, complex, and takes a lot of time – and if the relevant officer is transferred the whole process of raising awareness has to be started again with his successor.” Aleya Parvin, Uttaran

“The length of time generally taken to get khas land registered in the name of a beneficiary is about 1 year. But the time invested by us in that achievement is very difficult to calculate. It is a lot of effort.” Sandip Mitra, ERA - Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

“The project support for the transfer of khas land was inadequate in terms of the financial allocation, given that it is a long and time-consuming process” Arjuman Tuli, Asroy – Netz

Safety nets

The Government of Bangladesh provides an impressive array of social payments to those in need – no respondent was certain of exactly how many, but estimates fell within the order of 70 to 130. At the same time, it is widely recognised that there are far more persons eligible than those who receive benefits, and that some payments are captured by non-eligible parties. EEP/Shiree figures indicate that only some 20.8% of BHH are in receipt of any safety net payment (EEP/Shiree Second Baseline Report, August 2014).

Access to safety nets was identified by stakeholders as one of the most obvious ways of reaching elderly and disabled individuals. In its latter years, EEP/Shiree supported some partners in raising BHH awareness about safety nets and how to access them, but this is essentially part of supporting good governance at UP level. Access to safety nets for extremely poor people living in urban areas appears to be particularly problematic.

“Safety nets should be given priority for the URBAN extreme poor; the urban corporation has no provision for extreme poverty. Sutapa Paul, Senior Programme Officer, EEP/Shiree

Health

“Linkage with the existing health facilities of GoB was very effective to ensure that other health services including family planning, immunisation and primary health care. Linkage activities should be started from the beginning of the programme through building up formal partnerships between the programme and the respective GoB authority/department.” Mohammad Alomgir Husan, Programme Officer (Nutrition), EEP/Shiree

Although there was no MoU signed between EEP/Shiree and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and its related departments, in general the programme’s interaction with this sector seemed to work relatively well. Nevertheless, a good understanding of the institutional set-up, combined with good personal relations, was essential, as illustrated by the comment below.

“There are Community Clinics for every 6,000 people, at least in theory. Each Community Clinic has a Community Group (management body) made up of 13-17 members, which is basically comprised of local elites, UP representatives, etc. and three Community Support Groups - each of 13-17 members, representative from different groups in society. They are not always well oriented about basic nutrition and their responsibilities, which limits proper functioning of Community Clinics. So we have organised orientation and awareness raising events jointly with Upzila Health Department on basic nutrition and their responsibility. It’s also important to get to know and work with the Civil Surgeon at district level, to show that you support him. Thus for example when we held a district level coordination meeting, we produced banner titled “Strengthening Government Health and Nutrition Services” Chaired by: Civil Surgeon. Also we invite him to field level events as chief guest. This makes for ownership of the programme by Government.” Zahid Hasan, Project Leader, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

6.2. Field staff, not volunteers: CPKs

The health and nutrition component of EEP/Shiree functioned through community health volunteers, or Community Pusti Karmi, otherwise known as CPKs. There was widespread agreement that these women have been key in working with BHHs and in raising local awareness about nutrition and health more generally. “Volunteer” is incorrect terminology as they were paid workers – but as highlighted by the DFID review team, they were paid extremely poorly for the type of work that they did. This criticism seem to be widely agreed. Implementing partners explained that they felt uncomfortable, but could only follow programme guidelines. EEP/Shiree managers pointed to the fact that they had almost doubled CPK wages in the extension phase, in recognition of the nature of the CPK’s work. This near doubling brought the CPK monthly wage to TK 3,000 plus TK 700 for travel expenses. However, without family support, such a wage is barely enough to survive. A full time field job of this nature, including reporting responsibilities, would normally be paid TK 5,000 – 7,000. The DFID review team was of the opinion that CPK’s very low wages constituted a violation of DFID’s legal obligation to ensure gender parity. They also commented that it was surprising and regrettable that the implementing NGO partners had not challenged the approach (Seibold, pers. comm).

Interest in the particular circumstances of CPKs was stimulated by the DFID team observations, and a meeting with a group of such women was organised. This provided a variety of insights into their work (see full notes in annex); key points may be summarised as follows.

- Most CPKs are motivated to take on the work out of a personal interest to learn more about health and nutrition; and out of a desire to gain respect in the community. In general, the work of CPKs is well regarded both within the family (husbands, in-laws) and by others. Because they are, by intention, based in their own community, they have no problem in mobility.

“I now only earn TK 3,700/month but for me the main incentive is the learning that I have gained – now I know far more about nutrition and health. I also have a sewing machine so I do tailoring to supplement my income.” Jesmin Akter, CPK, Kushoreganj

“I like being respected in the community – people call me Nutrition Apa (elder sister)....Now as a CPK I earn TK 3,700, but the work I do is much more demanding – it’s a 9 to 5 job every day except Friday, and we have to complete a lot of monitoring forms. Normally such a job would be paid at least TK 5,000 – 7,000, I think.” Shanti Rani Das, CPK Sunamganj

“I am proud to do this work, and my husband approves of it too..... Going to the field is not always easy. Sometimes we have to take a bus, and pay for it ourselves – but then there’s the fact that there’s no safe drinking water, and no latrine. But we’ve none of us ever had any problems from men. We are of the same community – people know us and respect us for what we do.” Hayatunessa, CPK Sunamganj

- For women with political aspirations, becoming a CPK is perceived as a good step on the ladder to becoming an elected (reserved) UP member. In Sunamganj, four out of some 100 CPKs have been successful in this regard – which is considered significant.

Being a CPK is definitely a good way to get elected to the UP, if that’s what you want. It may not be a good way to remain popular, though, because then you have to decide who gets which safety net or not – and you can be sure that the ones who don’t get will hate you afterwards!
General observation of CPKs

- CPKs often do not stay very long in the job, mainly because of the low salary. This poses a problem in maintaining the quality of services. CPKs have often been asked to cover more BHHs than is really feasible.

“The drop-out rate of CPKs is very high as the salary is too low; out of 100, 12 left in the first year. In two years, maybe the drop-out rate goes up to 20% - if someone finds a better paid option, they leave immediately. This is a major difficulty in the field, as when one CPK leaves you cannot replace her straight away. Often the only solution is to divide the work between the other CPKs so they have to travel further, and to reduce the monitoring visits.” Nazia Zabeen, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Nutrition Officer – Sunamganj

“The ratio of CPKs to beneficiary households should be 1:50 in rural areas, 1:100 in urban areas, and 1:30 very remote areas such as the CHT to ensure regular household visits and nutrition, health and gender-based support.” Mohammad Alomgir Husan, Programme Officer (Nutrition), EEP/Shiree.

- To maintain motivation and performance, CPKs require regular supervision. Often their supervisors have also been over-stretched in what was expected of them.

“In future, the CPKs should be considered front line staff rather than volunteers. The supervision ratio of CPKs to the Health & Nutrition Coordinator should be 10:1 whereas now it is far more. The nutrition programme should ensure the inclusion of old persons along with others.” Mohammad Alomgir Husan, Programme Officer (Nutrition), EEP/Shiree.

- Providing the CPKs with just a little more equipment could have rendered their work a lot more effective. In particular, they mentioned the need for small portable scales.

“It is important to ensure anthropometry is conducted regularly by the CPKs – that is, that they have the equipment for measuring – so that the beneficiaries are convinced of the activity.” Mohammad Alomgir Husan, Programme Officer (Nutrition), EEP/Shiree.

“...adolescent girls are supposed to go to the community clinic for regular measurement. They often don’t – and the clinics often don’t have scales anyway. So we have linked with the government schools which have scales, but it would be so much easier if each CPK had her own scales. It would also be more motivating for the girls and their families to see how their weight is changing.” Nazia Zabeen, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Nutrition Officer – Sunamganj

6.3. Monitoring, research and learning

“Regarding monitoring, the partners were used to generate information. At the end, the partners could only get the result. The capacity of partners on managing CMS 1 – 6 is not really developed. After project closing, the partners are not in a position to maintain and operate the monitoring system developed by Shiree. Shiree/ECORYS as an organisation only developed its own capacity.” Shamim Ahamed, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

“Monitoring System should be user friendly and continuing from the beginning of the project” Md. Abdul Khalequal, Uttaram

The monitoring systems established through EEP/Shiree, and the body of research built upon them, are impressive. Indeed, research is still being elaborated, with two books and a major workshop to

present programme findings on 26 September 2016. The main comments from implementing partners were with regard to the sustainability of the monitoring and research. It seems that none of the monitoring will continue, thus losing the opportunity to track long term changes. There were also concerns that with research being largely driven by British universities, research capacity had not been built or embedded in national institutions. Apparently this was a concern that was brought up by the EEP/Shiree team, which suggested to DFID that research be embedded within BIDS (Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies). This suggestion was not taken forward (Taylor, pers. comm).

“The programme should engage both national and local academic institutes/universities for research and advocacy.” Mohammad Alomgir Husan, Programme Officer (Nutrition), EEP/Shiree.
“There needs to be effective linkages with different Bangladeshi research organisations/institutions in different parts of the country such as BLRI, BARI, BRRI” Md. Abu Bakar Siddique, Programme Officer, EEP/Shiree.

6.4. Local partnerships

“There should be less tiers in partnership, for example EEP/Shiree -> CARE -> five local partners” Sutapa Paul, Senior Programme Officer, EEP/Shiree
“There should be less tiers in partnership, not more” Manotosh Kumar Madhu, Programme Officer, EEP/Shiree

EEP/Shiree partnered with both international and national NGOs, some of which (not only the INGOs) then subcontracted locally based NGOs to undertake field activities. There was some questioning on the part of EEP/Shiree staff as to the cost effectiveness of this approach. In general, it was understood that implementing partners might have to partner with others – but in doing so, there should be a clear capacity building or other added value, not simply a transfer of funds.

6.5. Donor collaboration

“Donor consortium is required in the beginning of project, taking the experience of each donor’s expertise in different sectors.” Md. Abdul Khalequal, Uttaram

On the part of the implementing partners, the involvement of a second donor in EEP/Shiree – even if only near the end of the programme – was welcomed. It was specifically said that SDC’s experience of working on local governance was something that could enrich EEP/Shiree activities.

6.6. Systemic change

“The structural reasons for poverty are a big concern but to some extent were untouched by EEP/Shiree.” Zamal, NETZ

The literature on challenge funds suggests that they are not always effective in bringing about systemic exchange – unless this is very clearly factored into programme design. In the case of

EEP/Shiree, it was certainly intended that the programme achievements should be used in policy dialogue and reform, but the way that this should be achieved was not fully clear – neither was it established in the reporting structure. Implementing partners praised the opportunities for exchange and practical learning. Whilst such events were no doubt valuable as a forum for improved practice, they essentially served to “preach to the converted” rather than having an advocacy function.

“The organisation of a national poverty day was a really good initiative to establish the commitment of all parties to work together against poverty. It was really a market place to know the best practices to address poverty.” Shamim Ahamed, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

The Manifesto for the Extreme Poor was clearly a motivating document, of which the EEP/Shiree team is justifiably proud. The fact that the extreme poor have been recognised as a specific group with specific needs in the 7th Five Year Plan of the Government of Bangladesh (2016 – 2020) is considered a major programme achievement. Yet there was also a sense that this had not been enough. Unfortunately, words in a broad planning document are not the same as identified actions and budgetary allocations.

The DFID review team noted that the whole approach to advocacy on policy change was a weak part of EEP/Shiree design. At programme commencement, there was no baseline survey of current attitudes towards poverty, and no mapping of actors to whom policy messages should be channelled. Thus it is not possible to track any changes in a systematic manner. This noted, the programme set-up was not conducive to an advocacy role. The difficulties are summed up nicely in the following observation of Eamonn Taylor.

“It is difficult for a project or programme officially rooted within the government to advocate publically for change by government. Advocacy has to be planned and managed strategically, with specialist support on political economy analysis – also remembering that NGOs have a limited sphere of action. They are businesses; they cannot reasonably be expected to do anything that threatens their operations.” Eamonn Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, EEP/Shiree

7. Recommendations

With EEP/Shiree closing, and delays in the establishment of any follow-on programme, what lessons from its experiences might be integrated into SDC’s future country programme strategy and portfolio of interventions? Two seem particularly promising.

Build on learning about extreme poverty: continue the CMS 3 monitoring

Evidence of change is currently a government and donor priority in development cooperation. EEP/Shiree was designed as a result-based programme, and it duly delivered these results. An immense amount of effort was put into elaborating a comprehensive monitoring system, but with programme completion and no follow-on in immediate sight, all data collection will cease. It would be particularly valuable to continue CMS 3, which has monitored the changes in socio-economic and nutritional status of a statistically valid sample of extreme poor households on an annual basis from 2010 to 2016. Continuing the monitoring for several more years would potentially provide rich

insights into whether graduated households remain out of extreme poverty, whether they continue to improve or stabilise, and what aspects seem to be particularly important for resilience. Adding to this the CMS 5 which documents individual life histories would bring further richness.

The practical aspects of continuing CMS 3 and CMS 5 in the absence of the EEP/Shiree infrastructure would need investigation. No doubt there would be certain difficulties, but an attempt would seem well worthwhile.

Women's empowerment as central to addressing extreme poverty

The importance of women's empowerment in the fight against poverty is well known; whilst it was demonstrated through EEP/Shiree, this was a lesson already learned. At the same time, very basic needs amongst women and adolescent girls for adequate nutrition and knowledge were highlighted. Of particular interest in the context of local governance is how the agency of dynamic women living in areas of extreme poverty can be further supported. Research on women in leadership has shown that such leaders often emerge through initial experiences in women's networks, community oriented activities and groups (Domingo et al, 2015 and O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). It is significant in this regard that the post of CPK was clearly recognised by the CPKs themselves as a step on the ladder to political influence and election.

It would be interesting to place additional emphasis on women's empowerment in future, with a more strategic focus on how women can be supported in gaining a voice in society. Health and nutrition serve as one promising entry point in this regard, being a socially acceptable issue for women's engagement. Promoting women's empowerment could include working with

- CPKs as agents of change (remunerated appropriately, and supported in leadership skills, not only in health)
- Graduated women beneficiaries as role models (also supported in leadership skills)
- Field facilitators providing regular mentoring to women at the same time as overseeing practical interventions of asset transfer and training
- Women's groups and networks, drawing on the experiences of those that grew through EEP/Shiree, such as the women's construction workers' union
- Disabled women (given that they are apparently so more significant in numbers than men)
- Adolescent girls as future change agents.

Cultivating the support of men in these efforts – particularly male opinion leaders who can serve as champions – would be an essential part of such a focus.

To conclude, EEP/Shiree has demonstrated that socially marginalised women and men living in extreme poverty can radically improve their lives if given the chance to do so - through a combination of asset transfer, training and mentoring. The challenge lies in institutionalising this approach within government structures, as well as in ensuring coordinated donor support.

8. References

Numerous EEP/Shiree project were consulted in the course of this exercise, but only documents that are specifically quoted in this report are listed below.

Domingo, Pilar, Holmes, Rebecca, O'Neil, Tam, Jones, Nicola, Bird, Kate, Larson, Anna, Presler-Marshall Elizabeth and Valt, Craig (2015) Women's voice and leadership in decision-making: Assessing the evidence ODI Report April 2015 <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9627.pdf>

EEP/Shiree Manifesto for the Extreme Poor
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O'Riordan, A-M, Copestake, J, Seibold, J. and Smith, D. (2013) Challenge Funds in International Development Triple Line Consulting, University of Bath and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships
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Roche, Kate (2015) Change Monitoring System 2 (CMS 2) Performance and Cost-Effectiveness Review of EEP/Shiree's CMS 2 in Bangladesh Ecorys, UK.

Sen, Binayek and Ali, Zulfiqar (2015) Ending Extreme Poverty in Bangladesh During the Seventh Five Year Plan: Trends, Drivers and Policies. Background Paper for the preparation of the Seventh Five Year Plan, prepared for the General Economics Division (GED) Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh. January 2015.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference (ToR)

Engagement of SDC Consultant in EEP (Economic Empowerment of the Poorest / Shiree) CAPEX

1. Introduction of the EEP Programme

The EEP is a Challenge Fund programme in Bangladesh (Jan 2008 – Sept. 2016), co-funded by DFID and SDC and sponsored by the Rural Development and Co-operatives Division (RD CD) of government of Bangladesh. The programme is managed by a DFID contracted Management Agent – (Ecorys) with 45 innovative poverty reduction projects implemented across Bangladesh. The programme has the objective to lift 1 million people out of extreme poverty and support Bangladesh to attain the development goals. It is implemented as a Challenge Fund mechanism, which sub-contracts local and international NGOs on a competitive basis. The target groups of this programme are extreme poor households, national and international NGOs, Government of Bangladesh and national think tanks. SDC has started co-financing EEP from late 2012 until the end of Phase I by May 2016.

2. The Objectives

- I. To capitalize in-depth learnings from ‘Challenge Fund’ model in Bangladesh
- II. To capitalize programme knowledge on addressing ‘Extreme Poverty’

3. The Recipient

The primary recipient of the CAPEX work will be SDC. The findings may also be shared with DFID.

4. The Scope of Work

- I. Evaluation of the experience of ‘Challenge Fund’ for SDC. Does it work/not-work? What are the critical risks of this mechanism while implementing in Bangladesh?
- II. What kind of diversities in respect of innovative poverty reduction has been achieved under Challenge Fund mechanism? What would be the added value for SDC to work through Challenge Fund?
- III. What are the lessons learnt from ‘Challenge Fund Mechanism’ considering the ‘Innovation Fund’ and ‘Scale Fund’ projects of EEP. How SDC can use the experience in applying the instrument of a ‘Challenge Fund’ as an aid modality in the Local Governance domain in Bangladesh.
- IV. Analyze DFID’s methodology on graduation process of Extreme Poor and evaluate the sustainability of this graduation process. How the interventions have impacted on the re-orientation of Government support services (like Justice, Social Protection issues, resource allocation for extreme poor)
- V. Identify ‘challenges’ involved in graduation process from Extreme Poverty issues in respect of: (i) geographic area (location-basis); (ii) Partners (local NGO-basis), and, (iii) sector profiles (like WATSAN)

VI. Evaluate how the collective responsibility (like capacity building, organization of savings group) creation across the community has impacted (on rights, skills, governance) as support to vulnerable extreme poor households. How feasible is the EEP exit strategy on Extreme Poor issues.

VII. Gather event-based knowledge/learning and identify whether it has transformed government, donor and NGO policies and practices for tackling Extreme Poverty. How SDC can utilize the EEP's learning and advocacy platforms on Extreme Poverty through which governance and pro-poor market issues could be channeled.

VIII. Review of all study findings and reports (particularly from Monitoring and Evaluation)

5. Methodology

- The capitalization of learning will be conducted by an International Consultant - for two components, 'Challenge Fund' and 'Extreme Poverty' of Shiree. The task will follow according to SDC's requirements.
- Review key background documents of EEP/Shiree, prepared by SDC and the programme. The documents include: Entry Proposal of SDC (EP), Credit Proposal of SDC (CP), the inception report, all annual reports, previous annual reviews, relevant strategy and partnership documents
- Discussions with key informants including SDC, DFID, EEP/Shiree Programme Team, Ecorys, NGOs and the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division of Bangladesh Government.
- Field visits to collect feedback, case studies and to identify successes and challenges of the Challenge Fund mechanism and Extreme Poverty components.

6. Timeframe and Key Activities

The evaluation task will commence from August 2016 with an in-country mission for the period of around 10 days. The in-country mission days will include meetings/briefings with Donors, implementing partner and project stakeholders; data consolidation and validation, debriefing of findings.

Table: Activity plan and timeline⁶

'In-country' period in Bangladesh	
Travel to Bangladesh	1 day (22 Aug)
a) Briefing meeting at SDC b) Meeting with the Project Director and the Assistant PD of Shiree c) Meeting with the Shiree-Operations/Management team	0.5 day (23 Aug)
Meeting with the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division (RDGD),	0.5 day (as per their

⁶ Many of these schedules will be finalized upon discussion with the Shiree team. The consultant will be responsible to finalize those schedules in discussion with Shiree team

Ministry of LGRDC	convenience)
Individual discussions with selected regional sub-contractors of Shiree ⁷	3.5 days (24, 25, 28, 29 Aug)
Review of secondary information, consolidation of interview material, planning of workshop with Shiree stakeholders	2 days (26 & 27 Aug)
Feedback workshop in Dhaka with key stakeholders of Shiree	0.5 day (29 Aug)
Consolidation of findings, debriefing at SDC (incl. DFID and Shiree team)	1 day (30 Aug)
Return travel to Switzerland	1 day (31 Aug)
Switzerland	
Mission preparation – reading of draft DFID mission report, background documents	2.5 days
Draft report preparation and submission	2 days
Report finalization (incorporating feedback from SDC, DFID)	0.5 day
Total working days	16 days

The above plan is a layout of the mission. The Consultant is responsible to design the methodology and organize the mission events and to ensure the outcome.

7. Deliverables

The consultant will deliver according to the following time period:

- i) Draft report by **14 September, 2016**
- ii) Final report by **23 September, 2016**

SDC final feedback on report (if any) by 15th of October 2016

8. Management and Coordination

The task will be managed and funded by SDC under the 'Capitalization of Experience' from EEP/Shiree. SDC will equally share the plan, methods and findings to DFID. In association with DFID, SDC will coordinate with Ecorys/EEP team members to organize field visits, Ministerial and NGO meetings. The final report will be accepted after incorporating comments from SDC and DFID.

9. Logistics and Security

SDC will support for arranging logistics requirements including hotel bookings, organizing meetings and transport within Dhaka. Upon requirement, EEP will provide field logistics like transportation, organizing stakeholder meetings at the programme locations. The Consultant(s) will take appropriate security measures as part of their own duty of care during the mission.

10. Review Materials

- Entry Proposal (EP)-EEP of SDC
- Credit Proposal (CP)-EEP of SDC

⁷ The focus should be on in-depth discussions with selected staff of regional sub-contractors, including field-based staff and those responsible for data collection. The persons to be invited will depend upon the choice of topics – which is still to be finalized.

- EEP Technical Proposal with Updated Log-Frame
- All monitoring and evaluation documents of EEP incl. exit strategy
- DFID's End of Project Evaluation and Lessons Learnt report, August-2016
- EEP progress reports/annual reports
- CMS/Graduation reports of EEP
- Extreme poverty background paper as part of the 7th Five Year Plan of Bangladesh.
- Lesson Learning Reports on Innovation and Scale fund projects
- Manifesto for the Extreme Poor
- Other research and advocacy reports on Challenge Fund and Extreme Poverty components of EEP
- Visit www.shiree.org for more detail information/project activities and publications

Annex 2: Notes from stakeholder meetings

Meeting with 7 Scale Fund Project Leaders 24 August morning

Present: Helvetas, Uttaran, HKI, MJSK, Shushilan, DSK and CWW

Key lessons learned

Grouping into key themes by facilitator; each bullet point represents a card

Local Government linkages

- UP capacity-building
- Active involvement of local government (elected representatives) in the process
- Government-NGO linkages
- Involvement of local government, UZ from the beginning of the intervention
- Working together with government wings: admin, extension, social service, health...
- Linkages with different line departments ensures sustainability (MoU with the ministries of livestock, poultry, fisheries was a big help – conversely, the absence of such an MoU with the ministries of agriculture, health and land was a significant difficulty)
- Access to social protection

Khas land and water bodies

- Khas land and natural resource access
- Access to khas land by extreme poor (strategy, challenge and success)
- Access to khas channels for multi-purpose use by extreme poor

Research

- Learning from extreme poverty research initiative (EPRG)

Media

- Involvement of media for learning, sharing and accountability
- Benefit from Extreme Poverty Day observance

Local focus

- Engagement of LOCALS as staff, institutions/NGO, local government

Private sector

- Private sector involvement
- Market access

Tailored interventions at household level

- Intervention based on (tailored to) household, location and market (context is crucial!)
- Need-based household interventions led to graduation
- Micro-plan at household level (BHH) for family development
- IGA selection (needs to be) both short and long term for regular income
- Working with social & economic issues side by side

Finances

- Opening of bank accounts of BHH gives safety, dignity
- VSLA create opportunity for saving & reinvestment

- Extreme poor's capital financing formation process
- Access to micro-financing institutions
- VSLAs/SHGs strengthening

Monitoring

- Change monitoring system (CMS) 2: good to see changes

Collective action

- Raising voice platform
- Collective enterprise by EP
- BHH's Group strengthening

Capacity building

- Capacity building of primary orgs (BHHs)
- Capacity building: asset building – capacity increased
- Adequate time is needed for working with BHH to make their learning stronger

Health

- Community Pusti Karmi (CPK) an alternative to village doctor
- Nutrition & health access

Climate change, shocks

- (Taking into account in interventions) health shocks, DRR, climate change adaptation
- Adaptation to DRR and climate change issues

Women's empowerment

- Household approaches lead to women's empowerment – also in male-headed households through asset transfer to women
- Women's strong engagement in financial processes – fund generation, small businesses, enhanced mobility (leads to their empowerment)
- Women are economically empowered
- Women's empowerment

Other

- Working with a tri-fold approach: household – group – community (is a good approach)
- The most dependent BHHs (old, disabled) are difficult to graduate
- Livestock projects need 4-5 years (minimum)

How would you do things differently?

Human capital

- Gender approach should have been clearly identified from the beginning
- Health & nutrition (should have been considered from the start) to address BHHs basic needs
- Nutrition was considered as a different component but it should be part of livelihoods component
- Community livestock service providers involvement from the beginning with building their capacity

Natural/biological capital

- Need support to establish a khas land databank (making information transparent)

Economic capital

- VSLA (was) introduced during the closing stage. We would introduce from the beginning
- Financial institutions have to be mandated by the government to work with the EP from the beginning
- Engaging private/business sector to develop production based on household, village – they should be mandated by government to do so
- Involvement of private sector from the beginning – market development component (was) ignored
- Private sector was ignored and skill training of beneficiaries

Social/political capital

- Advocacy, activity (meetings, workshops) with district, UZ, UP representatives

Learning, sharing

- Annual sharing, regular sharing was missed
- Amplifying the voice of non-partner organisations on interventions was avoided
- Donor consortium to bring in different experiences (eg. SDC brought in experience of working with local government)

Management & broad design issues

- Low payment to front line, local volunteers (should have been higher)
- Sustainability concerns must be put up front
- M&E should be user friendly
- Monitoring capacity of partners: only (used for) data collection. Each partner should do own monitoring
- Shiree did not establish MoU with ministries at the beginning. If we assign, we should do so at the beginning.
- Not only the target (reaching) in minimum time: quality is also important
- Work in a holistic approach from the beginning of project – assets, land, health, nutrition, DRR, markets...
- There should have been made separate arrangement for the old and disabled BHH
- Asset transfer strategy was not preferred. Assets were transferred to last day of the project (so no follow-up possible).

Personal statements (other than those quoted in the main text)

The organisation of a national poverty day was a really good initiative to establish the commitment of all parties to work together against poverty. It was really a market place to know the best practices to address poverty. Shamim Ahamed, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

Regarding monitoring, the partners were used to generate information. At the end, the partners could only get the result. The capacity of partners on managing CMS 1 – 6 is not really developed. After project closing, the partners are not in a position to maintain and operate the monitoring system developed by Shiree. Shiree/ECORYS as an organisation only developed its own capacity. Shamim Ahamed, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

Local elites/champions made a good contribution to the project due to their high local acceptance. This helped a lot in the selection [of BHHs], mitigation of problems and tensions, the design of the local strategy, and community ownership... Shamim Ahamed, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

A key lesson is that you have to involve all the concerned ministries right from project inception through the writing of a MoU. Md. Mujibur Rahman, Adviser, Shushilan

Monitoring System should be user friendly and continuing from the beginning of the project Md. Abdul Khalequal, Uttaram

Access to a piece of khas land by BHHs can easily lead to their benefit in sustainable development. Md. Abdul Khalequal, Uttaram

Donor consortium is required in the beginning of project, taking the experience of each donor's expertise in different sectors. Md. Abdul Khalequal, Uttaram

Livestock related projects need more duration such as a minimum 4-5 years for implementation Dr. Md. Nuruzzaman, Project Manager, MJSKS

Special/different approach may be given to old age/women-headed /disabled households for their graduation Dr. Md. Nuruzzaman, Project Manager, MJSKS

District Administration should be actively involved from the beginning for smooth operation/implementation of the project Zahid Hassan, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

Meeting with 7 Scale Fund Field Staff 24 August afternoon

Present: Helvetas, GreenHill, HKI, MJSK, Shushilan, DSK and VARD

Key lessons learned

General

- Poverty reduction is possible!
- Extreme poor are sensitized to work! (To overcome a fatalistic attitude)
- The household assessment process, targeting interventions according to need, is a good approach

Skill development

- With minimum support (input and training), extreme poverty can be addressed
- Awareness raising on the proper management of their asset is needed
- Proper asset transfer and proper use are needed to overcome poverty

Livestock

- Household members are better experts in livestock treatment
- Artificial insemination (AIDBR) is a time-efficient way of addressing extreme poverty
- One calf per year is a good, profitable approach
- (Training in) feeding & treatment of livestock must be taken care of

Homestead gardening

- Homestead gardening and marketing improved among members

Nutrition

- Nutrition as well as health & hygiene needs to be addressed
- Nutrition support to the EP (is needed)

- Iron Folic Acid and micro-nutrient powder is needed
- Pregnant women, adolescent girls and children particularly need improved nutrition
- In child care and pregnancy, women are more careful about health issues
- The nutrition work helped to raise awareness on health issues

Women's empowerment

- Women's empowerment & rights
- Women's empowerment
- Women need to be empowered

Collective action

- CBOs including SHGs
- Group savings
- Formation of SHGs
- In many cases, women are empowered through CBOs and the apex formation of CBOs
- The Contributory Group Fund (CGF) during the no-cost extension was very important
- THE CGF helped to develop good relationships among members
- Weak beneficiaries got developed through the CGF
- CGF helped the up-gradation of some weak beneficiaries (non-graduated)
- VSLA helped poor to develop a savings attitude
- Opening a bank account (formal) and VSL (informal) are both helpful
- A savings mentality was developed among beneficiaries
- A savings mentality was developed and the EP became more organized

Khas land

- The khas land distribution mechanism is a very important one for graduation from poverty
- The EP can benefit greatly from khas land transfer

Linkages

- Linkages need to be established between line departments & stakeholders
- Linkages/networking with other service providers (govt/NGO/private) is important

How would you do things differently?

General design issues

- Prior/basic knowledge of DRR is needed
- Support for livestock package should be increased
- Market access should be facilitated by all (some did it – like Helvetas)
- Financial volume (support) needs to be equal for all
- Not all FF have a motorbike. If they did, they would be able to work more efficiently
- Floating schools for children in Haor areas (is a good approach)
- Infrastructure for hard to reach Haor areas (should be developed)

Graduation out of extreme poverty

- Project duration – graduation in the field – needs more time
- At least 5 years are needed for the process of graduation from poverty

Gender

- Gender mainstreaming/ gender justice for all needs more emphasis

- A system of day care should be installed for women beneficiaries

Beneficiary selection

- The selection criteria for beneficiaries (below 29 TK/capita) is not realistic; living expenditures have increased, and even very poor people have to earn more than 29 TK to survive)
- In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, those showing capacity & willingness should be given priority for IGAs
- The selection of very old beneficiaries should be avoided
- (Different) IGAs that are elderly and disabled-friendly are needed

Collective action

- Group approach is more effective than individual asset transfer

Nutrition

- Hygiene should be included in the nutrition intervention
- Increased support for nutrition (is needed)

Personal statements (other than those quoted in the main text)

Additional human resources are needed to implement activities in collaboration with government departments, such as khas land transfer Shajadul, MJSKS

For beneficiaries, in addition to IGA selection a business plan is required Enamul Haq, VARD

The project scope needs to be increased to allow greater outreach to extreme poor people Karna, HKI

The process-oriented cost per head needs to be increased in budget planning; 1,500 TK per beneficiary is not enough Aleya Parvin, Uttaran

Working with women in male-headed households requires specific targeting. Ekramul Hossain, Shushilan

When working in the Haor areas, longer project duration is needed Sandip Mitra, HSI – ERA

VSLA needs to be established from the beginning of the programme. Shajadul, MJSKS

Social service provision for the extreme poor requires advocacy with local government institutions. Enamul, VARD

Urban slums need a proper rehabilitation plan Hosne Ara Begum, DSK

Meeting with 7 Scale Fund Project Leaders 28 August morning

Present: CARE, Practical Action Bangladesh, Netz, Greenhill, Oxfam, SCI, Caritas

What are the best ways to promote resilience?

Women's empowerment

- Encouraging men can play a vital role in women's empowerment
- Great focus on women's empowerment
- Single headed female households

Geographical specificities

- Diverse geographical strategies should be used

Markets

- Linking the disadvantaged & excluded to markets sometimes works
- Without a market approach, livelihood interventions are incomplete

Nutrition & health

- Health support by government is needed for EPs as a top priority
- Health scheme for disabled persons should be followed up by community clinics
- Nutrition is the +++ component for sustainable graduation

Community action

- Community solidarity & their own organization led by themselves (the extreme poor and poor households) have successfully contributed to social inclusion

Government schemes

- Households should be aware of the time cycle of social schemes
- Information sharing with key stakeholders is important regarding proper coverage
- Access to public resources is far from expectations due to the lack of social and political pressure
- The government criteria and the amount in the social safety nets package should be revisited

M&E

- Digital M&E is cost effective and enhanced graduation
- The database is not properly maintained at UP level, so a proper digital database system may be developed

Since the selection of beneficiaries was done using a participatory community approach, the same system should be used in assessing who has graduated, or at least a participatory element should be included Rafiqul, Caritas

Lessons learned on promoting social inclusion

General

- Great focus is needed on social inclusion
- There was less scope (in the project) for children and adolescents
- Adolescents & youth should be included in social inclusion
- A stipend system for old people should be included in the project design
- We still need to dig out how to address old people
- Asset transfer is an inappropriate approach for the elderly

Other comments

- Graduation entails social dignity
- Increase the number of participants in each social scheme
- Not graduation but survival approach for old/disabled
- The project had poor scope to ensure basic services
- Increased technical knowledge of cropping [is needed]
- Creation of employment opportunities for the disadvantaged people [is needed]
- Safety net linkages are poor

Personal statements (other than those quoted in the main text)

Benefits to the extreme poor is the first priority, rather than the thousands of works of the project Sultana Nasrin, Oxfam

I want to do the same type of job my life long, in which I could see the vigorous economic exchange of the extreme poor Sultana Nasrin, Oxfam

"I want to identify good way of working for social inclusion group" Sultana Nasrin, Oxfam

Communicating with communities should be a MUST effort Matin, CARE

Multilevel engagement, ie. Directly working with the household, community and beyond community particularly with the UP is extremely important for sustainable poverty alleviation." Matin, CARE

"I want to see private sector resources effectively used for extreme poverty and poverty reduction in Bangladesh" Matin, CARE

EEP/Shiree engaged government, gathered a stock of knowledge tested over the period [of 8 years]. Now is the time to replicate [this knowledge] with the political will of the GoB. Zamal, NETZ

Very effective coordination government – NGO - donor – private sector is pre-requisite for such a mega development project to ensure value for money. Nazmul, Practical Action

The plan discussed and agreed under the Banyan tree by the people is far more important than the policy decisions taken in capital cities Nazmul, Practical Action

More comprehensive and integrated approaches is highly needed to make a vibrant impact Nazmul, Practical Action

Development initiatives should not be considered as charity to give the chance of survival, but as a commercial business approach for real growth and development Nazmul, Practical Action

We need additional activities to include the promotion of water sanitation and hygiene for extreme poor people. Anuwar Hossain, Green Hill

We need the same EEP project for extreme poor people for their chance of a livelihood. Anuwar Hossain, Green Hill

[We should] start to work with children of extreme poor households to break the transmission of intergenerational poverty Rafiqul, SCI

Community based social linkage could be a sustainable survival solution for old and disabled extreme poor Rafiqul, SCI

Economic solutions need to be combined with a social component to graduate the extreme poor Rafiqul, SCI

Without proper concentration on youth of extreme poor households it is difficult to ensure graduation Rafiqul Islam, Caritas

Intervention may take place as follows: IGA support through a grant (2 years); contribution to IGA support (2 years); follow-up (1 year). Rafiqul Islam, Caritas

Behavioural change strategies should be regionally specific Rafiqul Islam, Caritas

[We need to] strengthen the community in taking care of the most vulnerable Rafiqul Islam, Caritas

Shiree is an excellent platform for working with the extreme poor, this is a platform for knowledge sharing Rafiqul Islam, Caritas

Meeting with Shiree Beneficiaries, 28 August lunchtime

Jasmina, Kishoreganj (Concern)

"I studied to class 10 but did not pass my SLC. As a beneficiary of EEP/Shiree, I received some geese. On selling them, I bought a beef calf for fattening. I have already fattened and sold two, and have one more that I am keeping for sale; the price goes up around religious festivals. Meanwhile I am also active in paddy trade – I buy sacks of paddy immediately around the harvest, and sell them 4-6 months later when the price has risen. This is a good way to make profit. I also worked as a CPK for two years, but gave that up since becoming a UP representative. When I worked as a CPK, people appreciated my work and told me that I should stand for election. I talked with my husband and he inspired me to try – he said that it was time to test whether the people really me or not, So I stood, and I won."

Jasmina also made the comment that she spent only Tk 50,000 on the election, whereas her rival spent Tk 3 lakhs – a passing comment that provides some insight into how things work. Jasmina stood as an independent, explaining that this is cheaper – if you stand on a party ticket, you have to contribute to the party finances. It is not the party who helps you. Furthermore, it is far better to appear neutral than to adopt a party line before the elections, as that way you are more likely to attract votes from all sides.

Kulsumata, Sunamganj (Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation)

Kulsumata is 22. "I studied to class 8 and then got married at the age of 14. My married home was 10 km from her parent's home, and although I gave birth to a son, my life was difficult – my husband and parents-in-law were cruel and beat me. My husband then divorced me and married another woman, so I returned to my parent's home with my son. However, they couldn't afford to feed us, so I worked for a year as a maid in the house of a rich person. One day I met with some Helvetas staff, who talked with me about my situation and said that I would be eligible for the EEP/Shiree programme. After a while, my name was verified, and I received Tk 7,500 with which I leased a 50 decimal plot of paddy land. On this I cultivated short ripening paddy (taking 3 months to harvest), in the season before the monsoon. I received support in the cultivation – in seeds, materials and advice – but the labour was my own and I took the lease myself. I sold the paddy at the end, whilst keeping some for us to eat; I used part of the money to buy a sewing machine. I got a training from the UP in sewing, so now I do tailoring to earn money during the off-season. In the second year I leased 75 decimals of land and cultivated paddy again – again it was successful. So now I am raising ducks and poultry, as well as doing tailoring and cultivating paddy. Furthermore, I got a job with Diamond Life Insurance as a representative – and I'm working in a BRAC kindergarten as a teacher for under 5s. So life is far better now, and my son is doing well. He's now 5½ years old, and going to school. My husband and in-laws are asking me to go back to them, but I'm happy to have my independence."

Shiuli Mondola, Kulna (Uttaran)

"One day my husband went to find work as a labourer, but he was unsuccessful. He was coming back home when he met with some Uttaran people. They said that he might be eligible for a project – and this was later confirmed. As my husband is a fisherman, we received a net; with this he was able to catch fish on a regular basis, and to save money to buy a boat. Meanwhile, we bought a cow which has now produced two calves. We also bought a sewing machine, so I can run a tailoring business. Once upon a time we had no food, but now we can sometimes gift milk to other members of our community."

With the money that we have made, we have rebuilt our house. I am now a teacher at the local mandir (temple) primary school, for which I receive Tk 2,500 a month. I myself have studied to class 12; I had reached class 10 when I married, and my husband was happy for me to continue studying afterwards. Last year we received 50 decimal of khas land for paddy cultivation on a 99 year lease, and just from that single year's harvest we got Tk 40,000."

Forida Begum, Gaibhanda district (CARE)

"I have a husband and four daughters, but we have decided no more children now. One day I was on the road and met with some CARE people who told me about the programme, As my husband is a carpenter, we were supplied with Tk 7,900 worth of wood. I worked as a labourer on an earthworks; with the money I made, I bought ducks and chickens – then a goat, and eventually a calf for fattening. After fattening it, I sold it for Tk 90,000, and with this money I invested in a grocery shop. So now as a family we have both a grocery and a carpentry workshop. All our girls are in school – two already at college, with the eldest doing her honours degree. The little one is in class 3."

Meeting with 7 Scale Fund field staff 28 August afternoon

Present: CARE, Practical Action Bangladesh, Netz, Greenhill, Oxfam, SCI, Caritas

What are the best ways of promoting resilience?

Regional approach

- Area specific risk analysis & action
- Local development steps building on locally available resources & skills
- Utilisation of local resources

Policies

- Ear-marked planning

Asset base tailored to household

- Increase asset base at household level
- Increase sources of income
- Livelihood diversification
- Diversification of IGAs
- Let beneficiaries select their IGAs
- Household micro-plan to assess business of Eps
- More productive assets
- Identify their particular skills
- All round income generating activities

Savings (x5)

Financial inclusion (linkage with formal financial institutions)

Shelter & Housing

- The usual investment pattern of beneficiaries is 1. Food 2. Medical treatment 3. Shelter – so they use the income they generate to invest in better housing. Although this also depends on regional circumstances.

Participation of women

- Gender mainstreaming
- WEE
- Women's empowerment (x4)
- Create another women's platform

Better nutrition (x4)

- Awareness on health & nutrition

- Drinking water & sanitation
- Food security

More formal education (x2)

Collective action

- Group-based IGAs (x3)

Family approach

- involving all members of the household in different activities, so everyone works together

More training (x2)

- Training on DRR
- Better skills

Marketing

- Better marketing of produce
- Better marketing facilities
- Linkage with the market (x2)

Government linkage – public providers (x6)

- Increased focus of safety nets – to include more of the real poor
- The PD can play an important role in facilitation of such linkages

Technology

- Technology innovation
- Technical justice

Other comments

- Increased veterinary services
- More inclusion of disabled people
- Long term funding

Lessons learned on promoting social inclusion

Addressing the root causes

- Institutionalisation of EPs
- Comprehensive approach linking government - private sector - NGOs
- Securing access to resources
- Business group linkages
- Provision of basic services

Savings (x3)

Women's savings

- More women group registration by government
- Women-based group savings system

Increased income

Cash for Work

Training (x2)

Women's empowerment

- Increased women's mobility
- Women's federation
- Women's IGAs
- Dialogue with all actors on the gender issue for better understanding

For the disabled

- Capacity development
- Assistive devices

Lease of khas land x2

Linkages with the private sector x2

Linkages with the government

- Regular communication with the UP by a community representative
- Information dissemination about services
- Linkages with social safety nets

Specific approaches/actions to build social inclusion

- Using audio-visual tools to raise awareness
- Exchange visits (study tours)
- Community fair (mela)
- Organisation of community games

Personal statements (other than those quoted in the main text)

"Livestock related cross-visits [study tours] [are important] to see practically the good practices by beneficiaries" Sasuimong Marma, Caritas

"The project support for the transfer of khas land was inadequate in terms of the financial allocation, given that it is a long and time-consuming process" Arjuman Tuli, Asroy – Netz

"The success components could be shown to implementing NGOs for learning purposes. For example, CARE could organise cross visits (study tours) to Uttaran to see the khas land transfer component (a good case)." Mustafizur Rahman, SCI

"Hard-to-reach areas need to be covered more in order to really include socially excluded people in a project like Shiree." Mustafizur Rahman, SCI

Meeting with CPKs 29 August morning

Jasmina, Kishoreganj (Concern)

See interviews with "star" beneficiaries

Jesmin Akter, Kushoreganj (Concern)

I worked for 5 years in an earlier Dutch-funded project as an educator cum supervisor. The project mainly worked in establishing schools in very remote areas; my job was to select pupils for these schools, supervise the teaching staff, and attend the regular management meetings – for this I was paid Tk 18,000/month. When the job was coming to an end, my master trainer suggested that I get involved in a new project coming up that was working on nutrition [EEP/Shiree]. So that is what I did. I now only earn Tk 3,700/month but for me the main incentive is the learning that I have gained – now I know far more about nutrition and health. I also have a sewing machine so I do tailoring to supplement my income.

I'm 28, and not married – I live with my parents and my two brothers. My parents are happy to let me decide what I do. I've studied to graduation and am now doing a Masters. Maybe when the time comes I'll marry, time will tell.

Moni Akter, Sunamganj

I passed my SLC before marrying, and have one son. The three of us live separately from my in-laws, and my husband is very supportive of me being active in the community – he works for Grameen Shukti. Previously I worked for a European Union project as a Reproductive Health Promoter for 3 years; for this I received Tk 1,400 as well as travelling expenses. Now as a CPK I get Tk 3,700 but I have to take care of travel costs from that amount. My main motivation to become a CPK was to gain knowledge, but also to mobilise my community for a better life.

Afroza Khanam, Sunamganj

After passing my SLC I got married and started a family immediately – one boy and one girl, so that kept me occupied for a while. I did however start working as a primary school teacher after having my first child, and kept this job for 3 years. It was only paid Tk 1,500/month. Then I switched to working on nutrition for VARD; as a staff member, I was paid Tk 1,400/month for 3 years. Now as a CPK I'm earning Tk 3,700 – and of course I am interested in the money. But I also find the work interesting. I'm proud of working with extremely poor people who have very little idea about health and nutrition. There may be many government educational programmes on the radio and TV, but there are some people who don't watch TV or listen to the radio – and even if they did, it's not the same as being told about such things face to face. For example, it's important to tell people about washing their hands every time after they've relieved themselves. Then at childbirth, we should keep the protective film on the baby rather than washing it straight off, and the mother shouldn't express and throw away the colostrum, but should feed it to the baby. There's a belief that it's bad, whereas of course it's important for giving the baby antibodies.

Shipra Rani Das, Sunamganj

I like my job – particularly counselling adolescent girls in my community about hygienic behaviour. I passed class 9, and then worked as a BRAC kindergarten teacher for which I was paid Tk 1,800/month for 2 hours a day, 6 days a week. The work of a CPK takes a lot more time, but it is interesting and it is important to have such knowledge about health, nutrition and hygiene for later in life. For the time being I'm not married; I'm 21, and I live with my parents.

(Jasmina added that those women who do this work before getting married benefit the most as they then avoid making the mistakes that we made at the time, when we didn't have a better idea.)

Hayatunessa, Sunamganj

I am proud to do this work, and my husband approves of it too. He has a small business. We don't yet have children. I have studied to class 9. Before becoming a CPK, I worked for another project on child health and nutrition, then as a primary school teacher for a year, and then as a BRAC primary school teacher for a year. Over the time that I've worked, what I've earned has increased – but so has the amount of work. Back when I was employed as a child health/nutrition counsellor in 2007, I was paid Tk 1,500; then Tk 2,500 by BRAC. Now I earn Tk 3,700 as a CPK.

Going to the field is not always easy. Sometimes we have to take a bus, and pay for it ourselves – but then there's the fact that there's no safe drinking water, and no latrine. But we've none of us ever had any problems from men. We are of the same community – people know us and respect us for what we do.

Suprava Rani Das, Sunamganj

I also studied up to class 9, and I also always wanted to work in the community. My total work experience is now 11 years. I started working as a government volunteer, paid just Tk 1,400, and then I became a CPK. Now I'm an elected UP member. My husband is very supportive of my community activities; so are my in-laws. We all live together in an extended family of 26 members, including my 4 children. My eldest, a girl, is now studying at undergraduate level; the boys are still in school. Definitely being a CPK was helpful in me getting elected to the UP.

Shanti Rani Das, Sunamganj

I like being respected in the community – people call me Nutrition Apa (elder sister). In particular, I counsel the mothers-in-law that they should feed their daughter-in-laws well during pregnancy. They think that if the daughter-in-law eats too much, the baby will be big, the birth difficult and maybe even surgery needed for the labour. But I tell them that it's important the daughter-in-law has nutritious food for a healthy baby. I've been working since 1997, particularly with BRAC and then the NNP (National Nutrition Programme). Right at the very beginning, I was paid Tk 900, but then that was quite a lot of money; with BRAC I got Tk 2,400. Now as a CPK I earn Tk 3,700, but the work I do is much more demanding – it's a 9 to 5 job every day except Friday, and we have to complete a lot of monitoring forms. Normally such a job would be paid at least Tk 5,000 – 7,000, I think.

One of the hamlets that I have to visit is surrounded by water in the monsoon, so I have to get there by boat. Once I had to wait most of the day for a boat, and then when I got there, it started raining heavily and there was no boat to get back. I had to call my family and get them to arrange to collect me – I had to wait until 8 o'clock in the evening, when it was pitch dark, before they could get to me.

Nazia Zabeen, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Nutrition Officer - Sunamganj

In determining the salary of village workers, there are two aspects to consider: the qualifications of the individual, and the type and nature of the work. To earn over Tk 5,000 you generally need to have at least SLC pass – but in very rural areas you have to look at availability; often it's very difficult to find a local woman with such a high level of education. The overall literacy rate is only 34%, and of course that's far more men than women. So often we look at the candidate's experience, and don't insist on an SLC pass if she's got relevant experience.

The drop-out rate of CPKs is very high as the salary is too low; out of 100, 12 left in the first year. In two years, maybe the drop-out rate goes up to 20% - if someone finds a better paid option, they leave immediately. This is a major difficulty in the field, as when one CPK leaves you cannot replace her straight away. Often the only solution is to divide the work between the other CPKs so they have to travel further, and to reduce the monitoring visits. In most cases the work area is within walking distance, but in the monsoon the CPKs have to travel by boat and pay themselves.

General discussion

Being a CPK is definitely a good way to get elected to the UP, if that's what you want. It may not be a good way to remain popular, though, because then you have to decide who gets which safety net or not – and you can be sure that the ones who don't get will hate you afterwards!

Whether you teach people about safe drinking water or sanitation, at the end of the day if they don't have a boiler to make water safe or a toilet they can use, there isn't much point. Any project teaching about hygiene should include the provision of infrastructure.

The salary is not bad, but making it higher would definitely encourage people to stay in the job.

In the nutrition component, only iron supplement is provided. Calcium and Vitamin A are important too – but these are only provided by the government through the community clinic. It would be more practical if the CPKs could dispense these themselves. In one recent campaign, the civil Surgeon

gave a day's training to the CPKs and then they distributed vitamin A capsules to all children and lactating mothers in the whole community – not only Shiree beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the project didn't provide scales for measurement of BMI (Body Mass Index); adolescent girls are supposed to go to the community clinic for regular measurement. They often don't – and the clinics often don't have scales anyway. So we have linked with the government schools which have scales, but it would be so much easier if each CPK had her own scales. It would also be more motivating for the girls and their families to see how their weight is changing.

Adolescent girls often have an inadequate BMI of 17 or below; they are a vulnerable group who should be covered by the nutritional programme. Furthermore, there are still many extreme poor not covered by the Shiree programme – it is difficult to explain that the programme does not include them. It would be better if they were included.

Community Health Clinics are not very operational because the Community Health Support Group is not very well informed. So now Helvetas is negotiating for the CPKs to have membership.

Meeting with Shiree Programme Managers 30 August morning

What were the best innovations?

The focus on the extreme poor

- EEP is a great movement to reduce poverty
- Selection of the bottom 10% - actually addressing the bottom 5% of extreme poor
- Only extreme poor targeted
- Integrating all kinds of population, eg. Children, elderly – good
- Emphasis on women, disabled, most vulnerable

Project design

- Addressing contextual and geographical barriers & food diversity
- The Challenge Fund concept itself is an innovation
- Allowing innovative ideas in innovative project very much needed
- The partnership approach is very good
- Groups/CBOs are group mechanism

Nutrition

- Finally, integration of health & nutrition is a MUST
- Conduct health & nutrition service – mapping and linking accordingly
- Engaging local health worker to mobilise community people
- Recruiting CPK locally and assigned accordingly
- Integrated livelihood approach with nutrition & gender
- Develop adolescent girls & provide health, nutrition, & life skills, gender & education

IGA selection

- Good considering choice of beneficiaries
- Providing appropriate IGA to the BHH according to their skills
- Somebody gets two or three IGA for a sustainable approach

Training

- In livestock rearing & arranging AI

- Synchronised cattle pregnancy so cow produces calf in the lean period
- To youth to create job in RMG factory

Khas land

- Initiative of khas land (x2)

Savings

- Providing start-up fund for savings group to establish revolving fund
- Encouraging BHH in savings is very important
- Introducing VSLA for the BHH to overcome crisis periods and emergency family needs

Personal statements (other than those quoted in the main text)

[Any future] programme must be integrated livelihoods and nutrition Sutapa Paul

GoB/local government institutions/civil society linkages must be strengthened Sutapa Paul

Advocacy and research themes should be generated from the realistic ideas of the targeted BHHs. That is, the research should be bottom up. Sutapa Paul

It is important to work on market linkages from grassroots to local to districts to national to shop chains to international Sutapa Paul

There should be more focus on basic services, ie. Water and sanitation. Health and education should be well thought through. Sutapa Paul

All household members must be covered for the whole period – with de-worming tablets, etc (not a “one shot” programme) Sutapa Paul

Initiatives should be taken on a private-public partnership basis Sutapa Paul

Capacity building & market linkages are an essential part of any IGA for the extreme poor Manotosh Kumar Madhu

There should be less tiers in partnership, not more Manotosh Kumar Madhu

Sometimes the NGO does not want to make the CBO/group sustainable and able to run their savings and IGA independently Manotosh Kumar Madhu

Funds should be provided to a single partner, not to sub-partners Delwar Hossain

Addressing the geographical poverty pockets of Bangladesh is very important; in any future project, all should be included Delwar Hossain

Nutrition, education, savings etc need to be included from the beginning. Delwar Hossain

We need to work with the elderly and disabled people. Delwar Hossain

From the beginning of the programme, group savings need to start and funds allocated to make a community-managed self-help micro-finance operations initiative. Md. Abu Bakar Siddique

Insurance against disaster and other incidences on livelihood activities should be considered Md. Abu Bakar Siddique

Unconditional cash based support might be effective and could be considered in future Md. Abu Bakar Siddique

Targeted livelihood options, considering the local available resources, should be considered in an M4P approach. This would entail IGA to small & medium enterprise with market development. Md. Abu Bakar Siddique

It is important to engage the related departments of GoB such as the department of women and child welfare, the department of social services along with other ministries. Mohammad Alomgir Husan

Annex 3: Persons met

EEP/Shiree Beneficiaries

Jasmina	Kishoregonj (through Concern International)
Kulsumata	Sunamganj (through Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation)
Shiuli Mondola	Khulna (through Uttaran)
Forida Begum	Gaibhanda (through CARE)

Senior government officials

Dr Prosanta Kumar Roy	Secretary, Rural Development & Cooperatives Division, Ministry of Local Government Rural Development & Cooperatives
Bhabesh Chandra Podder	Additional Secretary & Project Director, EEP

SDC-Bangladesh

Beate Elsässer	Head of Cooperation
Siroco Messerli	Deputy Head of Cooperation
Dr. Syeda Zinia Rashid	Programme Officer

EEP/Shiree National Steering Board

Dr Ferdous Jahan	Independent member, EEP/Shiree National Steering Board and Professor, Department of Public Administration
Julian Francis	Independent member, EEP/Shiree National Steering Board

EEP/Shiree Staff

Eamoinn Taylor	Chief Executive Officer
Najir Ahmed Khan	Chief Operating Officer
Md. Anwar Chowdhry	Deputy Team Leader & CFO
Zulfiqar Ali	Head of Advocacy and Research
Monjur Hossain	Managing Director, PTMC Ltd
Sutapa Paul	Senior Programme Manager
Manotosh Kumar Madhu	Programme Manager
Mohammad Alomgir Husan	Programme Manager
Md. Abu Bakar Siddique	Programme Manager
Delwar Hossain	Programme Manager
Samuil Ahsan	Senior Communications Manager

Project Managers, Partner NGOs

Md. Abdul Khaleque,	Uttaran
Dr. Md. Nuruzzaman,	MJSKS

M. Mujibur Rahman	Shushilan
Shamim Ahamed	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
Zahid Hasan	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
Rafiqul Islam Sarkar	Save the Children International
Nazmul Islam	Practical Action
Abdul Matin Sarder	CARE
Sultana Nazrin	Oxfam
Rafiqul Islam	Caritas
A Mannan Molla	Helen Keller International (HKI)
Shakil Ahmed	Concern Worldwide
Zamal Uddin	NETZ
Anwar Hossain,	Green Hill
Aroma Datta	PRIP Trust

NGO field staff

Aleya Parvin	Uttaran
Shajedul	MJSKS
Enamul Haq	VARD
Karna Joy	HKI
Ekramul Hossain	Shushilan
Sandip Mitra	Helvetas Swiss International – ERA
Hosne Ara Begum	DSK
Sasuimong Marma	Caritas
Arjuman Tuli,	Asroy – Netz
Mahfuza,	CARE
Shakhawat Hossain,	JSKS – Practical Action
Mustafizur Rahman	SCI
Nazia Zabeen	Nutrition Coordinator, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

CPKs

Jesmin Akter	Kushoregonj
Moni Akter	Sunamganj
Afroza Khanam	Sunamganj
Shipra Rani Das	Sunamganj
Hayatunessa	Sunamganj
Suprava Rani Das	Sunamganj
Shanti Rani Das	Sunamganj