

Management Response & Recommendations Action Plan

Evaluation Report Title:

LONGITUDINAL MONITORING AND INDEPENDENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF CHARS LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME-2

Response to Evaluation Report (overarching narrative)

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) commissioned this evaluation in order to assess the effectiveness of the Chars Livelihood Programme 2 (CLP-2) in achieving its objectives, to analyse the sustainability of CLP-2's impact, and to draw lessons from CLP-2's experiences for future programming. More specifically, the evaluation focused its efforts around the priority areas of CLP-2 graduation, poverty, livelihoods, sustainability, efficiency, and perceptions on changes to the local economy.

The evaluation aimed to bring together analysis of existing quantitative household survey data, collected throughout the life of the programme, with new qualitative data, collected by the evaluation team in project sites. Accepting the limitations in the qualitative and quantitative data available or collected for this evaluation, we judge this to be a robust evaluation that made good use of different methods to analyse the available data and draw out and, as far as possible, explain key findings.

Given CLP-2 has now ended, the findings from this evaluation will be used to inform future DFID extreme poverty programmes in Bangladesh and beyond. DFID is planning to launch a new extreme poverty programme in Bangladesh in 2017 that is likely to continue working in the chars in the future. The main lessons DFID will take forward into the design and implementation of this programme are:

- The basic approach (the graduation model) brings about sustained and transformative change for the extreme poor: a key finding from the evaluation is that the economic wellbeing of participant households improved significantly after receiving CLP-2 support and that this change was sustained. In terms of consumption poverty, three to five years after the start of CLP support the poverty rate among participant households was on average 37 percentage points lower than without support. These findings underline the effectiveness of the approach and the importance of not 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater' in future attempts to improve the model and make it more cost-effective.
- Despite these positive changes the evaluation found that many households struggled to build on these changes by continuously improving their level of wellbeing. As noted in the evaluation report, the largest proportion of CLP-2 attributable gains are achieved one year into the 18 month intervention period. This points to need to provide more flexible support to households over a longer timeframe to support a wider range of livelihood strategies and also changes in these over time. This is particularly important in light of the evidence that many household choose to invest in alternative income generating activities, such as crop farming, during the intervention period. The evaluation findings also emphasise the importance of supporting complementary interventions in markets from the very start to stimulate demand and increase income and job opportunities for target households.
- Economic empowerment and participation in programme activities appears to contribute to some changes in social status for women but these improvements are limited in scope: while the evaluation confirms that women's status has improved within their households and women now actively engage in activities outside their houses, their actual say in decision-making has not changed much while greater freedom of movement is restricted to the char they live on. This

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points to the need for more focused and sustained work with the whole community to influence gender and other social norms that constrain women's economic and social opportunities.

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Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If “Accepted”, Action plan for Implementation or if “Rejected”, Reason for Rejection
<p>1. If working within the context of the chars, assess the effectiveness and relevance of interventions related to erosion and flood protection. Specifically:</p> <p>a. Consider whether and how plinth construction practices could be further strengthened or modified.</p> <p>b. Review the current practice regarding flood and erosion grants to assess their effectiveness, and explore ways of modifying them.</p>	Accepted	To be addressed in future livelihood programmes implemented in the chars.
<p>2. Our research also shows that high dependency ratios posed a structural constraint on the effectiveness of CLP-2. Future livelihood programming may want to take up the task of mitigating the impact of such ratios.</p>	Accepted	Findings from similar programme also suggest that labour-constrained households, whether due to high dependency ratios, poor health, disability or age, struggle to utilise a productive asset or undertake other income generating effectively. In the long-run such households should have access to stable social security transfers (life cycle grants) as envisaged in the National Social Security Strategy. Future DFID Bangladesh graduation/livelihood programme will seek to link such households to existing social transfers whilst also encouraging accelerated implementation of a consolidated system of life cycle grants.
<p>3. Expanding access to larger affordable loans can further improve households’ ability to invest in productive assets and should be considered.</p>	Accepted	Experience from other programmes funded by DFID Bangladesh, such as the PRIME programme implemented by PKSf, demonstrate how access to soft loans can support the expansion and diversification of income generating activities. Future DFID Bangladesh livelihood programmes will seek to utilise both grants and soft loans to support livelihood development and transitions.
<p>4. Our research shows that the VSL component has proven to be an effective means of promoting</p>	Partially Accepted	We recognise the important role played by peer groups in the CLP-2 as a platform for social mobilisation and training. We also recognise that regular savings activities help provide a focus for such groups whilst also offering a

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<p>productive investment and a vehicle of social change and collective action, especially for women. Future programming should acknowledge the success of VSLs, both in relation to promoting savings and as a vehicle for women's empowerment, and further strengthen this component.</p>		<p>valuable services (whilst also recognise the general finding on savings below). Future DFID Bangladesh livelihood programme will continue to use peer groups to achieve both objectives, even if the role of savings needs to be reviewed.</p>
<p>5. We recommend that future programming take notice of the tendency of CLP participants to invest in land and consider additional efforts to raise the productivity of agricultural activities.</p>	Accepted	<p>Future programmes will seek to provide a more flexible menu of support over a longer timeframe that enables households to change and pursue a greater variety of livelihood strategies over time.</p>
<p>6. Future programmes should clearly explain the role of vouchers as a temporary discount for veterinary services and not an entitlement to participants. They should further emphasise awareness-raising activities aimed at promoting appreciation of the value of timely veterinary care – preventive as well as curative.</p>	Accepted	<p>We will review the role and effectiveness of vouchers for such services in any future programme and, if necessary, ensure their use is supported by clearer communication on their role and the timeliness of relevant animal health services.</p>
<p>7. The importance of cash savings as a policy objective should be reassessed in future programming.</p>	Accepted	<p>See 4.</p>
<p>8. Markets and the local economy should be developed more widely and form part of future core programming. Having access to markets and being equipped to engage with markets in an empowered way was perceived as being of crucial importance for the sustainability of change over time and for ensuring that households continue on an upward development trajectory.</p>	Accepted	<p>Future DFID Bangladesh livelihood programmes will integrate market development and market systems work from the start. We will also ensure such demand-side interventions are designed together with the supply-side interventions.</p>
<p>9. The approach to women's empowerment – including</p>	Accepted	<p>Future programmes will include a much stronger focus on and specific</p>

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<p>economic empowerment – must be more nuanced, proactive, and grounded in the fact that CLP women tend to feel more empowered in their own communities, where CLP has given them status and support.</p>		<p>interventions aimed at promoting social empowerment alongside economic empowerment. This will include a greater focus on working with both men and women as well as other key stakeholders in the community.</p>
<p>10. Building resilience to shocks during the project cycle was one of CLP’s key achievements. Future programming should aim to go further and seek to promote more intensive and continuous growth despite these shocks.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>See 3. and 5.</p>
<p>11. A related strategic priority should be reducing the role of remoteness and distance as a factor limiting development in the chars.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted</p>	<p>While there is scope to promote innovative solutions to improve connectivity to many chars in more cost-effective ways, it is also important to recognise that there is significant differentiation across the chars. While there is scope for investment in basic services and market development in some, in others this is not likely to be cost-effective in the long-run and in these cases the Government will need to pursue other strategies to ensure all char dwellers have access to basic services and market opportunities.</p>
<p>12. Similarly, future programmes which operate in the chars could build on recent improvements in the quality and accessibility of money transfer services that can support the flow of resources from employment outside the chars.</p>	<p>Accepted.</p>	<p>See 11.</p>