

MAXWELL STAMP | P L C

QUARTERLY REPORT

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Chars Livelihoods
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1. Introduction

This document reports on progress in the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) in Bangladesh – a programme funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). The report covers the period January to March 2010.

1.1 Team Leader's Overview of the Quarter

The current report marks the final quarterly report of the first phase of the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP1). As such the quarterly report is being accompanied by a formal End-of-Project (EOP) Report under final development by Maxwell Stamp as a deliverable to DFID. The EOP report is being developed by the senior CLP team in a process coordinated by Michael Scott and is, at the time of writing, in its final draft.

Given that the January to March quarter represented both the closing out of CLP1 and the preparations for the start of CLP2 (on 1 April 2010), it is clear that the quarter was rather busy. It was a quarter marked by anticipation of new activities in the new districts that CLP will be moving into and sadness for leaving some old districts (particularly Sirajganj, Bogra and Jamalpur). Several of our current IMOs will sadly not be working with us in our new districts and these IMOs, in particular, have had to make a number of redundancies among their staff. We hope that many of the good, experienced staff may be picked up by new IMOs recruited to undertake the CLP programme in the new districts.

January through March was thus a period of phase-out with Ric Goodman and the Operations Team and Razib Hassan and Finance being particularly active both within the programme and with our many partners. Stuart Kenward and his IML team have continued to monitor activities and impacts through to the end of CLP1 – many of the results are published in detail in the EOP report while ensuring that baseline data were collected from the first three of five new districts into which the CLP expands from April. All directors provide their detailed reports below.

The quarter was also one about preparing for the new phase. Aside from setting up the operational and financial structures, there has been much baseline data activity across the three new districts in which CLP is soon to begin activities. These data have been added to the CLP2 log frame to ensure that baseline data are as accurate and close to the start of the new phase as possible. Furthermore, the CLP is retendering core contracts for CLP2, with very few exceptions. This has meant a lot of additional work in drawing up TORs, posting adverts, receiving proposals and scrutinising/selecting candidates. At present we are finalising recruitment of "new" IMOs for the three additional districts plus special service providers for such key monitoring activities as output verification, monthly income and expenditure monitoring and beneficiary registration. A few new staff are also being recruited. Many members of the CLP team have been involved in this work and their activities are very much appreciated by senior management.

The involvement of AusAid as a partner to DFID in CLP2 drew closer with the visit to the CLP of several members of AusAid in the company of Michael Sampson, their appointed lead-consultant. CLP is very honoured that other donors should feel suitably impressed by the progress and impacts achieved on the chars to wish to contribute financially to the CLP. Not only is the CLP being recognised within Bangladesh but it is also receiving international recognition. For example, senior members of CLP have been invited to attend a regional conference on sustainable livelihoods and rural development in Delhi in late April to present activities, impacts and lessons learnt from the CLP. Ric Goodman (Operations Director) has been asked to represent the CLP.

As the final point in this last quarterly report from CLP1, we would wish to pay homage to Penny Davies, senior Livelihoods Advisor, at DFID-Bangladesh, who moved to DFID-London in March. For almost four years Penny was a motivating force behind the successes of the CLP1, the driver behind getting CLP2 in place so that it could move seamlessly on from the first phase and a true friend to the poor of the Jamuna Chars.

1.2 Deputy Team Leader's Overview

1.2.1 Political Situation

The political situation in the country appears to be calm and the Awami League led government of Bangladesh (GoB) is proceeding steadily to implement election commitments and its charter for change. The opposition has however announced that there will be demonstrations if the government does not tackle the power, gas and water crises currently facing the country.

1.2.2 Economic Situation

Despite the serious global economic downturn Bangladesh's economy remains comparatively stable and is poised to achieve rapid industrialisation and economic growth.

Bangladesh is efficiently managing the macroeconomic situation including the flow of remittances, its balance of payments and government reserves. A stable flow of remittances has helped the country avoid balance of payment pressures. However, the economy is being hindered by frequent power cuts and gas shortages that are affecting the garment sector in particular.

Price hikes in the international markets have contributed to an increase in the country's inflation rate.

The effect of the *little monga* (hungry season) on the poorest rural communities, that particularly affects the north west of Bangladesh, was reduced by the introduction of the government's "40-day employment generation programme" (March – April 2010).

1.2.3 District Coordination Sub-Committee (DCS) Meeting

The quarterly District Coordination Sub-committee (DCS) meetings for the Districts of Gaibandha and Kurigram were held during the quarter.

2. Operations Division

2.1 General

Operations concentrated in particular on closing down activities in Districts not included in the next phase of the programme, CLP2. All activities such as group meetings, household stipend payments and training were discontinued at the end of February while IMO field staff continued for one additional month in order to tie up any loose ends in the field. This additional period also served to ensure that attempts at dishonest activities in the field (especially by discontinued staff) could be kept at a minimum. The CLP used extensive independent monitoring and real-time reporting from the field to ensure that levels of suspected deviance were kept to a minimum.

Core management staff within IMOs, e.g. project managers and accounting and monitoring staff are continuing until the end of the financial year (end-June 2010) in order to finalise accounts and oversee residual ongoing activities.

Although most activities came to an end in the three districts of Sirajganj, Bogra and Jamalpur, health activities continue under CLP2, using a phase out plan agreed following the recent review. Education for approximately 5,000 students will also continue in all five CLP1 districts until completion of Class 5 and children sit the relevant exams. Village savings groups will continue some way past the end of March CLP1 close, to complete their savings cycles as originally agreed, and in order to best guarantee their re-formation and independent continuation.

The cold spell in early January was severe on the chars where most people are inadequately protected and poorly prepared for low temperatures. A distribution of 7,157 blankets was welcomed by people living in thin walled houses who spent a few weeks in temperatures down to 5°C.

2.2 Infrastructure

Infrastructure and Employment Programme (IEP)

The Infrastructure and Employment Programme (IEP) operated in the southern three districts (Jamalpur, Sirajganj and Bogra) during the month of January to raise CLP1 homes onto raised plinths. At the end of January CLP operations came to an end in these three Districts and from February, work began in Kurigram and Gaibandha districts.

Dry Season Plinth-raising

Grant agreements for dry season plinth-raising between January and March were issued to nine IMOs in Kurigram and Gaibandha. Plinths were raised for 2,860 households against a target of 2,760 – bringing the total number of households raised above the 2004/2007 highest flood level during CLP1 to 90,377.

Tube Wells and Water

Arsenic testing and follow-ups continued during the reporting period. Water from 300 tubewells, 50 household storage points (water pitcher), 50 glasses of water and water from 20 river points was tested. Test bores at three locations at different depths were also conducted where high concentrations of arsenic had previously been found. It is still generally the Jamuna and Teesta mainland or tributaries that demonstrate higher concentration of arsenic.

GPS mapping

Recording GPS coordinates of infrastructure and other CLP works continued during the quarter. To date coordinates of 83,531 CLP-inputs have been recorded and these are "mapped" in Google Earth, thus providing a useful management tool.

2.3 Health

During the reporting period an international consultant, Caroline Fitzwarryne, undertook a review of CLP's Health project. The objectives of the review were to assess the performance of the health project; explore the issue of sustainability through the current voucher system, and provide an analysis of possible exit strategies that would allow a progressive move from the current voucher-dominated system to one where the patient bears reasonable costs. The consultant, accompanied by CLP's Health Project Coordinator met multiple stakeholders including DFID Advisers, BRAC's Health Director, MIS Director of DGHS and the Project Director of GoB's Community Clinic Project.

In her report, the consultant praised the progress and achievements of the Health project and emphasised the need to continue activities up until either GoB is able to deliver services on the chars or DFID can organise alternative service providers.

In terms of health activities on the ground during the three-month period, a total of 2,371 Satellite Clinics took place offering just over 112,000 consultations. The Char Shasthya Karmis or CSKs (Char Health Workers) conducted 4,733 health and nutrition education sessions with the participation of just over 107,000 char residents comprising both core (75%) and non core (25%) participants.

Training for another batch of Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs) was also conducted during the quarter bringing the total number of trained RMPs to seventy-four. The objective of training RMPs is to reduce the incidence of harmful advice/practices by the RMPs; to engage them as advocates of CLP's work, and to motivate them to refer cases, beyond their expertise, to other facilities.

During February Misoprostol tablets were given to twenty Paramedics who had previously received Safe Delivery Training from the LAMB Hospital in Dinajpur. These tablets will be given to mothers just after Normal Vaginal Delivery to prevent Post Partum Haemorrhaging, the leading cause of maternal mortality. In addition, these Paramedics successfully conducted forty-three vaginal deliveries during the quarter.

Three orientation programmes for newly-wed couples were also organised during the quarter. A total of 164 couples attended information sessions that positively impact in delaying first pregnancy and increasing the acceptance of contraceptives. District and Upazila level health and family planning officials also attended the orientation sessions and acted as resource persons in delivering maternal health and family planning related messages. In addition, IMOs are continuously organising local level BCC campaigns to convey different messages on health, hygiene, nutrition and family planning through folk song, drama, community meetings, etc.

2.4 Education

The final examination for Class II students took place during January and February for 150 students. The results were very encouraging with 80% achieving Grade A, 14% Grade B, and 4% Grade C. Only 2% received a Grade D.

To strengthen capacity, 146 teachers (128 female and 18 male) underwent subject-based training for Class III. Further, a total of 201 Centre Management Committee members (135 male and 66 female) visited learning centres of other organisations to encourage an exchange of ideas and learning. With the support and assistance from CLP, IMOs obtained free of cost almost 3,500 sets of books from GoB's National Curriculum and Textbook Board for Class III students and just over 3,000 sets for Class IV students.

2.5 Village Savings and Loan Associations

During the reporting period 230 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) out of a total 264 completed their annual share out among 5,123 members. The average amount of money received per member was Tk. 1,305 whilst savings averaged Tk. 80 per member per month. Members made an average profit of 36%, which plays an important role in motivating members to continue saving. Out of the 230 associations, 197 (3,756 members) have already started a second cycle with a total of Tk. 1,174,696 as seed capital, averaging Tk. 313 per member. The remaining 34 associations (766 members) are continuing their first cycle and will share funds amongst members in April 2010.

The VSL project has created a habit of regular savings among participants. This has resulted in women who are not members of VSLAs becoming interested and joining VSL groups.

2.6 Social Development

Group Meetings

With the exception of one IMO, the Social Development group meetings for all ATP-3 and ATP-4 beneficiaries of the eighteen IMOs were completed by the end of February 2010. During the reporting period, Social Development staff of IMOs assisted with dry season infrastructure work and the Innovation Monitoring and Learning Division's Nutritional Status Survey.

As CLP2 starts on 1st April 2010, and the first phase of Asset Transfer soon thereafter, relevant IMOs have already selected staff to continue into CLP-2.

In the quarter under review, important specialised training took place such as Adolescent Training, Couples Training, Disaster Preparedness Training, Leadership Training and Human Rights & Family Law Training.

Core Beneficiary Selection

CLP senior management staff and CLP district staff have successfully completed the random verification of the 5,000 selected core beneficiary households which will be provided assets in the first phase of CLP2.

Infrastructure Employment Programme Safety Net

The budget for the Infrastructure Employment Programme (IEP) Safety Nets was calculated on the basis of 2,000 eligible beneficiaries receiving the grant of Tk 200 per week for ten weeks. In reality, IEP in most areas lasted for significantly less time as identified household groups were smaller and more isolated. CLP decided that all eligible safety net households should receive a minimum of four weeks of the grant. Despite the shorter qualifying period, a total of 3,794 beneficiaries have received this social protection grant.

Erosion Grants

Since July 2009 there has been less river erosion than expected and so against an estimated 4,000 erosion grants of Tk. 2,000 per beneficiary household, only 2,241 grants have been provided. In addition, with DFID's agreement, CLP distributed blankets to over 7,157 households during the January cold spell. These blankets were distributed to households receiving the Community Safety Nets during ATP-4 as well as to the selected CLP2 Phase 1 beneficiary households.

CLP also assisted 21 households that lost most of their possessions through fire damage. As most village houses are made of highly inflammable material, it is recognised that fire hazard awareness-raising must be addressed in the upcoming revision of the Social Development Training Modules.

2.7 Livelihoods

By the end of March 2010 all IMOs had ceased livelihoods activities apart from RDRS which will continue implementing up to June 2010. Due to an earlier than expected cessation of CLP1 activities, the Livelihoods Unit revised downwards some of its planned activities.

Home gardening and compost production training

Because participants were either sick or had migrated only 96 received refresher training on homestead gardening against a target of 209. However 14,600 against a target of 12,500 participants received refresher training on compost production during the quarter. The target was exceeded because participants who did not receive training between October and December 2009 underwent training during the current reporting period.

Monitoring vegetables cultivation in home garden

CLP has been encouraging participants of the homestead gardening project to produce and preserve their own vegetable seeds for future use. Beneficiaries have been encouraged to practice seed production and preservation by the IMOs which has met with keen interest from CLP participants.

Vaccination, de-worming and artificial insemination of ATP cattle through the voucher system

CLP's Livelihoods and Enterprise Units have continued to work together on veterinary support activities in the chars. A total of 11,998 ATP cattle were vaccinated against a target of 10,000 and an additional 6,295 de-worming doses were administered during the quarter. 235 cows were also inseminated against a target of 1,200. This target was not achieved due to a lack of artificial insemination (AI) facilities in the working area. A total of 157 cows gave birth following artificial insemination. 41,016 vouchers were used by CLP participants for vaccination, de-worming and AI services while 45,015 vouchers were reimbursed during the quarter.

Livestock training

A total of 16,522 person days of refresher training on livestock rearing was provided against a target of 17,000 person days. Because participants were either sick or had migrated this target was slightly underachieved.

Stipend distribution

With the exception of two IMOs namely RDRS and RSDA, all IMOs completed stipend distribution for ATP-4 beneficiaries. 28 CLP participants of RSDA and all CLP participants of RDRS will receive their stipends during the fourth quarter of 2009/ 2010.

2.8 Enterprise**Fodder Production**

7,865 CLP participants cultivated a combined area of approximately 1,500 acres during the quarter. 19% of participants made fodder sales on a monthly basis during the quarter. Seed was purchased from seed distribution points established by seed importers.

Local Poultry Rearing

Poultry participants were trained by the Local Services Providers (LSP) or Paravets in improved rearing techniques. The Paravets continued to vaccinate poultry against Ranikhet disease and make available poultry feed to participants. 58 model poultry houses were built during the quarter without subsidy. 41,393 poultry participants were involved in selling birds and/or eggs, earning on average Tk. 342 per month per participant.

Milk Marketing

23,624 participants sold an average of just under two litres of milk per day to milk collectors during the quarter. 249 milk collectors sold to local buyers (89% of them) including sweet and tea shops as well as commercial milk processing plants (11% of the collectors), including Milk Vita and BRAC Dairy. Participating households earned an average of Tk 1,573 from milk sales during the quarter.

Livestock Services Programme

306 out of 320 active LSPs received refresher training during the quarter by GoB Livestock Services Officers (LSO). LSOs also helped LSPs to identify reliable sources of vaccines and medicines. All 35 solar fridges provided by CLP are functioning well and contribute to ensuring the cool chain is maintained. During the quarter 289 out of 320 active LSPs had earnings averaging more than Tk. 3,000 per month.

3. Innovation, Monitoring and Learning Division**3.1 IML Overview**

The Division recruited a new Young Professional, Roos Helmich, in January. Roos had previously been providing short-term inputs to the Dutch funded Chars Development and Settlement Programme III in the south east of Bangladesh. Furthermore, IML identified a new, female intern called Tajmary Akter who comes from Bogra. Tajmary will join the Division during the fourth quarter of 2009/10.

IML also received short-term consultancy support from Kate Conroy in the development of baseline tools. Kate is a previous IML Young Professional who left the Programme during 2009.

Much of the quarter was spent outlining the M&E Framework for CLP2, preparing for the April nutrition survey and the baseline/registration survey for the first asset phase of CLP2 scheduled for May 2010.

3.2 Improved visibility of the CLP

Recruitment of a Communications Unit Manager commenced during the quarter. The Communications Unit Manager will report to the IML Director and will be responsible for raising the profile and visibility of the Programme. It is hoped this post will be filled by the end of the fourth quarter of 2009/ 2010.

A short film of the CLP entitled '*Improving Livelihoods on the Chars*' was finalised during the quarter. It is a twenty-four minute film documenting life on the chars, CLP interventions and achievements to-date.

3.3 Monthly Verification of CLP Outputs

Data Management Aid (DMA) continued to provide quality and timely feedback on the quantity and quality of outputs delivered through CLP's Operations Division. All irregularities identified by DMA were recorded on an "irregularities schedule" and followed up by the appropriate Unit Manager. CLP is to retender the Verification contract for CLP2 during the fourth quarter of 2009/2010.

3.4 Household Level Surveys

Towards the end of the quarter, Professor Nick Mascie-Taylor provided training to a team of CLP community development organisers and data entry monitoring officers. Training focused on how to record height, weight and haemoglobin levels accurately in

preparation for the household nutrition survey scheduled for April 2010. The April nutrition survey will collect nutrition information from a sample of CLP1 as well as CLP2 phase 1 households (the first asset transfer phase during CLP2).

During the quarter IML also reviewed the registration/baseline questionnaire in light of the new Log Frame. This will be applied in May 2010 to households of the first asset transfer phase.

4. Finance Division

During the reporting period the Finance Division focused on implementing the CLP1 exit strategy while preparing for the start up of the second phase. The Division worked closely with other Divisions and partners to develop financial reports and reconciliations covering CLP1.

Within the quarter, the Finance and Contracts division carried out respective procedures and amendments to bring potential operational activities in line with CLP1 closing schedule of 31st March, 2010. The Division can report a cumulative expenditure of 40.89% (GBP) against the annual program budget for 2009-10 as at the end of the second quarter and an expenditure of 9.14% (GBP) during the quarter under review.

Key activities during the quarter included:

- A reconciliation exercise was carried out to ascertain the level of funding required by CLP's Operations Division and the IMOs;
- Finalising a draft Chart of Accounts along with potential cost centres;
- Accounting for and reconciling historic financial transactions from 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2010;
- Terminating all contracts by 31st March 2010, the end of CLP1;
- Issuing contract amendments to allow for an easier phase out of CLP1;
- Initiating the opening of two new bank accounts for CLP2;
- Reviewing and finalising the asset disposal policy for the partner organizations thereby reducing the risk of CLP assets being misappropriated;
- Preparing for the DFID audit;
- The Finance department also reported the final settlement of CLP2 design phase
- During the quarter, the Division recruited a Finance Officer according to the strategy to recruit and train professionals.

Finally, in the quarter, the Division undertook all the necessary actions and exercises to contribute to a smooth phase out of CLP1. All essential recommendations regarding financial and contractual matters have been sent to relevant authorities within the partner organisations and special service providers.

5. Short Term Consultancies

The CLP received five consultants during the period:

- David Williams was contracted to undertake an economic and social impact assessment of raised plinths comparing those constructed through IMOs and those constructed through Union Parishads;
- Professor Nick Mascie-Taylor supported the IML Division by training a team of measurers on how to accurately collect nutrition related information in preparation for the April 2010 nutrition survey. Professor Mascie-Taylor also presented findings on CLP's nutrition monitoring activities to DFID advisers and partners;

- Caroline Fitzwarryne undertook a review of CLP's Primary Health Care – Family Planning Pilot. The review looked at lessons learnt, cost effectiveness and made recommendations on the future of the health pilot;
- Kate Conroy, a former CLP Young Professional provided support in developing baseline tools for CLP2, and
- Michael Scott assisted in the development of the End-of-Project report for CLP1.

The CLP was also visited by Michael Samson under the bipartite agreement (DFID and AusAid) under which AusAid will add funding to CLP2. Michael made a scoping visit in February, developing an appropriate methodology for an objective impact evaluation of CLP1.

6. Next Quarter's Activities

With CLP 2 starting on 1st April, the activities for the upcoming quarter centre on starting phase 2 implementation. The highest profile activities are the transfer of assets to the 5,000 new households in Kurigram and Gaibandha, and the putting in place of the programme's formal financial systems.

New staff will join the Programme or recruitment will commence for the positions of Social Development Coordinator, Communications Unit Manager and Market Development Coordinator. An intern will also join the IML Division.