



QUARTERLY REPORT

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Chars Livelihoods
Programme, Bangladesh

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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 July to September 2009.

1.1 Team Leader's Overview of the Quarter

The joint visit of the Right Honourable Douglas Alexander, UK Secretary of State for International Development, and the Right Honourable Edward Miliband, UK Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change was the highlight of the quarter. Their visit to Bangladesh was in part preparation for the Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen later this year. The two ministers were accompanied to the field by Chris Austin, Head of DFID-Bangladesh. Thanks are due to the many individuals who helped with the preparations and assisted on the day of the visit and particularly to our IMO partner MMS (Sirajganj).

The quarter was also notable for the visit of a team of consultants, led by Dr Emma Hooper, charged with the design of the CLP-2 programme and supporting documents. Their visit demanded a considerable contribution both from senior management and from the core team and field partners.

Turning to the core activities of the CLP, as is usual in the first quarter of a new financial year (FY), much effort was expended in completing the contractual formalities of the previous year; especially closing the financial books and developing the Annual Report. Nonetheless, the CLP has started the FY 2009/10 well and remains on target to deliver its Workplan obligations by the end of the FY. In the following sections, the Directors of Operations and of IML provide more detailed reviews of performance in their respective divisions.

One sad event was the discovery at the tail-end of FY 2008/09 that certain members of staff both from the CLP and from some partner IMOs were involved in activities that were contrary to CLP policies. These activities directly impinged the autonomy of IMO management as well as negatively impacting some CLP beneficiaries. A very thorough investigation was carried out and the necessary action taken. There was also a review of relations and communications with partner IMOs and this led to meetings with IMO Directors to clarify such issues as lines of accountability, authority and policies and the agreement to hold such meetings quarterly in the future.

1.2 Deputy Team Leader's Overview

1.2.1 Political Situation

With the election of the Awami League led Sheikh Hasina, the previous unrest has apparently disappeared. The Government is endeavouring to bring stability to the political arena in Bangladesh. But the people are waiting for the government to perform by fulfilling their electoral commitments. Currently a calm political atmosphere prevails in the country.

1.2.2 Economic Situation

The economy of Bangladesh relies heavily on two significant pillars: remittances from Bangladeshi workers overseas and from the export of Ready Made Garment (RMG). Remittances have held up well and the official reserves of the Central Bank are healthy. RMG had been suffering but as a sign of global economic recovery, foreign buyers are increasing orders. The Bangladesh Bank has announced that its monetary policy is to aim at attaining the highest sustainable output growth through investment without triggering inflation. The government is also aware of the credit needs of the agriculture sector and of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Attempts are also being made to improve the reliability of power and gas constraints that frequently obstruct agriculture and SMEs.

Prices of food grains and other essential commodities are mostly stable and attainable for the majority of the population. The country has not witnessed any serious floods this year although there are some concerns about anticipated rice yields, especially in the northern districts, being below normal level. River erosion has remained elevated.

Bangladesh is anticipating an economic growth rate of between 5.5 and 6.0% for Fiscal Year 2009-10. However, the overall situation in Bangladesh during July to September 2009 was favourable for smooth operation and implementation of the CLP.

1.2.3 Unemployed Youth Training Project

As per Memorandum of Understanding between the CLP and the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), the remaining 111 participants (60 male and 51 female) successfully completed their 10 weeks' training on woven clothes production in four Training Centres of BMET. 74 participants (47 male and 27 female) also completed 4-week training in knitting in the Training Institute of BKMEA. They are now ready for employment in the garment industries of BGMEA & BKMEA.

1.2.4 District Coordination Sub-committee (DCS) Meeting

The quarterly DCS meetings of Bogra, Kurigram and Sirajganj Districts were held in the quarter.

2 Operations Division

2.1 General

The monsoon rainfall has been some 40% below average. The situation looks very fragile with low rainfall, and thus fewer labour opportunities. However, the overall situation is probably better than this time last year during moderate flooding (coupled at the time with high food prices), and certainly better than in 2007 during the prolonged floods.

The number of allegations of fraud within IMOs has risen recently. While, in part, this is due to an increase in reporting (including false, unfounded or anonymous accusations), it is also thought to be a consequence of the uncertainty over the future of the next phase of CLP and of anxiety of CLP and IMO staff over their own positions. CLP management has re-stated its responsiveness to dealing with allegations, and communicated staff obligations with respect to reporting alleged fraud and declaring potential conflicts of interest.

Within one IMO, AKOTA, an allegation of taking money from chars residents in exchange for a promise of registration for future rounds of CLP asset distribution led to the PM being dismissed. In another example, an IMO PM was dismissed along with Enterprise staff for allowing a solar fridge to be installed in the house of a relative of the Union member rather than in the shop of the paravet association.

The quarter also saw the conclusion of the investigations into the most serious case involving in particular unlicensed livestock vitamin products and fake livestock vaccines. The Team Leader provided a brief overview. The investigation of the facts dominated management time for a significant part of the quarter and led to many internal changes in policy and procedures. For example, a revised vaccine delivery system is being implemented.

2.2 Infrastructure

A one-day workshop with all IMO Programme Managers, Technical Supervisors, selected Technical Officers, CLP District Infrastructure Managers and Infrastructure Officers was held in August 2009 to review the 2008-09 infrastructure work experience and lessons learnt. IMO Directors were also in attendance.

Infrastructure and Employment Programme (IEP) was due to start on 15 Sept but could not start be brought to scale until after the Eid-ul-Fitr holiday week (27 Sept).

Grant agreements have been signed with all 18 IMOs for the construction of 7,500 low-cost slab latrines (5 rings, one slab with super structure and water seal) in the period July to December 2009. 640 latrines were installed in August 2009 and the rest will be completed by December 2009

Grant agreements for the Infrastructure and Employment Programme (IEP) during the *monga* period (Sept. – Dec.) were issued to all IMOs. 920,000 person days of employment are expected to generate work for 30,000 poor households in *monga* affected (seasonally food insecure) island chars.

Water quality testing of 300 shallow tube wells (TW) is taking place. The tests include bacteria (TTC), iron and manganese. These results will add to the growing body of data on TWs across the CLP working area and build our understanding of the causal factors of TW contamination; thus enabling CLP to respond appropriately.

Arsenic survey testing and necessary response is continued. 450 TW water points were tested this quarter. In areas where high levels of arsenic are found, test bores at varying depths were drilled and the water periodically tested. Overall, it appears that water from depths of more than 120 feet has lower arsenic levels than water from shallower bores. CLP is considering applying this as a standard response to arsenic discovery, coupled with regular follow-up testing and awareness raising in affected areas. Mainly Jamuna mainland and tributaries demonstrate this phenomenon.

Recording of GPS coordinates of infrastructure and other CLP works continued in this quarter. So far, GPS coordinates of 60,000 CLP inputs have been recorded. These coordinates are marked in Google Earth and are being used to provide management insight to a variety of topics.

2.3 Health

Contracts for IMOs and EngenderHealth were issued and implementation went on smoothly. MoUs were renewed with 11 secondary referral centres and MoUs signed with 8 primary level referral centres (mainly individual doctors). During the quarter, a total of 2,189 satellite clinics were operated and 96,489 consultations took place. During the same period, the Char Shasthya Karmis (Char Health Workers) conducted 4,041 health, nutrition and education sessions with the participation of 95,203 people.

To help simplify the field clinics' administration following the withdrawal of the Satellite Clinic Aides, Health and Voucher books were distributed to all participating beneficiaries. EngenderHealth has now completed the development, training and installation of the computerised MIS system. Meaningful data is anticipated during the following quarter.

Training of Trainers on maternal and newborn care for the IMO Trainers and Health Supervisors took place during the quarter. Also training on safe delivery for 5 Paramedics took place at the LAMB hospital in Parbatipur. In addition, refresher training for PMs, HSs, Paramedics and CSKs continued.

Purchase and distribution of mobile phones for Community Shasthya Karmis, (CSKs, community health workers) was completed and a signing ceremony held to mark the occasion with CLP, GrameenPhone, EngenderHealth, DFID and GoB in attendance. The event achieved favourable media coverage on television and newspapers.

2.4 Education

Contracts for IMOs and FIVDB were issued. The purchase of uniforms and school bags for students is underway and was completed end-September.

The annual Education review meeting was held with the participation of the concerned PMs, Centre Supervisors and senior personnel of FIVDB and CLP staff. Monthly follow-up training for the teachers continued.

CLP reached an agreement with GoB to obtain free books for class III and IV from January 2010. This relied on contacts CLP maintains with the former GoB Programme Director who is now posted as Joint Secretary for Primary and Mass Education.

2.5 VSLA

At the start of the year the management of Village Savings and Loans Associations was moved from Enterprise to Health and Education. This will help to identify synergies between VSLA as a form of social capital on the one hand and related programme areas on the other.

During the quarter, 134 savings associations out of 762 finished their annual share out among 2,912 members. The average share out money per member was Tk. 933 against an average savings of Tk. 720. Thus members made an average profit of 30%, which plays an important role in motivating the members to make savings; the real purpose of VSLA. Out of 134 associations, 74 with 1,537 members have already started their 2nd cycle with a total amount of Tk. 261,473 as seed capital. The remaining 628 groups with 14,047 members are continuing their first cycle.

The incomes of VSLA members are increasing significantly over time and so the opportunity to save is stimulating new financial behaviour. It can be observed that VSLA members are significantly more respected in the community and that participation in VSLA has real impact on household decision-making.

2.6 Social Development

The Social Development Unit Manager, Ms Momtaz Shirin, did not renew her contract and so Julian Francis (Programme & Implementation Advisor) is currently overseeing the activities of the Social Development Unit. SDU works in the five CLP districts and is supervised by three District social Development Managers (DSDMs).

Social Development Contracts were signed with the 18 IMOs to cover work with both ATP-3 and ATP-4 core beneficiaries so that all social development module sessions are completed through the weekly group meetings. At the beginning of the FY, IMO staff was provided refresher training. In addition, the list of non-modular training for core beneficiaries was revised and prioritised and DSDMs have assisted in some of those training sessions.

CDOs accompanying CLP Phase 3 BHHs who were due to finish employment by end-September were considered for a contract extension to assist with Infrastructure work (IEP), monitoring and other tasks. CDSs and Trainers were approved for contract extensions until December.

2.7 Erosion Grants

Erosion Grants of Tk. 2,000 per affected household are this year available only to residents of island chars. 1,848 grants have been made until end-September.

2.8 IEP Safety Net

The Workplan contains a budget line for grants to 2,000 households in the villages where IEP work is going on but have no adult capable of earthwork. These Safety Net Grants will be provided in villages where IEP work is occurring and recipients will receive Tk. 200 per week for 10 weeks. However, as IEP will occur in dispersed locations throughout the five districts, it is likely that approx. 4,000 households will benefit but for shorter periods of time. Exact numbers and average duration will be reported in the next quarterly report.

2.9 Livelihoods

Following the departure of the Livelihoods Unit Manager (effective from 1 July), Julian Francis is also overseeing the activities of the Livelihoods Unit. The Livelihoods Unit works in the five districts

and work is monitored by four CLP District Livelihoods Unit staff.

Vaccination and de-worming of ATP cattle against vouchers: The guidelines of the voucher scheme have been thoroughly reviewed and revised. In the new system, the LSPs (paravets) are responsible to collect vaccines directly from Upazila Livestock Offices. LSPs collect vouchers from BHHs to deliver appropriate vaccines, and they redeem the vouchers at the IMOs. Livelihoods district staff discussed the guideline with concerned IMO staff. Livelihoods and Enterprise staff planned joint workshops with LSPs and IMO staff during the 2nd week of October. During the reporting period, 2,714 cattle were vaccinated (target 2,500) and 9,029 doses of de-worming drug administered to CLP purchased cattle (target 6,000).

Establishment of home gardens by beneficiaries' own resources: All IMOs started to conduct refresher training on homestead gardening for ATP-4 beneficiaries. 18 IMOs provided training to 12,652 beneficiaries (target 6,000). This year, beneficiaries will establish home gardens by using their own resources. IMO will provide only training to beneficiaries and will not supply seeds, fertiliser or fencing material. Many ATP-4 beneficiaries preserved or stored seeds for future sowing and others have been collecting seeds from neighbours or have purchased from local markets. In the meantime, beneficiaries have sown pit crop seeds and are preparing seed beds.

Livestock training: 13 IMOs started 5th round training in livestock rearing for those who could not complete the training in the last financial year; mostly due to delays in purchasing their cattle. All ATP-4 beneficiaries received a voucher of Tk. 100 for artificial insemination of their cows/heifers with the semen of improved breeds. 421 cows were inseminated (target 400).

Beneficiaries planted fodder cuttings on the slopes of raised plinths. Two IMOs (AKOTA and GBS) did not complete the distribution of high yielding fodder cuttings for planting to ATP-4 beneficiaries due to a shortage of cuttings. However, AKOTA did distribute fodder cuttings to 666 beneficiaries and GBS to 55 beneficiaries (target met).

Stipend distribution was completed for ATP-3 beneficiaries in the quarter. It continues for ATP-4 beneficiaries and is expected to finish in August 2010.

2.10 Enterprise

Fodder Production: 7,500 participants are being selected for cultivating about 1,500 acres of land. Seed distribution points were established by seed importers. Seed purchase can start in the first week of October and sowing can commence immediately after training.

Local Poultry Rearing: Poultry participants are trained by the LSPs (paravets) in rearing techniques. Vaccination against Ranikhet disease and feed sale are on-going. 1,268 model houses are being used (target 1,461). 501 houses were built without CLP subsidy, i.e., more than 50% of the supported model houses.

Milk Marketing: About 5,000 participants are selling milk with approximately 12,000 litres of milk marketed by milk collectors during the quarter. 209 collectors are working as self-employed businessman and 50% of them sold to local buyers (such as sweet and tea shops) and the remaining 50% to commercial processors (such as Milk Vita, BRAC Dairy and Pran Milk).

Livestock Services Programme: LSP planned activities are currently behind schedule since CLP-employed LSOs are yet to be recruited. Scheduled vaccination as per availability of quality vaccine from IMOs is on-going. 28 additional solar fridges were installed in CLP working areas to support the cold chain of livestock and poultry vaccines – the current total is 33 solar fridges.

3 Innovation, Monitoring and Learning Division

3.1 IML Overview

During the quarter, IML continued with its monitoring and reporting activities while working towards increased communications. Monthly Output Verification as well as monthly Income and Expenditure monitoring was ongoing while the IEP micronutrients and deworming baseline survey were carried out. The 4th round of Nutrition Status monitoring was started while IML prepared CLP's representation at the Extreme Poverty Eradication Day (18 Oct.) and began the process of contracting a CLP film.

3.2 Reporting

The IML Division assisted in the preparation and submission of the Annual Report for Financial Year 2008/09, completing the task in-country by late July.

3.3 Improved visibility of the CLP

1. The redesign of the CLP website is complete and a Bangla version is currently being tested. The website is being regularly updated and reports uploaded to on the site;
2. IML is leading on the publicity aspects at the Extreme Poverty Eradication Day and has finalised a CLP brochure and poster displays; and,
3. The interim IML Director, Frank Kiel, is working on advancing the Communications & Dissemination Strategy and this includes a film of CLP's activities and achievements. Completion date is anticipated as mid-December 2009. IML is cooperating with the Press and Communications Unit of BHC / DFID in order to ensure that the film can be useable for a variety of audiences and messages.

3.4 Monthly Verification of CLP Outputs

Verification of outputs, contracted to Data Management Aid (DMA), continues to provide excellent results. Any divergences are reported to IML to the Team Leader. It is to be noted that major discrepancies are few and decreasing with time.

3.5 Household Level Surveys

1. Monthly household income & expenditure (I&E) monitoring continues to show significant increases in both household income and expenditure. Monthly reports are now issued in English and in Bangla. This latter is part of the CLP desire to provide quality feedback towards the grassroots organisations with which it works.
2. The economic impacts of cattle transfers, of land leases, and of land ownership were carried out in the previous quarter and data are now being analysed. These assessments represent CLP's annual review of investment and economic impact through asset transfer to ATP Phase 1 through ATP Phase 4 beneficiaries.
3. A baseline study to measure the impact of micronutrient treatment and deworming of IEP workers and their families was conducted, although without haemocues. Blood cell counts to determine anaemia were added to the programme in the last week of September with a 10% sample of the 1,200 households being monitored. The data will provide a clear picture of the physical capacity of IEP workers and their families. An end-line survey is to be conducted in December 2009, after IEP work is completed.

4. Planning for the fourth round of the NSS (nutritional status survey) was carried out ahead of data collection. The survey itself is using 10 teams of 2 CDOs and 5 supervisors and most will occur in October 2009. Data collection will cover all four ATP phases and will remove seasonal effects by collecting data from all families at the same time. Continued reductions in wasting and stunting are anticipated across ATP phases. Prof. Nick Mascie-Taylor continues to support the training aspects of NSS (especially of YP Lucy Cooper, the newly arrived YP Laura Gisby, the National Adviser Rafiqul Islam and five external staff concerned with survey supervision). Training was carried out both in the classroom and in the field. The stadiometers were checked for accuracy and error margins were established.

4 Finance Division

After a successful and high activity FY 2008/09, CLP is looking towards the completion of CLP Phase 1, during the FY 2009/10 and planning for CLP Phase 2. The CLP budget was segregated into two parts, as this FY 2009/10 comprises of two different phases.

The total budgeted disbursement for FY 2009/10 is £9.41m (86.26% of total budgeted expenditure) while the total budgeted management cost is £1.50m (representing 13.74% of the budget). During the quarter, the total achievement against the work plan was £1.72 m (15.80% of the total annual budget).

Due to the two different phases, all contracts are being prepared for a 12-month duration with a six months breach clause. DFID and GoB officials praised the financial presentation in the PEC meeting at RDCD secretariat. The Finance Division provided support to the CLP-2 design team and the CLP Senior Finance Manager fulfilled his additional task of UK accounting. The Contract and Procurement Division also provided a procurement plan to Crown Agents for the procurement of five new vehicles was initiated. Furthermore, 15,000 pairs of flip-flops¹, 11,000 boxes of sprinkles, trade name MoniMix (for use in the IEP de-worming and micronutrient treatment of CLP IEP workers), 150,000 de-worming tablets, 300 bottles of deworming syrup and 8,000 plastic buckets were procured and distributed to beneficiaries. 325 vaccine-carrying boxes and 15 GPS devices were procured through Crown Agents. CLP nominated Grameenphone as a Business Solution Partner when procuring 392 Nokia handsets including SIM cards at reduced pricing. By the end of Q1 2009/2010, the peak activity of the Infrastructure Employment Programme (IEP) commenced.

The rollout of a computerised accounting system was implemented as a core part of the capacity-building programme for IMOs. All 38 IMO Accountants received training in Tax, VAT and Business Communication as well as in advanced IT Training. This component is part of the continuous human resource development plan of the CLP Finance team.

The Finance and Contract Department also initiated investigations into AKOTA and Sircer Pasha with regard to alleged corruption.

One junior member left the Department during the quarter and has not been replaced despite an increase in disbursement and reporting needs of the programme and of external stakeholders. This is a good example of an efficiency gain.

The Finance Department prepared its audit to be carried out by DFID in mid-October while reviewing audit reports and management letters of IMOs, SSPs and UPs for the period 2008/09 as submitted by the external auditors at the end of this quarter.

¹ The flip-flops are provided to households that are receiving latrines as part of the CLP improved hygiene strategy. It is interesting to note that BATA Shoes (Bangladesh), as part of their corporate responsibility package, provided the flip-flops at a large discount to shop prices while giving several thousand additional pairs for free.

5 Procurement and Information Technology

No major items were procured during the quarter. The haemocue devices arrived and are being used for red blood cell count in the IEP micronutrient and de-worming survey.

6 Short Term Consultancies

No short-term assignments relating to the current programme occurred in the quarter. The CLP-2 design team was fielded and worked towards the layout of the second phase. A series of workshops to support the work of the design team (NGO involvement, LogFrame elaboration) took place at end-September / early October.

7 Next Quarter's Activities

The major field activity of the upcoming quarter is the *monga* season campaign to raise earthen plinths for core and non-core beneficiaries during IEP. Given budgetary uncertainties as CLP moves towards its second phase, it may be necessary to reduce the scale of certain other activities until financing becomes clearer. IML will begin shooting the CLP Film and, in the run up to filming, has been cooperating with the Communications Unit of BHC/DFID to ensure that clear messages can be provided by the film.

The CLP anticipates the arrival of the new IML Director (Stuart Kenward) in November while a new YP (Laura Gisby) arrives at the start of October. CLP is currently recruiting new unit managers (or similar designations) in social development, enterprise and livelihoods).