

# Community Reflections

## Best Practices of SHOUHARDO II Program in Bangladesh



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## Foreword

One of the fundamental rights of citizens stipulated in the Bangladeshi Constitution is food security for all. According to the World Food Summit (1996), 'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'. Food security encompasses many issues, ranging from food production and distribution to food preferences and the health status of individuals. Nevertheless, there is a substantial gap in ensuring food security for all Bangladeshis. Nearly 45 percent of the total population of the country is now food insecure (<2122 kcal per person per day), and one-quarter (23.9 percent) of the population is understood to be considerably food insecure, consuming less than 1805 kcal per person per day (WFP, 2012). For these rural and urban people, domestic production and/or imports are inadequate to meet their needs throughout the year. The underlying cause for this prevailing gap in the country's food security coverage is poverty.

With funding from USAID, the SHOUHARDO II Program aims to enhance and protect the country's food security by supporting 370,000 poor and extreme-poor households in the North *Char*, the Mid *Char*, the *Haor* belt, and the Cox's Bazaar coastal areas of Bangladesh. The program has been proven reasonably effective throughout its earlier phase (SHOUHARDO I). As quoted in the Final Evaluation report of SHOUHARDO, it stated 'SHOUHARDO is attempting to address not only the availability, access and utilization issues that lead to food insecurity, but also the underlying issues that contribute to vulnerabilities such as a lack of participation, social injustice, and discrimination that prevent people from realizing their full potential in leading healthy and productive lives.'

The program has some embedded features and brought in some fresh programmatic approaches, in other term the best practices, for addressing food insecurity. We strongly believe these approaches and features would enable any food security related program achieve its goal. Hence, as a fellow development partner to those work toward addressing food insecurity in Bangladesh, we held ourselves responsible for documenting the best practices of SHOUHARDO II program. We also believe that this document will help to improve the overall understanding of SHOUHARDO II interventions.

I would like to convey my sincere thanks to NIRAPAD and technical specialists, for their contributions. I hope that readers will gain insights that will help them to understand the value of these best practices of SHOUHARDO II for reducing food insecurity of the poor and extreme people of Bangladesh.

**Marc Nosbach**

Chief of Party, SHOUHARDO II Program  
CARE Bangladesh

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## Acronyms

ANC	Antenatal Care
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BRRRI	Bangladesh Rice Research Institute
CAP	Community Action Plan
CAV	Community Agriculture Volunteer
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CfW	Cash for Work
CVCA	Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis
CHD	Comprehensive Homestead Development
CHV	Community Health Volunteer
COG	Core Occupational Group
CRC	Community Resource Center
CSISA	Cereal System Initiative for South Asia
DCRM	Disaster and Climate Risk Management
DPHE	Department of Public Health Engineering
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DV	Disaster Volunteer
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
EKATA	Empowerment Knowledge and Transformative Action
EPI	Expanded Program on Immunization
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
GMP	Growth Monitoring and Promotion
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HHN	Health Hygiene and Nutrition
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IGD	Interactive Group Discussion
IR	Intermediate Result
JSKS	Jhanjira Samaj Kallayan Sangstha
LCS	Labor Contracting Society

LEB	Local Elected Body
LGD	Local Government Division
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoLGRD&C	Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives
MYAP	Multi-Year Assistance Program
NBD	Nation Building Department
NDP	National Development Programme
NNPC	Nari Nirjaton Protirodh Committee
NIRAPAD	Network for Information, Response And Preparedness Activities on Disaster
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PACC	Program Advisory and Coordination Committee
PDF	Positive Deviant Farmer
PEP	Poor and Extreme Poor
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
RIC	Resource Integration Center
SBK	Shishu Bikash Kendra
SHOUHARDO	Strengthening Household Abilities for Responding to Development Opportunities
SO	Strategic Objective
SMC	School Management Committee
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UzDMC	Upazila Disaster Management Committee
VAW	Violence Against Women
VDC	Village Development Committee
VERC	Village Education Resource Center
WHO	World Health Organization

# Chapter One

## Introduction

## Background

CARE Bangladesh has been implementing SHOUHARDO II (Strengthening Household Abilities to Respond to Development Opportunities II) since June 2010. It is a five-year, USAID-funded Multi-Year Assistance Program (MYAP), and is built on the previous phase (SHOUHARDO) that established an integrated model for reducing child malnutrition while contributing to greater livelihood security and women's empowerment. SHOUHARDO II operates in 11 Districts: the operational areas include northern and mid-river chars, the *haor* areas, and the coastal region in the southeast. SHOUHARDO II aims to 'transform the lives of women and men in 370,000 Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) households through five Strategic Objectives, each contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Bangladesh's food security agenda and USAID's strategic priorities for Bangladesh'. Further details of II the project can be found in Chapter 2).

At its inception, SHOUHARDO II quantified and established a baseline against each of its five strategic objectives:

- i) availability of and access to nutritious foods
- ii) health, hygiene and nutritional status of children under two years of age,
- iii) empowerment of poor and extreme-poor women
- iv) accountability of the local elected bodies and government service providers
- v) capacity to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to disasters and adapt to climate change.

In 2012, a Midterm Review of the program assessed progress and achievements in these areas, and suggested that the interventions made significant progresses against all five strategic objectives. The review noted that support provided had improved agricultural productivity and income at the household level and it significantly contributed to food availability and accessibility. The program had enabled significant improvements in caring practices for expectant mothers, as well as in the care and feeding practices of young children. The interventions had helped to reduce instances of domestic violence, dowry and early marriage, and had supported girls' access to education. SHOUHARDO II has promoted community-driven development and made beneficiary communities much more aware of their rights to government services and entitlements. The program helped to establish or reform Union and Upazila Disaster Management Committees and Disaster Volunteers and it improved the technical capacity of government officials and Union Parishads to respond to disaster.

The findings of the Midterm Review were promising. It encouraged CARE to explore further to identify the specific activities that delivered good results. 'By classifying these activities as best practices, it has been possible to produce the present knowledge product, with the intention that it will be useful for future programming, not only within the scope of SHOUHARDO II but also in the entire integrated food security programming arena. CARE

commissioned NIRAPAD (Network for Information, Response And Preparedness Activities on Disaster) to document the best practices at the different levels of the program implementation and produce this report.

## Objectives

The purpose of best practice documenting the best practices of the SHOUHARDO II Program is to make accumulated knowledge available, in order to improve strategies and interventions for food security.

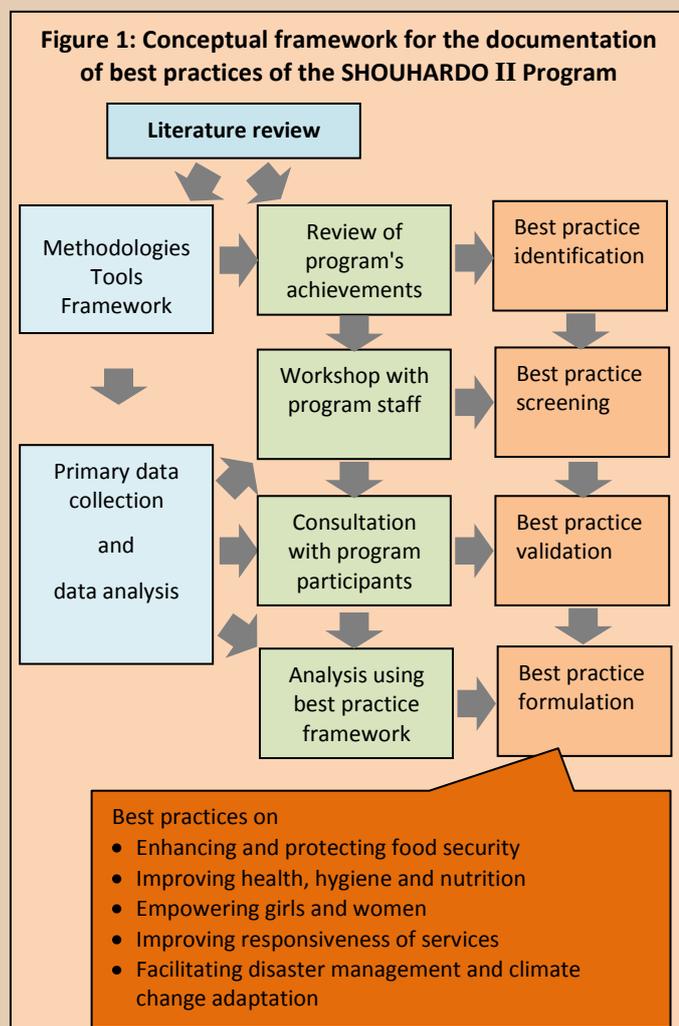
More specifically, the objectives are:

- to avoid the repetition of mistakes in designing and planning program interventions best practice
- to reorganize and improve specific elements of ongoing interventions by using accumulated knowledge.

## Methodology

The documentation of best practices entails reviewing the documented achievements of the SHOUHARDO II Program and analyzing them to formulate the best practices. It requires firstly applying a set of criteria and a best practices framework in order to review and analyze project documents, such as progress reports, evaluation reports, case studies and other documents (the Literature Review). Secondly, it is necessary to screen and validate the potential best practices through in-depth discussions with field-level staff and beneficiaries of the project. Thirdly, it requires reviewing and analyzing identified best practices to produce a knowledge product.

This methodology was developed through extensive consultation with CARE Bangladesh program management, technical staff and field teams.



## Literature review

A literature review was the first step of the process. It included a review of the program's achievements as documented in various reports to identify the potential best practices. For the purposes of this review, documents regarding SHOUHARDO II were collected from CARE and its partner NGOs; these documents included:

- Reports, documents and newsletters published by SHOUHARDO II;
- Unpublished research reports, thematic study reports, policy papers, case studies and knowledge products generated by SHOUHARDO II;
- The baseline report, progress reports, annual reports and other periodic reports of SHOUHARDO II as prepared by CARE and its partner NGOs.

Secondary data analysis provided a general overview of the issues and an outline of the best practices; it also helped to develop a framework and formulate an appropriate questionnaire and check list for primary data collection from the field.

## Workshops with SHOUHARDO II Staff

The second step was regional workshops with CARE and its partners' staff. Four workshops were held, one workshop in each of the four regions, namely:

- i) Northern char areas (Rangpur)
- ii) Mid-char areas (Sirajganj)
- iii) *Haor* areas (Mymensingh)
- iv) Coastal region (Cox's Bazar).

The purpose of these one-day workshops was to screen the practices identified during the literature review by examining their relevance to the SHOUHARDO II program, i.e. whether and how they contributed to achieving the program's objectives. Field staffs were engaged to provide guidance in determining a list of best practices through discussions and analysis of the program activities.

## Primary data collection

To validate the potential best practices with concrete evidence, the study team collected primary data from the project's operation areas. It explored whether and how the practices were conducted in the communities and whether and to what extent this benefited community people. Primary data collection included consultation with beneficiaries from target areas – in particular, women and men from poor and extreme-poor households, members of the Union Parishads, Government officials and staff of partner NGOs. This consultation process included interactive group discussions with women and men and Union Parishad members and Government officials.

Field work covered about 30% of the unions under SHOUHARDO II interventions in 11 Districts. It was spread more or less evenly in the four operational regions that included

North char (4 districts including Rangpur, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Kurigram), Mid char (3 districts including Sirajganj, Pabna and Bogra), Haor (3 districts including Mymensingh, Jamalpur and Sunamganj) and Coastal (Cox's Bazar district) where SHOUHARDO II program is being implemented.

## **Constructing the best practices**

The qualitative information provided in-depth understanding and basis for the best practices. Practices identified during the review and validation process were analyzed by applying Resilience framework (described in Chapter Two). This framework sets out the key factors contribute to peoples' vulnerability: exposure to hazards and stresses, fragile livelihoods, future uncertainty and weak governance; and measures a practice by its strength to minimize the vulnerabilities. Practices that qualified through the screening process were defined as best practices.

## **Scope and Limitations**

The best practices investigation and documentation included primary data collection obtained through consultation with CARE field staff, program partners and community people. It did not, however, seek to evaluate the program's performance or progress. Instead, the goal was to list the program's achievements as noted in the mid-term review and other evaluations, and to identify the practices that contributed these achievements. The program has a wide range of practices and many noteworthy achievements. Only those practices that demonstrated a clear causal relationship with specific achievements were explored.

# Chapter Two

## SHOUHARDO II Interventions and the Best Practice Framework

# The Best Practice Framework

'Best practice' can be defined as a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven to reliably lead to a desired result. A best practice consistently shows results superior to those achieved by other means, and for this reason it can be used as a benchmark for program practices; however, it does not refer to perfection in terms of practice or indicate the only element that makes an intervention successful. Instead, best practices come from lessons learned and accumulated knowledge; they refer to effectiveness and consistency in terms of producing desired results. A best practice can itself therefore evolve to become better as improvements are discovered.

The term best practice is used frequently – but with varied connotations – in different fields, such as health care, government administration, education, project management and product development.

For the purpose of capturing the best practices in SHOUHARDO II interventions, NIRAPAD used a

The World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa (2008) applies the following criteria to documenting best practices: "

- **Effectiveness** – The practice must work and achieve results that are measurable.
- **Efficiency** – The practice must produce results with a reasonable level of resources and time.
- **Relevance** – The practice must address the priority problems of the region.
- **Ethical soundness** – The practice must respect the current rules of ethics for dealing with human populations.
- **Sustainability** – The practice must be implementable over a long period of time without any massive injection of additional resources.
- **Possibility of duplication** – The practice must be replicable elsewhere in the Region.
- **Involvement of partnerships** - The practice must involve satisfactory collaboration between several stakeholders.
- **Community involvement** – The practice must involve participation of the affected communities.
- **Political commitment:** The practice must have support from the relevant national or local authorities.

resilience framework adapted from the 'From Vulnerability to Resilience' framework. The framework sets out the key factors that contribute to the underlying causes of peoples' vulnerability and determine actions concerning each of these factors to improve resilience.

The key factors of vulnerability are:

- a) fragile livelihoods – leading to food insecurity
- b) exposure to hazards – causing shocks and stresses
- c) future uncertainty – diminishing livelihood options
- d) weak governance – creating marginalization.

Identifying best practices can be enabled by examining and understanding whether and how individual program interventions offset vulnerability factors and contribute to resilience.

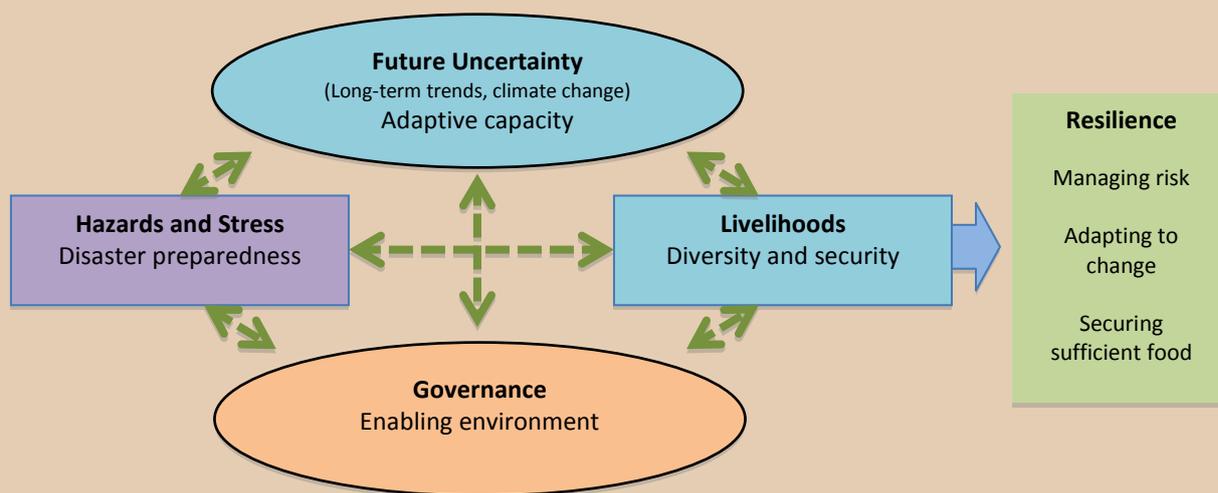


Figure 2: Resilience Framework

The SHOUHARDO II Program seeks to reduce the vulnerability of the poor and extreme-poor to food insecurity. Interventions are expected to help communities strengthen disaster preparedness, enhance adaptive capacity, diversify and secure livelihoods and create an enabling environment. Disaster preparedness means that communities are aware of disaster risks as well the ways of minimizing them. Access to relevant and timely information helps people understand long-term trends such as climate change, and the relevant potential impacts on their lives and livelihoods. It can also help them explore and make preparatory adjustments to their livelihoods: community organization, access to productive assets and technologies and better market links help poor and extreme-poor communities diversify and secure their livelihoods. It helps them make choices that will increase incomes and reduce their vulnerability to shocks. An enabling environment created by good governance allows people to participate in decision-making processes and access services. Accountability of the service providers is crucial element in ensuring this is successful.

Achievements in these areas mean that communities, particularly the poor and extreme-poor, are better able to:

- manage risks so that they have the strategies to cope with the impacts of hazards and maintain wellbeing during disaster without undermining the future continuation of their livelihoods
- adapt to changes environmental and climatic changes and respond to these proactively, adjusting ways of using resources and exploring new livelihood opportunities
- secure sufficient food so that, at all times, they have nutritious and culturally appropriate food for all members of their households.

To determine SHOUHARDO II's best practices, the NIRAPAD team applied this framework and analyzed whether or how the program's interventions contribute to adaptive capacity, disaster preparedness, diversity and security or enabling environments, then assessed whether the practices improve communities' ability to manage risks, adapt to change, and to secure sufficient food.

## SHOUHARDO II Interventions

The SHOUHARDO II Program has targeted the poor and extreme-poor (PEP) population and addresses availability, access and utilization issues of food insecurity, as well as their underlying causes, which include social injustice and discrimination, lack of participation and voice, and heightened vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. The overall goal of the SHOUHARDO II program is to transform the lives of 370,000 poor and extreme poor households in 11 of the poorest and marginalized districts in Bangladesh by reducing their vulnerability to food insecurity. It target is to reach these vulnerable households in 171 Union Parishads and 30 Upazilas in the 11 districts of Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Dinajpur in the North Char; Bogra, Sirajganj and Pabna in the Mid Char; Mymensingh, Jamalpur and Sunamganj in the *Haor* and Cox's Bazar in the Coastal Region.

To achieve the SHOUHARDO II' Program's goals, CARE partners with 16 national NGOs and collaborates with 13 Government ministries with the aim to achieve the following Strategic Objectives (SO) and Immediate Results (IR):

**SO1: 'Availability of' and 'access to' nutritious foods enhanced and protected for 370,000 PEP households.**

IR1.1: Improved and diversified agriculture systems developed and linked with private and public services.

IR1.2: Increased household income among PEP in the target communities.

**SO2: Improved health, hygiene and nutrition status of 281,000 children under two years of age.**

IR2.1: 'Access to' and 'utilization of' health and nutrition services improved to care-givers of children under two years of age.

IR2.2: Care-givers of children under two adopt improved health, hygiene and nutrition behavior and caring practices.

**SO3: PEP women and adolescent girls empowered in their families, communities and Union Parishads.**

IR3.1: Influence of PEP women and adolescent girls in decision making increased.

IR3.2: Local support systems strengthened to reduce Violence Against Women (VAW).

**SO4: Local elected bodies and government service providers' responsiveness and accountability to the PEP increased.**

IR4.1: Nation Building Departments (NBD) and Union Parishads proactively work to address the needs of the PEP, especially women.

IR 4.2: PEP access to entitlements and services increased, including safety nets and natural resources.

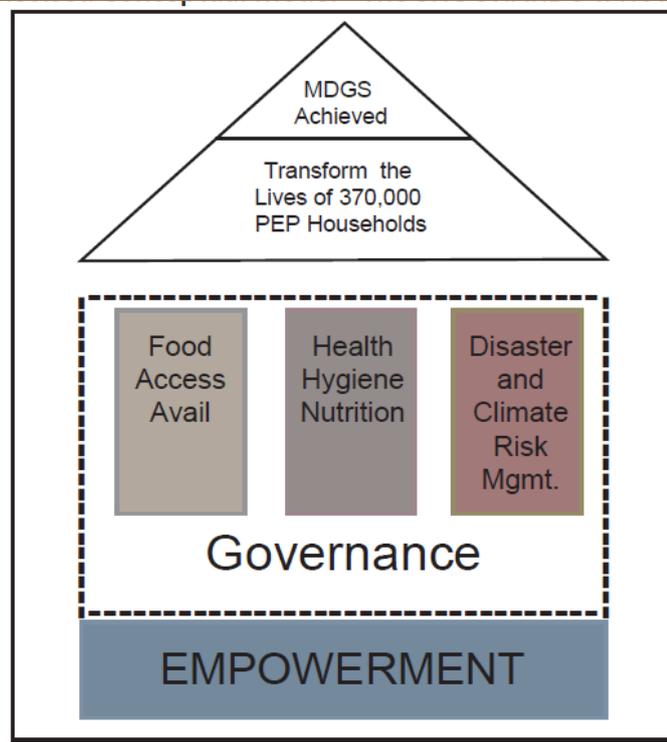
**SO5: Targeted community members and Government institutions are better prepared for and able to mitigate and respond to disasters, and able to adapt to climate change.**

IR5.1: Disaster contingency systems in place and functioning.

IR5.2: Influence local and national humanitarian assistance initiatives.

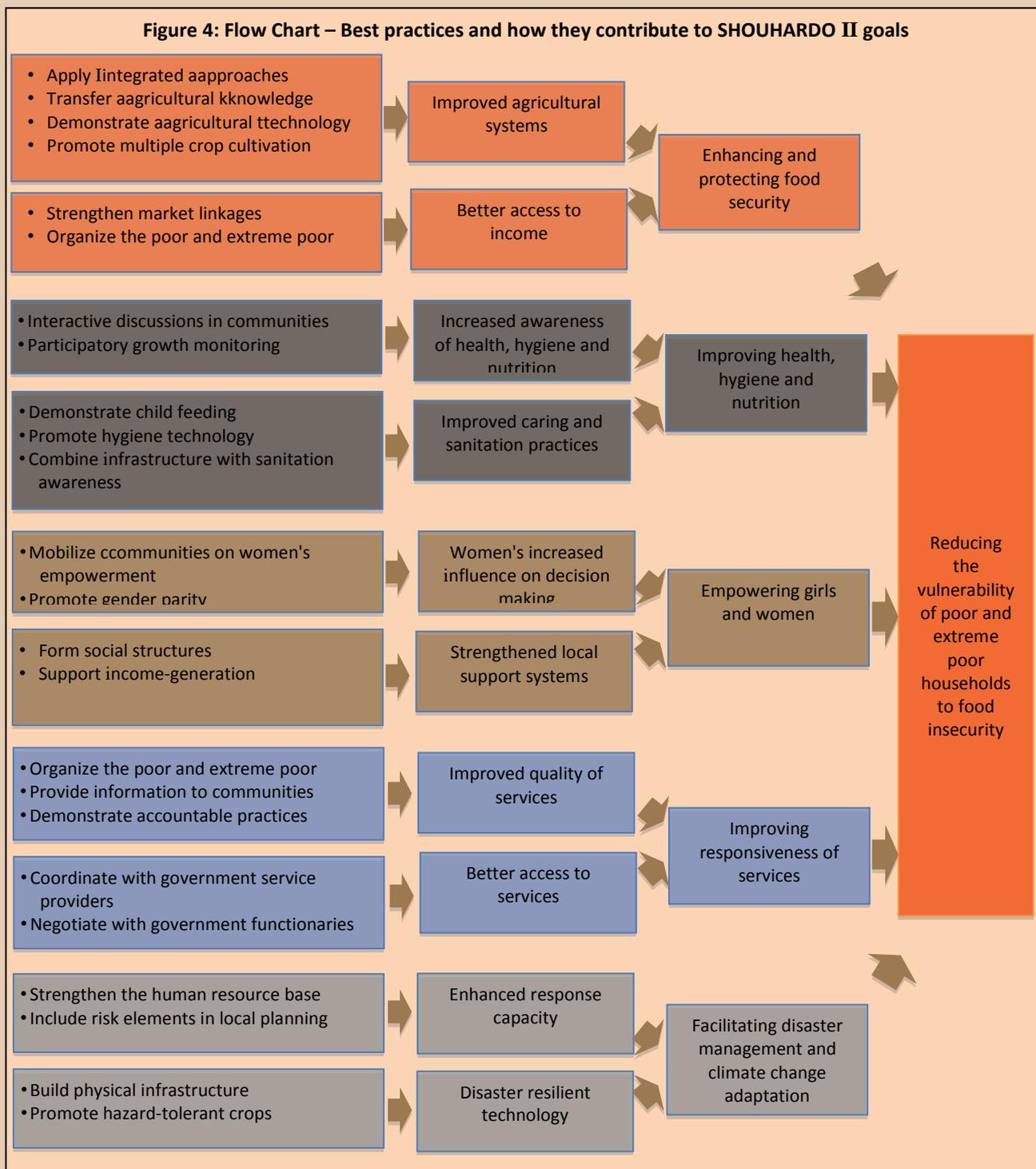
The program's conceptual model (shown in Figure 3) places empowerment of the poor and extreme-poor, with a special role for women's empowerment, at its foundation. This is inherent in CARE Bangladesh's programmatic approach, and the SHOUHARDO II design. Key areas of intervention (food access/availability, health, hygiene, nutrition, and disaster risk management) are represented as pillars placed on top of the foundation of women's empowerment. The program's governance approach, which includes capacity building, and the formation of Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) groups, is then shown as supporting and holding together the three pillars. The SHOUHARDO II 'House' is then completed by its roof, representing the transformation of 370,000 households and the achievement of various Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Figure 3: Conceptual Model – The SHOUHARDO II House



# Summary of best practices

The SHOUHARDO II program has planned and executed some 120 activities to pursue its goals through its five strategic objectives. During the course of implementation, it has achieved many noteworthy successes; however, there are some 32 approaches that stand out and qualify, by the criteria described above, as best practices. These actions show distinct causal relationships with specific achievements, and their outcomes are perceived by the communities as beneficial.



## Enhancing and protecting food security

Best Practices under SO1, the strategic objective to improve food security, include the application of an integrated approach, the transfer of knowledge in order to improve agricultural systems and organizing the poor and extreme-poor to improve their access to markets. Knowledge transfer, achieved through training or demonstrating new and improved technologies, seeks intensive land use, crop protection and increased crop production. Activities to improve food security cover all three factors of food security – i.e. food availability, food access and food utilization – and target a wide range of occupational groups, applying a variety of tools and methods.

There are eight best practices under this strategic objective. They show that even without significant cash inputs, intensive knowledge transfer can have dramatic beneficial outcomes. By transferring knowledge of improved agricultural techniques and exploring and strengthening market linkages, the poor and extreme-poor are able to obtain increased amounts of food and increased incomes for their families.

### Best practices in enhancing and protecting food security

- Apply integrated approaches to improve food security for the poor and extreme poor
- Supply intensive and regular support for agricultural knowledge transfer
- Provide agricultural knowledge to improve the effectiveness of input support
- Support positive deviant farmers in learning and demonstrating efficient agricultural practices
- Promote the use of crop rotation to control pests
- Promote multiple crop cultivation the intensive use of homestead land
- Strengthen market linkages to increase market opportunities
- Engage labor contracting societies in structural schemes to transfer income to the poor and extreme poor

## Improving health, hygiene and nutrition

There are five best practices under SO2, the strategic objective for improving health, hygiene and nutrition. They include interactive discussion and participatory analysis to increase understanding and awareness, introducing technology and demonstrations, and providing a combination of materials and knowledge to improve behavior and practices.

### Best practices in improving health, hygiene and nutrition

- Conduct courtyard sessions to transfer knowledge on health, hygiene and nutrition
- Use growth monitoring results to raise mothers' awareness about child nutrition
- Demonstrate cooking and feeding in the community to improve child feeding practices
- Promote the use of improved stoves to reduce adverse impacts on children's and women's health
- Use 'tippy tap' technology to promote handwashing practices in the communities
- Combine awareness-building with infrastructure support to improve sanitation practices

## Empowering women and girls

There is strong correlation between women's empowerment and different channels through which households and individual's access and secure food. The SHOUHARDO II Program emphasizes women's empowerment as instrumental in the success of program implementation strategies and as the foundation of the program framework. It applies a three-dimensional model, focusing on

Agency, Structure and Relations. SO3, the strategic objective for women's empowerment, is designed to increase women's ability to influence decision-making and subsequently reduce violence against them. The best practices relating to this strategic objective include forming social structures and supporting income generation activities that enable women to influence decisions, and mobilizing communities to promote gender parity, thereby strengthening the local support system to reduce violence against women.

#### **Best practices in empowering girls and women**

- Form social platforms for women to raise their concerns collectively
- Support women from poor households to generate income
- Mobilize communities to end violence against women
- Facilitate men's involvement in promoting women's empowerment
- Use early childhood care and development centers to promote gender parity

### **Improving the responsiveness of services**

SO4, the strategic objective for improving responsiveness and accountability of services, seeks to improve both the access of the poor and extreme-poor to services, and the quality of those services. There are two sets of best practices under this strategic objective: organizing the poor and extreme-poor, which involves providing information to communities and the demonstration of accountable practices that contribute to improving access to services, and improving the quality of services, involving coordination with government service providers and negotiation with government functionaries.

#### **Best practices in improving responsiveness of services**

- Strengthen VDCs to bridge gaps between citizens and local government bodies
- Involve poor and extreme-poor people in preparing the annual budgets of Union Parishads
- Involve VDC in developing Community Action Plans
- Provide information systematically to develop linkages between government service providers and community people
- Promote accountability in food distribution systems to ensure the entitlements and dignity of pregnant and lactating mothers
- Involve government functionaries in improving the livelihoods of the poor and extreme-poor
- Negotiate with key government officials to help extreme-poor households access *khasland*

### **Facilitating disaster management and climate change adaptation**

The SHOUHARDO II Program pursues SO5, its strategic objective to facilitate disaster management and climate change adaptation, by enhancing the response capacity of existing Union Disaster Committees and introducing disaster-resilient technologies in communities. There are three best practices under this strategic objective that contribute to enhancing response capacity by strengthening the human resource base and the inclusion of risk-reduction elements in local planning. There are also another three best practices that seek to introduce disaster-resilient technologies by building physical infrastructure and promoting hazard-tolerant crops.

**Best practices in facilitating disaster management and climate change adaptation**

- Establish Disaster Volunteers to ensure Union Disaster Committees function effectively
- Promote female Disaster Volunteers to ensure better understanding of women's disaster risks
- Facilitate community-led initiatives for reducing disaster risks
- Use risk and resource mapping for local-level action planning
- Raise dwelling areas to mitigate flood risks
- Support mound protection in communities to reduce wave erosion
- Promote the cultivation of rice varieties that are better able to cope with local hazards

# **Chapter Three**

## **Enhancing and Protecting Food Security**

## Best practice:

# Apply integrated approaches to improving food security for the poor and extreme-poor

### Context and objective

Bangladesh has made significant progress towards the reduction of poverty; its grain production has also dramatically increased since the 1990s. Nevertheless, the three major domains of food security – availability, access and utilization – are constrained by health, economic, social and governance factors and roughly one third of the country's population remains under poverty line. Poor and extreme-poor households do not have land and their incomes are insufficient to purchase food: they are vulnerable to food insecurity.

SHOUHARDO II aims to reduce the vulnerability of these poor and extreme-poor households to food insecurity through a comprehensive, multi-year assistance program. It not only deals with issues concerning food availability, access and utilization, but also addresses the underlying factors causing vulnerability, such as weak health services, lack of women's participation and voice, poor governance and disaster and climate risk.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II applies an integrated approach that includes improving food availability, food access and food utilization through a strategy that combines transferring knowledge, introducing better technology and the provision of material inputs. It also focuses on *food stabilization* as a cross-cutting issue, pursuing this through disaster- and climate-resilient cropping systems.

SHOUHARDO II's efforts to improve food availability for the poor and extreme-poor include promoting diversified crop cultivation, intensive vegetable cultivation in homesteads, more efficient use of fallow land and the use of disaster- and climate-resilient crops. To achieve this, SHOUHARDO II transfers agricultural knowledge (e.g. training and demonstration farms), introduces new and improved technologies (e.g. multi-terracing, inter-cropping, crop rotation for pest control and multiple crop cultivation) and disaster- and climate-resilient

crops (such as BRR1 dhan52, BRR1 dhan55, BRR1 dhan56 and BINA dhan7).

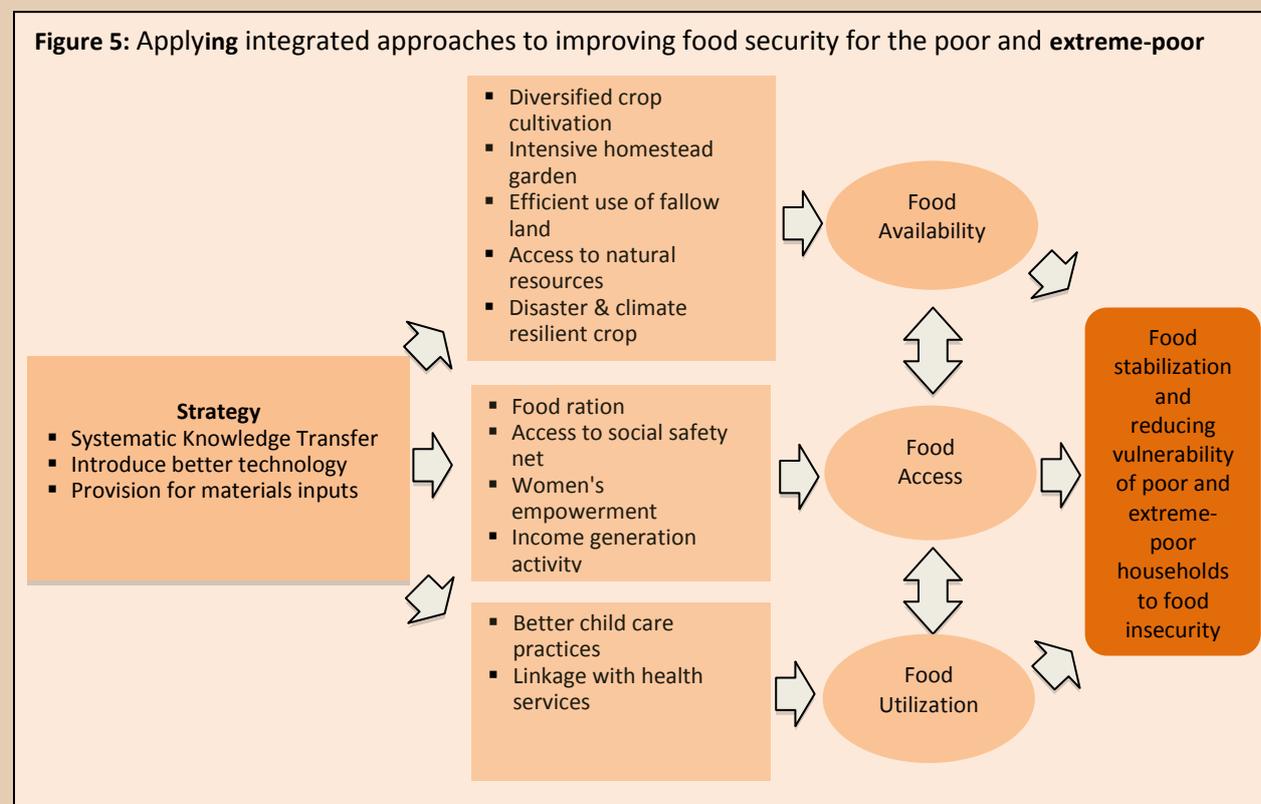


Photo 1: Vegetable cultivation at Bhangnamari village of Gauripur upazila, Mymensingh



Photo 2: A demonstration plot of BRR1 dhan56, a drought-tolerant rice variety, at Kunkunia village of Kazipur Upazila, Sirajganj

SHOUHARDO II improves the access of poor and extreme-poor households to food by providing food rations to pregnant women and lactating mothers. It also helps women and adolescent girls to raise their voices and influence decisions concerning their families' food security and wellbeing. Furthermore, it supports Village Development Committees to enable the poor and extreme-poor to access safety nets and natural resources. In addition, SHOUHARDO II involves poor and extreme-poor households, especially women, in Income-generating activities.



To help poor and extreme-poor households better utilize food, SHOUHARDO II seeks to improve health, hygiene and nutrition behavior and caring practices through knowledge transfers and awareness-raising. The process includes courtyard sessions, growth monitoring, and cooking and feeding demonstrations. In addition, SHOUHARDO II works to improve access to preventive and curative health and nutrition services by establishing linkages with health service providers.



*Photo 3: Conducting a courtyard session with mothers in Uttar Harishwar village, Kaunia upazila, Rangpur*



Photo 4: Monthly food ration distribution among pregnant and lactating mothers at Ulipur, Kurigram

## Results and achievements

The program has made significant progress in food availability, access and utilization. Communities have been able to grow crops around the year and produce varieties of food crops. Numbers of poor and extreme-poor households raising livestock, poultry and fish have increased. Also, there has been increase in the per-capita income of poor and extreme-poor beneficiary households and a decrease in the incidence of purchasing food on credit, skipping entire meals or eating less due to the scarcity of food.

'SHOUHARDO II integrates traditional approaches to enhancing food and livelihood security that have proven effective in Bangladesh. Individual sets of interventions under each strategic objective are comprehensive and provide the understanding, skills and material support necessary to achieve intended outcomes.'

- CARE Bangladesh, *SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013*, p. 86

Progress in program impact indicators (Baseline versus Midterm) <sup>4</sup>														
											Baseline	Midterm	Percent difference a/	
<b>SO1. Availability of and access to nutritious foods enhanced and protected for 370,000 PEP households</b>														
<b>Food security</b>														
Average household dietary diversity score												4.8	5.9	22.9
Number of months of adequate household food provisioning												5.9	9.9	67.8
<b>SO2. Improved health, hygiene and nutrition status of 281,000 children under 2 years of age</b>														
<b>Malnutrition among children under five</b>														
Percent of children 6-59 months moderately stunted												61.7	52.7	-14.9
Percent of children 6-59 months severely stunted*												30.8	22.6	-26.6
Percent of children 0-59 months moderately underweight												42.2	34.2	-19.0
Percent of children 0-59 months severely underweight*												13.5	9.8	-3.7

Source: CARE Bangladesh – *SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013*, p- xi

'...SHOUHARDO II households were able to significantly increase their mean household income per capita to Bangladesh Taka (BDT) 1,255 against an annual target of BDT 890 while maintaining a Life-of-Award (LOA) target of BDT 1,039...'

- CARE Bangladesh – *SHOUHARDO II Annual Results Report, 2013*, p. 1

## Conclusion

There has been increase in the duration of food provisioning in poor and extreme-poor households. The quality of food consumed by mothers has improved – they are able to eat pulses and legumes, meat, fish, egg, dark green leafy vegetables and fruits. Moreover, malnutrition among children under the age of five – on measures of stunting, wasting and underweight – has reduced.

## Best practice:

# Supply intensive and regular support for agricultural knowledge transfer

### Context and objective

The poor and extreme-poor of SHOUHARDO II do not have sufficient food throughout the year. Through regular agricultural knowledge transfer, the poor and extreme-poor will learn ways to use their land and generate a regular supply of agricultural products throughout the year, both for their own consumption and for sale.

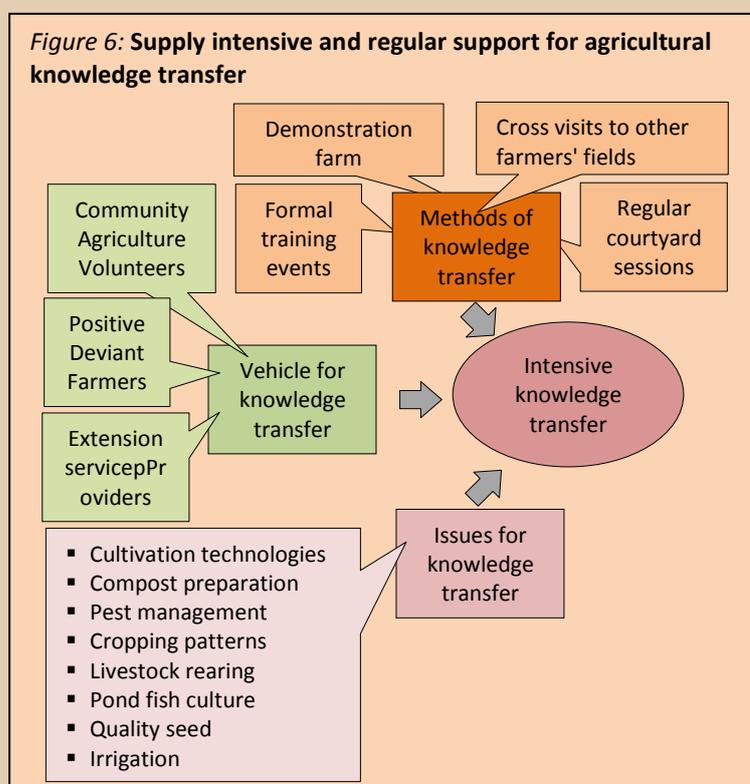
### Process and action

The whole community is involved in beneficiary selection when each beneficiary household is selected for a particular Core Occupational Group in SHOUHARDO II – these groups include Agriculture (learning about field crops such as rice, wheat, and maize), Fisheries, Comprehensive Homestead Development (cultivating vegetables, goats and poultry) and Income Generating Activities. Community Agriculture Volunteers are selected from the local communities and undergo intensive training, organized by SHOUHARDO II. Each volunteer has the responsibility to train and support 250–300 households: all poor and extreme-poor beneficiaries of SHOUHARDO II receive this formal training. Beneficiaries are trained on improved and new technologies for crop cultivation, including preparation of compost, quality seed, irrigation, cropping patterns, pest management and livestock rearing. In addition, for a small percentage of the poor and extreme-poor, SHOUHARDO II provides training on pond fish aquaculture. Throughout the year, regular courtyard sessions are conducted by the SHOUHARDO II Community Agriculture Volunteers. In addition, knowledge is gleaned through cross-visits to other farmers' fields, particularly those of the

SHOUHARDO II Positive Deviant Farmers.

Part of each Community Action Plan is to involve the relevant Union Parishad to ensure that the government Agricultural Extension Officers makes regular visits to offer assistance and advice. In addition to formal training through very comprehensive and detailed modules, the poor and extreme-poor learn that vegetables can be grown throughout the year and not at particular times of the year. The use of a demonstration homestead garden, often implemented by the

Figure 6: Supply intensive and regular support for agricultural knowledge transfer

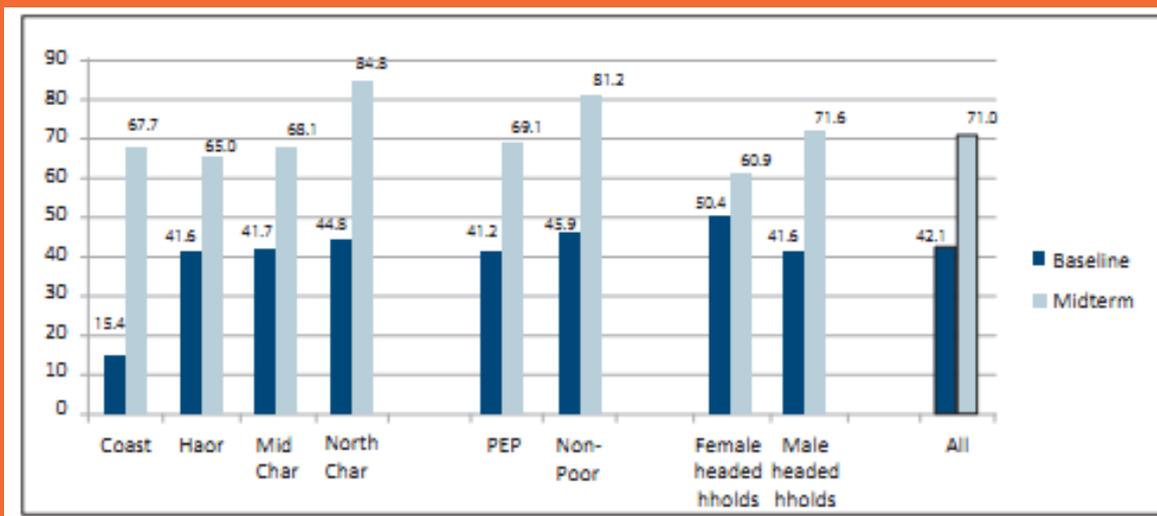


Community Agriculture Volunteers, is used as a 'Learning Center'.

## Results and achievements

With very minimum financial input, but very intensive and significant training, the poor and extreme-poor under the SHOUHARDO II Program have adopted new techniques and practices related to Comprehensive Homestead Development, in particular, the use of organic fertilizer, development of compost pits, popularizing of pit crops and ensuring crops and vegetables are grown throughout the year. These improved and new techniques have also been adopted by many non-poor members of the community.

Percent of field crop producers adopting the minimum number of technologies (three), by region, wellbeing category and gender of household head



Source: CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 22

### Successful Comprehensive Homestead Development

Apia Begum is an extremely poor beneficiary of the SHOUHARDO II program. She was selected for Comprehensive Homestead Development support through the beneficiary selection process. Apia only owns small piece of land that she uses as her homestead. She received three days of training from the program, covering the preparation of compost and vegetable beds and the production of multiple vegetables. After the training, she received input support to the value of BDT 3,000 (USD 38.78) from the program, including better quality seeds for



Photo 6: Apia Begum in front of her homestead garden

vegetables and fruits, fencing nets, materials for preparing compost and a goat. With the input support, she prepared a compost pit and started growing bitter melon, eggplant, cucumber, bottle gourd, pumpkin, red amaranth, spinach and other vegetables on her homestead land. She also planted some papaya, litchi, guava and lemon trees in her yard. She applied no chemical fertilizer or pesticides to the vegetables or fruits. Apia received regular and intensive support from SHOUHARDO's Community Agricultural Volunteer. After satisfying her household's need for vegetables, last year Apia was able to sell her vegetables and fruits and made a profit of BDT 20,000 (USD 258.56). She also used the knowledge of animal husbandry she had learned through the program to take care of the goat she received as an input support; she now has three goats.

*Source: Discussion with Apia Begum, Village: Sadhua Dhamer Hat, Union: Bajra, Upazila: Ulipur, District: Kurigram*

### Conclusion

Vegetable and field crops are being grown more systematically and throughout the year and the families of the poor and extreme-poor are receiving better-quality and an increased quantity of food. The improvement in the general health of families leads to greater productivity and income, better family health (which saves money) and greater success at school for children.

## Best practice:

Provide agricultural knowledge to improve the effectiveness of input support



Photo 7: Vegetable cultivation by the side of a pond at Dakkhin Titpara village of Dimla upazila, Nilphamari

### Context and objective

Over time, agricultural land holdings in Bangladesh are getting smaller, creating pressure to maximize output and income from increasingly smaller pieces of agricultural land. This is particularly true for the poor and extreme-poor, who are the targets of SHOUHARDO II.

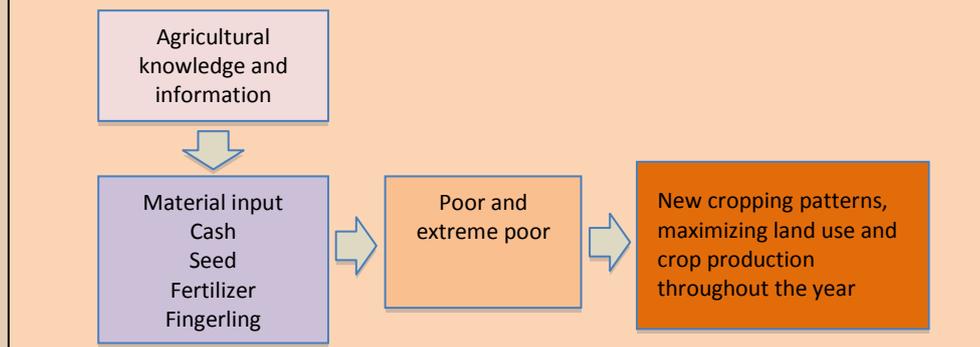
The program recognized that intensive knowledge transfers, rather than cash assets, were needed to bring poor and extreme-poor people above the poverty line.

Farmers (the 'model' farmers).

### Process and action

Intensive knowledge transfer is arranged by SHOUHARDO II in the areas of field crops, comprehensive homestead development and fisheries. After Community Agriculture Volunteers have been provided with intensive, five-day training by SHOUHARDO II, often assisted by government agriculture and livestock Extension Officers, they impart training to poor and extreme-poor beneficiaries and non-poor people alike, covering new key techniques and technologies related to cereal crops, vegetables, fish, poultry and livestock. SHOUHARDO II technical partners Cereal System Initiative for South Asia (CSISA) and World Fish have had significant involvement with demonstration plots and ponds. In addition, much learning has been obtained by visiting the plots of the Positive Deviant

**Figure 7: Providing agricultural knowledge to improve the effectiveness of input support**



## Results and achievements

Poor, extreme-poor and non-poor people have learned how to grow vegetables and field crops throughout the year. New cropping patterns of field crops, such as *Aman* rice, mustard and Boro rice have been introduced in beneficiary communities. Farmers in program areas tested new varieties of rice – flood-tolerant, short-duration and cold-tolerant – and a new variety of wheat. They also applied intercropping methods to grow maize with coriander. They maximized land use by cultivating vegetables and fruits on bunds between paddy fields, homesteads and roadsides. They have also cultured fish along with rice. Many farmers also adopted the practice of using sex pheromone hormone traps for pest control purposes.

'Beneficiaries were trained on improved technologies for crop cultivation, including preparation of compost, quality seed, irrigation, cropping patterns, pest management, livestock rearing, and pond fish culture. After completion of the formal training the program continues to provide input support to 119,640 beneficiaries to enable them to practice the new learning presented in the training.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II Annual Results Report 2013, p. 2

## Use of roadside fallow land for fruits and vegetable cultivation

During the preparation of the Community Action Plan, the Village Development Committee of Chatnai Block-8 in Nilphamari planned to utilize unused fallow lands by the sides of a road. The Village Development Committee members proposed to plant banana trees and vegetables on both the sides of the road. They formed a six- member sub-



Photo 8: Vegetable and banana cultivation by the side of a road at Chatnai Block-8 village

committee and discussed the issue with SHOUHARDO II staff. Following this discussion, the committee consulted Union Parishad members, community people and the adjacent landowners. These groups sat together to finalize the work process and profit sharing. An agreement was signed on a BDT 100 (USD 1.29) judicial stamp paper. Total 18 participants were selected for the initiative where 12 were poor and extra poor beneficiaries of SHOUHARDO II and 6 were the landowners. 450 banana trees along with eggplant and chili saplings were planted by the side of 1.5 km. road.

*Source: Discussion with Village Development Committee Members, Village: Chatnai Block – 8, Union: Purbo Chatnai, Upazila: Dimla, District: Nilphamari*

## **Conclusion**

New knowledge and new techniques imparted by SHOUHARDO II's Community Agricultural Volunteers has resulted in increased productivity and financial profit with very minimal financial investment.

## Best practice:

# Support positive deviant farmers in learning and demonstrating efficient agricultural practices

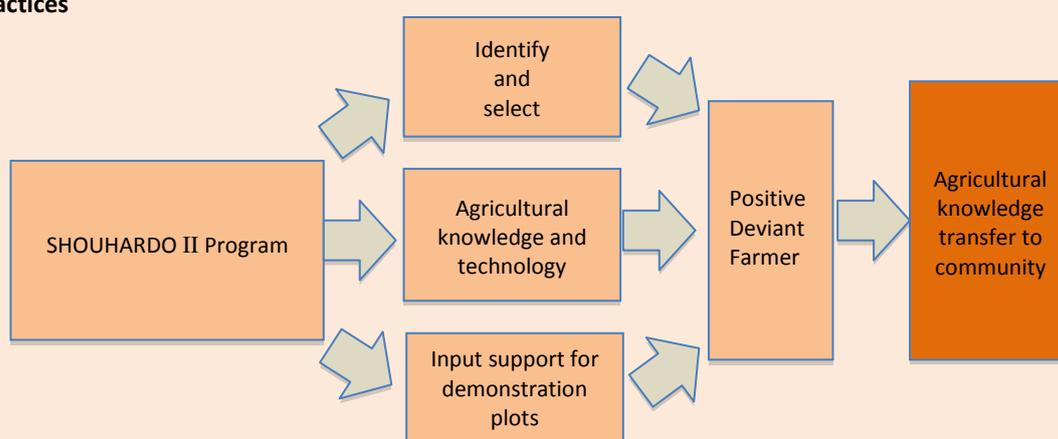
### Context and objective

In all aspects of development, it is found that if there is a successful model or example to follow, this helps the process of changing public and 'individual opinions and helps in the processes of training people in new approaches. In Strategic Objective - 1 'Availability of' and 'access to' nutritious food', it was decided that SHOUHARDO II training in new agricultural techniques should be available to the whole community, rich and poor.

### Process and action

Rich or non-poor members of beneficiary village communities are able to participate in all courtyard sessions run by the Community Agricultural Volunteer as well as by any visiting government agricultural officer. In each community the Village Development Committee identifies one or two 'model' farmers (known in SHOUHARDO II as 'Positive Deviant Farmers') and a specific training module is designed for them. During three days of training, they learn how to prepare seedbeds, compost, use sex pheromone traps instead of pesticides and cultivate multiple vegetables simultaneously.

**Figure 8: Supporting positive deviant farmers in learning and demonstrating efficient agricultural practices**



### Results and achievements

It is found that positive deviant farmers are proud to be 'model' farmers and are keen to share their successes (and failures) with all members of the community. They have been prepared to try out new crops, new ideas and to take some financial risks as well. Many of them have been eager to offer to train others. The Positive Deviant Farmers work closely with the Village Development Committee and are sometimes also members of the Union Parishad, and can be very instrumental in

'During this period [Year 2013] 605 PDFs [Positive Deviant Farmers] were trained to model the different technologies for targeted communities, especially the Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) households.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II Annual Results Report 2013, p. 2

ensuring that government Agricultural Officers offer assistance and advice. SHOUHARDO II encourages the positive deviant farmers opportunities to visit each other and even engage each other in some healthy competition. Beneficiaries and the whole community are enriched with knowledge and understanding of demonstrated technologies, and production and income are both increased.

### Positive Deviant Farmer

Md. Safor Ali was selected as a positive deviant farmer by the Village Development Committee and SHOUHARDO II. He had 270 decimals (2.7 acres) of land and was eager to experiment with new cultivation ideas and techniques upon receiving training from SHOUHARDO II. He was also willing to show others the cultivation processes. Md. Safor Ali received three days of training at implementing partner JSKS's office in Dimla on how to prepare seedbeds and compost,



Photo 10: Md. Safor Ali in front of his paddy field

use sex pheromone traps instead of pesticide and cultivate multiple vegetables simultaneously. After receiving the training he started vegetable cultivation on a small portion of land (10 decimals) using the bed system and other methods he learned from the training. He cultivated bitter melon, cucumber, bottle gourd, pumpkin, red amaranth, spinach and potato, and was able to produce about 1,000 kilograms of potato from that land in one year. He also cultured fish in his 45-decimal paddy field (slightly less than half an acre) with BIRRI Dhan-29 rice variety. He invested only BDT 5,000 (USD 64.50) in culturing the fish and made a profit of BDT 25,000 (USD 322.47) on top of meeting his household needs for fish. The Community Agriculture Volunteer and SHOUHARDO II staff paid regular visits to see his progress. Also, other farmers came to his farm to see how Md. Safor Ali prepared the bed, made compost, used sex pheromone traps, and cultivated different vegetables together. Md. Safor Ali eagerly explained to them how he applies improved and new technologies and intercropping and crop variations.

*Source: Discussion with Md. Safor Ali, Village: Chatnai Block – 9, Union: Purbo Chhatnai, Upazila: Dimla, District: Nilphamari*

## Conclusion

The decision of SHOUHARDO II to select and train positive deviant farmers has been an inspired one. The farmers have experimented with new crops and techniques and have taken pride in being known as model farmers. They have welcomed visitors, poor and non-poor alike, who come to learn and they are ready to train and help others.

## Best practice:

# Promote the use of crop rotation to control pests

### Context and objective

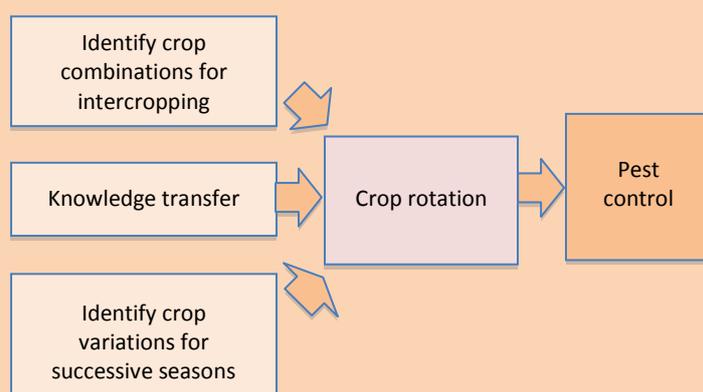
For centuries, all over the world, people have grown one crop on the same land every year. So that the soil could recover its fertility, the land would be left 'fallow' or uncultivated for one year in roughly every three. However, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Dutch farmers found that it was not necessary to keep land 'fallow' at all, if a four-crop cycle was adopted: turnips (a root crop), followed by barley, clover (a leguminous crop good for grazing cattle or sheep on), and wheat. The leguminous clover acted as a nitrogen-fixing agent, while animals would also graze both the turnips and clover and the soil would benefit from the animal droppings. It was also observed that the incidence of pest attack reduced when this crop rotation was adopted. With the development of fertilizer and pesticides from the 1950s onwards, many farmers all over the world felt that they could use mono-cropping and maximize income.

In Bangladesh, this has meant that in some places three crops of rice have been grown on the same land while using excessive chemical fertilizer and pesticides. SHOUHARDO II observed that with the practice of mono-cropping, the soil fertility has dropped and there has been an increase of crop damage by insects and other pests.

### Process and action

The SHOUHARDO II Community Agricultural Volunteers received five days of training on various techniques for cultivating cereal crops, vegetables, fish, poultry and livestock, and Income Generation Activities. This training has been supported by the relevant government departments, which have at times supported the Community Agricultural Volunteers in the regular courtyard training sessions for the poor and extreme-poor households. The Community Agricultural Volunteers are able to explain to the poor and extreme-poor how crop rotation in fields or homesteads is not only able to control insect and fungal pests but also preserves the fertility of the soil. The Community Agricultural Volunteers also explain that some vegetables use up more plant

▪ Figure 9: Promoting the use of crop rotation to control pests



nutrients than others which affect the soil fertility.

## **Results and achievements**

In all the village communities where SHOUHARDO II is working, the value of demonstration homestead plots, often cared for the Community Agricultural Volunteers, cannot be overstated. Villagers coming to these plots and also to the land of Positive Deviant Farmers learn new practices and techniques. Crop rotation advice is followed closely and has resulted in a reduction of insect and fungal pests as well as a significant retention of – and occasional increases in – soil fertility. Relay cropping or intercropping is also a type of crop rotation and this has been successful with maize alternated with coriander and onions among eggplant controlling nematodes (see *SHOUHARDO II Annual Results Report, 2012*).

## **Conclusion**

Controlling pests through crop rotation has lowered beneficiaries' production costs and increased their profits when the product is sold. This has been a significant value-for-money success in SHOUHARDO II. In addition, by not using chemical fertilizer and pesticides, the food consumed by the poor and extreme-poor families has been safer and more nutritious.

## Best practice:

# Promote multiple crop cultivation for the Intensive use of homestead land



Photo 12: Multiple crop cultivation at homestead in Achintapur village of Gaouripur upazila, Mymensingh

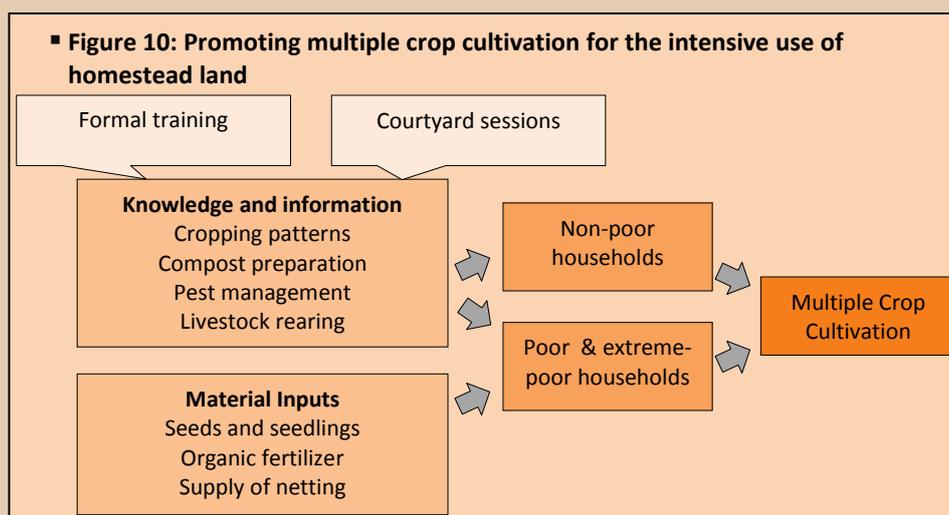
### Context and objective

For much of the year the homestead land of many Bangladeshi village families lies fallow, as, traditionally, vegetables are grown only when sufficient rainfall is experienced, where there is some form of irrigation nearby, and during the winter. One of the key objectives of SHOUHARDO II is to maximize the use of the limited homestead land that each family possesses. Often a poor or extreme-poor beneficiary does not even possess as much as 5–10 decimals of land (one twentieth to one tenth of an acre). The objective is to intensively maximize the use of limited homestead land with good quality vegetable seeds to make the beneficiary household more food self-sufficient and enable the intake of better nutrition.

### Process and action

The poor and extreme-poor of SHOUHARDO II receive formal training for homestead vegetable gardens and livestock. Throughout the year, regular courtyard sessions are conducted for the poor and extreme-poor by the SHOUHARDO II Community Agricultural Volunteers. Training is also open to non-poor community members, but they do not receive any input packages. These courtyard sessions are complemented by regular courtyard sessions relating to Strategic Objective 2 (Health, Hygiene and Nutrition) by the Community Health Volunteers, who stress the importance of vegetables for good nutrition. Beneficiaries are trained in improved technologies for crop cultivation, including preparation of compost, quality seed, irrigation, cropping patterns, pest management and livestock rearing. Inputs include the provision of seeds and seedlings, organic fertilizer and supplies of netting. In addition, the homestead is, in many cases, the place where the beneficiary household keeps and rears goats and/or poultry or ducks. Knowledge is gathered through cross-visits to other farmers' fields, particularly those of the SHOUHARDO II Positive Deviant Farmers, while the work of the Community Agricultural Volunteers is enhanced by advice received from the local

government Agricultural and Livestock Officers.



## Results and achievements

There is evidence that intensive Comprehensive Homestead Development has significantly contributed to increased food availability and, in most cases, increased household income from the sale of vegetables through 'Collectors'. The beneficiary households get continuous financial return from selling vegetables around the year. The most important aspect of this practice is improved nutrition, particularly for children. The knowledge transfer has benefitted the total community and not just the poor and extreme-poor.

### Significant achievements from introducing multiple crop cultivation

- Adoption of organic cultivation, which produces safer food
- Making compost in pits
- Wide adoption of pit crop cultivation
- Use of *neem* oil-based pesticides
- Use of sex pheromone traps to control insects in vegetable production

*Source: Observation and Discussion with farmer groups, Village: Chatnai Block-8, Union: Purbo Chatnai, Upazila: Dimla, District: Nilphamari*

### Multiple crop cultivation in homestead gardens

In Khapara village of Bhangura Upazila in Pabna, Adiya Khatun has become a successful homestead gardener. She was given three days of training by SHOUHARDO II, where she learned how to grow multiple crops throughout the year. After receiving the training she started growing vegetables on her homestead garden. She mainly cultivated amaranth, Indian spinach, spinach, bottle gourd, bitter melon, pumpkin, brinjal, chili and cucumber. She grows these throughout the year, and selects the crops according to the seasons.

*Source: Discussion with Adiya Khatun, Village: Khapara, Union: Bhangura, Upazila: Bhangura, District: Pabna*

## Conclusion

Multiple crop cultivation and the use of new techniques have ensured food crops throughout the year. Adoption of the practices benefits not only the poor and extreme-poor but the whole community.

# Best practice: Strengthen market linkages to increase market opportunities

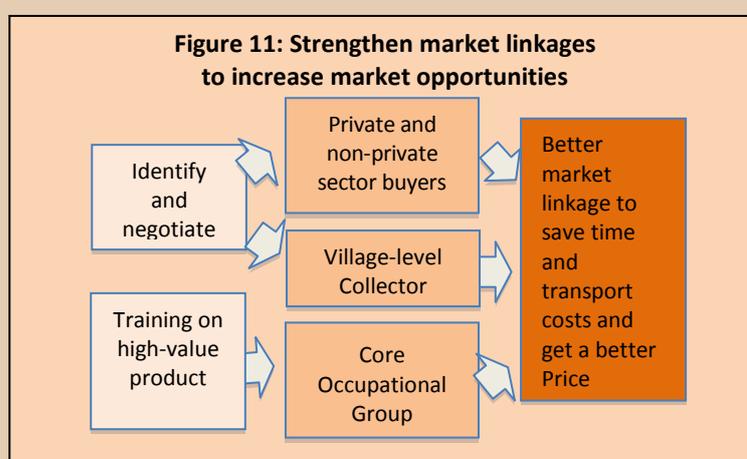
## Process and action

### Context and objective

In Bangladesh, the poor and extreme-poor rarely have agricultural products or other commodities to sell. Mostly, they rely on selling their labour for agricultural work or working in other activities after migrating to the towns and cities.

SHOUHARDO II supports the poor and extreme-poor through program interventions to enable them to have surplus agricultural products and access to markets to sell these commodities.

SHOUHARDO II identifies potential linkages with private-sector and non-private-sector buyers of agricultural products. The poor and extreme-poor are also brought into a supply chain of collecting, distributing and marketing the agricultural products. This linking is also related to access to agri-inputs, finances and services from local government Agricultural Officers. SHOUHARDO II trains the beneficiaries in simple book-keeping and how to bargain when selling their products, as well as how to cut out the 'middle-man'.



## Results and achievements

SHOUHARDO II has managed to train a number of 'Collectors', who collect products from their own local community and take them to a nearby market. The 'Collector' decides which market to go to by doing market research via mobile phone; at all times the 'Collector' maintains close contact with the Village Development Committee and the Community Agricultural Volunteer. At times when there is excessive product the 'Collector' employs additional personnel and may send the products to bigger towns and cities.

'The high population density, even in semi-remote and remote areas, often helps to find local markets available within a radius of a few kilometers. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) have highlighted the facilitation role of VDCs (Village Development Committees) in finding market opportunities with higher prices, organizing transport, and inviting wholesalers to buy produce directly. That is remarkable and further tribute to the key position of the VDC in the SHOUHARDO approach. Other improvements include the introduction of high-value crops such as jute, turmeric, pumpkin and ginger.'

### Collector increases market opportunities

Md. Billal from Bhatirchar Village is a poor farmer; he used to sell vegetables in a local market, but the Village Development Committee decided to establish him as a local Collector. Through SHOUHARDO II, the VDC provided him with training on market linkage and with some cash grants to purchase and transport vegetables. After receiving the inputs from the SHOUHARDO II program, Md. Billal started to collect vegetables from individual households in the village and take these to the markets in nearby towns to sell. This enables him to get a better price for the produce. It also helps the other village households by saving their time and transport costs and passing on fair prices for their produce.

*Source: Discussion with Md. Billal, Village: Bhatirchar, Shahganj, Ishwarganj*

### Conclusion

SHOUHARDO II has enabled the poor and extreme-poor to obtain better prices for their produce and make a higher profit. By training the Collectors' on market linkage, new employment opportunities have been generated and the individual farmers who hand over their produce to the Collectors' save time, transport costs and avoid paying market tax.

## Best practice: Engage labor contracting societies in structural schemes to transfer income to the poor and extreme-poor

### Context and Objective

In Bangladesh, usually the rural poor work as the labor force under professional contractors and obtain wages, meaning they are unable to access a share of the profit from the construction work in the way that contractors do.

SHOUHARDO II implements some structural schemes through Labor Contracting Societies. These are small to medium-size structured schemes that contribute directly to disaster risk mitigation and climate change adaptation. This approach substantially contributes to transferring resources to the poor and extreme-poor.

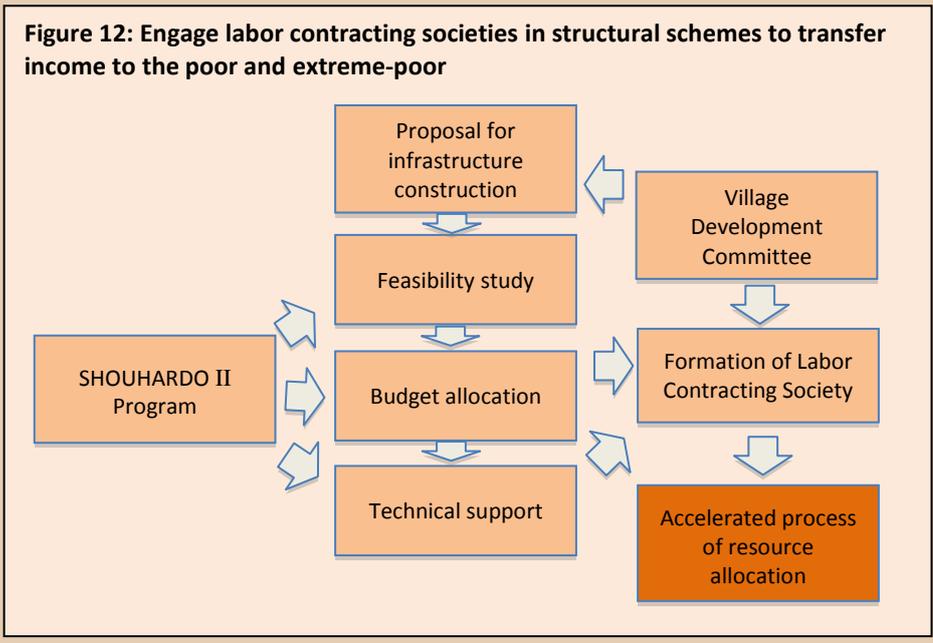
### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II and Village Development Committees screen the villages' Community Action Plans and identify construction work for implementation through Labor Contracting Societies. SHOUHARDO II management review the proposed schemes against a set of criteria, i.e. cooperation of the community and Union Parishad representatives, transportation facilities of construction materials to the scheme site, distance between scheme site and local office of the implementing agency, the scheme's cost and the capacity of the community to complete to project.

Project engineers the conduct a feasibility test and finalize the schemes for design and estimation. After estimation, the implementing organization discusses the formation of a Labor Contracting Society with the Village Development Committee. This Society consists of 7–20 people, with a 30–60% female membership. SHOUHARDO II then enters into a formal agreement

with the Labor Contracting Society and assigns the job contract. Usually the implementing agency provides the Labor Contracting Society between one and three days of training before the commencement of physical work.

To help the Labor Contracting Society initiate the project, SHOUHARDO II advances 30% of the estimated cost; the Labor Contracting Society opens a bank account to access this money.



## Results and achievements

Poor and extreme-poor men and women have the opportunity to work as construction day laborers in their localities. At the same time, they are able to access a share of the profit from the contract of construction work. Individually, members of the Labor Contracting Society gain knowledge and skill regarding construction work. Also, as they operate as an organized body, they are able to secure similar contracts in the future.

### Labor Contracting Society constructs a Community Resource Center

The Village Development Committee of Hatia Bhabesh Uttar village identified a need for a common place for social gatherings. They included it in their Community Action Plan and SHOUHARDO II agreed to provide support to construct a Community Resource Center in the village. Accordingly, the Village Development Committee negotiated with local landowner Shachin Chandra to use a piece of land for the center and formed a Labor Contracting Society comprised of seven members. SHOUHARDO II allocated BDT 660,762 (USD 8,548.02) to build the center. The program then signed an agreement with the Labor Contracting Society and arranged for three days of training for the Society members. The Society completed the construction work within four months and made a profit of BDT 98,000 (USD 1,267.79), which they distributed among themselves equally.

*Source: Discussion with members of the Labor Contracting Society, Village: Hatia Bhabesh Uttar, Union: Hatia, Upazila: Ulipur, District: Kurigram*

## Conclusion

The Labor Contracting Society interventions help poor and extreme-poor people earn more money and accelerate the process of resource accumulation. This approach also enables them, as collective body, to compete with other contractors who operate individually.

# **Chapter Four**

## **Improving Health, Hygiene and Nutrition**

## Best practice:

# Conduct courtyard sessions to transfer knowledge on health, hygiene and nutrition

## Process and action

### Context and objective

Limited access to updated knowledge and information is a major constraint in the maintenance of health, hygiene and nutrition for the rural poor in Bangladesh. Courtyard sessions are a culturally appropriate means of transferring health, hygiene and nutrition knowledge.

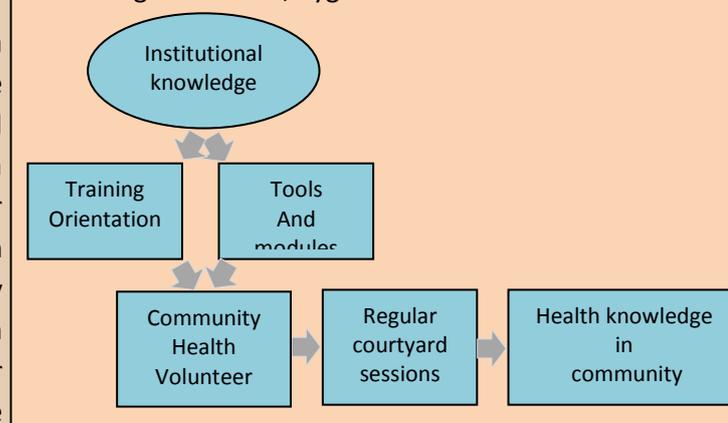
SHOUHARDO II selects female Health Volunteers from the community and trains them on 24 critical issues of health, hygiene and nutrition to raise awareness and provide correct information to the village women in order to improve the health, hygiene and nutrition knowledge and practices of the villagers, particularly the poor and extreme-poor.

The Community Health Volunteer also makes home visits for selected cases where the child is sick or their growth is faltering, or the pregnant woman has a problem. In cases where the pregnant woman or the mother of a old child younger than two is prevented from attending the courtyard sessions or growth monitoring and promotion sessions by her husband or other family members, the Community Health Volunteer also makes home visits to talk to the family members. If that is not effective, she seeks help from the women's empowerment group members or sometimes the Village Development Committee. She also sometimes conducts courtyard sessions on health and hygiene issues with the men in the evenings.

Using a monthly schedule, Community Health Volunteers conduct courtyard sessions on one health, hygiene and nutrition topic per month, based on a Flipchart and Module developed by SHOUHARDO II. For convenience and accessibility, she usually divides her working area into four parts and every week conducts one session in one of those areas. The number of participants in a session is usually not more than 20.

The volunteer also conducts growth monitoring and promotion sessions for children under the age of two every month, combining this with the monthly Extended Programme for Immunization (EPI) day as much as possible, and counsels the mothers. She also weighs the pregnant women and records their weight in their SHOUHARDO II health card and provides necessary advice.

**Figure 13:** Conducting courtyard sessions to transfer knowledge on health, hygiene and nutrition



### Some key messages on health, hygiene and nutrition delivered to women

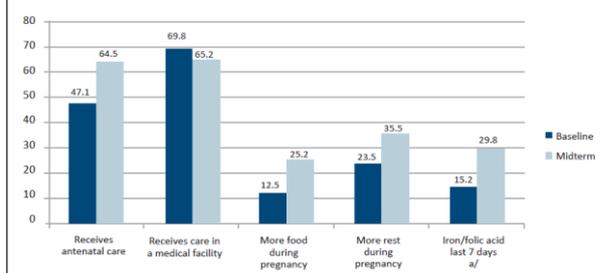
- Breastfeed exclusively for the first 6 months (180 days) of a child's life
- Introduce babies to home-made complementary food from the 7<sup>th</sup> month, gradually increasing the quantity and time of feeding
- Wash your hands with soap and water after defecation, after cleaning the child, before preparing and handling food, before eating and before feeding a child
- Pregnant and nursing women need extra food rich in nutrients
- Pregnant women need adequate rest, i.e., 2 hours during the day and 8 hours at night
- Pregnant women must not do heavy work
- Ensure safe delivery with assistance from trained health care providers
- Immunize pregnant women and young children as per EPI schedule
- Take children for monthly growth monitoring checkups
- All members of the family must use sanitary latrines
- Wear sandals, particularly when visiting the toilet
- Cut your nails once week
- Wash vegetables and fruits before cutting them
- Always keep food covered

### Results and achievements

Health, hygiene and nutrition messages reached all pregnant women and lactating mothers from poor and extreme-poor beneficiary households. Practices for feeding and taking care of the pregnant women and lactating mothers in the communities improved substantially. Poor and extreme-poor women gained easy access to knowledge and information relating to health, hygiene and nutrition issues.

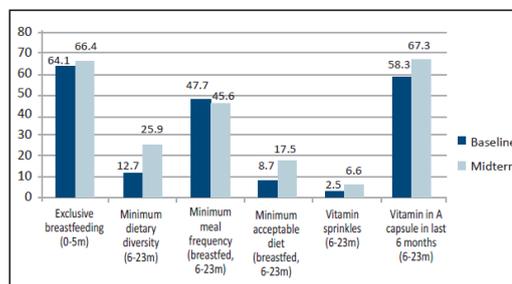
'... courtyard sessions are a culturally appropriate means of communicating key health messages and promoting behavior change. Participants have a high level of awareness of key health messages...'

*CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 33*



#### Caring practices for mothers

(Source: *CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 39*)



#### Nutrition-related caring practices for children under two

(Source: *CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 40*)

## Conclusion

The mothers and caregivers of children under two years of age now have easy access to updated knowledge and support in accessing primary health care services. Families are more aware and conscious of health, hygiene and nutrition, particularly in relation to children.

# Best practice: Use growth monitoring results to raise mothers' awareness about child nutrition

## Context and Objective

Poor nutrition remains the most important cause of child mortality and morbidity. Undernourished children are at high risk of mortality and, if they survive, they remain at high risk for poor cognitive development, leading to poor learning capacity as a child and poor productivity as an adult.

Growth monitoring and promotion means regular assessment of the growth of children under two years old to detect deviation from normal growth and the application of appropriate interventions, thereby preventing growth faltering and irreversible physical and intellectual damage caused to a growing generation.

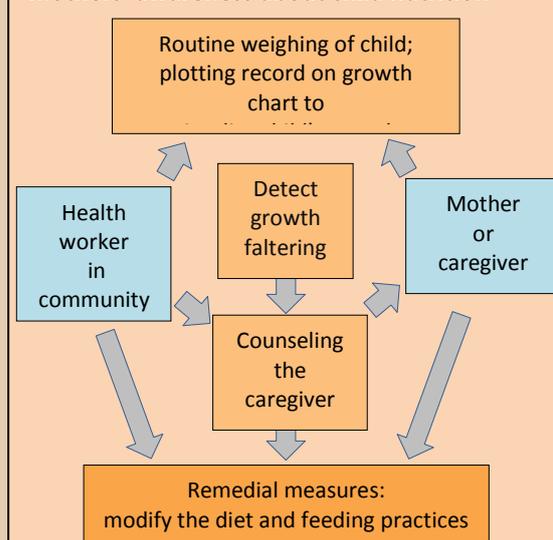
## Process and action

Once a pregnant woman is identified and enrolled in the SHOUHARDO II Program she receives a health card. This comprehensive health card records information about the pregnant woman, the progress of her pregnancy, birth planning, antenatal, peri-natal and postnatal care, history of the child's birth, the child's birth weight, monthly weight and immunization record, etc.

The growth monitoring approach helps mothers and caregivers 'visualize' the growth of their children, by using a World Health Organization growth chart. Growth monitoring and promotion is a critical entry point for the health worker for counseling the mother or the caregiver about the child's nutrition, physical growth and mental development.

If the child has not gained weight or has lost weight, the Community Health Volunteer tries to find out from the mother what the problem is and advises the mother accordingly. If she considers that medical care by qualified personnel is required, she writes a referral slip and sends the mother and child to a nearby health center operated by the government or an NGO. If it is simply improper (and/or inadequate) feeding or care that led to growth faltering she counsels the mother on proper feeding and caring practices, including feeding the child a variety of foods containing adequate vitamins and minerals. She also talks about proper hygiene and sanitation and encourages the mother to attend SHOUHARDO II cooking and feeding demonstration sessions along with her child and the child's grandmother. The

**Figure 14:**  
Using growth monitoring results to raise mothers' awareness about child nutrition



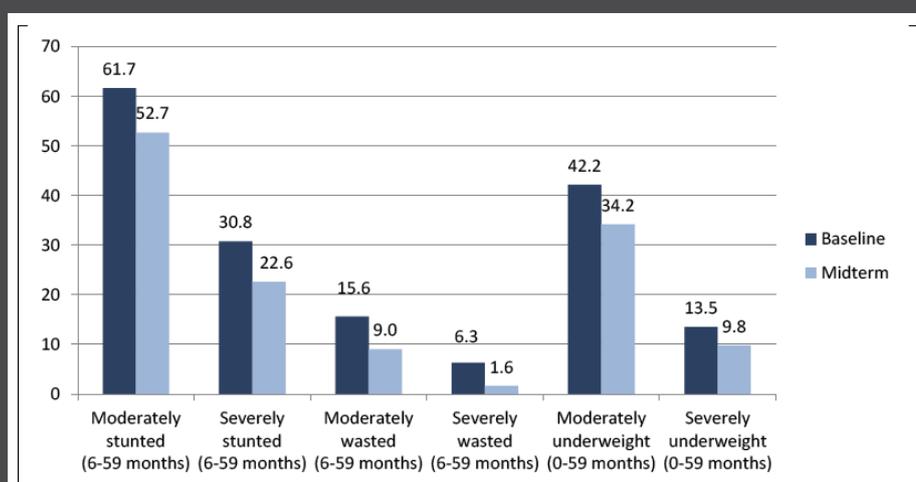
Community Health Volunteer also pays the mothers home visits for follow-up and further counseling.

## Results and achievements

Mothers, fathers and caregivers have started taking notice of the child's growth trajectory as plotted on the growth card. Counseling by the Community Health Volunteer has helped mothers and families to modify the diet and feeding practices of children less than two years of age, evidenced by the reported increase in exclusive breastfeeding rates in the project areas. An increased variety of homemade food rich in vitamins and minerals and seasonal fruits are being given to these children.

'... children under age five have experienced significant reductions in all measures of malnutrition—stunting, wasting and underweight. The reduction of 9 percentage points in moderate stunting (chronic malnutrition), 4.5 points per year..'

Percent of children under-five stunted, wasted and underweight



- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 35

### Growth monitoring to maintain child's nutrition status

Khadiza Begum of Karkhanapara village is a housewife from an extreme-poor household. She received food rations from SHOUHARDO II program as a pregnant woman and, later, as lactating mother. She also attended the courtyard sessions run by the Community Health Volunteer and learned that, to monitor their nutritional status, children's weight should be checked every month and recorded on the Growth Monitoring Chart. When she gave birth to her child, she started to monitor her baby's growth regularly. Every month she measured her baby's weight and plotted it on the Growth Monitoring Chart. At one point she noticed that her baby's growth curve had dropped into the area marked in red on the chart. She went to doctor for advice and started taking special care of her child.

Source: Discussion with Khadiza Begum, Village: Karkhanapara, Union: Dangdhara, Upazila: Dewanganj, District: Jamalpur

## Conclusion

Visualizing the child's growth helps families take corrective measures so that a child whose growth is faltering does not become malnourished. The monthly weighing of the baby ensures regular contact with the Community Health Volunteer and the follow-up of the child's condition. This is an important contribution to breaking vicious cycle of poverty, poor health and low productivity for the future generation.

## Best practice:

# Demonstrate cooking and feeding in the community to improve child feeding practices

### Context and objective

Correct cooking methods and proper feeding practices are crucial for ensuring the adequate growth and development of infants and children. Hence correct food preparation and cooking processes have been a part of most of the development approaches in the Health and Nutrition sector in Bangladesh for decades. However, despite the knowledge level increasing substantially among the women, actual practices have only improved in a very small percent of families. This is because i) changing traditional practices and behavior is a difficult and lengthy process II) nutrition advice is difficult to understand and put into everyday practice<sup>1</sup>.

SHOUHARDO II demonstrates cooking and feeding that includes selecting seasonal vegetables, the safe handling of food, cooking process that involve a minimum loss of nutrients and the feeding of children. This helps mothers and grandmothers learn correct cooking methods and proper feeding practices.

### Process and action

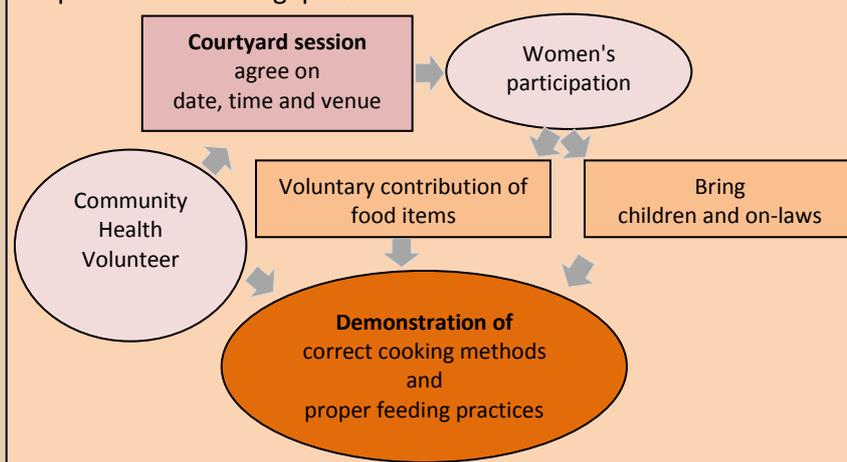
As per a monthly schedule, the Community Health Volunteer organizes cooking and feeding demonstration sessions in groups of 8–10 mothers once a month. Depending on the number of pregnant women and lactating mothers in the working area, 4–5 such demonstration sessions are held every month.

A suitable homestead is chosen by prior discussion with the participants. The house must have supply of safe water, a sanitary latrine, a clean cooking area and sufficient space for 12–15 adults to sit together and for their children to play and interact. Usually (paternal) grandmothers of the babies are encouraged to be present at the demonstration session so

they can also observe and benefit from the whole process.

The pregnant women and lactating mothers from the community bring in rice, pulses and seasonal vegetables from their own kitchen garden (set up with SHOUHARDO II support), as well as spices, salt, oil and utensils: all the ingredients needed to cook a nutritious meal are contributed by the participant women. They

**Figure 15: Demonstrating cooking and feeding in the community to improve child feeding practices**



also bring their own plates or bowls for themselves and their babies to eat from.

To start with, the Community Health Volunteer reminds them of the key points on hygiene and cleanliness in food preparation, cooking process and duration. She supervises the whole process. The women wash their hands with soap and water before starting the food preparation. They also wash the cutting equipment and the vegetables before cutting cooking utensils, plates and bowls.

The Community Health Volunteer also helps women to learn from each other as well as from the 'positive deviant' mothers on how to encourage feeding.

### Take-home messages

- a) Personal hygiene: hands must be washed with soap and running water i) before handling food ii) before feeding children iii) before eating iv) after visiting the toilet and v) after cleaning the baby's bottom.
- b) Food preparation: i) vegetables should be washed BEFORE cutting ii) vitamins are lost if vegetables are washed AFTER cutting iii) vegetables should be cut in big pieces to minimize nutrient loss iv) vegetables should not be cooked for too long to retain vitamins as far as possible v) food should be kept covered after cooking vi) cooked food should be consumed within 3–4 hours of cooking.
- c) Child care: i) start giving infants family food after six months of age ii) start giving infants family food in small amounts, gradually increasing the amount and types of food iii) complementary food for infants should be home-made iv) the remaining food after feeding the infant should be eaten by the mother as she is still breastfeeding the child and in need of extra food.

## Results and achievements

Pregnant women and lactating mothers gained knowledge and skills about correct cooking methods, proper feeding practice and stimulating unwilling children to eat. Women, including grandmothers, learned about the safe handling of food to prevent contamination and nutrient loss. They also learned about the need and importance of feeding additional amounts to pregnant and lactating women as they have higher nutrient and calorie requirements during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

'...the quality of caring practices for children under age two has generally improved since the baseline. The strongest improvement is found in the area of diet and food consumption. The percent of children with minimum dietary diversity increased from 12.7 at baseline to 25.9 at the midterm...'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 39

## Demonstration of cooking and feeding

In Gayari village of Kanthal Bari union under Kurigram Sadar Upazila, cooking and feeding demonstrations take place regularly. The SHOUHARDO II beneficiary mothers and the community have adopted the practice well and organize demonstrations every 2 to 3 months. Usually the demonstrations are jointly organized by the beneficiary mothers, Community Health Volunteers, Village Development Committee members and SHOUHARDO II staff.

On 10 May 2014, beneficiary mothers and

Community Health Volunteers organized a cooking and feeding demonstration. 'At around 10am, 16 lactating mothers along with their children gathered in the house of one of the participants'. Each of the mothers brought some rice, pulses and vegetables. First, they washed and prepared the food for cooking, maintaining hygiene and cleanliness. Then, on behalf of the group, two women cooked *khichuri* (hotchpotch), while others observed and assisted them.

When *khichuri* was prepared, they distributed it among the children. They gave a small quantity of *khichuri* in small bowl to the younger children, and relatively bigger meals in larger bowls or plates to the older children. The mothers fed the children as the children were too small to eat on their own. After feeding the children, mothers also ate the remaining *khichuri*.

*Source: Observation and discussion with mothers group, Village: Gayari, Union: Kanthal Bari, Upazila: Kurigram Sadar, District: Kurigram*



*Photo 18: Mothers dished out Khichuri for their 6-24 months old children at Gayari village of Kurigram Sadar*

## Conclusion

The practical demonstration has contributed to better understanding about food and nutrition and its sources. Mothers and grandmothers learned to use local resources for ensuring adequate supply of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients in their child's food. This practical demonstration of cooking and feeding practices in the presence of mothers and grandmothers helps to break the cultural constraints on feeding a variety of foods to young children and also improves the practice of pregnant women and nursing mothers eating more (because of higher nutrition requirements).

## Best Practice

# Promote the use of improved stoves to reduce adverse impacts on children's and women's health



*Photo 19: An improved stove provided by the SHOUHARDO II Program at Razibpur, Ishwarganj Upazila, Mymensingh*

### Context and objective

The traditionally defined gender roles of women in rural Bangladesh include collecting fuel and cooking meals for the members of their families. It is a time consuming as well laborious job. Moreover, the system of cooking exposes women to health hazards, as the traditional stoves emit smoke, causing breathing difficulties.

The SHOUHARDO II Program recognizes that climate change is likely to result in more frequent and extensive disasters with severe consequences for the food security and livelihoods of agriculturally dependent populations in the *char*, *haor* and coastal areas of Bangladesh. The program has therefore planned interventions to promote climate-resilient technologies.

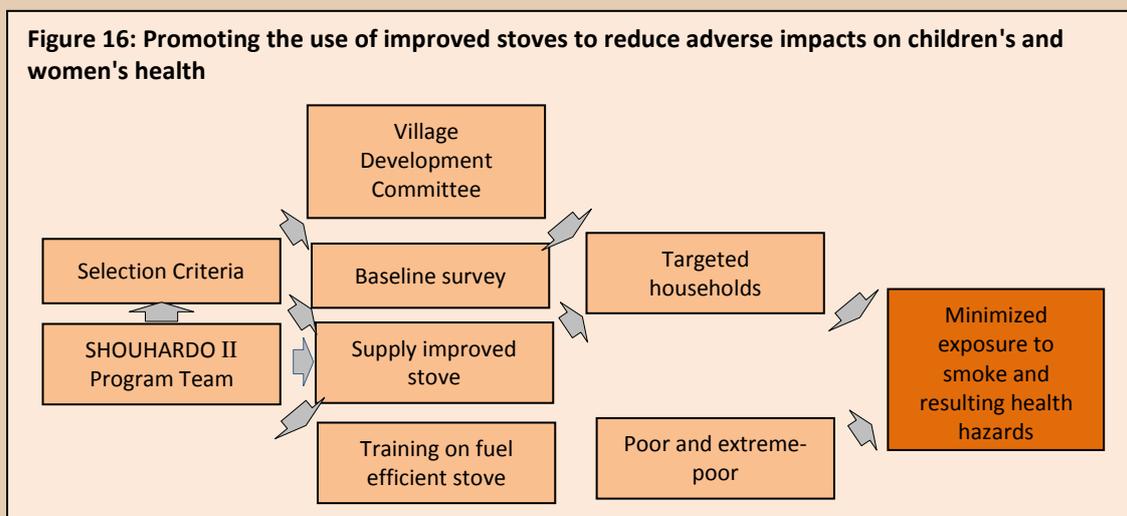
Tackling both of these issues simultaneously, SHOUHARDO II promotes the use of a fuel-efficient stove which also reduces women's exposure to smoke and the associated risks while cooking.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II teams identify most the vulnerable localities within their intervention areas and supply fuel-efficient stoves to an average of 50 households per Union. To identify and select the recipient households, they explain the selection criteria and all other aspects of the support to Village Development Committees. The Village Development Committees then work with women's empowerment groups to select beneficiary households through risk and resource mapping and community consultation. The program teams conduct baseline surveys for targeted households to determine the status of these households and, through Village

Development Committees, supply fuel-efficient stove to these households.

The program team also provides capacity-building training on the use of fuel-efficient stoves to the selected poor and extreme-poor groups to help them replicate and extend use of the technology in their communities.



## Results and achievements

By the end of 2014, some 3,793 women received improved stoves. The use of these stoves helped the women reduce their exposure to smoke while cooking. Also, compared to the traditional stoves, these stoves required less fuel and less attention for refueling, so women were able to save the time and effort usually spent collecting firewood and attending to refueling during cooking.

'At the end of the reporting period a total 3,793 households received improved (fuel efficient) stoves (LOA target 8,600 households all program Unions). As means of motivation, 'demonstration' stoves have been arranged where individual community members model the technical aspects and usefulness of the stoves. Among targeted communities there is an increasing interest in this technology and some community members have already procured their own stoves. For future scale-up of energy efficient technologies, the program will continue with awareness-raising activities through VDC, UDV, UDMC and courtyard sessions.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 11

## Conclusion

The Introduction of improved and fuel-efficient stoves markedly improves cooking systems for the rural women in Bangladesh. It reduces health risks by minimizing their exposure to smoke while cooking, diminishes their workload for collecting fuel and makes cooking less strenuous.

# Best practice: Use 'tippy tap' technology to promote hand washing practices in the communities

## Context and objective

Frequent episodes of diarrhea, gastro-intestinal infections and intestinal worm infestations are important causes of under-nutrition in children, particularly among those under two years old. Poor personal cleanliness, lack of hygienic practices, absence of sanitary latrines and improper disposal of excreta lead to gastrointestinal infections. Frequent illness and under-nutrition lead to poor growth, poor development and poor learning capacity in children and consequently low productivity in adults. Thus the vicious cycle of poor health, low productivity and poverty continues.

Washing hands at certain times is an easy and cheap way to prevent illness, promote good health and growth and thereby increase productivity. Lack of awareness on the benefits of washing hands and on the hazards of not washing hands at critical times, as well as the non-availability of soap and adequate water, were found to contribute to poor personal hygiene.

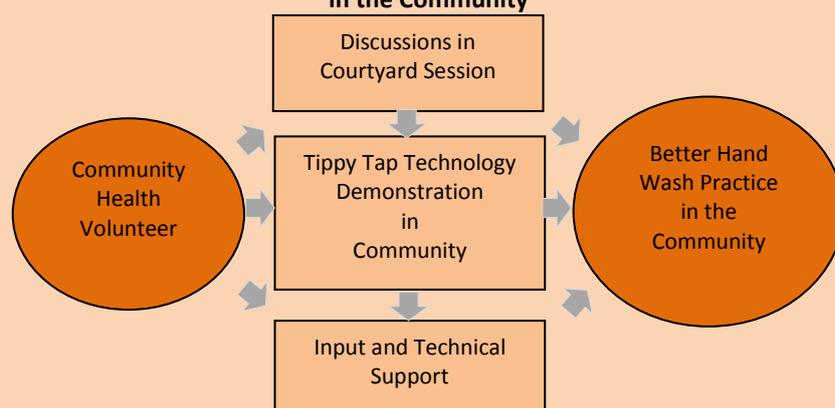
The use of 'tippy taps' is promoted with the expectation that this simple, low-cost method will encourage people to wash their hands at six specified, critical times.

## Process and action

Community Health Volunteers received training on cleanliness and the promotion of hygienic practices and used the courtyard sessions to create awareness among the villagers, particularly the poor and extreme-poor. The Community Health Volunteers and women's empowerment groups together demonstrate the simple method of making a "tippy tap". The villagers, including children, are now enthusiastic about using this simple technology to wash their hands during the six specified, critical times.

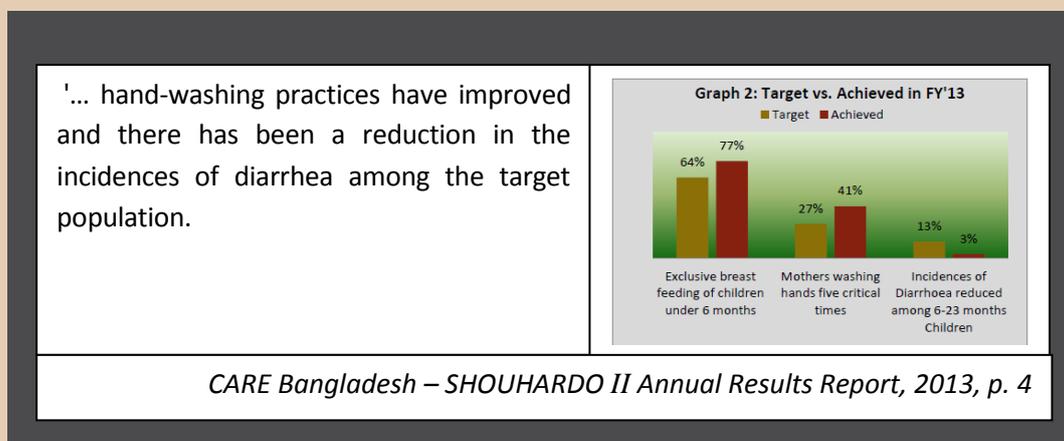
*'Tippy tap' a simple, low-cost yet very useful hand-washing device is made using a clean plastic bottle (2-3 liters capacity), a nail or a small knife, a candle, match stick, string, soap and a net bag. The nail or the tip of the knife is heated with the lit candle and a small hole is made with it in the bottle, approx. 2 cm above the bottom. The bottle is then filled up with safe water and the cap is closed tightly.*

**Figure 17: Flow Chart - Use *Tippy Tap* Technology for Promoting Hand Wash Practice in the Community**



## Results and achievements

'Tippy tap' has become quite popular in beneficiary communities. Children in particular are now enthusiastic about washing their hands with soap. 'Tippy tap' is helping these children and adults stay clean with less water. As an increasing number of people have developed the habit of washing their hands with soap and running water at crucial times, the incidence of diarrhea and other gastroenteritis has decreased substantially<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Source: Observation and discussions with mothers' groups at Kushmail village of Fulbaria Upazila, Gabarkhali village of Haluaghat Upazila, Rajnarayanpur village of Bera Upazila, Khapara village of Bhangura Upazila, Uttar Harishwar village of Kaunia Upazila, Dakkhin Titpara village of Dimla Upazila, Moddho Haludia village of Ukhia Upazila and Naikong Khali village of Teknaf Upazila.

### Introducing 'tippy tap' technology

Introducing 'tippy tap' technology is one of the successful interventions from the SHOUHARDO II Program. The technology has been very visible in almost all the program areas.

In Kushmail Early Childhood Care and Development Center, the children use 'tippy tap' to washing their hands. They enjoy using 'tippy tap' as a fun and entertaining way to play. This has increased their hand washing practices.

Nazma, a housewife in the village of Gabarkhali in Haluaghat Upazila, fixed a 'tippy tap' on the front wall of her family's toilet. Water is very scarce in the village and women of the village have to travel long distances to fetch water. 'tippy tap' helps her save water and cope with the water scarcity.

*Source: Observation and discussion with community people, Village: Kushmail, Union: Kushmail, Upazila: Fulbaria, District: Mymensingh; and Village: Gabarkhali, Union: Gazirbhita, Upazila: Haluaghat, District: Mymensingh*



*Photo 21: Children use 'tippy tap' to wash their hands at Kushmail Early Childhood Care and Development Center*

### Conclusion

The introduction of 'tippy tap' in areas where there is scarcity of safe water or where women have to fetch water from distant water sources has helped people improve their personal hygiene. It is expected that this will reduce the disease burden, reduce expenditure on treatment, and improve the nutritional status of children.

## Best practice:

# Combine awareness-building with infrastructure support to improve sanitation practices



Photo 22: Sanitation support provided by the SHOUHARDO II Program at Kushmail village of Fulbaria upazila, Mymensingh

### Context and objective

Sanitation and hygiene are critical to good health, survival, and development. Access to basic sanitation is defined as having access to facilities for the safe disposal of human waste (feces and urine), as well as having the ability to maintain hygienic conditions, through services such as garbage collection, industrial/hazardous waste management, and wastewater treatment and disposal.

Inadequate sanitation is a major cause of diarrheal diseases and worm infestations worldwide. These in turn contribute to the vicious cycle of poor health, low productivity and poverty. Proper sanitation facilities promote good health by providing a barrier in the orofecal route of disease transmission.

SHOUHARDO II combines awareness-building with infrastructure support in order to improve sanitation and contribute to achieving the total sanitation goals of the Government of Bangladesh.

*According to World Health Organization, 'sanitation generally refers to the provision of facilities and services for the safe disposal of human urine and feces'.*

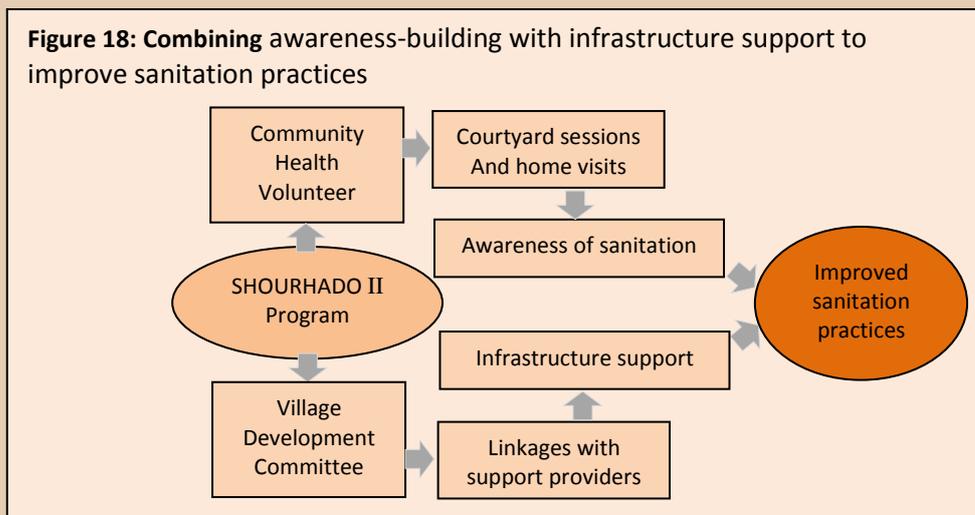
### Process and action

The SHOUHARDO II Program conducts courtyard sessions through Community Health Volunteers to raise awareness of personal hygiene, cleanliness, hand-washing and the safe disposal of human waste in the community. It also provides material supports the poor and extreme-poor to installing sanitary latrines. The program supports the Village Development Committee in negotiating

with other actors to gain access to sanitary latrine facilities. SHOURHADO II trains households in how to use the toilets and keep them clean after every usage. In addition, it introduces tippy tap, an easy simple method for washing hands with soap in running water.

### Some key messages on sanitation

- Wash your hands with soap and water after every time you visit the toilet
- Wash your hands with soap and water after every time you have cleaned a baby
- Wash your hands with soap and water before each time you handle food, cook or eat
- Dispose the excreta properly and wash your hands with soap and water afterwards
- Use sanitary latrines.
- Always keep food covered

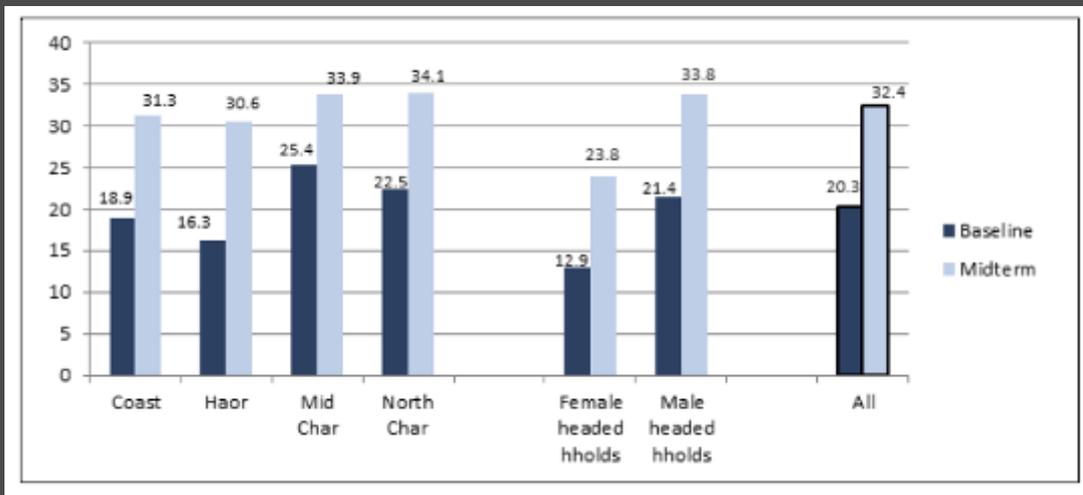


### Results and achievements

Significant gains have been achieved in access to sanitation facilities. Installation of latrines has improved hygiene and sanitation practices. Improved hygiene practices have also been introduced, including wearing sandals help prevent worm infestations. Combining awareness-building with infrastructure support has strengthened these efforts and facilitated the adoption of hygienic practices by children.

'Access to an improved sanitation facility remains low but has increased from 20 to 32 percent of households, with the increase being strong in all regions.'

**Percent of households with access to improved sanitation facility by region, and gender of household head**



*CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 41-42*

### Combining knowledge and material supports for improved sanitation

Jahanara Begum from Rongikhali village in Teknaf Upazila was receiving supplementary food support from SHOUHARDO II. She attended courtyard sessions and had regular health check-ups. Jahanara regularly took her baby to the Growth Monitoring and Promotion sessions to keep track of the baby's weight and to ensure proper growth. She also learned about the importance of safe sanitation practice from the courtyard sessions. In addition to providing knowledge and information, the program helped Jahanara to install a sanitary latrine in her house.

*Source: Success Story – Commodity Support: Improved Health and Nutrition, SHOUHARDO II News, Vol. 2, Issue 3, October 2013*

### Conclusion

The combination of promoting hygienic behavior and supplying sanitary latrines and a simple, easy way to wash hands with soap in running water has shown that people do adopt good practices with the right kind of motivation and necessary material support.

# Chapter Five

## Empowering Girls and Women

# Best practice: Form social platforms for women to raise their concerns collectively

## Process and action

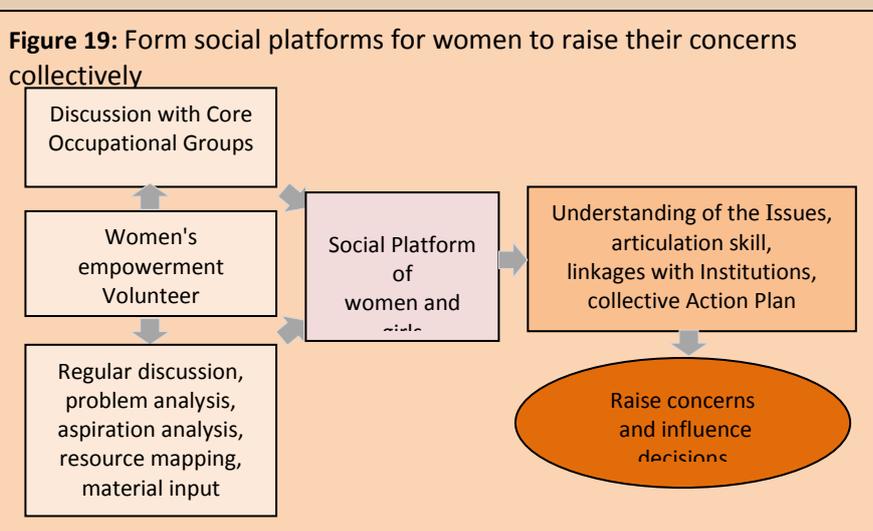
Context and objective  
Women are contributing immensely to development process as well as food security, yet their contribution remains unrecognized and they endure deprivation and oppression and face violence. This situation leads to 'inadequate' access to education, low self-esteem, weak decision-making power, little or no access to or control over resources, limited income opportunities, and violence against women, making them a key disadvantaged group in society.

SHOUHARDO II endeavors to create a social structure for poor and extreme-poor women and adolescent girls to raise their voices, assert their rights and help their communities to recognize 'their capabilities and contributions. It is a strategic step towards empowering women to be active agents for positive change.

SHOUHARDO II employs female volunteers in the community and trains them on issues related to women's empowerment. Volunteers discuss the value of women's empowerment and need for a platform for women with the community through the core occupational group. They, with the help of Village Development Committee, select willing and enthusiastic women and adolescent girls and form a social structure.

The volunteers facilitate regular discussion sessions, problem and aspiration analysis and resource-mapping with women and adolescent girls to help them better understand and articulate their needs and aspirations. SHOUHARDO II helps the group to develop their action plan and provides material inputs to support the implementation of the plan.

SHOUHARDO II supports women's groups to develop linkages with other community and local institutions and motivates community and local institutions to support the women's group to assert their rights.



## EKATA group

EKATA group who are recruited from adolescent girls of different occupations and skills. They are divided into groups and each group has a secretary, a resource person, and members from Union Parishads, etc.) and making house visits if required.

**Monmajni** entertain the members, **Shikhon Majhi** is responsible for sharing and refreshing the learning, and **Ghotok Pakhi** collaborates with other committees (such as School Management Committees, Project Implementation Committees and VDCs) and service providers in the community.

adolescent girls from each group are identified and during that time, female

## Results and achievements

The creation of a specific social structure has enabled women to discuss issues and influence decisions at various levels, from the family to institutions, in both an individual and collective way. They have resisted violence in the family and challenged discriminatory behavior towards girls and women collectively.

### Women's group stops early marriage

In Satnai village, the father of a 15-year-old girl arranged her marriage forcefully, without listening to her wishes. The girl sought support from EKATA members to stop the marriage. EKATA members, along with other VDC members and influential persons of the community, went to talk to her father about the bad effects of early marriage, such as the risks of pregnancy at an early age, and other health problems, and together influenced her father to stop the marriage. Due to the collective efforts of the women's group (EKATA), the girl is now continuing her study.

*Source: Discussion with Women's Group, Village: Satnai, Union: Dimla, Upazila: Dimla, District: Nilphamari*

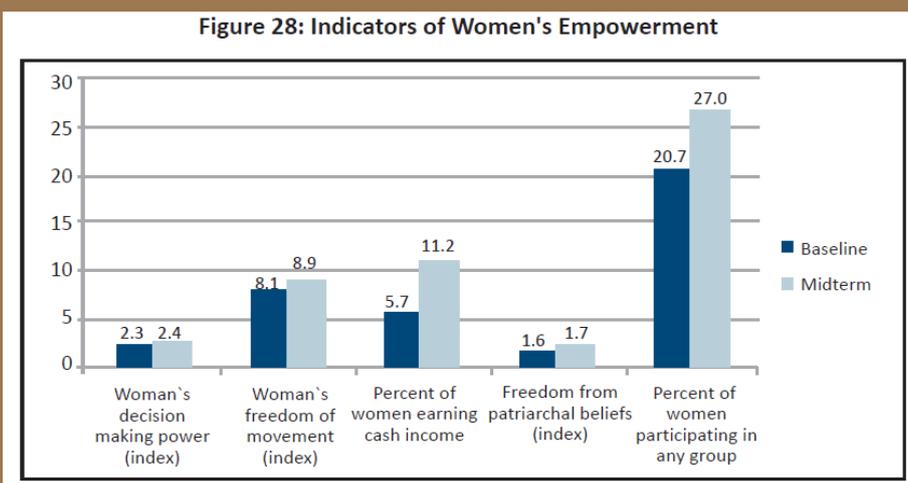
'In this reporting period the EKATA groups with the support of VDCs resolved 104 VAW cases, stopped 53 early marriages, resolved 13 cases of 'eve-teasing' and settled eight cases of verbal divorce.'

*CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II Quarterly Report, Jan-March, 2014, Annex-9*

'At the mid-term, SHOUHARDO II is making significant progress towards ending violence against women. The Program has successfully put in place a system and structure to facilitate men and women working together to end violence against women. The project has exceeded its targets in doing this. 154 ERAW forums have been established or reactivated against a target of 10.'

*CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 49*

**Figure 28: Indicators of Women's Empowerment**



*Source: CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 48*

## Conclusion

Creating a social structure for women's empowerment brings solidarity and collective power to women and girls and gives them a voice to assert their rights and resist violence against them. The social structure helps women to encounter day-to-day family problems in an effective way by providing them with improved negotiation skills and knowledge.. It encourages men to recognize women's capacity and their contributions to the family and society.

## Best practice: Support women from poor households to generate income



Photo 24: Women making bamboo mats at Dakkhin Titpara Village, Dimla Upazila, Niphamari

### Context and objective

Women in Bangladesh, especially in rural areas, are forced to be dependent on men throughout their lives. This results in the myth that women are a burden for their family. Though women work hard in their families, their contributions remain unrecognized, their voices remain unheard, their choices are ignored and their potential remains untapped.

SHOUHARDO II concentrates on poor and extreme-poor community to lift them from poverty through ensuring food security at household level, it has given significant emphasis on income generation by women and to link them with local market to achieve its overall goal that is food security.

that includes community analysis, market analysis, the development of business plans, capacity assessment and training. Participation in this process helps women gain the knowledge and expertise to run income-generating activities and to access resources.

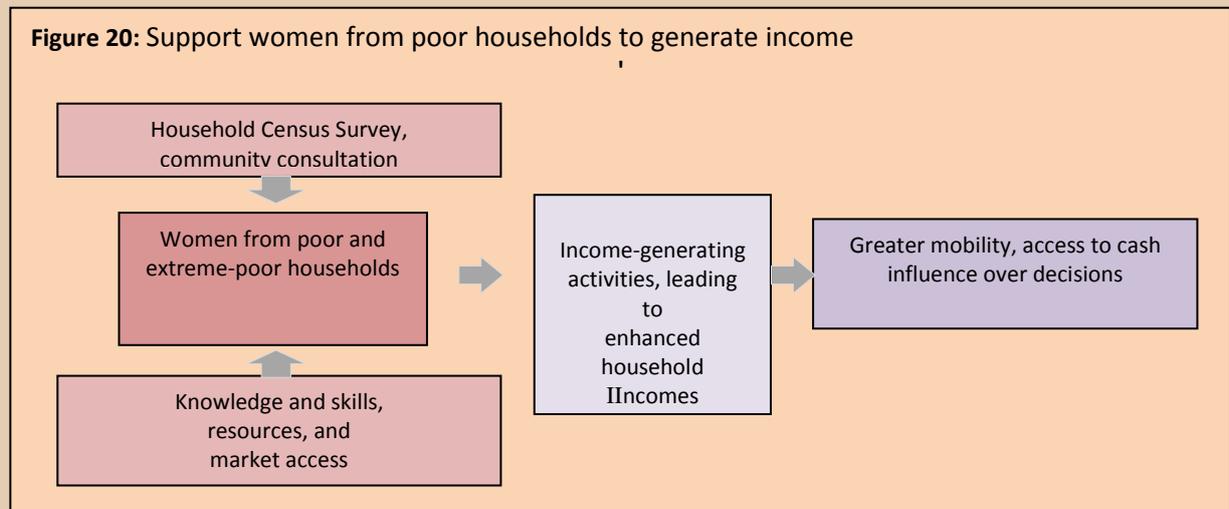
### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II involves poor and extreme-poor families, especially poor women, female-headed households and pregnant and lactating mothers in income-generating activities. These groups of women are selected through a household census and further community consultation.

Income-generation activities can be collective or individual and agricultural or non-agricultural. Those used by SHOUHARDO II include Comprehensive Homestead Development, rearing livestock and poultry, small businesses, dressmaking, carpet weaving, embroidery, and other services that generate income. Targeted women choose any of these options based on what is convenient for and interesting to them.

To ensure that income-generating activities are effective, SHOUHARDO II applies a complex process

Skill development training is designed based on the choices made by the female beneficiaries. The women also receive seeds and/or cash grants to start their businesses. SHOUHARDO II helps women to establish links with the Department of Agricultural Extension, the Department of Livestock, local market committees and other service providers.



## Results and achievements

The program's income-generation efforts for women diversified livelihood options and created additional income for poor families. Women's involvement in income-generating activities gave them the power of participation, and they felt more confident in raising their voices and establishing their rights.

While women went through the capacity-building processes, poor women gained new knowledge and expertise to run their income-generating activities and increased their access to resources. To run income-generating activities, women attended various training events and came into contact with various government departments during the process of accessing support and services. This greatly increased their mobility.

As women interacted with different groups and committees as part of their productive activities, they built relationships and bargained with different social groups and institutions, helping to increase their bargaining skill.

'There has been a strong increase in the percentage of women earning income (5.7% at baseline to 11.7% at midterm), although it is still quite low compared to the national prevalence 49 and SHOUHARDO II project target of about 25 percent.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 48

### A woman contributes to her family's income

Parvin Akter is a housewife in Batuadi village, in the Mymensingh district. In 2011, along with other 20 women



Photo 25: Parvin Akter stitching design

from her village, she received 20 days' training on stitch-craft.. Through this training she acquired the skills she needed to stitch attractive designs on dresses. She was also able to develop a network with other women who received the same training. With her skills and networks she started to produce better-designed dresses and charge higher rates for her services. Now she has an extra income of approximately BDT 1,500 (USD 19.40) per month. It enables her to contribute to her family's income and discuss financial matters with her husband.

*Source: Key Informant II Interview with Parvin Akter, Village: Batuadi, Union: Jahangirpur, Nandail, Mymensingh*

## Conclusion

Income generation activities for women have led to a two-fold achievement in SHOUHARDO II. On the one hand, income generation activities are opening up new horizons for women by involving them with economic activities, helping them to assert their influence on decision-making processes within the family as well as in their communities. Though at the cost of having an increased workload, the new skills, knowledge and information they are exposed to help them to negotiate and bargain to have their voice heard outside the family and begin changing social norms and values. On the other hand, women's income generating activities also provide a major means of ensuring food security at the household level, thus increasing the nutritional status of both children and adults.

## Best practice: Mobilize communities to end violence against women



Photo 26: Men and women discussing violence against women together

### Context and objective

Though Bangladesh has made good progress in many areas of women's empowerment, such as education, mobility and participation in income-earning activities, the scenario remains bleak when it comes to eradicating violence against women. For the most part, this violence is the result of existing social beliefs that are influenced by rigid patriarchal views. As a result, violence against women, ranging from verbal abuse through to killing, is still viewed as a normal act. In turn, violence against women reinforces discrimination against women at all levels from the family to state the state, assigning them a subordinate role.

To help change this situation, SHOUHARDO II has made great efforts to enable community to adopt socially acceptable behavior to end violence against women.

### Process and action

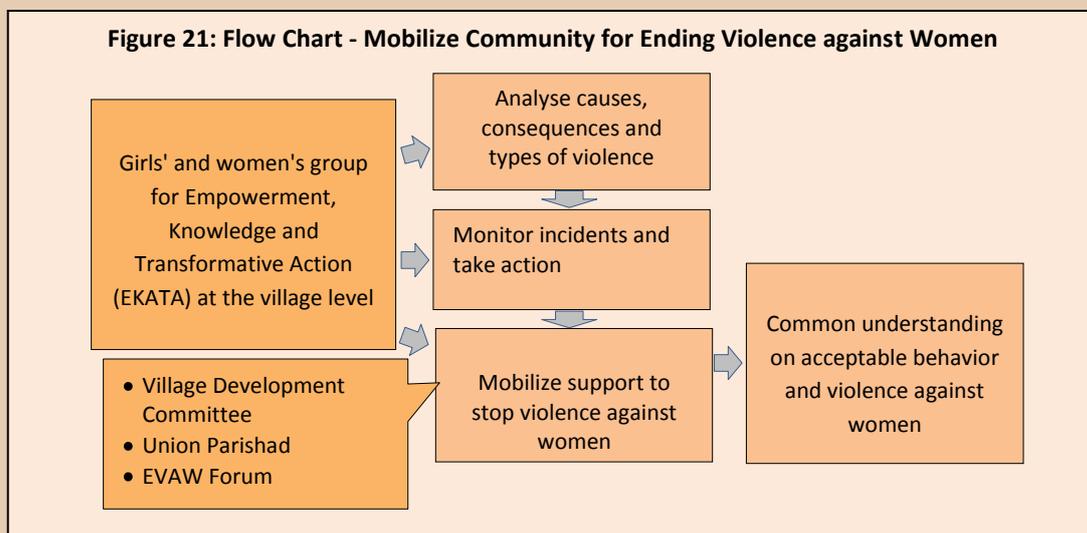
To address the issue, SHOUHARDO II forms women-only social structures called EKATA (Empowerment, Knowledge and Transformative Action) groups at the village level and Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) forums at the union level.

Learning sessions, designed by SHOUHARDO II, support women and adolescent girls in analyzing the causes and consequences of violence and the types of violence committed, as well as indefining socially acceptable behavior to stop violence against women. These women's groups ensure that they are aware of events in their village, visiting the homes of their neighbors. If they discover any violence, including wife beating, divorce, early marriage, the payment of dowries, 'eve-teasing' (harassment) or families preventing girls from going to school, they first play the role of mediator, discussing the issue with male member of the woman's family. If this 'soft' approach does not work, they then contact volunteers, members of the VDC and, if necessary, they go to the Union Parishad.

This process assists the Union Parishad-level Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) Forum to develop and implement an Action Plan to prevent and stop violence against girls and women. The EVAW consists of different professionals, including lawyers, journalists, school teachers and religious leaders who are not necessarily from the poor and extreme-poor part of the community. They work as a pressure group and collaborate with the *Nari Nirjaton Protirodh* Committee at the Union

Parishad. To prevent any violence, members of EKATA groups hold meetings with men in their community to raise awareness and to change attitudes and behavior to stop violence in their families and to organize a social movement against it.

Together with male members of the VDCs, members of EKATA mobilize influential persons in the communities, visiting households, conducting individual counseling and establishing new social norms that violence is unacceptable. There is also a strong effort to connect with legal services to ensure that women have access to these where necessary.



## Results and achievements

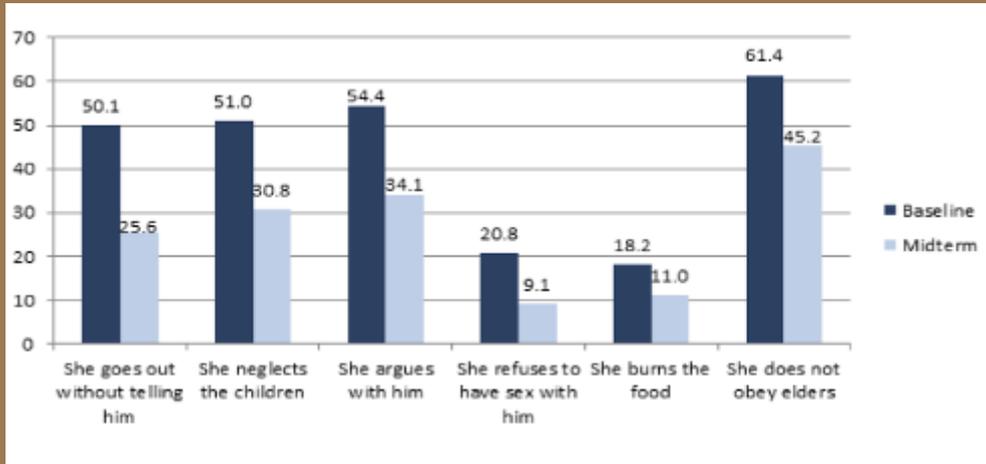
Due to increased awareness about women's rights, people in the community have become aware of the negative impacts of violence against women. They learned that violence against women not only debilitates women, but also has a negative impact on families and communities more broadly. They have therefore established socially accepted behaviors to stop violence against women.

Through SHOUHARDO II's approaches, communities have developed the power to mobilize against gender violence and can now place social pressure on perpetrators not to commit any violence or violate the rights of women and girls. This pressure has proved effective: for example, some households have been convinced not to arrange early marriages or ask for dowries, and some men have ceased beating their wives.

Mobilization and collaboration with different professionals and legal institutions has helped to women to access preventive support and to stop preexisting violence against women.

According to midterm survey results there has been strong progress towards shifting beliefs and attitudes about violence against women.

**Percentage of women who believe a man is justified in hitting or abusing his wife in six situations**



Source: CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 49

**Social pressure to stop violence against women**

A divorced woman with one daughter in Rangikhali village, Teknaf Upazila, remarried to a fisherman. Initially, they lived happily, but after a while her new husband started to torture her to get money from her father. From time to time she brought home money, depending on what her father could afford, but it did not satisfy her husband. Becoming desperate, she complained to a Union Parishad member, who warned her husband. However this intervention only made him angry, and his violence become more frequent. This became unbearable for her, so she left her home. The village's EKATA members learned about what had been happening and talked to the woman and her husband, explaining to him the dreadful effects of abusing his wife and the economic and social costs of domestic violence. They also explained to him the social consequences that he would have to face if he did not stop abusing his wife. The husband reached a new understanding of the situation and promised not to repeat his mistakes again. For the last one-and-a-half years, the woman has been living with her husband peacefully.

Source: Women for Women: EKATA Initiative to Stop Violence, [http://www.carebangladesh.org/shouhardoIII/human\\_story](http://www.carebangladesh.org/shouhardoIII/human_story)

**Conclusion**

Violence against women remains one of the major violations of women's rights in Bangladesh, irrespective of rural or urban context. It hinders women's mobility and their participation in social, economic and political arenas. Through SHOUHARDO II, awareness has been raised about resisting violence against women and collective action has been taken to combat this. Beneficiaries are now challenging the acceptance of violence and abuse against women in their communities and are bringing about positive changes to social beliefs and standing up against early marriage, dowries, girls' dropping out of school and all physical and mental abuse of women.

## Best practice:

# Facilitate men's involvement in promoting women's empowerment



*Photo 27: EKATA members discussing women's issues with male members of Village Development Committee at Razibpur village of Ishwarganj Upazila, Mymensingh*

### Context and objective

One of the key factors of women's empowerment is engaging men and boys in the empowerment process. Men's engagement does not mean playing a role as gatekeeper for women, but rather means the elimination of structural inequalities between men and women and challenging gender stereotypes in the society.

In SHOUHARDO II, male engagement is viewed as the process of creating male advocates and allies in order to create an enabling environment for women's empowerment. As a result, women can actively take part in income-generation and asset-building activities to contribute to the food security of the family.

### Process and action

In SHOUHARDO II, male groups are organized in implementing areas to support women's empowerment activities. Apart from the material and monetary benefits, these groups take part in discussions related to the social benefits of focusing on equality between men and women and eliminating violence against women.

Members of EKATA groups designed weekly one-day sessions to talk with the parents, especially men, and husbands of EKATA members to raise awareness about the importance of their role in parenting and the importance of facilitating women's rights.

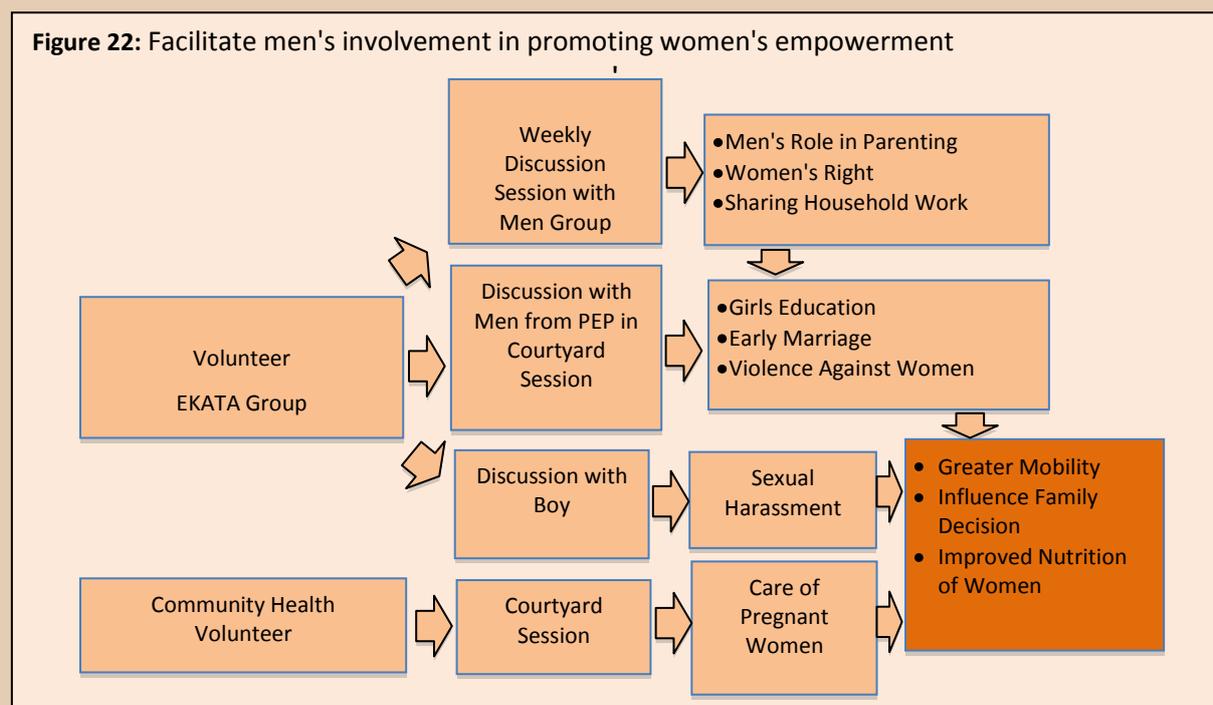
SHOUHARDO II conducts discussions through volunteer and women's groups with male members of beneficiary households about sharing household work and supporting women to take part in income-generation activities and other community development activities.

Male members are also targeted in health and

hygiene sessions to raise awareness and motivate them to take care of the pregnant women in their family and advocate to in-laws and other family members for the proper distribution of food among other female and breastfeeding mothers.

Male members in poor and extreme-poor communities and non-poor communities are targeted and mobilized to facilitate girl's' education or re-enrolment in school, to resist violence against women in the community, to stop the culture of dowry and prevent early marriages. The objective of this mobilization is to take preventive action to end violence against women in any form and to promote equitable relationships.

Boys are mobilized in the community to advocate for an end to "eve-teasing" (harassment)' which is often severe and prevents young girls from attending school. Couples groups have also been formed to act on improving marital relationships, which ultimately benefits individuals, children and family.



## Results and achievements

Female beneficiaries acknowledged the positive results of engaging men in terms of their greater mobility. Women were able to go outside the home to attend events such as meetings, training events and School Management Committee meetings.

In some families, model men (positive deviants) started to share household work and took responsibility for child care.

By engaging men in different group sessions, SHOUHARDO II initiated the process of exchanging ideas between men and women within families and communities, creating a friendly environment to learn from each other and help to improve family decision-making processes about asset creation.

'The Program has started to engage men more effectively through the VDC, facilitating sessions with men so that they can realize the importance of shared responsibility at home and play a positive role in preventing VAW and supporting women in [income-generating activities], health, hygiene and other domestic tasks. A total of 804 sessions have been conducted during this reporting period.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II Quarterly Report, Jan-March, 2014, p. 6

### **Union Parishad and Village Development Committee members help EKATA to resist 'eve-teasing'**

A schoolgirl from Gobindapur village in the Bhangura Upazila, Pabna district, was being teased by young men on her way to school. In order to protect her, the girl's parents decided to stop her schooling. When EKATA members heard about this incident, they decided to oppose the decision of her father. The EKATA group tried to convince the family that their decision violated their daughter's rights, but they could not. They sought help from the Union Parishad and Village Development Committee, especially the male members. They played a significant role in re-enrolling the girl in school and ensuring her continued by influencing her father and by discussing the issue with the community to resist 'eve-teasing' to create an enabling environment for the girl's education.

*Source: Discussion with a women's (EKATA) group, Village: Gobindapur, Union: Khanmarich, Upazila: Bhangura, District: Pabna*

## **Conclusion**

The unequal social system in Bangladesh hampers women's ability to realize their full potential and contribute efficiently to the family or society. To change this situation, male engagement is key strategic step in SHOUHARDO II. Though it is difficult to engage men in the women's empowerment process, there have been small but sustainable changes in creating a more equal playing field for both men and women in the family and community. By fostering social change, people from poor and extreme-poor communities are practicing better family decision-making regarding increasing their nutrition level, building their asset base and thus ensuring food security.

## Best practice: Use early childhood care and development centers to promote gender parity



Photo 28: Girls and boys sitting together at an Early Childhood Care and Development center in Kunkunia village of Kazipur Upazila, Sirajganj

### Context and objective

Inequitable social conditions, ignorance and violence – all these are prominent in the maintenance of the poverty cycle and creation of discrimination, which is linked to exclusion. These conditions prevent children and their families from realizing their full potential as healthy, competent individuals, thus ensuring they remain poor and marginalized. The shift of social norms and fundamental value changes between generations is therefore a crucial element in child development, empowering families to lead children's development in a way that will break the cycle of poverty.

SHOUHARDO II adopted Early Childhood Care and Development as a process by which the program supports empowerment through education, bringing transformational changes in traditional power structure and thus initiating positive socialization among the children of poor families.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II runs Early Childhood Care and Development centers in each village. These centers have four wings: *Shishu Bikash Kendra*, Pre-schooling, Parenting meetings and Early Childhood Care and the Development Management Committee.

*Shishu Bikash Kendra* is a one-year program for the children of the poor and extreme-poor who aged four to five years. Each center has 25 to 30 children, but if there are more children, the Village Development Committee and EKATA groups of respective villages make a decision about where operates another center in the same area. These centers must have enough space for games, as well as light and fresh air for the mental and physical growth of children. After *Shishu Bikash Kendra*, children move on to Pre-schooling, which continues for another year.

In the center, SHOUHARDO II provides books, toys and games for children. These are varied and are intended to challenge gender stereotype; for example, all children are offered dolls, cricket bats and kitchen utensils.

Parenting meetings are designed to raise awareness among parents about the importance of early childcare and their children's mental, physical and social development.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Management Committees

are responsible for the overall management of Early Childhood Care and Development centers. These committees consist of seven to 11 members who are parents, volunteers, members of the Village Development Committee and other members of civil society. Six of these positions are reserved for women, with a view to creating more opportunities for women and girls in the education system, empowering them in the family, community and local government structures.

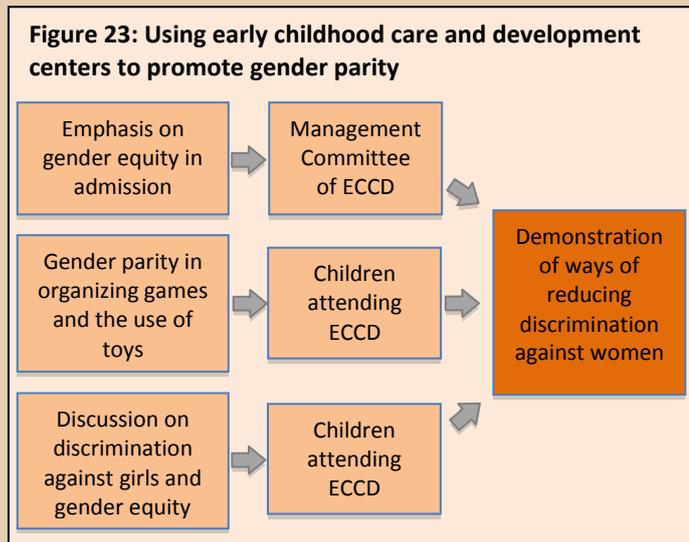
SHOUHARDO II supports one paid volunteer to operate the Early Childhood Care and Development centers for two hours a day, six days a week, except for government holidays and parent meeting days. They receive annual training and a refresher course on early childhood care and development teaching method.. SHOUHARDO II also develops modules and other training materials for volunteers.

## Results and achievements

Through the Early Childhood Care and Development process, boys and girls came to school together and stayed together in the classroom. This created opportunities to change boys' dominant attitudes towards girls (which they had learned from their families and communities) and accept them as friends.

Children were encouraged to play with toys that are typically socially designated for both boys and girls. Such as, boys played with dolls and kitchen utensils along with girls, and girls played with balls and cricket bats with boys, challenging stereotypical socialization and raising the boys with girls in friendly environment. The Early Childhood Care and Development centers also provide an important service for the parents, especially for mothers, by relieving them of caring responsibilities while they are at work. Parents have somewhere to leave their child where they will be safe at least for two hours a day, will not come across any danger and will have some positive learning opportunities.

Linkage between Early Childhood Care and Development centers and Government Primary schools has been a great achievement, institutionalizing the relationship between community and academic institutions. Through this effort, children from poor and extreme-poor families had priority enrolment in the school and fared well there, as they had become familiar with educational systems through their experiences in the Early Childhood Care and Development centers.



'In half of the 1,509 target villages Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centers are established for children ages 4–6 ... ECCD enrolment tends to be comprised of approximately 60 percent girls and 40 percent boys. In addition, parenting sessions are held for mothers and fathers with the aim of improving parenting skills, especially related to girls' enrolment in school.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 45

### **Socialization through Early Childhood Care and Development center**

In Kunkunia village of Kazipur upazila, 30 girls and boys of four to five years of age come to the Early Childhood Care and Development Center at nine o'clock every day and stay there for two hours. In the center, children participate in various educational and recreational activities. The Volunteer in the center is conscious of gender discrimination, and makes sitting arrangement for the children in a manner that the girls and boys could sit together. The toys and sports items are same for boys and girls, so that all students can play as they wish. In the monthly meeting, the Volunteer discusses gender discrimination with the children's guardians.

*Source: Key Informant Interview with ECCD Volunteer, Village: Kunkunia, Union: Maizbari, Upazila: Kazipur, District: Sirajganj*

## **Conclusion**

The establishment of Early Childhood Care and Development centers for the children of the poor and extreme-poor community is strategic a effort to prepare the future generation by empowering them with education and by challenging the existing stereotypes and discriminatory socialization of boys and girls. Early Childhood Care and Development is an effective way to hold the community responsible for creating an enabling environment for the education of boys and girls of the poor and extreme-poor community.

# **Chapter Six**

## **Improving the Responsiveness of Services**

## Best practice:

# Strengthen Village Development Committees to bridge gaps between citizens and local government bodies



Photo 29: A Village Development Committee conducting a monthly meeting at Razibpur village, Ishwarganj upazila, Mymensingh

### Context and objective

Good governance practices are essential for the sustainable improvement of food security. It includes ensuring accountability, transparency and participation of community people. Without planning and implementation of community-driven development it is difficult for the poor and extreme-poor to access and claim their rights.

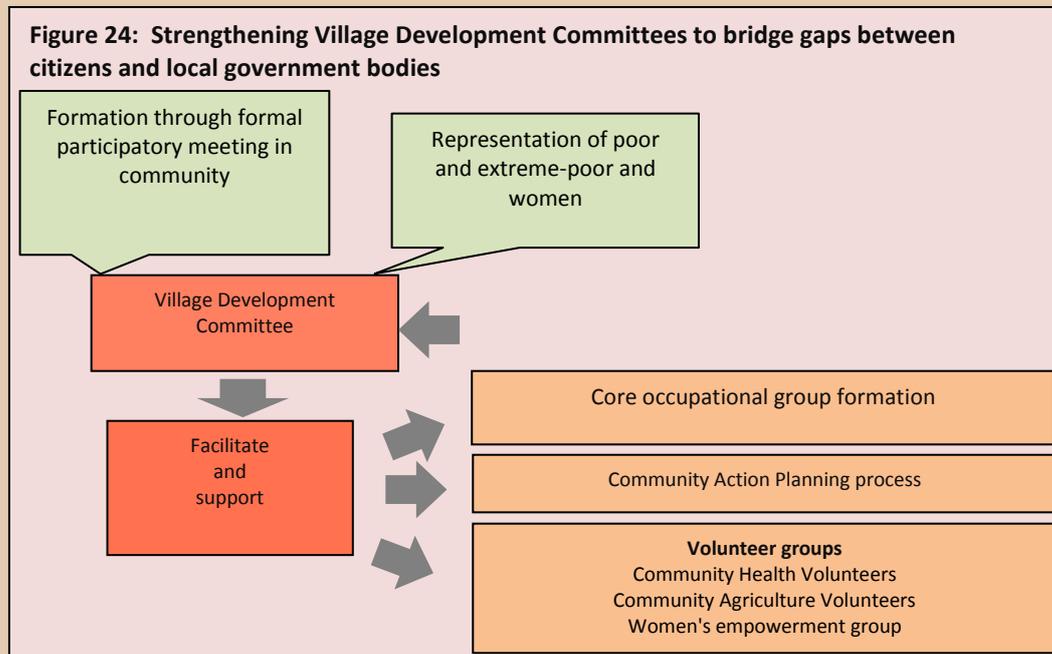
SHOUHARDO II establishes and strengthens community-based informal institutions, such as the VDC, in order to reduce the gap between local government institutions and community people. The Village Development Committee functions as an umbrella institution for all groups working on behalf of the poor and Extreme-poor in the community. It considers the VDC a fundamental 'vehicle for development' to bring about catalytic changes needed in the communities.

### Process and action

The SHOUHARDO II Program establishes Village Development Committees (VDCs), usually comprising 11 poor and extreme-poor community members (there are sometimes more in larger villages), at least five of whom are women. Sometimes it includes pro-poor members. A village representative group comprising 25–30 people usually nominates 11 names from their community for the formation of a Village Development Committee: through a formal participatory meeting in the presence of the Union Parishad representatives, this representative group puts forward the names of the Village Development Committee members. The general purpose of the Village Development Committees is to work with poor and extreme-poor people to identify constraints to development within the community and

then, through the Community Action Planning process, collaborate with SHOUHARDO II, local government representatives and the private sector to identify the means of addressing those

development constraints. VDC attend a series of training events and receive various capacity-building supports from the SHOUHARDO II program. Representatives of the Committee also take part in coordination and linkage-building meetings and workshops with Union Parishads, Upazila Parishads, and government and private service providers.



The VDC facilitates the selection process of various Core Occupational Groups based on people's assets (such as the availability of land, access to water bodies and labor resources). They are also responsible for coordinating and supporting the efforts of volunteers engaged in all the strategic objectives, including Community Health Volunteers, Community Agriculture Volunteers, women's empowerment groups, Ending Violence Against Women forum members, Union Disaster Management Committee members and Disaster Volunteers. They work to ensure that the poor and extreme-poor are included in the Union Parishad sub-committees, Union Disaster Management Committee, and other representative bodies. The VDC holds a monthly formal meeting to discuss the progress achieved as well as the challenges faced.

## Results and achievements

Informal Village Development Committees play an important facilitation role at community level and link directly to a range of formal and informal institutions, including local governments. Establishing and supporting the central role of VDCs has helped promote a sense of empowerment among the poor and extreme-poor. It has become an active and sustainable problem-solving group with supports from government service providers and local government bodies. VDCs contribute to negotiations with Union Parishad members to ensure the inclusion of Community Action Plan items in annual budget plans. They also facilitate many of the linkages with government service providers in government and private entities. They expedite poor and extreme-poor people's access to the common resources of the community.

'...the SHOUHARDO II program engaged with three key institutions, including Village Development Committees (VDC), Union Parishad (UP) and Nation Building Departments (NBDs) to ensure better services to the program beneficiaries by promoting good governance in the service delivery process. As a result at the end of the reporting period 61% PEP households accessed common/public resources...'

- *CARE Bangladesh - SHOUHARDO II Annual Results Report, 2013, p. 7-8*'Union Parishads have supported:

- 3,610 Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) households in accessing different types of safety net facilities, including:
  - a. Vulnerable Group Development
  - b. Vulnerable Group Feeding
  - c. employment under 100 days/40 days' work schemes
  - d. maternity, widow's and old age allowances
- The maintenance of 8km of earthen road, benefitting 10 communities
- the installation of six tube wells, benefitting two communities.'

- *CARE Bangladesh - SHOUHRDO II Quarterly Report, January-March, 2014, Annex 10*

### **Contribution of Village Development Committee in safety net beneficiary selection**

A VDC in Boroitoli village, Palongkhali Union under Ukhia Upazila was involved in the beneficiary selection for a safety net program. The Chairman of the Union Parishad was convinced that the involvement of the VDC greatly benefitted the Union Parishad. He felt that the group's involvement improved the safety net beneficiary selection process and demonstrated accountability and transparency. The Chairman was very impressed by the initiative of the Village Development Committee; it inspired him to form two new VDCs in the non-SHOUHARDO II villages of Telkhola and Mochakhola in order to resolve challenges around transparency and accountability.

*Source: Key Informant Interview with Mr. Gafur Uddin, Chairman, Palonkhali, Ukhia, Cox's Bazar*

### **Conclusion**

VDCs promote community-driven development and help beneficiary communities to be much more aware of their rights to access government services and entitlements. It fills a gap in the institutional structure between citizens and the lowest level of local government representation. The Village Development Committees also improve the accountability of Union Parishads by promoting the participation of poor and extreme-poor people in their decision-making processes.

## Best practice:

# Involve poor and extreme-poor people in preparing the annual budgets of Union Parishads



Photo 30: Mr. S.M. Gazi Mazharul Anwar, UP Chairman, sharing the proposed budget of FY 2013-14 at Tekani Union Parishad, Kazipur, Sirajganj

## Context and objective

Union Parishads formulate their budgets by focusing on the overall development of the Union. It is imperative for the community to have access to participation in this process and opportunities to offer their opinions. The Local Government (Union Parishad) Act of 2009 added a dimension that preparing budget should include participatory process; and it should be based on *Ward Shava* and placed in open public meeting. However, in reality, it rarely happens; largely, because, of the absence of financial discipline and weak capacity of the Union Parishad.

SHOUHARDO II program involves the poor and extreme-poor in the budget preparation process through the development of a Community Action Plan. It engages the VDCs as well as other volunteers to establish an effective linkage between the Union Parishads and their standing committees, which play an important role in reflecting the interests of the poor and extreme-poor in the budgetary process.

## Process and action

SHOUHARDO II facilitates Village Development Committees to develop Community Action Plans and engages the Union Parishad members of the respective wards. During the process it helps Village Development Committees to estimate costs and resource requirements for the individual activities, and to identify possible sources of funding. The VDCs also mark the activities that they consider should be done through the Union Parishads. SHOUHARDO II then facilitates the VDC in participating in the *Ward Shava* and raising their voice to include these activities in the Annual Budget provision of the Union. To facilitate communities' participation in the open budget, SHOUHARDO II also supports the Union Parishads in organizing open public meetings to discuss the budget,

display the draft budget and incorporate comments and suggestions in the final budget.



## Results and achievements

SHOUHARDO II's interventions have provided a mechanism for raising the concerns of the poor and extreme-poor in the Union Parishad annual budget processes. The program has prompted Union Parishads in beneficiary areas to practice open budgeting and increased government budget allocations in support of the poor and extreme-poor. It has also improved transparency in the local government budgetary system. As a result, the special needs of the poor and extreme-poor were significantly reflected in the Union Parishad annual budget.

'UPs included Village Development Committees' program activities valued at BDT 42,553,490 (USD 531,918) in their FY14 budget. The VDC activities to be covered by the UP budgets include tube wells, drain construction, homestead raising, road maintenance and the planting of trees. Overall achievements of the SO4 activities include:

- Increased number of UPs i.e. 121 Union Parishads (UPs) practicing open budget annually against LOA target of 50 UPs.
- Increased number of UPs i.e. 62 UPs allocated increased resources to meet the needs of the PEP against LOA target of 34 UPs.
- Increased number of UPs i.e. 171 UPs co-opted PEPs in different UP committees against the LOA target of 170 UPs.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II Annual Results Report, 2013, p. 58

### Poor and Extreme Poor Participation in the Annual Budget Preparation at Dhangdhara Union

In 2013, SHOUHARDO II helped the poor and extreme-poor in Dangdhara Union participate in the annual open budget session of their Union. It initiated the process in April, which continued until June. The program supported Union Parishad members of the respective wards to organize open budget discussion session in their wards; it then informed community people about attending the discussion session through Village Development Committees and volunteers. During the discussion session, they discussed various issues including activities proposed in the Community Action Plans, and prepared a draft budget for the ward. The respective ward members then presented their draft

budget in the Union Parishad meeting. The Union Parishad Secretary, in consultation with the Chairman, compiled the draft budgets received from the wards into one annual budget for the Union. The Union Parishad organized a public meeting on 10 June 2013, where it announced the draft budget. They then displayed the budget on a notice board for two weeks for the public to provide feedback.

*Source: Key Informant Interview with Abdur Rashid Mandal, Union Parishad Chairman, Dangdhara, Dewajganj, Jamalpur*

## Conclusion

Participation in open budgetary session enhances the poor and extreme-poor's awareness of the system and processes of preparing the Union Parishad's budget. The program's intervention establishes linkages between the community action planning and the budgetary provisions of the Union Parishad. The annual budgets of Union Parishads include risk-reduction elements and contribute to improving the resilience of the poor and extreme-poor.

## Best practice: Involve Village Development Committees in developing Community Action Plans



Photo 31: A Village Development Committee preparing a Community Action Plan with poor and extreme-poor community members

### Context and objective

In the Community Action Planning process, people are considered to be the primary resource rather than the objects of development. This approach motivates people to take the lead in the planning and implementation of reconstruction activities.

Involvement of community people in preparing the community action plan is imperative as they have the best knowledge of their problems, vulnerability issues and needs, as well of the potential solutions that may best address the challenges.

The creation of a Community Action Plan is an important element in SHOUHARDO II interventions. It seeks to bring about positive changes in the lives and livelihoods of communities. The key element of this intervention is to expand and protect livelihood options for the poor and extreme-poor households in the communities. SHOUHARDO II involves its VDC in the Community Action Plan development process. VDCs comprises of poor and extreme-poor community members; they operate as the primary means of empowering the local community to develop and implement plans for community-driven development.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II has a major set of activities to ensure community representation and the reflection of beneficiaries' opinions in the Community Action Plan. To begin with, it conducts a village-level baseline survey in the target villages to identify individual households in the program areas. Field-level staffs then initiate small group discussions with village people. The participants for these discussions come from various occupational and gender backgrounds, with a focus on including farmers, women and adolescent girls, extreme-poor people and people with disabilities. Each of these small groups nominates two people as their representatives. Thus, in each village, they form a representative group comprising of 25 to 30 people.

This group later sits together in a different meeting and develops social maps of their village on the basis of their own knowledge and experience. The social maps mostly reflect information about the village areas, the location of families, commuting roads, agricultural land, wetlands, markets, schools and important social and religious centers. They then develop criteria to determine 'extreme-poor', 'poor', 'lower middle class', 'middle class' and 'well-off' households in their village, and divide the households previously identified through a baseline survey into these five categories. The groups also propose 11 names from their community to form a VDC.



The VDC takes responsibility for leading the process of developing a Community Action Plan. The VDC sits with the other members of the group as well as members of the Union Parishad and develops the action plan. In developing a Community Action Plan they consider the risk and resource maps and social maps created by the community; their analysis includes identifying problems based on these maps and prioritizing them through and analysis of cause and effect focusing on gender, disaster and climate change and determining priority actions.

## Results and achievements

The process for developing Community Action Plans through VDCs helps the poor and extreme-poor achieve a sustainable solution that is accepted and supported by the local community. Common items included in Community Action Plans include food security-focused items such as improved agricultural production (including homestead gardening), reductions in malnutrition, greater awareness of and access to government services, women's empowerment, improved sanitation, greater employment opportunities, and improved access to education for children, and a plan to address other issues, including good governance, women's empowerment, healthcare and the education of children. The process also enables Village Development Committees to negotiate with Union Parishad members for the inclusion of Community Action Plan items in annual budgets and plans.

'The specific activities of VDCs have been guided in large part by the formation and implementation of Community Action Plans (CAPs). During the initial stages of project implementation, communities were also supported in undertaking Gender Analyses and Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analyses (CVCA). These exercises prioritized participation of PEP households and served as precursors to formulation of Community Action Plans.'

*CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p-56*

### **Village Development Committee initiatives**

People from the village of Naikong Khali, through the support of SHOUHARDO II, organized themselves and formed a VDC. They discussed their problems and needs, and ways to solve their problems in VDCs meetings. They noted that poor health and malnutrition were crucial problems. They identified that these problems arose due to the scarcity of safe water and absence of hand-washing practices. The VDCs planned and implemented awareness-raising activities and, more importantly, identified the need to about 400 sanitary latrines to improve hygiene practices in the village. They explored options and found VERC, a national NGO, through which they could procure sanitary latrines from UNICEF.

*Source: Emerging Initiatives of VDC, SHOUHARDO II News, Vol. 1, Issue 1, April 2012*

### **Conclusion**

Poor and extreme-poor groups worked together with other socio-economic groups in the communities to identify their problems and plan for development activities. This enabled the communities to apply the perspectives of the poor and extreme-poor in their analysis and planning. Poor and extreme-poor people – the traditionally marginalized group – participated in the community planning process and were able to demonstrate their ability to lead community-based planning.

## Best practice:

Provide information systematically to develop linkages between government service providers and community people



Photo 32: A coordination meeting with union-level government service providers

### Context and Objective

Various departments of the Government provide services such as agriculture, health and education to rural populations in Bangladesh. These departments have extension workers at Upazila and Union levels. However, people living in the villages are generally less informed about their entitlements and the roles and responsibilities of the government service providers. Therefore, poor and extreme-poor households in rural areas often face difficulties in accessing services and meeting their basic needs.

SHOUHARDO II addresses this problem by systematically providing information to develop linkage between the government service providers and communities. It applies a variety of tools and methods and targets both the community, to raise their awareness about the availability of services, and the government service providers, to encourage them to participate in conducting these awareness-raising interventions.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II conducts a range of activities to help the poor and extreme-poor and other stakeholders in the community to understand the citizen Charters of the government institutions and the roles and responsibilities of government service providers which are operating at the local level. It conducts orientation sessions for government service providers to better understand the needs of the poor and extreme-poor and encourages them to participate in disseminating information and raising community' awareness. The program also arranges coordination meetings with various departments, Union Parishads and VDCs to share information and exchange ideas.

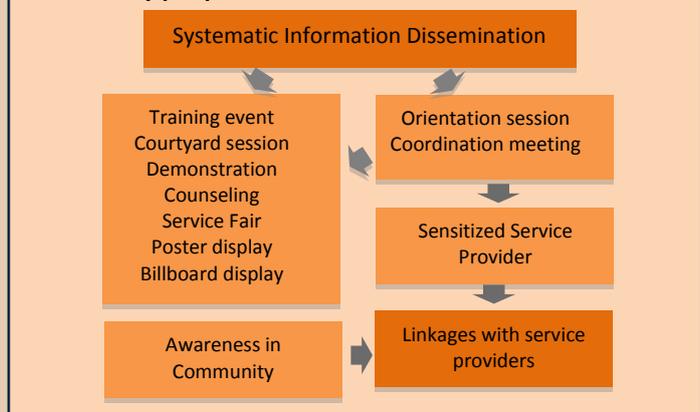
The program runs a series of training events for VDCs and the Core Occupational Groups, which involve government service providers.

It conducts courtyard sessions that include discussions of how the poor and extreme-poor and

different occupational groups can access services provided by various government departments. SHOUHARDO II also organizes Service Fairs in program areas, at which extension workers from different government institutions participate and explain their roles and responsibilities.

Program staffs provide counseling to distressed people, either directly or through the Village Development Committee, informing them of ways they can access relevant services from government service providers. SHOUHARDO II also demonstrates better technologies and processes. Government service providers participate in these activities and community people are able to see for themselves what services they can access from these government service providers. In addition, SHOUHARDO II displays posters that describe what services the Government extension workers provide and how community people can access them.

**Figure 27: Providing information systematically to develop linkages between government service providers and community people**



## Results and achievements

Across all households, utilization of services has increased significantly. Farmers have been able access the training that is provided by Agricultural Officers. SHOUHARDO II has been successful in linking children to the EPI program and basic health services, as well as facilitating doctor and midwife home-visits to care for sick and malnourished children. There has been an increased awareness of entitlements among local elected bodies; in particular, Union Parishad members have a better understanding that they are legally bound to support the regular meeting of village courts.

- 64% of surveyed beneficiary households accessed services from the department of agriculture extension against the baseline of 22.5%
  - 46% of surveyed households accessed services from the department of livestock against the baseline of 24%
  - 67.5% of surveyed households accessed common resources against the baseline of 21%.
- CARE Bangladesh - SHOUHARDO II Quarterly Report, January-March, 2014, Annex 10

### Service Fair organized at Ullapara

In June 2012, Ullapara Upazila Administration, in collaboration with SHOUHARDO II, organized a Service Fair in Bora Pangasi Union. The purpose of the fair was to demonstrate how people could better utilize the services that government departments provide at the community level. Various departments of the government, such as the Department of Agricultural Extension, Department of Livestock and the Department of Social Welfare participated in the display, as did the Union Health Family Welfare Center, the Information Service Center and other local organizations. People from surrounding villages came to the fair and received information and services.

*Source: SHOUHARDO II NEWS, Vol 1, Issue 2, July 2012*

## Conclusion

The process of the VDCs facilitating linkages with government and private service providers improves governance. It enables the poor and extreme-poor in the community to have better access to services provided by various departments of the government as well the market.

## Best practice:

Promote accountability in food distribution systems to ensure the entitlements and dignity of pregnant and lactating mothers



Photo 33: Food distribution to pregnant women and lactating mothers at Gunaigach village in Ulipur Upazila, Kurigram

### Context and objective

Despite significant economic progress in Bangladesh, the country remains highly food-insecure, and an estimated 60 million people consume less than the minimum daily-recommended amount of food<sup>1</sup>. The level of malnutrition remains high, with 43 percent of children under the age of five suffering from chronic malnutrition (stunting) in 2007<sup>2</sup> (see FAO, WFP and IFAD, 2012 for more information). Food distribution comprises a very large portion of the Government's safety net programs. These include transferring food grains to some 500,000 women in poor and marginalized households through the Vulnerable Group Development program.

The SHOUHARDO II Program provides monthly food rations to approximately 176,700 pregnant and lactating mothers, with the aim of improving the nutritional status of children less than two years of age. To ensure accountability in the process and uphold the dignity of the women, SHOUHARDO II conducts food distribution in collaboration with Union Parishads and VDCs.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II involves communities at different stages of the food distribution process. It identifies pregnant women and lactating mothers by accessing lists prepared by Community Health Volunteers. It also forms Project Implementation Committees in collaboration with VDCs and Union Parishads. The program then delegates the responsibility of food distribution to these committees. Food is delivered to the Project Implementation Committees one day before the day of distribution. It keeps the food overnight and distributes it the following day.

Project Implementation Committees, in consultation with Union Parishads, find places that are convenient for pregnant women and lactating to come to, and makes arrangements so that during their stay in the distribution center women can sit and have access to potable water and toilet facilities. The committees display

posters that state women's entitlements to food rations, including what type and quantity of food is available to individuals. The committees also keep a set of weighing scales in an open place near the distribution center, which women can use to weigh the food items they receive. Furthermore, the Committees place a complaints box in the distribution center for the women to give feedback if they need to; posters also display contact numbers for program staff should the women need to share their grievances.

Staff from SHOUHARDO II and its partner NGOs and VDC members make regular visits to the distribution centers to monitor distribution and beneficiary satisfaction. Union Parishad members also monitor the Project Implementation Committee's' food distribution work.



## Results and achievements

The program's food aid complies with the minimum standards for dietary requirements and comprises culturally acceptable food items. Food distribution plans and processes have been developed in consultation with the community. The distribution system included receiving and responding to complaints from the recipients. Recipients of the food aid were also informed about their entitlements and had access to weighing scales to measure quantities of food that they received.

**'Transparency** - SHOUHARDO II has engaged local leaders in discussions of beneficiary selection criteria, food ration distribution procedures, and participation in the distribution management. SHOUHARDO II staffs have also taken steps to ensure impartiality, neutrality and timeliness.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 83

### **Distribution of food rations to pregnant women and lactating mothers**

SHOUHARDO II partner, the SKS Foundation, distributed food rations among the pregnant women and lactating mothers of Gunaigach village on 11 May 2014 through the area's Project Implementation Committee. They informed the beneficiaries about the date, time and place of distribution one week prior to distribution. On the day of distribution, the program partner fixed a banner at the distribution center that displayed the information about the ration items and the quantities available for individual recipients. They also arranged drinking water, toilet facilities and seating for the women. The Project Implementation Committee formed a distribution team that included three women to check the ration card, two men to provide wheat, two women to provide oil and one woman to provide pulses. They arranged the process so that those five recipients came to the distribution point in a group and took their food packages one by one. The committee kept a weighing scale and a complaints box near the distribution point. They also displayed a banner that described how and where to complain.

*Source: Observation and discussion with SHOUHARDO II Program Staff, Village: Gunaigach, Union: Gunaigach, Upazila: Ulipur, District: Kurigram*

### **Conclusion**

SHOUHARDO II food distribution upholds transparency and accountability by involving poor and extreme-poor people in the Project Implementation Committee, and planning and executing food distribution through this committee. The program demonstrates its commitment to ensuring the dignity of recipients by allowing them raise complaints.

## Best practice:

Involve government functionaries in improving the livelihoods of the poor and extreme-poor



*Photo 34: Program Advisory Coordination Committee members meeting with program beneficiaries at Mollikpara village of Kazipur upazila, Sirjganj*

### Context and objective

A large proportion of the population in Bangladesh is poor or extreme-poor. Pro-poor and proactive support from public sector agencies such as the Departments of Agriculture, Livestock and Health and Family Planning, is essential for their livelihoods.

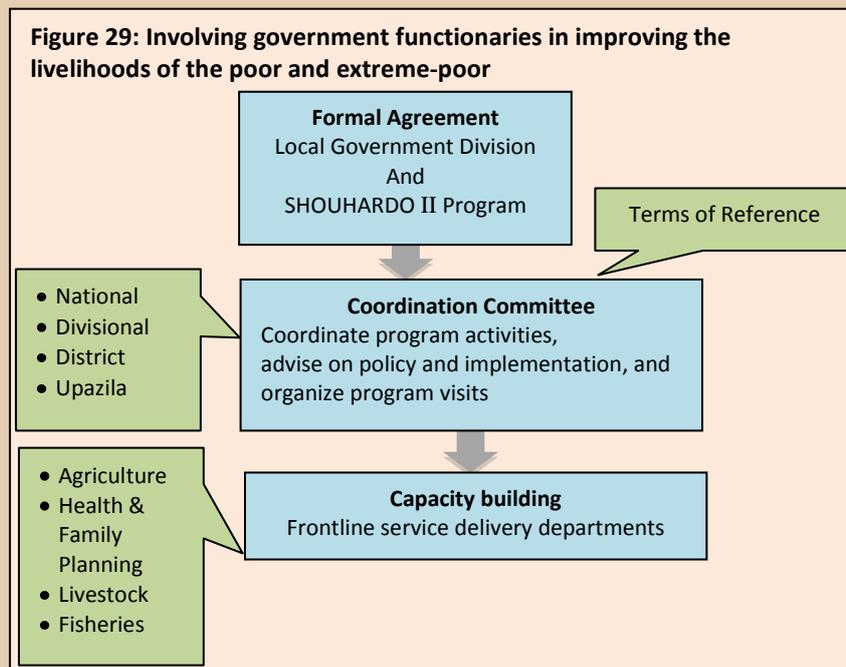
SHOUHARDO II seeks to reduce the vulnerability of the poor and extreme-poor to food insecurity and implements the program through a regional approach involving government functionaries at local and national levels. It works to establish strong linkages among community, local government bodies and government service delivery departments. CARE enters into partnership with the Government of Bangladesh to involve government functionaries in SHOUHARDO II program interventions at various levels to improve the access of the poor and extreme-poor to government services.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II, on the basis of the formal agreement with the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives and the relevant Terms of Reference, formed a Program Advisory and Coordination Committee at the national level, involving officials from 14 ministries as well as representatives from CARE. Then, through the support of the Local Government Divisions, it formed SHOUHARDO II Program coordination committees with representation from SHOUHARDO II at Division, District and Upazila levels.

The SHOUHARDO II program organizes regular coordination meetings at the upazila, district, division and national levels. National and Divisional coordination meetings are

scheduled to convene twice each year, the District Committees meet three times per year, and the Upazila Committees meet quarterly. These committees coordinate the activities of various Government institutions involved in the SHOUHARDO II Program and provide advice on policy and implementation as necessary.



The program arranges orientation sessions for the coordination committee members at different levels that include the principles of good governance, the roles and responsibilities of various government departments and Local Elected Bodies, development planning and implementation, resource mobilization and allocation, linkages between governance institutions, and the facilitation of community participation in government structures and processes. Also, SHOUHARDO II plans and organizes training for the capacity building of the frontline staff of government service delivery departments such as Agriculture, Health and Family Planning and Livestock.

Furthermore, the program facilitates visits of the government functionaries in the SHOUHARDO II program areas to monitor, providing technical support and interact with people at community level.

## Results and achievements

Coordination committees and their meetings increased the involvement of government functionaries in SHOUHARDO II program management. In turn the program facilitated the increased presence of the government service providers and their services in the communities. The poor and extreme-poor gained more access to agricultural knowledge and technology, veterinary services (including vaccination), treatment and advice for livestock rearing, safety net provisions, common resources and medical care. Coordination meetings also contributed to the process of including Community Action Plan items in the annual budget plans of the Union Parishads.

'It should be noted, however, that the most remote beneficiary communities cite their geographic isolation as a continuing impediment to enhanced development and access to government services. Where it has been achieved, more frequent visits by Union Parishad (UP) members not only enable more personal interaction with the poor and extreme-poor, it also allows UP members to witness first-hand the constraints to development encountered in target communities, as well as the progress being made (through SHOUHARDO II) to address them. Through Program Advisory and Coordination Committees, CARE worked with the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) to conduct arsenic testing of tube wells in target communities, ultimately leading to DPHE replacements of those that tested positive.'

- *CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p. 56*'II'II

## Conclusion

The Program Advisory Coordination Committees facilitate the involvement of government functionaries in program interventions. This approach improves the responsiveness and accountability of frontline government service providers and the Local Elected Bodies. It also contributes to the enhancement of livelihood options for the poor and extreme-poor and increases their opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

## Best practice:

Negotiate with key government officials to help extreme-poor households' access *khasland*



Photo 35: After receiving *khasland*, a land owner works on his land at Sagarpara village of Dimla Upazila, Nilphamari

### Context and objective

Access to *khasland* (government-owned land) is an important livelihood source for the extreme-poor. It can generate and protect the gains made toward achieving sustainable livelihoods. According to the *Khasland Management and Distribution Policy, 1997*, *khasland* is to be distributed to poor households. The Government of Bangladesh has an established mechanism at Upazila, district and central levels for *khasland* distribution. However, the extreme-poor are inadequately informed about this policy and there are complications in the distribution process.

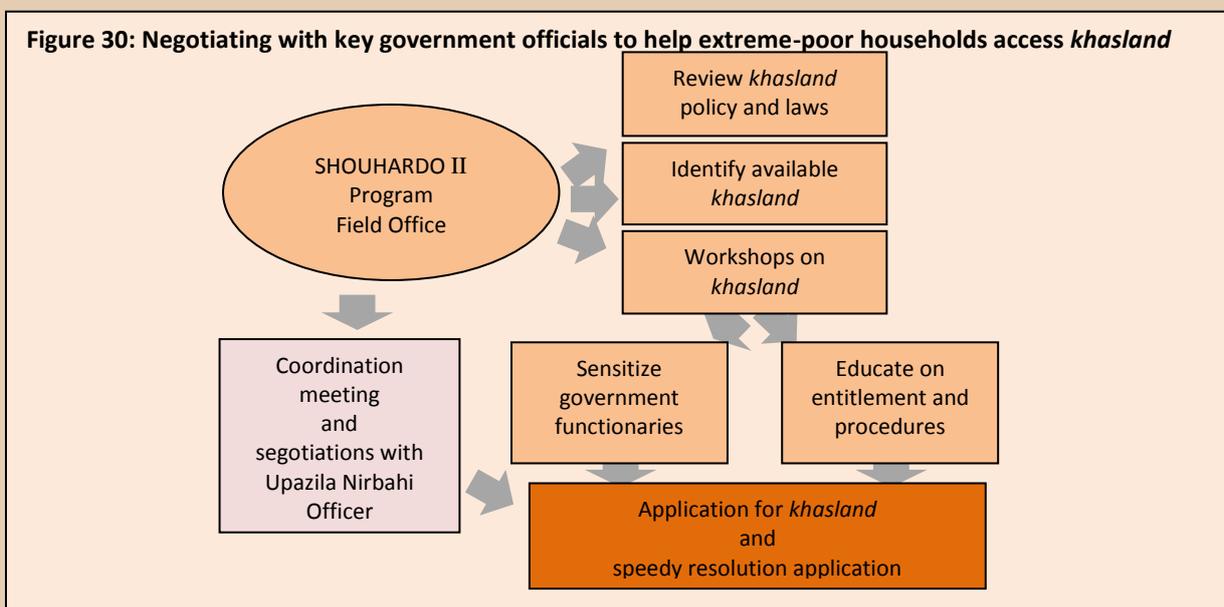
SHOUHARDO II supports the extreme-poor to meet the complex procedures involved in making applications to the land office at Upazila and District levels to secure tenancy of the *khasland*. The support provided includes an innovative negotiation process that mainly focuses on transferring the tenancy of *khasland* to extreme-poor households and targets the key relevant government officials in the upazila and district offices.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II reviews policies and laws related to the *khasland* and inform communities about their entitlements. It provides support to the VDCs to identify both *khasland* and the landless poor in the community. They start by sensitizing the government officials and other key stakeholders at Upazila and District levels. The program mainly does this mainly by arranging workshops on *khasland* at union, upazila and District levels in which Village Development Committees, Upazila Nirbahi Officers, Union-level officials and the Union Parishad Chairman participate and discuss the problems and opportunities. Then the program supports potential beneficiaries to complete the application process and helps applicants track the process and, where needed,

push the relevant officers toward a speedy resolution.

SHOUHARDO II discusses the application for  *khasland*  in the Program Advisory and Coordination Committee meetings at District and Upazila levels. During these meetings they press the relevant Upazila Nirbahi Officer to allocate  *khasland*  to the poor households. Furthermore, program staffs conduct an analysis to identify the most influential stakeholders in the system and engage in negotiation with those people individually. The negotiation activities vary depending on the situation and persons involved, and it includes formal as well as informal meetings.



## Results and achievements

Negotiation efforts lead to the speedy resolution of the applications for  *khasland* . Poor and extreme-poor people are able to establish tenancy of  *khasland* , and live in their own homesteads without a fear of eviction. They can then use their land to cultivate diversified crops for both household consumption and sale.

### Extreme-poor households receive *khasland*

The SHOUHARDO II Rangpur Regional Office and partner NGOs,  *Jhanjira Samaj Kallayan Sangstha*  (JSKS) and Resource Integration Center (RIC) provided the necessary assistance to a Village Development Committee in identifying available  *khasland*  and eligible households. The program team lobbied with the relevant government institutions to allocate  *khasland*  to the extreme-poor. It discussed the issue in the District SHOUHARDO II Coordination Committee meeting held in November 2011. The program staff then negotiated with the respective Upazila Nirbahi Officer to take the necessary action to allocate  *khasland*  to SHOUHARDO II beneficiaries. As a result, 45 households in the Banial village in Ghoraghat Upazila and Satini Sagarpara village in Dimla Upazila have received legislative ownership of 1,048 decimal of  *khasland*  (10.48 acres) for 99 years.

Source: SHOUHARDO II News, Volume 2, Issue 3, October 2013

## Conclusion

Owning a piece of land can make a difference in the life and livelihoods of extreme-poor households. It impacts directly on their household income and increases their social dignity. Also, owning land enables them to decide on what to plant and how and when to harvest what they plant. They invest and work harder on their own land to earn more, and can innovate and decide on their own value-adding activities. It contributes to their food security and improves their access to productive assets, allowing families to address other issues including the healthcare and education of their children.

# **Chapter Seven**

## **Facilitating Disaster and Climate Risk Management**

## Best practice:

### Establish Disaster Volunteers to ensure Union Disaster Committees function effectively



Photo 36: In response to riverbank erosion, Disaster Volunteers assist affected people to evacuate in a safe place

#### Context and objective

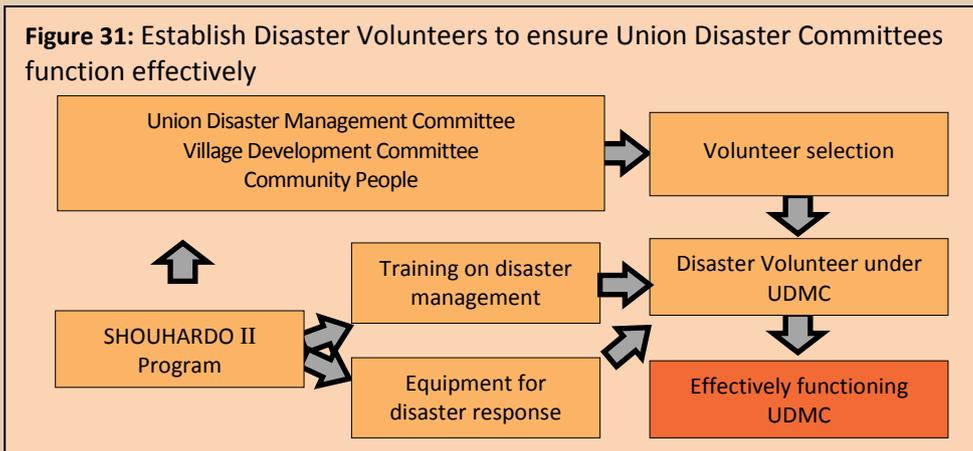
Union Disaster Management Committees are mandatory, according to the Disaster Management Act 2012; these exist in every union. The committee is expected to play an important role in disaster risk reduction in Bangladesh. In reality, most of the Union Disaster Management Committees do not function well, largely because of a capacity gap that includes human resource constraints.

SHOUHARDO II supports Union Disaster Management Committees to enhance its human resource capacity by recruiting Disaster Volunteers in each union.

#### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II staffs meet with Union Disaster Management Committees and discuss, among other issues, the establishment of Disaster Volunteers in the communities. The program proposes the placement of four volunteers (two women and two men) in each ward, who would work under the Union Disaster Management Committee to help it do its disaster risk reduction and disaster response work. If the committee agrees, SHOUHARDO II staffs consult the VDC and the community people to identify and select the volunteers. SHOUHARDO II applies a set of criteria (e.g. an age range of 18–40 years; and an education minimum of grade 8), and involves the Union Disaster Management Committee in the subsequent selection process.

Once the volunteers are selected, SHOUHARDO II arranges training on disaster management for these volunteers and supplies the equipment needed for disaster response. Also, from time to time, SHOUHARDO II arranges refresher training for these volunteers. SHOUHARDO II motivates the volunteers and defines their roles so that Disaster Volunteers work solely under the Union Disaster Management Committees, and these committees oversee their work.



## Results and achievements

Unions under SHOUHARDO II operation areas have Disaster Volunteers in place. Union Disaster Management Committees in these Unions conducted risk and resource mapping, developed disaster preparedness plans and conducted disaster and climate risk awareness-raising activities in the communities through Disaster Volunteers. In the disaster affected Unions, Union Disaster Management Committees disseminated early warnings, ran search-and-rescue operations, conducted damage and needs assessments and delivered humanitarian assistance through Disaster Volunteers.

'Through the facilitation of the Disaster Volunteers and with the assistance of the Union Disaster Management Committee members, the program has developed Risk and Resource Maps at all 172 program unions.'

- Palash Mondal, Senior Technical Manager-  
Humanitarian Assistance

**Volunteers disseminate warning messages and evacuate people**

On May 11, 2013, a deep depression formed over the southeast of the Bay of Bengal and intensified into cyclonic storm Mahasen. In response, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department advised the hoisting of local cautionary signal number three. Later, as the signal rose to number four, the Union Disaster Management Committee of Jalia Palong urgently sat together to decide their course of action. Based on the decision of the meeting, they instructed Disaster Volunteers to disseminate early warnings amongst the at-risk communities and evacuate people to safer shelters. The volunteers disseminated warning messages in 16 at-risk communities using hand mics, phone calls and loud hailers, and by hoisting warning flags in public places. They also successfully evacuated over 8,000 people to nine safe shelters.

*Source: Case study on disaster preparedness: Striking Preparedness to Strike Out 'MAHASEN', [http://www.carebangladesh.org/shouharDOII/human\\_story](http://www.carebangladesh.org/shouharDOII/human_story)*

## Conclusion

The presence of Disaster Volunteers in the Unions enables the Union Disaster Management Committees to access and utilize additional human resources. This helps the committees conduct their disaster risk reduction and response operations in a timely and effectively manner. In turn, this intervention contributes to improving communities' resilience to disaster and climate change.

## Best practice:

Promote female Disaster Volunteers to ensure better understanding of women's disaster risks



*Photo 37: A Female Disaster Volunteer carrying goods*

### Context and objective

During disasters, women suffer from injuries, loss of assets, and physical and emotional distresses, but despite this, women are expected to take responsibility for ensuring the nutrition, hydration, health and cleanliness of family members as well as the safety and security of children and elderly people. However, the national disaster management system is weak in assessing and addressing women's needs.

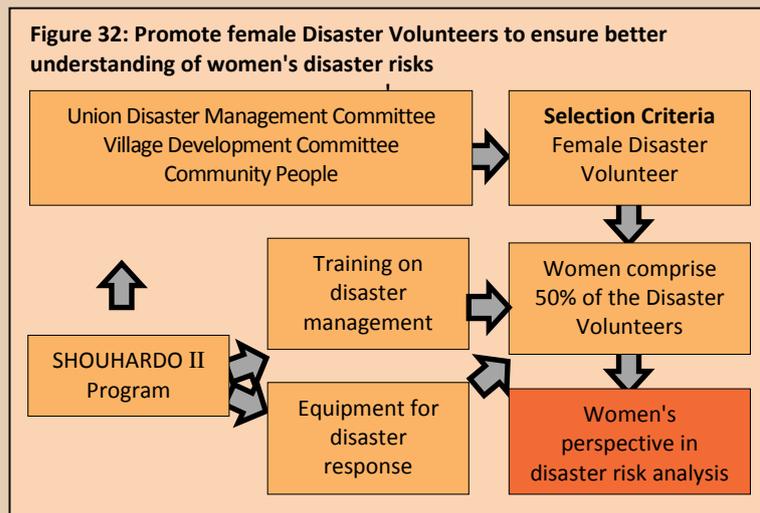
SHOUHARDO II, in collaboration with the Union Disaster Management Committees, works to establish female Disaster Volunteers in each Union. It seeks to help Union Disaster Management Committees to better understand women's disaster risks and address these.

### Process and action

To support Union Disaster Management Committees in establishing Disaster Volunteers, SHOUHARDO II defines a set of criteria for the volunteer selection process, and it clearly states that in each Union 50% of Volunteers must be women. SHOUHARDO II explains the criteria and process for volunteer selection to the Village Development Committees, Union Disaster Management Committees and women's groups, and discusses the need for and value of female Disaster Volunteers in the community. If the Union Disaster Management Committee agrees, SHOUHARDO II staffs consult with the VDC and the community people to identify female Disaster Volunteers by applying the criteria. The program also involves the Union Disaster Management Committee in the selection process.

Once the volunteers are selected, SHOUHARDO II

arranges training on disaster management techniques for both female and male volunteers, and supplies them the necessary equipment for disaster response. Also, at regular intervals, the program arranges refresher training for the volunteers. SHOUHARDO II motivates the volunteers and defines their roles in a way that female and male Disaster Volunteers can work together under the Union Disaster Management Committee; this committee oversees their work.



## Results and achievements

Unions under SHOUHARDO II operation areas have female Disaster Volunteers in place and each of these women participated in risk and resource mapping, disaster preparedness planning and disaster and climate risk awareness raising activities in the communities. Risk and resource maps in these unions identified specific risks to women during evacuation and in temporary shelters (for example, risks of violence and abuse). Plans included provisions of special arrangement for adolescent girls, pregnant women, lactating mothers and elderly people. Awareness-raising activities focused on reaching women and issues concerning women's risks during disaster, such as death and injury, exposure to violence and abuse, and loss of household assets, as well as other possible options for mitigating these risks.

### Female volunteer help families go to shelters during tropical storm Mahasen

When Bangladesh Meteorological Department issued a local warning signal number four for cyclonic storm Mahasen on 13 May 2013, the Union Disaster Management Committee of Jalia Palong in the south-east Cox's Bazar District advised disaster volunteers to disseminate early warnings among at-risk communities. Tahura Khatun, a member of a 36-volunteer group, went with another volunteer to the communities on the west side of Marine Drive, which was exposed to the sea. They warned the families about the threat of the cyclone and advised them to make preparations for probable evacuation. In particular, she advised the female members of the households to pack up necessary belongings tie up long hair and wear less risky clothes. Later, when the signal rose to number seven, they asked the community people to go to nearby shelters. They helped over 50 families to move to safe shelters. Tahura Khatun also looked after these families to ensure the safety and security of the women and helped them access food and water.

*Source: Case study on disaster preparedness: Striking Preparedness to Strike Out 'MAHASEN', [http://www.carebangladesh.org/shouharidoII/human\\_storyr](http://www.carebangladesh.org/shouharidoII/human_storyr)*

## Conclusion

Having a female Disaster Volunteer in each Union Disaster Management Committees brings women's perspectives to disaster risk analyses of communities. The community as a whole, especially women, identifies measures for managing women's particular risks and strengthening community's disaster preparedness plan accordingly. This helps reduce casualties among women and children.

## Best practice: Facilitate community-led initiatives for reducing disaster risks



*Photo 38: Bamboo bridge made by community people of Digirchar village in Dewanganj Uupazila, Jamalpur*

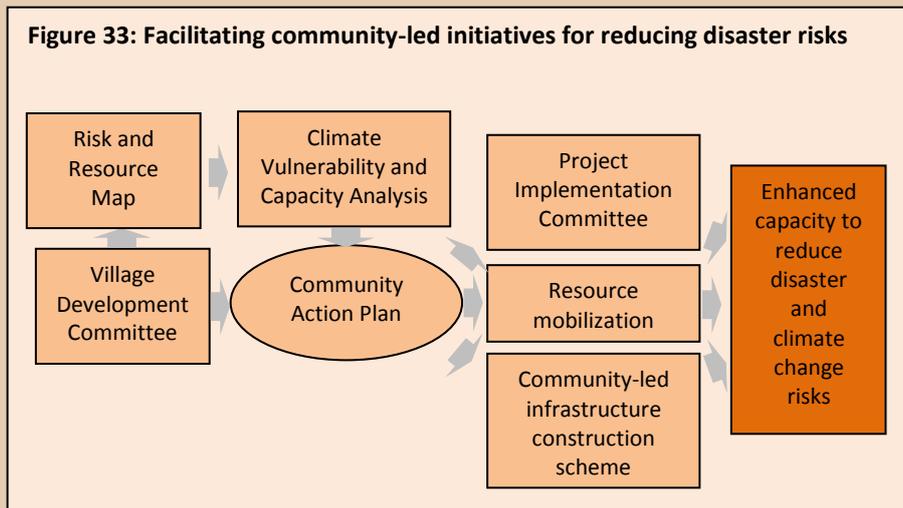
### Context and objective

Large proportions of people in Bangladesh live in marginalized locations and recurrently suffer from various natural hazards, such as cyclones, storm surges, floods, riverbank erosion, salinity intrusion and droughts. However, persistent exposure to such hazards enables communities to develop the capacity to cope better with subsequent disasters. Generally, communities are the first to respond to a disaster when it occurs.

The SHOUHARDO II Program works to reduce disaster and climate change risks. It strengthens disaster preparedness and the response capacity of communities and local institutions. A significant part of the support the program offers is the facilitation of community-led initiatives to build infrastructure in order to reduce disaster risks.

### Process and action

SHOUHARDO II staff work with VDCs and involve them in preparing risk and resource maps and climate vulnerability and capacity analyses. Through these interventions, VDCs identify the need for planning activities to mitigate disaster and climate risks. During the development or review of Community Action Plans, VDCs plan specific infrastructure construction activities and include them in the Community Action Plan. VDCs then explore the options for mobilizing resources to implement the plan. During this process, VDCs identify the most urgent infrastructure construction plans, and which of these can be managed by the community. The VDCs then involve the community to mobilize local resources and build these infrastructures. SHOUHARDO II Program staffs provide advice and technical inputs to facilitate this process and help the VDCs form Project Implementation Committees to conduct the construction work.



## Results and achievements

By involving communities and mobilizing resources locally, VDCs have constructed or repaired infrastructure in their respective communities to reduce disaster and climate change risks. These have included approach roads, embankments, small bridges and culverts.

SHOUHARDO II has been working with the Araj Shabaz Girls High School to form the School Based Teen Brigade (SBTB). The SBTB when identifying risks and resources marked that their primary access road to the school was a threat in itself. This was a broken road which frequently submerged in the monsoon, posing a risk to pedestrians who would fall off the road into adjacent ditches. The SBTB took it upon them to approach the Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) of Balapara, and the Upazila Disaster Management Committee to see if they could provide assistance to repair and elevate the road. These Committees agreed to assist, and on the National Disaster Preparedness Day they, together with the community, mended the 600m-long, nine feet-wide road. Almost 700 villagers, 200 students, numerous local elites, and two local clubs participated in the rebuilding initiative. The Upazila Nirbahi Officer was present as Chief Guest in the opening of the reconstructed road, together with the Upazila Vice Chairman, and other government senior representatives.

*CARE Bangladesh MYAP – SHOUHARDO II Annual Results Report*

## Conclusion

Community Action Plans focusing on managing local resources for the common good and defending the interests of the poor help to improve the livelihoods and food security of the poor and extreme-poor. Incorporating the findings from risk and resource mapping in Community Action Plans helps to develop local capacity to respond to disaster, build disaster-resistant infrastructure and promote climate smart agriculture. It enhances disaster resilience and climate change adaptability, thereby contributing to the improvement and protection of the livelihoods of the poor and extreme-poor.

## Best practice:

# Use risk and resource mapping for local-level action planning



Photo 39: Risk and Resource Map at Jadurchar, Rowmari, Kurigram

## Context and objective

Risk and resource mapping in the rural and marginalized areas of Bangladesh has become a common practice in recent times. Bangladesh is a disaster-prone country, and many government and non-government agencies are involved in disaster risk management. Mapping exercises that identify the key hazards, vulnerabilities and resources in an area is an important element in the model that these agencies apply. For many years these mapping exercises have been done by involving the community people. As a result, the communities, local government bodies and the Disaster Management Committees at local levels have taken up this intervention almost as a day-to-day activity.

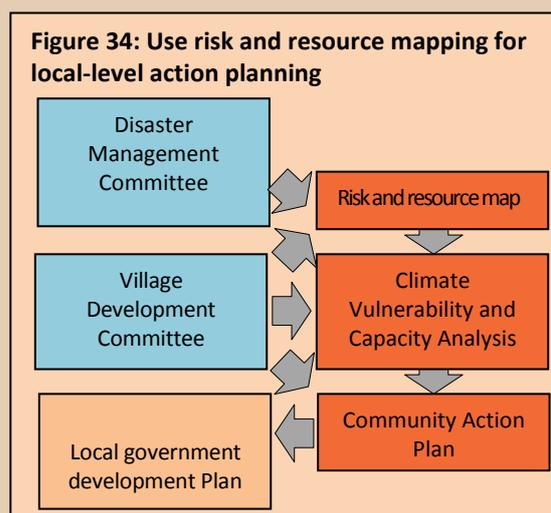
Usually, risk and resource maps are rarely used in the planning of interventions for improving the livelihoods of the poor and extreme-poor. However, the design and implementation of SHOUHARDO II is different: it applies the risk and resource maps to expand and protect the livelihoods of the poor and extreme-poor households by supporting Village Development Committees to use risk and resource maps as one of the foundations of their annual Community Action Plan.

## Process and action

Disaster risk reduction is an important element of SHOUHARDO II, and the program responds to disaster when it affects the program area. SHOUHARDO II provides various supports, including training, to Union Disaster Management Committees and the local communities to help them enhance their disaster risk management capacities. The program engages Disaster Volunteers and through them involves the communities in risk and resource mapping exercises. Risk and resource mapping is a participatory process, conducted at ward level. The ward-level maps are collated and compiled into a Union-level risk and resource map by involving Union Disaster Management Committees. Union Parishad and Union Disaster Management Committees use the risk and resource maps to plan their

disaster risk reduction and disaster response interventions.

To establish linkages between disaster risk reduction and livelihood protection, SHOUHARDO II involves VDCs in using the findings and analyses of the risk and resource maps in developing Community Action Plans. This process seeks to identify the main problems of the community and establish possible solutions. SHOUHARDO II facilitates the process by encouraging the consideration of a Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis. This is a participatory process to facilitate community analysis of vulnerability and adaptive capacity regarding climate change; it also serves as a vehicle for mainstreaming disaster and



climate risk management in all development and livelihood interventions. SHOUHARDO II invests significantly in capacity-building efforts. It equips the local-level disaster management committee as well the communities with knowledge and skills to analyze and prioritize disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

## Results and achievements

The risk and resource maps and the understanding gained through the Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analyses enable the community members to incorporate disaster risk and climate vulnerability in their analysis for community action plan. Many of the Community Action Plan activities were identified through the Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis process – the common priority activities for coping with climate change include raising dwelling areas, constructing and maintaining roads, culverts, canals and embankments, creating tree plantations, cultivating drought- and flood-tolerant crops and installing tube-wells.

'Regarding the use of Risk and Resource Map, Union Parishad Chairman of Paikurati Union under Dharmapasa Upazila Mr. Ferdous reported that his job of disaster preparedness has been made easy, as he just had to know where the 'reds' (areas of high risk) were on the map of his union, and try to take measures to reduce the risks by undertaking projects of embankments, plinth raising, etc'.

- Palash Mondal, Senior Technical Manager- Humanitarian Assistance, SHOUHARDO II Program

### VDC identifies the need for a bridge using a risk and resource map

Purba Digrirchar is a flood-prone village in the Parramrampur Union under Dewanganj Upazila. Almost every year, monsoon floods affect the village and cause severe damage to infrastructure and disruption to services.

SHOUHARDO II provided training to the Disaster Volunteers and the VDC to conduct risk and resource mapping, which was done at the volunteers' respective ward levels. With the involvement of the Union Disaster Management Committee, they then compiled these maps into a Union-level risk and resource map.

In 2013, while reviewing their Community Action Plan, the VDC looked at the findings of the risk and resource map. They noted that communication services in the village were often disrupted due to flooding, and there were inadequate bridges and culverts to properly link the commuting roads in some natural water passes within the village. They identified a particular spot that immediately required a bridge for safe commuting during the floods. The committee included this in their Community Action Plan.

*Source: Discussion with Village Development Committee, Purba Digirchar, Parramrampur, Dewanganj, Jamalpur*

## Conclusion

Community Action Plans focusing on managing local resources for the common good and on defending the interests of the poor help to improve the livelihoods and food security of the poor and extreme-poor. Incorporating the findings from risk and resource maps when creating Community Action Plans helps to develop local capacity to respond to disaster, build disaster-resistant infrastructure and promote climate-smart agriculture. It enhances disaster resilience and climate change adaptability, thereby contributing to expanding and protecting the livelihoods of the poor and extreme-poor.

## Best practice: Raise dwelling areas to mitigate flood risks



*Photo 40: A raised dwelling area at Shyampur village, Ulipur Upazila, Kurigram*

### Context and objective

Poor and extreme-poor households living in flood-prone areas of Bangladesh suffer regularly from inundation during monsoon seasons. Raising dwelling areas ensures flood-free homesteads and enables people stay on their homestead land during flood periods.

SHOUHARDO II raises clusters of homesteads in flood-prone areas to protect them from flooding, so that poor communities are better prepared to mitigate the effects of disaster shocks and the loss of lives and assets.

### Process and action

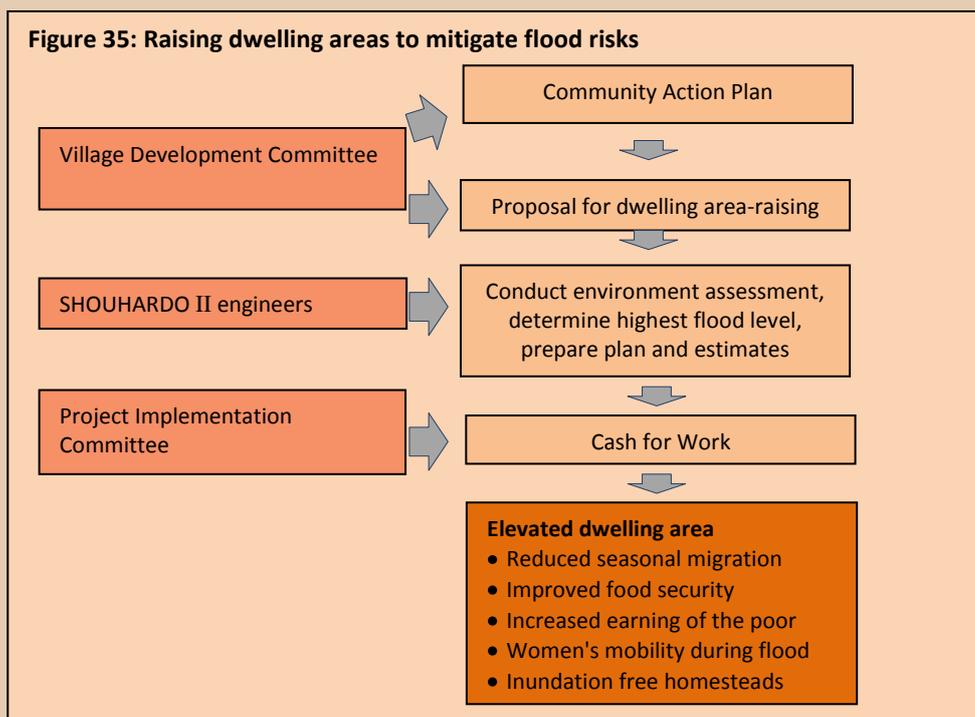
Based on the village's Community Action Plan, the Village Development Committee proposes to SHOUHARDO II a scheme for raising dwelling areas. The program engineers then conduct an environment assessment and determine the highest probable flood level in collaboration with the Village Development Committee. They then design and prepare a layout for the raised dwelling area. The engineers also prepare a budget for this scheme. Before raising the dwelling area, owners of the homesteads move their houses to another place with the help of this Project Implementation Committee; SHOUHARDO II forms a Project Implementation Committee with seven members, at least 14 of whom are women. The Project Implementation Committee assists the total implementation process voluntarily. The implementing agency employs laborers (Cash for Work) and conducts earth-filling work. They ensure that about 40% of this labor force is

female. In many cases, beneficiaries take responsibility for some components of the process, such as compacting the earth-fill and planting turf on the side slopes. After the completion of the earth-filling the homestead owners rebuild their houses on their respective lands at their own cost.

### Results and achievements

This intervention provided poor and extreme-poor households with flood-free homesteads. It enabled people to grow vegetables and rear poultry and domestic animals on their homesteads despite flooding. Tube wells and latrines in raised homesteads also remained functional during

floods. Moreover, it created employment for poor men and women by providing Cash for Work for dwelling area-raising.



## Dwelling area raising in Kurigram

In 2012, a VDC in Shyampur village, Kurigram, identified the households vulnerable to inundation during floods through their Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis. In their Community Action Plan, they included a scheme to raise the homesteads of 11 households. These households lost their homes due to riverbank erosion in 2010 and had subsequently been living on low-lying land and suffering from flood inundation every year.

SHOUHARDO II conducted a feasibility study, then approved the scheme and included it in the budget of the 2012-13 financial year. It initiated a Cash-for-Work scheme to raise land about 6 feet from the existing land level, having considered the highest flood levels of two dwelling areas - one with a cluster of five homesteads and other with six homesteads. The total budget for the scheme was BDT 359,175 (USD 4645.31) and the construction was completed in December, 2012.

The 11 families participated in the Cash for Work employment, along with other poor and extreme-poor people from the village, and rebuilt their houses on the raised land at their own cost. They also planted over 2,000 trees in their dwelling areas.

*Source: Discussion with Village Development Committee, Village: Shyampur, Union: Hatia, Upazila: Ulipur, District: Kurigram*

## Conclusion

This intervention contributes to reducing short-range seasonal migration and improving the food security of poor and extreme-poor people. It also increases the earning capacity and mobility of poor women. It is expected that the households would remain free from flood inundation despite the predicted rise in water levels over the next 30 years.

## Best practice:

### Support mound protection in communities to reduce wave erosion



Photo 41: Mound protection wall at Adarshagram village, Dharmapasha Upazila, Sunamganj

#### Context and objective

The villages in *haor* areas are made up of one or more distinct mounds (*at* in the local language) that are sometimes connected but often become separated during the monsoon. From May to October *haor* areas are flooded and winds over the vast body of water generates high waves. A common problem for local people is how to protect their dwelling areas from erosion caused by these waves. To protect themselves and their assets, they construct mound protection walls by using voluntary labor and mobilizing locally available resources. They repair these mounds with earth if necessary. They also construct protection walls using *Binna* grass, *chaila* grass, straw and bamboo. These protection walls require annual repair and maintenance because they are damaged by wave erosion.

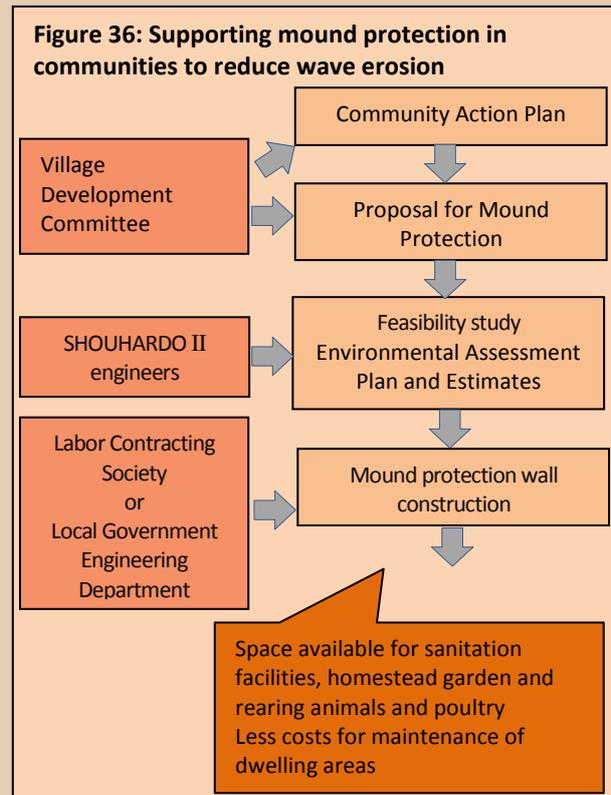
SHOUHARDO II supports communities to build mound protection walls. It provides more durable materials, such as bricks, cement and iron bars to help the poor and extreme-poor have a long term solution to wave erosion.

#### Process and action

Based on a Community Action Plan, a VDC makes the proposal to SHOUHARDO II construct a mound protection wall. The program engineers conduct a feasibility study and environmental assessment. During this process, they involve the VDC and explore various options for identifying more durable solutions. They then discuss these with the VDC and Union Parishad and reach an agreement about the most appropriate option. Applying the SHOUHARDO II Program infrastructure planning and implementation guidelines, they plan to construct this kind of protection wall.

SHOUHARDO II implements mound protection wall schemes either through a Labor Contracting Society (for schemes costing less than roughly BDT 1,500,000, or USD 19,524.85) or the Local Government Engineering Department (for those with a higher estimated cost).

To implement the scheme through a Labor Contracting Society, project engineers design and prepare the layout for a mound protection wall. They also prepare a budget for the scheme based on this design and layout. After estimation, the implementing organization discusses the formation of a Labor Contracting Society with the VDC. They form a Labor Contracting Society consisting of seven to 20 people, of whom 30% to 60% of members must be female. SHOUHARDO II then enters into a formal agreement with the Labor Contracting Society and assigns the job contract. Usually, the implementing agency provides a Labor Contracting Society with one to three days of training before the commencement of physical work. To help the Labor Contracting Society initiate the project, SHOUHARDO II makes a payment of 30% of the estimated cost in advance. The Labor Contracting Society opens a bank account to access the money transferred from SHOUHARDO II.



## Results and achievements

This intervention protected dwelling areas from erosion caused by waves in the *haor*. It minimized the loss of land and allowed households space to prepare nurseries and homestead gardens, raise livestock and other domestic activities. It also reduced the yearly maintenance cost of traditional mound protection walls. Moreover, construction of mound protection walls generated additional employment and income for the poor and extreme-poor.

### Mound protection walls mitigate wave erosion at Adarshagram

Adarshagram is a settlement mound in Dakhsin Shukhail Razapur Union, under Dharmapasha Upazila, which is located in the middle of a *haor*. It was vulnerable to wave erosion and every year it lost some land during monsoon. The VDC discussed this problem and included a scheme for building mound protection walls in the Community Action Plan. SHOUHARDO II agreed to support the scheme. It engaged its engineers to conduct necessary environmental assessment, develop a layout design and prepare the budget for construction. Based on their assessments, the engineers designed a 700 meter-long brick mound protection wall instead of the traditional bamboo-straw wall. They estimated that construction of the protection wall would cost BDT 2,300,000 (USD 29,725). SHOUHARDO II constructed the mound protection wall through a Labor Contracting Society. Communities in the Adarshagram now have a brick mound protection wall and they are more protected against wave erosion.

*Source: Discussion with VDC, Village: Adarshagram, Union: Dakkhin Shukhail Razapur, Upazila: Dharmapasha, District: Sunamganj*

## Conclusion

The intervention contributes to reducing the long-term seasonal shelter vulnerability of the poor and extreme-poor. It contributes to improving their food security by protecting their dwelling areas; spaces used for income generation activities, safe water and latrine facilities. It reduces stress for women resulting from their participation in regular construction work and coping with the erosion of their dwelling areas. It reduces the forced migration of families due to wave erosion.

## Best practice:

Promote the cultivation of rice varieties that are better able to cope with local hazards



Photo 42: Farmer taking care of BRR1 dhan55 at kunkunia village of Kazipur upazila, Sirajganj

### Context and objectives

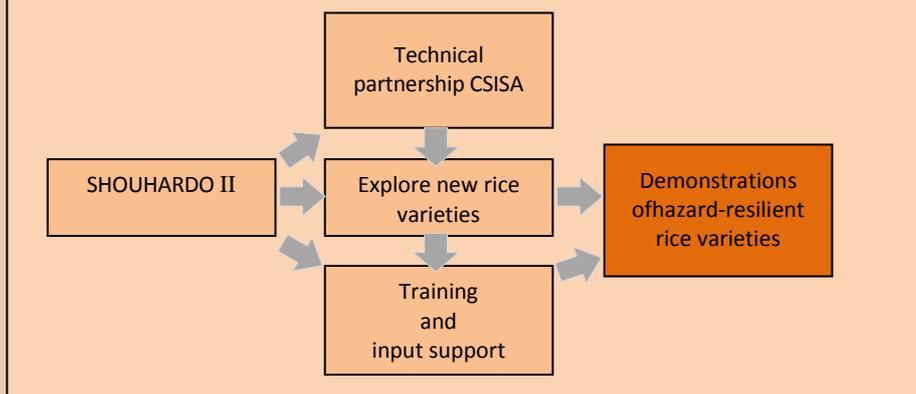
Rice is the staple food of most of the 160 million people of Bangladesh. It provides nearly 48% of rural employment, and about two-thirds of the total national calorie supply and half of the total protein intake of an average person. The rice sector contributes one-half of the agricultural GDP and one-sixth of the national income in Bangladesh. However, rice is susceptible to natural hazards such as drought, flood, water logging and salinity intrusion. Some varieties of rice are also photo-period sensitive and vulnerable to climate change.

By collaborating with IRRI-Cereal System Initiative for South Asia, SHOUHRDO II is working to introduce flood/drought tolerant crop varieties and water saving technologies for Boro rice cultivation and providing training on the cultivation of improved, short-season rice and drought-tolerant maize varieties.

### Process and action

Together with Agricultural Officers from the Department of Agricultural Extension, the Community Agricultural Volunteers of SHOUHRDO II, with guidance from technical partner Cereal System Initiative for South Asia (CSISA), have trained the poor and extreme-poor and non-poor farmers to plant paddies in lines. This training has been carried out through formal training, on-the-job training, cross-visits and demonstrations. Poor and extreme-poor and non-poor have also tried using new high-yielding varieties of rice bred for specific local conditions.

**Figure 37: Promote the cultivation of rice varieties that are better able to cope with local hazards**



## Results and achievements

To combat the future situation including the anticipated effects of climate change, SHOUHARDO II suggests:

- The replacement of local varieties by modern varieties in T. Aman season, where possible.
- The limited increase of modern variety Boro areas.
- The replacement of present varieties by superior inbred and high-yielding varieties.
- Increment of irrigation areas in both Boro and T. Aman season.
- The application of superior resource management technologies.
- The use of quality seeds.
- Mechanization of rice cultivation particularly to minimize post harvest losses.

The intervention has identified some potentially hazard-resilient rice varieties, including BRRi *dhan51* and BRRi *dhan52*, which are resistant to sudden flood; BRRi *dhan55*, which is drought- and cold-tolerant; BRRi *dhan56*, which is an early and drought-tolerant; and BINA *dhan-7* - a short-duration and high-yielding *aman* variety.

## Conclusion

By keeping up-to-date with the emergence of new rice varieties and practices, SHOUHARDO II has shown, particularly through the success of Positive Deviant Farmers, that choosing rice varieties very carefully can be highly beneficial. The breeding of new rice varieties for particular soil types and climate has been most successful.

'The collaboration with CSISA has been beneficial. The Team has observed a number of new techniques and management practices that were implemented with assistance from CICSAs staff. This includes introducing flood- and drought-tolerant crop varieties and water-saving technology for Boro rice cultivation. Efforts are focused on a small number of villages, but good practices are likely to spread quite quickly.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II MYAP Mid-Term Review, 2013, p-29

'Over the last six months, 44.80% of beneficiaries have been cultivating HYV rice (High Yielding Variety, a faster growing variety) compared to the base line of 28.7% and mid-term rate of 29.1%. This has led to farmers producing more rice and ultimately raising income and consumption. Farmers from areas which are susceptible to early flash flooding, such as the *haor* region are benefiting from cultivating the HYV rice because of its faster growing characteristics.'

- CARE Bangladesh – SHOUHARDO II Quarterly Report, Jan-March, 2014, p-2

# Chapter Eight

## Major Successes

## Building resilience

The SHOUHARDO II Program aims to improve the food security of poor and extreme-poor households. In essence, it is expanding agricultural production to improve food availability, increasing incomes to ensure better access to food and improving food utilization by improving health, hygiene and nutritional status. However, the program acknowledges that the prevailing power relationships within the target communities and the country's exposure to natural hazard's impact negatively on the three major domains of food security – i.e., availability, access and utilization. Generally, the poor and extreme-poor are marginalized in these communities, which in turn limits their access to resources. Gender inequities restrict women's mobility and hinder their participation in decision-making. In addition, every year natural hazards such as floods, cyclones, riverbank erosion and/or droughts destroy crops and assets and disrupt communication and market facilities. Moreover, Bangladesh is vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Climate change variables increase the magnitudes of hydrological disaster, shrinking the livelihood opportunities of the poor and extreme-poor. The program therefore applies an integrated approach, including practices that expand the poor and extreme-poor's livelihood options through income generation activities, improving governance factors in the local systems, empower women to raise their voices against abuse and discrimination; and reduce disaster and climate change risk to secure livelihood opportunities.

### Livelihood diversity and security

Large elements of the program include diversifying agriculture and enhancing the household incomes of the targeted households. The program pursues this goal through strengthening community organization, supporting access to promoting better technologies and improving access to markets. Village Development Committees, comprising poor and extreme-poor members of the community, including women, are formed to assess local factors constraining food security and oversee program efforts to address them. In addition, community members are organized under Core Occupational Groups for the promotion and extension of food crops, fisheries, livestock, poultry and income generation activities. Positive Deviant Farmers in the communities are identified and trained, and new technologies are promoted through them. Market linkages have been strengthened by establishing Collectors in the communities, who buy farm products from individual households and carry them to marketplaces to sell. Furthermore, to enhance income and accelerate resource accumulation, the program has helped the poor and extreme-poor form Labor Contracting Societies.

These efforts enabled the poor and extreme-poor households to grow vegetables for consumption and sale and have food throughout the year. Farmers are able to grow more varied crops and get better prices for their produce. Household food consumption in the communities has improved. Beneficiaries are able to eat pulses and legumes, meat, fish, eggs, dark green leafy vegetables and fruits, and communities have seen reductions in the

malnutrition of children aged under five years, on measures of stunting, wasting and underweight.

## **Developing adaptive capacity**

The SHOUHARDO II Program has focused on both food availability and food utilization to help communities practice adaptation. To sustain food availability in the communities, the program has supported Positive Deviant Farmers to experiment with new varieties of rice. These new varieties of rice included flood-tolerant rice (BRR1 dhan51 and 52), short-duration rice (BRR1 dhan56 and BINA7), and cold-tolerant rice (BRR1 dhan55). The program has helped poor and extreme-poor households adapt to using multiple crop cultivation and crop rotation in order to use their homesteads intensely for vegetable cultivation. The poor and extreme-poor households have also received information and materials to apply multi-terracing methods for the more efficient use of sparse land (such as embankments) for crop cultivation. To improve field crops, the program has assisted local farmers in introducing new cropping patterns and ensuring year-round production by intercropping maize with coriander and papaya, and banana with other vegetables. In addition, the SHOUHARDO II Program has provided technical support to the local farmers in preparing compost and controlling fruit flies in vegetable production by using sex pheromone traps.

Focusing on food utilization, SHOUHARDO II has assisted communities in adopting better practices for maintaining health, hygiene and nutrition. In particular, the program succeeded in promoting oral rehydration therapies for diarrhea as well as the immunization of children against eight diseases. The program has also helped communities change the prevailing caring practices for mothers and enabled pregnant women and lactating mothers to receive additional food and rest during pregnancy. Mothers have learned better caring practices for their children from the courtyard sessions and cooking and feeding demonstrations, and have applied that knowledge to maintaining their children's weight gains at a satisfactory rate. The mothers have also participated in growth monitoring and promotion activities.

## **Supporting enabling environments**

In SHOUHARDO II program areas, communities have formed Village Development Committees. These committees are comprised of representatives from the poor and extreme-poor. They have developed Community Action Plans, which are implemented through SHOUHARDO II Program partner NGOs or through local government bodies. The Village Development Committees have also implemented some of the items in their action plans by mobilizing local resources.

Open Union Parishad budgeting processes have become a common practice in SHOUHARDO II program areas. The poor and extreme-poor have been mobilized by VDCs to participate in the budget formulation process. They have raised their concerns, made claims and proposed issues to the Union Parishad to be included in the annual budgets.

SHOUHARDO II has worked closely with Government stakeholders, and through the coordination committees has sensitized government functionaries at different levels to the concerns and needs of the poor and extreme-poor. It has strengthened linkages between communities and government service providers. As a result, poor and extreme-poor people have gained better access to the services provided by the departments of Health and Family Planning, Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries. SHOUHARDO II has also enabled extreme-poor households to access common resources, including *khasland*.

To minimize violence against women, communities (with support from the SHOUHARDO II Program) have formed women's groups. This informal social structure has helped women and adolescent girls discuss issues concerning violence against women among themselves, as well with their communities. Women's groups, together with the Village Development Committees and Union Parishads, have been able to take deterrent measures against perpetrators to end and prevent violence against women. The groups have helped women increase their mobility, participate in decision-making at the family and community level and take action to stop early marriage, dowry practices and 'eve-teasing' (harassment). Many communities have made strong progress on shifting beliefs and attitudes about violence against women, and have noted large decreases in the proportion of women reporting domestic violence. Furthermore, these communities have begun socializing children in early childhood care and development centers in ways that promote gender equity.

The program has also helped women participate in Income Generating Activities. It enabled women to earn money, contribute to household food security financially and participate in decision-making processes within their families, as well as at the community level. Moreover, the program has selected and trained Female Disaster Volunteers and helped them voice the perspective of women 'during community disaster risk analyses.

### **Strengthening disaster preparedness**

The SHOUHARDO II Program has assisted Union Disaster Management Committees to enhance their capacity to reduce disaster risk and respond to disaster. Orientation sessions and training events have helped the committees better understand their roles within the Committees and gain knowledge and skills to conduct risk reduction activities. The program has provided Disaster Management Committees with' human resources by establishing Disaster Volunteers in the communities. The committees have engaged with these volunteers to prepare risk and resource maps, raise awareness on disaster and climate issues, conduct damage assessments and search and rescue operations, disseminate early warning information and deliver humanitarian assistance.

Risk and resource maps have helped the communities identify and include disaster risk reduction elements in their Community Action Plans, as well as in the annual budgets of the Union Parishads. Many villages have identified the need for physical infrastructure to mitigate disaster risks, such as mound protection walls, raised dwelling areas, embankments, culverts and bridges; many of these have subsequently been constructed by

the communities using local resources, by local government agencies or through the  
SHOUHARDO II Program.

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