




Final Report

Review of the Strengthening Public Institutes (SPI) Programme of the EPR project

Associates for Innovative Research and Development (AIRD) Ltd.

10 May 2022





Final Report on

Review of the Strengthening Public Institutes (SPI) Programme of the EPR project

Submitted to:

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)
Plot # 3 & 4, Avenue # 3,
Hazi Road, Rupnagar, Mirpur – 2,
Dhaka – 1216, Bangladesh

Submitted by



Associates for Innovative Research and Development (AIRD) Ltd.

Address: Flat # 3B, House # 9/2, Road # Garden Street,
Ring Road, Shyamoli, Dhaka-1207.

Contact: 88-01715-106115; 88-01715-055872

E-mail: mdaird10@gmail.com, Web: www.aird.com.bd

Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgement</i>	4
<i>Acronym/Glossary</i>	5
<i>Executive Summary</i>	6
<i>Fact sheet (Target vs. Achievement)</i>	9
1. INTRODUCTION	10
2. METHODOLOGY	14
3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	19
4. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS	41
5. PCM ANALYSIS	48
6. SWOT ANALYSIS	51
7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	56

Acknowledgement

This report is the result of collaborative efforts of and cooperation from large number of individuals from diverse background. We would like to acknowledge their contribution and thank them for their generous cooperation without which, a quality report would not have been possible to develop.

Number of people to whom we are grateful for their support is too large to mention by name. Nevertheless, cannot but acknowledge those individuals who extended unflinching support and contributed in the core elements of the review. Naturally the staff members of MJF, Bangladesh are to be started with. Even before the evaluation was formally commissioned, Mr. Shazzad Hossain, M& E Coordinator, Mohashin Kabir, Program Manager and Mr. MD. Ziaul Karim, Head of Programme, patiently introduced the project, explained its various aspects and provided with wealth of information. Throughout the evaluation they continued to extend support in coordination with other stakeholders and particularly in dealing with contingencies emerged from COVID-19 pandemic. Besides during SWOT analysis and KII with PNGO's, Executive Directors not only performed as the knowledge actors of the project, but they also enriched our understanding of the project and underlying concepts and enabled the evaluation to be grounded on appropriate theoretical background. We also like to thank Ms. Banasree Mitra Neogi, Director-Programmes for her valuable contribution in gaining insight of Gender Perspective of SPI Programme.

It would be unfair, even unethical perhaps, not to mention the PNGOs who never stopped to go the extra miles to enable the evaluation to complete the necessary tasks. We are grateful to the CSG, CRG, local administration and people's representatives for their kind cooperation and participate in out surveys and discussions.

And finally, our heartfelt gratitude the community people who are at the centre of the project and by default the evaluation. They not only provided all the crucial information for the evaluation they supported us in every means possible. Without any complain, they took out time from their long hours of everyday work and travelled to places to join group discussions under inclement weather.

Associates for Research and Development (AIRD) Ltd.

Acronym/Glossary

AIRD	Associates for Innovative Research and Development
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSG	Community Support Group
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
EPR	Excluded People's Rights
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
IDI	In-depth Interview
LA	Local Administration
LG	Local Government representatives
LGUs	<i>Local Government Units</i>
LGIs	Local Government Institutions
PFM	Public Finance Management
PH	Public Hearing
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
OAA	Old Age Allowance
PESP	Primary Education Stipend Project
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunity and Threat
SA	<i>Social Accountability Tools</i>
SPI	Strengthening Public Institutions
SESP	Secondary Education Stipend Project
TOCs	Theory of change
UP	Union Parishad
VGD	<i>Vulnerable Group Development</i>
VGF	<i>Vulnerable Group Feeding</i>
8 FYP	8 th Five Year Plan

Executive Summary

Strengthening Public institutions (SPI) theme under Excluded People's Rights (EPR) project of the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is focused on enhancing governance of the public institutions for rendering essential public services entitlement of the excluded people. In the midst of the project, MJF intends to commission a review of the SPI programme to assess the overall performance, identify gaps, capture learning, and reshape the programme strategies. This review aims to assess the overall performance of the programme, identify strategic gaps and limitations, and gather/capture evidence-based learning and best practices to inform future programming in light of contemporary local and global contexts.

This review adopted a mixed-methods research approach that combines the elements of quantitative and qualitative research to accomplish the objectives. Data and information were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through a participatory approach applying questionnaire survey, FGD, KII, SWOT analysis, institutional ethnography, and case studies. The survey was conducted with 1061 direct beneficiaries and 156 control respondents. A total of 28 FGDs and 45 KIIs were carried out during the assessment, and 13 significant cases were developed. A separate SWOT analysis with each SPI partner was conducted. Participant observation was carried out following the approach of institutional ethnography. In addition, relevant secondary materials were also consulted.

KEY FINDINGS

Access to social safety net programmes

In the project area, **67%** of the surveyed respondents or their family members receive safety net support. The poor marginalized, and vulnerable people, who were entirely unaware of their rights, have become self-dependent thanks to this SPI programme.

Access to Health Services

In the project area, the overwhelming majority (**74%**) of the respondent has found good and satisfactory attitudes of doctors and nurses towards health care services. Most of the respondents (**64%**) said advised medicines were available and indicated as 'good' adequacy.

Access to agriculture, livestock, and fisheries extension services

Of the respondents who corresponded with concerned extension officials, **52%** were satisfied with their services (extension agents) in the project area. However, the extension service is still weak due to its low coverage, infrequent interaction, and limited number of covered crops.

Access to Education

A major section of respondents (**79%**) have opined their satisfaction regarding attendance of the teachers in the educational institutions maintaining time as scheduled. Furthermore, the attitude of teachers towards teaching is also found good by a significant number of respondents.

Access to drinking water and sewerage

A significant number of respondents (**73%**) opined good coverage of drinking water within their reach, which they are regularly getting. On the other hand, many of the respondents don't have sanitary latrines as their income was not supported to buy such materials.

Perception and knowledge about Rights and Governance Issues

According to the number of quantitative respondents, **62.1%** of the respondents found aware of good governance, but the number of unaware respondents (**37.9%**) was also significant. However, communities' perceptions and knowledge regarding participation in rights and entitlements are not impressive.

Perception and knowledge Governance Performance Monitoring

Around **89%** of respondents have participated in GPM events supported and guided by the project. In addition, due to the project interventions, they learned many new issues and their rights, which they didn't know even a few years back.

Right to Information and Information Services

Awareness of access to RTI has increased by **20%**. It has developed a sense of security among **21%**, meaning awareness of the project beneficiaries on access to information has increased, and they now have a security feeling by accessing it.

Women's rights, gender equality, and empowerment

The majority (**67%**) of respondents claimed that they had received gender training during the project period. Women's access to public institutions increased; now, they are going to UP, Upazila, and District levels depending on their needs and necessity.

Cash Transfer and Livelihood Support in the context of COVID-19

Nearly half the respondents (**46%**) mentioned that they got support from the MJF during the Covid pandemic. Among respondents, **90%** said they had spent the cash as Covid emergency support for their food purchasing. However, only **10%** of them used this money for IGA and new income initiatives.

SNAPSHOT OF KEY FINDINGS

Output 1: Organized marginalized peoples to claim their rights and entitlements fight discrimination and exclusion;

The poor and marginalized section of the society, who are also direct beneficiaries of the SPI programme have learned about their rights and entitlements. As a result, their awareness level has risen.

Output 2: Strengthen official capacity to respond to citizen demands

Due to the SPI programme the partner NGOs have introduced the NBD officials to the villagers and informed the people about their services. People go to the different NBD officials for different needs and demands according to the specialization of their line department. However, insufficient staff in some departments (e.g., fisheries and livestock) creates difficulties in liaising with them.

Output 3: Strengthen capacity of citizen in the community to monitor the activities of government service delivery institutions

CSGs organised the poor marginalized and vulnerable people and took collective initiatives. They liaised with the LGIs (e.g., Union Parishad/City Corporation) and field-level personnel of agriculture, livestock, land administration, social welfare, women affairs, and fisheries department to ensure better service for the poor marginalized and vulnerable people in the community.

PCM ANALYSIS

Relevance

The project was highly relevant considering that the lack of awareness, capacity, and necessary skills of both the local government officials and community members is a barrier to the demand and supply of effective local governance in rural Bangladesh. The project has contributed to creating demand from among the people for accountable, transparent, and quality services along with the capacity building of the service providers to deliver the services as per the demand of the public

Efficiency

The SPI programme has contributed to increasing participation of rural citizens, especially poor marginalized and vulnerable people, in local government affairs, e.g., planning, resource allocation, and service delivery. The SPI programme has shown that enabling communities to realize their own potential leads to self-reliant development and proactive actions. It is evident that due to project interventions, community participation has increased in selecting safety net programme beneficiaries, and collective efforts have also increased against social injustice

Effectiveness

The project has contributed to activating, capacitating, and mobilizing various accountability mechanisms. Implementation was largely centered on Local government and Public Service Delivery Agencies (PSDA). It is evident that the local government bodies, especially the Union Parishads and public services agencies, precisely

agricultural extension services, health facilities, have become more transparent than earlier. But other local-level agencies such as livestock, fisheries, etc., were not adequately accountable and transparent.

Sustainability

Factors such as awareness building, enhancing capacity, and strengthening systems have played a crucial role in determining project sustainability. The elected and nominated members from community groups will likely continue advocating for ensuring the rights of the marginalised section of the society in their respective constituencies. During the review, the community level stakeholders, including beneficiaries such as the social safety net, highlighted the need for further backup and support arrangements to capacitate and encourage local NGOs, especially in the current process of transformations in local government.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

A. Issue-specific way forward

- Create a linkage to SSNPs, basic services, and the market to reduce social exclusion;
- Enhancing the capacity of the partner;
- Continue to strengthen the ability of CSGs to serve as catalysts for local development;
- Special attention to women and other marginalized groups;
- Support for structural changes in making local government pro-people;

B. Project-specific way forward

- Include a definite post-project sustainability component in the project design;
- Support CSGs to continue their work as an interface between people and the service providers;
- Include an effective M&E component that implementers can use to ascertain project progress;
- Attracting and retaining the right talent;

C. Theme Based/ Thematic way forward

- Develop and implement programme exit strategies;
- Include a sustainable livelihood strategy in the project design;
- Top-Down Approach to Policy Decisions;
- Sensitization for local legislative;
- Bridging the Macro-Micro Gap;
- Hardware support;

Fact sheet (Target vs. Achievement)

Narrative summary	Objective verifiable indicators -OVI	Achievement Till date
Outcome <i>Grassroots citizens are more able to access material resources, services and opportunities that should be theirs by rights</i>	105,400 poor-marginalized left-out men and women receive social safety-net;	43038 poor-marginalized left-out men and women receive social safety-net;
	118,400 poor-marginalized men and women receive health service from local primary health care institutions;	53524 poor-marginalized men and women receive health service from local primary health care institutions;
	48,500 poor-marginalized women got access to safe drinking water;	30523 poor marginalized people got access to safe drinking water
	24,750 poor-marginalized women got access to agricultural services;	23687 poor-marginalized people got access to agricultural services
	9,975 poor-marginalized men and women got opportunities for skills development and involve with IGA;	14257 poor poor-marginalized men, women and Youths got opportunities for skills development and 425 involve with IGA
	3,550 children of disadvantaged family enrolled in primary schools.	Net enrollment rate increased 4% coping with the baseline information. But dropped out rates are in the same level of baseline status but absenteeism increasing due to COVID-19 situation.
Output-01: <i>Organized marginalized peoples to claim their rights and entitlements fight discrimination and exclusion</i>	405,000 potential beneficiaries received awareness on SSN rules & policies and NBD services (20 citizen in each event*3 groups/ward*9 ward*150 LGUs/year*5 years)	364500 potential beneficiaries received awareness on SSN rules & policies and NBD services
	In total 256,500 grassroots citizens claimed for government service delivery mechanism ((150 LGUs*9 ward*40participants/ward meeting) +(150 LGUs *9 wards*150participants/cultural events))	Almost 230850 grassroots citizens claimed for government service delivery mechanism
Output-02: <i>Strengthen official capacity to respond to citizen demands</i>	Total 2,100 LG representatives and 900 NBD officials attained knowledge on service delivery monitoring, participatory planning, budgeting and local resource mobilization ((14 LG representatives*150 LGUs+ (6 NBD officials/LGU*150 LGUs)).	Total 1722 LG representatives and 738 NBD officials attained knowledge on service delivery monitoring, participatory planning, budgeting and local resource mobilization
	750 standing committee (health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure and water sanitation standing committee (150*5)) activated to monitor service delivery;	615 standing committee (health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure and water sanitation standing committee (150*5)) activated to monitor service delivery. But as per GCPA 54% of standing committees are fully functional and 46% committees are partially functional.
	In total 500 GOB designated officers of Upazila and UP level received training on RTI act and local governance;	68% targeted service providers get primary knowledge on RTI and WBPA. (248 government designated officials, selected members of Union Parishad and NGO officials participated in the orientation on RTI and WBPA)
Output-03: <i>Strengthen capacity of citizen in the community to monitor the activities of government service delivery institutions</i>	32,070 community leaders playing vigilance role to ensure better SSN services, Health care service, safe drinking water and agriculture extension services (28350 members at ward level and rest of them are from union, upazila and district level);	27,900 community leaders playing vigilance role to ensure better SSN services, Health care service, safe drinking water and agriculture extension services (24665 members at ward level and rest of them are from union, upazila and district level);
	The Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO) of 150 UPs are vibrant to provide agriculture extension service support to the beneficiaries;	The Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO) of 150 UPs are vibrant to provide agriculture extension service support to the beneficiaries
	Governance improvement at 38 government Primary School;	Governance improved in at least 80% schools within project area
	A total of 50,000 marginalized women/destitute have better option to have safe drinking water;	A total of 30523 marginalized women/destitute have better option to have safe drinking water

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), one of the largest national non-government organisations (NGOs) as well as an intermediary funding organisation in Bangladesh, provides funds and capacity-building assistance to civil society organisations and networks to promote human rights and governance initiatives. MJF has been managing the Excluded People's Rights (EPR) project funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) since 2017 through currently 60 civil society organisations across the country. This project is based on the human rights-based approach to empower marginalised and excluded people to assert their rights through sensitising duty bearers. The project intervened with a diverse cross-section of populations, including persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, Dalits, transgender, and other vulnerable groups. The projected intended impact of EPR is to improve the quality of life of the marginalised and vulnerable population of the country in an environment of democratic freedom and security. The ERP project is currently organised into three key programmatic areas: (i). Tackling Marginalisation and Discrimination; (ii) Security and Rights of Women and Girls; and (iii) Strengthening Public Institutions (SPI). In the midst of the project, MJF intends to commission a review of the SPI programme to assess the overall performance, identify gaps, capture learning, and reshape the programme strategies.

1.2 Programme Brief

One of the SPI program's core assumptions is that enhanced governance—accountability, transparency, and civic engagement—can increase access to public goods and services for the poor, marginalised, and excluded people, resulting in a higher quality of life. This program is being implemented by 13 partner organisations in 14 districts. The programme focuses on the following goal, outcomes and outputs:

Project Goal: Poor, marginalised and vulnerable people enjoy better quality of life in a well-governed institutional environment.

Project Outcomes:

- Public service delivery agencies (i.e., Local Government Institutions, Government of Bangladesh (GoB) agencies) are more transparent and accountable to the people, and responsive to the needs of people especially the poor, marginalised and socially excluded sections.
- Poor, marginalised and vulnerable citizens are more able to access material resources, services and opportunities.

Project Outputs:

- Organised marginalised peoples are able to claim their rights and entitlements, fight discrimination and exclusion;
- Strengthened capacity of the public service delivery institutions (LGI and GoB agencies) to respond to citizen demands; and
- Strengthened capacity of citizen in the community to monitor the activities of government service delivery institutions.

1.3 Objective of Review

The specific objectives of this programme review are:

- To assess the performance of the SPI theme and its implemented projects, as well as the impact of COVID 19 on program performance, current strategies, and interventions.
- To make a comparative performance analysis of the projects that have been implemented under SPI theme.
- To analyse the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and gender and disability dimensions of the programme.
- To identify strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and current trends in the programmatic initiatives that have significance for strengthening its future programmatic and funding directions.
- To capture best practices and document the lessons learned, that will reorganise the design of the new programme.
- To analyse the scope of integration of diverse focuses in order to accelerate delivery/cost effectiveness/avoiding missed opportunities, as a part of the strategy.
- To assess how cross-thematic issues are integrated into the programme and the projects, and whether they add value to the programme and MJF as well.
- To provide forward-looking recommendations and develop a potential Theory of Change for the programme.

1.4 Review Criteria and Questions

The study team will consider the review criteria and questions (Annex 1) mentioned in the ToR while preparing the tools and data collection plan. The key review questions will therefore be as follows:

- *What progress of SPI theme and its implemented projects has been made towards the achievement of outcome and impacts till now?*
- *What are the major factors that influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?*
- *What is the assessment of the project approach towards achieving development objectives?*
- *To what extent did the project meet the members' needs?*
- *To what extent do the support activities/inputs achieve project outcomes?*
- *To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted project outcomes?*
- *To what extent are the benefits of the project likely continuing after donor funding ceases?*
- *How should project determinants and context to provide forward-looking recommendations and develop a potential Theory of Change for the programme?*
- *How citizen group/community group engaged with different actions/interventions in accessing project participants into the different public services?*
- *How citizen group/community group contributed to bring changes in governance system*
- *What were the major challenges faced by the project in working with multi-level stakeholders including public sector and LGIs?*

1.5 Analytical Schema of the Review

The delivery of various public services is one of the basic responsibilities of the State. Moreover, the State has a vital role in making available essential public services, ensuring a certain minimum level of

well-being for everyone in need.¹ The public service delivery system has also been perceived as one of the most important ways to reduce poverty. The provision of services is the core function of government. This is the point of direct interaction with citizens. So it is a critical issue for the government to deliver their services and make sure that the services are provided effectively, efficiently, equitably, and transparently. However, the delivery of public services has recently been the subject of significant reforms, in particular at the local government level. Thus, delivering public services to the satisfaction of the citizen is a significant challenge confronted by democratic governments everywhere in the modern world. However, it is already widely recognized that the government alone cannot make available different kinds of services people may need. Although the responsibility for making macro-level policies and legislation regarding different kinds of services rests mostly with the government, several other actors such as local government institutions (LGIs), government agencies at the local level, NGOs, and the private sector are involved in delivering services.² With the support from the government, these actors made good strides toward improving service delivery as well as good governance in both rural and urban areas.

Consistent with the notion that the government of Bangladesh seeks to deliver public services “close to the people” or “on people’s doorsteps”, the local public sector could be defined as the part of the public sector that regularly interacts with the people in a localized manner. The range of public services and activities within the local public sector realm thus includes important sectoral services such as basic education, basic health services, water provision, and agricultural extensions and basic local services such as solid waste management, street lighting, public markets, and community development, etc.³

While the Constitution of Bangladesh provides for a highly decentralized public sector - stating that local governments in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to elected councils - in practice, Bangladesh is widely considered to be one of the most centralized countries. However, in recent years, substantive reforms have taken place in support of a more decentralized public sector. The government has also made a solid commitment to achieving SDG objectives by 2030, and to do so, it has developed its 8th Five Year Plan (8 FYP) for 2021-25. But, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) recognises many issues and challenges to be addressed for implementing the 8 FYP.

Actually, the government is still unable to meet the fundamental requirements and entitlements of about 40 million people, half of whom live in extreme poverty. Inequality, both in income and consumption, continues to be a source of concern. High degrees of corruption, weak and dysfunctional institutions, governmental inefficiency, aggressive politics, and centralised authority are the causes of these inabilities.⁴ Democratic cultures, practices, and values have not been fostered in political institutions, including the political parties. Moreover, ineffective public election administration makes it difficult for competent individuals to be elected. The national-level institutions in planning and policymaking (e.g., parliament, party, and bureaucracy), as well as institutions directly responsible for delivering services on the ground (e.g., government departments, local councils), do not often function

¹ Shah, A. (Ed.). (2005). *Public services delivery* (Vol. 41181, No. 4). World Bank Publications.

² Ahmed, N. U. (Ed.). (2020). *Public Service Delivery in Bangladesh: Parliament, Public Policy and Local Government*. University Press Limited.

³ Boex, J. (2012). *Providing Basic Public Services at the Door Step of the People?: Estimating the Size of the Local Public Sector in Bangladesh*. Urban Institute Center on International Development and Governance.

⁴ MJF. (2021). TOR for Review of the Strengthening Public Institutes (SPI) Programme of the EPR project.

according to citizen's expectations.⁵ More precisely, the parliament and other state-oversight institutions do not operate autonomously. Local government entities have little jurisdiction and only receive a tiny fraction of the development budget.

Against this backdrop, the Strengthening Public institutions (SPI) theme under Excluded People's Rights (EPR) project of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has focused on enhancing governance of the public institutions by engaging Local Government (LG) and Nation Building Department (NBD) for rendering essential public resources/services entitlement of the excluded people. These services include primary health care, agriculture, WASH, social security, and LGI services programmes administered by respective LGs. Right to Information (RTI) is a cross-cutting to all these services. The project covers 111 Local Government Units (LGUs) of 21 Upazila and two City Corporations under 14 districts. The SPI theme denotes that improvement of governance- accountability; transparency and civic engagement enhance access of the poor and excluded people to the public services towards mounting their living standard. The theme has initiated an empowering group of citizens as a catalyst and nurturing them using Social Accountability (SA) tools to collate the hindering issues related to the accessibility of excluded people to public resources. Besides, the theme mobilizes the grassroots community to raise their voice for demanding public services as rights. On the other hand, capacity-building training for the duty bearers to make them accountable to the people is another stream of the theme.

It is already noted in the introductory section that MJF intended to commission a review of the SPI programme to assess the overall performance of the programme, identify strategic gaps and limitations, and gather/capture evidence-based learning and best practices to inform future programming in light of contemporary local and global contexts. The review covers policies, practice areas, partnerships, and programmatic approaches and modalities. This review is exploratory, theory and approach-based, concentrating primarily on the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions employed and capturing experiences, practice and knowledge derived from the strategies and interventions.

This review sets qualitative or quantitative means of measuring indicators to gauge the performance of the programme or the outputs. Quantitative survey data and qualitative studies, together with other secondary sources, are combined to clarify key channels of programme influence, or reasons for lack of change, addressing research questions structured around the programme's theory of change (TOC). The final review report answers a series of evaluation questions to cover the entirety of the end line review. The evaluation questions were drawn from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria: relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

⁵ Hussain, A. & Rahman, M. M. (2012). Importance of Participatory Method in the Service Delivery of Municipalities and Union Parishads: Citizen Perspective. *Administrative Development*. Vol. 1 (2): 265-277.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Approach

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach that combines the elements of quantitative and qualitative research to answer the research questions. The purpose of choosing mixed methods for this study is to provide a better understanding of research objectives and complex phenomena than either approach alone. Moreover, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data can improve a review by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of another.⁶

For the purpose of the study, data and information were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through a participatory approach and involved diverse stakeholders, including direct participants, representatives of partners, civil society members, and government counterparts. The team deployed a structured questionnaire for collecting quantitative data from direct participants as well as from a small control group. The main stakeholders for the quantitative sample were poor, marginalised, and vulnerable people. PRA tools and techniques, e.g., FGDs, KIIs, case studies, etc., were applied to gain insight and understanding of qualitative aspects. It should be noted here that this study employs the approach of 'Institutional Ethnography', a method of inquiry to describe the interface between individual experience and institutional relations. In addition, a SWOT analysis was conducted to combine the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the partner NGOs in implementing the project with that of the threats and opportunities of their external environment to define strategies to better achieve the objectives. On the other hand, various documents, e.g., PD, PIMP, periodic monitoring reports, baseline reports, tools and guidelines, and other relevant documents, constitute the secondary sources.

2.2 Review Design

Based on the scope of works (SoW) and key activities of the project, the SPI review process includes both quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. More specifically, the SPI review carried out field assessments to capture survey data and triangulation of the findings drawn from qualitative sources. In addition, SPI review also relies on secondary materials and literature, including project reports such as PD, PIMP, periodic monitoring reports, baseline reports, tools and guidelines, and other relevant documents. A total of four participatory tools were used for 'Field Assessment', which are described in the following.

Survey

Surveys serve as an excellent method of opinion sampling and finding out what people think about different contexts and situations. The survey was conducted of **1061** direct beneficiaries and **156** control respondents for this study. In this survey, a standardized questionnaire was used to guarantee the comparability of data, speed, and accuracy of data recording and facilitate data processing. For this study, various parameters, including opinion scale, preference, multiple-choice, etc., were used in the questionnaire to understand respondents the level of agreement or disagreement.

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

Another instrument for collecting in-depth descriptive data from the respondents was Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This participatory tool is very useful in collecting descriptive and exploratory types of information. A pre-designed guideline for facilitating the sessions was administered to keep the

⁶ Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). Choosing a mixed methods design. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*, 2, 53-106.

discussion on track, and the focus of the discussion on the agenda was agreed upon. The note taker kept thorough notes of the discussion, and the facilitator checked them after each session if anything important was missing. A total of **28 FGDs** in selected Union Parishads, Paurashava, and City Corporations were conducted for this study. The participants were invited from the disadvantaged community, LGIs, and other relevant sources considering proportion and purposefully. All relevant sections of respondents were invited to participate in the FGDs. The team consulted with MJF and respective partners in finalizing the list of respondents well ahead of the events.

Key Informant Interview

Key Informant Interviews (KII) are conducted to collect data and information from the selected informed respondent on the subject under study. As one of the focuses of the study is to identify the actual scenario of the local level public agencies in providing service delivery to the poor, marginalised, and socially excluded sections, the KIIs were conducted with the elected local government representatives both in the rural and urban areas and government officials at the local level responsible for providing the services to the community. Besides, KIIs were also conducted with the MJF SPI team, the partner NGOs, donor, and central level policy-making bureaucrats. A separate KII checklist was prepared for each professional group so that the respondents find it relevant and useful to share their ideas and concerns. A total of 45 KIIs were carried out during the assessment.

Case Studies

During the course of the study, around 13 significant cases were developed targeting the eligible direct beneficiaries, which are focused on the project impacts highlighting their successes compared to baseline status. It covers those living in hard-to-reach areas and has a substantial potential impact on society to portray the relevant cases. The team followed a comprehensive list of issues/themes in line with the overall objective of SPI in selecting areas/partner-specific most significant successes.

Participant observation through IE

Participant observation, a staple data collection method, was carried out following the approach of institutional ethnography during the different stages of qualitative fieldwork. As mentioned earlier, institutional ethnography is an approach where the aim is to explicate how peoples' all activities are coordinated or ruled by different institutions. It is not likely that the study team can apply this tool during the field visit. Nevertheless, this tool was applied mainly to the group-level activities, viz., meetings in LGIs, CBOs or Citizen Groups.

SWOT Analysis

The review team conducted a separate SWOT analysis with each SPI partner as part of the qualitative data collection process. Through commissioned this tool, the review team identified partners' strengths and weaknesses, as well opportunities and threats in the context of SPI and project implementation. The exercise helped the study team to know each of the partner's current portfolios from the SPI project point of view. The outcomes of that crucial in analyzing the performance of the SPI from comprehensively.

Institutional ethnography

The review team also commissioned an institutional ethnography with a specific view to know the ethnographic features of the institutions providing public support and services targeting to the extreme poor section of people. For the same team used a semi-structural checklist while conducting the session. For identifying institutions for the ethnography, the team brings different institutions being provided pro-poor support services.

Desk Review

Reviewing the Secondary Data/Information is one of the most important activities to review the SPI. The main source of secondary information is the proposals of the partner NGOs, which provide the project result framework, Monitoring Key Milestone, etc. in addition, other technical reports, e.g., Theory of Change, Programme implementation guideline, MJF Social Accountability Tools, Governance Capacity Performance Assessment Format, Baseline survey report, Quarterly and Annual Reports, PIP, COM, Participatory Module planning, budgeting and local resource mobilization for UP and Paurashava, training manual, SAM, SPI Thematic Strategy Paper, etc. were also reviewed.

Area selection and sampling

The project has been implemented by 13 partner NGOs in 14 districts. This study was conducted in all 14 districts. The targeted respondents were identified using various sampling techniques, including proportionate, purposive, and cluster sampling techniques to ensure representation of the target population with study coverage.

Quantitative Sample size

A representative sampling approach was undertaken. The sample was considered at a 95% confidence level, with an accuracy rate or amount of admissible error margin of +/-5% as we had exact beneficiary count and to sample the sample representative equally for each district and distributed proportionately in accordance with population size.

The main stakeholders for the quantitative sample are Poor, marginalised and vulnerable people. To determine Sample size, the following Statistical formula is used:

$$n = \frac{N z^2 pq}{d^2 (N - 1) + z^2 pq}$$

Where, n = Sample Size

N = Targeted population size (Here, **N= 1,71,913 excluded poor-marginalised people**).

Z = Standard Normal Variate (SNV) at 95 % confidence level (**1.96**)

p=50% (Lets consider that 50% of the total beneficiary of project area has been benefited i.e; **p= 0.50**)

q = 1-0.5=.5

d = Acceptable margin of error for proportion being estimated which is comparable to 3% i.e; **d=0.03**

By using this formula, the calculated overall sample size, we get, n= 1061

The study also surveyed with the control group (10% of the total sample), composed of the participants that are not direct project beneficiaries but serve as the standard for comparison.

Qualitative sample size

PRA tools and techniques, such as Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informants Interview (KII), case study, etc., were applied to gain insight and understanding of qualitative aspects. Findings from the exercises are expected to reinforce and validate the data and information collected by the quantitative study. A separate SWOT was also conducted with all 13 partner organizations. In addition to that, a central level workshop was conducted with all partners through Zoom/online platform at the end of the data collection phase.

Data collection tools

Quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire incorporating structured and open questions as well as rating/self-assessment indicators. Qualitative data was collected using a checklist to guide and moderate discussions. The format was developed to incorporate data in KOBO and Excel. (Please see Annexure 2, 3, 4 for sample questionnaire)

Selection of enumerators

Enumerators were recruited centrally from AIRD's resource pool. In selecting enumerators team preferred individuals having relevant experience in working in the same locations. AIRD strongly believes that having prior experience with similar tools, locations and partners distinctly helps to extract data and information. A total of 25 potential enumerators were recruited for the assignment. AIRD team considered gender perspective in selecting enumerators by ensuring at least 50% female presence in the team. The enumerators were basically worked to collect information from respondents of the quantitative questionnaire.

Enumerators were given detailed orientation through virtual platform to strengthen their knowledge and skills necessary for the tasks. A 2-day participative and interactive orientation was organized to orient them on the questionnaire and the KOBO Toolbox. As part of the orientation process, enumerators were provided with the questionnaires well in advance of the orientation. This helped them familiarize with the tool and expediate understanding during the orientation sessions. They were guided hands-on through mock test of the questionnaire and use of KOBO Toolbox before the launching the final data collection process. Some of the features of the orientation were:

- Special attention to details cross-check, validation, etc.
- Technicalities of operating the KOBO Toolbox.
- Guideline containing "Do's", and "Don'ts"
- Test run through role play
- Tools finetuned to strengthen enumerates understanding.
- Project coordinators and staff from PNGOs also participated and shared their prior experience with KOBO Toolbox to assist enumerators in understanding technicalities.

Data collection technique/methods

Quantitative data was collected using the software application KOBO. Enumerators visited respondents and ran the questionnaire in person, maintaining social distancing and other health regulations. Enumerators kept a note in hard cope simultaneously and consulted those while finalizing responses recorded in KOBO. Enumerators were guided hands-on through field tests of the questionnaire and use of KOBO before launching the final data collection process. The consultants collected qualitative data along with other AIRD officials.

Quality Assurance

The quality of quantitative data collected from the field was checked continuously. Field data were recorded by filling in a paper questionnaire. After completion of the interview, enumerators reviewed the questionnaire in case of confusion, writing errors, or missing information. Once the paper questionnaire had been corrected, the data were fed into KOBO Toolbox and sent to the consultants. Consultants provided feedback on the collected data, and necessary corrections, cleaning, additional information were incorporated by the field team to make the data consistent and compatible with different values and parameters of the questionnaire.

Consultants facilitated discussion for qualitative data collection. FGDs and KII were assisted by project coordinators of the respective PNGO who organized participant(s) and assisted them in technical matters. S/he also played a bridging role between moderators and participants. Qualitative data

collected from the field were organized in a complete write-up. Audio record of the discussion(s) was used as a backup to cross-check. In case of any vital information went missing or major inconsistency or ambiguity was found after completion of the discussion, the field facilitator contacted the respondent(s) collected missing/ corrected information.

Data processing and analysis

Quantitative data generated by field survey were entered and stored in KOBO Toolbox. The data specialist transferred those to XL. The XL data were cleaned, checked, and verified. Once the data were cleared, XL was used to generate output for analysis. Analysis was based on the outputs generated. The process of generating output and analysis of the output continued until the completion of reporting. Qualitative data were organized under different categories after coding and classifying the data. Qualitative data provided corroboration of quantitative data and explained apparent/real anomalies, exceptions, and the like.

This 'Review Report' is produced based on the data generated from primary and secondary sources. The report presents and interprets findings from the evaluation exercise. It includes highlights of the project together with gaps/ weaknesses observed.

Limitation of the study

The prevailing pandemic situation changed the way we do almost everything. The study was conducted when Bangladesh had reported a sharp rise in Omicron variant of COVID-19 infections and fatalities throughout the country. Therefore, there was a concern to carry out the research that ensures the safety of the participants and researchers above all else. Thus, in addition to the limitations inevitably imposed by the virtual mode of functioning of some activities, the study continued along with /through the following limiting conditions/factors.

- Further deteriorating COVID 19 situation;
- Enforcement of a further lockdown;
- No provision for data saturation and data redundancy due to limited time;
- Limitation of distant method in training, data collection, discussion; and,
- Disruption in power supply and electronic communication system.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter incorporates findings from both quantitative and qualitative studies. The study was centered on exploring the situation of the SPI programme concerning the thematic issues. First, the general socio-demographic characteristics of the sampled respondents are described, which is followed by findings related to each of the SPI thematic issues. The next findings from the survey are compared against baseline data from the baseline report provided by the MJF. Finally, the Qualitative information is incorporated in parallel with the quantitative findings as relevant.

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

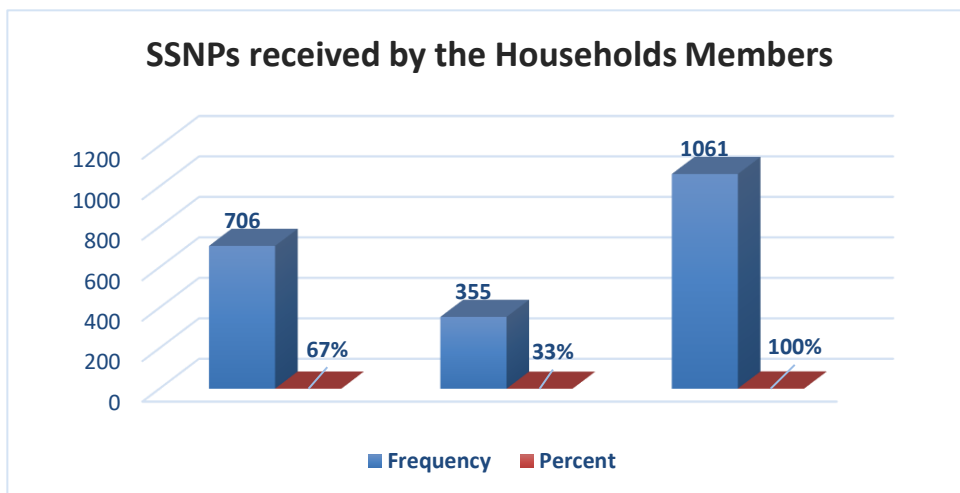
The survey was conducted with 1061 and 156 respondents from poor marginalized, and vulnerable sections of the society in the project and control areas, respectively. Of the respondents from the project area, 38% were female, and 62% were male. On the other hand, out of the total respondents, 17% were female, and 83% were male in the control area. In terms of occupation, most of the respondents claimed that they are engaged in the labour market and directly or indirectly involved in income-generating activities. Agriculture is the main stay of the respondents' household. Agriculture and agricultural labour constitute more than one-third (31%) of the respondents. Other major occupations reported are Day labour (19%), petty business (9%). However, 28% of the female respondents' main occupation is caring for their families. On the other hand, in the control area, agriculture and agricultural labour constitute more than one-third (34%) of the respondents like the project area. Other major occupations reported are Day labour (15%), petty business (14%), construction labour (12%).

3.2 Access to social safety net programmes

Bangladesh has been trimming down poverty by executing various social safety net programmes (SSNPs). The government allocates a significant amount of money in the budget to implement various social safety net measures to attenuate the degree of poverty. However, a massive chunk of the country's vulnerable population is still in the dark about their rights, especially at places where proper information is hard to come by. Interestingly the situation has changed rapidly in the SPI intervention areas thanks to the initiatives taken by MJF.

Respondents were asked whether any of their family members had been involved with or got any social safety net support for the last three years.

Figure 01: SSNPs received by the Sample Households



It is revealed from the above table that 67% of the surveyed respondents or their family members from the project area receive safety net support. However, less than half of the respondents (44%) positively answered this question in the control area.

Generally, the Union Parishad (UP) offices conduct an outreach and information campaign either once or twice a year through various mediums, including posters, miking, local radio, and word of mouth. The outreach campaign is reported to take place once the ministries receive the annual budget allocation. Respondents were asked how did they know about social safety net programmes. The quantitative data demonstrates that a large number of respondents are got information regarding SSNPs from the NGO workers (45.41%) in their locality, followed by Union Parishad representatives, secretary, and Chowkidar (38.19%). However, 36.48% of the respondents mentioned they got informed about SSNPs from miking and 16.40% from Local influential people. On the other hand, the respondents from the control area mentioned that their source of information about SSNPs are hardly from Union Parishad representatives, secretary, and Chowkidar (27%), followed by miking (25%).

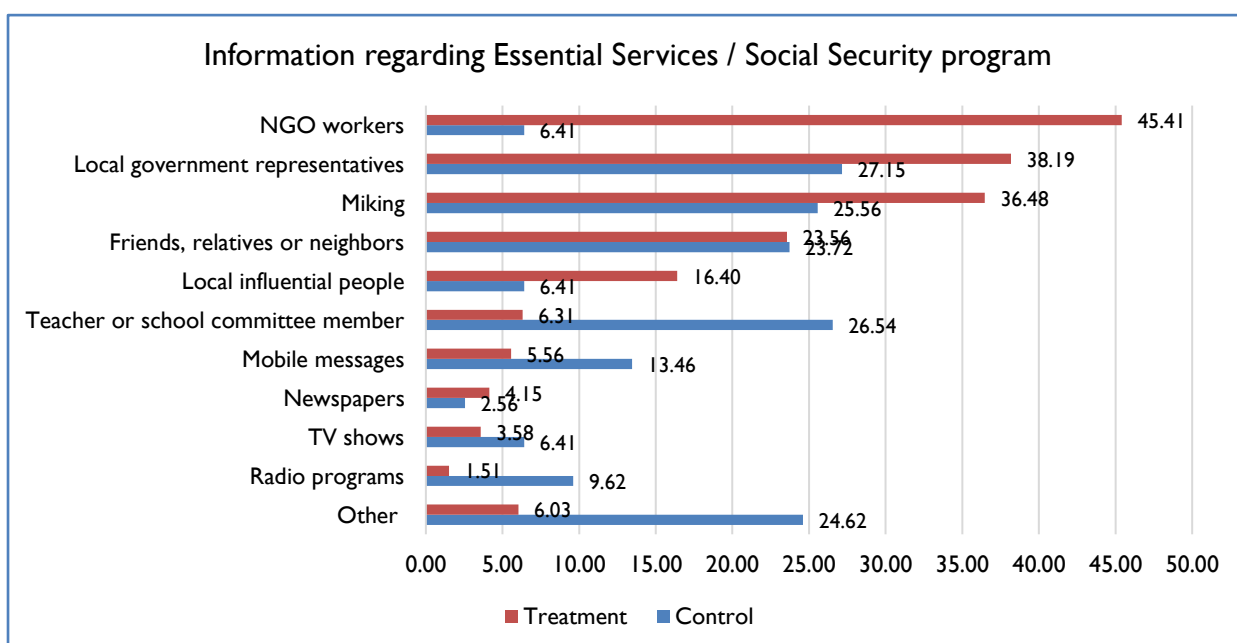
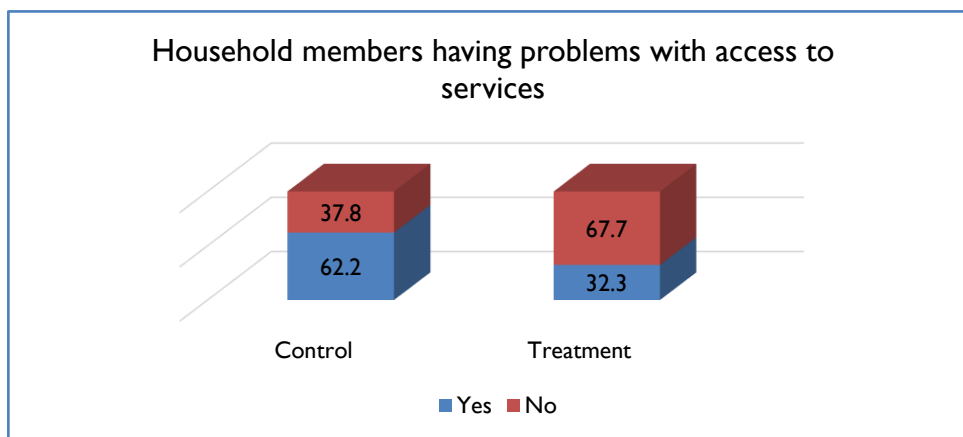


Figure 02: Information regarding Essential Services / Social Security program

However, it is often reported that poor people remain deprived of the government’s social protection benefits. Respondents categorically asked whether they or the member of their household experienced any problems with access to SSNPs in the last three years. The survey found that 49% faced some challenges accessing SSNPs.

Figure 03: Household having problem with access to services



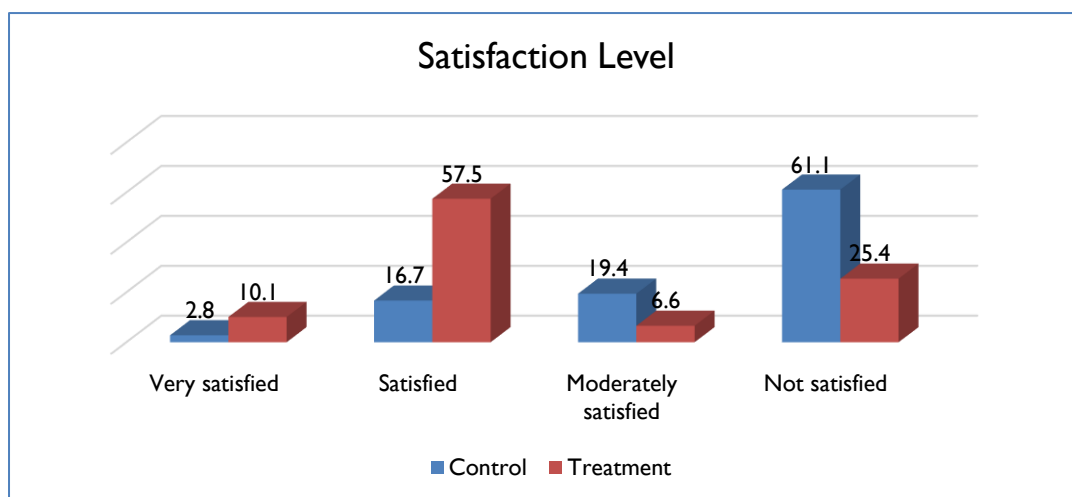
Of them, 56% of the respondents corresponded with the concerned officer to deal with the problem. Interestingly, their experience with the concerned official was either very satisfying (48%) or satisfying (42%).

Complaints are expected to be filed with the Union Parishad representatives who are responsible for the primary selection of recipients. The evidence suggests that complaints are few, and those filed are usually lodged with Ward Members or Union Chairmen. However, their resolution was not up to the mark, although the implementation guidelines do not define specific procedures. It is revealed from the survey that 28 % have complained about the SSNPs having somewhat dissatisfied, and 57.5% got the solution. Actually, they have done so mainly verbally rather than through a formal written request. Such verbal complaints are raised in rural areas mostly with the local Union Parishad members and chairpersons, followed by local elites and the Union Social Worker (SW). In urban areas, they are raised primarily with the Ward Commissioner, followed by local elites, the mayor, and District Social Service Officer (DSSO).

The beneficiaries, like older people or widows, rarely raise a complaint about basically one reason: lack of knowledge about mechanisms. It is revealed that 49% of respondents were not raised complaints because they did not know where to file such complaints. However, at the same time, they believe that if they raise a grievance, the complaints will be effectively addressed. Few respondents opined that complaining would lead to discrimination and retaliation from authorities involved in implementing SSNPs.

Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction level with the social safety net. Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction level with the social safety net. It is revealed from figure 4 that in the project area, 10.1% were very satisfied, 57.5% were satisfied, 6.6% were moderately satisfied, and 25.4% were not satisfied. On the other hand, in the control area, the scenario was different. Only 2.8% were very satisfied, 16.7% were satisfied, 19.4% were moderately satisfied, and just over half (61.1%) of the respondents were not satisfied.

Figure 04: Satisfaction Level of the Beneficiary



The study revealed two main reasons behind the respondents' dissatisfaction with the existing social safety net programmes. First, the allocation that a family or individual receives under any given social safety net programme is certainly inadequate. Moreover, the existing social safety net programmes are not adequate as these schemes are mostly operated on a short-term basis, which is not an effective way to provide year-round protection for those in need. Secondly, delivering the support to intended beneficiaries is a challenge as irregularities prevail, e.g., the inclusion of ineligible beneficiaries with political connections, leaving many genuine ones out. Still, there are allegations against some elected representatives that they incorporated names of people of their choice. Thus, the government's social safety net programmes fund goes to the non-poor owing to nepotism, corruption, and political consideration in selecting beneficiaries.

However, the poor marginalized and vulnerable people, who were entirely unaware of their rights and access to social safety net schemes, have become self-dependent thanks to this SPI programme. It is evident during FGD that an incredible number of people have so far got access to SSNP services, e.g., Old Age Allowance (OAA), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), allowance for the widowed, deserted and destitute women, allowances for the financially insolvent disabled, Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP), Primary Education Stipend Project (PESP), through the intervention of the project. Existing evidence emphasizes the importance of the SSNPs for poor marginalized and vulnerable people and their families and points towards positive impacts across a range of outcomes. For example, the guaranteed and regular stream of income enabled poor marginalized and vulnerable people to meet a larger share of their consumption needs; they could eat more and increase spending on health care, despite the transfer value of the allotted amount of SSNPs very low. Many recipients also reported improvements in their economic conditions, often resulting from investments in productive assets. Furthermore, there is evidence that the SSNPs increase poor marginalized and vulnerable people standing within their families and communities and their psychosocial well-being. Poor marginalized and vulnerable people interviewed for this study reported that the SSNPs enable them to meet some of their basic needs, particularly on food and medicines, and enhance their social standing – but that the allowances are woefully inadequate relative to their needs.

During the interview with the CSGs, it is revealed that they are trying to bring the poor marginalized and vulnerable people under SSNPs. They work in groups in the targeted communities that are not aware of the local government services. If anyone complains regarding the access to SSNPs, they negotiate with local government representatives. Moreover, they sit for several meetings with the UP representatives in a month to establish the rights of the poor marginalized and vulnerable people.

Evidence of this fact is revealed from the comment of Kulsum Begum, a 73-year-old widow who lives in Delduar under Delduar Upazila of Tangail District. She did not know for a long time that she could get the OAA programme, a government social pension scheme. According to her, Democracywatch (the implementing partner of the SPI programme) has taken steps to disseminate information to people by creating the CSG.

“Now I know all about the allowance. I have been getting this allowance since the last one and half years”

Kulsum Begum, Delduar Upazila, Tangail District

Furthermore, through its activities, the SPI programme, has involved vulnerable people in the decision-making process to voice their own concerns. Working as social safety net programmes (SSNP) selection committee members and standing committee members, these people are now speaking at interface and advocacy meetings. For example, in the FGD session, one of the CSG members mentioned: “Earlier, we didn’t know how to access the facilities at the local government level. Nobody cared for us then. But after the implementation of the SPI programme, we’ve become aware of our own rights. We can now access the social safety net programmes.

“My daughter has been disabled since birth. She could not move and talk like other people. We tried our best but did not get the desired results. In addition, we were in a deep financial crisis. We did not know that the government provides allowances for disabled people. So when members of the project told us about her facility, we immediately contacted the UP chairman. Thankfully, my daughter has been receiving the disabled allowance for the last couple of years”

A Disabled Mother, Delduar Upazila, Tangail District

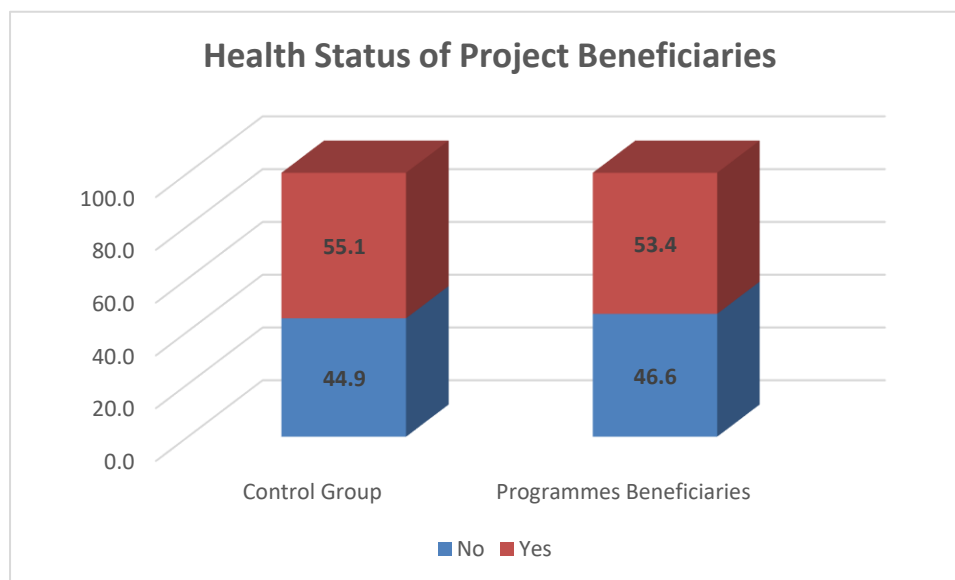
Now, we know what we should do to establish our rights and where to go.”

3.3 Access to health services

Primary health care in the public sector is organised around the District Hospitals at the district level, the Upazilla Health Complexes (UHCs) at the Upazila level, work as healthcare hubs. In addition, there is a government health facility at the union level operated by either the “Family Planning” department or the “Health” department. The government of Bangladesh initiated community clinics (CC) to extend the reach of public health services to the doorsteps of rural people all over rural Bangladesh, and these facilities were planned to be run through community participation. Thousands of people are getting services from the CCs, and it has become an integral part of the national health system.

Among the survey respondents, more than half (53%) reported that they were suffering from at least one illness in the last year.

Figure 05: Health Status of the Beneficiary



Of them, 48% went to hospitals for treatment, although the accessibility of the rural people to healthcare services is still not up to the mark. The constraints encountered in the utilisation of public health facilities are often associated with both physical accessibility and waiting time for treatment at the facility. These factors tend to facilitate or restrict health care use. The three main elements of physical accessibility are distance traveled, travel time, and travel cost to visit the facilities.⁷ Suppose the health facility is situated far away from home; it involves considerable travel time as well as travel costs to get to the facility depending on the mode of transport. Further, accessibility to services requires waiting time at the facilities that may induce or discourage usage. The findings suggest that health care facilities are somewhat accessible to poor marginalized, and vulnerable people without any discrimination. Physical accessibility is no longer a barrier because people do not have to travel a long distance to reach health facilities. Once they arrive at the facilities, they do not have to wait for a long time to get to the services.

It is often reported that poor marginalized and vulnerable people worry about their health. They face complex health issues but are often unable to access appropriate health care. The increased burden from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and disability among older people was clearly observed in this study. Older women and men described the health issues and how they impact their lives.

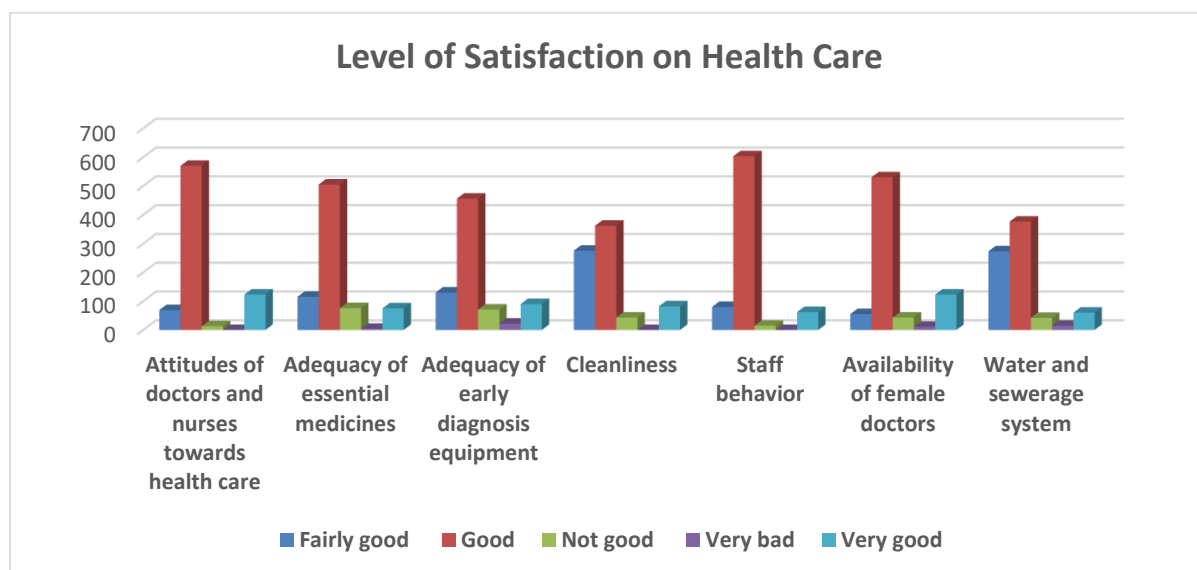
Despite their complex health needs, older women and men are often unable to access the healthcare services they need. Older women and men interviewed for this study talked about how they struggle to access the healthcare services they need, mainly due to a lack of appropriate services and financial barriers. In addition, existing human resources are inadequate for performing delivery services at the UHFWC. Despite the widespread establishment of the community clinics, the goal of ensuring quality, equity, and accountability in healthcare service at the local level is limited by a lack of supply and logistics, proper monitoring, and overall lack of voice and accountability.

In the project area, the CSGs supposed to be regular follow-up and monitoring of the Community Clinic, Union Health Centre, Upazila Health Complex services for the poor and vulnerable communities.

⁷ Mannan, M. A. (2013). Access to public health facilities in Bangladesh: a study on facility utilisation and burden of treatment. *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, 25-80.

In this backdrop, respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the various issues regarding health care services in their locality.

Figure 06: Respondents’ Level of Satisfaction on Health Care (Project Area)



In the project area, the overwhelming majority (74%) of the respondent has found good and satisfactory attitudes of doctors and nurses towards health care services. Regarding the adequacy of advised medicine in the hospital, the majority (64%) of the respondents said advised medicines were available and indicated as ‘good’ adequacy. On the other hand, only 10% of the respondents commented that the adequacy of medicine was not good. On the issue of early diagnosis equipment, 59% of respondents said hospitals have adequate early diagnosis equipment. At the same time, 17% said they were fairly good. Only 10% considered ‘not good’. A large majority of respondents (83%) said the overall cleanliness of hospitals was either fairly good (36%) or good (47%). When it comes to the behaviour of the hospital staff, the majority of respondents (90%) said they receive either fairly good (11%) or good (79%) behaviour from the hospital staff. When respondents were asked regarding the availability of female doctors, the majority of the respondents (86%) said the availability of female doctors was either good (70%) or very good (16%). To provide quality care, healthcare facilities need to have a safe and accessible water supply, clean and safe sanitation facilities, hand hygiene facilities at points of care and toilets, and appropriate waste disposal systems. How do respondents rate the quality of water, sanitation, and hygiene in health care facilities? The majority of respondents said the quality of water, sanitation, and hygiene in health care facilities was either fairly good or good (35% and 50%, respectively).

The findings demonstrate that overall service quality has improved. People were getting the assured services from their nearest UHC, which caused significant trust and satisfaction among the patients. Explicitly, service receivers and providers both stakeholders showed satisfaction with the performance of Community Clinic, Union Health Centre, Upazila Health Complex in providing health service.

In rural Bangladesh, where the condition of medical facilities is still not up to the mark and hence thwarts many people to have access to treatment, however, in FGD session, it is evident that the wife of a poor day-labourer Nurjahan Begum of Sherpur has experienced an optimistic way of having medical care through the community health clinic. It is also revealed that people now feel comfortable going to “Sarkari Haspatal” (the government health facility) because they know that the ‘Daktar

shaheb' (doctor) is qualified. Moreover, in times of sickness, they prefer a government hospital over a private one because it is “free” or much less costly than private treatment. Most importantly, they trust the doctors. Moreover, they feel it is their right to receive services from a government hospital.

FGD participants and key informants at the intervention of the SPI programme stated that through the implementation process, the community became more aware of the community clinics and the services offered by these clinics. For example, one of the respondents mentioned: “There’s a community clinic here, and they offer so many services, treatment is available, delivery facilities, disburse medicines, and check-ups. But many people didn’t go to the community clinics earlier. No one knew all these things well. But now, after the SPI programme, a significant number of people know and are more aware”.

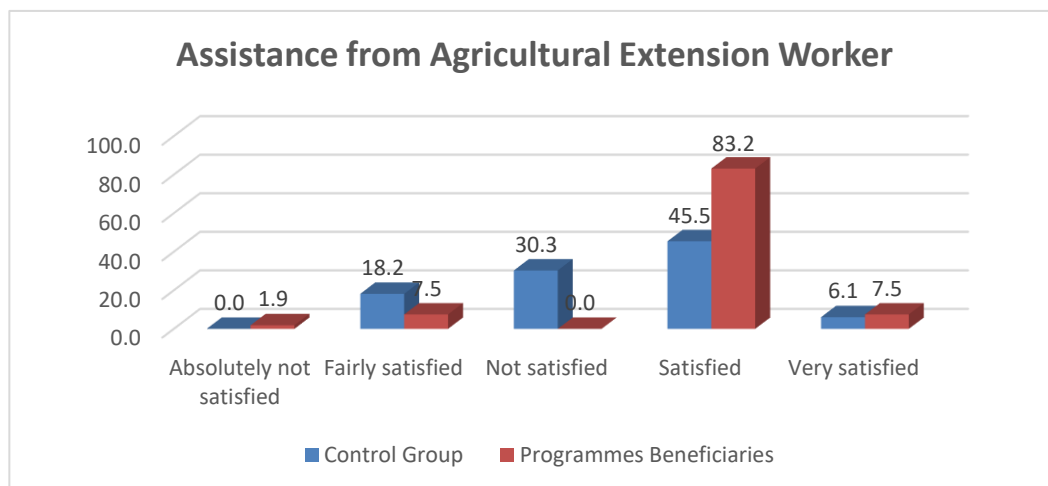
In the control area, each respondent was asked the same questions and found that significantly larger proportions of respondents have a ‘good’ level of satisfaction with the various issues regarding health care services. This is because a number of NGOs created civil society organisations had a positive impact on communities, including raising awareness about health facilities and increasing community demand, putting pressure on doctors to arrive on time, and stopping levying illegal fees on patients.

However, participants in this study mentioned that health service providers lack the capacity to address older people's health concerns and treatment requirements, particularly around NCDs. One common issue raised by older women and men interviewed for this research was that the health system primarily focused on children and mothers and failed to provide necessary and specialised services, programs, or facilities for older people. In addition, participants emphasized that health providers, particularly at the community clinic level, could not often offer specialised treatment and medications for older people's health concerns, especially NCDs. As a result, older people were often required to travel to higher-level care, which required additional resources.

3.4 Access to agriculture, livestock, and fisheries extension services

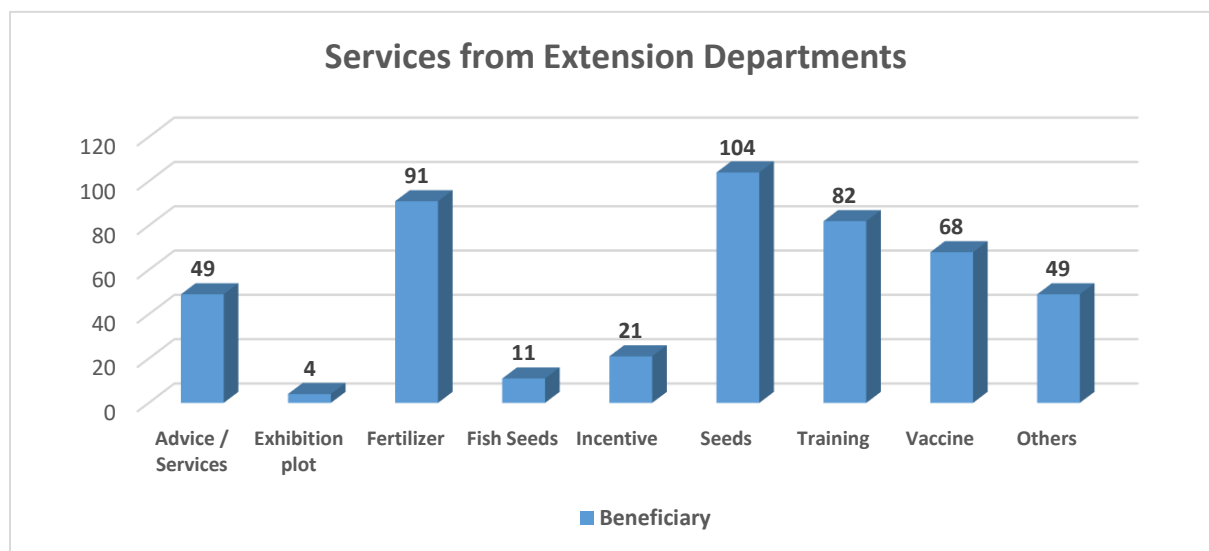
Although the extension and advisory services in Bangladesh are dynamic, with various actors from different sectors, and very decentralized, the high plurality leads to difficulties in coordination between different types of extension actors (public, private, and NGO) as well as between different areas of extension services, i.e., crops, livestock, and fisheries. Public sector extension service actors generally act independently of each other but overlook the need to take farmer input or measure farmer satisfaction or impact. The major functions of the extension service providers are to help farmers make efficient, productive, and sustainable use of their land and other agricultural resources through the provision of information, advice, education, and training. Monitoring and distributing various agricultural inputs at the doorstep of the farmer is an important responsibility of the extension departments. The extension departments are supposed to provide quality agricultural inputs and guaranteed availability to the farmers at their doorsteps.

Figure 07: Satisfaction level of service from Agricultural Extension Worker



Respondents were asked which agricultural, livestock, and fisheries services/materials were received for free from the government or non-government organizations in the last three years. As reported by the respondents from the project area, 22% received seeds, 19% received fertilizer, 17% received training, 14% received the vaccine for livestock, 10% received technical advice, and 5% received a financial incentive. On the other hand, in the control area, no answer was received from the participant on the various issues. Only 14% said they received support and 29% said they got the vaccine for livestock.

Figure 08: Input received from extension service providers



Though the situation in Bangladesh has gradually improved, there are still different challenges that the farmers face. For example, many of the farmers are ready to do their part, they really want to survive, but they have not gotten the opportunity to receive technical training, which helps them to increase their crops and have more food security. Therefore, respondents in the project area were asked in this context whether they or any of their households faced any problems related to agriculture, livestock, and fisheries in the last three years. Out of the total respondents, 53% faced agriculture-related problems, 50% faced livestock-related problems, and 49% faced fisheries-related problems. Furthermore, it is revealed from the quantitative analysis that almost 50% of the respondents corresponded with concerned officials. On the other hand, respondents from the control

area claimed that 22% corresponded with agricultural extension officials, 50% corresponded with both livestock and extension officials.

Respondents were next asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the services received from the concerned officials. In the project area, out of the total respondents who corresponded with concerned extension officials, 52% were satisfied, 11% were satisfied with agricultural services, 71% were satisfied with livestock services, and 65% were satisfied with fisheries services. On the other hand, in the control area, 40% were either satisfied or very satisfied with agricultural service, 40% were fairly satisfied, 40% were not satisfied with livestock service, 40% were not satisfied with fisheries.

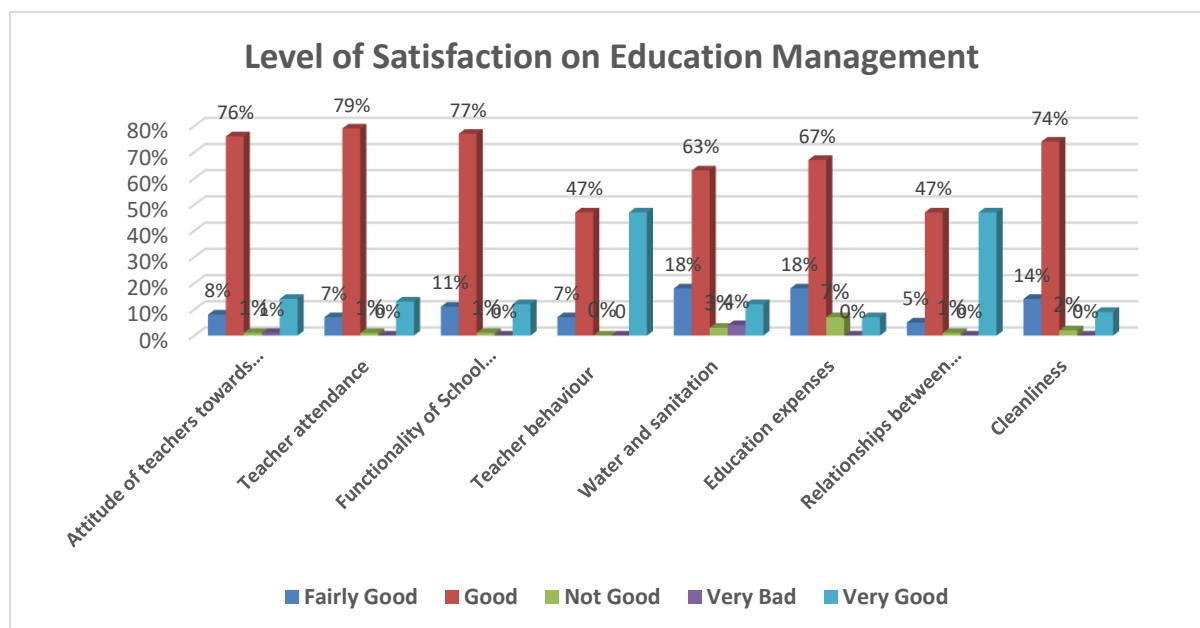
The SPI programme is supposed to capacitate PSDA introduce social auditing tools to provide more quality services for the marginalized people. The FGD sessions revealed that farmers were aware of the best applications of agricultural inputs or productivity-enhancing, and cost-saving, cultivation, and pest control practices. They are reliant on both public agricultural extension services to maintain and improve productivity and the yield of their produce. It is also revealed that the Public Service Delivery Agencies (PSDA) provide frequent extension services in the form of training, awareness events, or embed information through their field-level personnel. Interestingly, these activities cover the diverse issues faced by farmers. Therefore, public extension services are a major source of reliable agricultural information. It should be noted here that most of the agriculture-related information available to farmers is received through public extension offices. However, the respondents also characterized the extension service as weak due to its low coverage, infrequent interaction, and a limited number of covered crops.

3.5 Access to Education

Education as a human right means the right to education is legally guaranteed for all without discrimination. Therefore, the state has an obligation to protect, respect, and fulfill the right to education. One of the focuses of the project was to ensure the education of excluded children through strengthening community participation. In this backdrop, respondents were asked to rate satisfaction with the management of education.

According to the quantitative data, a significant section of the respondents has expressed their satisfaction over the management of educational institutions ranging from good to very good. However, a considerable number of respondents, however, evaluated the satisfaction of educational management at the scale of fairly good. Only a few numbers have not been satisfied with the performance of educational institutions. A major section of respondents (79%) have opined their satisfaction regarding attendance of the teachers in the educational institutions maintaining time as scheduled. The attitude of teachers towards teaching is also found good by a significant number of respondents. In contrast, 77% and 67% of the respondents replied with positive notes about the functionality and educational expenses, respectively. The relation between teachers and students was also found good (47%), and good remarks also came about the cleanliness of the educational institutions by 74% of the respondents.

Figure 09: Respondents' Level of Satisfaction on Education Management



From the perspectives of the respondents met through qualitative methods, they generally expressed a good notion about the inputs and progress of the project in the case of quality education in their locality. The CSG and local government representatives could acknowledge the direct contribution of the project in creating a pro-educational environment, engaging parents in the management committee, overseeing the relation of teachers and students, and maintaining schooling time as per government rules.

The CSG members met have clearly explained their roles in respect to the education and collaboration with duty-bearers and project personnel in a very precise manner. They also mentioned that they got a positive return through the project interventions by far compared to their initial expectations. CSG has got functional relationship with the authorities of educational institutions and local government bodies in connection to sensitize their due responsibilities.

Despite such progress, the project has gone through a nightmare due to unprecedented COVID-19 impacts. As per their opinion, they couldn't work for at least 7-8 months due to different government restrictions. As a result, the project has only 35 months of official duration in which months were lost due to the stopping of project work. In addition, though there was no specific survey about child marriage during the COVID restricted days, they found a number of incidences of child marriage.

In the case of newly reintegrated enclaves in the area of Kaliaganj, Boroshoshi union (under Boda Upazila, Panchagarh), the educational facilities are not similar in that of the main land. The level of awareness regarding education and information of duty-bearers was found very low.

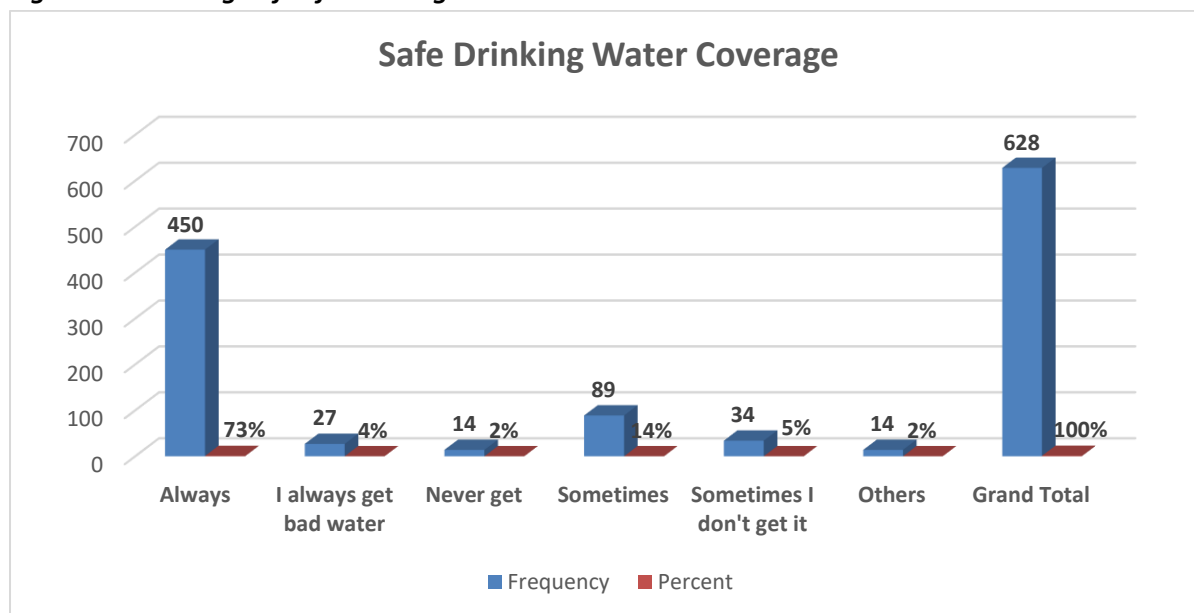
The overall awareness about educational importance and services was found good. Still, there are several needs also expressed by the communities, including the establishment of more educational institutions, technical schools/colleges, increase the number of stipends for the poor students, and physical communication.

In the control areas, the satisfaction of respondents was found good to very good in almost all respect, including the attitude of teachers towards teaching, the relation between teachers and students, and cleanliness.

3.6 Access to drinking water and sewerage

Adequate water and effective sewerage measures have always been crucial for public health. Provision of improved water and sanitation facilities and stopping open defecation practices are paramount to achieving SDG 6: clean water and sanitation for all. Respondents were asked whether they always get quality and safe drinking water.

Figure 10: Coverage of safe drinking water



A significant number of respondents (73%) opined good coverage of drinking water within their reach, which they are getting in a regular manner. On the other hand, 14% and 5% of respondents replied that they sometimes get water and sometimes do not, respectively. It was also noticed that at least 2% of individuals didn't access drinking water, not at all. In the case of the control area, 73% expressed that they were regularly getting water. On the other hand, 12% were not getting any water for their drinking purpose.

The respondents who were met at the FGDs expressed a moderate level of satisfaction regarding getting drinking water from the respective authorities. At the ward level of Rangpur City Corporation, only a few wards were getting supply water for their drinking purpose. Still, they used water for their cooking being collected from other sources. The individuals living in the Sweeper Colony of Rangpur City Corporation expressed lower levels of satisfaction in connection to having drinking water regularly. The respondent met through FGDs were found critical about the capacity and work of City Corporation in the context of citizen entitlements.

Through the discussion, there were huge needs found at the household level that they don't have any formal points to collect drinking water; thus, they are in acute need. As per NGO Forum for Drinking Water's version, there are (Shallow) Tube-well being installed in the areas where supply infrastructures are not built yet. With the support of MJF and City Corporation, they are currently working to provide hardware support in non-supply areas. They are hoping that after installing the tube wells, the suffering of the inhabitants will be overcome.

As per the opinions of the officials of the City Corporation, the capacity of the office has yet to increase to meet the actual needs. The organogram of the corporations has long been pending to get approval. Since its inception, they have been waiting to pass it, thus the scarcity of human resources being met

by appointing persons on a master roll basis. They opined that most of the officers are with additional responsibilities which actually not possible to serve people as per their expectations.

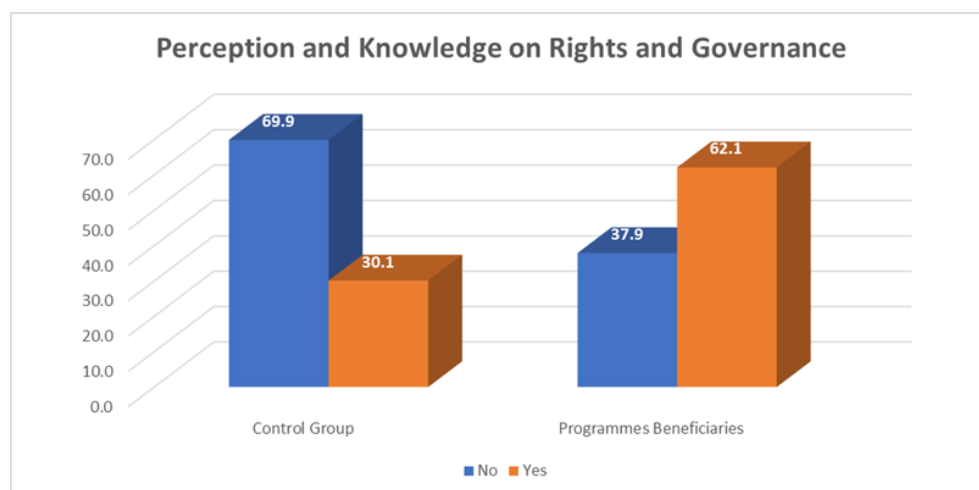
The officials also claimed that the annual allocation for the water supply and sanitation is quite low compared to the existing needs. For example, they could be allocated only 0.02% exclusively for water and sanitation purposes in the last fiscal year.

Due to COVID and government health advisory, the level of awareness among the targeted community increased but is still not up to the mark. The discussion with the same was found cases behind it mainly lack of awareness and poverty. To meet their daily basic needs (mainly food), they couldn't manage expenditure to buy hygiene kinds and sanitary latrines. Many of the respondents who took part in the FDGs said that they don't have sanitary latrines as their income was not supported to buy such materials. It was also found interesting that everybody came in the meeting carrying their own smartphones and they also have the television in their houses but not sanitary latrines.

3.7 Perception and knowledge about Rights and Governance Issues

It is now well recognized that citizens need greater political knowledge and awareness of governance and rights as a first step to claiming rights and acting for themselves. According to the number of quantitative respondents, 62.1% of the respondents found aware of good governance, but the number of unaware respondents (37.9%) was also significant. The data revealed from the field reflects that still, there is a huge number of respondents unaware about a foremost aspect that have obvious impacts in pursuing their citizen rights.

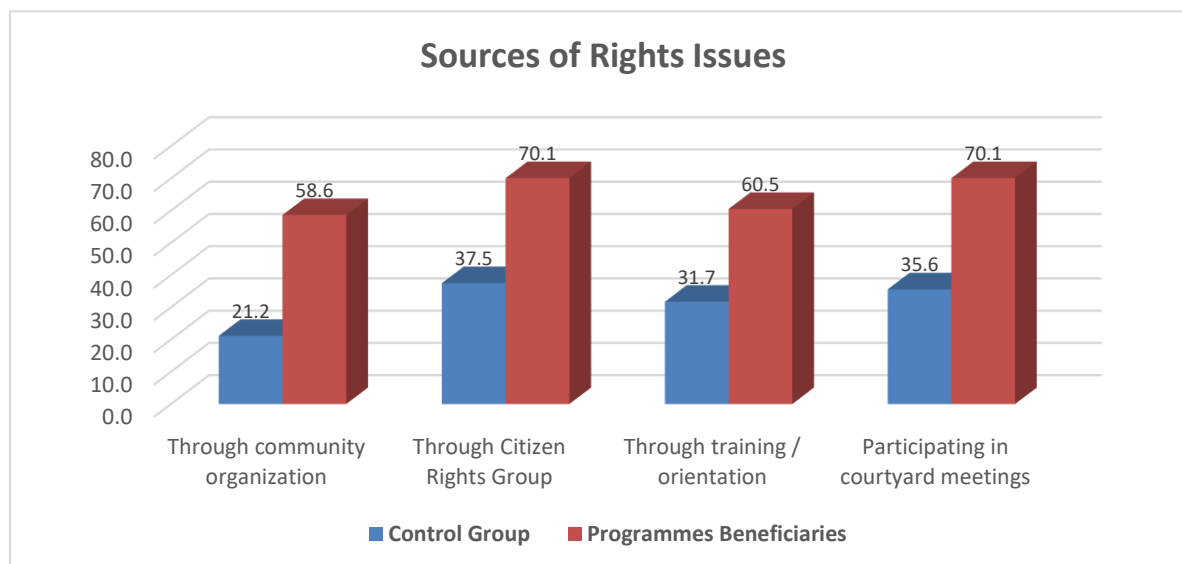
Figure 11: Perception and knowledge about Rights and Governance



In the FGD session, the common definition of or understating of good governance was “working together with the people,” or “everybody knowing and having a say.” Interestingly it was more or less equated to popular participation.

Beside the SPI programme was very instrumental regarding sharing their rights issue.

Figure 12: Knowledge Source of Rights Issues



However, communities’ perceptions and knowledge regarding participation in rights and governance are not found impressive, and in many cases, there was a low level of awareness observed regarding rights and entitlements. For example, among the respondents, 15% informed that there are 13 standing committees to implement various local government programs, 25% opined that there are opportunities for the participation of common people in various development activities of the local government, and 25% noted that there are opportunities to participate in local development priority determination, ward meetings, open budgets, etc. But it was revealed that there were a large number of respondents (35%) who actually don't have know-how about the scope of work and functions of Local Government Institutions (Union Parishad, Municipality etc.) from which they could get their entitlements and thus exercise rights. . On the other hand, 18% of respondents replied that they have no idea about their rights and local government structures in the control areas.

During the qualitative data collection and discussion with respective authorities and civil society, it was widely observed that most of the people belong the HHS with the project area are not adequately aware of their rights and how to get those. However, through the engagement of different stakeholders, it is noted that the level of awareness somewhat increased with the targeted community.

3.8 Perception and knowledge Governance Performance Monitoring

Around 89% of respondents say that they have participated in Governance Performance Monitoring events supported and guided by the project. In the case of the control group, this ratio is lower, around 21%. 37% mentioned their relationship with the public institutions (Union Parishad / Municipality / Zila Parishad / City Corporation) mostly as a service recipient. 25% of the beneficiaries responded that they also belong as a member of the UP, Municipality / District Council / City Corporation, and Development Activities Supervision Committee. However, only 5% of respondents claimed they were involved as members of different Standing Committees, though the participation level appeared low, as the meetings were infrequent. However, 16% mentioned that they received invitations to various meetings, but only 18% claimed they could propose issues at the different UP/UZP and other meetings of the relevant local bodies. Only 13% claimed about the adequate allocated budget. On the contrary,

the control groups slightly vary this data. It is mentionable involvement and interaction with local government through the project is moderately satisfactory, though the Covid and other kick off the project hampered the project.

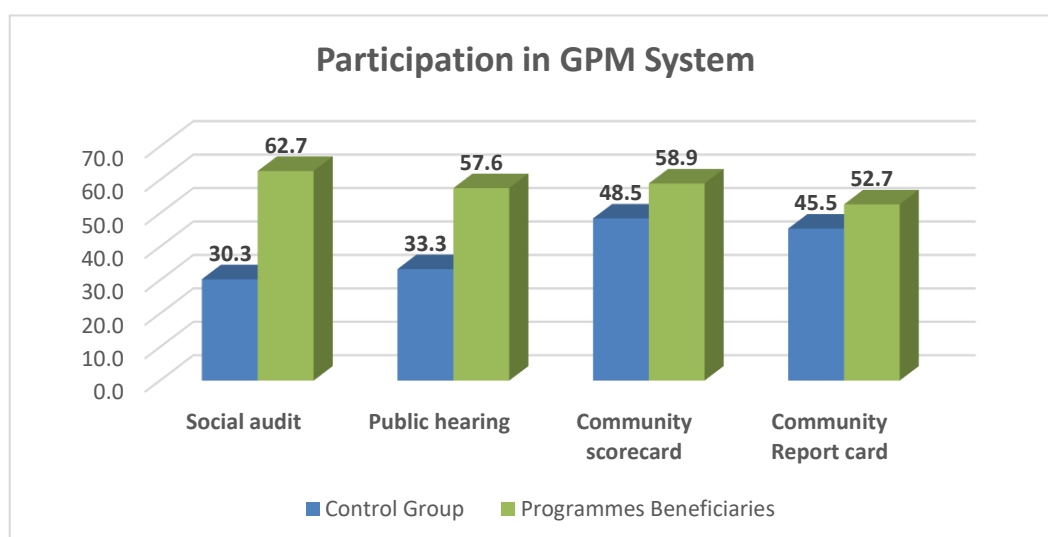
According to the field data collected from respondents who attended FGD and KII opined that due to the project interventions and local implementing partner(s), they came to know many new issues and their rights, which actually they didn't know even a few years back. Upon having an attachment with the project and forming different groups, they now feel confident to take part in GPM and Ward Shavas. They frequently visit Union Parishad, Community Clinics and attend Scool Management Committee Meetings. Women's transformation and leadership have also been visible in many who consulted during FGDs and KIIs. The level of awareness and collective voice was counted as they expressed their vision and how they pursued those.

In the case of ensuring their livelihood, it was also evident that people belong to poor communities being unmet from their daily needs, including food, medicine, and educational expenditure. The poor people were somewhat skeptical about the software-based governance project as this is no longer supported their daily needs.

Both quantitative and qualitative data found that there were several barriers the targeted community faced in attaining service providers and support services. The major constraints were identified, including accessive delays, absence of respective duty-bearers, and undue financial demand. There were 37% of respondents shared that procrastination was the main barrier to getting services from Union Parishad / Municipality / Zila Parishad / City Corporation, 25% mentioned illegal financial transactions, 16% mentioned misbehavior, but only 5% said about the absence of service provider, which indicates service providers are more aware and have an obligation to the service recipients by the mechanisms. Therefore, the overall service level is increased and was more satisfactory than previous.

62.7% of respondents said that they have participated in GPM systems through social audit, public hearing, interface meeting, and community scorecard process.

Figure 13: Knowledge Source of Rights Issues



The project has supported with GPM tools to improve the situation regarding governance and accountability for ensuring rights with different thematic components, i.e., Health, agriculture, education, social safety net, access to safe water. Social Audit, public hearing, and interface meetings

have been done with the presence of relevant government authorities, departments, local government representatives, citizen rights groups, media, and project beneficiaries. However, respondent's participation seems higher, possible cause of that respondent's coverage under each activity from major to a minor level of engagement count as participation. The practical reason is due to covid field level activities initially was shut down, curtail down and re-arranged within a different context, which is probably hampered the project to get meaning full participation (designing questionnaires' by themselves, data collection in a team, report preparation and facilitate the public hearing or interface meeting) on the designed intervention. However, whoever participated in the process is well known about the process and understands the overall objectives of GMP. However, the majority (45%) of them are not aware of how the beneficiaries have been selected for this process. A similar response came from the control group for beneficiaries' selection. In terms of quality of service majority (75%) of respondents agreed that service quality has improved and good now. They are also satisfied (45%) with the service providers in timely support; now the institutions remain also clean (57%) give positive opinion on that compared to previous. A majority of the respondents (79%) agreed that service providers have the infrastructure and ensured environment for women, persons with disabilities, and elderly people. But in reality, MJF can plan new awareness program to sensitize service providers regarding the accessibility of persons, especially women with disabilities to ensure pro-poor service provision.

The overall outcome of the GPM seems good; in response to access increase to the services, the quality of the services remains good than previous. It is mentionable, for accessing the social safety net-awareness and consciousness among beneficiaries selection improved, a cross-check by the service provider and the CSG and local partners contributed the process to come up at least a minimum accountability range. However, political influence, vote banking, and nepotism remain sporadically within the intervention area. Overall governance access to health, education, agriculture sector governance, and safe water issues benefited from the various ranges through GMP tools and activities.

Although the project, through its intervention, has focused on ensuring rights and governance issues through strengthening public institutions. Massive project input is given through GPM tools, cross-learning, demonstration effect views, and exchange of good practices sharing affect positively nearby UPs and constituencies. These were shared by KII respondents, local representatives, and FGD participants while in the survey interaction. Also, in the control area, the different projects might contribute to such changes. The government, through NILG and other local legislation, was doing different projects and interactions for the localization of SDGs through UP and different institutions. On top, It is assumed that the Digital Bangladesh campaign, media mobilization, SMS awareness systems, and rights campaign might begin these positive changes in the control area. Thus general awareness among beneficiaries, project facilitators, and service providers foster services with a level quality than the previous among the beneficiaries group, which is clearly seen in comparison with the control group.

3.9 Right to Information and Information Services

According to the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, all powers of the republic belong to the people. The Right to Information Act (RTI) was introduced to establish the ownership of the constitution amongst the people to help address this issue in 2009. However, most of the citizens are unaware of their rights and available public resources, including their right to information. Right to information service, one of the SPI themes, is designed to inform local citizens of the Right to

Information Act 2009 and provide practical and relevant information on 'how to' obtain information from any service providing agency.

Generally, the respondents have information on RTI; at least most of them heard its name. Awareness of access to RTI has increased by 20%. The government has enacted an RTI act and has given massive drive for its institutionalization, thus setting different set-up from Union Parishad to community doorsteps established. At UP, the Union Information Center has established, through a2i launched "TOTTHO APA" to enhance and ensure support to the community doorsteps. At Union and Upazila levels, through different government projects, established citizen charter, regularized ward shava, and open budget citizen monitoring. Organizations like; TIB, MRDI, and Bangladesh Information Commission, implemented massive awareness campaigns, which also partnered with digital media, social media, and mass media. The government SMS service had a positive vibe to gain such social change as per the awareness campaign. It has developed a sense of security among 21%, meaning awareness of the project general beneficiaries on access to information has increased, and they now have security feeling by accessing it.

Service providers' attitude to the community is slightly increased (5%) for providing services as claimed. The possible reason may include; with demand-side readiness, supply has a positive turn to downstream the services, thus through national input and government policy mandate UPs become more proactive of organizing ward shava , open budgeting, enrolled citizen-led monitoring to ensure citizens rights as state commitment. UP and UZP committees are enrolled with more gender sensitivity and inclusiveness than previously. As the chain effect of performance review mechanisms government has now practiced its own annual performance review through its public services and institutes by mainstreaming the National Integrity Strategy. With other mega plans, SDGs localization and implementation are embedded within the government's local implementation strategy toward vision 2041. All these integrated efforts impacted to achieve such findings. However, an overall acquaintance of accessing Right to Information remains as a challenge from the perspective of acquaintance with the process (only 4%).

They used to seek information for loan service and agricultural issues, health and government services came at number 3 and 4, a similar scenario is prevailing for the control group. The main barriers found were misconduct (18%) and absence of service provider (17%) though 7% claimed for seeking such services from the respective department/ institutions they had to pay. There were 7% of respondents report Procrastination is another barrier.

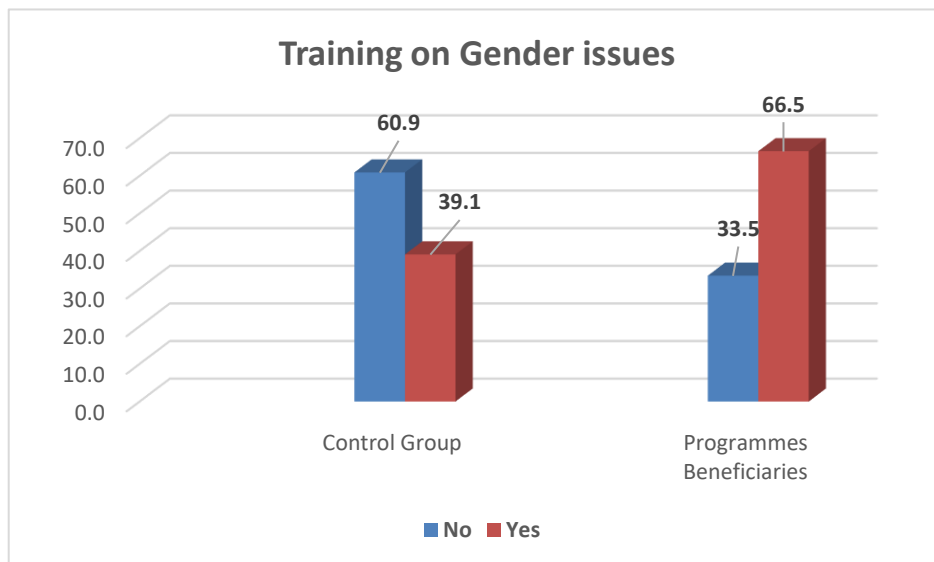
60% of respondents said they did nothing in response to such a situation, whereas; 18% said they had made complaints against it, and 14% said they had taken help from the local representative. On the other hand, only 4% said they had taken advice from the Citizen Support Group (CSG). .

There is a dilemma seen among the participants whether they should attempt for the right to information though its need is acute. Bureaucracy, lengthy process, lack of proper knowledge, and a generally negative perception make the process complicated, hindering and slowing down the entire system to benefit the beneficiaries. For the control groups, a similar scenario is prevailing for particular indicators.

3.10 Women's rights, gender equality, and empowerment

The majority (67%) of respondents claimed that they had received gender training during the project period. From the beneficiary level, involvement in the citizens' rights group scope was limited.

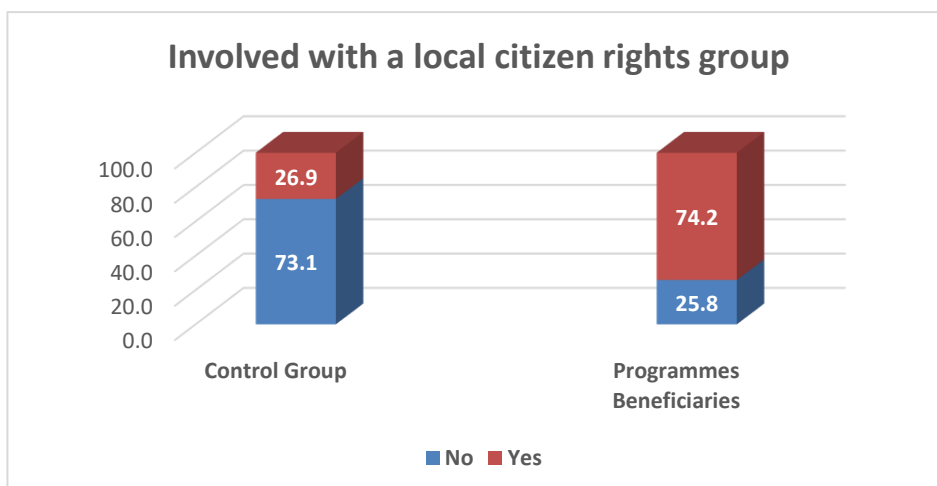
Figure 14: Training on Gender Issues



Still, they are well aware of the groups and know the major functions of the group, as it is for them for guidance and assisting to linkage building and advocacy on behalf of their rights and entitlements. Women’s access to public institutions increased; now, they are going to UP, Upazila, District levels depending on their needs and necessity. At the UP level, they are able to participate in different meetings and place their demands, most of the time ward meetings (claimed 39%) and often at open budget (claimed 4%) meetings. A significant number claimed that they used to place their demand and go for rural arbitration (22%) and went to village court (35%). While in their participation regarding different development priorities, legal aid in the local area, their opinion is partially accepted by 38%, whereas mentioned it was perfectly acceptable. It indicates that women are getting access to the PI, and their meaningful participation has been increased. However, 19% claimed that PI and other forums ignore their opinions also.

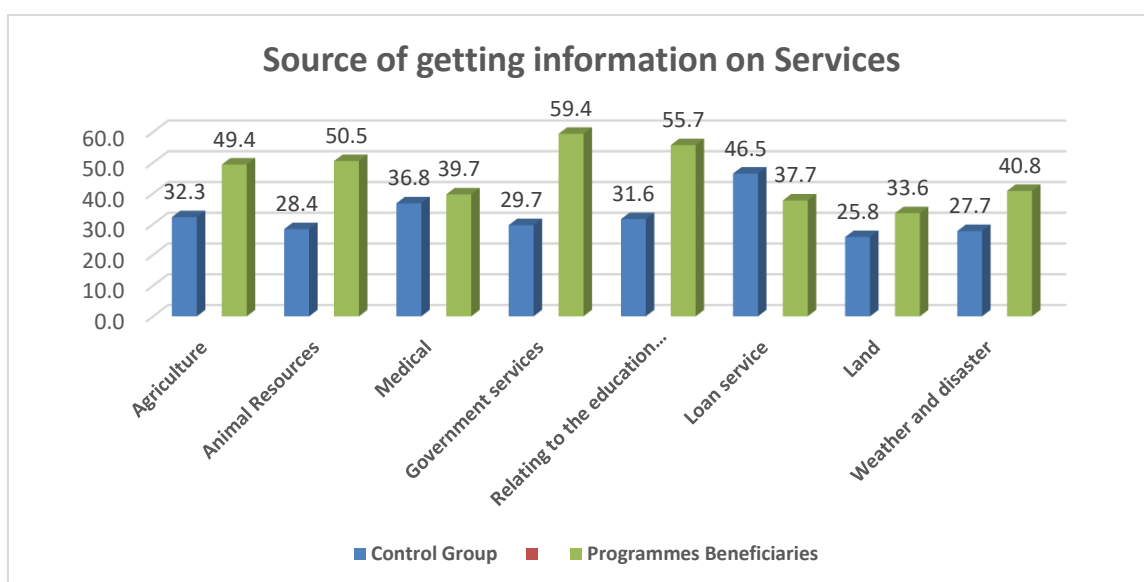
Women are also enrolled into the different committees at the local level at UP, UZP, SMC, and so on though their status on the meaningful participation in vibrant committees like UP standing committees is still lagging behind. 74.2% women are somehow involved in the local rights groups while its it was found reversed in the control areas.

Figure 15: Involved in Rights Group



The majority (81%) of the respondents claimed that they are familiar with the word women empowerment. Among 16 parameters and dimensions analysis on gender perspective of the project regarding the life and empowerment paradigm, it is seen that most of the cases female respondents/project beneficiaries are dominated by the male counterpart, major findings related to this is involved with monetary and financial category female participation is still very low, though it is noted that most of the similar criteria like as Child's education, crop cultivation, production of crop and its sells, Land purchase/sale, medical treatment, decision, and borrowing/lending are largely dependent on male counterpart, female participation in those aspects as ranging 1-2%. It indicates women's independence, liberty; decision-making power is hampered or controlled by the patriarchal mindset.

Figure 16: Source of Information



Some of the positive indicators are; access to the daily market, participation in employment and income-generating activities, women's earning against expenditure, saving the earned income of women have comparatively better than previous. Control groups' situation on the above dimensions is worse, as the project intervention is not able to serve or reach them.

In the project intervention area, domestic violence has been controlled/decreased generally. Women through intervention are more aware of their rights and entitlements; however, if anything happened in the project area, most of the respondents (29%) claimed that they had informed the local chairman and members, 20% claimed they used to stand beside the victim, and a significant number (24%) mentioned they did nothing. Domestic violence and early marriage during Covid number of incidents happened reported and unreported way. Poverty also was a major cause of facilitating those even in a worse manner.

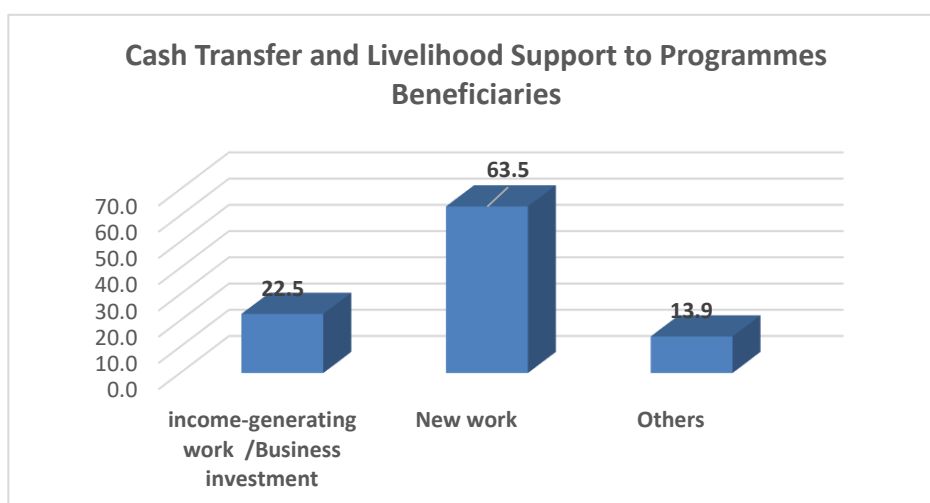
A number of positive indicators are prevailing at the project area through intervention for women's advancement and access to the PI and strengthening their capacity and as well as institutions also. Women can now raise their voices and place their demands in the public institutions, participate in the local governance systems through social accountability tools, be more aware of their rights and dignity, and enroll in the different tiers committees. As a result, mobility has been increased; thus, the

project could make its footprint visible in its intervention area and create a milestone in strengthening public institutions by women’s participation and some empowerment areas.

3.11 Cash Transfer and Livelihood Support in the context of COVID-19

Covid has affected the life and livelihood of the project beneficiaries in multiple ways. During Covid, a large number of beneficiaries, more than one-third (33%), were under debt with high interest from different sources, like *Mahajan*, different microcredit organizations, NGOs, and personal sources. Lots of them were also needed to sell their last assets for the survival of the family. Their business was interrupted and lost (19%) due to lockdown and massive Covid restriction. Agricultural production was disrupted as market systems were totally collapsed. Most of them are day labor and small industries jobholders, due to massive production loss, maximum small industries, shops and markets closed down and demised their business permanently, so they lost their job and became unemployed.

Figure 17: Cash Transfer and Livelihood Support to Programmes Beneficiaries



Though it is also mentionable, among beneficiaries, no such death rate (only 2%) is reported other than the massive financial and economic loss. Livelihood and daily life are affected adversely by the Covid impact. To recover the loss of Covid, they had different sources of financial help and assistance, the majority (32%) got from local NGOs, 23% got from local government institutions. 46% of respondents mentioned that they got support from the MJF during the Covid pandemic. A majority of the respondents (74%) mentioned that during Covid, they had problems with regular meetings and activities and thus hampered the project communication between beneficiaries and project officials/facilitators to attain its expected results. Among respondents, 90% said that they had spent the cash as Covid emergency support for their food purchasing. Only 10% of them used this money for IGA and new income initiatives. Through different KII, IDI and FGD, it is revealed that whoever (study findings got 10%) initiated IGA or new business has utilized the full (100%) cash support provided by the Manusher Jonno Foundation. The above table shows the proportionate segregation from the community responses. Mostly they as IGA and new initiatives, started poultry, cattle, and pigeon rearing, tailoring and cloth business, small shops, and so on. Control groups mostly use this support for their food and living costs.

3.9 Snapshot of key findings

This section presents the key findings associated with the SPI outputs. Most of the findings presented in this section resulted from the review of the qualitative part of the SPI review.

Output 1: Organized marginalized peoples to claim their rights and entitlements fight discrimination and & exclusion;

It is evident that the poor and marginalized section of the society who are also direct beneficiaries of the SPI programme have learned about their rights and entitlements. As a result, their awareness level has risen. The partner NGOs formed Citizen Support Groups (CSGs) at the ward, Union, Upaliza, and District level by the SPI programme and developed the capacity to raise their voice. All groups are directly engaged with the citizens of local areas and from poor, marginalized, and excluded groups where the females were always the priority. The CSGs are meant to serve two specific purposes in the context of governance: first, to organize and sensitize the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable people about their rights and entitlements, and second, to represent the community in demanding services from and negotiating with the Union Parishad and NBDs.

Earlier, they were unable to go to the Union Parishad or other government offices, they did not dare to talk with them and to demand service, but now they know about their rights; they have also learnt how to contact with the LGIs (e.g., Union Parishad) and NBDs and how to seek service from them. They used to go to the Union Parishad or NBDs alone, and now they go in groups, so the latter are more likely to listen to them. And as some of them have become well-known to the officials now, even if they go alone, the Union Parishad and NBD officials are more likely to pay attention to and respect them. However, they still have to continue visiting and persuading the Union Parishad or NBDs to meet their demands.

From talking to members of various CSGs and people affiliated with these organizations, it is evident that the CSGs have helped the poor and extreme poor people of SPI working areas become better organized, have greater voice vis-à-vis local government bodies and NBDs, and take various initiatives to seek solutions to their development problems.

Output 2: Strengthen official capacity to respond to citizen demands

It is revealed from the study that before the inception of the SPI programme, public service delivery agencies, i.e., NBD officials, rarely visited the villages. Thus, rural citizens did not know about their services and could not communicate with them. As people were not much aware of the activities of NBD officials, they could not seek advice from them and did not get free services from health, family planning, agriculture, and other departments. However, now they are aware of it. Due to the SPI programme the partner NGOs have introduced the NBD officials to the villagers and informed the people about their services. It is interesting to note that most of the respondents have the mobile phone numbers of the NBD field staff members, and they call them if needed, and most of the time, the officials respond very nicely. It should be noted here that the agriculture, health, family welfare,

“ We were asleep. The SPI programme has awakened us. We did not get services before. We did not know. We had no identity. We had to talk a lot to get services from the UP; now, that is not needed. Earlier, the service providers did not have to answer to us. Now they do. The SPI program has allowed us to vent our grievances. ”

Respondent in a FGD Session

and community clinic staffs are more available at the Union Parishad level than other departments. Therefore, working with them is easier, and the success of SPI is higher with these departments.

Although field-level personnel, i.e., from the livestock, fisheries departments, are supposed to hold offices at the Union Parishad complexes, they remain largely absent. Some departments, such as fisheries and livestock, do not have sufficient staff members at the field level. Thus, finding them or working and liaising with them is difficult. Findings from the study indicate that this situation has improved noticeably in SPI working areas.

People now have more interactions with them, and their service deliveries have improved. But the staff members of the fisheries, livestock, and land administration departments are reportedly hard to find. Nonetheless, reportedly they too visit the villages more frequently now than earlier. People go to the different NBD officials for different needs and demands according to the specialization of their line department. For example, farmers get valuable technical advice from Sub-Assistant Agricultural Officers for better agricultural production and pest control. In most treatment unions, there are separate rooms for Union Agriculture Services Unit (UASU) in the Union Parishad complex.

The local government representatives and NBD officials, on their part, seem to value what the CSGs have to offer. For example, some local-level officials opined that the CSG members prepare lists of the poor marginalized and vulnerable people and other eligible candidates of social safety net provisions for them; it is helpful for them as they do not need to prepare such lists themselves. Moreover, the list prepared by the CSGs is said to be quite accurate and reliable enough. Most of them also say that when they participate in SPI training sessions, public hearings, or other activities, it increases their image among the poor marginalized and vulnerable people; as more people get the assistance, they remain pleased with them.

Output 3: Strengthen capacity of citizen in the community to monitor the activities of government service delivery institutions

It is evident that the CSGs organised the poor marginalized and vulnerable people and took collective initiatives. They liaised with the LGIs (e.g., Union Parishad/City Corporation) and field-level personnel of agriculture, livestock, land administration, social welfare, women affairs, and fisheries department for ensuring better service for the poor marginalized and vulnerable people in the community. The field staffs of the respective partner NGOs prepare them through training and mentoring for this purpose. They also introduced the CSG members initially to NBDs and Union Parishad. After this orientation, the CGS starts its work, but the programme staff continue their support and advise regularly. Local government representatives and local officials of relevant agencies are sometimes requested to join the training sessions organized for the CGS and the poor marginalized and vulnerable people. The CSG-affiliated poor marginalized and vulnerable people, local government representatives, and NBD officials are introduced through such training, and rapport is developed. The poor marginalized and vulnerable people believe this rapport is beneficial for securing service from the NBDs since prior familiarity with the service seekers makes the providers more likely to respond quickly and positively. When other community members need help from the NBDs, they often contact CSG members. The NBDs of some departments have also started visiting the community; those who used to visit the community rarely earlier have become more regular.

Besides liaising with local government representatives and NBDs, the CSG members are also incorporated into the Union Parishad standing committees to represent the poor and extreme poor. The CSGs prepare the list of poor and extreme poor in the community and give it to the representatives

of the Union Parishad for allocation of the social safety net programmes (VGD, VGF, elderly allowances, 100-day Employment Generation Programme, etc.). They seek assistance in the supply of sanitary latrines, tube wells, etc., for the poor and extreme poor from the Union Parishad. They also place their demands for infrastructure development, such as construction or repair of roads and culverts. They try to put these development activities in the Union Parishad development plan and budget.

Some of the CSG members participate in alternative dispute resolution in the community to resolve minor disputes among community members. Earlier, the poor and extreme poor had to go to the influential local people for seeking their help for mediation of disputes; they had to pursue day after day to make them sit for the mediation, yet they were highly prone to bias. Therefore, many poor marginalized and vulnerable people now go to the CSG for mediation; it takes less time and is relatively impartial.

Generally, most respondents affiliated with CSGs spoke of positive changes in terms of enhanced knowledge and improved services from the local government institutions and NBDs. When CSG members and poor marginalized and vulnerable people go to the Union Parishad and NBD for different needs, first they demand the service; if the demands are not met in time, they go again in large groups

and demand again with greater vigor. Usually, such collective force works. The engagement with Union Parishad/City Corporation and NBDs by CSGs and poor marginalized and vulnerable people has increased, and more of their demands for services are met. It is revealed from the qualitative data that earlier, the poor marginalized and vulnerable people feared to go to the Union Parishad or NBD; if they had to go, they used to go alone, and the officials ignored them, they could not even talk, let alone receiving the service; now they go with CSG to seek service in groups. They are no longer ignored but rather respected, and service delivery has also improved significantly.

Though CGSs have been designed as community organizations of the poor marginalized and vulnerable people, some are trying to continue their activities to sustain their entity. Some CSG members have openly expressed their ambition to contest for the

next Union Parishad election; they have been quite confident about their prospects. Moreover, From talking to various CSGs, the optimism and self-confidence that this community organization has induced could be seen quite readily.

“ We are now able to take the lead in the development of our village. No one else will be able to develop the village unless people like us take the initiative. ”

CSG Member in a FGD Session

4. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

This section reveals the role of local institutions and analyses their functions to see how they promote an enabling environment for local communities, both urban and rural. This discussion will highlight the bottlenecks and indicate models of good practice using an analytic tool, i.e., institutional ethnography, which offers a strategic and comprehensive means of investigating issues related to institutions and institutional processes. More precisely, institutional ethnography reveals how institutional performance influences access to public services for the marginalised community and the actualities of the people's experiences. The study followed three important activities to conduct

institutional ethnography: (i). talking to people, (ii). collecting texts, and (iii). observing people at work, as mentioned by Rankin (2017).⁸

In Bangladesh, at the rural level, there exist some formal institutions, e.g., the elected local government bodies, public service delivery agencies, community-based organisations, NGO-created civil society organisations, clubs, etc. However, these groups of institutions can be further categorised as government and non-government or civil society. This study has tried to throw light on mainly the government institutions and see how the pattern of their behaviour affects the lives and livelihoods of communities.

4.1 Public service delivery agencies

Once the different line agencies of the public sector are seen active only at the district and Upazila levels, their presence has increased in recent times below this tier. Although the structure of the public administration follows a vertical pattern of authority with a minimum delegation to the lower levels from the centre, the accountability mechanism has improved somewhat due to the presence of elected representatives at Upazila and district levels. It is evident that government local service provision capacity has expanded, which is also one of the major outcomes of the project design. It is also recognized that there can be no exit strategy without considering the rights and responsibilities of national and local-level government service providers to be fully engaged in the process. The following discussions highlight the *modus operandi* of the technical officials of the Nation Building Departments (NBDs) based at the Upazila, and Union Parishad level and its reflection on citizens' life.

Agricultural extension services

An extension worker of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) at the grass-root level has been designated as Sub Assistant Agricultural Officer (SAAO) to provide support services among rural people. The SAAO is posted at a block with duties and responsibilities of agricultural development, including technology transfer to the farmers. It is revealed from the KII that SAAO maintains the fortnightly visit schedule and helps farmers to identify and overcome the problems related to production, farm management, and marketing through the exchange of information among farmers, extension staff, input suppliers, credit agencies, and marketing agents.

The SAAO usually works under the Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO) stationed at Upazila level. The SAAO maintains a diary that is a tool to record their daily field work details. It contains details of problems faced by farmers and their changing needs. The diary helps SAAO's to build a report on farmers' problems. The SAAO presents the problems in the next weekly meeting or training to be held in the Upazila to solve the unresolved problems recorded in the diary. After that, the solution strategies convey to the concerned farmers as soon as possible. The Agricultural Extension Officer is responsible for this and takes help from Additional Agriculture Officers or Upazila Agriculture Officer or any experienced person to solve the problem if needed.

⁸ Rankin, J. (2017). Conducting analysis in institutional ethnography: Guidance and cautions. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1).

Agricultural Extension Service aims to educate the farming community to improve their quality of life through disseminating knowledge, technologies, techniques, methods, ideas, and useful information through an extension system. It is revealed from the FGDs and KII that the number of farm visits of the agricultural officers plays a vital role in enhancing the farmers' technical efficiency. For example, one of the KII noted:

Moreover, the agricultural officers help to learn the better use of existing technology, e.g., through more efficient use of feed, fertiliser, irrigation, etc., which enhance the technical efficiency of the farmers and increase environment-friendly agriculture-related knowledge. It is evident that the SPI programme serves as a link between DAE and farmers. The qualitative data also indicate that farmers' have a positive attitude toward public agricultural extension activities.

In the COVID period, the field-level officers of DAE, including the Upazila (sub-district) Agricultural Officers (UAOs), Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs), Sub-assistant Plant Protection Officers (SAPPOs), and Sub-assistant Agricultural Officers (SAAOs), are the front-line extension service provides information to the farmers in a daily basis. They have drawn a red line between food insecurity and stable food production in Bangladesh. During the lockdown period, the field level officers of DAE have been regularly working in their offices, transferring relevant technologies, conducting field days, and conducting their typical operations.

However, the agricultural extension service does not always work satisfactorily. It is revealed that farmers have a high level of satisfaction with the accessibility of services. In contrast, the diversity of services was the lowest-ranked quality attribute, and in the control area, many farmers hardly ever received agricultural extension service. Furthermore, households have noticeably limited access to the agricultural extension service of any kind, and many accused agricultural extension programmes of offering poor and backdated service.

There is a lack of quality fundamental training for extension staff on the basics of extension, leadership, and group formation. Thus, scarce and unplanned training for extension workers, especially the field level workers, hinder service quality. Moreover, it is revealed that there is no training need assessment system in extension organizations for either demand-side and/or supply-side participants; hence a remarkable number of resources and valuable time is wasted. Furthermore, the less logistic support for field-level extension workers is also a major problem and results in low quality of services.

Fisheries extension services

The Department of Fisheries (DoF) is responsible for providing, among other things, fisheries extension services. There are administrative set-ups at division, district, and Upazila (sub-district) levels headed by Deputy Director, District Fisheries Officer, and Senior/Upazila Fisheries Officer, respectively. Upazila office of DoF is led by Upazila Fisheries Officer (UFO) or Senior Upazila Fisheries Officer (SUFO)

“ Nowadays, SAAO and farmers often meet either at the local tea shop or yard meeting and talk about their farming, any information needed, and solutions for any problems. That's why they face fewer problems now in farming. ”

Community Leader, SPI project

and supported by the one Fisheries Extension Officer (Not in every Upazila), one Assistant Fisheries Officer, and one Field Assistant.

A number of extension activities are provided to the farmers involved in fish culture by DoF, such as fishery demonstration, prawn demonstration, fry release, fish sanctuary, pond, shrimp farm visits, etc. In addition, the DoF usages varieties of extension communication approaches, e.g., individual contact and group contact through the Upazila fisheries office.

Findings from FGDs and interviews with key informants in the treatment area indicated that the Upazila Fisheries Office usually provides *services to office callers*, meaning the fisheries officer at the

“
We used to follow traditional practices.

However, due to the guidance of the Upazila fisheries office, we know the good improved practices, and we are using our knowledge in practice. To be honest, we are more aware now. We even know the benefits of fish farming. As a result, many of us have increased fish production by adopting

improved practices.”

FGD Participants, SPI project

Upazila level offers technical advice to the individual office callers. In addition, on the fish farmer’s specific request, the extension staff visits her/his farm for particular investigations and advice. On their own initiative, the Upazila Fisheries Office conducted the farm visit and, having tried to identify problems, provided technical advice to the fishermen. In addition, training and workshops are frequently organized at the Upazila level for the farmers. Moreover, the Upazila fisheries office frequently organizes training programmes for fish farmers and entrepreneurs.

The Upazila Fisheries Office undertakes Informal meetings with the fish farmers, fishers, input dealers, and other stakeholders. The Upazila fisheries office also arranges demonstrations of new or improved culture or hatchery techniques provided in a suitably located private or government-owned pond. In either case, the demonstrations are open to any interested persons.

Findings from the observation analysis confirmed that the farmers in contact with public fisheries extension services have more

communication sources, increased participation in the group, enhanced knowledge in fish farming, better income from fish farming, and have a more positive attitude towards natural resource conservation. It has also been observed that extension contact influences production, adoption of new inputs and technologies, farmer-to-farmer diffusion, decision-making capacity, and income.

However, findings from the observation analysis established that the farmers in contact with public extension services were more educated possessed a large farm size compared to their non-contact counterparts. Moreover, the extension service is very centralized and less farmer-driven, where large and medium farmers receive more attention compared to other categories of farmers. So, it is apparent from the findings that public aquaculture extension service is also suffering from the failure to equally reach all categories of farmers. In the control area, the public extension didn’t significantly contribute to farmers’ knowledge in fish farming.

Livestock extension services

The Department of Livestock Services (DLS) under the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock provides targeted livestock services to farmers. There is an administrative set-up at the Upazila level headed by the Senior/Upazila Fisheries Officer. The DLS encourages and supports the planning and implementation of all livestock-related extension activities at the grass-roots level. The DLS, through its programs and services, aims to reduce poverty, provide opportunities for job creation and gender

empowerment and expand access to microcredit and microfinancing among rural people. Both KII and FGD data reveal that the Upazila Livestock Office provides services to the field level like treatment of livestock and poultry, providing vaccines, arranging vaccination camps, arranging courtyard counseling meetings on livestock improvement, etc.

Findings from the observation analysis confirmed that there is a severe shortage of staff to deliver services. Moreover, the services, e.g., vaccinating and treatment to ruminant livestock population provided by the DLS, are not able to fulfill a need or requirement. Moreover, it is also evident that, like the DAE organogram, there is no livestock staff employed at the union or village level. The support staff is employed at the Upazila veterinary clinics, so this staff has to cover about 15 villages or about 2-3 unions. Consequently, they can do very little beyond assisting the Upazila Veterinary Officers at the Upazila clinics. In the absence of adequate access to proper vet care at a reasonable cost, poor farmers often resort to traditional medicine with poor outcomes.

Health services

This review also attempted to analyze the institutional aspects of health services provided in or through health care facilities and includes the entities in or through which such services are provided.

Community Clinics, Union Health and Family Welfare Centers (UHFWC), Upazila Health Complex (UHC) are the ultimate means for providing health services to the rural community. However, it is revealed from the KII that there exist some problems in the mentioned healthcare institution such as lack of adequate workforce and infrastructural facility, unavailability of medicine and doctors in time, lack of modern tools and technologies, lack of adequate funds, lack of awareness of general people about the health service.

During FGD, different criteria of user satisfaction were discussed. However, most of the service users were satisfied with prompt services, waiting arrangements, cleanliness, interactions, and behavior of the care providers, and the quality of health education. For example, regarding the UHC, one of the FGD participants mentioned that:

At the same time, it is also evident that some respondents were not much satisfied with waiting time, maintaining privacy, availability of medicine, and access to information. However, above mention findings indicated that the quality of community clinics is encouraging, and the user's satisfaction is somewhat up to the mark.

Education services

The primary school system in Bangladesh has made great strides in increasing access to education over the past decade. The study found that teachers are trying their best to teach in the classroom. Some schools are provided extra care to slow learners, and in some cases, the teachers have the training to address the slow learners as well as inclusive education, and the trained teachers are very active. Teachers' punctuality in school also has increased compared to the earlier. However, the study found a dismal scenario regarding the number of teachers in government primary schools in the project area.

“ There has been a change in the behavior of the doctors. Previously they did not even want to talk to us! Now they treat us with respect, and they talk to patients respectfully. When doctors speak nicely with the patients and give good treatment, the patients are also happy, and, in turn, the patients behave nicely too. This is definitely

”
due to the SPI programme.

FGD Participants, SPI project

According to the findings of KIIs with LGIs and CSGs, the teachers' attendance in the school has become regular due to strong supervision by SMC and CSGs. The member of SMC and CSG visited the school regularly and checked the attendance register. It is revealed that if teachers do not attend the school timely, the SMC seeks explanation in their meetings. It is observed that though the SMC members were from different socio-economic and political backgrounds, they had a very good understanding among themselves and played a significant role in the development of the school. In the SMCs meetings, they were found to have solved problems related to school through a consensus. The SMC members were noted to have the student's attendance, teacher's attendance, and teaching-learning process in the classrooms. They sometimes provide financial support and organize extra-curricular activities. Due to the project interventions, SMCs are now very active and doing a lot of work for the school. In addition, they have taken the initiative to mobilize funds to use their social influence. It should be noted here that primary education officers have also increased their visits in the areas. However, in some cases, the SMCs do not run democratically. The chairs and the member secretaries took decisions. The other members just put their signatures on the meeting minutes. It is observed that also the same people are selected in the committees for several years.

Social Security Services

Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Ministry of Food, and Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief are responsible for implementing social safety-linked programmes. The Upazila level offices of the said ministries played a vital role in implementing social safety net programmes. It is evident that the Upazila level officers are supervising all the Upazila level allowance-related activities, verifying and finalising the beneficiary list sent by the Union level committee, troubleshooting while opening bank accounts, supervising the distribution of allowance, maintaining a database, redressing grievances, and arranging meetings. In addition, these officers disseminate the information regarding beneficiary selection, collecting beneficiary lists from the UPs and, after initial screening, submitting these to the Upazila committee for further verification, inputting beneficiary lists into the database. Due to SPI interventions, the access of common people to public information and government services has increased; thus, their level of trust in these offices has also increased.

4.2 Local government institutions

Local government institutions (LGI's) undoubtedly play a significant role in shaping the local institutional environment. Constitutionally sanctioned, elected local government at all levels of administration is one of the fundamental rights of the people. In the rural setting, the Union Parishads (UPs), the lowest tier of local government, represent the most important formal institutional structure and are potentially very influential. UPs are a legal entity elected through popular vote. They continue to hold timely elections - tenure after tenure. In the history of Bangladesh, no other administrative unit can boast of such punctilious revalidation of its office. The Upazila system was introduced, abolished, and again revived. The activation process of the Zila Parishad has started through a direct election.

Service delivery

Union Parishads are the focal points of delivering various services like birth certificates, health and family planning, social safety nets, etc., but still struggling to provide expected public service at the

grassroots at the local level. Field observations reveal that basic service areas like education, health, nutrition, family planning, irrigation, and agricultural services, are all managed directly by the central government officials and their field functionaries without any involvement of the UPs either in the design or implementation process. However, it has been observed that the direct interventions of the SPI programme have brought some real positive changes. The project has created a culture of 'people ownership' in the Union Parishad affairs and improved the awareness of the elected representatives of the Union Parishad about the participatory process in their mandated matters. The UPs now involve the community in planning, implementation, supervision, and monitoring to ensure efficient use of resources. In addition, the project also established authentic participation mechanisms for citizens to join *Ward Shavas*, open budget meetings, and Standing Committees to represent their interests. During FGD, it also has found that beneficiary lists for social safety net programmes, e.g., vulnerable-group-feeding and cash-for-work labourers are made available at ward shava meetings which is a straightforward approach to introducing greater transparency and greater equity into the system. The female participants particularly praised women members for doing a "good job" of selecting social safety-net beneficiaries.

Dynamism of representatives

During interviews, some UP chairmen and members displayed their dynamism while describing their proudest accomplishments, e.g., holding regular office hours, making sustained efforts to meet constituents in their villages and homes, and experimenting with new mechanisms for UP management and citizen participation. In addition, the FGD participants noted that the UP chairman met constituents in their office almost every workday and actively sought out citizens in their communities. Furthermore, the female participants agreed that they routinely saw the UP chairman and other members around in their communities.

Citizens awareness

Findings from the observation analysis confirmed that rural citizens in the project area have substantially gained more awareness of UP responsibilities than before the activation of the SPI programme, and they are now more demanding that the public services UPs are obligated to provide are in fact provided. They are now uninhibited about asking UP chairman and members directly concerning services and entitlements, e.g., VGD, VGF cards, old-age allowance, etc., often calling them on the mobile phones that have become so ubiquitous all-over rural Bangladesh.

5. PCM ANALYSIS

5.1 Relevance

The project was highly relevant considering that the lack of awareness, capacity, and necessary skills of both the local government officials and community members is a barrier to the demand and supply of effective local governance in rural Bangladesh. Besides, the awareness and participation of people in the local government procedure are also poor. In rural areas, lack of access to information is another significant barrier to demand for more effective and accountable governance. Poor people often have little or no access to information on their rights and entitlements. In addition, a pervasive obstacle to improving local governance is the non-democratic bureaucratic practices, such as secrecy, exclusivity, and exclusion. These practices bar the poor marginalized, vulnerable people, and other excluded groups from key decision-making processes.

Similarly, the socially excluded people, especially the women, have less access to the entrance and participate in local development procedures and are deprived of their entitlement and government services. It is well known that there is a lack of coordination between Local government and Public Service Delivery Agencies (PSDA); as a result, excluded people are deprived of public services. Moreover, the implementation of the Acts and Rules and Manuals regulating the different tiers of the local government was weak, resulting in poor function of local-level institutions. For example, it has been observed that the LGI Act-2009 is not properly functioning with transparency and accountability as well as community participation is not satisfactorily ensured. Against this backdrop, the project has contributed to creating demand from among the people for accountable, transparent, and quality services along with the capacity building of the service providers to deliver the services as per the demand of the public. Interestingly, the intervention matched very well with the priorities of the government. The idea to mobilize partner NGOs as an interface was relevant, particularly from the perspective of sustaining the changes.

5.2 Efficiency

The SPI programme has contributed to increasing participation of rural citizens, especially poor marginalized and vulnerable people, in the process of local government affairs, e.g., planning, resource allocation, and service delivery. The project was efficient in terms of a large number of direct beneficiaries. In addition, due to project interventions, a significant percentage of potential beneficiaries received awareness of SSN rules and policies and NBD services. At the same time, rural poor people's increased access to reliable information about civic rights, local government, and local services has been achieved, and an increased number of community members using the Right to Information Act to access information.

The partner NGOs have formed the CSGs at *ward Union, Upazila, and district level* to sensitize the poor marginalized and vulnerable people to claim their rights and make local government practices more democratic and transparent. This has been demonstrated through local government officials taking local development initiatives based on community demands, community members' proactive role in ensuring fair and transparent resource-service allocations and local infrastructure development initiatives, and performance monitoring by the community.

The SPI programme has shown that enabling communities to realize their own potential leads to self-reliant development and proactive actions. It is evident that due to project interventions, community participation has increased in selecting safety net programme beneficiaries, and collective efforts have

also increased against social injustice. Moreover, poor marginalized and vulnerable people have shown their aspiration to become part of the rural power structure by competing in the local government elections. This has been a driving force that has resulted in the transformation.

5.3 Effectiveness

The project effectiveness is discussed in the form of implementation achievements and challenges.

Achievements

The project has contributed to activating, capacitating, and mobilizing various accountability mechanisms, i.e., forming citizen forums and processes, i.e., village-level yard meetings, public hearings, etc. In addition, the project contributed to activating, capacitating, and mobilizing local-level CSOs as an interface between public and local governance structures. The project contributed to building the capacity of local public service delivery agencies and gave adequate focus on the local committees like school managing committees.

Implementation was largely centered on Local government and Public Service Delivery Agencies (PSDA). It is evident that the local government bodies, especially the Union Parishads and public services agencies, precisely agricultural extension services, health facilities, have become more transparent than earlier. But other local-level agencies such as livestock, fisheries, etc., were not adequately accountable and transparent.

The quantitative survey matched with qualitative inferences in presenting that people are now aware of and exercising their rights, claiming their entitlements, resisting exploitation, and playing a more active role in public life. Civil society groups created under the SPI programme assist the poor and marginalized to access local government services.

It was common practice that the local government resources and services were not reaching those who needed them most and were unfairly allocated to people who were not eligible for safety net provisions. The CSGs now select social safety net beneficiaries allocation. As a result, we are now confident that misappropriations in the safety net resource allocations to the poor will not happen anymore.

FGD Participant, SPI programme

Impacts

Due to improved knowledge and enhanced participation, poor marginalized and vulnerable people, have started to claim their rights in various platforms and resources.

There are new leaders created due to project efforts. Due to the project involvement, a number of male and female members of CSG have developed leadership skills. The participation in various groups encouraged by CSGs also contributed to garnering new knowledge and building dignity among women and disadvantaged communities.

We are now aware of the Union Parishad affairs and join ward shava, open budget meetings. Most importantly, we also join the beneficiary selection process of various social safety net programmes; thus, we know where we should go and what are facilities we can take from UP.

If we stay in post of groups and committee, we can meet new people and learn different things. So now, all people have equal dignity in the community.

FGD Participant, SPI programme

5.4 Sustainability

The SPI programme focused on awareness building, enhancing capacity, and strengthening systems. Interestingly, it is revealed that in different localities of the project area, a number of group members competed in the local election, of which a good number were elected. The elected and nominated members from community groups will likely continue advocating for ensuring the rights of the marginalised section of the society in their respective constituencies. The field-level service provider, local government representatives, and community people, trained on various aspects of governance, accountability, and rights, will continue to support local people to take their rights. While it is explicit that the local governments will continue to perform the ward shava, open budget meeting prescribed in the government guidelines, the continuation of project-introduced mechanisms such as social audit, public hearing, community scoreboard may not be in all project sites. Here it should be noted the public hearing is now institutionalized to ensure public accountability at UPs. Recently the government has issued a guideline to institutionalize public hearings. Besides, Go-NGO coordination meetings, Citizen Charter, and Information disclosure on Websites are already accepted. During the review, the community level stakeholders, including beneficiaries such as the social safety net, highlighted the need for further backup and support arrangements to capacitate and encourage local NGOs, especially in the current process of transformations in local government.

6. SWOT ANALYSIS

As part of the SPI review, the team conducted a SWOT analysis with each SPI partner as part of the qualitative data collection process in the context of SPI and project implementation. The assessment has followed an interactive and participatory approach with a good representation of officials working in different departments in the organizations. The facilitator team has basically been applied appreciative inquiry in the areas of organizations' strengths, areas of improvement, opportunities, and threats. Therefore, the discussion mainly explored organizational know-how, expertise, challenges, and potentials in light of human rights-based and governance programming.

Strengths

In general, the strengths of the organizations implementing projects under the SPI theme were found to be convincing. The organizations have found relevant expertise and experience in mobilizing communities belonging to multidimensional poverty. So far, under these projects, the targeted communities have been reached successfully by the responsible organizations. Communities are already on board and learned about their rights and entitlements through participating in different events within the project locations. Partners have disseminated necessary knowledge, information, and appropriate links to the communities with a specific view to bringing them in a convenient loop to get essential and safety net services.

The team observed that the partners have a very good connection with the communities represented mainly by extremely poor sections of people, and they are acquainted with the organizations that are actually trying to uplift their life and livelihood standards. So, the intention of the projects and organizations has been clearly conveyed.

In case of relation with the duty-bearers, including local administration and local government, institutions were found very good and functional. Most of the interviewees with whom the team met were quite aware of the projects and local implementers of the SPI theme. They all recalled that they officially informed about the projects through an inception event, and subsequent they took part in different events so far. The officials with whom the team met so far were enthusiastic about the project Theory of Change (ToC) and appreciated the necessity of such initiatives. During the discussion, duty bearers were looking forward to extending the project as a considerable amount of time has been done due to the COVID-19 pandemic and government restrictions.

The merit of the project was successfully conveyed to the targeted officials as the interventions mostly dealt with software issues rather than hardware support. However, the conventional mindset was one of the major hindrances to proceeding with full success from the first day, knowing the challenge of governance nature projects. Thus it took somewhere a pretty long time to convince them by the project officials. It is also quite challenging regarding Government officials' transferable jobs and local representatives being replaced by the election systems (the recent UP election is the latest example). It was evident that the technical capacity of partners in the respective areas was quite good as they cautiously selected to deal with specific issues corresponding SPI them. For Example, NGO Forum has a long track record in dealing with water and sanitation issues; thus, public health is highly appreciated by a large number of stakeholders. On the other hand, CAMPE has solid expertise and experience in working with mass education. They have gained a good reputation in dealing with quality primary education and educational management affairs. Light House, based in Bogura, also has a very good image within the state and non-state stakeholders in working on the safety net, health, and livelihood issues. The duty-bearers team met were very much positive regarding the capacity and devotion of

Light House in dealing with multiple poverty issues. KMSS, Agragoti Songstha, and Wave Foundation have profound knowledge and experience on the RBA and SPI theme for localization support. Duty bearers and local citizen groups have a positive attitude toward their support; however, some expect input support in the future.

The inputs of MJF have invested towards building capacity of partners on governance performance monitoring (GPM) technicalities found moderate as it is quite complex in nature. Without having solid experience in governance, rights-based approach, and development paradigm, it is not easy to perceive rightly. However, the project staff was found positive at a certain degree in initiating such interventions. All the organizations have intervened through suggested GPM tools within their mandates with moderate success.

In the case of pursuing policy issues, some of the project personnel, including the core staff of the partners, found convincing as they had already pursued some of the policy interventions successfully. For example, in Rangpur City Corporation, the NGO Forum has already initiated joint collaboration in installing some tube-wells within the wards where water scarcity is huge. Moreover, for some cases, KMSS, AS, and Wave Foundation demonstrated examples at UP level governance performance (beneficiaries selections technical support of assisting proper listing, UP level budget preparation technical help) in such a way so that the nearby UP, which is not now under the SPI outreach also demanding the SPI project at their locations.

Weaknesses

Organizations working with SPI have found a number of lacks, particularly in dealing with MJF's rights-based approach and governance programming. The team found areas that need to be improved without further delay in addressing the ultimate goals of the EPR programme and project objectives. The areas were identified, including a weak knowledge base in the context of rights and governance perspective, holding GPM maintaining standard procedures, and policy influencing. As the current socio-cultural-economic and political arena are quite dynamic thus organizations working with SPI theme need to be updated about the changes of development perspectives long-term government plans (i.e., 8th Five Year Plan, Delta Plan, Sectoral Plans, and SDGs. The expertise for dealing with rights-based and governance projects is somehow required long experience and a theoretical knowledge base; thus, organizations are suffering from personnel having relevant particulars. Only MJF's inputs and project coordination meetings were major sources of enhancing capacities; therefore, the knowledge and skills were not adequately being cascaded up to the front line project forces. On the other hand, when staff dropout happened, it was found worse as there were very weak interim mechanisms to handle such odds.

The project salary was also not proportionate to the required capable personnel to retain them. In that case, most of the partners were struggling to prolong the experienced personnel within this poor salary package.

Advocacy and policy influencing require long-standing expertise and experience, which is not the case for most organizations since they basically belong to the project area. As a result, though partners are engaging with several networks as members in a true sense, they often couldn't take part in an active role. Partners are, therefore mostly dependent on MJF in pursuing their advocacy issues that came out from their fields. Also for retaining skills on the issue based support within emerging context, research knowledge is very much needed within their own frame, but the organizations have not much awareness of such innovation input for themselves rather, they are willing to have external input/support for themselves by the project or from MJF funnel.

As recommendation was solicited, most of them shared that they need frequent training and capacity-building support for their staff. However, MJF did a lot of input on policy preparation upgradation and OD support. In the case of preparing a policy brief/position paper in favor of their calls, partners were found a bit shaky as they required technical know-how for preparing the same. The events targeting to influencing policies often required a vast amount as they were supposed to deal with government counterparts and sequential interventions. The nature of the projects and the budgetary limitation should be flexible for the sake of effective advocacy. One of the biggest challenges for the organizations is they have the lack of documentation and archive of the issues. However, project-specific reporting systems vary from development partner to partner. Nevertheless, the local partner's museum organization has no master documentation systems to keep all the issues. The advocacy and governance issues change requires long input and institutional memory for the grassroots' mobilization and functional support as a team. Memory with focal/institutional head is not feasible to sustain the issues for real-time governance harvesting.

Organizations also struggled to convince project participants that the project basically deals with software support but not tangible inputs. Dealing with extreme poor and marginalized sections of people is always difficult as they lack basic needs and maintain their daily livelihood. The discussion explicitly exposed that only software support and services were not enough to convince them to proceed with the projects. The community with multiple poverty is actually not ready to convince only getting software support.

Opportunities

The SPI theme being dealt actually foremost in combating lack of governance, poor peoples' meaningful participation, and fighting against lack of institutional democracy. Given that the respective theme has enormous potential in bringing innovations and people-centered initiatives through establishing community-based organizations (CBOs/Self-help Groups-SHGs) and bottom-up advocacy in breaking the silence. To this end, the project has directly linked its operational objectives with the existing national and international commitments and constitutional rights as the constitutions pre-dominantly declared that all the citizens of the country would be equal before the law. Furthermore, the constitution also upholds the values that no such policies and laws will be formed to harm anyone's dignity and promote social exclusion.

The Universal Human Rights Declaration (adopted on 10th December 1948) has a number of articles upholding an individual's basic needs for life, security, self-actualization, and participation and called for all its members to care of. In light of this declaration, several other conventions have already been taken to ensure the rights of children, persons with disabilities, old-aged, and socially excluded people. Therefore, MJF and the partners could consider these declarations as to their legal basis for advocacy. The government, on the other hand, has taken a number of pro-poor, pro-women, and pre-disability perspective plans meantime to ensure the graduation of its people still living under the poverty line. The SDGs as global development commitment can be translated into action by MJF and project partners targeting to respective goals. All goals except its 17 could directly like with poverty alleviation programming. In their new project design, the global development partners also focus Bangladesh on the governance issues and social accountability mechanisms upholding RBA, so internal fundraising opportunities for the small to medium partners can be crucial to expand their organizational portfolio based on the current project input and experience.

The capacities of the partners and MJF have so far are another potential hub to explore further. For that, respective partners could sharpen their knowledge and technical knowhow by exercising tools

and methodologies more in the field level interventions. Furthermore, aligning youth in the grassroots level intervention (especially for campaigns on SPI) could be a potentially sustainable approach and strategy to generation building for sustainable output.

Threats

As all the partners considered the impact of COVID-19 and its aftermath were enormous; thus, its consequences would certainly impact the project work negatively. It is also assumed that the follow-through of this unprecedented pandemic will also be hampering their future performance it is not dealt with carefully. The partners and the MJF have tried to adopt several cautious initiatives in combating possible threats that need careful inputs in lasting their impacts.

Projects are being pressurized to co-opt some tangible services within its current intervention strategy, knowing the scarcity of services within government relevant departments regarding fulfilling the needs of extreme poor people. However, given the working modalities of government and local government machinery and the pace, it is very tough to bring dramatic change within such a short time. Having said that, MJF and its partners must be innovative in bringing some inputs/tangible features within its current version.

The current practice of democracy and institutional culture is also a big challenge, particularly for the non-state actors (CSOs) to intervene directly in pursuing pro-people arrangements within the project-specific time span. The knowledge and skills on running community-centered GPM and rights-based interventions are yet not at a satisfactory level. Though some of the GPM and bottom-up interventions are being carried out at the local level concerning GPM's spirit, it is still far from reality. Only sporadic and prescribed initiatives are being implemented within the project setup, but things should eventually be run by the community itself.

To retain the knowledge and skill base, MJF and partners of SPI theme need careful effort, including technical and financial support are crucial. From that perspective, the project actors are really having a tough time retaining and leveraging its already existing capacity and know-how.

Though having well information about the offer by the project, service providers sometimes demand input support. In their attitude especially by the duty bearers, particularly from the Government officials it seems that they are giving some welfare for the marginalized, has kind of pity on them, whether they are somewhat don't willing to express it as their rights, RIGHTS LENS is missing among a large number of the Government service providers.

The Local representative has a different perspective. They are mostly doing all interventions for keeping their vote bank; thus, when pandemic outbursts and the community have been provided input support in cash and kind was very participatory by themselves and appreciated very much. One indicator is, in the interview, they either recalled those supports by the project rather than the CB input and GPM interaction facilitated by the project.

Another notion in the field reality is political nepotism, which is an open secret now; they want to rule over each other (LA and LG) and resulting coordination gaps in the local level intervention on the formal occasion regarding the physical presence and meaningful contribution.

Natural disasters, especially for the coastal areas, remain as a challenge for the organization itself working on such software projects, the real context then demands humanitarian support as instant support.

In hard-to-reach areas, some systemic limitations, i.e., scarcity of government human resources, input against demand, and staff retention, remain challenging to influence and pursue the SPI theme as per

project desire. To reach out most vulnerable female participants, it is crucial to give posting female staff at remote areas for their practical needs. Due to the local context lack of resources, it is sometimes difficult to give posting or assign female staff at remote areas.

The duration of the project also remains as a threat for convincing and communicating the SPI theme as it demands a certain time for desired change and harvesting the benefits for the marginalized people.

Area coverage is also crucial and demanding factor for massive grassroots mobilization and collective impact, there is emerging need from the respective UP where nearby UP became a model by the project support.

Summary of SWOT analysis

In a nutshell, the partners are engaging with the projects under the SPI theme found capable of dealing with operational aspects of said interventions. By far, partners with the technical and financial support of MJF have been marked a number of achievements in terms of coverage, establishing community-based organizations, linking communities with the essential and safety net support, and knowledge building. The achievements also consist of enhanced leadership capacity among women and men belonging to the communities living in the hard-to-reach areas and socially excluded portion and tracking the performance of governance within local and meso level institutional set up. As a result, the communities so far covered by the different projects have got support and services at a higher amount and quality. Moreover, providing and disseminating information among the wider community through the projects has also created a new reality in getting government support and services.

Several weaknesses are also found in the case of developing knowledge and skills among the project personnel in dealing with governance performance monitoring (GPM), transforming public institutions in taking pro-poor development initiatives, bringing community demand, and influencing public policies in a due manner and resulting in focused documentation and dissemination. The organizations couldn't be able to bring like-minded networks, platforms, and bridging with Community-Based Organizations (i.e., Citizen Support Group-CSG) to create collective strengths to proceed towards the effective advocacy.

Given the project and work diversity of the SPI theme, there has been enormous potential in bringing innovations, and people-centered influencing agenda as community-based interventions by the CBOs/Self-help Groups-SHG are demonstrating significant innovations, so these all could bring further opportunity in terms of gaining funds and technical support in coming days. Moreover, the projects have been directly linked with a number of national and international commitments, including the 8th Five Year Plan and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To proceed further and implement SPI theme-like programming, there is a number of challenges also revealed during the assessment. The impacts of COVID-19 and its aftermath might be enormous in mobilizing foreign funds due to the same funds being shrunked already and to be continued. The nature of the projects of SPI theme has already gone through a challenge to include some service

To retain the knowledge and skill base, MJF and partners of SPI theme need careful effort, including technical and financial support are crucial.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the project performed well in meeting most of its performance targets. Compared to the baseline figures, the project area was largely better than the control area. Through the observation, people are aware and self-motivated in all the project areas. Communities are aware and have good knowledge about their rights and entitlements and other local-level planning and processes such as *Ward Shava*, open budget meetings, social audits, public hearings, etc. People have become part of various groups and networks. The project contributed to the empowerment of the local community, especially women, by enabling them to move outside their homes, take leadership positions in various local-level groups and networks, and initiate activities for livelihood promotion by utilizing resources available at the local level. As a result, the agency of community people, especially women, has grown stronger. At the same time, the project has already contributed to some extent in preparing for the local government transition by creating new leaders among marginalized sections who are now part of the newly elected local government.

Major learning form the project

The major lessons learned from this project are explained below.

- ***Working with LGIs and NBDs***
The overall beauty of the project is to involve the local government representatives and NBD officials in project activities. Government and elected local government bodies as 'duty barriers' welcome the different initiatives, especially the capacity building under the project, which ultimately reported to help uphold the entitlements of the right holders.
- ***Increasing citizens awareness***
Citizens are substantially more aware of their rights and entitlements than before the SPI programme, and they are more demanding that the service delivery agencies are obligated to provide. They are now expressive about asking local government representatives and NBD officials directly concerning services and entitlements.
- ***Citizen empowerment through CBOs***
The CBOs, namely CGSs created by the project, are considered an important milestone of the project. CBOs are ideally formed with poor, marginalized, and excluded groups for collective strength to claim rights and access services. In addition, CBOs play a major role in representing the community in demanding services from and negotiating with the Union Parishad and NBDs;
- ***Project activities helped to increase the leadership skills of women***
It was evident that many women were very articulate in voicing their problems. Women have proportionate at least one-third of membership in the CSGs to assert their opinions. The capacity of community women leaders was emphasised to participate in the institutional process and procedures effectively. In addition, the SPI programme directly benefits poor people, especially women, in accessing economic development activities. These indicate that women have begun to make family decisions and control their household assets. However, the shackles of patriarchy are strong, and child marriage and dowry are still somewhat prevalent.
- ***Networking opportunities***
Networking opportunities are crucial for safeguarding to diversifying the livelihoods of poor, marginalized, and excluded groups using various social capital, relations, and networks. Due

to the project activities and interventions, beneficiaries who are mostly landless, involved in the informal economic sector, day labourer, or floating labourer have been able networking opportunities.

Recommendations for future programming

The review process observed the SPI theory of change is sound as its central focus was on creating citizen rights groups as intermediaries between the LGIs, service provider agencies, and ordinary citizens. It can certainly be used again, but a number of modifications in the following points are recommended under three categories.

A. Issue-specific way forward

- **Create a linkage to SSNPs, basic services, and market to reduce social exclusion**

Poor households often face multiple layers of exclusion, driven by embedded socio-cultural norms and practices as poor institutional capacity, policy, and governance. Thus, it is important to promote the linkages of SSNPs, basic services with and market opportunities. Market creation is a much-needed concern in interventions that aim to create longer-term economic and livelihood changes. In rural Bangladesh, valuable agricultural and human resources remain untapped. Therefore, improving value chains and addressing bottlenecks can unleash economic potential and generate employment. In addition, closer business links between farmers, agro-processors, exporters, traders, and retailers provide significant potential for improved and increased employment and economic returns for rural producers. Such services and linkages could also strengthen advancements in policies on gender equality and indigenous rights.

- **Enhancing the capacity of partner**

MJF needs to enhance the capacity of the partners in initiating community-led governance performance monitoring (GPM) through organizing training and capacity-building events where project personnel should enroll directly. In addition, MJF can link the local implementing partners with the local, regional, national, and international level platforms that promote the rights and entitlements of the marginalised community.

- **Continue to strengthen the ability of CSGs to serve as catalysts for local development**

Future capacity-building efforts should include strengthening the ability of citizen rights groups to serve as sustainable drivers of community development, given their central role in programme implementation. Potential areas of follow-up training include improved access to local-level service delivery, periodic update of community action plans, and strengthening interaction with other informal community groups.

- **Special attention on women and other marginalized groups**

The project needs more attention on women, and other marginalized groups as their meaningful participation in the project as well as economic and political participation speed up the process from benchmark to excellence. More specifically, the project could intervene in women's participation in different committees, access to finance, skill-building, the social barrier to being an entrepreneur, and rural credit policy. For that, the project could be done some rights session at the community level with their counterpart and create spaces for social movement and decision making hub wherever possible from UP to the national and even international level for having some demonstration effect with creating a role model for the

project. Furthermore, by giving women and disadvantaged groups specific knowledge and skills, it is hoped that they will become more confident about voicing their expectations and demand responsible action from public officials and agencies.

- ***Support into structural changes in making local government pro-people***

Recently, the local government in Bangladesh has started to exercise democratic and participatory governing processes at the grassroots level. In this context, there is a need for additional support to ensure that the poor and marginalized sections have representation to ensure participation in decision-making levels in the updated structure. The support could involve mobilizing local CSOs in the following:

- Capacitate the CSG members who have been elected in leadership positions in local government;
- Advocating with national and local government to set up suitable guidelines for the operation of local government;
- Forming local groups and structures with adequate participation of women and disadvantaged groups;
- Arranging local level platforms to ensure communication between the newly elected officials and community people;

B. Project-specific way forward

- ***Include a definite post-project sustainability component in project design***

By now, it is clear that any future project should include a post-project sustainability plan that should be designed and implemented, emphasizing the final year of the project. One suggestion along this line is that If grants do not provide MJF enough leverage to assure a sustainability component, consider using a cooperative agreement with partner NGOs.

- ***Support CSGs to continue their work as an interface between people and the service providers***

While CSGs have been capacitated, their role as an interface between people and service providers was at an early stage by the end of the project. Therefore, they will require continuous follow-up, technical support, and backstopping to continue working as an interface between government and service bearers.

- ***Include an effective M&E component that implementers can use to ascertain project progress***

Future projects should establish a baseline survey plan that includes “treatment” and “control” localities to be re-surveyed later in the project to identify project activities that are proving successful and those that are not in specific sites. This data collection and use will require some training and guidance for the project’s M&E cell. More importantly, the project coordinator and field staff should orient them to using quantitative and qualitative data to assess progress and make needed changes.

- ***Attracting and retaining the right talent***

The institutional support (e.g., salary, logistics) should increase further from the existing structure to attract and retain quality personnel with relevant expertise and experiences in the context of human rights and governance programming.

C. Theme Based/ Thematic way forward

- ***Develop and implement programme exit strategies***

Given SPI’s close coordination with formal and informal institutions at multiple levels, the programme must develop and implement formal exit strategies. These should be developed

in close conjunction with PNGOs and government counterparts and should include, but not be limited to, an assessment of current capacities, plans to address critical capacity gaps, necessary systems and structures, and specific handover plans. It is evident that the projects that deal with governance and rights issues need continuous support. Given that SPI theme management and associate authority should consider technical and financial readiness beyond the conventional project phase. Further interventions could sustain the community-based approach and strengthen the role of women in decision-making in community organisations, to improve rural livelihoods.

- ***Include a sustainable livelihood strategy in project design***

The SPI programme has promoted community-driven development and made beneficiary communities much more aware of their rights to government services and entitlements through establishing and supporting CSGs. But there is a need for the intensive facilitation of livelihood support embedded in governance and empowerment processes at the community level. Thus an output could be included titled 'poor marginalized and vulnerable people able to effectively sustain their livelihoods and engage in the local and national economy'. This would address various issues, including improving agriculture production through support to poor and vulnerable households and developing business development services and financial services for the poor marginalized and vulnerable people.

- ***Top-Down Approach to Policy Decisions***

The bottom-up approach sometimes could not influence the power hub that is at its peak to ensure governance and social accountability. Thus top-down policy influence based on the contextual need will be beneficial to foster the entire programme strategy. National-level policy intervention through policy dialogue, campaigns, and conventions will be the milestone input for the project.

- ***Sensitization for local legislative***

Sensitization for local legislative, i.e., elected representative bodies at all levels of administrative tiers, is crucially needed, who are solely responsible for translating the policy into action. Operational directives and the new strategy for them would be more beneficial to foster the overall governance system of the SPI theme.

- ***Bridging the Macro-Micro Gap***

The relation between macro and micro efforts in pursuing policy issues needs to be synchronized and comprehensive. In fact, there are examples of good macro-micro linkages in the context of local governance and service delivery. However, often there have a lacking of policy engagement by linking lessons from project interventions to policy dialogue and advocacy. Thus, a proper road map should be in place that entails knowledge generation, preparing policy tools, and building networks to do effective advocacy targeting to policymaking hubs within the government.

- ***Hardware support***

Governance programming is currently being considered based on software supports (e.g., community mobilization, sanitation promotion, strengthening local government) and linkages. Authorities should incorporate relevant services and support to reach the expectation of targeted communities considering the reality and the pragmatic needs of the targeted population.

- Annexure 1: Review Criteria and Questions**
- Annexure 2: Data collection tools (Quantitative)**
- Annexure 3: Data collection tools (Qualitative- FGD)**
- Annexure 4: Data collection tools (Qualitative- KII)**
- Annexure 5: Organization specific SWOT**
- Annexure 6: Organizational Ethnography Checklist**
- Annexure 7: Selected Case Story**