

# Programme Completion Review (PCR)

## Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh (EPR) Programme

Manusher Jonno Foundation

<b>Title: Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh (EPR)</b>		
<b>Final Programme Spend £ (full life):</b> £27,495,405 <sup>1</sup>	<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>February 2023</b>
<b>Programme Code:</b> [AMP ID#] 204195	<b>Start Date:</b> 14/09/2017	<b>End Date:</b> 31/03/2023

### Summary of Programme Performance

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 (PCR)
Programme Score	B	A	A+	A	A+	A
Residual Risk Exposure Rating	Moderate	Major	Major	Major	Major	Major

<b>DevTracker Link to Business Case (and any addendum):</b>	<a href="http://iati.fcdo.gov.uk/iati_documents/15495265.odt">http://iati.fcdo.gov.uk/iati_documents/15495265.odt</a>
<b>DevTracker Links to all log frames used during programme lifetime:</b>	<a href="https://iati.fcdo.gov.uk/iati_documents/D0003177.xlsx">https://iati.fcdo.gov.uk/iati_documents/D0003177.xlsx</a>

## A. Summary and Overview

### Description of the programme and what it has achieved

1. The Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh programme (EPR) (July 2017-March 2023)<sup>2</sup>, implemented by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), promotes the rights of people most at risk of being left behind by Bangladesh's economic progress. Beneficiaries, who received support from the programme, include poor women and girls, ethnic minorities, working children, people with disabilities, fisherfolk, and *Dalits* ('untouchables'). The programme worked in 52 districts of Bangladesh. Through support to organisations that represent excluded people, movements and coalitions, the programme enabled them to challenge poor governance in public institutions, and to encourage them to be more responsive to peoples' needs. Where opportunities arose, partners also contributed to the development and implementation of policies and laws that uphold the rights of the poor and excluded groups in the society.
2. There have been three major issues that the programme has had to navigate: (1) a progressive tightening of civic and political space in Bangladesh; (2) the Covid-19 pandemic; and (3) significant and unanticipated global pressures on the UK's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) budget in 2022.
3. As a result of this, the programme's scope and partnerships have contracted to fit with new ODA budgets and to ensure the best possible coherence, impact and value for taxpayers' money with FCDO Bangladesh's country plan. This led to an early closure of the EPR programme in March 2023, conducted responsibly but reducing its duration by nine months. The programme's end budget was also reduced to £27.5m following consecutive ODA cuts in 2022, 2021, and 2020 (from the initial allocation of £48m).
4. To accommodate this contraction, FCDO focused on budget negotiations and prioritisation exercises with its implementing partner to identify the scope to scale project activities up or down. From August 2021, the number of downstream partner non-government organisations (PNGOs) was reduced from 102 PNGOs to 60 PNGOs under three themes: security and rights of women and girls, tackling marginalisation and discrimination, and strengthening public institutions.<sup>3</sup> The partnership with 23 PNGOs under two themes (decent and safe work, and youth and social cohesion) was ceased at this point. The decision to close two themes was based on a rigorous reprioritisation exercise. **Due to the contextual challenges and revisions made to the scope of the programme, the risk level was increased from 'Moderate' to**

<sup>1</sup> This include £27,480,405 to MJF and FCDO's spending of £15,000.

<sup>2</sup> As per the approved Business Case, the programme's AMP end date was September 2022. In December 2018, the FCDO extended the programme's end date from September 2022 to December 2023 to ensure sufficient time for PNGOs to implement activities. In May 2022, FCDO decided to reduce the programme duration by 9 months and close by March 2023.

<sup>3</sup> The programme began working with 102 PNGOs under five themes. In August 2021, this number was reduced to 60 PNGOs under three themes.

**‘Major’.** FCDO and the implementing partner put additional mitigation measures in place to address the risks.<sup>4</sup>

5. Using the targets agreed following the early closure decision, **the programme scored an A in the Programme Completion Review (PCR)**, meeting expectations. It recognises that the programme has had limited time to deliver planned results and reflects the progress and achievements that have been possible. Where objectives have not been completed, this does not necessarily reflect on the quality of programme design or delivery.
6. Major achievements include:
- **COVID-19 Response:** The reprioritisation of FCDO funds allowed the programme to respond to the pandemic. 23,000 people from the most affected marginalised households received emergency cash transfers and food support. Another 15,380 people benefitted from livelihood cash transfer support. The programme also undertook advocacy initiatives to reduce violence against women, which increased during the lockdown, tackle stigmatisation of infected people, and increase government support.
  - **Creating a supporting environment for tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG):** 31,218 women survivors of violence were supported with medical, compensation, resolution or legal services and 15,673 child marriages were stopped as a result of programme interventions.
  - **Women’s economic opportunities:** 11,230 marginalised females were supported to engage in micro-businesses or work.
  - **Decent work & safe migration:** Working conditions and wages were improved for over 11,000 workers in 22 non-compliant factories in Dhaka and Chattogram and 14 companies elsewhere introduced better work policies. 2,964 migrants followed safe migration routes to their destination countries for work, and 2,135 female returnee migrants were supported with skills and training for employment to reintegrate into the local formal economy.
  - **Access to services:** 214,016 poor and vulnerable people benefitted from the government-run social safety net programmes; 967 acres of *khas* land<sup>5</sup> and water bodies were distributed to 4,922 poor people; 282,210 marginalised men and women gained access to basic health services; 55,959 people from minorities benefitted from agricultural extension services support from the government.
  - **Protecting rights of working children:** 13,601 working children were completely withdrawn from hazardous work and enabled to enrol into schools.
  - **Support to disabled people’s organisation:** 31,401 people with disabilities (PWD) received various kinds of social services.
  - **Youth & social cohesion:** Life skills training benefitted 37763 young people, out of which 11234 engaged in voluntary activities in their local communities.
  - **Collective action to influence pro-poor policy enactment & implementation:** MJF and its PNGOs were included in seven government committees;<sup>6</sup> invited to eleven government policy discussions,<sup>7</sup> and influenced the content of draft acts that included the Hindu Inheritance Act, the Victim and Witness Protection Act, the Anti-discrimination Bill 2022.<sup>8</sup> During the pandemic, nationwide telephone surveys<sup>9</sup> on VAWG proved instrumental in evidence-based influence at the grassroots and nationally. MJF and PNGOs also conducted advocacy to establish a separate land commission for the Plain Land Adivasi community.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See section E for detail on Risk.

<sup>5</sup> *Khas* land is the government/public land intended for redistribution to people who depend on agriculture for a living but own less than 0.1 acre of land.

<sup>6</sup> Sustainable Development Goal Sub-committee of NGO Affairs Bureau; Child Labour Elimination Committee at the Ministry of Labour and Employment; Member of the National Legal Aid Committee; Occupation Health & Safety Council; National Child Labour Welfare Committee; National Inquiry & Action Committee to prevent and address VAWG and rape incidences under the National Human Rights Commission and representation at the National Committee to observe International Day for Persons with Disabilities, by the Ministry of Social Welfare.

<sup>7</sup> The Planning Ministry’s budget discussion on disability; Access to Information division’s discussion on disabled people’s web accessibility; discussion on Legal Aid Policy, organised by the Supreme Court; discussion on rules related to Child Marriage Restraint Act and National Plan of Action on Domestic Violence, by Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; discussion on Seventh Five Year Plan to include marginalised communities in the development agenda, discussion on 8th Five-Year Plan to include marginalised communities in the development agenda, hosted by the Planning Ministry; consultation meeting on the Government of Bangladesh’s commitments to the Global Disability Summit 2022, organised by the Ministry of Social Welfare; consultation meeting on National Social Security Strategy Action Plan and popularising grievance redress system (GRS)

<sup>8</sup> Examples of other legislative ‘targets’ at the national level include proposed amendment to the Fisheries Law 1950; and also advocacy on the development of the National Plan of Action to Eliminate Child Labour (2021-2025).

<sup>9</sup> The survey conducted between April-September 2020 revealed 37,912 domestic violence incidences in 53 districts of Bangladesh.

<sup>10</sup> Adivasis are indigenous people of Bangladesh. Plain Land Adivasis are from all other regions except Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs). There is no separate land commission for plainland Adivasis like CHTs.

## Major lessons learned and evidence generated

7. Some of the key **lessons learned** include:

- The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) offered MJF and PNGOs an orientation on applied political economy tools. The PNGOs responded positively to this as it allowed them to mainstream political economy and utilise power mapping tools. As a result, PNGO advocacy has improved with tangible results for programme beneficiaries.
- The programme provides further evidence that with sufficient resources MJF's 'social accountability model' can work at the local level, enabling those with limited voice to have their demands for services and rights met to a significant degree;
- The closer the issues being tackled get to local or national elite or vested interests, the less this continues to be true. The programme might have done more to problematise this and render more explicit options for tackling blockages in the local political economy;
- EPR made a slow start with assessment of only one output out of seven (Output 7)<sup>11</sup> through the first two Annual Reviews (AR), as well as (arguably) giving an inaccurate sense of progress with the programme over those two years. FCDO and MJF could have thought more creatively about tackling the situation, for example, by dwelling less on thematic strategy papers that added limited value; by bringing the call for proposals forward; by phasing themes and activities with partners; and/or by accepting fewer proposals from NGOs, creating less capacity building work ahead of grant transfer;
- The programme had to make tough choices due to the ODA re-allocation. M&E plans suffered, compounding the monitoring challenge imposed by Covid-19. With the benefit of hindsight some modest resources in this area might have been deployed earlier and/ or retained;
- The programme seems to have been rather long on numbers and perhaps a bit short on narrative. Log-frame quantitative output indicators do not always cover the breadth of the relevant outputs (e.g., Output 1 and 2), which themselves also lack some precision. This emphasis on numbers might have been more explicitly complemented by tools that enable a better sense of the quality of processes to be gauged;
- Despite the challenges, the programme's VFM could have been tackled in a more systematic way as proposed in the programme's Business Case (BC). FCDO should ring-fence any budget allocation for independent evaluation. The re-allocation and surrender of M&E budget affected the robustness of the results and generation of evidence for wider use.

8. A wide range of evidence has been generated by the programme. For example, an outcome assessment was conducted, commissioned by MJF. Five research papers were developed including a comparative study on violence against women and children during the Covid-19 pandemic; the state of the marginalised; and MJF's journey over the last 20 years. A recurrent theme is that the programme and its core partners are well networked and understand the political economy of the environments in which they live and work.

## How this review was conducted

9. This review was led by a Senior Social Development Adviser<sup>12</sup> with prior knowledge of and experience in Bangladesh and with MJF. He worked with the programme team and key advisers to develop a draft PCR, which was finalised by the programme team. The review involved meetings with representatives of MJF's Governing Board, senior management, theme leads and representatives of a selection of MJF's downstream PNGOs. From FCDO's side, the team leader, the programme's SRO, advisers and programme managers were interviewed for the review. The review did not involve any fieldwork but it did consider a range of programme documents.

## Recommendations and actions following approval of this report

10. A 'top 7' of recommendations is presented below mainly for FCDO and MJF consideration:

- **Rec 1:** The programme worked on various issues and with groups that HMG has strong interest and commitment. FCDO should consider how can some of this can best be translated into the mission's development diplomacy, policy influencing or working with others.
- **Rec 2** Any future FCDO programme should be informed by in-depth political economy analysis at the outset to provide an understanding of how to work and where the greatest impact can be achieved.

<sup>11</sup> The first AR 2017-18 scored B and the second AR 2018-19 scored A.

<sup>12</sup> He is a senior SDA and Group Head – Health and Education from British High Commission, Islamabad.

- **Rec 3:** FCDO should maintain a non-funding strategic partnership and/or contact with MJF and its PNGOs, who are a good source of information on policy and politics/governance issues - all of which remain priority areas for the UK.
- **Rec 4:** MJF should continue to accelerate recent efforts (and successes) to attract and secure new funding streams. FCDO should support MJF in this area by taking opportunities to flag its work to other donors.
- **Rec 5:** MJF might consider growing and publicising their brand further as part of an emerging 'marketing' strategy. Although, for obvious risk management reasons, MJF likes to take a low profile, it could consider whether the balance of risk versus return is quite right in this space.
- **Rec 6:** MJF should prioritise supporting their downstream PNGOs in ways that entail little or no cost. Despite the closure of this programme, they will still have useful evidence to feed into national legislative and policy dialogues. This can all be enabled by further strengthening MJF's on-line presence, use of social media and virtual communication, which took a large step forward during the pandemic.
- **Rec 7:** Similar programmes need to ensure both formal and informal learning approaches are incorporated into their programme to help with effective adaptive programming.

11. A final programme audit will need to be conducted within six months of March 31 2023 and MJF will need to plan to continue to check and confirm that EPR assets are being used by partners for appropriate development purposes.

## B: Theory of Change and Outcome Assessment

	Starting point	Final result
Budget	£48 million	£27.5 million
Timeframe	October 2017 - December 2023	October 2017 - March 2023
Outcomes	See below	See below

### Overall assessment of programme outcomes, sustainability and VfM

12. The overall outcome is enhanced access for the poor and marginalised people to economic, social, political and legal rights and quality public goods and services. Under the overall outcome, six secondary outcome areas are identified:

- Women and girls resist violence and exercise voice, choice and control;
- Enhanced opportunities for women's economic empowerment;
- Rights of vulnerable working children are better protected and strengthened;
- Marginalised people are more able to access material resources, services and opportunities that should be theirs by right;
- Young people have opportunities to become active citizens and agents of progressive change; and
- MJF transforms into a more financially sustainable, leaner and knowledge-based foundation that supports NGOs and CSOs to champion the rights of the poor.

13. The revised targets for all of these outcomes have been met and in some cases moderately exceeded. Targets were revised to reflect the 43%/£ 20 million reduction in the programme budget. A selection of secondary outcome indicators with original and revised targets set against actual achievement are shown below.

Selected Outcome Indicators	Original Target	Revised Target	Achievement
1.1 % of female survivors of violence supported by the programme who received medical, compensation, resolution or legal services.	87%	60%	67%
1.2 % of women in the programme areas who report they have a role in household decision-making in (a) health; (b) asset purchase and (c) use of women's income.	(a) 23% (b) 21% (c) 21%	(a) 18% (b) 19% (c) 20%	(a) 28% (b) 29% (c) 29%

2.1 % of female programme participants from marginalised groups who are newly engaged in micro businesses or paid work.	68%	55%	63%
2.2 % of workers receiving minimum wage and other legal entitlements in non-compliant garments factories.	85%	12%	14%
3.1 % of working children (<14 years) withdrawn from hazardous work and enrolled in schools.	34%	8%	11%
4.1 % of poor and marginalised people supported by the programme who are allocated <i>khas</i> land and water bodies by the government.	49%	25%	27%
4.2 % of poor and marginalised people in programme areas who regularly receive government social safety net benefits.	79%	72%	77%
4.3 % of targeted marginalised people who received basic health service in programme areas.	76%	75%	79%
5.1 % of targeted youth involved in community level voluntary activities in the project areas.	32%	9%	13%

14. On MJF's transformation, the sixth secondary outcome, the evidence is less quantitative and clear cut. Revised targets at the outcome level do appear to have been mostly met. Outcome indicators are about influencing government decisions, being in national level discussions and persuading the government to move forward on laws and policies that protect the rights of excluded groups. It is arguable whether these kind of targets speak very directly to the outcome statement, which is about becoming a financially sustainable, nimble and knowledge-based organisation.
15. On financial sustainability, MJF's original target of 40% non-FCDO financing was revised down to 24%. They did not meet this target at the end of EPR. Interestingly, recent developments around budgets and closure appear to have provided a stronger incentive than existed previously for MJF to seek new sources of funding. This already has borne fruit, albeit on a much more modest scale than EPR. MJF will need to be more creative about financing in the future. The private sector is a potential source of funding that they should consider to explore.
16. On transforming into a nimble knowledge-based organisation, MJF acknowledges that it continues to fall short of the mark. For the most part, its work to date on knowledge management seems mostly to be about establishing and organising a repository of information. MJF conducted research and developed policy briefs and papers. Legislative and policy engagement at the national level involves a significant measure of agility and evidence. But this does not yet translate into an organisation where evidence, knowledge generation and reflection, with feedback loops to operations, is in the DNA.
17. It is also fairly clear that this vision or ambition for the organisation was more an FCDO ambition than necessarily MJF's own. With the benefit of hindsight, it is reasonable to wonder whether it was an appropriate ask of MJF. It would be more effective if we would have asked them to do what they do best, with parallel efforts elsewhere to build the knowledge function on inclusion.
18. Whilst the gains from the programme are impressive in the challenging circumstances, it is not immediately obvious how sustainable the changes and outcomes are. The processes of engagement with vulnerable and excluded groups and communities upon which the programme rests require time (and resources) to build awareness, knowledge, skills, confidence and networks for individuals and groups. Losing at least two years of the programme has likely reduced the benefits and their chances of sustainability. However, MJF and the PNGOs are optimistic that the new services obtained will not be easily lost at the programme's end.
19. MJF and most of the PNGOs are quite well established and credible, often with various other ongoing funded programmes and relatively large staff complements. Their operations, which are typically contiguous with those of EPR, seem likely to endure and their built capacity is probably sufficient to sustain at least some of the organisational gain from EPR and MJF's inputs. Although much of the early and ongoing Enhanced Due Diligence Assessment was perhaps more about compliance than capacity, the PNGOs have clearly valued the products of this labour, even if this is often said with an eye to getting further funding from other donors.
20. As hinted above, there is more cause for concern around the built individual, organisational and community capacity to sustain engagement at the local level. This seems inevitably likely to be thinner than originally anticipated due to the various disruptions to the ordinary functioning of the programme.

21. On VfM, **equity** was the major focus of the programme as it worked to enable marginalised people and communities gain their rights. It also effectively bridged local level activism with MJF's national-level advocacy to push forward pro-poor policy.<sup>13</sup> On **efficiency**, whilst original overhead and cost efficiency targets<sup>14</sup> were not met, again, mainly to disruptions to the programme, there is still significant evidence from the monetisation of key benefits streams that the programme offered good VfM on **effectiveness**. By delivering through local NGOs and community-based organisations, the programme ensured that the costs of downstream partner NGOs reflect market rates, overheads are reasonable, and that they have the capacity to implement the programme effectively. This has demonstrated to be the best delivery route for its ability to maximise impact which would not have been available from commercial contractors. (further detail on VfM is in section- D)

**Summarise the programme's theory of change and results framework, including any changes to outcome indicators.**

22. The programme's Theory of Change (ToC) was based on supporting poor and marginalised people and communities to undertake collective action, improving access to economic and social opportunities, and advocating for improved public services, and legal and political rights. It incorporates the process of institutional, policy and legislative change through effective advocacy efforts to hold duty bearers more accountable for the services they deliver. It also recognises MJF's ability to link its grassroots work to advocacy for national policy changes. The ToC was based on evidence and learning from MJF's prior interventions on rights and good governance.

23. The ToC and log-frame/results (Milestones 4, 5 and 6) were adjusted in 2021 to reflect both the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on what the programme could realistically do and EPR's (eventual) 43% budget reduction.<sup>15</sup> The ToC revisions did not involve changes to outcome indicators. However, it did involve substantial changes to output milestones and later outcome level milestones/ targets.

24. Target revision did not employ a simple one-size-fits-all formula. Rather, the method addressed various factors for each indicator at the output level. Factors included the scope of work during Covid-19, the size of fund curtailment, budget allocation to themes, the planned number of downstream projects and partners and their actual performance. On this basis, MJF tried to understand the best feasible activities for each output against the original plan through discussion with PNGOs. In each case, an approximate proportional decrease (or in some cases modest increase) of programme activity was identified. Periodic reviews of such activities and re-prioritisation exercises were also carried out by MJF at the output level to identify the scope to scale project activities up or down. Outcome indicators were adjusted later (January 2023) in line with output decisions. With the late change to the EPR timeline and early closure, Milestone 5 effectively became the programme end target.<sup>16</sup>

25. Similarly, the assumptions underpinning the ToC were also revised to reflect the shifting context by including that: i) government policies support working with the marginalised population; ii) service providers care more about the accessibility of the poor and marginalised to the public delivery services; iii) the government bureaucracy does not cause delays or create obstacles to approve services and resources for the marginalised.

26. The approach taken to target revision was appropriate. However, its application to the outcome targets took place late in the programme. Although this was a sensible, pragmatic approach, some inconsistencies still seem to exist in the application of the methodology across all indicators.

27. Across all quantitative outcome indicators, there is range from 1-86% in the decrease in results from the original programme end target to the revised end target. This is what one would expect given that some areas of operation came to an abrupt stop, whilst for others the programme's focus was maintained. The average decrease from the original end targets to the revised targets (for quantitative outcome indicators) is approximately 34%. This does not, however, factor in any weighting for programme expenditure linked to each outcome indicator. Still, setting it against a 43% decrease in funding, it seems not unreasonable. The

<sup>13</sup> Closure of projects and reduction in thematic areas also took equity into account by retaining focus on issues where marginalisation is most acute.

<sup>14</sup> in terms of expenditure / beneficiary

<sup>15</sup> The budget reduction meant closing down work around Outputs 2, 3 and 6 - women's skills development, garment workers and working children and youth. Focus was maintained (and in some areas there was some modest scope to scale up) around Outputs 1, 4 and 5 on VAWG, discrimination and exclusion and public institutions.

<sup>16</sup> This has been agreed following advice from FCDO Bangladesh's Stats Adviser.

indicative gap between the decrease in funding and the average reduction of outcome targets may explain the consistently modest over-achievement against the revised targets.

28. The ToC in its revised version, as in its original version, is ambitious. The assumptions are many and have been focused on less through programme implementation than they might have been. Some of the assumptions are fairly heroic (mainly around institutional responses, and power and political/ vested interests) and can be seen not to have held in at least some circumstances.

### C: Detailed Output Assessment<sup>17</sup>

Output Number and Title	<b>1. Men and boys are informed and trained to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)</b>		
Output Score	<b>A</b>		
Impact weighting (%)	<b>15%</b>	Impact weighting revised since last AR?	<u>Yes</u> - impact weightings are changed for all outputs as the PCR needs to cover all outputs; the last AR did not as several had been closed early.

Output Indicator	Starting Target	Revised Logframe Target	Final Result Achieved
1.1. No. of men and boys informed/ trained on issues of VAWG.	34,500	35,000	37,412
1.2. No. of child marriages stopped and prevented in the project areas.	20,000	12,600	15,673

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<b>Output Score</b>	-	-	A	A+	A

#### Briefly describe the output's activities and achievements during its lifetime and provide supporting narrative for the score

29. The final score for Output 1 is 'A'. This is justified considering the three output scores over a five year period as well as the final result whilst noting some level of uncertainty around the late and complex end target revision process and the relative weakness of ongoing results validation.
30. Output 1's title and indicators capture poorly the range of VAWG and child marriage activities that have taken place under EPR. Since 2019, 16 PNGOs and 10 sub-partner NGOs worked on this theme in 56 *Upazilas* (sub-districts) in 24 Districts. Broadly, there were activity sets aimed at: (1) raising awareness amongst men and boys on women's rights, gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV); (2) raising the awareness and knowledge of girls and women about child marriage, VAWG and sources of support; (3) forming groups and organising around the negative consequences of VAWG and child marriage; (4) connecting survivors of VAWG to public agencies and NGOs for practical support - cash, food and basic health and hygiene; and (5) connecting survivors of violence to services providing compensation, legal support and resolution mechanisms. There was also (6) policy engagement at the national level, based on this experience and evidence from the ground, led by MJF.
31. During the Covid-19 period, in Bangladesh as elsewhere, the threat and incidence of domestic violence and child marriage grew. The pandemic placed more girls at risk of child marriage by interrupting education, through economic shock, by increasing the possibility of the death of a parent and by disrupting access to health and other services. Despite this, according to the Outcomes Assessment Report (OAR, 2022) commissioned by MJF, only 11% of marriages in targeted communities in 2022 were reported as involving children under 18, as compared to 25% at baseline. Close to 16,000 child marriages were reportedly stopped. There were also many smaller but significant wins. For example, the licenses of one marriage registrar and three public notaries were cancelled; and three registrars and 39 parents were penalised for arranging child marriages.

<sup>17</sup> For all outputs except Output 7: i) there were no additional results to consider from the time of the last AR as the programme wound up its operations at that point; ii) the quantitative results generated by the programme and presented here are substantially less verified or validated than one might ordinarily expect - this is partly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which limited field monitoring visits by all programme partners; and partly stems from decisions around programme trade-offs, caused in turn by ODA budget reduction. This meant that the financing set aside for external independent M&E and other learning and knowledge activities (£1.5 million) was de-prioritised; The quantitative results at output - and outcome - level, *post-revision*, uniformly exceed slightly the milestones and targets - the consistency and uniformity of this pattern suggests that the original targets may have slightly lacked stretch; and they all got off to a very slow start whilst MJF developed thematic strategy documents and other foundational management documents, ran the call-for-proposals process and ensured that the 102 successful PNGOs were adequately prepared to begin to receive UK funding - this took the best part of 18 months and means that for the first two ARs no output scoring beyond Output 7 is available.



32. Over 37,000 men and boys received training. 1,500 groups were formed at the village level with over 30,000 members, and courtyard meetings were held involving 40,000 adolescent boys and girls. These activities increased the awareness of families and communities of their responsibilities to prevent GBV. There is good evidence, including testimony that during the programme period the behaviour and attitudes of men and boys shifted, though this will not have been completely consistent or universal. 23,000 female survivors of violence were connected to public bodies and NGOs and 31,000 received medical, compensatory, legal or resolution services.
33. This theme also linked community-level practice with MJF's influencing work with the government and other actors at the national level. For example, findings from MJF's nationwide telephone surveys on VAWG in 2020 fed into local-level campaigns, whilst MJF also fed partner experience in to the process to develop the Victim and Witness Protection Act, aimed at protecting the rights of survivors and witnesses of violence. The programme also provided facilitation support to like-minded NGOs/CSOs in drafting the Hindu Inheritance Act, which aimed to ensure equal rights for Hindu women in inheriting property.

### Lessons learned through this output

34. Lessons learned through this output include:

- Focusing more explicitly on men and boys, as well as girls and women, seems to have paid off in terms of results on VAWG and child marriage;
- Combining this focus on men and boys with individual economic empowerment and group participation for women and girls seems to have successfully challenged existing gender power relations, enhancing women and girls' bargaining power whilst also shifting men's attitudes;
- To embed and drive social norm change at the community level takes time and requires sustained resource flows. Although impressive in the time available, it is not obvious or assured that the gains on these issues will be sustained;
- In sustaining local efforts to tackle child marriage and gender-based violence, links between NGOs working locally and nationally are necessary, but perhaps not sufficient. Capacity at the local level and in communities should continue to be strengthened; and
- Ideally, tackling gender-based violence needs to be part of wider work on advancing women's rights, requiring more systemic approaches and longer term investments.

Output Number and Title	<b>2. Increased opportunities for women to develop skills</b>		
Output Score	<b>A</b>		
Impact weighting (%)	<b>10%</b>	Impact weighting revised since last AR?	Yes

Output Indicator	Starting Target	Revised Logframe Target	Final Result Achieved
2.1. No. of women from various marginalised groups provided skills development training and entrepreneur assistance.	80,000	15,500	17,277
2.2. No. of potential migrant workers provided training and support for safe and legal migration.	18,000	4,700	5,575

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Output Score	-	-	A	A	-

**Briefly describe the output's activities and achievements during its lifetime, and provide supporting narrative for the score**

35. Due to the slow start and early closure of this output, its implementation took place over approximately two and a half years, much of which was affected by Covid-19. Considering this, alongside the AR scores for those two years and the results validation issue, the best possible score for the output is an A.
36. **Sub-theme on skills:** This sub-theme provided over 17,000 marginalised people from ethnic, *Dalit*, fisherfolk, female survivors of violence, people with disabilities (PWDs), and returnee migrants with skills



training through government and non-government service providers for income generation or micro-business development, and linked them to product markets, micro-finance institutions and asset transfer programmes where feasible. As a result of training and entrepreneur assistance, over 11,000 people became engaged in new income earning activities.

37. **Sub-theme on migration:** This sub-theme aimed at reducing risks associated with labour migration to ensure safe migration protocols, rules and regulations. Initially, one of the main target groups under this output was potential migrant women. It was realised that (1) abuse and exploitation of female Bangladeshi domestic workers in the Middle East had reduced the number of migrants and that (2) their geographical dispersal, made it challenging to address their needs. As a result, the target group was revised to include potential male migrants.
38. Although the pandemic poses a significant challenge to potential migrant workers and returnee migrants, training on safe migration raised awareness among nearly 6,000 potential migrants on legal information related to services.<sup>18</sup> Migration Information and Support Centres (MISC) were established in certain project locations that connected potential migrants with the outside world and provided information on migration options, opportunities, challenges and risks. The programme also continued support to returnee migrants by linking them with service providers and countering labour migration fraud.<sup>19</sup>

### Lessons learned through this output

39. The main lessons learned through implementing this output include:

- As the programme linked beneficiaries with existing public sector skills development agencies/schemes, its impact was impaired by institutional weaknesses or gaps such as the organisation, flexibility, quality, innovation, links to the job market;
- The type of training offered appears to have been relatively basic, giving rise to concerns that insufficient scope was made for people aiming to work in well established areas;
- Without access to seed capital and market linkages, much of the skills training (e.g., enterprise development) seems unlikely to be sustainable in the long run.

Output Number and Title	<b>3. Vulnerable garment workers and working children organised to claim their rights and are protected from vulnerability</b>		
Output Score	<b>A</b>		
Impact weighting (%)	<b>10%</b>	Impact weighting revised since last AR?	Yes

Output Indicator	Starting Target	Revised Logframe Target	Final Result Achieved
3.1. No. of garment workers organised and active in Ready Made Garments (RMG) factories to claim decent working conditions.	59,000	15,400	18,624
3.2. No. of companies that introduce decent work policy in their factories / work places.	53	13	14
3.3. No. of children supported to switch from hazardous to non-hazardous work.	40,000	12,900	13,620

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Output Score	-	-	A	A	-

**Briefly describe the output's activities and achievements during its lifetime, and provide supporting narrative for the score**

<sup>18</sup> 'Courtyard' meetings were awareness-raising events held on a regular basis to inform potential migrants about the safe migration process, migration costs, visa checking and passport submission procedures and fraud risks.

<sup>19</sup> For example, 19 migrant rights organisations (including MJF and its PNGOs) worked closely in 2022-23 to demand the

release of 300 returnee migrants arrested without charge.

40. Similar to Output 2, Output 3 was implemented for around two and a half years, with end targets reflective of this. In these circumstances 'A' is the best score applicable at the end of the programme.
41. The pandemic impacted the RMG business substantially with schools closing and swelling the potential child labour pool, and buyers cancelling orders. The overall effect was to make workers more vulnerable. Within this context the 'Decent and Safe Work' component of EPR focuses on: i) supporting garment workers to ensure decent working conditions and minimum wages in non-Accord compliant Readymade Garment (RMG) factories; companies introducing fairer workplace policies; and ii) protecting children from forms of exploitation and discrimination, with a particular focus on their engagement in hazardous work.
42. The sub-theme on workers' rights included activities to raise awareness amongst garment workers and factories, improve networking among worker unions to build a platform to help realise benefits, use the platform to help lobby policy-makers and national and local level trade union dialogue on labour law. These interventions helped over 18,000 workers to claim their entitlements in the workplace. This includes minimum wages and other legal entitlements (maternity, overtime, festival bonus). The programme also ensured that redundant RMG workers could get their full redundancy entitlements.
43. The second sub-theme focuses on preventive and rehabilitative approaches to protect the rights of working children, who are engaged in hazardous work.<sup>20</sup> It supported over 13,000 working children move from hazardous to non-hazardous work with the aim to enrol them into formal or non-formal education or provided them with other development opportunities.<sup>21</sup>

### Lessons learned through this output

44. Some of the lessons learned through implementing this output include:

- Many donors are active in the RMG and skills sectors. This makes it difficult to have a visible impact with limited resources. Moreover, the scope of Output 3 is broad relative to its resources (and the particular skill-set NGOs needed). It covers two different themes with quite distinct sets of governmental and other actors. Covid-19 worsened the situation for children and other workers, often resulting in redundancy and income loss. This increased the risk of children moving into hazardous work;
- Hazardous work pays more than non-hazardous work. Whilst children were supported to move from hazardous to non-hazardous work with the aim of also enrolling them into formal or non-formal primary education, there was no provision of monetary benefit for either children or their households. This made it difficult to retain children in non-hazardous work; Local level advocacy by downstream partners ensured that marginalised households received appropriate government social safety net support. This helped to reduce exclusion errors albeit at the margins from such programmes.

Output Number and Title	<b>4. Marginalised people are organised to claim their rights and entitlements and fight discrimination and exclusion</b>		
Output Score	<b>A+</b>		
Impact weighting (%)	<b>20%</b>	Impact weighting revised since last AR?	Yes

Output Indicator	Starting Target	Revised Logframe Target	Final Result Achieved
4.1. No. of people from marginalised groups represented in local committees and fora.	19,500	9,500	12,013
4.2. No. of women survivors of violence in project areas claimed medical and/or legal assistance.	90,000	34,300	43,970
4.3. No. of Covid-19 vulnerable men and women received emergency cash transfer support.	0	23,000	23,000
4.4. No of Covid-19 vulnerable men and women received livelihood support.	0	15,000	15,380

<sup>20</sup> Government identified 38 sectors as dangerous works for children. Out of this, MJF prioritised 4 areas (i.e. Automobile Workshops, Manufacturing of Bidi and Cigarette, Brick or Stone breaking and Engineering Machine including lathe machine) to work with under the EPR programme.

<sup>21</sup> The result related to children's enrolment in schools is measured at the outcome level.

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Output Score	-	-	A++	A+	A+

**Briefly describe the output's activities and achievements during its lifetime, and provide supporting narrative for the score**

45. This output scores an A+. The output was delivered over the past three years and consistently exceeded expectations against its quantitative milestones. It was part of the programme that flexed most directly and effectively to support the Covid-19 pandemic.
46. This component of the EPR provided capacity development support to three main marginalised groups - the landless, fisherfolk and *dalits* (scheduled castes). Within these groups it also aimed to prioritise women and people with disability. The capacity development support focused on enhancing three main skillsets: a basic understanding of rights and entitlements; representing groups at local committees and other fora; and engaging and negotiating with service providers.
47. During the project period, the programme helped 12,013 marginalised people to be included in different government and non-government committees at the Union, *Upazila* and District levels through capacity development and consistent advocacy. In such committees they acted as a check on the functioning of the local government decision-making and then provided a bridge between the marginalised people they represented and service providers. As a result of their activity during the period of the programme, 214,016 poor and marginalised people secured social safety-net support; 282,210 marginalised people received basic health service; and 4,922 landless families received 967 acres of *khas* land and water-bodies from the government.
48. Linked to output indicator 4.2, the programme supported vulnerable women to organise and claim medical and legal rights and entitlements. During the programme period many more women used violence redress mechanisms than was previously the case. The support included setting up women's groups, awareness-raising regarding services for women survivors, relationship building with service providers, as well as coordination and advocacy initiatives.
49. The programme adapted during the Covid-19 pandemic and indicators 4.3 and 4.4 were added in 2020. Targeting on Covid-19 support was aimed at the most economically vulnerable groups who lost earnings, fell into poverty and had limited access to food. The programme supported 23,000 financially vulnerable people with cash support of BDT 7,500 / head. MJF's assessment showed that a relatively large share of the cash recipients used it for productive activities. The programme also helped 15,380 female beneficiaries and disabled men, providing BDT 7,000 / head to restart or reinvigorate their income-generating activities (IGAs). MJF's internal assessment showed that they all invested the money in their IGAs and at least 80% sustained these. The PCR team met with PNGOs to triangulate those assessments and found that some of the supported partners established a 'food bank' in the Barind track area, which acted as a cooperative and shared food and money during the lean season.

**Lessons learned through this output**

50. Lessons learned through the implementation of this output include:
  - Promoting the rights of marginalised people requires both critical and positive engagement and the navigation of power dynamics among different stakeholders. In Bangladesh's shrinking civic space, CSO's mixed and politically savvy approach helped to build strong partnerships with government entities. CSOs should be aware of the risk of co-option and navigate local political dynamics more explicitly for learning purposes;
  - Skills training for the poorest, in the absence of a needs assessment or links to opportunities to use their new skills, has limited utility and may even be counter-productive;
  - The Covid-19 related cash transfers are a cost-efficient way of reaching the poorest and were rolled out well, reflecting a good deal of flexibility from programme partners. The transfers themselves seem mainly to have been used by beneficiaries for investment in small scale productive activities rather than for food or other consumption, possibly raising a question around the added need for them; and
  - Social accountability tools can create tension between service providers and citizens. Power mapping, when done well, can improve the skills of CSOs in calculating risks, developing mitigation strategies, improving social bargaining and navigating social and political barriers.

Output Number and Title	<b>5. Public institutions are more responsive to citizen's demands</b>
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Output Score	<b>A+</b>		
Impact weighting (%)	<b>20%</b>	Impact weighting revised since last AR?	Yes.

Output Indicator	Starting Target	Final Logframe Target	Final Result Achieved
5.1. No. of citizens' committees formed and functional in project areas to monitor health, agricultural extension, social protection services available to the poor.	12,000	1,243	1,267
5.2. No. of government service delivery outlets monitored by the citizen committees (agricultural extension offices, health facilities, social safety net programmes, schools).	750	800	1,480

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Output Score	-	-	A+	A	A+

**Briefly describe the output's activities and achievements during its lifetime, and provide supporting narrative for the score**

51. The score for this output is A±. It is based on above average scores in two out of three ARs, including the last one, and in particular on the over-achievement (close to 100%) on Citizen Committees monitoring service delivery outlets. Even with questions around target revision and results validation, this seems reasonable based on the indicators provided.
52. This output adopted a 'push-pull' strategy that focused on the interaction of citizens on the 'demand' side and service providers on the 'supply' side. On the demand side, EPR and its PNGOs built citizens' knowledge and individual and group capacity to claim rights. On the supply side, it aimed to improve the responsiveness and accountability of government officials to better address the needs of the poorest and most marginalised.
53. The poor and marginalised individuals were organised into groups to strengthen their claim to rights and were provided with the skills and tools needed to monitor government service provision to them and the communities they represent. Over 1200 Citizens' Committees were established and operated at different levels - Ward, Union, *Upazila*/ Sub-District and District. PNGOs facilitated participatory processes with these committees to help identify local issues, relevant service providers and possible solutions to problems and blockages. The committees were trained to use social accountability tools<sup>22</sup> related to public service provision which include local government rules, social protection schemes, agriculture extension services.
54. The programme provided bespoke training and support to government officials to increase their knowledge on effective service delivery and appropriate responses to citizen demands. It also strengthened linkages between communities and public service providers. These included: 2,170 planning meetings between the community and Union Parishad (UP); 1,045 UP standing committee meetings; 237 open budget dialogues with local government representatives; 429 health committee meetings with health officials. Overall, Citizen's Committees approached 1,480 government service delivery outlets (e.g., community clinics, UP administrations, agriculture extension offices, social protection schemes) to articulate their needs and demand for services.
55. The programme also served to bridge the gap between such local citizen groups and national policy platforms, linking such local groups with the Governance Advocacy Forum (GAF), the Right to Information (RTI) Forum and the National Forum for Social Protection (NFSP) and organising national level policy dialogues. For example, the GAF, selected Citizen Committees and MJF jointly organised a national policy convention on effective local government. The convention made a recommendation and collectively

<sup>22</sup> These are: citizen charters, public hearings, grievance redress mechanisms and community scorecards.

pushed the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (MoLGRDC) to amend the Local Government Institution (LGI) Act. The Citizens Committees also took steps to strengthen the implementation of the RTI Act on the ground through displaying social security scheme eligibility criteria, updating UP websites, showing citizen charters and organising RTI camps.

### Lessons learned through this output

56. Lessons learned through implementing this output include:

- Good collaboration between local groups and national policy-advocacy platforms, has helped to create space for and deepen policy dialogue; and
- Social accountability tools used by Citizen Committees were effective in building relationships and constructive dialogue, developing joint action plans and monitoring progress.

Output Number and Title	<b>6. Young people are empowered and work together for Bangladesh's sustainable development</b>		
Output Score	<b>B</b>		
Impact weighting (%)	<b>10%</b>	Impact weighting revised since last AR?	Yes

Output Indicator	Starting Target	Final Logframe Target	Final Result Achieved
6.1. No. of young people trained to develop their life skills and leadership.	66,400	37,200	37,763
6.2. Research and analysis on youth and social cohesion conducted.	A lesson-learning study completed for the Youth & Social Cohesion theme.	A lesson-learning study initiated for the Youth & Social Cohesion theme.	ToRs for the study were drafted but due to early closure the study was not started.

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Output Score	-	-	A	A	-

### Briefly describe the output's activities and achievements during its lifetime, and provide supporting narrative for the score

57. The score for this output is **B**. As prior ARs both scored the output an A, the final score of B looks incongruous. However, it reflects the delivery of one revised output indicator, whilst the other was not. The score also takes on board the issue raised previously around results validation and milestone target revisions.
58. Under this output, 13 local NGOs created opportunities for young people from different marginalised groups (e.g., persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, Dalits and transgender people) to become active citizens and agents of change. The output focused on organisational and life skills development aimed to enhance leadership and volunteerism among young people. It also focused on building the capacity to engage in income-earning opportunities, including promoting innovative business ideas through seed funding. NGOs under this theme, worked in and with five city corporations and 22 *Upazilas* in nine Districts.
59. The PNGOs working with these young people had different ideas and approaches. Some sought to build a youth social movement through advocacy and human chains, and emphasised high-level youth leadership. Others sought to improve networking, recognising the role of peer education and leadership at that level.
60. As well improving the life and leadership skills of 37,763 young women and men, the PNGOs supporting them also provided and linked young people with various skills development training courses. Subsequently, some were connected to different types of service providers, employers and financial institutions. 1,809 were involved in income-generating activities, whilst 11,234 volunteered for community or governmental activities, including supporting the pandemic response at the local level in various ways. Other voluntary initiatives included: a tree-planting campaign; helping to transfer vulnerable community members to safe shelter and protecting the coastal embankment during the super-cyclone Amphan relief operation; launching an anti-pollution campaign in Thakurgaon District and helping to prevent river



pollution from a sugar mill; helping to stop early marriages; and road maintenance in post-disaster settings.

### Lessons learned through this output

61. Lessons learned through implementing this output include:

- This output was closed early. Several people consulted in the review questioned the decision to completely close out this output, raising the importance of youth, the challenge of large numbers of marginalised young people and links to wider demographic issues. It seems fair to raise a question on whether a reduction in the number of partners could have been secured in different ways, for instance, by dropping the poorest performing PNGOs across all themes rather than dropping two themes entirely.
- Life skills education can make an important contribution to young people’s capabilities and their willingness to undertake voluntary work. The experience, however, shows that life skills development works best when it is linked to enhanced livelihood opportunities.
- The importance of youth engagement and voluntarism was demonstrated in particular during the pandemic and in the context of other disasters. The promotion of active citizenship among youth is effective when there is policy commitment as well as strong cooperation between NGOs’ efforts and action from public institutions.

Output Number and Title	<b>7. MJF and partner NGOs / CSOs have better capacity for programme management policy compliance and resource mobilisation</b>		
Output Score	<b>A</b>		
Impact weighting (%)	<b>15%</b>	Impact weighting revised since last AR?	Yes

Output Indicator	Starting Target	Final Logframe Target	Final Result Achieved
7.1 Implementation of improved finance, internal management and capability of MJF and its partners.	MJF and partner NGOs/CSOs demonstrated improved programme management, policy compliance and resource mobilisation capacity	Large number of specific deliverables listed in text below.	Completed.
7.2 MJF’s staff capability improved in programme management.	MJF’s Human Resource (HR) practices aligned with international standards for CSOs. MJF has a diverse funding base.	Large number of specific deliverables listed in the text below.	Completed most but a few ongoing moderately did not meet expectation.
7.3 Downstream partners demonstrate improved internal management and implementation capability.	Downstream partners are capable in internal and project management.	Large number of specific deliverables listed in the text below.	Completed.
7.4 MJF’s capacity on knowledge management and learning improved.	Knowledge management unit established. M&E research and VFM plan in place. Partners’ knowledge sharing platform established and annual meeting held. Thematic strategy papers produced. On-line file archiving system in place. Internal knowledge sharing system established. Commissioned out redesigning of MJF website. Synthesis paper on learning from EPR programme produced.	As per the starting target but with the addition of PNGOs meet semi-annually and lessons are documented.	Completed.

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Output Score	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>

**Briefly describe the output’s activities and achievements during its lifetime, and provide supporting narrative for the score**

62. Output 7 scores an A overall. This represents an average of AR scores across the programme’s life and delivery against almost all of the final requirements of the organisation as stated here. The output indicators do not highlight resource mobilisation for MJF or the PNGOs sufficiently, considering the special



emphasis placed on it in the output statement and the relative weakness in this area at the programme's conclusion. However, there are some limited activities and deliverables that address the issue.

63. The reference in the output statement to programme management policy compliance, as distinct from capability, is perhaps a concern. It is clear that a lot of work has gone into building this compliance and it is noted and appreciated by MJF and the PNGOs including during this PCR. It is, however, less clear if the emphasis on compliance has led or will lead to sustained on-the-job capability. Excessive emphasis, arguably, was placed by the PNGOs on their enhanced ability to access donor funds with the new policies and not enough on how useful they are in their own right with regard to strengthening their everyday operations.
64. Whilst the output is delivered as expected, it does not really connect well to or support the secondary outcome statement - "[a] financially sustainable, nimble and knowledge-based organisation." This is achieved to a lesser degree than originally anticipated, as discussed earlier.
65. Inevitably there is a very long list of things delivered and done by MJF and the PNGOs under this output. Some of these, to give a flavour, are listed below by output indicator:
- *Indicator 7.1 - MJF and PNGOs - finance, internal management and capability* - included such things as: a resource mobilisation unit and accompanying strategy paper; MJF's strategic plan and costed action plan; the partner selection process; annual external audit; virtual access to all updated policies; partner's reporting system maintained through the MIS; robust programme and financial management visits; partner coordination meetings; safeguarding and fraud registers developed and maintained; and downstream partners project closure process completed.
  - *Indicator 7.2 - MJF - staff capability* - consultations on career development; annual performance appraisal system reviewed and reformed; training to staff; human resource management and development manual updated; training on gender and EDD assessment.
  - *Indicator 7.3 - PNGOs - internal management and implementation capability* - capacity needs assessment for PNGOs; orientation on compliance; EDD assessment training and action plan (87% achieved); active support to build capacity on compliance and controls; safeguarding policies in place and safeguarding officers assigned.
  - *Indicator 7.4 - MJF - knowledge management and learning* - knowledge management unit established and staffed; M&E, research and VFM in place; partners knowledge sharing platform established.<sup>23</sup>
66. The only tasks noted as still to be completed are under 7.2. (staff capability). A conclusion is that whilst there are examples, an improvement in staff capability is not adequately demonstrated in a consistent manner across the main themes of the programme.

### Lessons learned through this output

67. Some of the lessons learned through the implementation of this output focused on organisational capacity include:
- The capacity to mobilise resources from other donors and the private sector could have been emphasised more throughout the programme and supported earlier with TA during the extended inception phase.
  - Knowledge management was perhaps more of a donor ambition for MJF than a genuine organisational ambition, and this is probably at the heart of the challenge in this area.
  - On organisational development, experience shows that the participation of staff is critical to put policies into effective practice. Hence, it needs to be accompanied by long-term change management planning with the buy-in of senior management.
  - MJF's transformation from a fund management organisation to an efficient and effective capacity development and knowledge-based organisation requires sustained aspiration from within the organisation rather than driven by donors.

## D: Value for Money

68. The broad thrust of the BC in VfM terms was that the programme should offer good VfM through its 'low-cost/ high-impact' implementation model. The programme was to deliver on the ground through local

<sup>23</sup>This include formulation of thematic strategy papers, knowledge management strategy paper; establishment of on-line archiving system; regular partner meetings on lesson-learning; on-line tools for sharing information; development of research partnerships and delivery of research papers.

NGOs and community-based organisations. It was expected this would mean both relatively low administrative and implementation costs and good impact due to their closeness to and knowledge of the communities where the programme would become operational.

69. The programme design provided good **economy** using community-based organisations for local level implementations. MJF managed PNGOs and their programme activities for a relatively low management cost. The management cost stated in the BC was around 5.5%. MJF's actual overheads at the end of the programme are closer to 8%.<sup>24</sup> Though this is an increase on expected original overhead costs of about 2.5% in terms of management cost, it is still very low as the cost for similar programmes vary from around 6%-30% through most of other possible delivery routes. MJF has introduced an on-line Management Information System (MIS) and this has reduced transaction costs related to communication, coordination and logistics. The introduction of online MIS has also made the programme more efficient as it strengthened collaboration among different teams in MJF's partner NGOs.<sup>25</sup>
70. Due to the budget cut, instead of supporting 1.65 million people with the full £48 million budget, the programme supported 650,000 people and spent £27.5 million (57% of the original budget). The funding cut prevented the programme from achieving economies of scale that were envisaged in the Business Case. Consequently, the cost per beneficiary for EPR came to £29, which is a 45% increase compared to the BC. It should be noted that the cost of providing different services to beneficiaries were still relatively low despite the comparative overall drop in **cost-efficiency**. For instance, the average cost of skills training per beneficiary is roughly £6 (BDT 800), and the cost incurred in supporting beneficiaries accessing social services is £3.4 (BDT456).
71. **Equity** was the main thematic focus of the programme due to its focus on marginalised people and communities. It also effectively bridged local level activism with MJF's national-level advocacy to push forward pro-poor policies across a range of themes.
72. Finally, on **effectiveness**,<sup>26</sup> most of the programme's revised quantitative outcomes marginally exceeded the targets. There are some benefits that the programme has helped to leverage that are amenable to monetisation. For example, one of the successes includes supporting 4,922 poor people in applying for and accessing *khas* land. The PNGOs estimate that the beneficiaries' total annual income from *khas* land will be around £0.73 million (BDT 97 million).<sup>27</sup> It also helped 214,016 additional poor and marginalised men and women gain access to their entitled social safety net that results in an approximate benefits totalling £11.94 million (BDT 1,540 million) over a year.<sup>28</sup> 31,218 survivors of violence received legal services that amounts to a value of £4.7 million (624.36 million Taka).<sup>29</sup> 282,210 marginalised people also received basic health services. The benefit is the reduction in health expenditure resulting from receiving the basic health services free of charge. Assuming that health expenditure per head will be reduced by BDT 1,495 per year, the total potential out of pocket health expenditure that the beneficiaries saved due to the programme comes to around £3 million (BDT 421 million).

<sup>24</sup> Due to funding cut the programme lost its advantage in terms of economies of scale that can explain the increase in cost per beneficiary.

<sup>25</sup> Changes in the programme that contributes to ease of operation and leads to better chance of outputs into outcomes are taken as examples of efficiency. MIS improvement is a classic example of efficiency.

<sup>26</sup> Here, £1= 133 BDT exchange rate is used for all the cases.

<sup>27</sup> 967 acres of *khas* land and water bodies redistributed to 4,922 poor people. The average estimated annual income from one acre land/water bodies is Bangladesh Taka 100,000 (£775.19). Hence, the total annual income expected from this is £0.75 million (BDT 96.7 million). r

<sup>28</sup> On an average, one beneficiary of safety net services received estimated amount Bangladesh Taka 600 (£4.65) equivalent per person per month. So, it is estimated that on an average at least one year each person received safety net services.

<sup>29</sup> Based on assumption that total BDT 20,000 (£155) is saved due to providing legal support in each case.

73. There are a range of benefits flowing from the activities of the programme which are not quantifiable. These include things like awareness, confidence, empowerment, dignity and rights. Furthermore, some of the programme's work on tackling VAWG and support for the survivors, as well as child marriage prevention work, will have positive intergenerational benefits. Despite the lack of data and quantification difficulties, it would be safe to state that the programme's overall value for money proposition has been moderately positive.

## E: Risk

74. The overall programme risk level has been assessed as **Major** throughout almost all of the programme period. It was assessed as Moderate at the time of the approval of the BC and for the first AR in 2017/18. The 2018 election was generally thought to have raised significantly the strategic and contextual risks to the programme, bringing with it a tightening of civic and political space and further centralising or politicising of the bureaucracy. This combined with Covid-19 and the ODA reduction served to keep the overall risk rating at Major until the programme's closure.
75. The respective programme risk matrices were updated regularly by both MJF and FCDO. The Programme Management Team (PMT) in FCDO escalated all risks (including risks associated with budget reductions) outside the programme's risk appetite to the Development Director and discussed these at team meetings on risk. At closure, there are 7 active risks, with one judged Moderate and six Minor.
76. The pandemic disrupted the programme, and milestones and targets were revised. However, it also spurred some innovation and adaptation within the programme. Alongside virtual meetings and field visits, the programme also used social media effectively. This gained much ground through Covid-19 and has been sustained thereafter. On-line talk shows and policy discussions, which focused on the themes of the programme, often involved service providers and local administrators and drew in large on-line audiences.
77. Safeguarding has always been a risk as the programme dealt with Bangladesh's poorest and most marginalised people, including many women and girls. Initially, MJF along with PNGOs had relatively limited understanding of safeguarding risks and how to mitigate and manage these risks. MJF, with support from FCDO, introduced new safeguarding standards agreed by MJF's governing board. MJF rigorously applied Enhanced Due Diligence Assessment (EDDA) guidance and embedded mitigation measures throughout its delivery chain by providing training to staff of both MJF and its PNGOs. During the programme period, MJF reported five safeguarding cases. These were investigated thoroughly and actions were taken based on the findings.
78. As MJF channelled grants to a wide range of downstream PNGOs across the country with varying standards of internal control, there was significant fiduciary risk throughout the programme. As with safeguarding, MJF conducted appropriate EDDA on selected PNGOs to manage fiduciary risk. They also held quarterly monitoring visits to check financial systems and provided further advice and training as necessary. During the programme period, five fraud cases were reported. These were thoroughly investigated and closed by following FCDO's rules.
79. The early closure of the programme, combined with uncertainties and budget reductions, may serve to increase the reputational risk somewhat for both FCDO and MJF. This was identified early, marked as severe and escalated to the senior management. As mitigation, FCDO held a series of meetings with MJF and similarly MJF held consultations with the PNGOs. MJF provided further financial management training to all PNGOs as part of the close out arrangements. PNGOs also held phase out meetings with all stakeholders and beneficiaries associated with the programme. However, despite such efforts, the early overall closure, and the early sub-project closures, have interrupted ongoing developmental processes with groups of the most vulnerable and excluded people in Bangladesh.

<b>Current level of fiduciary risk and direction of travel since last ASP</b>	Moderate Improving
<b>Specific assessment of corruption risk and direction of travel since last ASP</b>	Minor Improving

## F: Programme Management: Commercial and Financial Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation

80. The period through which EPR was implemented was challenging due to ODA reduction and uncertainty, the pandemic and the general tightening of civic and political space. Taken together this has been a lot for the programme to respond to and manage, and the programme partners are to be congratulated on delivering as much and as well as they have. Overall, the performance of MJF and PNGOs is judged to have been good. This includes their commercial and financial performance.
81. Having said that, inevitably, all of these challenges placed additional strains on critical relationships and partnerships. While relations remained cordial, constructive and sincere, decision-making processes were perhaps not always as consultative as they might have been. Decisions were not always fully agreed between major stakeholders, and sometimes they may have been communicated a bit late to avoid impacting negatively on core constituencies. The reasons behind some key decisions were not always completely clear to partners at different levels, perhaps despite best efforts. FCDO might be said to have taken a quite managerial or compliance-focused approach to the programme and its partners.
82. MJF has been a long-standing partner of FCDO. This prior knowledge and close support and guidance from the FCDO enabled MJF to understand FCDO's evolving rules and requirements on financial reporting, budget forecasting, risk management, fraud, transparency and safeguarding. MJF took time to ensure that this was passed on to PNGOs ahead of programme commencement.
83. MJF's grants and programme team used comprehensive tools for PNGOs' enhanced due diligence process that covers the review of financial strengths, programmatic experience, efficiency of management, book keeping and recording, staffing experience and skills, risk management. The Grants Team used a checklist and guidelines for conducting field visits. All the visit findings were documented and followed up. Throughout the programme, the grants team assisted PNGOs to develop policies and follow up on implementation of the policies on such themes as Conflict of Interest, Safeguarding, the Anti-Terrorism and Corruption Act, Bribery, Gifts and Hospitality, Child Protection and Code of Conduct.
84. MJF followed standard procurement processes for selecting the PNGOs. The final selection of 102 proposals and partners (from 455 proposals) was agreed by MJF's Governing Board in 2018. FCDO monitored and advised MJF throughout the selection process. Assets were procured based on MJF's procurement policy. As per the Accountable Grant Agreement (AGA), PNGOs were advised to follow their own approved standard procurement policy for the procurement of goods and services. However, MJF provided a threshold above BDT 10,000, beyond which procurement of any capital items be made after MJF's approval.
85. The AGA value for EPR with MJF was £45,899,502. This was reduced to GBP 27,530,405 due to ODA reprioritisation and budget cuts. FCDO disbursed £27,480,405 to MJF. There is an underspend of £79,966 which will be refunded to FCDO. Hence, there was a 40% reduction (£18,419,097) to the initially approved allocation to MJF. 69% of this, in line with the BC target of 70.20%, went directly to PNGO grants.
86. MJF ensured quality financial management and reporting throughout the programme's implementation. They maintained strong internal controls, monitored PNGOs' financial activities, and conducted EDD assessments. MJF's Grants Team completed 76 field visits<sup>30</sup> for financial monitoring. They also provided capacity building support to the PNGOs in areas like, forecasting, budgeting and risk management.
87. Five annual audits of EPR were completed by independent external audit firms. All were unqualified and provided a true and fair view on the programme's accounts. The audit for the period July 2021 - June 2022 was conducted in August 2022. The report was shared with FCDO in November 2022. There were three recommendations to improve human resource and administrative actions. These have already been addressed. The final programme audit covering the period July 2022 - March 2023 is due within six months of the closure of the programme.
88. MJF and the PNGOs both maintained asset registers for EPR. FCDO conducted asset verification exercises twice during the programme period, in 2021 and 2022. Asset Inventory Books were properly maintained and reconciled physically with the assets. Linked to successive re-prioritisation exercises and the progressive ending of partnerships in EPR with PNGOs, FCDO between 2020-22 completed and approved asset disposal plans based on MJF's requests, following the PrOF Rule 27. As a result, FCDO transferred ownership of 935 items to MJF and 6,545 items to the 102 PNGOs. The estimated sale value of these items is £27,996 for MJF and £180,858 for PNGOs. The assets will be used for the purpose of other development works.

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<sup>30</sup> During the field visit, beneficiaries were consulted.

## Programme-level approach to monitoring and evaluation

### Monitoring:

89. MJF had overall responsibility for oversight of the EPR programme, including the day to day monitoring and oversight of downstream PNGOs.<sup>31</sup> Programme focal points were the primary monitoring contact points for the PNGOs. The M&E unit provided additional support and a second layer of quality assurance of the collected data. The data was aggregated by the M&E Unit for progress reports to FCDO. Following performance monitoring, MJF also invested time and effort to develop PNGOs' capability on monitoring. The programme activities were regularly monitored by MJF's senior management team and their governing board also provided strategic direction, including on M&E.
90. For two years, the pandemic placed limits on the ability of MJF and its PNGOs to physically visit field sites and monitor progress in the way that might ordinarily be expected. In tackling some of these challenges, virtual visits, one-to-one meetings between PNGO staff and community/ group leaders and the use of social media platforms for dialogue were some of the innovations used by PNGOs to continue operations, including at least some M&E.
91. FCDO monitored the programme through annual reviews, field visits, and through regular engagement with partners on programme performance. It maintained monthly meetings with MJF to review on progress and challenges. During the pandemic, monthly on-line meetings took place to sustain contact and monitor progress. The FCDO's programme team visited project sites of a few PNGOs in the post-pandemic period, including attending two programme reflection workshops in November 2022. During monitoring visits, detailed discussions took place with both the PNGOs and programme beneficiaries.

### Evaluation & Learning:

92. The BC envisaged that learning, evaluation and knowledge management would be central to delivering the programme. The programme has achieved this in some areas but not as envisaged for reasons including a lack of FCDO funding due to ODA budget cuts, reprioritisation due to the pandemic, and MJF's capability limitations.
93. The original BC envisaged FCDO keeping £1.5 million aside for "*activities that it will commission independently, including paying for external expertise to help MJF build capacity in areas such as knowledge management and resource mobilisation and to carry out an independent evaluation.*" FCDO decided not to retain any of this resource due to the challenging budgetary context, and rather focused on prioritising and sustaining as much beneficiary engagement as possible. This is completely understandable, as seen in other FCDO country offices and programmes and likely the right choice. Still, with the benefit of hindsight, perhaps (1) some of the resource might have been used early on in the programme, ahead of the later budget re-allocations, for TA to support MJF to begin move towards being a knowledge-based and resource mobilising organisation, which they struggled with; and (2) a modest amount of resource might have been retained and used if not for an evaluation at least for some independent results verification.
94. In absence of FCDO commissioned learning and evaluations, MJF's Monitoring & Evaluation team and Knowledge Management team jointly facilitated regular meetings with PNGOs to identify good practice examples and generate lessons from the grassroots. They also supported establishment of partners' knowledge sharing platform. MJF commissioned five thematic external reviews and four research studies focussing on violence against women and girls, Covid-19 impact and people's satisfaction on public service delivery. In the programme's last year, it conducted an independent outcome survey by appointing a local research firm. All these initiatives allowed the programme to contribute to promoting inclusive, evidence-based policy influencing.

Date of last narrative financial report	10 Jan, 2023	Date of last audited annual statement	25 Oct, 2022
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<sup>31</sup> Major M&E tools used by MJF included: (1) routine monitoring visits often with pre-designed checklists / guidelines; (2) virtual field and monitoring visits during the pandemic; (3) thematic case studies; (4) data quality and validation workshops; (5) partner coordination workshops; (5) annual scoring of PNGOs; (6) collection of baseline data.

## Annex A List of Acronyms

AGA	Accountable Grant Agreement
BC	Business Case
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BHC	British High Commission
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EDD	Enhanced Due Diligence
EPR	Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh programme
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GAF	Governance Advocacy Forum
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HR	Human Resource
IGA	Income Generating Activity
LGI	Local Government Institution
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MoLGRDC	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
NFSP	National Forum for Social Protection
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OAR	Outcomes Assessment Report
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
P-NGO	Partner Non-Governmental Organisation
PCR	Programme Completion Review
PMT	Programme Management Team
RMG	Ready Made Garments
RTI	Right To Information
ToC	Theory of Change
UP	Union Parishad
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VfM	Value for Money