

## Final Report

### Final Evaluation of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes, 2014-16



Prepared for:  
The Swallows India Bangladesh, 4/6 (Ground Floor), Block A, Lalmatia, Dhaka - 1207,  
Bangladesh, Web: [www.svalorna.org](http://www.svalorna.org)

Submitted by:  
Shadhan Kumar Das, Team Leader

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Shadhan Kumar Das  
Team Leader

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACCESS	Enhancing women's <b>ACCESSIBILITY</b> in the social, political and economic spheres in Bangladesh
ARP	Agricultural Rights Programme
BARCIK	Bangladesh Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEW	Development Wheel
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FO	Farmers' Organization
GO	Government Organization
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HYV	High Yield Variety
IEC	Information, Education and Communication (materials)
KII	Key Informants Interview
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTR	Mid-term Review
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NK	NijeraKori
PNGO	Partner NGO
PO	Partners' Organization
SAAO	Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer
SEK	Swedish Krona
SIB	Swallows India Bangladesh
SUS	SabalambbyUnnayanSamity
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSDS	Thanapara Swallows Development Society
UASC	Union Agriculture Standing Committee
UD	UnnayanDhara
UP	Union Parishad (Council)

## **Final Evaluation of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes (ACCESS and ARP), 2014-16**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **1. Introduction:**

Bangladesh is predominantly an agricultural country where two-third of Bangladesh's population live in the rural areas and 47% of the total labour force depend on agriculture for their main livelihoods. Hence, the Policy documents of the government of Bangladesh – the Seventh Five Year Plan and National Agriculture Policy – have emphasized on the profitable, sustainable and environment-friendly agricultural system to develop overall agriculture sector. As a result, Bangladesh has achieved self-sufficiency in food grain production. But growing use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers has been causing health and environmental hazards.

Women farmers, though, are equally contributing to agricultural production, their contributions are not acknowledged. Even they are not recognized as farmers. Not only in agriculture, but everywhere in the society - economic and political spheres- women are dependent on men for the archetype patrilineal and patriarchal kinship system.

Nevertheless, Bangladesh has achieved a consistent GDP growth of around 6% each year in the last one decade. UN's human development index (HDI) ranked the country at 139 out of total 188 countries albeit a high level of social inequality. Deprivation of marginalized rural people from available opportunities and their exclusion from taking part in "mainstream" development process are vividly visible.

In this context, the Swallows India Bangladesh (Swallows IB) implemented two projects i.e. "Enhancing women's accessibility in the social, political and economic spheres in Bangladesh (briefly known as ACCESS)" and "Enhanced Farmers' Rights in sustainable agriculture through independent farmers' organizations (briefly known as ARP)" in nine districts. Six partner NGOs (PNGOs) were involved to implement these programmes during 2014-16.

The specific objectives of the final evaluation:

- To deliver clear conclusion on each criteria stated below including an analysis of the reasons behind the success and prevailing challenges.
- To deliver lessons learned and recommendations to utilize in the project planning, implementation and management

This final evaluation was done following a sound methodology to generate qualitative data from the secondary literature (i.e. annual reports, MTR reports, project completion reports, etc.) and the diverse respondents (such as members of women groups, FOs, project staff, local government, government offices, etc.) of both the ACCESS and ARP projects. Total respondents were 254. There were 210 participants in the 21 FGDs. The remaining 44 were Key Informants. The report has been finalized through active engagement of the PNGOs.

#### **2. Institutional Arrangements:**

Three PNGOs namely TSDS, NK and SUS had 17 project staff to implement ACCESS in 120 villages of 12 unions in five upazilas under four districts. On the other hand, the ARP was implemented in 71 villages of 15 unions in 8 upazilas under 6 districts by 31 project staff of the five PNGOs i.e. TSDS, NK, UD, BARCIK, and DEW. All PNGOs spent on an average of BDT 64,56,906 and average burn rate was around 92%.

A secretariat was established for overall programme management of ACCESS situated at NK. The Secretariat was in charge of overall coordination with the partner NGOs in accordance with the decision and advice of the Steering Committee.

A great emphasis was given to the capacity building of the PNGOs and direct beneficiaries of the projects. Thus, around 79 and 473 staff members from ACCESS and ARP respectively received training. On the other hand, the number of trainees from direct beneficiaries of ACCESS and ARP were 1645 and 3603 respectively.

The Swallows IB developed platforms to enhance scopes for marginalized groups, particularly for women so that they would be empowered and claim their legitimate rights. There were 8,548 members in 154 FOs in ARP. The number of male and female members were almost the same. Under ACCESS, there were different kinds of groups i.e. both women and men groups, only women groups (*NariMorcha*), spouse groups, students groups. In total there were 84 groups, and number of members were 2,505.

The Swallows' Bangladesh Programme had internship facility to review the process of activities, outcome and monitoring system and exchange visit to learn from other PNGOs. Besides, the PNGOs built alliances and networks with like-minded organizations.

### **3. Assessing the ACCESS:**

Key activities of the PNGOs mainly include forming of groups, arranging meeting, building capacity, raising awareness, observing national days, arranging cultural activities and debate competition, encouraging women for savings, providing training on IGA, facilitating the groups to engage in societal and political issues on their own initiatives, campaigning locally, and nationally through networks, managing crisis, etc.

Through these activities, the PNGOs as well as different groups of target people brought some positive results in the intervention areas. Among them, a process initiated to break the stereotypical roles for men-women, bring male and female collaboration in family management, enhance women roles in *shalish* (arbitration), increase women's access to justice, access of women and men to GO-NGO and so on). Women are also found visible in political sphere. Moreover, women are bringing changes in economic behavior and resource management, an enabling environment for empowering women in public spheres created (proactive roles of the community to support women's rights, linkage with public department and elected representative).

**Relevance:** Before initiating the ACCESS, the PNGOs based on their experience assessed the context, extent, and dimension of gender issues and accordingly planned activities, set the output and outcome in the LFA. Thus, the project was quite relevant to existing needs and priorities of the target people. Still the project is relevant to the context that needs long time to be changed. The group formation, integrating community with these groups, capacity building of the group members, awareness raising for promoting equal share of men-women in households, encouraging women to build political leadership, and engaging them in income generating activities as well as creating pressure groups for the promotion of overall women empowerment in social, political and economic spheres were the key areas of output which are directly connected to overall goal of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes.

**Effectiveness:** Women groups, *NariMorcha* (Platform of women), village groups, spouse groups, *JonoMorcha* (Platform of the People), students forums built platforms for the marginalized to unite and tried to stimulate and mobilize community people for claiming their rights. The groups had catalytic roles in attaining results. Women are more engaged in income generating activities. They were elected as members in the UP election. They became members of different social committees, market committees, school management committees, local legal aid committees, and madrasa

committees. They have become vocal in the public gathering and claimed their rights. As a result, women are creating a space for them. All these built capacity of the marginalized people and making the local government accountable, but they need more time along with keeping the activities on track.

**Efficiency:** The PNGOs implemented different activities that were sometimes very difficult and challenging as they contained some sensitive contents (challenging religious superstition, and fundamentalism) and voiced against traditional institutions. Then they tried to continue the quality work to bring positive changes in the communities. Therefore, the financial supports of the development partners had been complemented with the voluntarism of the groups and community people and social networks. Through this approach of implementation and mobilization, the project used available resources to get intended results. Though any rigorous study on cost-efficiency of the project was not done, the allocation for the three-year project was not substantial. For achieving highly ambitious goals, the project was a good starter.

**Impact:** The results of the project explain that knowledge and awareness of women about their rights in decision-making in family, education, health, wages increased. Women participation in different social and religious institutions and UP committees enhanced. Their status and respect in family and society enhanced.

**Sustainability:** It is quite difficult to continue outcomes achieved under the ACCESS project, unless development partners ensured to such projects. Only three years project does not contribute much to institutionalize voluntary groups and bring changes in their attitudes and behaviors. Then learning of the project will have impact on the group members and communities to sustain in their personal and family lives.

#### **4. Assessing the ARP:**

The key activities were to form, strengthen and activate farmers' organization, to provide training especially for sustainable agriculture, organic pesticides, fertilizers, indigenous seed preservation, soil test, natural process of pest control, integrated pest management, marketing of organic agricultural products etc., to set up a place in the local market for selling organic crops, to build networks between FOs and other service delivery institutions such as UP Agriculture Office, UASC, etc.

Through these activities, the PNGOs as well as different groups of target people brought some positive results in the intervention areas. Some key achievements are: marginalized farmers found a platform to unite (formation and activation of 154 FOs, FOs took initiatives to claim rights from the duty bearers), farmers started to rely and practice ecosystem based agriculture (sustainable agriculture practice, proactive roles of female members of FOs), farmers established supply chain for their organic products (market for a good supply chain), capacity building on farmers' rights and sustainable agriculture (building skilled and trained facilitators, developing legal instruments).

**Relevance:** Almost everywhere now-a-day farmers are using chemical fertilizers and pesticides which are harmful for their health and environment. Traditionally farmers were free to cultivate their crops, but now they are becoming more dependent on companies for seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. These modern technologies are assisting to grow more crops. Consequently, they are damaging the quality of soils, contributing to environmental degradation and affecting public health negatively. Sometimes it makes agricultural productions costly. The ARP was introduced for initiating the concept of organic farming and sustainable agriculture that could save them from using poisonous agro products and could prevent their environmental pollution. This project was designed to make farmers aware of their rights through establishing their own platform – Farmers' Organizations. Therefore, the project was quite relevant in the context of farmers.



**Effectiveness:** The main achievement of the ARP project was to establish FOs and build their capacity and leadership. The PNGOs and FOs performed equally to introduce new agricultural practices in the rural setting, so their concerted efforts brought some positive results. If the FOs could be activated furthermore by regular facilitation, monitoring, and supervision, then some substantive changes would happen in all intervention areas, and it will have impact in surrounding villages. The FOs were at the center of the project. When they experienced deprivations in their lives and communities, they raised their voices to get justice. When the issues of their rights came to them, they became united and claimed their rights from the duty bearers. As a result, the FOs gained trust of the communities. But all FOs were not much organized, skilled and proactive to get involved with the issues of their members and communities.

**Efficiency:** Five PNGOs received almost the same amount of budget from the Swallows IB for the ARP. But it was considered a low budget for implementing a wide range of activities to achieve results. The number of staff members was small in size but they were involved to a large number of direct beneficiaries as well as indirect stakeholders. In addition to the financial support of donor, the FOs and communities were engaged on voluntary basis to achieve project's overall goal. The activities were highly cost-efficient, though this finding came not from rigorous analysis on cost-efficiency. It was found that the budgets were very small to organize events and meetings. Finally, this project was a good start for which it with almost the same objective but a different name was extended up to 2021.

**Impact:** Farmers are now more aware of sustainable agriculture, demerits of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and other societal and family issues such as education, health care, women empowerment and gender rights, wage gap, male-female equality, gender-based violence. As a result, the practice of sustainable agriculture has started. They are influencing other farmers who have become interested to know more about organic farming.

**Sustainability:** The project invested a lot to build leadership capacity and knowledge of the FOs, and to make them aware of sustainable and organic agriculture, and built a network between the FOs and the agro based service providing agencies. If external support is no more with the FOs and PNGOs, then these results would not sustain for along. But regular meeting, coordinated campaign and awareness building activities, activism on agricultural and gender issues may not be sustained.

## **5. A Critical Review of the ACCESS and ARP**

**An Introduction of a New Thought Process:** The Bangladesh programme was designed to bring changes in the stereotypical status quo, so that ordinary citizens can get their rights and become "mainstream" in the development process. The programme followed a seven-point strategy, i.e. group formation, building capacity, participatory planning and design, coordinated joint action, engaging community, networking and linkages, and setting examples to encourage interactions between rights holders and duty bearers for bringing change. They include formation of groups, building their capacity, participatory planning and design, coordinated joint action, engaging community, networking and linkages, and setting examples. The changes were not only considered as visible changes, but also changes in leadership, attitudes, behavior, knowledge, practices were equally important for achieving the project objective.

**Innovativeness and Value Addition:** Both the ACCESS and ARP projects were developed by the PNGOs. It was an exceptional but innovative process, because it brought all ideas on a table and decided which one fitted well to the context. Sometimes, it was time consuming to bring people of diverse background together and to take decision on developing specific tools and strategies for programme implementation. Nevertheless, when the process was completed, a unique project implementation and reporting procedures took place.

**Group formation as important component to the Theory of Change:** The Swallows IB did not have any written theory of change for the Bangladesh Programme. However, it created and facilitated groups from the direct beneficiaries, and eventually they served key role to bring changes in the communities.

**Previous relevant experience:** Most of the PNGOs had experience using RBA at that time, and they had hands-on experience on the issues of ACCESS and/or ARP. Though they faced challenges of getting capable staff having RBA experience, then they were able to run the programmes at field levels effectively.

**Voluntarism and Ownership:** The direct beneficiaries of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programme formed Community Based Organization (CBO) and acted upon voluntary basis. It was mostly a large group of people directly involved to the groups/organizations in a village.

**Support from the Stakeholders:** The direct beneficiaries built a good working relation with the service providing organizations by optimizing their strengths, and wining over their weaknesses.

**Building self-confidence and self-control:** The Swallows IB tries to build self-confidence and self-control mechanism of the PNGOs. Accordingly, they facilitated them to plan their work together following vision, mission and overall goal of the Swallows. Then they engaged consultants or expert organizations to build the capacity of PNGOs and the project staff so that they can implement project activities in a better way.

**Capacity building:** Both the PNGOs and direct beneficiaries received a good number of training on diverse issues which had tremendous impact on the knowledge and skills of the project staff as well as on the direct beneficiaries. Though in some cases subject-specific experts (such as Agriculturists, Gender Specialists, Human Rights Experts, etc.) were not engaged as trainers by the PNGOs, rather their regular trainers were engaged for the sessions on technical issues. Thus, the respondents opined that the training would be more effective if technically sound experts were involved in the facilitation of the training.

**Pro-community:** The Swallows' Bangladesh programme was formulated on pro-community approach. In all phases except the primary planning and preparing the LFA, community people were involved in the programme.

**Visibility of the programmes:** The results of the Bangladesh programme are quite visible in the intervention areas. For instance, members of the groups/organization built their capacity in the areas of leadership, management, and knowledge. Afterwards they were elected as members in UP, SMC, Market Committees, etc.

**Continuity of the programme:** In the development sector, many good results or achievements of a short-term development project were lost for the discontinuation of the project. Thus, the continuity of the programme (though a slight change in the objectives, and with different names of the projects) with the same PNGOs up to 2021 is a best way to keep the focus intact as well as to make the results sustainable.

**Accountability:** The first line of accountability was set between the Swallows and the PNGOs. The second line was between PNGOs and the groups/organizations. And the third line was between groups/organizations and communities. This accountability mechanism was maintained during project implementation.

**Sustainability:** It cannot be simply concluded that the result of the projects will be sustained or not. The best practices of the Swallows' Bangladesh programme would continue up to 2021. All PNGOs except TSDS and NK have been implementing almost the same projects with a little revision of the objectives and titles. NK is receiving funds for the five year project from the Swallows IB on "Ensuring Democracy, Accountability, and Rights for the Poorest" 2017-21. Though it is different programming, then they are keeping some aspects of ARP and ACCESS, such as farmers groups, landless groups, etc. in their current core programmes. TSDS is no more getting funds from the Swallows IB.

## **6. Major Learning for improvements:**

The study found the following major weaknesses in the Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes:

- a. Baseline data were not used as an evaluation tool.
- b. Lack of smart M&E tools and formats.
- c. Field visits took place without monitoring tools.
- d. There was difficulty in measuring real changes.
- e. Over ambitious targets were set.
- f. Least effort to reduce gaps among the partners of the Secretariat for ACCESS was given.
- g. There was a lack of believing in governance before promoting governance.
- h. Lack of specialized manpower and relevant experience.
- i. Lack of understanding of RBA among project staff during programme implementation.
- j. Lack of implementation and follow up of the MTR by the PNGOs.
- k. Insufficient IEC materials.
- l. Lack of innovation in reporting.
- m. Unavailability of the complete ready document.
- n. Activities suffered for financial loss.
- o. Less emphasis on national level joint programme

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendation**

The Swallow' Bangladesh Programme (ACCESS and ARP) 2014-16 has brought some substantive changes in the prevailing state of male-female relations and farmers' agricultural practices in the intervention areas. The findings reveal that the groups and organizations (e.g. *NariMorcha*, women groups, spouse groups, farmers' organization and so on) played a pivotal role in bringing these changes in the communities. Most of the PNGOs had a great effort to train them for building their capacity and to facilitate them for achieving their targets. Considering the weight of the barriers towards the women empowerment and sustainable agriculture, the programme was a good start. As the programme was quite relevant to the context, effectively addressed to the problems with cost-efficient way, brought visible changes in the communities and has built a psychological and behavioral change to sustain changes, so this programme with a little changes in the objectives and with different names has been extended to another phase up to 2021.

### **Recommendations for the improvement of overall Programme:**

The MTR reports of the ACCESS and ARP projects gave some specific recommendations for better implementation of these projects. These recommendations are still relevant, because most of them are yet considered in the implementation. So all these very important recommendations should be considered while implementing the ongoing phase of the programme.

Other than these, the following recommendations have been produced from the study findings.

#### **1. Baseline data in place:**

- a. Proper baseline study should be carried out by an external organization/consultant.
- b. Internal staff of the PNGOs or the project staff should not be involved either in the development process of data collection tools or during data collection for avoiding the conflict of interest and ensuring quality of data. Thus the Swallows IB shall have to estimate budget for this outsourcing during programme development.

- c. Their feedback should be taken at the time of brainstorming or at the initial stage of planning.
  - d. Baseline data should arise from the baseline study.
  - e. The data should be presented in a popular version so that everybody can have easy access to this.
  - f. On the baseline study, some very important smart indicators should be set and finalized, after getting feedback from the project staff.
  - g. Baseline data should be made ready at the very beginning of the project, not later than three months.
  - h. It should be confirmed that all the PNGOs are using the baseline data without any questions. If there is any question regarding the data, the outsourced organization/consultant should be contacted immediately.
- 2. Developing M&E Tools:**
- a. Based on the baseline study, proper and smart M&E tools and/or questionnaire should be developed and circulated among the staff at earliest, no later than three months.
  - b. The project staff have to be oriented to them, so that they can easily use while preparing M&E reports.
  - c. A computerized MIS can be developed for collecting M&E and other management data in an easiest manner.
- 3. Measuring Changes:**
- a. The MTR and the end line studies have to use comparative tools to measure changes and achievements based on baseline data.
  - b. Small pamphlets on key findings of the baseline and the MTR can be prepared for the project staff and beneficiaries, so that they can remember and follow them as well.
  - c. While conducting baseline study and end line study, control data and experiment data from field can be generated to measure real changes of the programme.
- 4. Setting achievable targets:**
- a. The PNGOs and the Swallows IB have to be practical and realistic while finalizing the targets of the programmes.
  - b. Activities, targets, objectively verifiable indicators, and mode of verification should be well articulated, and achievable.
  - c. Results and changes should be measurable, and visible in the lives of the target groups and communities.
- 5. Measures on promoting governance:**
- a. Governance is not a one-time issue. Regular follow up and refresher training on the governance issues should be taken.
  - b. Any kind of violation in maintaining governance should be raised before the concerned person/PNGO without any delay.
  - c. If one PNGO indulges in bad governance/corruption, and the Swallows IB decides to discontinue funding support after thorough investigation, then the PNGO should not get more than three months to closing the project.
- 6. RBA and other relevant experience:**
- a. The NGOs having long experience of using RBA and expertise in the targeted issue should be considered as partners of the Swallows.
  - b. This combination of two qualities should be ensured while contracting.
  - c. All of the project staff should receive RBA training.
  - d. In-house refreshers training on RBA should be arranged by the PNGOs. Even the RBA training should be given to newly appointed staff.
  - e. Technical project needs technical person for better implementation of the programme. Candidates having academic education and experience on agriculture should be selected for the farmers' rights projects.

**7. Joint event at national level:**

- a. A strategy should be developed in the programme so that the local level learning, and achievements can be presented at national level jointly.
- b. Policy level outreach should be considered in the programme.
- c. One exceptional achievement of a local NGO, presented before the policy makers at national level, may attract a wider audience.

**8. Developing IEC Materials:**

- a. The Swallows IB and PNGOs should be proactive to prepare IEC materials for wider dissemination of their activities as well as achievements.
- b. The Swallows should develop a documentation and communication strategy so that they can regularly document their good works for keeping the organizational memory intact, and reaching external audiences.
- c. The Swallows IB' project reports should be published in proper manner for making these as reference for the practitioners and readers.

**9. Mutual sharing and learning:**

- a. Cross field visits and reflections on the experiences can be increased for mutual learning.
- b. PNGOs should have openness to the new things or new tools, and they have to show how much new things they are taking from other partners.

**10. Developing writing skills:**

- a. The project staff or PNGOs should build report writing skills. If one staff member does not follow guidelines of the trainers or experts on report writing, then necessary corrective measures should be taken against them.

**11. Back-up financial plan:**

- a. The PNGOs should have an alternative plan to back up the project implementation, if they lose money for any unforeseen reasons including low conversion rate.

## Chapter One Introduction and Background

### 1.1 Context of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes:

Bangladesh has an area of about 50,000 square miles of which about 22.3 million acres (69 percent of total land area) are cultivable land. It is predominantly an agricultural country where agriculture sector plays a vital role in accelerating economic growth and stability.<sup>1</sup> Two thirds of Bangladesh's population (105 million people) live in rural areas and 47% of the total labour force depend on agriculture for their main livelihoods.<sup>2</sup>

Considering the importance of the agriculture sector in terms of the involvement of nearly half of the total work force and food security of its large population in the long run, the government policies have emphasized on profitable, sustainable and environment-friendly agricultural practices. The government has determined to develop entire agriculture sector keeping in view of the goals set out in the Seventh Five Year Plan and National Agriculture Policy. As a holistic approach combining policies with appropriate actions, there has been an increment in food production over the last few years.<sup>3</sup>

Bangladesh has achieved self-sufficiency in food production largely due to the use of modern technologies like improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. But excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers is posing increasing health and environmental risks. Experts also emphasized to control pesticides for maintaining environmental and social safety. Though the government has already banned 195 extremely hazardous pesticides, but farmers are still using these banned pesticides in fields as they are cheap. Above all, massive use of inappropriate, hazardous, non-registered pesticides is creating resistance, resurgence and residue effects that seriously affect crop production as well as environment.<sup>4</sup>

Professor Ainun Nishat, a water expert, said that chemical fertilizers are creating imbalance in the ecosystem that ultimately cause serious impact on the food chain. "The farmers must be informed that chemicals are ultimately destroying their lands and sources of foods," he said adding that they should be asked to use organic fertilizers instead of chemical ones.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, it is evident that agriculture in Bangladesh is male-dominant. Male farmers are considered as farmers. In such a way, enormous contribution of women towards agriculture is not recognized. Not only in agriculture, but also everywhere in the society, economy and politics, women become dependent on men for the archetype patrilineal and patriarchal kinship system.

This traditional system enforces the social and economic dependence of women on men and sustains lower status of women. Although, there has been steady progress in reducing gender inequality in different areas (education, health, employment etc.) but there exists a huge inequality in these areas

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<sup>1</sup>Hossain, Mahabub *et. al.* (2017) "A Diagnostic Study on Bangladesh Agriculture", Working Paper Series on Agricultural Economics, BRAC: Dhaka.

<sup>2</sup>Bangladesh Economic Review, 2014

<sup>3</sup>Bangladesh Economic Review, 2017

<sup>4</sup>The Daily Star, Food Safety and Responsible Use of Pesticide, 30 December 2015

<sup>5</sup>Excessive use of fertilizer and pesticides destroys the food Chain, By Banani Mallick The Daily Observer, <http://www.ipsnews.net/excessive-use-of-fertilizer-and-pesticides-destroys-the-food-chain/> (Accessed on 3 May 2018)

and participation of women has been very low compared to their male counterpart. Gender inequality has appeared as the major stumbling block in achieving desired development targets.<sup>6</sup>

Bangladesh has cemented its position in the World Economic Forum (WEF) rankings as the top performing country in South Asia on gender issues, climbing to No.47 on the global list from last year's ranking of 72.<sup>7</sup> However, there are continuous concerns over violence against women, wage disparity, high dropout rates among female students in primary and secondary schools, absence of women in top bureaucratic positions and so on.

Bangladesh has achieved steady GDP growth of around 6% each year in last one decade. UN's Human Development Index (HDI) ranked the country at 139 out of total 188 countries albeit presence of high level of social inequality.<sup>8</sup> Marginalized rural people in Bangladesh are deprived of opportunities and excluded from taking part in "mainstream" development.

## **1.2 The Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes<sup>9</sup>**

In such a context, the Swallows India Bangladesh (Swallows IB) implemented two projects - "Enhancing women's accessibility in the social, political and economic spheres in Bangladesh (briefly known as ACCESS)" and "Enhanced farmers' rights in sustainable agriculture through independent farmers' organizations (briefly known as ARP)" in nine districts. Six Partner NGOs (PNGOs) were engaged to implement the programmes during 2014-16. These two projects were evaluated in April 2015 – halfway of their implementation. Findings of the two Mid-term Review (MTR)<sup>10</sup> were quite helpful to make sure that the projects were on track in terms of progress towards its objectives and showing signs of achieving them by the end of the projects.

At the beginning of 2017, PNGOs prepared their respective Narrative Reports following the reporting format provided by the Swallows. Based on these reports, final project completion reports were prepared and submitted to the back donor Forum Syd by the Swallows IB. The report summarized programme results, contextual challenges, and lessons learned. But a critical review in terms of assessing relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, and scopes of improvement for similar projects have not been done. This final evaluation, thus, has been carried out to complement the earlier reports.

## **1.3 Vision, Mission and Objective:**

The Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes 2014-16 had clear vision, overall goal, programme goal, process outcomes, and indicators. In addition, each of the programmes had four outcomes.

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<sup>6</sup> Ferdaush, Jannatul and K. M. Mustafizur Rahman (2011), "Gender Inequality in Bangladesh", Unnayan Onneshan, Dhaka.

<sup>7</sup> The Dhaka Tribune, Is Bangladesh really closing the gender gap? 8 November 2017

<sup>8</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en>(accessed on 5 May 2018)

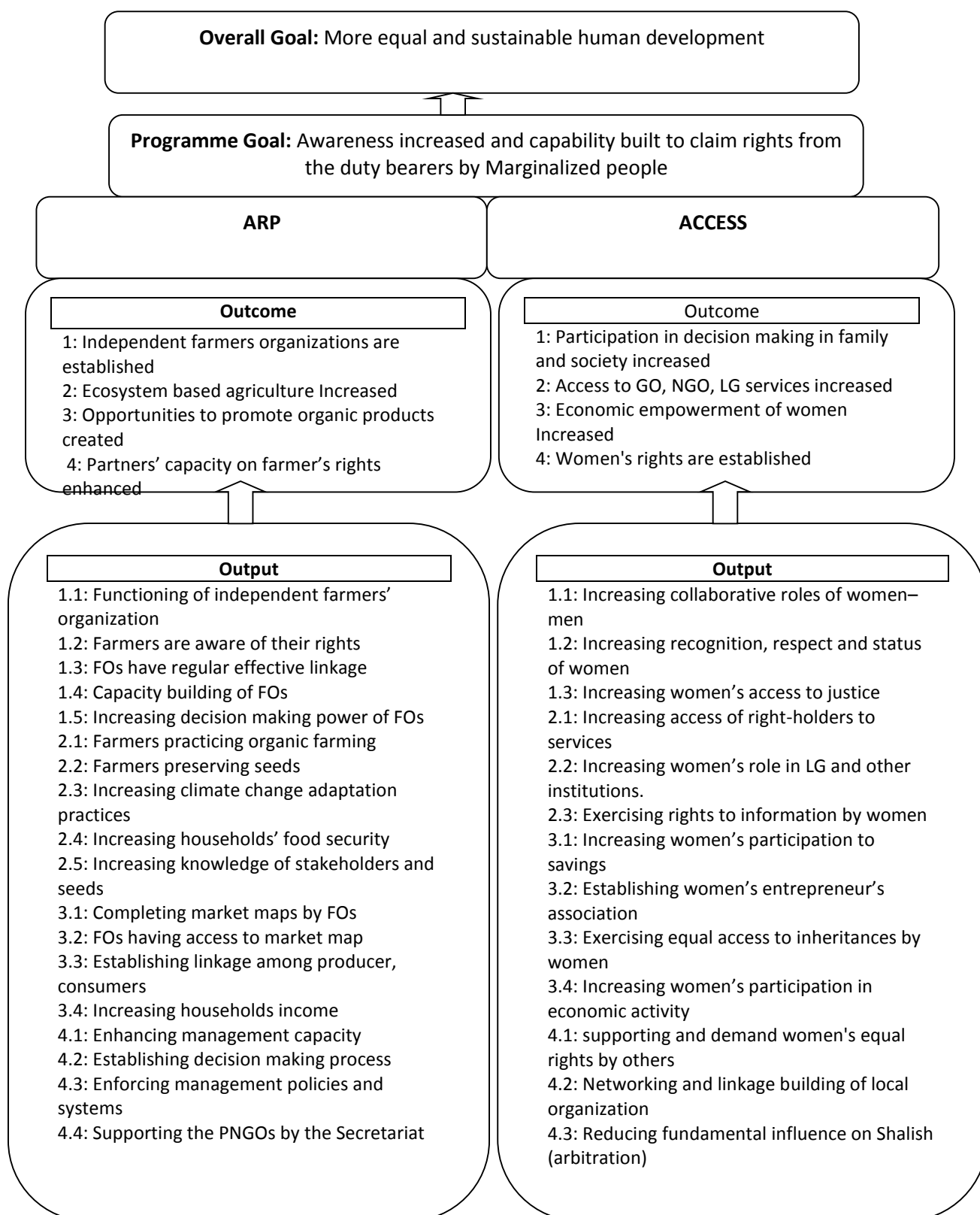
<sup>9</sup> The Swallows' Bangladesh Programme 2014-16 included three projects – two projects - Agriculture Rights Projects, and ACCESS Project have been considered for this evaluation. The third project was "Increased awareness on rights, especially among women, and enhanced capabilities to claim these rights and to adapt to climate change in communities that are poorly protected (shortly Climate Change Project.)

<sup>10</sup> Mid-Term Review: Agriculture Rights Program by A K M Masud Ali; Mid-Term Review Report Enhancing women's accessibility in the social, political and economic spheres in Bangladesh (ACCESS) Project by Naher, Ainoon and Abu Ala Mahmudul Hasan

The shared vision is to attain a just world – free from poverty – where people with power can influence their own lives and live with each other maintaining solidarity and, in a long term, in a sustainable relationship with nature.

The flow chart depicts overall goal, programme goal, outcome and output of the two projects (ACCESS and ARP):

**Figure 1: Flow Chart of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programme Results**





## 1.4 Knowing the Projects

### A. Enhanced farmers' rights in sustainable agriculture through independent farmers' organizations (ARP)

ARP addressed to develop strong farmer organizations with equal participation of men and women and build up their capacity on ecosystem based agriculture in order to promote organic products in the market and ensure fair prices for farmers. Farmers' organizations are expected to provide a platform in the community to work with the local government and hold relevant duty bearers accountable. Building project staff capacity through different issue based training and workshops is another purpose of this project.

### B. Upward trend in empowerment of women in participation and decision making in social, political and economic spheres (ACCESS)

The ACCESS project looked to empower women, increase their participation in different forums, improve their access to government services and local government functions, as well as to increase their involvement in economic or income generating activities. Overall objective of this project was to strengthen women's accessibility to social, political and economic spheres. Specific objectives were to increase women's participation at family, community and local governance levels. For this purposes, community support systems and mechanisms were created and promoted women's rights. As a consequence, women inclusion in service sectors has increased through collectives demand and economic empowerment of women through demanding rights over productive resources that had been visible in the intervention areas.

## 1.5 Purpose and Scope of the Final Evaluation

The Swallows is committed to meet criteria of quality and continuous organizational learning in its programmes and operations. Evaluations are a key method to fulfill these criteria as well as the criteria of accountability towards the Swallow's stakeholders, including the programme participants, local partner organizations, members, and donors.

The purpose of the evaluation is thus to look back on the programme period 2014-2016 to carry out an evaluation, both of the overall programme as well as the projects within it, based upon the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Other elements to be assessed include cross-cutting issues, programme and project management, as well as the application of a programmatic approach. Though the programme period ended in 2016, funding support to almost the same objectives with different names of the projects<sup>11</sup> will continue till 2021. The aim is that the evaluation should present conclusions and recommendations useful for the further development of the projects and overall programme.

## 1.6 Objectives and Key Questions

The specific objectives to address in this evaluation include:

- To deliver clear conclusions on each criteria stated below including an analysis of the reasons behind the success and challenges.

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<sup>11</sup> **Project 1:** The Farmer's rights Project is a five year Project, (January 2017 - December 2021) that is funded by The Swallows India Bangladesh. The Project is implemented with three Partner Organizations, named Barcik (Bangladesh Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge), UD (Unnayan Dhara) and DEW (Development Wheel) at Manikganj, Mymensingh and Jhenaidah district. **Project 2:** The Project on Women Empowerment and Gender Justice through Representation, Recognition and Redistribution is five year project (Jan 2017-Dec 2021) funded by The Swallows India Bangladesh. Sabalamby Unnayan Samity (SUS) is implementing the project at Netrokona District. But KN is not a part of these two projects. It is receiving funds for the five-year project titled "Ensuring Democracy, Accountability and rights for the Poorest" 2017-2021.

- To deliver lessons learned and recommendations to be utilized in the project planning, implementation and management

The objectives are to be applied on each project included in the Bangladesh Programme as well as the programme as a whole, and should be studied against following evaluation criteria guided by the stated key question:

## **1.7 Methodology and the data**

This final evaluation followed a sound methodology to generate data from diverse respondents living in the programme areas. The methodology mainly includes sources of information, types and number of respondents, data collection tools, timeline, and limitation.

### **1.7.1 Research Approach**

This final evaluation applied a qualitative approach to comprehend deeper understanding of interrelations, interdependencies, and intra-basis of the activities, and results within the scopes of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programme. Quantitative data of the Programme (ACCESS and ARP), 2014-16 were collected, analyzed and reported by the PNGOs during reporting of project completion. But qualitative aspects of the programmes was not sufficiently addressed that could be included in this final evaluation. Some qualitative data collection tools such as Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informants Interview (KII) and Participatory Reflection Workshops were used and these data were presented in listing, tables, and figures.

### **1.7.2 Sources of Data**

Data for the final evaluation were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources were the project-related documents, such as:

- Programme/project applications (incl. narrative, budget, goal matrixes, risk matrixes etc.)
- Six-monthly, and annual reports of the PNGOs
- Programme/project final reports, 2014-16 (narrative)
- Compilation reports of the ACCESS and ARP
- The mid-term reviews
- Minutes from partners' meetings
- The Swallows' Strategy 2015-2020
- The Swallows' policies and guidelines (e.g. gender and environmental policies and its papers on RBA and partnership)
- Forum Syd's (the Swallows' back donor) decision memo on the final report 2014-16, and their external evaluation of the Programme cooperation organizations' programmes 2014-2016.

In addition, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials of the implementing Partner NGOs, Evaluation Reports, books, policies and guidelines, website materials and other relevant literature were reviewed.

The primary sources of data were: Inception Workshop, FGD, KII, and field observation.

### **1.7.3 Data Collection Tools:**

Different kinds of data collection tools (see annex 1 for the data collection tools) were used to gather information from the participants of the inception workshop, FGDs and KIIs. They are:

- Checklist for the FGDs (for farmers' organization, women group, men group, cultural group)
- Checklist for PNGO staff members
- Checklist for external stakeholders

### **1.7.4 Types of Respondents:**

The beneficiaries of the ACCESS and ARP projects were different. For the ACCESS, the respondents were mainly Female Group Members/*NariMorcha*, Male Group Members/Spouse Groups,

*JonoMorcha*/ Pressure Group, *Shalisker*/Arbitrator, Local Government Representatives i.e. Union Parishad (UP) Member, and UP Standing Committee Members.

For the APR, respondents were male and female members of the Farmers' Organization, member of Collective Marketing Group, cultural team members, Local Government Representatives/UP Members, Agricultural Officials/Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer, UP Agriculture Standing Committee Member, and local Market Committee Members.

In both cases, Executive Head, and Project Staff including Project Coordinator, Project Officer, Community Mobilize of the PNGOs were interviewed.

### 1.7.5 Selection of Field and Respondents

Three PNGOs implemented the ACCESS project in four upazilas of four districts. These four upazilas were selected for data collection. The following number of FGDs and KIIs were conducted in these areas.

**Table 1: Types and Number of Respondents by PNGOs in ACCESS**

PNGOs	Location		FGDs			KIIs		
	Upazila	District	No.	Respondents		No.	Respondents	
<b>TSDS</b>	Charghat	Rajshahi	1	Female	Group Members	4	PNGO Staff,	Local Government Member
<b>NK</b>	Bagatipara, Kumarkhali	Natore Kushtia	4	Female	Group Members, Male Group Members	7	PNGO Staff, Arbitrator, UP Member, Group Member	who elected UP Member
<b>SUS</b>	SadarNetrokona	Netrokona	3	<i>NariMorcha</i> , Spouse Group, <i>JonoMorcha</i>		7	PNGO Staff, UP Member, Arbitrator, Group Member	who elected UP Member

On the other hand, the ARP project was implemented by five PNGOs in six districts. The following number of FGDs and KIIs were conducted in these areas.

**Table 2: Types and Number of Respondents by PNGOs in ARP**

PNGOs	Location		FGDs			KIIs		
	Upazila	District	No.	Respondents		No.	Respondents	
<b>BARCIK</b>	Singair	Manikganj	2	Male	FO, Female FO	6	PNGO Staff, UP Member, Agriculture Officer, Local Market Committee, UP Agriculture Standing Committee	
<b>TSDS</b>	Charghat	Rajshahi	2	Male	FO, Female FO	4	PNGO Staff, Agriculture Officer, Local Market Committee	
<b>NK</b>	Paikgacha	Khulna	3	Male	FO, Female FO, Cultural Team	4	PNGO Staff, Agriculture Officer, Local Market Committee	
<b>DEW</b>	Gouripur	Mymensingh	3	Male	FO, Female FO, Members of Collective Marketing Group	6	PNGO Staff, Agriculture Officer, UP Member, Agriculture Officer, Local Market Committee, UP Agriculture Standing Committee	
<b>UD</b>	SadarJhenaidah	Jhenaidah	3	Male	FO, Female FO, Cultural Team	6	PNGO Staff, Agriculture Officer, UP Member, Agriculture Officer, Local Market Committee, UP Agriculture Standing Committee	

### 1.7.6 Respondents by Sex:

Almost equal participation of both male and female were ensured during conducting FGDs in both the projects. But this equal representation could not be ensured in KIIs as PNGO staff and other stakeholders were predominantly male.

**Table 3: Respondents segregated by Sex**

Data Collection Techniques	Participants	ACCESS		ARP		Total	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
FGDs	210	48	44	55	63	103	107
KIIs	44	13	5	1	25	14	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>136</b>

### 1.7.7 Quality Control of Data

All necessary mechanism was set to ensure the highest quality data from the field. For instances, during the conduction of FGDs and KIIs, project staff members were discouraged to attend. The Study Team including the Lead Consultant visited field to see sustainable agriculture and market set up, as well as made home visits to observe how farmers prepared organic pesticides and fertilizers. The draft notes of the FGDs and KIIs were finalized on the same day to avoid missing of data due to memory loss. The Lead Consultant checked the transcripts of the FGDs and KIIs conducted by the Field Researchers and provided feedback to ensure quality of data at optimum level. Moreover, the active involvement of the project staff of PNGOs contributed a lot to the quality data collection from the field.

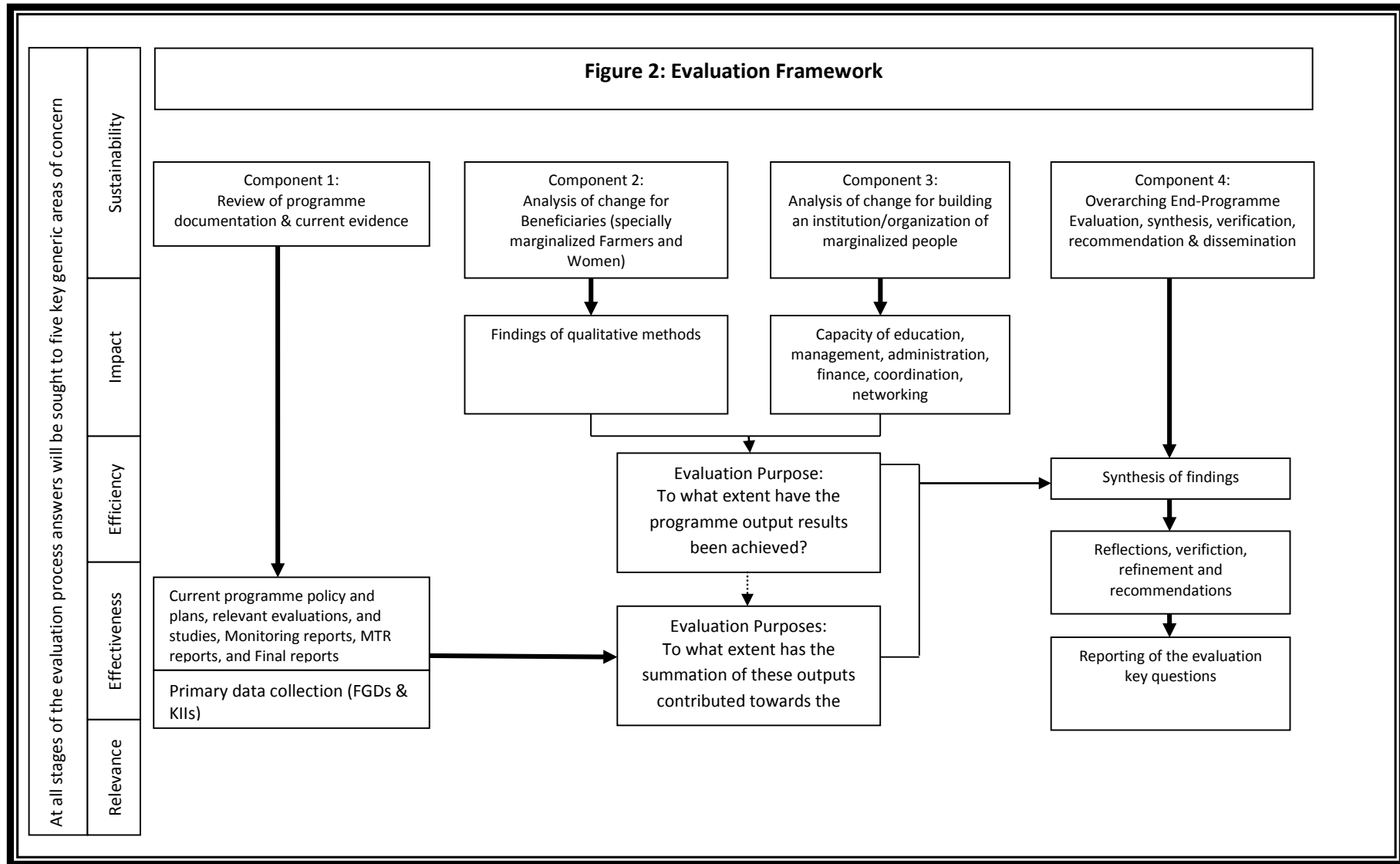
Even the draft report along with all annexes was shared with all the PNGOs for their feedback. All PNGOs except TSDS responded positively, and provided their feedback or comments on the report. Through this process, the quality of data was also strengthened.

### 1.7.8 Data Analysis

The desk research is a combination of review and secondary analysis of available relevant literature. In addition, the field based data were analyzed in a qualitative manner. Besides, this study highlights key lessons learned and key challenges encountered. The findings have come up through the listing and compilation of the responses of diverse respondents, and have been substantiated by the case stories.

Analysis, triangulation and synthesis of data done for this End Programme Evaluation keeping the 15 high-level evaluation questions on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability into cognizance.

Figure 2 outlines how each evaluation component worked together to achieve the evaluation purpose.



Source: Adapted from Burnet Institute & Survey Meter (2014)

### **1.8 Timeline**

This Final Evaluation was initiated at the beginning of April 2018 and ended in mid-May. The field work was carried out during 4-26 April 2018.

### **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

- a) The Bangladesh Programme was phased out in 2016. After almost one and a half years, this final evaluation took place. The time gap was a major challenge for the respondents to recollect the activities and results achieved during that reference period of 2014-16.
- b) The final evaluation was designed to collect information from the respondents through qualitative approach, but during field visit it was realized that field survey could be used to collect some quantitative data that would be helpful to measure the results of the programmes
- c) Organization-specific evaluation on governance and programmatic indicators will not be found from this study report
- d) This study focuses on the programmes, administration, reporting, coordination, and governance, but not on the finance. So cost efficiency was not assessed.

### **1.10 Organization of the Report**

The final evaluation report consists of seven chapters. In the first chapter, the Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes 2014-16, purpose, objectives and key criteria of the evaluation were described. Based on the objective and scope of the final evaluation, methodology was developed. This chapter mainly presented the sources of data, techniques of data collection, and the types of respondents. The Chapter two highlighted institutional arrangements of the programmes of ACCESS and ARP. It includes staffing, budget, beneficiaries, and burn rate. ACCESS and ARP programmes were assessed in the Chapter three and four respectively by analyzing key activities, output, outcome, key stakeholders, and training. After that, how the programmes were relevant, effective, efficient, participatory and sustainable were critically analyzed in these two chapters. In the chapter five, some critical questions such as how the programmes brought changes in the lives of the beneficiaries and the society, what results in terms of outcome and impact were achieved and how these experiences contributed to generate new knowledge to similar programmes were presented. Major learning for improvements of similar programmes were examined in chapter six. A concluding remarks and study recommendations for better implementation of the similar projects and bring further impact in the community were presented in the last chapter.

## Institutional Arrangements of the Programmes

The PNGOs followed an institutional arrangement for staffing, selection of intervention areas, and beneficiaries, forming groups, building capacity, and spending budget for better implementation of the ACCESS and ARP projects during 2014-16. Most of the NGOs had been working on the same issues in their intervention areas, but when they found the projects of the Swallows IB, most of them decided to choose new target groups from different areas. They received financial support from Swallows IB to avoid overlapping of the projects in the intervention areas. But how much money they received for planned activities and how much money they actually spent have also been calculated.

### 2.1 Staffing in the PNGOs:

Forty eight project staff worked in the PNGOs for the Bangladesh Programmes. Among them, 17 were with ACCESS and the remaining 31 with ARP. Male-Female proportion was 63:37. It is evident that number of female staff in ACCESS was bigger than that of female staff in ARP.

**Table 4: Number of the Staff involved in the Projects**

Projects	Name of the PNGOs	Number of Staff (Full time and Partial)		Total Staff
		Female	Male	
ACCESS	TSDS	3	2	5
	NK	3	2	5
	SUS	4	3	7
ARP	TSDS	1	4	5
	NK	1	5	6
	UD	3	5	8
	BARCIK	3	5	8
	DEW	0	4	4
Total Staff		<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>48</b>

### 2.2 Intervention Areas:

Coverage of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes 2014-06 was not too wide. It was only implemented in 9 out of 64 districts. Even the number of villages is 191 under 27 unions of 12 upazilas (sub-districts). Two NGOs namely TSDS and NK implemented both the ACCESS and ARP. The number of villages of intervention by PNGOs varies from 10 to 40.

**Table 5: Intervention areas of the PNGO**

Projects	Name of the PNGOs	District	Name of Upazila/ Sub-District	Number Unions	Number of Villages
ACCESS	TSDS	Rajshahi	Charghat	4	40
	NK	Kustia Natore	Kumarkhali Bagatipara	4	40
	SUS	Netrokona	NetrokonaSadar Kendua	4	40
ARP	TSDS	Rajshahi	Charghat	4	25
	NK	Rangpur Khulna	Pirganj Paikgacha	2	10
	UD	Jhenaidah	JhenaidahSadar Kaliganj	2	12
	BARCIK	Manikganj	Singair	2	12
	DEW	Mymensingh	MymensinghSadar Gouripur	5	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 NGOs</b>	<b>9 Districts</b>	<b>12 Upazilas</b>	<b>27 Unions</b>	<b>191 Villages</b>

### 2.3 Budget and Burn Rate:

The range of budget for ACCESS was about BDT 38 lac – BDT 77 lac. The lowest amount received by TSDS, and the highest amount of budget received by NK. NK spent 100% of its budget, but the other two PNGOs spent almost 80% of their budget.

For the ARP project implementation, all PNGOs received almost the same amount of budget. Among them, the lowest amount of BDT 59 lac received by NK, and the highest amount of BDT 77 lac received by two PNGOs – UD and DEW. Burn rate varies from 88%-100%.

**Table 6: Budget and Burn Rate for ACCESS and ARP by the PNGOs**

Projects	Name of the PNGOs	Budget for 2014-16 (BDT)	Burn Rate (%)
ACCESS	TSDS	38,33,202	83
	NK	77,73,835	100
	SUS	53,85,000	86
ARP	TSDS	64,45,000	88
	NK	59,73,720	100
	UD	77,00,000	89
	BARCIK	67,65,000	100
	DEW	77,79,492	89
<b>Average</b>		64,56,906	91.88

### 2.4 Formation of a Secretariat for ACCESS:

A secretariat was established for overall programme management located at NK. The Secretariat was in charge of overall coordination with the partner organizations in accordance with decisions and guidance from the Steering Committee. The key roles and responsibilities were:

- It will perform the responsibility of implementing the activities within the specific time period as per plan,
- If any specific need arises in terms of conducting the activities, the Secretariat will take initiatives to organize an additional meeting in consultation with the Convener of the Steering Committee.
- The Secretariat will take money from 'the Swallows IB.' It would perform the duty of financial management on the basis of the partnership agreement. The Secretariat will later send the audit accounts and reports as monitored by the audit firms to concerned organizations.
- The Secretariat will also play the duty of collecting information, preservation and sending the reports relevant to the project of concerned organizations.
- The Secretariat will send copies of each letter/correspondence to the Chief Executive/Coordinators of each organization and the representatives of the Swallows IB in the area of coordination and information exchange.

The Secretariat will also provide strategic assistance to partner organizations and visit the organizations and their working areas as needed. At the secretariat, a steering committee led by one Convener from NK was formed for management, director and coordination.

- The Steering Committee (comprising of 13 members) is responsible for the overall management and oversight of the programme. The committee provides overall direction, monitoring and financial management to the programme. Hence, the committee plays crucial role in overall coordination, planning, budget approval as well as programme delivery oversight.
- The partner organizations shall ensure effective implementation of the activities and shall ensure participation of all the beneficiaries in the processes and decision making. The programmes will be jointly conducted under the auspices of the Steering Committee.



- Partner organizations shall prepare the quarterly programme planning and the proposed budget on the basis of yearly planning as approved by the Steering Committee and then send those to the Secretariat.

## **2.5 Capacity building of the PNGOs and Target Groups**

The programme was designed to form groups and build capacity on rights based issues. Over the programme period, target groups actively participated in the planning and monitoring process of the future project. It aimed to strengthen their capacity and self-initiative for raising their voice, establishing farmers' rights, women rights and ensuring equality within household and society. On the other side, the project staff were given sufficient training to build their own capacity and knowledge so that they can deliver their knowledge to the target groups as well as they understand the project activities in a better way.

### **2.5.1 Staff Capacity Development:**

Around 79 staff members (some staff members received multiple trainings) of three PNGOs under ACCESS received a diverse range of training, which were on: LFA, gender planning methodology, monitoring format development, module development and facilitation and Rights-Based Approach, PME, training facilitation, governance, facilitation team development, project management.

In the ARP, 473 staff members (some staff members received multiple trainings) of five PNGOs received training on women rights, training facilitation, climate change adaptation, module preparation, agriculture rights, leadership development, PME, programme implementation, RBA, sustainable agriculture, developing of participatory M&E system, people led development approach, project orientation, food sovereignty, soil health, "Do No Harm", home gardening, compost preparation, IGA, market linkages, safe food with linkage, seed production and preservation, and organization management.

Staff of PNGOs received training for garnering new knowledge. Afterward, they gave training to the target groups. For developing own training resources and providing an organized in-house training programmes, they developed training manual, guidelines, issue-based modules, etc.

### **2.5.2 Capacity Development of Target Groups:**

Almost 1645 target group members in the areas of ACCESS (one participant received multiple training) received training that include inheritance law and property rights on land, leadership development, gender, rights and family law, group development, domestic violence, sexual rights and health rights, advocacy, networking and linkage building, rights to information, collective economic production, citizen's rights and constitutional guarantee, rights to information act, women food sovereignty, fundamentalism and women empowerment

Around 3603 target group members (one member received more than one training sometime) under the ARP project received training mainly on sustainable agriculture, homestead gardening, organization development, gender in agriculture, organic pesticides, rights in agriculture, linkage building and networking, seed production and preservation, soil health development, Integrated Crop management & Integrated Pest Management (ICM & IPM), gender planning methodology, organic manure, agriculture and market, rights to information, traditional agriculture commercialization, leadership of FO leaders, developing participatory M&E system, bio-pesticide preparation, vermin and quick compost preparation, local crop management, diversify crop management, organic model farm management, IGA, safe food with duty bearers

## **2.6 Formation of Groups**

The Swallows' Bangladesh programme was operated in the rural communities to develop platforms that broadened the opportunities of marginalized groups, especially of women so that they would be empowered to participate and claim rights at community level.

### 2.6.1 Farmers' Organization:

Under the ARP, one such platform was the Farmers' Organizations (FOs), which organize landless and small-scale farmers as well as female farmers and work to promote farmers' rights and expose causes of their marginalization. Female farmers' role and contribution in the agriculture sector have been largely unrecognized by the community, society and state. So they were also separately or jointly involved to form their own organization aiming to become independent.

**Table 7: Number of FOs and their Members**

PNGOs	Number of FOs	Number of FO Members		
		Female	Male	Total
NK	30	240	360	600
BARCIK	12	208	168	376
TSDS	32	1536	1536	3072
UD	30	1500	1500	3000
DEW	50	750	750	1500
Total	154	4234	4314	8548

Table 7 shows that the number of members differ widely ranging from 376 to 3072. There were 154 FOs which had 8,548 members. Almost half of them were female and half male. BARCIK had 376 members in 12 FOs. One FO was selected from one village. So BARCIK worked in 12 villages. These FOs became the leaders of the farmers in the villages to promote the issues of farmers. Moreover, BARCIK worked in other 9 villages, but the farmers of these villages were not organized under the FOs. On the other hand, TSDS and UD had large number of direct beneficiaries – 3072 and 3000 respectively, because they formed more than one FO in each village.

### 2.6.1 Women's Groups

Women's groups such as '*NariMorcha*' by SUS, '*Village Group*' by TSDS has been another way to organize marginalized and disadvantaged women under the ACCESS. These platforms had been further developed and institutionalized during the reporting period to fight injustice, oppression and violence against women to reduce their social and institutional vulnerability. For example, these group members were able to stop illegal decisions regarding domestic violence, child marriages and dowries. This is a positive result in ensuring women's legal rights (ACCESS outcome 1).

**Table 8: Number of Landless Women's Groups/*NariMorcha*/Village Groups and their Members**

PNGOs	Types	Number of Groups	Number of Members
NK*	Both women and men	21	396
TSDS**	Both women and men	40	1600
SUS	Only women	5	100

\*NK formed 21 new landless groups/*BhumiheenDol* for this project intervention. But it has extensive number of groups at different tiers (village committees, upazila committees) of the intervention areas.

\*\* TSDS had 37 women groups and 3 men groups

### 2.6.3 Other Groups:

In addition, under the purview of ACCESS, *JonoMorcha/Pressure Groups* consisted of both educated male and female, well-connected, professional or local elites such as UP Members, UP Standing Committee Members, students of high schools, teachers, *Qazis* (Islamic Marriage Registrars), Imams, market committee members, cultural activists, journalists, and **Students' Forums**. They were involved to strengthen the voices of landless women's groups to claim their rights.

**Table 9: No. of Members in Spouse Groups, Pressure Groups/*JonoMorcha* and Students' Forum**

PNGOs	Spouse Groups		Pressure Groups		Students' Forum	
	No. of Groups	No. of Members	No. of Groups	No. of Members	No. of Groups	No. of Members
TSDS	-	-	5	125	2	50
SUS	5	100	4	84	2	50

The PNGOs experienced non-participation of men in the programme implementation of ACCESS at the early stage. They did not directly engage men in the work for equality and gender justice at community level. By the creation of spouse groups (whose members were the spouses of the members of women's groups), the organization's work on gender relations and norms reached to a larger extent. The social and political empowerment process of women had been expanded in many ways, when women found their partners at the same platform and discussed the issues with them at the households.

The programme realized the necessity of strong and independent farmer as well as women's organizations to influence local governance structure and promote human rights, thus bringing justice for both women and men in the communities.

**2.7 Creation of Internship Facility:**

The position of Interns was created to have a Third Eye in the programmes. By this, the third-eye (interns) reviewed the process of activities, outcomes, and its monitoring system and shared the learning with the concerned PNGOs. This arrangement contributed to the effectiveness of the programme and capacity building processes of PNGOs. For instance, two Interns came from Sweden through the Swallows IB, which effectively contributed to build reporting capacity of SUS.

**2.8 Exchange Visit:**

Exchange visits were introduced to help organizations to learn how other organizations deal with challenges of pertinent issues. It also contributed in building capacity of organization.

**2.9 Building Alliance and Networks:**

The projects set outcomes and indicators to capture results from building alliance and networks with like-minded organizations, so that the cause and purposes of the projects could be shared and disseminated widely, thus, help to bring coordinated impact on the lives of beneficiaries as well as communities.

## Chapter Three

### Assessing the ACCESS

Enhancing empowerment of women in regard to participation and decision making in social, political and economic spheres, the ACCESS project was implemented in a small scale project (120 villages, 12 unions, 5 upazilas, and 4 districts) by three PNGOs. Though the PNGOs have long been working on the gender issues but under this project they combined three equally important areas of empowerment for women in one frame and facilitated the community groups to work on their own to bring substantial changes in the community. Realizing the objective, the project was implemented during 2014-16, but how much changes it has brought in the lives of the community people can be ascertained by an evaluation. Thus, in this chapter, key activities, output, and outcome, strengths and weaknesses of the key stakeholders, SWOT analysis of the programme, and challenges and risks of the programme are analyzed based on the responses from FGDs and KIIs. Above all, the project has been evaluated here by responding to 15 key evaluation questions in regard to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

#### 3.1 Key Activities and Achievements:

Three PNGOs jointly designed the project and prepared the LFA where they set targets to be achieved in three years. But they have been working on the issues of gender empowerment for a long time, and they have individual organizational strategy, working structures, and established networks in the intervention areas. Therefore, while implementing the ACCESS project by them, some variations in activities were observed. However, all of the key activities and results have been compiled and reported as well.

Key activities implemented by the PNGOs include forming of groups, arranging meeting, building capacity, raising awareness, observing national days, arranging cultural activities and debate competitions, encouraging women for savings, providing training on IGA, facilitating the groups to engage in societal and political issues on their own, campaigning locally, and nationally through networks, managing crisis, etc.

Through these activities, the PNGOs as well as different groups of targeted people brought some positive results in the intervention areas. Among them, some key achievements are presented below (see annex 6 for more details with statistical figure):

##### 3.1.1 Process initiated to break stereotypical roles for men-women:

- *Female and male collaboration in family management:* The scope of expressing opinion by women and participation of women in the family economic decision-making process have widened and enhanced. Men have started to come forward to join hands in household chores. This has a direct impact on the stereotypical roles of both men and women, and thus creating a space where women are recognized and respected by families as well as society.
- *Roles in Shalish:* According to the project completion report, it is found that a total of 1,521 (women - 538 and men -983) members participated as observers in *shalish* (arbitration) and 193 (women -109 and men -84) members participated as mediators in *shalish*. This was a positive step towards achieving equal participation of men-women in the society and recognition of women's right by the local elites.
- *Women's access to justice:* In the project areas, especially in the families of group members, domestic violence has reduced. Lots of efforts were invested to build public opinion against domestic violence. Now women have gained confidence to file such complaints, even with

*JonoMorcha*, for instance. This happened because marginalized victim women sometimes got legal support from groups under the facilitation of PNGOs.

- *Access of women and men to GO-NGO:* Women's mobility in the society has become increasingly visible. Earlier they rarely visited governmental and non-governmental organizations to get services, instead sent their male counterparts. Through the activism and campaigning of the groups, women have come forward to demand their rights, for instances, regarding social safety net from the LGIs. As they are now united, so their voices have been heard by the service providing agencies.

### Case Study 1: Advocacy and lobbying worked to ensure civil rights

There are instances where eligible persons are not getting support from safety net programmes run by local governments due to their dishonesty and biasness.

Molejan Bewa lives in village Gopalpur, Charghat, Rajshahi. Her husband died 25 years ago. She has no property. Now she is too old. Thus, she attended group meetings of net Group a number of times. came to know types of services and Social Service Department. municipality for a widow card. and local councillor denied her claimed that she was not eligible matter in the group meeting. Begum along with some other Rebina Begum, Popy Begum,



Begum went to the Mayor to convince him to give her a widow card but they failed. Then they went to Charghatupazila and submitted an application to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). Rasel Sabrin, UNO of Charghat upazila discussed this matter with Upazila Social Welfare Officer and formed an investigation committee. Two members committee from social services department investigated the matter in the field and submitted a report. As per the report, Molejan was declared eligible for a widow card.

became helpless. She has Chargat Babupara Social Safety Through group meetings, she people can get from municipality After that she applied to her But the Mayor of the municipality rights to a widow card. They fora widow card. She shared the Then the group leader Saleha members like Mahmuda Begum, Nasima Begum and Komela

Finally, she got a widow card. Now she is getting 1200 in every quarter. So far she has received the support two times. Obviously, this was an example of group achievement in claiming civil rights of disadvantaged people.

#### 3.1.2 Women are visible in political sphere:

- *Women's participation in local governance structures:* Women participated in budget preparation of the Union Parishad, contested in the school and market management committee election. 18 and 3 women were elected in school management committee and market committee respectively. Besides some group members were nominated in UP Standing Committees and policing and community clinic committees. This indicates women's representation in the local decision making process.

A total of 24 candidates (women - 16 and men - 8) contested in union parishad election. Out of them, 12 members (women - 8 and men - 4) were elected in Sardah, Nimparapara, Usuppur, Charghat municipality (TSDS), Nowpara, Kailati UP (SUS) Nandalalpur, Sadaki, and Bagatipara UP (NK).

#### 3.1.3 Women are bringing changes in economic behaviors and resource management:

- *Women participating and controlling own fund:* In the reporting period, both women and men group members saved a total of BDT 2,176,195. The group savings formed a collective resource and indicated economic empowerment of the members. The group members decided to distribute BDT 1,184,515 from their collective savings equally amongst themselves for use in farming. Some women have established micro businesses getting support from collective

resources and engaged in income generating activities. This way women have started to increase their access to markets.

Women's access to inheritance: In the reporting period, a total of 119 women raised claims and demanded their inherited property. As a result of collective pressure, 75 women members already received property from their parents. This has encouraged other women to demand property and assets that are rightfully of their own, which is a strong indication of women's empowerment and sustainable economic wellbeing.

### 3.1.4 Creating enabling environment for empowering women in public spheres:

- *Proactive roles of the community to support women's rights:* There was active participation of men in all the movements regarding the issue of violence against women, strengthening gender sensitivity within men and women's groups, as well as within society at large. Through press conference and engaging journalists the message of the issues was disseminated.
- *Linkage with public department and elected representatives:* In the day celebration events, district and different upazila level government officials, elected representatives and other organisations like Mohila Parishad were present together with target group members. This was positively contributed to build direct relation and linkage between external influential stakeholders and groups members.

Through seminar on "Land Right, Food Sovereignty and Rural Women" organized by Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Nijera Kori and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), concerted demand was raised at national level to establish a recognition for woman as agricultural labour. The demand was published both in print and electronic media.

### 3.2 Key Stakeholders and their Strengths and Weaknesses

Above results have been achieved because of proactive roles and activism of key stakeholders. Though all actors had weaknesses for having their own status quo and structural limitations, then their strengths fought back against these and finally contributed a lot to achieve the results of the project. The strengths and weaknesses of the key stakeholders that have impacted the implementation of the project are presented below for getting boarder understanding about them. They would help the implementers to design proper strategy for the future programmes.

Key Stakeholders	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Targeted women's groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong landless organization</li> <li>• Collective voice for right</li> <li>• Social acceptance</li> <li>• Representation in different forums</li> <li>• Become knowledgeable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonal migration</li> <li>• Influenced by patriarchal value</li> <li>• Not educated</li> <li>• Low voice for being poor and marginalized</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted spouse groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They become organized and positive on gender issues</li> <li>• Helpful mentality developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonal migration</li> <li>• Low voice for being poor and marginalized</li> <li>• Time constraint</li> </ul>
<b>Pressure groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong acceptance in the society</li> <li>• Aware on different rights and laws</li> <li>• Influential and good network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not having own office</li> <li>• Different mentality and attitude</li> </ul>
<b>Students' groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positively received information</li> <li>• Unity and cooperative mentality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly change of the group</li> </ul>
<b>Union Parishad</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political power and local influential</li> <li>• Social acceptance</li> <li>• Skill in message delivery, arbitration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biasness for many reasons</li> <li>• Time constraints</li> <li>• Institutional barrier</li> </ul>
<b>Students/Teachers/Lawyers association,</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social acceptance</li> <li>• Having knowledge on rights and laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time constraints</li> <li>• Institutional barrier</li> </ul>

Key Stakeholders	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Press club, Religious Leaders and teacher association</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to disseminate information</li> <li>• Media disseminates information easily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political biasness and rent-seeking</li> <li>• Not properly organized</li> <li>• Stereotypical mentality</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant government officials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service provider</li> <li>• Skilled in message delivery</li> <li>• Social acceptance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time constraints</li> <li>• Institutional barriers</li> <li>• Unwillingness to provide services</li> <li>• Corruption</li> </ul>

### 3.3. A Brief Overview of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats of the Project:

Strengths of the PNGOs, staff and the different groups and opportunities prevailed in the community and the legal system sufficiently controlled over the weaknesses. The strengths of the key stakeholders, as mentioned earlier, had doubled with the enabling environment of legal framework and community support system to accept the change. Then some threats i.e. political unrest, religious superstition and fundamentalism had negatively impacted the implementation. The SWOT of the project is illustrated in the below:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working experiences, existing organizational structure, networks, skilled staff and social acceptance of PNGOs</li> <li>• Favorable state policy and law</li> <li>• Issue based movements by the landless groups</li> <li>• Participatory programme formulation, implementation and monitoring process</li> <li>• Contribution and voluntarism of the direct beneficiaries</li> <li>• Representation in different institutional committees</li> <li>• Cultural activities</li> <li>• Democratic decision making process</li> <li>• Joint economic activities by the groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patriarchal and stereotypical mentality and attitudes</li> <li>• Fundamentalism and religious superstition</li> <li>• Lack of awareness about women rights</li> <li>• Less opportunity for women in participating social and political spheres</li> <li>• Joint economic activities need to be strengthened</li> <li>• Lack of collective leadership by women and men</li> <li>• Lack of acceptance of women's leadership</li> <li>• Weak information collection mechanisms</li> <li>• Not covering all villages of the selected union</li> <li>• Staff Dropout</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive environment</li> <li>• Donor support</li> <li>• Women friendly state law and policy</li> <li>• Cooperation from Union Parishad and civil society people</li> <li>• Like-minded local, national and international networks</li> <li>• Government resources and services</li> <li>• Empowering women economically through savings group</li> <li>• Social acceptance of changed roles of women in UP, Market, etc.</li> <li>• Increasing market linkages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgetary support reduction</li> <li>• Delay to receive funds</li> <li>• Political unrest</li> <li>• Political pressure and biasness of political elites</li> <li>• Religious superstition and misinterpretations</li> <li>• False legal charges for working on rights issues</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Responses to the Key Evaluation Criteria

The results of ACCESS which have been presented in the beginning of this chapter can be properly evaluated, if evaluation criteria of OECD-DAC (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) for the development projects are followed. Other than that, cross-cutting issues, results based management and the application of a programmatic approach have been analyzed here for

getting a comprehensive picture of the programme implementation. In this regard, the findings of the FGD and KII are presented below:

#### 3.4.1 Relevance:

In Bangladesh especially in the rural communities, violence against women and violation of women's rights are very common phenomenon – not only limited to Khulna, Natore, Rajshahi, Netrokona, rather it prevails across the country. This multi-faceted problem is ingrained in our society, politics and economy and women are the worst victims of it. In this context, like many other NGOs, the PNGOs of the Swallows IB especially NK, and SUS have been working to address gender discrimination and promote women's rights and empowerment through rights based approach. Before initiating the ACCESS, the PNGOs based on their long and relevant working experience assessed the context, extent, and gender dimensions and accordingly designed activities and set outputs and outcomes in the LFA.

1. To what extent was the project consistent with the needs and priorities of the participants?
2. Was the project still relevant in the given context?
3. Were the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?

Thus, the project was quite relevant to the existing needs and priorities of the target people.

Community people and other stakeholders were involved in implementing ACCESS through different kinds of groups such as landless women groups, *NariMorcha*, village groups, etc. These group members along with community people became aware of the issues and started to raise their voice for protecting women's rights. They have ushered this social movement for bringing gender justice and women empowerment from the beginning of this project and still they are continuing the journey to bring substantive changes in the community.

The group formation, integrating community with these groups, capacity building of the group members, awareness raising for promoting equal share of men-women in households, encouraging women to build political leadership, and engaging them in income generating activities as well as creating pressure groups for the promotion of women empowerment in social, political and economic spheres were the key areas of outputs which are directly connected to the overall goal of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programmes. It envisions "equal and sustainable human development where people living in poverty claim their rights and have control over their own lives in rural areas of Bangladesh." For instance, landless group members contested in the union parishad elections and became their members. This kind of result, though not many examples, was attained in the three years project, but empowering rural people to claim their rights and control their own lives will need more time.

#### 3.4.2 Effectiveness:

A slow process of building awareness and capacity of the marginalized people in rural areas of

4. To what extent have the projects' objectives been achieved?
5. What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
6. Were the projects' strategies useful in achieving the project overall goal.
7. To what extent the project was effective in addressing the issues of the affected communities

Bangladesh. The PNGOs initiated activities during 2014-16 for enable communities to claim their rights from the duty bearers. Women groups, *NariMorcha*, village groups, spouse groups, *JonoMorcha*, students forums built platforms for the marginalized to unite and mobilize community people for claiming their rights. The groups had catalytic roles in attaining these results.



They received trainings on women rights, gender equity, implications of early marriage, laws against dowry, wage gap, marketing of agriculture products, violence against women, social safety net, political empowerment, voting rights, human rights, etc. These caused visible changes in the society. For example, women are more engaged in income generating activities. They have been elected as members in UP elections. They became members of different social committees, market committees, school managing committees, local legal aid committees, and madrasa committees. They have become vocal in public gathering and claimed their rights. As a result, women are creating a space for them. All were good start that building capacity of marginalized people and making local government accountable, but it needs more time along with firm engagement.

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### Case Study 2: Demand for increasing the wage of a women labourer

Natore Sugar Mill is located in Tatonpara village, Bagatipara union, Bagatiparapuzila of Natore district. According to the government law, land adjacent to sugar mill is earmarked as sugar cane zone. The farmers have to cultivate sugar cane and sell them to the mill. They cannot produce molasses with those sugarcans at home. Therefore, the labourers employ themselves in a hazardous job like making of *biris* (locally made cheap cigarette) as an alternative source of income.

In Bagatipara upazila, there are two *biri* factories. There are two agents in the locality who employed 47 women. Being helplessness they had to do this hazardous job. Wages were fixed by the owner of the *biri* factory and agents. The labourers had no say in the matter. For filling one thousand *biris*, a woman labourer gets BDT 21. For the past few months, the labourers had been demanding a rise of their wage. For this purpose, they started contracting labourers in other villages. Through contact they learned that female labourers in Dholaura village are getting BDT 23 for filling thousand *biris*.

On 9 October 2014, nearly hundred landless labourers went to Selim *biri* factory to enquire about the discriminatory wage. The landless members waited for more than 4 hours but could not make contact the factory owner. Later on, when two agents came to Tatonpara village, the landless labourers barricaded them. They enquired how much was paid for filling one thousand *biris*. At one point, the women labourers demanded BDT 23 for per thousand *biris*. But the agents refused to increase wage to that amount. The landless village committee asked the female labourers to call a strike. Accordingly, on 12 October 2014 the female labourers stopped working until their wage would increase.

Due to this movement the representatives of the owners of the factory agreed to discuss the matter and finally agreed to pay BDT 23 to women labourers for filling thousand *biris*.

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The major factor of achieving one programme objective was forming groups, building their capacity, facilitating regular meetings, building networks, and creating support system such as pressure groups, student groups, etc. But the reason of non-achievement of another objective is that existing local government institutions (LGI) are more powerful than the women groups. Making the LGI accountable especially on women rights, these women groups have to be organized, united, and connected to citizens and civil society. This is a long term process.

Key strategies of the ACCESS project include arranging skill development training, regular sharing meeting in the community, organizing awareness raising programmes, identifying problems and solutions, setting up alliance with like-minded people, and institutions, introducing participatory and rights-based approach, and launching individual group consistent with men and women group. These strategies were used by all the PNGOs for attaining societal development so that the marginalized people could claim their rights. But creating more equal and sustainable human development and having control over their own lives need more time and engagements in the intervention areas.

The ACCESS project effectively addressed the issues of affected communities, especially women in a small scale because the magnitude of the issues and the strength of the groups are asymmetrical. The

patriarchal society is tolerant to gender discrimination and all institutions are built on this mentality. Against this system, women groups are weak in their membership, capacity and mobilization to challenge the mundane system. Then in some instances in the project areas, a group of women became united to raise their voices to anomalies against them, and create a space for their social, political and economic empowerment.

### 3.4.3 Efficiency

Three PNGOs had limited budget and only a few staff to achieve highly ambitious results in three years stipulated in the LFA. There were 13 indicators to reach four major objectives/outcomes in the areas of social, political and economic empowerment and building enabling environment and networks. Accordingly, the PNGOs employed diverse activities which were sometimes very difficult and challenging for having some sensitive contents (challenging religious superstition, and

8. To what extent did the project use the available resources to get intended results in terms of quantity and quality?
9. Were activities cost-efficient?
10. Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?
11. Were objectives achieved on time?

fundamentalism) and campaigning against traditional institutions. Then, they continued the quality work to bring positive changes in the communities. Therefore, the financial supports of the development partner had been complemented with the voluntarism of the groups and community people and social networks. Through this approach of implementation and mobilization, the project used available resources to get intended results.

Rigorous findings on cost-efficiency of the project were not found in this study. But, for instance, the study found from the interviews of the project staff, the group members and other stakeholders that less amount of money was spent to organize a meeting, rather the groups were encouraged to organize these events on their own capacity and fund. In this way, the spirit of voluntarism was created in the groups and they started to do activities of their own. Thus, activities were cost-efficient. It was also challenging for the PNGOs, when other NGOs spent large amount of time for organizing such events.

The procedural delay in getting fund clearance from the NGO Affairs Bureau and the money devaluation (low conversion rate of Bangladeshi Taka – BDT against Swedish Krona – SEK) have impacted the implementation of project activities. In fact, real implementation started three months late and ended early after curtailing of planned activities for losing of budget. The PNGOs did not have sufficient alternative plan to handle this budgetary issues.

The PNGOs and activities suffered for staff drop out. Once one staff member gains some rigorous experience and skills on RBA, and leaves the NGO, then the NGO suffers. Because replacement of the staff is not easy, and the new staff may not have experience in RBA. Same thing happened in the PNGOs. The new staff who were appointed in the middle of the project could not receive foundation training and other technical training.

As mentioned earlier, the objectives were highly ambitious to achieve within a three-year project. But the project was a good starter to the community and the PNGOs.

### 3.4.4 Impact

The key results of the project explain that knowledge and awareness of women about their rights in decision-making in family, education, health, and wages increased, women participation in different social, religious, institutional and UP committees enhanced, and their status and respect in family and

society also enhanced. Women after receiving training started income generating activities, thus

12. What has happened/changed as a result of the project?
13. What real difference has the activity made to the projects participants?

empowering them economically. Women actively participated in the *shalish* (village arbitration) to express their opinions.

“In one place, an *Imam*(religious leader) of the local mosque declared a *fatwa* that women cannot work in the field because it is a sin. To raise voice against this decree, both women and men members of a group arranged a human chain and submitted a memorandum to the local administration. As a result, that Imam was arrested and kept under custody.”

“In one place, landless group members raised their voice against their eviction from *khas* land and continued their demonstration and mobilization until they succeed.”

The marginalized people -men and women started to voice their concerns in public meeting and are now raising voices jointly against violence against women, and other disparities in families and communities. As a result, they are demanding their due rights from duty bearers. These real changes in the families, communities and institutions took place for engaging both women and men in the project.

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### Case Study 3: An example of successful advocacy

A former BGB soldier had a photo studio in Fachika Bazar of Kailati union under Netrokona sadar upazila of Netrokona district. College and school going girls used to come to the studio to take pictures.

But the owner used to abuse girls sexually, even raped some of them by force or allure. He used to make videos of those scenes by a hidden camera. Then he made adult movie and sold them to local youths at high prices. The victims did not complain to anyone because of the fear of tarnishing their goodwill and social difficulties in their future life. Therefore, they remained silent. But one day all of his evil deeds opened up in daylight and conscious people of that locality got to know this heinous matter. After knowing the matter, community people became so furious on him. They tried to catch him but somehow he managed to escape. But the community people destroyed his studio. Members of *NariMorcha* and *JonoMorcha* immediately communicated with police and informed the matter. Police then confiscated all instruments in the studio. However, when members of *NariMorcha* and *JonoMorcha* went to submit complaints against him, police declined to receive a complaint, because police claimed that they did not have clear evidence to arrest him.

Then members of *NariMorcha* and *JonoMorcha* asked police to check his computers which they had confiscated from the studio. Again, police claimed that they did not find any such videos in the computer. The members of *NariMorcha* and *JonoMorcha* shared the matter with local people, UP, other Human Rights based CBOs and social leaders. Then all agreed and arranged a Human Chain to protest the matter at Fachika Bazar. And, from that human chain, they sent a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of Netrokona attaching signatures of hundreds of people.

Afterwards, some daily newspapers published the news of human chain. Eventually, the Deputy Commissioner ordered police to take the matter seriously and go for immediate action. Then on 14 February 2016, Sub-Inspector Md. Al Amin made a complaint against him under the act of “Controlling Pornography 2012” section 8(1)/(2)/(3)/(4) at the model police station of Netrokona. Also the Officer-in-Charge of the police station promised to arrest the accused.

On the basis of that complaint, now the owner of the studio is in jail and the case is under trial.

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#### 3.4.5 Sustainability of the outcomes:

It is quite difficult to continue outcomes achieved under the ACCESS project, unless such kind of project in association with development partners is ensured. The reason is that the PNGOs do not have enough fund to support and continue such activities. For instance, what TSDS had achieved during 2014-16 was not found during the field visits. Now the Swallows IB is no more funding to TSDS

for its women empowerment project. On the other hand, TSDS is also not working on this issue on its own fund. Thus, it has a negative impact on the women and other groups (which were formed under the ACCESS) who do not sit together, and are not organized to raise their voice on the women rights issues.

14. Are the changes that are brought out through the project likely to continue without external support?
15. What factors hinder/facilitate sustainability of the changes among the communities?

Besides, a three year project cannot contribute much to institutionalize voluntary groups and bring changes in their attitudes and behaviors. Then, it can be told that the impact of the ACCESS project will be remained long on the group members and communities, because it has brought changes in their personal and collective roles. As most of them have built their knowledge and understanding by attending regular training and engaging themselves in action, they would not forget these experiences, rather they try to be look forward to continue this social movement in future.

Foreign support will never be continued for an indefinite time. Considering this reality, the PNGOs have to develop other options such as taking low-cost collaborative advocacy programmes in the community with the help of local influential people, creating organizational back up fund for such rights based campaign, institutionalize voluntary groups by engaging them in activities whenever opportunity arises.

### **3.5 Findings on other Criteria**

Rights based approach and gender were built-in in the project, though understanding of the approach was not developed much in the communities, even to all project staff equally. The marginalized people, though they are big in size and are often neglected in the communities started to be united to claim their rights from duty bearers of health, education, local government, and so on. As women are the worst victims of stereotypical social system, and are not contributing much to the social, political and economic spheres, their empowerment issue was a priority in the project.

Occasionally, the lesson on environment-responsive behavior was taught in the training, but it was never an important issue for the project.

Building community based organizations (CBO) like women groups was a key objective of the project, and lots of capacity building and programmatic efforts were given to make the CBOs functional. The PNGOs had an intention to establish linkages between CBOs and CSOs, but there was not much success in this regard.

## Chapter Four

### Assessing the ARP

Similar to *NariMorcha*, village groups and so on in the ACCESS project, Farmers' Organizations (FOs) were formed under the ARP to build capacity of rights bearers so that they could claim rights from the duty bearers. During implementation of ARP<sup>12</sup> in 2014-16, five PNGOs adopted the strategy of establishing FOs in a few villages of Bangladesh (71 villages, 15 unions, 8 upazilas, 6 districts) and enhancing capacity of such organizations and expects that the rights of farmers would be ensured through sustainable agriculture practices. But how much the programme brought results in the lives of farmers was assessed in this chapter. Before analyzing the findings on the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability), key activities and achievement, strengths and weaknesses of the key stakeholders, and SWOT analysis of the programme were done.

#### 4.1 Key Activities and Achievements:

Under the same goal matrix of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programme 2014-16, the ARP along with the ACCESS was a three years project and implemented by five PNGOs (BARCIK, TSDS, DEW, NK and UD). The project had specific objectives and outcomes. To achieve four outcomes, 28 indicators were set and a long list of activities were planned jointly by the PNGOs before initiation of the project.

The key activities were to form, strengthen and activate farmers' organizations, to provide training especially on sustainable agriculture, organic pesticides, fertilizers, indigenous seed preservation, soil test, natural processes of pest control, integrated pest management, marketing of organic agricultural products etc., to set up a place in local markets for selling organic products, to build networks between FOs and other service delivery institutions such as UP Agriculture Office, UASC, etc. The PNGOs facilitated FOs to participate in rallies, human chains for claiming their rights and getting fair price of their products, to inspire other farmers (who were not as direct beneficiaries of the project) to use organic fertilizers and pests, and organize cultural shows in the communities for building mass awareness on rights based approach on equal wages of women-men, demerits of chemical fertilizers and pests, social, cultural and religious superstition, climate change, women empowerment, etc. Another emphasis was given to build capacity of PNGOs on farmers' rights and technical know-how of sustainable agriculture.

Through these activities, the PNGOs as well as different groups of targeted people brought some positive results in the intervention areas. Among them, some key achievements are described below (see annex 5 for more details with statistical data):

##### 4.1.1 Marginalized Farmers found their platform to be united:

- *Formation and activation of FOs:* 154 FOs were established. Among the members, almost least 50% were female. Some PNGOs such as DEW, UD, TSDS created an executive body of the FOs, where they ensured around 60% female representation. Farmers participated in regular meetings, consultations, training, day observances, agriculture fair, exposure visits which raised tier awareness on their rights and united them to raise voices against commercialization of their agricultural lands.
- *Development of enabling policies:* Essential policies/by laws including gender, management, advocacy, organic farming, and rights based approach were developed for the FOs.

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<sup>12</sup>A conceptual note on ARP was given in Annex 4.

- *FOs took initiatives to claim rights from the duty bearers:* Farmers' accessibility to the service providing organizations have increased and they became united while claiming their rights. Some good examples of such claim mentioned in the box:

Almost 67% and 80% of the FOs of UD and DEW respectively were involved to claim their rights on availing agricultural training from Upazila Parishad. By the landless FOs of NK, a total of 191 events of right claims and mobilizing protests happened to protest different irregularities in upazila administration on *khas* land, water, wages, violence against women, commercial shrimp farming, education and safety-net programme. In TSDS, FO members were elected as UP member at Union Parishad election. In BARCIK, 7% farmers organized demonstrations on the organic farming practices and field day observances.

#### 4.1.2 Farmers started to rely and practice ecosystem based agriculture

- *Sustainable agriculture practices:* Use of organic manure and pesticides, seed production and preservation increased at community level. Conversely, farmers reduced uses of chemical fertilizers, hybrid/market seeds and pesticides for their homestead gardening.
- *Proactive roles of female members of FOs:* Women's participation in seed processing, organic manure and pesticide preparation has increased. They take more responsibility for arranging the ingredients, and preparing organic pesticides and fertilizers, as they mainly take care of the household chores. In addition, they played pivotal role in homestead gardening. They mostly used backyard to produce organic/chemical free vegetables to meet family needs to some extent along with selling of extra production to earn some money.

#### 4.1.3 Farmers established supply chain for their organic products

- *Market for a good supply chain:* FOs had participatory exercise to prepare market maps for selling their organic products or pest-free crops. In some cases, they successfully developed linkages between producers and consumers. For that, farmers are getting benefits in two ways: their production cost has reduced for using organic manure and pesticides for their homestead gardening and they are selling their crops at good price at specific market places. Thus, it has contributed to increase their household income.

#### Case Study 4: Setting up of an organic food shop

Thanapara Swallows Development Society (TSDS) arranged a joint conference on with Jhikra Market Committee. At the conference, 40 shopkeepers of Jhikra Bazar, 3 leaders from farmers' organization and Executive Director, Assistant Director, Project of TSDS were present. They chemical and poison free having a detailed discussion, an organic agro-food shop. all. At that moment, Abdul an organic shop at Jhikra promised to support him to



Coordinator and Field Organizer had a lot of discussions on organic agro products. After the committee decided to set up This decision was highly praised by Aziz, a shopkeeper wanted to start Bazar in Sardah Union and all open the shop.

Then he started an organic organic products. Organic Rony, Md. Jewell, Md. Sohel in Jhikra village have been supplying organic agro-products to Abdul Aziz's Organic Food Shop. Responses from the customers have been considerable. Now this shop is well known to the villagers. It is a big achievement for the project intervention.

shop where he has been selling farmers Md. Mithun Ali, Md.

#### 4.1.4 Capacity building on farmers' rights and sustainable agriculture

- *Building skilled and trained facilitators:* Management and front line staffs of PNGOs received in-house and outsourced capacity building training and orientation on diverse issues mentioned in the chapter 2. After being trained, the project staff and the FO members have learnt about the

RBA and the technical know-how on sustainable agriculture, difference between organic and chemical pesticides and fertilizers, formula of preparing organic pesticides and fertilizers, etc. Every time, participation of target group were ensured during programme management and decision making processes.

- *Developing legal instruments:* Core management policies such as financial guidelines, M&E strategies, governance policies, governance action plan and HR manual of the PNGOs received a review and updated, when necessary.

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#### Case study 5: Facilitating integration of female sellers in village market

Nijera Kori started working in Deluti union of Paikgacha union in 2013. At that time, few women went to market for buying necessities. From January to March 2014, Nijera Kori had discussions with their groups on women's roles in production, access to market, decision making in selling of household assets, control on finance and other matters. Because of Nijera Kori's works, landless female members planned to go to Noai Darun Mollick Milonia village market in the union as sellers. However, it was perceived that there might be some obstacles from influential people and religious leaders. To tackle this obstacle, the landless leaders organized a representative meeting on 23 April, 14. The meeting formed a 11-member (six women, five men) coordinating committee who had a discussion with the market management committee.

In the next month, women went to the market to sell vegetables. But some people teased them. The middle men and whole sellers being afraid of losing their business disseminated misleading information about women selling. They managed land owners on whose land the landless farmers cultivated as share croppers. The land owners threatened the landless members to surrender the land. On the other hand, one influential social leader gave a sermon that women cannot violate social norm going to market, rather they should stop their businesses and stay at home. Hearing to this, husbands and children of some female sellers forbade them from going to market.

In such a situation, women sellers' coordinating committee discussed the matter with the chairman of Deluti Union Parishad. He assured the women sellers his full support. To tackle the situation, a dialogue meeting with Union parishad, market committee, teachers, assistant agriculture officer and women sellers coordinating committee members was held on 30 June. The meeting unanimously decided that for the next two weeks Deluti Union Parishad and market committee would work together to create a congenial atmosphere for the women sellers though ensuring respect and security to women and assigning a separate place for them.

Despite these measures, a separate place for women sellers could not be made available. Women sellers sat with men to sell their products. However, in the last update in January 2017, a separate space for the women sellers was created. Currently, women freely come to the market with their organic products. It is to be noted that, few women who do not feel hesitate also sit with men to sell their products. It is also commonly seen now that both wife and husband often come together in the market to sell their organic products.

Initially the number of female sellers were only 6. By 2016, the number was increased to 76. Of those 58 women sellers come from landless organization and 18 from unorganized women. This builds women's control on household finances.

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#### 4.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Key Stakeholders

The direct stakeholder of the ARP was landless farmers/both male and female members of FOs. While working with them, the project found their strengths as well as weaknesses. Their key strengths were strong willingness to do practice sustainable agriculture, as they have seen how the commercial companies are occupying their ancestral agricultural lands by introducing chemical pesticides, fertilizers and hybrid seeds in the name of high yield and better profit. But their illiteracy, limited resource and lack of unity are the main weaknesses.

As the project dealt with agriculture and farmers, the main service delivery organizations in this regard are agriculture, fisheries, livestock offices and UP. Though these institutions had little interest towards the practices of organic agriculture at the beginning, they changed their mindset and supported farmers friendly.

Other key stakeholders were the local government institutions, journalists, bank officials, youths and civil society members. For better implementation of the project and disseminating a new knowledge of organic agriculture in the communities, they were also engaged to some extent. The primary beneficiaries got support from them. As consequences, the mentioned results have been achieved in the limited three years of project period. The project utilized their strengths to overcome their weaknesses, which are given below:

Key Stakeholders	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Landless farmers (male-female)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong willingness and interest</li> <li>- Strong organization</li> <li>- Support from LGI</li> <li>- Knowledge and experience on RBA (limited)</li> <li>- Good relationship with service providers and service bearers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No own land</li> <li>- Illiteracy, lack of awareness and less unity</li> <li>- Limited resources</li> <li>- Dominated by large farmers</li> <li>- Social barriers</li> </ul>
<b>Government Service Delivery Institutions (Such as Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock, BADC, )</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly influential with high interest</li> <li>- Provide technical knowledge to farmers</li> <li>- Message delivery skills</li> <li>- Government agriculture policy implementer</li> <li>- Social acceptance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less eagerness to give service</li> <li>- Listed people get more benefit</li> <li>- LGI influences them</li> <li>- Time constraints</li> <li>- Institutional barrier</li> <li>- Corruption</li> </ul>
<b>Local government Institutions (LGI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social acceptance</li> <li>- Some support of UASC to farmers</li> <li>- FO included in UASC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low interest</li> <li>- Time constraints</li> <li>- Institutional barriers</li> <li>- Political biasness</li> </ul>
<b>Journalist and Media personnel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Playing strong role for publicity of farmers rights (though less number)</li> <li>- High message delivery skill</li> <li>- Social acceptance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Biasness</li> <li>- Lack of investigative reports</li> <li>- Lack of interests</li> </ul>
<b>Scheduled Banks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High influential with low interest</li> <li>- Providing agriculture credits to farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They do not usually work with farmers directly</li> <li>- Less focus to agriculture loans</li> <li>- Biasness in providing loans</li> </ul>
<b>Youth and student</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collective youth power</li> <li>- Well understanding</li> <li>- Willing to work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial hardship</li> <li>- Insufficient time</li> </ul>
<b>Association Govt.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy and constitutions</li> <li>- Own savings and office</li> <li>- Governing body and elected committee</li> <li>- Marketing linkages</li> <li>- Good relation with duty bearers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Members' residence are far from association</li> <li>- Not having network with national level platform</li> </ul>
<b>Civil Society Organizations and Network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High influential with low interest</li> <li>- Some NGOs are working with sustainable agriculture (only a few)</li> <li>- High message delivery skills</li> <li>- Social acceptance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of knowledge on RBA</li> <li>- Popularity of need based approaches and micro credits</li> <li>- Not properly organized</li> <li>- Different outlook</li> <li>- Internal grouping</li> </ul>



### 4.3 SWOT Analysis of the Programme

Project staff of the PNGOs done a SWOT of the project, as they went through the process and finally achieved the results. This SWOT analysis will help the project planners to understand how strengths of the internal arrangement work in concert with opportunities available in the society amid internal weaknesses and possible threats.

Most of the PNGOs had a good experience working with farmers and on agriculture issues. Moreover, they have internal manpower and knowledge resources. Currently the government and the agriculture experts are talking about negatives sides on excessive uses of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. So some policy guidelines have been developed. Along with the context, the ARP has created a comprehensive working environment by creating FOs, train them up on sustainable agriculture, producing organic crops, searching markets, building networks and selling crops. Continuous efforts were given to establish a good network with service providing organizations. As a result, they had overcome their own and other stakeholders' weaknesses, such as lack of awareness, literacy, FO's over-dependence on the PNGOs, slow implementation of state policy on sustainable agriculture, insufficient organic technologies, staff drop out, etc.

Prolonged political unrest in 2014 affected the movement of the staff and created fear on everybody. Thus, the implementation of project slowed down. Also, the private companies selling chemical fertilizers and pesticides colluded with local influential people to suppress the activism on sustainable agriculture.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Social acceptance of PNGOs</li> <li>2) Working experiences in the relevant field and skilled staffs</li> <li>3) Favorable state policy and laws</li> <li>4) Strong commitment towards landless farmers</li> <li>5) Participatory democratic management</li> <li>6) Training facilities</li> <li>7) A good number of mobilized farmers</li> <li>8) Community supports to the programme</li> <li>9) Proper guidelines for project implementation</li> <li>10) Ability to enhance community participation</li> <li>11) Regular monitoring system is in place.</li> <li>12) Available resources</li> <li>13) Marketing linkages</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) No proper application of state policy and law for the farmers</li> <li>2) Farmers are not adequately aware about their rights and sustainable agriculture</li> <li>3) Farmer's organizational skills and leadership yet to develop</li> <li>4) Farmers are dependent on PNGOs</li> <li>5) Less opportunity for women to participate in social and political spheres</li> <li>6) Lack of farmer's initiatives to claim issue based agriculture rights</li> <li>7) Difficulties to monitor long list of outcome and indicators</li> <li>8) Sufficient organic technologies are not available to the farmers</li> <li>9) Staff dropout due to insufficient retention measures</li> <li>10) Farmers are involved in various activities which are hard to monitoring</li> <li>11) Inadequate unity among farmers' groups</li> <li>12) Delay in receiving fund</li> </ol>
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Positive environment for the implementation of ARP</li> <li>2) Donor support</li> <li>3) Agriculture friendly state law and policy</li> <li>4) Government policy, government's commitment and supportive LGI &amp; social organization</li> <li>5) Close relation with GO/NGO</li> <li>6) A big number of farmers remained out of reach of ARP</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Political unrest and political pressure</li> <li>2. Natural disasters (drought, cold wave, heavy fog) and climatic disaster</li> <li>3. Reduction in budgetary support from the donor</li> <li>4. Funding clearance from NGO Affairs Bureau</li> <li>5. Over influence of multinational companies</li> <li>6. Religious superstitions and fundamentalism</li> <li>7. Government's suspicious towards RBA</li> <li>8. Government's agriculture policies favoring chemical farming</li> </ol>

7) Donor and government have special and supportive role to ensure food security	9. Role of media towards sustainable agriculture
8) Women's participation and recognition in agriculture	10. Existence of middleman in markets
9) Research and innovation in agriculture	11. Pest infestation
10) Consumers' demand & awareness for safe food increased	
11) Active involvement of youths (citizens and students)	
12) Ensure fair pricing and participation in direct marketing	

#### 4.4 Responses to the Key Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria of OECD-DAC (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) for the development projects have been followed here to assess the ARP, and the findings have been found from the respondents of FGDs and KII. In addition, a quick overview on the cross-cutting issues, results based management and the application of a programmatic approach in ARP has been presented for better understanding of the results.

##### 4.4.1 Relevance:

Villages in Bangladesh are agro-based and their main source of income is agriculture. Farmers face natural disasters including flood, river erosion, and drought every year. For these natural calamities and poverty, farmers are losing their land. Through this process the number of landless farmers is increasing, and traditional farmers have become leased farmers or agricultural labors.

Farmers are often neglected in the society as they are not educated and organized. They are

1. To what extent was the project consistent with the needs and priorities of the participants?
2. Was the project still relevant in the given context?
3. Were the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?

systematically deprived of their rights from their entitlements and prevent their voices to claim them. On the other side, almost everywhere now-a-day farmers are using chemical fertilizers and pesticides which are harmful for their health and environment. Traditionally farmers are free to cultivate their crops, but now they are becoming more dependent on the companies for seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. These modern technologies are assisting to grow more crops. On the other hand, they are damaging the quality of soil, contributing to environmental degradation and affecting to public health negatively. Sometimes, it makes the agricultural production costly.

The ARP introduced the concept of organic farming and sustainable agriculture that would save them from using harmful agro products and prevent environmental degradation. This project was designed to make farmers aware of their rights through establishing their own platform – Farmers' Organizations. Therefore, the project was quite relevant to the context of the farmers.

Five PNGOs designed the project and prepared the LFA based on their working experience on the agriculture and farmers' rights. So they rightfully put forward real problems and their way forward but they achieved little in a three year project. Therefore, most of them (except TSDS) got further financial support to continue with the project.

The overall goal of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programme 2014-16 was "more equal and sustainable human development where people living in poverty claim their rights and have control over their own lives in rural areas of Bangladesh." The project activities and output were consistent to this goal.

Hence, marginalized farmers built their capacity, formed their organizations and claimed agricultural rights from the duty bearers. Then it can be said that it was a good beginning on the way to control over their own lives, when the opposite side is too strong and powerful along with the state policies of commercialization of agricultural land and high-yield crops.

#### 4.4.2 Effectiveness:

The main achievement of the ARP project was to establish FOs and build their capacity and leadership. Other contributions were: developing specific guidelines and building linkages with strategic duty bearers, inspiring farmers to be involved more in sustainable agriculture, preserving seeds and preparing organic fertilizers and pesticides, increasing women participation in agriculture, ensuring presence of agriculture officers in agricultural land, involving women in decision making process, building awareness of farmers on safe food, collective marketing and fair price of their crops, building awareness of farmers to protect their rights, and introducing climate resilient crops using local technologies. Achieving all these were great things, the PNGOs facilitated the FOs to become proactive to deal their own issues.

4. To what extent have the projects' objectives been achieved?
5. What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
6. Were the projects' strategies useful in achieving the project overall goal.
7. To what extent the project was effective in addressing the issues of the affected communities

Though all PNGOs and FOs did not perform equally in achieving all these, they have created a different outlook of the agricultural sector in the community. If all FOs could be activated in a larger extent by regular facilitation, monitoring, and supervision, then some substantive changes could happen in all intervention areas, and it could have impact on surrounding villages.

The major factor of achievement was the formation of the FOs. The marginalized farmers owned the objectives of the project, and engaged themselves voluntarily. Capacity building and facilitation of the activities of FOs by the PNGOs were also influencing factors to bring changes in the community. But the aggressive expansion of commercialization of agriculture and influence of companies were the key factors that posed challenges to the activities of the ARP. Other than that the concerned duty bearers – agriculture officers always promote high-yield variety, and high production. The output of using chemical fertilizers, pesticides and hybrid seeds encourages farmers to choose modern technologies. Besides they are not educated, organized, and aware of their rights. All these contributed to the non-achievement of some objectives.

The main strategies of the ARP were forming FOs, building capacity and making them aware, engaging them with service providers and different stakeholders, advocating to create mass awareness against the commercialization of agriculture to get rid of the vicious cycle, developing a supply chain for selling organic products in specific market places, initiating participatory decision making process. All these were timely, forward looking and effective strategies to address the project's overall goal, but the targets in the LFA were highly ambitious for three-year project. In such a short time, establishing independent FOs by 2016 could not be achieved, and targeted sustainable agriculture practices could not be ensured.

The FO was in the center of the project. They raised their voices to get justice against deprivations they experienced in their lives and communities. When the issues of their rights came to them, they became united and claimed their rights from the duty bearers. As a result, the FOs gained trust of the communities. But all FOs were not such organized, skilled and proactive to be involved with the issues of their members and communities. Overall, the project addressed the issues of the affected communities very effectively.

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### Case Study 6: Alternative marketing system brought women empowerment

Unnoti Hawlder lives in the village of Durgapur, Kaligonj upazila in Jhenaidah. She is 35 years old. Her husband is a poor landless farmer. He is a small sharecropper. Unnoti has five members in her family. One son, his spouse and one aged mother-in-law live with them. They have 1.14 acre of land and 5 decimal homestead. Though her husband was producing agriculture products but they did not get fare price of their products. Unnoti could not maintain her family by her husband's meager income. Unnoti always dreamt to contribute to her family.



She was a member of Durgapur Swadhin Krishok Sanghothan (FO) facilitated by Unnayan Dhara in 2014. For the first time, she learned about organic agriculture from the Field Officer of Unnayan Dhara and she was highly motivated to apply her learning in 5 decimal homestead land so that she could contribute to her family. She planned to cultivate vegetables and fruits in her homestead without chemical fertilizer and pesticides. She knew that these products would be tasty and demandable and incur minimum production cost. She cultivated red amaranth, spinach, cabbage, reddish, bottle gourd and arum using organic fertilizers and pesticides. After her family consumption, she earned BDT 4,380 by selling vegetables round the year. Her organic and safe foods led to an alternative market of organic agro products named "Lokaj Bazar"

Because of local culture, earlier Unnoti could not touch money from selling of homestead products by her husband. In an alternative marketing system, a collector deployed by the farmer organization is engaged in collecting home-based products and return selling money to the women concerned. Thus women can get profit from their venture in an alternative marketing system.

Now Unnoti can deposit some money. She could lease more land to produce more fruits and vegetable. Unnoti is a symbol of development in the family as well in the community. Other women have started producing organic vegetables after observing the success of Unnoti.

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#### 4.4.3 Efficiency

Five PNGOs received almost same amount of budget from the Swallows IB for the ARP. But it was considered a low budget for implementing a wide range of activities to achieve the results. The number of staff members was small in size but they were involved to a large number of direct

8. To what extent did the project use the available resources to get intended results in terms of quantity and quality?
9. Were activities cost-efficient?
10. Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?
11. Were objectives achieved on time?

beneficiaries as well as indirect stakeholders. In such context, the project used the higher percentage of their fund as shown in their burn rate (around 90%). In addition to the financial support of the donor, FOs and communities were engaged on voluntary basis to achieve project's overall goal. Other stakeholders such as agriculture officials, UASC members, and Union Parishads extended their support to the FOs. Finally, it was found that sometimes resources were used to avail of the number of activities implemented, not to go for the quality – that needed more time, efforts and money.

The activities were highly cost-efficient, though this finding were generated from the respondents in this study. It could be perfect, if any rigorous analysis on cost-efficiency is done. For an example, it was

found that the budget was limited to organize events for demonstration, and trainings for the project staff and beneficiaries. It should also be mentioned that when many NGOs pay some amount to government officials for their participation in the events these five PNGOs did not do that.

The project suffered at the beginning for delaying fund clearance from the NGOAB, and at the end for low conversion rate – the PNGOs did not get the budgeted amount for that. Otherwise, the project was implemented in most efficient way.

As discussed earlier, many of the highly ambitious targets were not achieved to that extent. Then the PNGOs and FOs achieved some substantive results on time. The project dealt with a new thing breaking current status quo between influential people involved in profitable commercial agriculture and weak landless farmers who were uneducated, less aware and unorganized. For that, this project was a good start and for the logical ground it with almost same objectives but different name has been extended until 2021.

#### 4.4.4 Impact:

Farmers are now more aware of sustainable agriculture, demerits of usage of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and other societal and family issues such as education, health care, women empowerment and gender rights, wage gap, male-female equality gender-based violence. As a result, the practice of sustainable agriculture has started. They are influencing other farmers who are interested to know more about organic farming. Climate resilient crops have been introduced by using local level technologies. A network between agro based government service delivery offices and FOs has developed over the period. The network is facilitating to establish collective approach of the farmers for promoting their rights.

12. What has happened/changed as a result of the project?
13. What real difference has the activity made to the projects participants?

In the project intervention areas, it is evident that both male and female farmers of FOs are more organized, aware, and outspoken on their agriculture rights. They have gained some knowledge on sustainable agriculture and built their capacity on leadership and bargaining. Female farmers are engaged in homestead gardening where they use organic fertilizers and pesticides. Societal and family issues have been addressed by the FOs.

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#### Case Study 7: Kamala's green farming changed her social status incredibly

Kamala Begum was married off about 35 years ago. Her husband was too poor to maintain his family with his low income. In this situation, she left her in-law's house along with her husband and went to her father's house at Baira under Singair upazila. But she did not get any dwelling in her father's house. By BDT 7000, she was permitted to live in a government shelter home at Nayabari Adorsha Para. Afterwards, she became an icon of organic products in Singair upazila.

She started producing organic products since 2013 when she was introduced to BARCIK. At that time, BARCIK facilitated a training in the community to produce organic manures. She also visited Ruposhi Monodol's house and other areas to see their low cost organic farms. After training and visits, she started producing organic fertilizers, pesticides and fermented juice for organic cultivation. Initially, she got a good result that inspired her to produce more.

At one moment, she was producing a lot of organic manure from which she met her own demand and sold surplus amount to others. From this selling, she is earning BDT 9000 per month costing only BDT 700. Moreover, she is producing different kinds of vegetables, banana, pulses, beans, sugarcane, wheat, potato, eggs and milk using organic manures and pesticides and sold them in local and Dhaka markets (*Prakritik Krishi Biponon Kendra*, Mohammadpur, Dhaka). Sometimes, consumers collect organic products from her home. She also sells her

products at Baira organic corners markets and Joinal markets as well. Individually, she and other farmers (19) earn on average BDT 3000-3500 every week from super chain shops in Dhaka. She discussed with the owner of Prokritik Krishi Biponon Kendra to get fair prices from them.

She is also providing training to manure preparation and using people are producing organic Kamala's seed bank. In the her village are using organic from Garadia, Char krishmapur, Shibpur and Shoruppur visited her production of organic manure and friendly agriculture practices. She of their organization. She is looking members. She maintains close and facilitates legal services for ten members from Manikganj free of cost. Three journalists visited her house and published Kamala's successes in local and national newspapers. When she ventured into organic farming in 2013, nobody imagined that her small initiates would change her life one day.



other farmers on organic techniques. Community products using seeds from meantime, nine farmers of technique. The 19 farmers Basta, Golai Matikata, organic farm and started low cost, environment was also made the president after well and woe of her communication with them

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#### 4.4.5 Sustainability:

The project invested a lot to build leadership capacity and knowledge of the FOs, and to make them aware of sustainable and organic agriculture and build a network between FOs and agro based service providing agencies. If external support is no more with the FOs and PNGOs, then these things will be remained long. But regular meeting, coordinated campaigning and awareness building activities,

14. Are the changes that are brought out through the project likely to continue without external support?
15. What factors hinder/facilitate sustainability of the changes among the communities?

activism on agricultural and gender issues may not be sustained. This can be substantiated by the example of TSDS. During the field visit, it was found that as they are not getting any more support from the Swallows IB for the ARP project, FOs have become disorganized, and no substantive activities were not visible in the communities.

Changes can be made sustainable if follow up activities are taken place some more time. The three-year period is not enough to make the FOs independent considering their organization, management, membership, function, and finance. One good initiative was the savings of the farmers. If FOs could save more and invested for promoting sustainable agriculture, then this social movement would be more sustainable. In this regard, one firm statement from a local market committee representative tells:

“No one will take responsibility of my child. Same as, we have to preserve and protect our land, agriculture by ourselves. For preserving the fertility of our land and keeping us healthy, we should have self-initiative to practice organic farming.”

Then most of the respondents expressed that without foreign donation this movement can never be sustainable.

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#### Case Study 8: Jasim turned his life to become a community reformer

Jasim Uddin is a young man of Kustiapara, Boror Char Union, Sadarupazila, Mymensingh. He is 36 years old and completed B.A. He came from a well off family but he has a strong desire to do something for the rural women. Once upon a time, he was frustrated about his life. He heard about women rights and empowerment for the first time from some neighbors of ARP group members. Then he joined in the ARP group and attended different

group meetings and learnt human rights and rights-motivated community people was selected as the president of the FO, he participated in different programmes to discuss about discrimination and other engaged himself in different for his strong commitment capacity. Because of his government election was Parishad member of believes that in future his all sorts of discrimination and people will live with dignity through practicing rights-based approach.



different concept regarding based approach. Then he about their rights. After that, he of the farmers group (FO). Being participated in different local dowry, women repression, social related matters. Moreover, he social works. Everyone likes him and networking and socialization popularity, when local held, he was elected as a Union Bororchar Union Parishad. He community will be secured from

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#### 4.5 Findings on other Criteria

The RBA, gender, environment, and social mobilization were integrated in the project. The promotion of rights of the landless farmers was one of the key objectives of the ARP. Recognizing the contribution of female farmers, there were lots of mobilization and campaigning efforts in the project. The FOs were formed and strengthened as CBOs. CSOs had sometimes joint programmes on the same issue. But it was never formalized under any memorandum of understanding. Thus a gap between the CBOs and CSO was prevailed. As a whole, strengthening the CSOs in the community was not kept in the agenda.

The ARP followed a project-cycle management, but it had a lack of baseline data for which project monitoring, evaluation and quantitative changes could not be done efficiently. Also in some cases, the reporting was not innovative and results based for not having the baseline data and monitoring and evaluation formats. Besides, an overall evaluation on project cycle management and results based management will be given in the chapter six.

## A Critical Review of the ACCESS and ARP

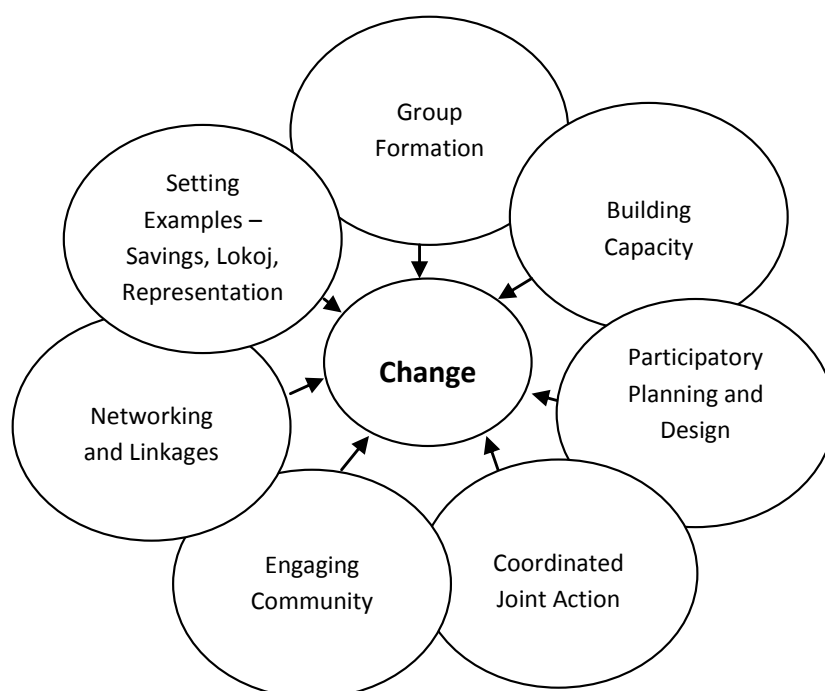
The Swallows' Bangladesh Programme 2014-16 has established some good examples in the lives and communities of rural people in Bangladesh which have been elaborately assessed in the previous two chapters (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4). It was found that the programmes had encountered several challenges and gone through some practical threats. However, its contribution to promote farmers' rights and women's empowerment has been recognized in the intervention areas as was at the national level. But how these programmes (ACCESS and ARP) were able to bring such changes only in three years has been critically analyzed in this chapter.

### 5.1 An Introduction of New Thought Process:

The programme dealt with two key issues – women empowerment (ACCESS) and farmers' rights (ARP) which are equally important for overall development of the country. It followed RBA to attain its outcome. On one side, the rights holders – the marginalized women and landless farmers – are unorganized, less aware of their rights, and almost invisible even though they are contributing a lot to the society. On the other side, the duty bearers – Union Parishad, educational institutions, health facilities, banks, government offices including agriculture offices, etc. are not providing due services to the rights holders, though they are responsible and accountable to them. The programme was designed to change the stereotypical status quo, so that the rights holders can get their rights and become “mainstream” in the development process.

The programme set a seven-point programme strategy to keep the infighting between rights holders and duty bearers subsided for bringing changes. The strategies were group formation, building capacity, participatory planning and design, coordinated joint action, engaging community, networking and linkages, and setting examples.

Figure 3: Seven Programme Strategy





All the strategies were inter-connected but individually or jointly they could bring changes. The changes were not only counted as materialistic changes, but also changes in leadership, attitudes, behavior, knowledge, practices were equally important for achieving project objectives.

## **5.2 Innovativeness and Value Addition**

Both the ACCESS and ARP projects were developed by the PNGOs. It was a participatory process where all the concerned PNGOs met together to do context analysis, problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, solution analysis, risk analysis, and sensitivity analysis and then designed the LFA to set the outcome as well as the indicators. They had also developed data collection tools for the baseline survey and took part in data collection.

It was an exceptional but innovative process, because it brought all ideas on a table and decided which one fitted best to the context. Sometimes it was time consuming to bring people having diverse experiences together and take decision on developing specific tools and strategies for programme implementation. Nevertheless, when the process was completed, the homogenous nature of implementation and reporting procedures took place. Thus, inclusion of the practical experiences of the implementing NGOs in the field, target groups, tools and strategies for the development of the project definitely added value to the project.

## **5.3 Group formation as important component to the Theory of Change**

The Swallows IB had not any written theory of change for the Bangladesh Programme. However, it created and facilitated groups from direct beneficiaries, and eventually they served key role to bring changes in the communities. The programme was not a top-down process, rather the reverse. Thus the Swallows IB and the PNGOs invested most of their time, and resources to establish and strengthen the groups or organizations in one way and facilitate them for achieving their agenda in other way. As a result, these groups became the main drivers of change in the communities and received trust of their members and other stakeholders.

## **5.4 Previous relevant experience**

The programme had two important aspects – the first one was: RBA and breaking the current status quo of the rights holders and duty bearers, and the second one was: bringing changes in the societal conventions and current trends. Working in RBA is not so easy; it needs ideals, belief, ownerships of the issue. The PNGO and the project staff members should have substantive work experience and knowledge on RBA and implement issues to build better understanding of the programmatic challenges. In the case of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programme, the PNGOs have either been working with technical and financial support of the Swallows IB or on their own. After all, most of the PNGOs were experienced to use RBA at that time, and they had hands-on experience on RBA issues. Though they faced challenges of getting capable staff having RBA experience, then they managed to run the programmes at the field levels effectively.

## **5.5 Voluntarism and Ownership**

The direct beneficiaries of the Swallows' Bangladesh Programme formed Community Based Organizations (CBO) and acted upon on voluntary basis. It was mostly a large group of people directly involved to the groups/organizations in a village. They regularly took part in meetings, discussed their issues, deposited their savings, and planned their future works in line with their rights. All they did simply on voluntarism, because they had ownership about the project. Most of the cases, the PNGOs did not assign any working line for them, rather facilitated to what they wanted to do. This programmatic approach to promote voluntarism and ownership of the members of groups/organizations as well as the communities was the strength. Then it was not equally followed to all cases of FOs and village groups/women groups, because less time and resource were invested by the PNGOs to these groups.

## **5.6 Support from Stakeholders**

The strengths and weaknesses of key stakeholders have been discussed in the earlier sections. It is important to mention that direct beneficiaries had built a good working relation with service providing organizations by optimizing their strengths, and winning over their weaknesses. The network with local administration, local government especially UP, government offices especially agriculture office, livestock office, fisheries office, etc. scheduled banks, and civil society organizations and issue-based alliances had been developed for achieving the objective of the programme.

At the beginning of the projects, government officials for instance, agriculture officers were not supportive to the beneficiaries as well as to the PNGOs. They had doubts over the issue of farmers' rights to land and sustainable agriculture because they usually followed the government guidelines that specially prioritized the commercialization of agriculture and high yield. But it was changing when they saw extensive activities implemented in the areas. Then they started to come and see what FOs were doing. As a result, they changed their mindset and voluntarily engaged to the projects.

Being united as a group/organization, the marginalized and landless people gained inner strengths to be vocal for getting their due share from the stakeholders. When one did not hear to the groups, then he had to face public demonstration that pushed them to be responsible. It can be told that these intermittent changes in relation to cooperation from the stakeholders to the groups have happened for the intervention of the projects. Even, in all project intervention areas, this good support system was not established.

## **5.7 Building self-confidence and self-control**

The Swallows IB has the strategy to build self-confidence and self-control mechanism of the PNGOs. Accordingly, they facilitated them to plan their work together following vision, mission and overall goal of the Swallows IB. Then they engaged consultants or expert organizations to build the capacity of PNGOs and project staff so that they can implement the activities in a better way. However, the concerned PNGOs designed their projects along with the LFA, and received rigorous training to revisit their internal, programmatic, financial and administrative governance policies and guidelines. The main purpose was to facilitate PNGOs to gain self-confidence for running the projects effectively and efficiently, ensuring their internal governance.

Even the Swallows IB organized training for building knowledge and skills on RBA, M&E, and reporting. During the implementation of the projects, the PNGOs had regular responsibility to monitor and evaluate the projects and report to the Swallows IB those matters that do not comply with policies or regular monitoring framework.

Despite having the core values of the Swallows IB, and receiving capacity building training, some of the PNGOs were not able to build such self-confidence and self-control, and expected more monitoring and learning from the Swallows IB. Even, in an instance, one PNGO failed to believe in zero-tolerance policy of the Swallows IB and lost the trust. This bad governance caused termination of funding that ultimately affected the communities.

## **5.8 Capacity building**

Both PNGOs and direct beneficiaries received a good number of training on diverse issues, elaborately described in the Chapter 2. This capacity building training had tremendous impact on the knowledge and skills of the project staff as well as on direct beneficiaries. Disseminating knowledge on sustainable agriculture and organic agriculture needed the FOs to be trained up and project staff on the technical know-how on preparing organic pesticides, fertilizers, preserving indigenous seeds, and natural ways of preventing crops from the insects, etc. Also, on women empowerment in social, political and

economic spheres, both male and female members were trained up to change their stereotypical mindset and realize the opportunities of gender equity.

The training will be more effective if technically sound experts are involved in the facilitation of the training. In some cases of the ARP, it did not happen. When staff members left the project, newly appointed staff members were not properly trained. Furthermore, it was found that more training was required for the direct beneficiaries –as many of them left during the selection for the available small number of training.

### **5.9 Pro-community**

The Swallows' Bangladesh programme was formulated on pro-community approach. Though there were some specific indicators, and output mentioned in the LFA, but the community or the groups/organizations could take any initiatives on their own. Because the vision of forming the groups was to make them independent. In all phases except the primary planning and preparing the LFA community people were involved in the programmes. Thus, one key informant demanded that even in the programme planning phase community people should have been engaged. Other than that, the participation of community people was ensured during preparing monthly, or annual action plan.

### **5.10 Visibility of the programmes**

During field visits, it is found that the results of the Bangladesh programme are quite visible in the intervention areas. The goal matrix of the programme quite elaborately presented its visibility. Then three important examples of visibility can be presented here. The existence and activism of the groups/organizations are quite evident. Members of the groups/organization built their capacity in leadership, management, and knowledge and afterward were selected as members in UP, SMC, market committees, etc. The last but not the least, both male and female farmers are speaking and practising sustainable agriculture. They have become aware of the negative impacts on the chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and hybrid crops.

### **5.11 Continuity of the programme**

The Swallows IB gained a new status from its largest back-donor Forum Syd, becoming a Programme Contract Organization (PCO). This resulted in a change from applying a project to a programme approach and 2014-16 was the first programme period. The Swallows' Bangladesh Programme 2014-16 was implemented in an organized and specialized way. So what the indicators or outcome were set in three-year project of ARP/ACCESS and achieved during that time, will not be lost because the PNGO will get further financial support from the Swallows IB to continue. In the development sector, many good results or achievements of a short-term development project was lost for the discontinuation of the project. Thus, the continuity of the programme with the same PNGOs except TSDS and NK is a best way to keep the focus intact as well as to make the results sustainable. NK is receiving core funds from the Swallows IB and keeping almost the same objectives of ACCESS and ARP in the current programmes. But TSDS is not receiving any funding support from the Swallows IB.

### **5.12 Accountability**

The first line of accountability was set between the Swallows IB and the PNGOs. The second line was between PNGOs and the groups/organizations. And the third line was between groups/organizations and communities. The crucial stakeholder was the community people. In all respects, everybody from the Swallows IB, or PNGOs or FOs/*NariMorcha*/Spouse Groups/*JonoMorcha*/Students Forum was fully accountable to the community. That's why the programme tried its best to engage them utmost. Once there were lapses in accountability of one PNGO to the Swallows IB, then technical and financial support to the PNGO was discontinued. In another instance of accountability, the FOs were not formed to make them a superior organization of the community, rather they were a part of the community for facilitating their joint expectation into reality.

### **5.13 Sustainability**

During the evaluation of the ACCESS and ARP (Chapter 3 and 4), the sustainability issues have been extensively analyzed. After all, this is a most critical thing on which lots of discussions can be made, but a little conclusion can be drawn. Also it cannot be simply concluded that the result of the projects will be sustained or not. The good thing is that the Swallows' Bangladesh programme with almost same objectives but different names will continue until 2021. All the PNGOs except TSDS and NK are going to implement the projects. Though NK is implementing core programmes on "Ensuring democracy, accountability and rights for the poorest" 2017-21, but it has absorbed some aspects and strategies of ARP and ACCESS, such as farmers groups, landless groups, etc. In the case of TSDS, some of the results of the ACCESS and ARP did not sustain, because the NGO is not implementing the same thing on their own funds or other donor's fund. The village groups or FOs are not meeting and discussing their issues. In fact, the synergy among the groups has been lost. Then, the respondents opined that changes in their knowledge and mindset will be sustained for a long time

## Major Learnings for improvements

The study was carried out to get a qualitative aspect of the results by evaluating relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the programme. Though the programme period ended in 2016, but the projects with almost same objectives but different names are still getting funding support which will continue till 2021. Thus the learning of this evaluation will be used for the better implementation of the current programme. Therefore, areas of improvements are discussed here.

### **6.1 Baseline data not used as evaluation tool:**

Monitoring and evaluation is an important component of a project cycle management. To measure changes in development projects, baseline data should be created before implementing the project at field level. These baseline data may be qualitative and/or quantitative.

For the ACCESS, one baseline study was developed by the PNGOs under the facilitation of the Secretariat. They developed a detailed survey questionnaire through a workshop in Dhaka, and later they collected quantitative data from the field by employing field staff on their own arrangement. Afterwards, field data was processed and findings were made ready in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) file by an outsourced organization. But the baseline data were not in use because two PNGOs i.e. SUS and TSDS failed to open the data, even till end of the project. On the other hand, the MTR report does not mention anything about the baseline. Unavailability of the key findings of the baseline may be the reason.

One consultant was employed to prepare the baseline study for the ARP. But the study came out with 117 indicators. Following the long list of the indicators for collecting and reporting data from the field was quite troublesome for the project staff which discouraged them to continue with the baseline. Moreover, an effective solution could not be made to re-establish the baseline data and to make them useful for the PNGOs. Eventually the baseline data was never used. But some targets set in the LFA were followed to report the progress of the project.

### **6.2 Lack of smart M&E tools and formats:**

As baseline data of both the ACCESS and ARP projects were not in use, so necessary monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools and formats were not developed to gather information regularly from the field. Without smart tools, formats and/or questionnaire, the output and outcome of the project cannot be measured. To fill up the gap for not having baseline-Indicator-specific data, reporting formats with targets were prepared by the Swallows IB.

### **6.3 Field Visit without having monitoring tools:**

While field visit by the Swallows IB staff, they did not have any baseline data or M&E tools or questionnaire to evaluate field report data or case studies or the results. Thus, a quality field visit was not established. The secretariat had discretion to visit the partners and their working areas, but only one joint meeting was held with one partner NGO. Thus, experience sharing with partners did not take place as expected.

### **6.4 Difficulties in measuring real changes:**

Before the partnership with the Swallows IB, most of the PNGOs worked on same issues. Furthermore, most of the PNGOs worked almost on the same areas of ACCESS/ARP with the support of the Swallows

IB. So without proper baseline data on target groups and areas, the outcome of ACCESS/ARP cannot be measured appropriately. In addition, it is also important to differentiate the contribution of other organizations that have implemented projects on same issues, even with the same target beneficiaries, while conducting the baseline as well as end line studies. Then real changes of the project intervention can be measured.

### **6.5 Over ambitious targets:**

The respective PNGOs worked together to develop the projects – ACCESS and ARP – and set targets in the LFA, which could not be achieved in this three years programme. They were over ambitious while setting the targets and outcomes. For instances, according to the LFA of ARP, “independent farmers organization will be established by 2016,” when the definition of the independence of the FOs was not clear, then how PNGOs could reach to that target. Besides, the FOs were not independent at all, but sometimes they were organized and proactive to act on local issues. Also setting targets of organic agriculture in the lands of the members were not reached, but the farmers mainly started this in their homestead farms.

### **6.6 Less efforts to reduce gaps among the partners of the Secretariat for ACCESS**

The Secretariat along with a steering committee had the key responsibility of the programme management, and coordination with PNGOs. It had so wide responsibilities of ensuring time-specific programme implementation, managing work-related crisis, managing financial and accounting, reporting, and assisting strategically to the PNGOs. Besides, the members of the Secretariat had different approaches, priorities, and field realities. So the work of the Secretariat or the Steering Committee became more complicated. Thus, the big wishes that members (for instance, making local issues as national by joint effort) had were not realized. On the other hand, difference among the members could not be minimized. As a result, sluggishness in coordination and process management developed. It was also found in the MTR that:

“although the secretariat is very active in organizing the Steering Committee meetings, fund transfers, and sending reports on time, nonetheless it could be more dynamic in terms of coordination, sharing learning and best practices among the partners and capacity building of field level staff.”

The Secretariat had the responsibility to coordinate the baseline and supply to the partners. In fact, it did not reach to members and used for reporting as well.

### **6.7 Believing in governance, before promoting governance**

The Swallows IB had very specific focus to promote governance among the PNGOs. So it organized two workshops engaging Chief Executives and Heads of Finance and facilitated their inputs to prepare their own governance action plan on programme, finance, administration, institution and coordination. Other than that, one renowned audit firm (Howladar Yunus & Co.) was appointed to strengthen their accounting and audits. These workshops and engagement of audit firm had a positive impact on the PNGOs which prepared their respective action plan that was followed up by the Swallows IB.

It is important to mention that the programmes of the Swallows IB directly linked to governance. Also, the Swallows IB has a policy of zero tolerance towards corruption. So before promoting governance at the field levels by the PNGOs, they have to believe and practice as well. Any kind of deviation in governance of the implementing PNGOs may antagonize the whole programmes, thus, will ultimately deprive the grassroots people of their right share.

### **6.8 Lack of specialized manpower and relevant experience**

The Swallows IB always uses RBA in its development projects. So PNGOs should have specialized knowledge and understanding on RBA. It is not a skill, rather a belief or way of life. Without such a mindset, projects with RBA will never bring optimum results. Besides, development projects on technical issues (such as sustainable agriculture) need skilled manpower with relevant knowledge and experience.

During data collection on the ARP, these two qualities were sometimes not found among PNGOs. The staff's lack of specialization on organic agriculture or farmers rights could not produce optimum results. Besides, it was also found that a newly appointed staff could not get the foundation training on the issues he would work.

### **6.9 Lack of understanding of RBA during programme implementation**

Drop out of trained staff was a big challenge for the PNGO. This happened quite frequently among PNGOs. Staff without having in-depth knowledge and understanding on RBA found the LFA as a to-do list and counted the tick marks on it for reporting as success.

Believing in and owning to the cause and values of RBA and issues of farmers' rights, sustainable agriculture, gender empowerment would have more impact on the programme implementation. In some cases, these qualities among the staff were not found. Working for the landless farmers and marginalized women is not all about the programming, rather finding human qualities among the participants, and disseminating inner messages of it. Refresher training and follow up of the learning on RBA could reduce understanding gap.

### **6.10 Lack of implementation and follow up of the MTR by PNGOs:**

MTR reports on ACCESS and ARP were published in the mid of 2015. After the publication, the PNGO received the reports. Even key findings were shared with them. But during final evaluation, it was found that some key respondents from the PNGOs were not aware about key findings of MTR reports. Even they have very limited response or no response on how they responded to recommendations made in the MRT report for the remaining period of the projects.

Baseline data and MRT recommendations are very important for any development project to remember. These basic findings guide the projects until the end. As in the cases of some PNGOs, senior project staff were not aware of these, so they did not adopt any changes in their strategies or tools based on the recommendations.

### **6.11 Insufficient IEC materials**

Wide dissemination of core messages of the programmes has immense impact on direct or indirect beneficiaries and stakeholders. It needs generation of information and make them available for education and communication through IEC materials. Any kind of research or baseline findings or MTR findings could be disseminated through attractive IEC materials. But it did not happen while implementing the ACCESS and ARP projects. Both the Swallows IB and the PNGOs had little interest to produce these IEC materials.

### **6.12 Lack of innovation in reporting**

While reviewing different kinds of reports (six-monthly, annual, project completion, case studies, etc.) for this final evaluation, lack of innovation in report writing and presenting data in line with the objective of the programme was found. Though the projects have produced good results and brought some substantive changes in the communities, but they have not been nicely presented in the reports. The final reporting gave little focus to the outcome of the programmes, rather it counted the outputs.

Even the Swallows IB shared a nice document on how to write case stories, but most of the cases stories were not prepared maintaining least use of guidelines. The case stories are sometimes complex, unclear, incomplete, subjective, and unorganized.

#### **6.13 Unavailability of the complete ready document**

While reviewing the reports (six-monthly, yearly narrative report, project completion report, etc.), multiple versions were found. It happened because drafts were not eliminated after finalizing the reports. Keeping all the drafts along with the final one often misguides the managers to produce right document at the right time. Some of the PNGOs did not also preserve final reports in an efficient manner. So when asked for some data from the reports, they did not provide the right one at once.

#### **6.14 Activities suffered for monetary loss**

Due to devaluation of money, the conversion rate of BDT against SEK reduced in 2015-16. As a result, the PNGOs received less amount of money than they budgeted for their activities. The project followed an annual action plan, and they needed money for that. As the monetary loss was substantial, the PNGOs had to curtail their activities. They did not have alternative financial planning – using own fund to carry out activities committed. Thus non-implementation of the log-framed activities could slow down the process of achieving results.

#### **6.15 Less emphasis on national level joint programme**

Under outcome 4 of the ACCESS project, one indicator specifies “network and linkage of local organization with district and national level take collective action,” Other than that indicator, the partner organizations wished to bring local issues at national level jointly. But it did not work out, as no joint programmes of the partners was held at the national level to reach out policy makers. There were expectations to work at national level but no consolidated decision on a joint event at the national level was taken by the Steering Committee or the Secretariat. Even for this, necessary budget was not allocated.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

The Swallow' Bangladesh Programme (ACCESS and ARP) 2014-16 has brought some substantive changes in the status quo of male-female relations and farmers' agricultural practices in the intervention areas. The findings reveal that the groups and organizations (e.g. *NariMorcha*, women groups, spouse groups, farmers' organization and so on) played a pivotal role in bringing these changes in the communities. Most of the PNGOs had a great effort to train them for building their capacity and to facilitate them for achieving their targets. Considering hindrances towards achieving women empowerment and sustainable agriculture, the programmes were a very good start. As the programme was quite relevant to the context, it addressed problems with cost-efficient manner, brought visible changes in the communities and had built some behavioral traits to sustain the changes, so this programme could be extended to another phase until 2021.

### **Recommendations for the improvement of overall Programme:**

The MTR reports of the ACCESS and ARP projects provided some specific recommendations for their better implementation. These recommendations are still relevant, because most of them are yet to consider in the implementation. So all these very important recommendations should be considered while implementing ongoing phase of the programme.

Other than these, the following recommendations have been generated from the study findings.

#### **1. Baseline data in place:**

- a. Proper baseline study should be carried out by an external organization/consultant.
- b. Internal staff of the PNGOs or the project staff should not be involved either in the development process of data collection tools or during data collection for avoiding the conflict of interest and ensuring quality of data. Thus the Swallows IB shall have to estimate budget for this outsourcing during programme development.
- c. Their feedback should be taken at the time of brainstorming or at the initial stage of planning.
- d. Baseline data should arise from the baseline study.
- e. The data should be presented in a popular version so that everybody can have easy access to this.
- f. On the baseline study, some very important smart indicators should be set and finalized, after getting feedback from the project staff.
- g. Baseline data should be made ready at the very beginning of the project, not later than three months.
- h. It should be confirmed that all the PNGOs are using the baseline data without any questions. If there is any question regarding the data, the outsourced organization/consultant should be contacted immediately.

#### **2. Developing M&E Tools:**

- a. Based on the baseline study, proper and smart M&E tools and/or questionnaire should be developed and circulated among the staff at earliest, no later than three months.
- b. The project staff have to be oriented to them, so that they can easily use while preparing M&E reports.
- c. A computerized MIS can be developed for collecting M&E and other management data in an easiest manner.

**3. Measuring Changes**

- a. The MTR and the end line studies have to use comparative tools to measure changes and achievements based on baseline data.
- b. Small pamphlets on key findings of the baseline and the MTR can be prepared for the project staff and beneficiaries, so that they can remember and follow them as well.
- c. While conducting baseline study and end line study, control data and experiment data from field can be generated to measure real changes of the programme.

**4. Setting achievable targets**

- a. The PNGOs and the Swallows IB have to be practical and realistic while finalizing the targets of the programmes.
- b. Activities, targets, objectively verifiable indicators, and mode of verification should be well articulated
- c. Results and changes should be measurable, and visible in the lives of the target groups and communities.

**5. Measures on promoting governance**

- a. Governance is not a one-time issue. Regular follow up and refresher training on the governance issues should be taken.
- b. Any kind of violation in maintaining governance should be raised before the concerned person/PNGO without any delay.
- c. If one PNGO indulges in bad governance/corruption, and the Swallows IB decides to discontinue funding support after thorough investigation, then the PNGO should not get more than three months for closing the project.

**6. RBA and other relevant experience**

- a. The NGOs having long experience of using RBA and expertise in the targeted issue should be considered as partners of the Swallows IB.
- b. This combination of two qualities should be ensured while contracting.
- c. All of the project staff should receive RBA training.
- d. In-house refreshers training on RBA should be arranged by the PNGOs. Even the RBA training should be given to newly appointed staff.
- e. Technical project needs technical person for better implementation of the programme. Candidates having academic education and experience on agriculture should be selected for the farmers' rights projects.

**7. Joint event at national level:**

- a. A strategy should be developed in the programme so that the local level learning, and achievements can be presented at national level jointly.
- b. Policy level outreach should be considered in the programme.
- c. One exceptional achievement of a local NGO, presented before the policy makers at national level, may attract a wider audience.

**8. Developing IEC Materials:**

- a. The Swallows IB and PNGOs should be proactive to prepare IEC materials for wider dissemination of their activities as well as achievements.
- b. The Swallows IB should develop a documentation and communication strategy so that they can regularly document their good works for keeping the organizational memory intact, and reaching external audiences.
- c. The Swallows IB' project reports should be published in proper manner for making these as reference for the practitioners and readers.

**9. Mutual sharing and learning**

- a. Cross field visits and reflections on the experiences can be increased for mutual learning.
- b. PNGOs should have openness to the new things or new tools, and they have to show how much new things they are taking from other partners.

**10. Developing writing skills**

- a. The project staff or PNGOs should build report writing skills. If one staff member does not follow guidelines of the trainers or experts on report writing, then necessary corrective measures should be taken against them.

**11. Back-up financial plan**

- a. The PNGOs should have an alternative plan to back up the project implementation, if they lose money for any unforeseen reasons including low conversion rate.

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## **Appendices**

Annex 1: Data Collection Tools (FGDs and KIIs)

Annex 2: Case Study of ACCESS Project

1) Advocacy and social engagement for prevention of VAW

Annex 3: Some more case studies of ARP Project

1) Ferdousi Begum is an example of organic pesticide(TSDS)

2) Everyone's Hares Bhai (NK)

3) How Nargis had overcome from miserable life (UD)

4) Local Rice Cultivation and its impact in community level (BARCIK)

Annex 4: Agricultural Rights: A Conceptual Discussion

Annex 5: Detailed LFA for Access

Annex 6: Detailed LFA for ARP