Research Highlights 2020

Editors

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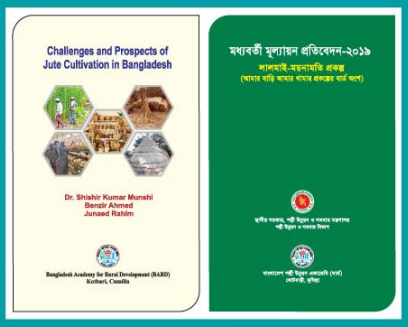
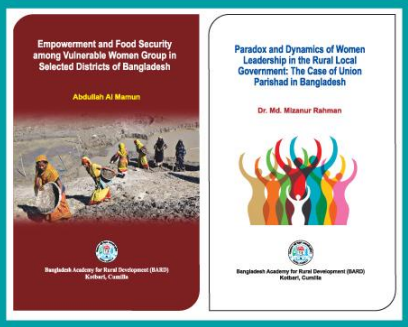
Md. Mosharaf Hossain Bhuiyan

Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD)
Kotbari, Cumilla

Some Published Research Reports





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Foreword

Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) regularly organizes a seminar on Research Highlights to disseminate the findings and policy recommendations of its recently completed researches. The research findings of the academy assist the policy planners by providing grass-roots data and their implications in terms of identification of rural problems along with their causal factors and probable solutions. On an average, BARD conducts 10 research studies every year addressing issues and problems of rural development. The findings of the research studies are disseminated through organizing seminars and workshops so that BARD could share its experiences with the relevant stakeholders and policy planners of Bangladesh. Following that tradition, BARD has organized the Seminar on Research Highlights on 20 June 2020 at the Mainamati auditorium of BARD where a total of 60 participants of BARD, Comilla University, and Bangladesh Cooperative Academy participated. Due to prevailing corona pandemic, a limited number of participants were selected from the surrounding organizations. However, the seminar was effective in terms of active participation and feedback of the participants. In the seminar six research papers were presented in six consecutive business sessions. The presentations served the purpose of dissemination of the research findings along with keeping concerned stakeholders updated about the current scenario of rural development in Bangladesh. Besides, the participants critically discussed, analyzed, and provided valuable suggestions that helped BARD think about the future improvement in its research works. Above all, the seminar immensely helped the research

documentation process. The present report is the outcome of this documentation process.

The report consists of a brief summaries of six research studies that were recently completed by the Faculty Members of BARD. Moreover, it also recorded the comments and feedback of the participants that were furnished through the rapporteurs' report. It is deemed that the research findings and recommendations would directly or indirectly help the relevant practitioners and planners involved with the process of rural development. I believe the researchers would also find valuable indications of recent trends of development interventions of the country. I would like to extend my cordial thanks to the researchers for their valuable contributions. My special thanks are due to the editors who actually worked hard for bringing out this seminar report. I hope that the report would be immensely useful to the policy makers, planners, and other stakeholders involved in rural development.

(Md. Shahjahan)
Director General
(Additional Secretary)
BARD, Cumilla

Editorial Note

Globally, social science research is a highly demanding subject to understand social changes, impacts of development interventions on society and needs to keep the momentum of progress going for a better future. Research is a systematic inquiry that utilizes acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and create new knowledge that is generally applicable for promoting human wellbeing. The mandatory functions of BARD are to conduct exploratory and operational research as well as policy analysis and evaluation; and impart training to the officials of different government and non-government organizations, representatives of local government institutions, co-operators and others concerned with rural development. The academy works as a laboratory for testing concepts and theories on development and governance. BARD also provides advisory and consultancy services, arranges national and international seminars, conferences, workshops and orientations programmes with a view to helping policy planners and academics engaged in rural development and public sector governance. BARD also provides academic services to the students of higher learning of various national and international universities and research organizations as well.

In consonance with the mandate of BARD, every year BARD conducts studies and organizes a research highlights seminar. This year, due to COVID situation, BARD could not organize this seminar in due time. However in spite of the pandemic situation, BARD, in order to maintain continuity of this good practice, organized a "Seminar on Research Highlights: 2020" on 20 June 2020 with a limited number of partcipants. The seminar was designed to achieve the objectives: i) inform the policy makers and

others involved in rural development about the findings of the selected research studies of BARD; ii) share with them the latest status of changes in rural scenario and problems identified in rural areas; iii) seek opinions and suggestions of the participants regarding future implications of the research findings.

BARD conducts research in diverse areas relating to socio-economic development and problems of rural society. In line with the government priorities pronounced in the five year plan, perspective plan (Vision 2021), Vision 2041, "Bangladesh on the March towards Prosperity" (election manifesto of Bangladesh Awami League, 2018), Delta Plan and SDGs, BARD accomplished a number of research studies in the recent past.

The findings and policy recommendations of the completed researches help the policy planners to formulate a plan of action to address the rural development needs of the country. Against this backdrop, BARD feels the necessity to organize the seminar on Research Highlights on a regular basis. In the seminar, held on 20 June 2020, six research studies were presented by the Faculty Members of BARD. The findings, policy recommendations and the feedback of the participants have been recorded in this seminar report.

In organizing this seminar, BARD received tremendous support and cooperation from the invited guests and participants. We, as members of the Research Division and seminar management, would like to express our profound gratitude to all of them who actively participated in the seminar and rendered their expert views. We are grateful to the concerned nominating agencies for nominating their officials to participate in this seminar. We are thankful to the Principal of the Bangladesh Cooperative

Academy, Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain for his kind presence in the Seminar as Guest of Honour and useful observations on the research works. Thanks are also due to the researchers and presenters for presenting their research summaries and recommendations in the seminar. We would like to offer our especial thanks to the session chairpersons who in fact played a crucial role for facilitating the rounds of discussions and bringing out productive outcomes from the business sessions. We also extend our sincere thanks to Director (Training) and Director (Administration) of BARD for providing us necessary supports to organize this seminar smoothly. We also express our heartiest thanks to the Director General of BARD for his constant and inspiring guidance in organizing this seminar. We strongly hope that the seminar report would help the policy planners get valuable insights into the recent trends and needs of rural development of the country, and also the researchers and academics as a whole to keep abreast of the development scenario in certain areas of rural development.

Editors

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Chapter-1
Introduction and the Context of the Seminar

1.1 Background

Conducting research relating to rural development helps explore rural problems and their probable solutions. Research provides important policy inputs for the public policy making process. BARD has been conducting research since its inception in 1959. Academy's research serves the triple purpose of identifying issues for initiating action research, providing inputs for training and suggesting policy inputs to the government. The dynamics of socio-economic changes and development are so intricately intertwined that until and unless the required information are available it would be very difficult to make appropriate policy for solving a particular problem. Therefore, it is essential to have a sound knowledge on the grassroots reality for identifying necessary interventions for development.

In Bangladesh, more than 70% of the population still lives in rural areas. Therefore, it is exigently important for the Academy to keep itself updated on changes in the rural scenario, and at the same time, to identify and solve their problems through undertaking research and action research. BARD is mandated to test the concepts and theories of development, evaluate the development programmes, conduct operational research and policy analysis, provide consultancy supports and assist in formulating policies. Every year BARD generally conducts 10-12 research studies addressing the problems of rural areas.

The findings of the researches of BARD are disseminated through seminars and workshops with the participation of officials of government, non-government and international organizations, scholars, practitioners and policy planners in concerned fields of the country. BARD

hitherto conducted more than 700 research studies in different areas of rural development during the last sixty one years. Through these researches, BARD has tried to uphold the ground realities and policy issues of rural development to the government. The "Seminar on Research Highlights of BARD: 2020" is the continuity of an annual event of BARD with the objective of keeping its stakeholders updated about its recently accomplished research studies. The detailed programme of the seminar is attached in *Annexure-1*.

The completed studies are published and circulated among concerned stakeholders including relevant ministries and members of the Board of Governors of BARD. The progress of work of the planned studies for 2019-20 was hampered due to the prevailing COVID situation. However, BARD could manage to complete a total of six studies in this period. In the meantime, Academy published reports of the six completed studies.

In a bid to fulfill our mandated duties coupled with meeting the target set for the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) with our concerned ministry, this year, BARD has already accomplished 10 researches among which the selected 6 research studies were accepted for publication and finally published. The remainings are in the process of review and editing. In this Research Highlights Seminar: 2020, the findings of those six research studies will be presented and shared with a limited number of learned audiences due to the prevailing grim reality caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The titles of researches along with the researchers' names; summary of the research findings and recommendations as well as policy implications have been compiled for better sharing and critical discussions by the participants. It is expected that with the enthusiastic participation of the participants, several issues related to the research findings would be

further clarified in the seminar. Moreover, the dessimination of the research findings could help uptake of relevant information and recommendations by concerned stakeholders to initiate actions aimed at addressing the felt needs as identified in the studies.

1.2 Objective of the Seminar

The general objective of the seminar was to inform the policy planners, development practitioners and scholars about the recently accomplished research works of BARD. The specific objectives of the seminar were to:

i. inform the policy makers and others involved in rural development about the findings of the selected research studies of BARD;
ii. share with them the latest status of changes in rural scenario and problems identified in specific areas of socio-economic development of the rural people;
iii. seek opinions and suggestions of the participants regarding future implications of the research findings.

1.3 Duration and Venue of the Seminar

The seminar on "Research Highlights of BARD: 2020" was held on 20 June 2020 in the Mainamoti Auditorium of BARD. In the context of COVID 19, the participants were seated maintaining required social distance.

1.4 Participants of the Seminar

The Faculty Members and other relevant officers of BARD as well as a limited number of participants from the neighbouring organizations attended the seminar. Besides, some resource persons cum participants from Dhaka were connected with the seminar by ZOOM. A total of 60 participants attended this seminar. Details can be seen in the ***Annexure- 2.***

1.5 Presenters and Chairpersons of the Seminar

In the seminar on research highlights 2020, a total of six accomplished/published research reports of BARD were presented by researchers of the respective publications. In care of several authors, a designated researcher on behalf of the team acted as the presenter while the whole team participated in the question-answer part after the presentation.

The Chairpersons of the presentation sessions were four senior Faculty Members of BARD and two external resource persons. Professor Dr. Tofail Ahmed, Vice Chancellor, Britannia University and a prominent local government expert, and Dr. Tapash Kumar Biswas, Director, Research Division of *Palli Karma Sahayak* Foundation (PKSF) chaired two sessions over ZOOM. The remaining were physically present in the seminar. A brief profiles of the reserachers are annexed (***Annexure- 3).***

1.6 Inaugural Session of the Seminar

The Inaugural Session of the seminar entitled "Research Highlights of BARD: 2020" was held in the Mainamati Auditorium of BARD. It was started at 09:45 a.m. with recitation from the Holy Quran. The session was chaired by Mr. Md. Shahjahan, Director General, BARD. Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain, Principal, Bangladesh Cooperative Academy graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour. Seminar Director Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Joint Director (Research), BARD; Director Research, Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee; Director (Training), Mr. Mohammad Abdul Quader; Guest of Honour and the Chairperson delivered their respective speeches in the Inaugural Session. The brief summaries of the speeches are given below:

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1.6.1 Welcome Address by Director (Training)

Mr. Mohammad Abdul Quader, Director (Training) greeted the participants and guests in the Inaugural Session. He welcomed the distinguished participants and acknowledged the kind presence of the honorable Guest of Honour. He said, the Research Highlight Seminar is a regular programme of BARD to disseminate the research results before the academicians and the policy planners. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year the Research Division could not organize this seminar in due time and participation was kept limited to BARD and neighbouring organizations. He requested the distinguished participants to give their valuable comments on the presented reports.

He extended his gratitude to the Guest of Honour for his kind presence. He also extended his gratitude to the Director (Research) and as well as to the Director (Administration). He expressed his gratefulness to DG, BARD for supporting the seminar in many ways. He thanked the participants for attending the seminar in an adverse situation and acknowledged the crucial support of the seminar management team. Wishing a great success of the seminar, he concluded his speech.

1.6.2 Seminar Introduction by the Seminar Director

At the beginning of his speech, Seminar Director Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman greeted and welcomed all participants and guests in the inaugural session. He mentioned that the whole world was experiencing a hard time due to the pandemic. He requested the participants to maintain their personal safety during the seminar. He added that the seminar management took best possible measures for the safety of the participants and all others involved in the seminar. Then he mentioned that the mandatory functions of BARD are to conduct exploratory and

operational research, policy analysis and evaluation, and impart training to the officials of different government and non-government organizations, representatives of local government institutions, co-operators and others concerned with rural development. BARD also provides advisory and consultancy services, arranges national and international seminars, conferences, workshops and orientations programmes with a view to helping policy planners and academics engaged in rural development and public sector governance. Later, he described the objectives of the seminar in the context of Academy's long history of conducting research and disseminating the findings and searcing of new research areas with the stakeholders. He informed that BARD accomplished 10 research studies in the year 2019-20 among which six selected research studies were published, which would be presented and shared with the learned audience. However, unlike the previous seminars, in this seminar, sufficient number of participants from among the academics, bureaucracy and development professional across the country could not be ensured due to the prevailing grim reality caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

He expressed his immense gratefulness to Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain, honorable Principal, Bangladesh Cooperative Academy who had kindly graced the event as the Guest of Honour in the inaugural session. He appreciated the crucial support given by Director (Research), Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee, and Director (Training), Mr. Md. Abdul Quader in arranging this seminar in such a grave situation. He expressed his deep gratitude to the Director General, BARD for his tremendous support. He also acknowledged Ms. Kazi Sonia Rahman, Deputy Director & Associate Seminar Director and Mr. Mosharaf Hossain Bhuyian, Assistant Director of Research Division for their sincere cooperation, and hard work. Wishing this event a success, he concluded his speech.

1.6.3 Address by the Director (Research)

Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee, Director (Research), extended his warmest greetings, on behalf of the Research Division, BARD to the distinguished participants of the seminar. He expressed his gratitude to the Guest of Honour for joining this important seminar.

He said, BARD is used to organizing this "Research Highlights" seminar every year. But the situation this year is very different and alarming. He mentioned that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, BARD had to organize this seminar with a very limited number of participants. Even last year, BARD organized this seminar at Dhaka with the presence of a big number of participants from various organizations and stakeholders. He mentioned that this seminar is a historical event of BARD which is being practiced since the time of Dr. Khan. He informed that Dr. Khan introduced many innovative initiatives in this academy and this seminar is a legacy of Dr. Khan. The objective of this seminar is knowledge dissemination, he stated. The researchers would disseminate the research results through presentation and the experts would give their critical comments. Thus the knowledge uptake could happen and at the same time, the critical comments would help make our future research more useful and methodical; he opined.

Later on, he extended his thanks to the management team for organizing this important seminar. He gave heart-felt thanks to Director General, BARD for his continuous support for the seminar. He was also delighted at the kind presence to the Guest of Honour. Last but not the least, he extended his personal regards and cordial thanks to the participants. He wished this event a great success and concluded his speech.

1.6.4 Address by the Guest of Honour

Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain, Principal, Bangladesh Cooperative Academy, at the very outset, conveyed his heartfelt thanks to the BARD authority for inviting him in this august gathering as a Guest of Honor. He mentioned that BARD is an internationally reputed organization in the field of rural development. BARD has tremendous contributions to the agricultural and socio-economic development of Bangladesh. Referring to the summaries of the six studies compiled in the working paper he said that, he had found the studies very important and time demanding in the context of the present situation of Bangladesh. This seminar would be so much useful for the country if the findings and the recommendations could be implemented at the national level, he stated. He emphasized on increasing agricultural production. He requested the relevant researchers to share the findings of the research on *Amar Bari Amar Khamar* project with the project management so that they use the findings and solve the limitations. He further mentioned that like BARD, Bangladesh Cooperative Academy started research activities from the year of 2015 in a limited way. He acknowledged the cooperation of BARD faculties in this regard from the very beginning. BARD has a huge profile in policy advocacy and development. The policy planners would take any recommendations given by BARD very positively, he wished.

He acknowledged BARD again for organizing such a seminar and also said it was a chance to enrich his own personal knowledge. He thanked seminar management for their hard work in organizing this seminar. He further hoped that the active participation of the participants would make this seminar fruitful. At last, he wished the seminar a great success.

1.6.5 Address by the Chairperson

Mr. Md. Shahjahan, Director General, BARD chaired the inaugural sessions. First of all, he was pleased to convey his warmest greetings to the participants from different organizations. He also extended his personal greetings to the Guest of Honour for his kind presence. For the first time he was able to participate in this seminar on research highlights of BARD, he mentioned. He thanked all the Faculty Members of BARD for their continuous efforts in research activities. He mentioned that at the initial stage, BARD was a training institution and research and action research were added later. Since then BARD faculty were constantly involved in need based research activities. He appreciated the good practices established in this academy by Dr. Khan, the founder chief executive of BARD. Research Highlights Seminar is one of the best practices of this academy, he mentioned. He thanked the Research Division, particularly for their initiative and tremendous effort, and finally for making this happen in this situation. He referred to some research works carried out by different countries regarding Covid-19 pandemic and stated the importance of research to find out solutions of different problems for the betterment of mankind. But he opined that many research activities could not add any value for the welfare of the nation. He requested the senior faculties to guide the juniors and make them competent. The Chairperson also suggested to uploading the papers in BARD website for more dissemination. He extended his heartiest gratitude to the participants for their participation. He also thanked seminar management team for their relentless efforts in organizing this seminar in this pandemic situation. Finally, wishing the seminar a great success, he formally inaugurated the seminar.

1.7 Methods and Materials of the Seminar

Since its inception, BARD is used to employing suitable methods in its research, training, seminars workshops etc. The

primary method applied in this day-long seminar was individual presentation of the research findings with PowerPoint slides through multimedia. The presentations were accompanied with vibrant discussions, feedback from the Director General and Chairpersons of the sessions.

1.8 Organization and Overall Structure of the Seminar Proceedings

The proceedings on the Research Highlights Seminar: 2020 comprised 3 Chapters. **The first chapter** deals with the inaugural ceremony of the seminar. The seminar began with a brief inaugural session. In the inaugural session Director (Training) Mr. Mohammad Abdul Quader welcomed the invited guests and participants. After that the Seminar Director Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman explained the context, objective, outcome and *modus operandi* of the seminar. The Guest of Honour Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain, Principal, Bangladesh Cooperative Academy and Director (Research) of BARD, Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee addressed in the session. Finally, the Director General of BARD, Mr. Md. Shahjahan wishing happy ending and grand success, declared oppenning of the seminar.

The second chapter contains the contents and outcomes of the business sessions. In the Research Highlights Seminar: 2020, a total of six selected research studies were presented which were followed by open discussions and question–answer exchange. Immediately after the inaugural session, a short tea break took place at the language martyr Abul Barkat Cafeteria of BARD. Following that the business sessions of the seminar started as per the scheduled programme. The PowerPoints presentations of the research findings started sequentially, one by one.

The first and second sessions were conducted online using zoom connectivity. The first session was on **"My House My Farm Project (*Amar Bari Amar Khamar***

Project): Challenges and Potentialities" and this was chaired by Professor Dr. Tofail Ahmed, Vice Chancellor of the Britannia University, Cumilla. The second session namely **"Agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh Government Policy Strategy and Applicability of PPP"** was chaired by Dr. Tapsh Kumar Biswas, Director (Research), *Palli Karma Sahayak* Foundation (PKSF).

The rest four business sessions were physically chaired by the senior Faculty Members of BARD in the seminar Hall. Each of the presenters was allowed 15 minutes to present his/her summary of the research findings. The Chairperson provided 10 minutes for discussions and question–answer and finally the Chairperson used 5 minutes to sum up the whole discussions and provided his expert opinions and on the particular session. The third and the fourth sessions were chaired by Dr. Masudul Hoq Chowdhury, Director (Rural Education & Social Development) of BARD and Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, Director (Rural Economics and Management) of BARD respectively. The fifth session was chaired by Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, Director (Administration) of BARD. The last session was chaired by Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Director (Project) of BARD. A detailed list of the titles of the research, researchers, presenters and Chairpersons is given in the Matrix-1.

The discussions, questions and answers on each study were recorded by the respective rapporteurs of the sessions. After the business sessions were over, a very short valedictory session was organized- which constituted **the third chapter** of this seminar proceedings. The valedictory session was chaired by the Director General of BARD, Mr. Md. Shahjahan. In the valedictory session, Director (Administration), Director (Research) and Guest of Honour offered their comments and observations. In fine, the chairperson of this session declared closing of this one day long seminar at BARD.

Matrix-1: Sessionwise Titles of the Research, Researchers, Presenters and Chairpersons

Sl. No.	Title of the Research	Name of the Researchers
1.	**Business Session One:** My House My Farm Project (*Amar Bari Amar Khamar* Project): Challenges and Potentialities **Chairperson:** Dr. Tofail Ahmed **Presenter:** Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam	Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee Dr. Abdul Karim Mr. Newaz Ahmed Chowdhury Mr. Md. Tanvir Ahmed
2.	**Business Session Two:** Agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh Government Policy Strategy and Applicability of PPP **Chairperson:** Dr. Tapas Kumar Biswas **Presenter:** Ms. Saifun Nahar	Ms. Saifun Nahar
3.	**Business Session Three:** Challenges and Prospects of Jute Cultivation: A Study on Farmer's Response in Selected Areas of Bangladesh **Chairperson:** Dr. Masudul Hoq Chowdhury **Presenter:** Mr. Junaed Rahim	Dr. Shishir Kumar Munshi Mr. Benzir Ahmed Mr. Junaed Rahim
4.	**Business Session Four:** লালমাই ময়নামতি প্রকল্পের (আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার প্রকল্পের বার্ড অংশ) মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়ন **Chairperson:** Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam **Presenter:** Dr. Md. Anowar Hossen Bhuyan	ড. মোঃ শফিকুল ইসলাম ড. মোঃ আনোয়ার হোসেন ভূঁঞা
5.	**Business Session Five:** Paradox and Dynamics of Women Leadership in the Rural Local Government **Chairperson:** Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam **Presenter:** Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman	Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman
6.	**Business Session Six:** Empowerment and Food Security among Vulnerable Women Group in Selected Districts of Bangladesh **Chairperson:** Mr. Abul Kalam Azad **Presenter:** Mr. Abdullah Al Mamun	Mr. Abdullah Al Mamun

Chapter- 2
Business Sessions of the Seminar

2.1 Presentation on My House My Farm Project (*Amar Bari Amar Khamar* Project): Challenges and Potentialities

Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam
Director (Administration), BARD

Md. Mizanur Rahman
Director (Project), BARD

Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee
Director (Research), BARD

Dr. Abdul Karim
Joint Director (Rural Admin. & Local Govt.), BARD

Newaz Ahmed Chowdhury
Joint Director (Training), BARD

Md. Tanvir Ahmed
Deputy Director (Project), BARD

1. Statement of the Issue

The Government of Bangladesh has been implementing the 'My House My Farm' project popularly known as '*Amar Bari Amar Khamar* (ABAK)' since 2009 with the goal of eradicating rural poverty from the country. This is the biggest project in the public sector of Bangladesh for poverty reduction of the rural people. The prime objective of the project is to contribute to reducing national poverty from 22.8% to 10% by 2020 (Revised DPP of MHMF, 2016). The project follows the strategy of making each rural household the locus of agro-economic activities for sustainable livelihood development through optimum

utilization of local resources, human resources and time. The core concept of 'ABAK' is that each rural household will be a centre of economic activities (GoB, 2014: 197). To achieve this end, it has introduced a unique system of fund mobilization known as 'contributory micro savings'. The project targets 60 poor, ultra poor and beggar families in each village. Government is committed to expand ABAK activities to all 87,223 villages of the country (Revised DPP of MHMF, 2016).

ABAK is one of the biggest rural development projects funded by the government of Bangladesh. Improvement of rural livelihood depends to a great extent on effectiveness and efficiency of the project. For better management of the project, it is highly essential to understand how far the present working process and project activities are being effective in producing expected outcome from the project. In this regard, the study attempted to understand and assess effectiveness of overall project activities. In addition, the findings of the study could be helpful for the development thinkers and policy planners to frame future policy issues regarding effective project management and proper use of public resources. The study was also expected to add some new knowledge in development literature that might be useful for Bangladesh.

2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to find out the operational efficiency and limitations of *Amar Bari Amar Khamar* (ABAK) project in reducing the rural poverty of Bangladesh. The specific objectives were to:

i) Examine the operational aspects of the project at the field level in the light of project documents and guidelines;

ii) Find out how far the desired outputs like VDOs, capital, productive assets, skill of beneficiaries, marketing centres, Information Communication Centre (ICC) etc. of the project are attained;
iii) Assess the outcome such as agricultural productivity and self-employment status of the beneficiaries of the project;
iv) Evaluate the impact like household income and incidence of rural poverty along with prospect of institutionalization of VDOs of the project; and
v) Find out the governance, overall effectiveness, weaknesses, strengths, potentialities and sustainability of the VDOs as well as project.

3. Methods of the Study

Cross sectional primary data were collected through different methods and tools. The study team reviewed different publications, research reports, newspaper articles and previous project evaluation documents to have clear understanding about the ABAK project activities and its achievements so far. The team collected data through Sample Survey, FGDs, Case Study and Field Observation. Multi-stage random sampling technique was followed to select sample Village Development Organizations (VDOs). From eight Divisions of Bangladesh, one district from each Divisionwas chosen randomly. Two Upazilas from each of the eight districts and two VDOs from each Upazila were selected randomly. Thus, a total of 32 VDOs were randomly selected from all over the country. Simple Random Sampling (SRS) technique was followed to identify the VDO members for household survey. For this study, the team selected 32 VDOs and each VDO consisted of 60 members. Hence, the population size was 1920. For finite population, the sample size was calculated by using the statistical formula (Kothari, 2004):

$$n = (z^2. p.q\ N)/\{e^2\ (N-1)+z^2.p.q\}$$

According to the formula the estimated sample size was 320. Ten members (6 women and 4 men) from each VDO were selected randomly for household survey.

Atotal of 10 FGDs were conducted in Chattogram, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka and Sylhet Divisions only by the study team members in the respective Upazilas. Approximately 15-20 participants attended each of the FGDs. The FGD participants were VDO-members, local government representatives, BRDB officials, Upazila Chairman, UNO, local leaders etc. For in-depth analysis and understanding of the success and failure of the VDOs, eight case studies were conducted under this study. Four successful VDOs and four unsuccessful VDOs were purposively chosen from eight districts. A thorough investigation and analysis was done to find out the cause and effect relationship behind the success and failure of the selected VDOs. For collecting quantitative data structured interview schedule was used and data were collected through face to face interview. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted to gather qualitative data on various aspects. Checklists and open-ended questions were used in collecting qualitative data.

Computer based software (CSPro) was used for data entry and processing. Research investigators of Research Division of BARD performed the functions of data entry developed by an expert data analyst. T-test was used to compare two different sets of values. This test compares the mean of two samples. For this research t-test was employed to test the significance of some defined variables before and after intervention of ABAK. The beneficiaries of the project were also asked to rate the overall performances of the project through five point Likert scale. The total score of a respondent was determined by summing up the weights for responses against each statement which is shown under 'aggregate score'.

4. Summary of the Study Findings

It was found that there is a diversified occupational structure among the VDO members of the ABAK project. Agriculture is no longer the only primary occupation of the beneficiaries. The average family size of the VDO members of ABAK project is 4.98 comprising of 2.37 adult male, 2.29 adult female and 1.16 children under 5 years. The average land size of the beneficiaries is 57.4 decimals including 38.2 decimals of cultivable land, 12.9 decimals of homestead land, 3.9 decimals of pond, 1.0 decimal of fallow land and 0.6 decimal of other types of land.

Among the respondents, 82% deposited savings on a monthly basis. On the other hand, 14.06% respondents deposited the monthly savings at irregular intervals. On an average, each member saved Tk. 6,866.00. The deposit of contributory savings from project authority was found a little bit irregular. The respondents got varying amounts of contributory savings from the project depending on the length of time of membership and amount of personal savings. The average contributory savings varied from Tk. 4,192.00 to Tk. 4,800.00 while the average amount of contributory savings was calculated to be Tk. 4,610.00.

The highest and the lowest average size of loan for the first time ranged between Tk.13,750.00 and Tk.8,675.00. For the second time, the amount varied between Tk. 21,000.00 and Tk.15,089.00. For the third time, the amount varied between Tk. 27,777 and Tk.19,130.00. It indicates that there is a small deviation between the existing guidelines and practices at the ground with regard to distribution of loans to members. The current loan approval process was time consuming. It was found that the loan approval process in some cases took more than one month, and in an extreme case it took more than six months. Most of the respondents expressed that loan approval process is slow compared to NGOs. There was a

high demand for increased amount of loan. They expressed that the initial amount of loan should be increased to at least Tk. 50,000.00. A sizeable portion of respondents was not sufficient aware of online based credit operation system of the project. Some participants pointed out certain difficulties with SMS. Such as, some borrowers could not read SMS and sometimes they missed SMS due to many reasons. Very often, SMS was deleted due to ignorance. Sometimes, they had changed mobile number.

It was found that, 120 (37.50%) out of 320 received training while 200 (62.50%) were not imparted training from the project. Further, 312 (97.50%) opined that they did not receive any kind of technical support after training. The current average monthly household income of the beneficiaries is significantly high compared to the monthly household income 5 years earlier. On an average, all the respondent beneficiaries have increased their monthly household income by 46% within the period of 5 years after being the members of the ABAK project. The mud and thatched walls of the houses of the beneficiaries decreased and tin and brick walls increased which indicates the improvement of their economic condition and standard of living. At present, the number of *Kutcha* latrine has declined remarkably (69 before and only 18 at present) and no open place defecation was found.

Number of income earning members has increased. Among the beneficiaries, 95% opined that their self-employment opportunities increased and only 5% opined that it remained same as earlier. Among the beneficiaries, 94% opined that their poverty decreased and only 6% opined that it remained same as earlier. Among the beneficiaries, 96% opined that their social dignity status improved and only 4% opined that it remained same as earlier, 95% opined that their livelihood status improved and only 5% opined that it remained same as earlier. The t-test result shows that significant changes occurred among

various assets of the beneficiaries after joining the ABAK project. The housing status, safe drinking water, sanitation status and electricity consumption status have significantly improved at present compared to the period before joining the ABAK project.

It was seen that 78% of the VDOs had full members while 22% of the VDOs were in shortage of members. In case of about 38% of the VDOs no member had left the VDO since they joined the organization. It was also found that 1-5 members from 38% of the VDOs had left the organization while 19% of the VDOs reported that about 6-10 members had left the organization. It was found that 10-20 members received IGA training only in case of 9% of the VDOs while in case of the rest of the VDOs only 1-10 members received IGA training. It was seen that over the last five years, the VDOs of the study areas were able to increase their initial fund almost three times (from Tk. 4.28 lakh to Tk. 12.94 lakh). This is quite a good sign for the VDOs to maintain the fund flow at the society level. It was found that the mean loan amount distributed increased so far in the studied VDOs over the last five years. It increased from Tk. 2.38 lakh to Tk. 4.61 lakh after five years.

The mean number of *Uthan Boithak* (courtyard meeting) differs among VDOs. It ranged from 9 to 11 meetings per year. It was found that a big confusion prevailed among the members. The members were told that they need to provide Tk. 200.00 each month and Government would provide same amount to each in their respective account. Some members did not have the idea that the 'incentive bonus' given by the Government, which would be deposited in society account and cannot be withdrawn at any circumstances and it is the property of the VDO, not of the individual members. Another confusion was observed about the own savings amount, which they thought could easily be adjusted with the bad debt. In many places, there had been brawl over this issue between the beneficiaries and project

management. This has created serious problem in running the society smoothly at the initial level.

A number of problems were ventilated by the beneficiaries, among which the most serious problems as felt by the beneficiaries are - poor loan amount (88%), shortage of training (52%), no society office (45%) and loan not given timely (17%). Other problems are - shortage of field supervisor, poor monitoring, no provision of loan exemption in case of death of the borrower, etc. Gradually poverty is reducing among the ABAK beneficiaries. Their income is increasing and they are becoming self-reliant. There are some advantages of ABAK loans. The interest rate is minimum and repayment system is also quite flexible. Borrowers do not need to pay installments weekly. All the participants unanimously agreed that ABAK project has been able to improve the social and economic status of the beneficiaries to some extent. As the number of female members is 40 (out of 60) in each society, women got the opportunity to express their loan demand in the *Uthan Boithak*. The project has made the loan available at their doorsteps, which not only helps to promote women empowerment, but also enhances the capacity to utilize the loan effectively for increasing the household income.

5. Recommendations of the Research

Some policy implications and recommendations of the study are:

(i) The size of the VDOs could be ranged from 30-60 members;

(ii) Loan size could be re-fixed at Tk. 20,000.00-50,000.00 depending on the business opportunities at the community and capacity of repayment of the beneficiaries.

(iii) Providing 5% interest on the savings of the beneficiaries right from the first year and showing it

in the passbook could help gain the confidence of general beneficiaries.

(iv) Provision could be made for reconciliation of bad debts from society fund which can be created from a portion of loan interest (8%) that is added to the society account on a regular basis or special insurance system could also be introduced for reconciliation of bad debts.

(v) For escalating staff morale, all staff positions need to be fixed either for long term or be transferred to *Pally Sanchoy Bank* in due time by providing service guarantee.

(vi) To encourage local entrepreneur, the possibilities of establishing '*co-operative market'* for the various products grown by the ABAK beneficiaries at the different locality of the country need to be explored.

(vii) Training on IGA is not sufficient. There should be more provision for training for the VDO members. The training should be related to the IGA that a particular VDO member wants to invest.

(viii) UP Chairmen and Members are not actively involved in forming VDOs and at the time of disbursement of loan to the beneficiaries. Their involvement could be increased. UP representatives and local elites could be included during disbursement of loan for making it more transparent.

(ix) Regular *Uthan Boithak* is essential for VDOs. Regular *Uthan Boithak* and attendance of members should be ensured by the Field Worker of ABAK.

(x) In order to satisfy demand of loan by the beneficiaries and efficient use thereof, a number of suggestions are: (a) contributory fund to the society could be increased. For increasing fund of the VDOs, government can continue to provide contributory fund to the society for five years; (b) special loan allocation could be provided to disaster-prone areas; (c) borrowers could be informed through SMS

regarding payment and remaining balance of their loan; (d) for strengthening the local level monitoring as well as supervision and realization of loan, Chairman and Manager of the respective VDO could be involved actively, and for this service, a small amount of honorarium from service charge can be provided to them; (e) for risk management (for example, sudden death of borrower or serious illness), there should be some security fund to support defaulter. Besides, a principle could be taken to re-adjust his/her savings with his/her loan in case of death; (f) ABAK could provide marketing support to the borrowers for their products; (g) Field Staffs could be provided training on record keeping, accounting and loan management; and (h) Concrete guidelines are needed with regard to utilization of service charge of loan.

Summary of Discussions on "*Amar Bari Amar Khamar* (ABAK) Project: Challenges and Potentialities"

The session on presentation of *Amar Bari Amar Khamar* (ABAK) Project: Challenges and Potentialities was chaired by Dr. Tofail Ahmed, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Britannia University, Cumilla who joined the seminar over the Zoom from Dhaka. Before starting the presentation, Dr. Ahmed instructed the *modus operandi* of the session. Later on, he requested Dr. Shafiqul Islam, Director (Administration) of BARD as well as the team leader of the research work to present the findings of the report. Dr. Islam gave a summary statement of the study, objectives, methods of the study, summary of the study findings, and recommendations of the research. After that, the Chairperson opened the floor for the questions and suggestions for future research. The whole discussions were recored below:

1. Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Director (Agriculture and Environment) of BARD, gave warm thanks to the presenter for his wonderful presentation. Then, he wanted to know the basis of a finding from the presenter that how 94% of beneficiaries opined that their poverty decreased and only 6% opined that it remained the same as earlier. He also added to know why the loan system under a government program was compared to the NGOs system rather than comparing it with other government programs.

   In reply to the first question of Mr. Azad, Dr. Islam said that the basis of the opinion was the question, "Do you think that your poverty level has declined after getting involved in the project?" Since we had no baseline survey before starting the research work, so we had to take the beneficiaries' own perception regarding poverty reduction. In response to the second query, Dr. Islam said that beneficiaries compared only the loan approval system rather than the whole loan process. The beneficiaries mentioned such a problem because the loan approval process is a bit slower than process practiced by any other traditional NGOs since the former has to go through an online system, Dr. Islam added.

   Mr. Azad also wanted to know the selection process of beneficiaries since the beneficiaries said they had just overcome their poverty level. Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam replied, "If you read the methodology of this study then you will see that we adopted a triangulation method to collect the information. We collected data by forming a semi-structured questionnaire. After that, we conducted some focus

group discussions and gathered some case studies. We tried our level best to compare these findings from these three methods. This is how we gathered the perception of the beneficiaries."

2. Mr. Krishna Kumar Saha, Assistant Professor of the Public Administration Department of Comilla University, thanked the presenter and his team for conducting this important research. Drawing the attention of the research team regarding a finding and a recommendation of this study, he wanted to know what was the purpose of making the recommendation to increase the amount of loan where loan default cases in the project were observed. He also wanted to know the actual reason for selecting the private banks over the public banks for running the loan process.

   The presenter replied, "Although we have found some loan defaulters, the beneficiaries demanded increased loan as the current amount is very poor. That is why the researchers suggested this recommendation." Since the loan providing system is totally based on online, two private banks have been selected over the public banks to run this loan system, he added.

3. Dr. Masudul Hoq Chowdury, Director of BARD, opined that the opinion of the beneficiaries regarding the poverty level may not be true. He enquired about the basis and the parameter of such an opinion.

   Dr. Islam again answered that the opinion was totally based on their own perception and the opinion was compared with FGDs and case studies parallelly. Researchers asked the beneficiaries about their livelihoods before and after getting involved in the project. He added that they used certain parameters regarding this issue in the study.

Dr. Abdul Karim, Director in Charge (Rural Administration and Local Government) of BARD had supplemented that they had found very few cases of loan defaulters during the study. He further opined that the actual beneficiaries need more money as loan for uplifting their livelihoods.

4. Dr. Md. Mashiur Rahaman, Associate Professor of the Public Administration Department of Comilla University, opined that a baseline survey could be helpful to assess the poverty line. He also suggested the research team to publish this report over the internet so that the researchers from relevant field could use this for their study purpose. Dr. Islam replied with thanks that they would take initiative to publish this report over BARD's website as an e-book.

5. Dr. Mohammad Rezaul Karim, Associate Professor of the Public Administration Department of Comilla University, expressed his gratitude to the seminar administration and applauded the research team for their tremendous effort. He shared a case on loan scam by a field assistant of the ABAK project referring to a national daily and wanted to know from the research team whether they found any case like this during this study. Also, he felt concerned about the governance of the procedure of selection beneficiaries as there are a lot of members who are from the same family. Dr. Islam responded that they did not find any loan scam by the field assistant during their study but he agreed that the research also found multiple beneficiaries from the same family.

6. In reply to Dr. Md. Kamrul Hasan, a Joint Director of BARD, on the micro savings issue, the presenter said that micro-savings issue was there in the report.

7. The chairperson of the session Dr. Tofail Ahmed offered his thanks to the presenter and the participants. He said that he knew about this research and was involved in this study as an adviser. He said that the data collection technique was adopted scientifically, findings and recommendations of this study were consistent and this report was a success story of the ABAK project. He further requested the researchers and concerned faculty members of BARD to take more research works on the effects of Covid-19 situation on rural livelihoods and to design more projects regarding this burning issue for the betterment of rural people. Finally, he concluded the session by thanking all.

2.2 Business Session 2: Presentation on Agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh: Government Policy Strategy and Applicability of PPP

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1. Statement of the Issue

Following Five Year Plans and other national and international policy directives (PRSP and MDG and SDGs), Bangladesh has achieved massive socio-economic development in almost all fronts. But still its economy is struggling for achieving a sustainable stage. Rapid industrialization is the only way to achieve the desired goal and SMEs are the most potential sector for the contribution of rapid industrialization with creating huge employment as there are surplus and underemployed labor. Agro-based SMEs are going hand in hand with other SMEs. As there are huge growing demand for agro-based products in the domestic as well as world market, Bangladesh is standing in a favorable position by holding a big comparative advantage in producing and exporting these products compared to many other countries in terms of available raw materials. After declaring the agro-based industries as a thrust area for export, many industries have been established and these are creating appeal among the Bangladeshi expatriates as well as foreign consumers for the processed and packaged foods. Even they built up a value-chain which is meeting the interests of all the parties involved at different phases in agro-based products. According to Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) the export of agro-based products has been risen and it earned 610 million dollars in FY 2013-14 compared to 570 million dollars in FY 2012-13 and 120 million-dollars in 2008-09 respectively (Arman, 2015). But still this sector faces some problems such as reducing international competitiveness, less product diversification, financial and

enterprises infrastructural constraints, less efficient labor as well as entrepreneurship initiation, as most of the agro-based are operated in the private sector. As with many developing countries, there are limited research and scholarly studies about the Bangladesh agro-based SMEs also, specially related to international competitiveness and applicability of PPP of this sector. It was found from different studies on SMEs and agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh that most of the research was conducted on finance-related issues and some are on the problems and prospects of these sectors. Some research has been conducted for agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh but not at satisfactory level. It is hard to find out any research related to Agro-based SMEs, its product competitiveness in international market and PPP at a time. FAO has conducted a research named "*Public–private partnerships for agribusiness development: A review of international experiences*", but in this study, there is no case study about Bangladesh agribusiness related to PPP. There is another research namely "*Study on the Roles and Opportunities for Private Sector in Agro-food Processing Industry of Bangladesh*" which is conducted by Innovision Consulting Private Limited in 2016, where we find some case studies about agro-based processing project funded by donor and implemented by Bangladesh government and NGOs. Those cases can be examples of PPP in agri-based SMEs, but the researcher's view was different. Though the PPP concept came into light for various fields of development works especially the development of infrastructure, education, health sector, it could be a favorable tool for enterprise development also. As agro-based SMEs could be an important sector of Bangladesh economy, there was a need to conduct an empirical enquiry to investigate the success factors of agro-based SMEs and applicability of PPP to foster those factors in Bangladesh.

The data that have been used in this study are retrieved from UN COMTRADE primary data set which is

completely a new addition of this study. The study aims to find some policy recommendations, which can provide some positive suggestions to make development plans for the agro-based SME sector by applying PPP for fostering the growth of Bangladesh economy, which could lead the country to holding a better development position. Besides, this research can produce several benefits such as: i) Readers can be benefited by acquiring knowledge and insights about progressive industrial and different economic development related policy-strategies of Bangladesh government and know about the position of Bangladeshi agro-based products in international market in terms of international trade competitiveness and product sophistication; ii) For the universities, the research can help make a comparison between the theory of development especially the coordination approach between government and private sector for the agro-based SMEs development; iii) For investors, it will increase their knowledge about international demand of agro-products and where they need to give attention. Besides, it could be an input of thought that is expected to be useful for their field of investment; iv) For the government, this study will open a new avenue for evaluating the policy strategies of economic activities and can help to adopt some new areas for policy formulation to boost up the economy with the active participation of private sector through PPP in agro-based sector.

2. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the present study is to figure out the current situation of Bangladeshi agro-based SMEs with special emphasis on international market and harmonizing the agro-based SMEs as a dynamic sector by overcoming the existing barriers as well as articulating proper strategy for facilitating the development of this sector. The specific objectives of the study are to:

(a) assess the current status of Bangladesh agro-based SME sector and its products with special emphasis on export performance;
(b) analyze government's policy strategy/ initiatives for fostering the agro-based SMEs for achieving the development growth;
(c) apply relevant theories to explain opportunities, constraints and growth potential of agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh;
(d) explore the applicability of PPP for the development of agro-based SMEs; and
(e) provide some policy recommendations for the development of agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh based on findings.

3. Methods of the Study

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used for data collection, sampling, interpretation and analysis. Product disaggregated data were retrieved from United Nations COMTRADE database on Standard International Trade Classification Rev.2 at 4-digit level. Those data were retrieved and cleaned for analyzing actual position of agro-based products of Bangladesh in international market for last one decade according to RCA model with EXPY and PRODY variables. For RCA, EXPY and PRODY analysis, purposive sampling method has been used to select agro-based product. Descriptive statistics was calculated for the quantitative phase from the different data to support evidence from previous studies and research on the specific sub-sector, particularly to shed light on agro-based SMEs and public private partnerships in Bangladesh and other countries which are practicing PPP in this sector. The collected data were processed manually and through software. Tabular and graphical representations were made in MS Word and MS Excel. The concept of RCA model has

been used for sorting of data, identifying the gap of the agro-based SME products and learning the application of PPP can generate spillover effect in this sector is shown by Big Push theory with diagram. The conceptual and thematic interpretations in the study aim at exploring the actual situation of agro-based SMEs and the phenomena of the potentiality of PPP in agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh.

4. Summary of Study Findings

Considering export performance, it has been found that Bangladesh has a big market with 154 export partners. It is found that in the last four decades, the number of trade partner for selected agro-based products has increased from 40 partners in 1976-1980 to 154 partners in 2010-2016 and total trade value has increased from 194.20 million US$ in 1976-1980 to 8678.04 million US$ in 2010-2016. But the product diversification is very low which need special attention. According to SITC Rev. 2 data, there are 134 products included in food category from which 115 products earned foreign currency for Bangladesh in 2016. The number of product items increased from 83 to 115 in 2006 to 2016 which is insignificant in terms of diversification of product, and the volume of export earnings was US$ 570.330414 in 2006 (for 84 products item) and US$ 947.513103 in 2016 (for 115 product items).

Besides, the more sophisticated products, which increase the EXPY, are absent in export basket of Bangladesh or contain low RCA value. Among 59 selected products for 2016, top 10 products of high PRODY value lie in marginal class according to RCA classification, which indicate the shortage of sofisticated product export by Bangladesh. The top three products which are in classic group have less PRODY value and secured 40th, 41st and 58th position which need much attention to increase its income potentiaity to contribute more on country's export value.

To increase income potentiality of the products of these categories, it is necessary to build strong agro-based SMEs with government initiatives by lowering the barriers and promoting entrepreneurship. Product development research is urgently necessary in these perspectives. The study also found that most of the export partners are from European countries and the Middle East. Bangladesh needs to expand its export in Africa and Latin American countries to minimize the risk of squeezed market for facing the global economic crisis.

From the study it has been found that agro-based SMEs have a significant role to promote rural employment which can reduce rural to urban migration problem. Besides, it directly increases the income level of people as well as plays as a good forward linkage industry for the primary agricultural product by value addition. It has been found from a study conducted by SME foundation that the maximum average annual turnover is Tk. 108.54 million per enterprise in agro-processing sector, which promotes potentiality of agro-based industry (SMEF, 2013) and the economic viability of this sector. By analyzing the government policies, rules and regulations, it was found that those are still in favorable situation for establishing more agro-based SMEs and promoting industrialization in this sector specially to receive financial facilities perspective. But most of other facilities are paper based. In real situation agro-based SMEs are facing various problems like other manufacturing sectors along with sector specific problems.

The study also found that for overcoming the current problems of agro-based SMEs, public-private partnership can be a better option. From different case studies it has been found that PPP in agri-business still exists in different countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa e.g. Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Ecuador, Ghana, Kenya,

Chile etc. In Bangladesh there are some projects which are implemented with the coordination of Bangladesh government, international donor, NGOs and private agro-based associations which can be categorized as PPP project, e.g. ATDP-I and ATDP-II, ASIRP, Strengthening the capacity of Bangladesh Agro-Processors' Association (BAPA) to enhance competitiveness of its member SMEs involved in agro-processing etc.

As government has favorable policies, rules, regulations, institutional set up both for government and private level and there are many potential entrepreneurs who are ready to promote this sector and PPP can play role to mature these enterprises for some years. After maturation of the enterprises by initiating PPP, agro-based SMEs can be a big sector having a good spillover effect.

5. Suggestions and Recommendations

5.1 There are 30 agro-based SME clusters, which have been recognized by SME Foundation. Bangladesh Bank has prepared SME credit policies and programs in 2010 and according to those clusters development is an important issue for implementing financial schemes. So, cluster can be a potential location for implementing the PPP for agro-based SME development in order to increase the global competitiveness and enrich the export basket with new diversified and more sophisticated product through increasing RCA.

5.2 PPP can be applicable in the following four areas:

i) Product Chain Development (PCD) from farmers to producers for reducing the post-harvest losses and maximizing and efficient utilization of raw materials. Under the different financial schemes of Bank and Non-bank Financial Institutions, different

infrastructure facilities as well as technology can be introduced in this perspective.

ii) Innovation and Technology Transfer (ITT)-from research institutions to farmers (for strengthening backward linkage industries), SMEs to innovate new product, quality assurance, increase the production and lower the opportunity cost of time. As different agro-based research institutions and DAE are working for the development of primary agricultural products, these institutions can jointly do research within PPP structure which will be an easy way to directly transfer the technology to farmers and producers. Besides, BSTI & BCSIR can jointly do research for quality assurance and product diversification within PPP structure in agro-based SMEs.

iii) Development of Physical Infrastructures (DPI)- In the Industrial Policy 2016, agro-based SMEs have been recognized as high priority sector and the establishment of PPP-based industries has been specified. So, government can provide industrial plot in Special Economic Zones and EPZs for agro-based SMEs. BSCIC can be modernized, existing 30 agro-based industry clusters can be upgraded and newer cluster can be developed in different geographical regions for product specialization.

iv) Delivering Business Development Services (DBDS)-As there are already some government and private institutions such as SMEF, EPB, BPC, BAPA, HORTEX foundation etc., these can work jointly in PPP structure which can strengthen the agro-based business associations to work as network between government institutions (for using the one stop service) and agro-based SMEs to enhance the export market as well as meeting the increasing domestic market.

Summary of Discussions on "Agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh: Government Policy, Strategy and Applicability of PPP"

Ms. Saifun Nahar, Deputy Director, BARD and the researcher of the study presented the findings of the study. The presenter informed that this study was a part of her Master's thesis. Following the presentation, the chairperson of the session, Dr. Tapash Kumer Biswas, Director (Research), PKSF invited questions from the participants to give their valuable comments and queries as well.

1. Mr. Krishna Kumer Saha, Assistant Professor, Comilla University asked the presenter if she had considered the influence of politicization while nationalizing the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Mr. Saha also suggested the presenter that it would be better if she could use some recent data or references on this topic.

   In response to these queries, Ms. Saifun Nahar replied that, nationalization of SMEs was not always bad, in many cases like physical infrastructure development, government interventions were crucial to avoid the premature death of SMEs. It's true that some SMEs were politicized in recent past, but we should take it positively as it helped us harness our demographic dividend in one way or other, she added. She then confirmed that, some references were already added to the printed version of the study report.

2. Dr. Md. Mashiur Rahman, Associate Professor, Comilla University congratulated the presenter for a very methodical and lucid presentation. Then he made some observations regarding the objectives and methodology of the study. He suggested that objectives should not be too many and needed to be very specific. He also advised the researcher that the methodology could be divided into two separate parts i.e. quantitative and

qualitative research methods. Finally, Dr. Rahman requested BARD authority to conduct a big data based research on this important issue.

Ms. Nahar thanked Dr. Rahman for his suggestions and added that objectives were taken according to the scope of the study. She then replied that data were retrieved from United Nations COMTRADE primary data set which was actually a new addition of the study.

3. Ms. Nasima Akhter, Joint Director, wanted to know the male-female ratio among the SME owners in the study area. In her reply, Ms. Nahar said that the detailed information about the SME owners was presented in her study report.

4. Praising the presenter for a systematic study and excellent presentation Mr. Ranjan Kumar Guha, Joint Director, BARD suggested that a thorough analysis on the existing government policies regarding PPP with their advantages and disadvantages could be done and a new model could have been proposed afterwards. Mr. Guha also advised to check and incorporate recent definitions of SMEs to the study. In her reply, the presenter thanked Mr. Guha for his valuable suggestions. She mentioned that the definition of SME, which she used in the study was cited in the 'Industrial Policy 2016' and the central bank also followed the same definition.

5. Dr. Tapash Kumer Biswas, Director (Research), PKSF and Chairperson of the session thanked the presenter and the audience who contributed to the presentation by asking questions or supplementing suggestions and comments. As the report has already been published, so there is no scope to incorporate the recommendations, but the researcher can keep the

comments in mind to design future studies, he added. Dr. Biswas said that, it is better not to use any abbreviation in the title of the study. In the study, there was no indication about the sample size, he observed. Dr. Biswas mentioned that branding is one of the most important factors to determine the success or failure of SMEs. Finally, the chairperson suggested that BARD prepare an Action Plan based on the findings and recommendations of different studies conducted in the last 10 years and disseminate the findings among multi-sectoral stakeholders. Thanking all, the chairperson concluded the session.

2.3 Business Session 3: Presentation on Challenges and Prospects of Jute Cultivation in Bangladesh

Dr. Shishir Kumar Munshi
Joint Director (Agricultural Extension), BARD

Benzir Ahmed
Deputy Director (Rural Education), BARD

Junaed Rahim
Deputy Director (Project), BARD

1. Statement of the Issue

Jute, as an environment friendly fiber, provides a lot of opportunities to farmers for income generation in Bangladesh. Till the end of the 1980s, jute remained as the most significant export item for Bangladesh and had a dominant role for foreign export earnings. In the earlier times Bangladesh dominated the world jute market. At present though Bangladesh ranked the second in producing fiber jute, gradually it has lost its grip on the world market. Jute alone contributes about 1.58% to the national GDP without involving any foreign investment. The eagerness of the farmers to cultivate jute, share and significance of jute and jute products in the manufacturing sector, and its overall contribution to the GDP have shown a sharp decrease over the last three decades. Lack of significant efforts and required investments towards jute product development and diversification, and also inability to undertake the technological transformation undermined jute's prospects as a fiber. Due to scarcity of land for cultivation, high input cost, lack of HYV seeds, the consequence of lower productivity and low profit thus gave rise to a vicious cycle. The golden fiber as it was called once upon a time gradually lost its footing in the economy and in the farmer community as well. To revive the role of jute in national economy, the government of Bangladesh has taken some practical

measures such as encouraged use of jute made shopping bags instead of polythene ones and also made some policy supports in producing jute made textile and other handicrafts. Hopefully, the jute industry would take a greater place in the market by producing jute made bags and other usable products. It is a fact that the scientists in Bangladesh have been working on developing high yielding variety of jute. Notably, the genetic structure of jute was first discovered by Bangladeshi scientist. The study was attempted to explore the reasons for losing competitiveness of jute in the manufacturing sector and prescribe the possible ways of promotion of jute products where by the farmers are able to improve their earnings and livelihoods.

2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine the prevailing problems and future potentials of jute cultivation in the country. The specific objectives were to:

i) examine the present socio-economic status of the jute farmers;
ii) identify the causes of losing interest of the farmers in jute cultivation;
iii) identify the factors contributing to the variation of prices of jute from producers to users at different levels;
iv) explore the opportunities of promotion of jute products and formulate policy recommendations specially in marketing of jute and jute products.

3. Research Methods

The research was carried out following both qualitative and quantitative method. To fulfill the objectives of the study both primary and secondary data were used. A semi-structured questionnaire was followed to collect data from the study area. The study was designed to comprehend and highlight the opinion of two sections of

people: a) farmers who are directly involved in jute cultivation, and b) *Foria/Aratdar* (market agents) who are involved in trading of jute and jute products. Moreover two case studies have been included to analyze the success stories of jute cultivation and promotion of jute products. With this view previous research conducted on this area was used as a source for analyzing the trends of jute industry in Bangladesh. Relevant newspaper articles and websites were also used as a secondary source.

3.1 Data Collection and Sampling

Data was collected through random sampling by administering semi-structured questionnaire. Two approaches were followed to collect data: questionnaire survey and case study. The questionnaire was pre-tested to make it more pragmatic and rational. Based on the feedback from the field, two sets of questionnaire were developed. Two hundred (200) respondents were interviewed from four districts namely Rangpur, Pabna, Faridpur and Jessore where jute is grown more. Both close ended and open ended questions were included in both the questionnaire. Two case studies were done and it illustrated the potentials and the ways of how jute cultivation can be profitable to the farmers. These case studies also include the ways of government and non-government interventions in promotion of jute cultivation.

3.2 Data Analysis

Results are presented through both tabular and graphical explanations like table, pie chart and bar chart. which have given a concrete insight of the situation of the study areas. In analyzing the data, MS Excel has been used as a tool for drawing simple percentage and graphs. Moreover, the content analysis is done depending on the secondary data that includes tabular and graphical explanation. The primary data analysis was also

supplemented by secondary data. The following methodological framework is done to present the data:

3.3 Measurement and Scope

The scope of the study is furnished below:

Study Objectives	Dimensions	Important Variables	Measurement Technique
a. examine the present socio-economic status of the jute farmers;	i. nature of involvement ii. living standard iii. major sources of income	Types of farmers, knowledge about cultivation, level of education, income level, household status	The opinion of the farmers about their nature of involvement in jute cultivation and the livelihood pattern of the farmers would be analyzed.
b. identify the causes of losing interest of the farmers to jute cultivation;	i. market price of jute and jute products ii. profit and loss iii. supply of jute products iv. status of cultivation of jute	Annual/ monthly production cost, selling cost, cost and return, production process, market chain etc.	The process of jute cultivation, supply chain, cost of cultivation and returning benefit and loss would be analyzed through questionnaire. Farmers' perception relating to the study variables will be analyzed.

Study Objectives	Dimensions	Important Variables	Measurement Technique
c. identify the factors contributing to the variation of prices of jute from producers to users at different levels;	i. role of middle man ii. role of farmers in the supply chain iii. reasons of price variation iv. satisfacti on of the farmers	Market demand, use of jute products, major clients of jute products etc.	Farmers' perception relating to the study variables will be analyzed.
d. explore the opportunities of promotion of jute products and formulate policy recommendati ons specially in marketing of jute and jute products.	i. market opportunities ii. areas of use of jute product iii. governm ent support iv. farmer's eagerness	Market demand, use of jute products, channel of export, government support etc.	Farmers' perception relating to the study variables will be analyzed.

4. Findings of the Study

a) Farmers' Perception

- The present potentials of jute could not be comprehended by the farmers because of multifarious market dimensions. Although jute has huge market potentialities the farmers could not get the benefit out of jute cultivation. Among the problems, not getting fair price of jute seems one of the most important that is reported by 167 (83.5%) respondents in the study areas.

- The presence of a syndicate in the market is another significant factor for not getting the profit of jute cultivation by the farmers. This syndicate controls the market chain and price for which the farmers could not get the benefit of jute cultivation.
- To break the chain of syndicate, government could intervene in the market by purchasing jute directly from the farmers. The respondents opined that price of jute could be rationalized and fixed by the government. Use of modern machineries particularly ribbon retting method of collection of jute fiber could increase the production. Moreover, the farmers need training on how to use the best technology for jute cultivation.
- The farmers would like to increase their production. In this respect the unnecessary influential factors in the market play some negative impact. Farmers' association has not been formed in the study areas as a result of which they could not address their problems to the appropriate authority.
- Increase of cultivation cost of jute is diminishing the interest of the farmers to cultivate jute. Moreover, the hazards in production and other retting process such as lack of water bodies/ponds make the situation more complex.
- Farmers usually sell jute in the local markets. The local market is basically the prime channel from where the raw jute moves to its final output. Therefore, the interest of the farmers lies mostly in the local markets. But the local market is mostly controlled by local middleman that is called *Foria.* Here the interest of the farmers was lost as well.
- The farmers could not get the benefit because of other factors as well. The local dealers usually collect the raw jute at very low price during peak period and store them so that they can sell them at high price. As a result the farmers again are deprived of getting fair price.

b) Dealers' Perceptions

- The dealers usually collect raw jute at the beginning of the season. About 46% respondents at the dealer level mentioned that they did not get fair price from the party they sell jute. Here the existence of a middle man was also seen in between mills and dealers.
- Majority of the dealers (73% of the respondents) sell their jute to the mills. Moreover, the dealers also sell their collected jute to big merchants. This indicates that the large portion of produced jute goes to the mills for further use or export.
- The quality of jute is significant if we need a vibrant jute market. The dealers opined that they did not get quality raw jute due to some malpractice of the middleman. As a result the mill & factories were not getting quality jute.
- The dealers also mentioned about the problem of insufficient capital to maintain their business. It was observed that the dealers could not manage sufficient capital to purchase raw jute as a result of which they could not supply good quality jute to the mills.

c) Inference Drawn from the Case Studies

It is found in the first case study that jute stick could be potential source of producing ink powder to be used for press and computer printing. At the same time it can make a huge access to international market like China, Japan, Australia etc. In this way the farmers can get a good price and huge source of additional income generation. The case studies suggested that jute stick ash producing factories could be set up in the study areas and linked with the farmers' so that they could get good price from jute stick. Moreover, in the second case study it was found that jute fibre can also be used as raw materials for producing eco-

friendly perishable poly bag. If it is promoted in the international market jute could get back its past glory. At the same time BJMC is promoting jute fair where they demonstrated diversified and eco-friendly jute made products. Proper patronization of these products can help the farmers to get benefit from jute cultivation.

5. Recommendations

- The market chain is very significant for the farmers to get the fair price of jute. In this regard the monopoly of the middle man in the market should be diminished. In every step of market channel a flexible price plan could be fixed by the government. Moreover, the farmers could be given direct access to sell their jute to the mills and factories that produce innovative products from jute. This may not be easy for a single farmer. In this regard farmer's association could be formed in the jute produced areas so that the interest of the farmers could be better served.
- The farmers talked about the lack of institutional support such as lack of training about modern techniques of jute cultivation. In this regard, concerned ministry and institutions could arrange special campaign at the village level to disseminate the knowledge of latest trends of jute cultivation among the farmers.
- Special loan package could be given to the farmers to promote jute cultivation. Moreover, small entrepreneurs of jute made product could also be included in the loan package so that the new innovative products could be promoted.
- The ashes of jute stick can be used for making dry cell batteries, cosmetics, carbon paper, computer ink and various chemical products. This is not so much

rampant practice among the farmers of our country to use jute fiber in this way. This could be promoted countrywide as it could be a vital source of income.

- Supply of quality seeds is very significant to ensure production. It was seen that farmers could not get enough quality seeds in time. Therefore, the study recommends to give special task to concerned Departments to maintain supply of quality seeds in the market.
- The innovative jute products as mentioned in the study should be promoted in the market. We have seen in the study that jute can be used as substitute of poly bag. Moreover, jute is being used as a raw material of making ink. Dress materials are also made from jute. Our honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has emphasized on using jute products to minimize the use of poly bags. Now the question is how these products can be brought into limelight in the market. If these products are popularized, the ultimate benefit should go to the farmers. In this regard, these products could be channelized in the popular market outlets and special expo can be organized. To make these products popular in the international level, some popular international promoters can be invited in these exhibitions. Concerned ministries and Jute Research Institute can initiate such plan in this regard.

Summary of Discussions on "Challenges and Prospects of Jute Cultivation in Bangladesh"

Dr. Masudul Hoq Chowdhury, Director, BARD chaired the session. After the presentation, the Chairperson opened the floor for discussion. The following comments came from the house:

1. **Dr. Md. Mashiur Rahman**, Associate Professor (Public Administration), Comilla University mentioned that since recommendations remain implied in any research, so it should not be included as an objective in the research. He also added that the researchers used primary data to conduct the research and used secondary data to support the primary data. Considering this issue, the researchers could say that the research was based on primary data.

2. **Mr. Salah Uddin Ibne Syed** appreciated the researchers for their tremendous work. He mentioned that government has taken a lot of initiatives for the jute sector, but the beneficiaries specially the farmers do not know about those initiatives. The researchers need to draw attention of the government in this regard. It could help the policy planners, he said. From that perspective, it was a useful research. He appreciated the researchers to choose this kind of crucial issue.

3. **Mr. Krishna Kumar Saha,** Assistant Professor, Public Administration of Comilla University mentioned that it is difficult to get rid of syndicates. So, it is better to find out alternative ways for getting fair price. He also suggested incorporating some case studies in the research.

In response to the recommendations made by the participants, the presenter thanked them for their valuable comments. Replying to the suggestion of Mr. Krishna, Mr. Junaed Rahim said that the researchers suggested creating a common platform like cooperative, which may help the farmers to get fair price of jute. He also added that the research team did a good number of case studies, which are available in the main text.

2.4 Business Session 4: Presentation on মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়ন প্রতিবেদন-২০১৯ লালমাই-ময়নামতি প্রকল্প (আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার প্রকল্পের বার্ড অংশ)

ড. মোঃ শফিকুল ইসলাম
পরিচালক (প্রশাসন), বার্ড এবং
উপ-প্রকল্প পরিচালক, লালমাই-ময়নামতি প্রকল্প

ড. মোঃ আনোয়ার হোসেন ভূঁঞা
যুগ্ম-পরিচালক (কৃষি প্রযুক্তি), বার্ড এবং
সহকারী প্রকল্প পরিচালক, লালমাই-ময়নামতি প্রকল্প

১. মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়নের প্রেক্ষাপট

প্রকল্পের ডিপিপিতে মেয়াদের মাঝামাঝি সময় মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়নের বিষয়টি উল্লেখ রয়েছে। প্রকল্প মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি না পেলে প্রকল্পটি জুন ২০২০ খ্রিস্টাব্দে শেষ হয়ে যাবে। এমতাবস্থায় প্রকল্পটির মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়নের সিদ্ধান্ত গৃহীত হয়েছে। এরূপ মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়নে আন্তঃমন্ত্রণালয়ের বিশেষজ্ঞদের নিয়ে কমিটি গঠন করা হয় বলে তাঁদের পক্ষে প্রকল্পের মাঠপর্যায়ের সার্বিক সঠিক চিত্র জানা সম্ভব হয়, প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগীদের সাথে মিথষ্ক্রিয়া ও মতবিনিময়ের সুযোগ হয় এবং প্রকল্পের বাকী মেয়াদের জন্য সুনির্দিষ্ট পরামর্শ প্রদান ও ভবিষ্যতে মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধির আবশ্যকতা হলে সে বিষয়েও সঠিক মতামত প্রদান সম্ভব হয়। এলক্ষ্যে ডিপিপি'র বিধান অনুযায়ী মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়নের সিদ্ধান্ত গৃহীত হয়। মূল্যায়নের জন্য পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় বিভাগ, পরিকল্পনা কমিশন, বাস্তবায়ন পরিবীক্ষণ ও মূল্যায়ন বিভাগ (আইএমইডি), "আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার প্রকল্প" এর প্রতিনিধি, বার্ডের প্রতিনিধি ও লালমাই-ময়নামতি অংশের প্রতিনিধির সমন্বয়ে মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়ন কমিটি গঠন করা হয়।

২. মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়নের উদ্দেশ্য

মূল্যায়ন হল প্রকল্পের আওতায় বাস্তবায়িত/বাস্তবায়নাধীন কর্মকান্ডের লক্ষ্য ও প্রকৃত অগ্রগতি পর্যালোচনা ও কোন বিচ্যুতি হয়ে থাকলে তার কারণ উদ্ঘাটনপূর্বক প্রয়োজনীয় সুপারিশ/পরামর্শ প্রদান করা। এ কারণেই যেকোন প্রকল্পের মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়ন একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়। লালমাই-ময়নামতি কম্পোনেন্টটি যদিও *আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার* প্রকল্পের

আওতায় বাস্তবায়িত হচ্ছে, কিন্ত এর বেশীর ভাগ কর্মকান্ডেরই স্বতন্ত্র বৈশিষ্ট্য রয়েছে। এ কম্পোনেন্টের আওতায় শুধু গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠন সৃজন, সদস্যদের নিকট হতে সঞ্চয় সংগ্রহ ও ঋণ কার্যক্রমই হুবহু আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার প্রকল্প প্রকল্পের আদলে বাস্তবায়িত হচ্ছে। এ প্রকল্পের আওতায় বাকী প্রায় সবগুলো কর্মকান্ডই উদ্ভাবনীমূলক, গবেষণাধর্মী এবং একই সাথে চ্যালেঞ্জিংও বটে। এক বছর কয়েক মাসে প্রকল্প কার্যক্রমগুলো কতটুকু সঠিকভাবে ও সফলতার সাথে বাস্তবায়িত হচ্ছে এবং প্রকল্পের বাকী মেয়াদে প্রকল্পের অন্যান্য কার্যক্রমগুলো পুরোপুরি বাস্তবায়ন সম্ভব হবে কিনা, প্রকল্প মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি করা প্রয়োজন হবে কিনা ইত্যাদি বিষয়গুলো বিশ্লেষণ করাই মূল্যায়নের প্রধান লক্ষ্য ও উদ্দেশ্য।

৩. মূল্যায়ন পদ্ধতি

মূল্যায়নকে অধিকতর অংশগ্রহণমূলক, বাস্তবভিত্তিক ও ফলপ্রসু করার লক্ষ্যে বিভিন্ন পদ্ধতি যেমন, কম্পোনেন্টের অগ্রগতি প্রতিবেদন পর্যালোচনা, ৫টি গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের সদস্যদের সাথে এফজিডি (দলীয় আলোচনা), মাঠপর্যায়ের কর্মকান্ড সরেজমিন পর্যবেক্ষণ, দৈবচয়ন পদ্ধতিতে বাছাইকৃত ৮০ জন সুফলভোগীকে সরাসরি প্রশ্নোত্তর, উৎপাদন উপকরণ ও প্রযুক্তি সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্মকর্তাদের সাথে মতবিনিময় ও এফজিডি ইত্যাদি পদ্ধতি অনুসরণ করা হয়। মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়ন কমিটির সদস্যদের সমন্বয়ে দু'টি পৃথক দল গঠন করা হয়। প্রতিটি দল ভিন্ন ভিন্ন তারিখে আলাদাভাবে বার্ডে প্রকল্প অফিস, কার্যক্রমের অগ্রগতি প্রতিবেদন এবং প্রকল্প এলাকা সরেজমিনে পরিদর্শন করেন এবং সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে বিতরণকৃত উৎপাদন উপকরণ ও অন্যান্য সুযোগ-সুবিধাগুলোর মাঠপর্যায়ে অবস্থা ও প্রভাব মূল্যায়ন করেন। প্রকল্প অফিস পরিদর্শনকালে মূল্যায়ন কমিটি প্রকল্প কার্যক্রমের প্রচার, প্রকল্পের আওতায় প্রণীত ও প্রকাশিত প্রকল্প পরিচিতিমূলক বুকলেট, গ্রাম তথ্য বই, প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়ন নির্দেশিকা, দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন বিষয়ক বিভিন্ন কোর্সের প্রশিক্ষণ ম্যানুয়াল, ড্রাগন চাষ ও কোয়েল পালনবিষয়ক বুকলেট ইত্যাদি পর্যবেক্ষণ করেন। মূল্যায়ন কমিটি প্রকল্প এলাকা সরেজমিন পরিদর্শনকালে গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের উঠান বৈঠকে উপস্থিত হয়ে দলীয় আলোচনার (FGD) মাধ্যমে সদস্যদের নিকট হতে প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য-উপাত্ত সংগ্রহ করেন। সুফলভোগীদের নিকট হতে সরাসরি প্রশ্নোত্তরের মাধ্যমে তথ্য-উপাত্ত সংগ্রহের জন্য দৈবচয়ন পদ্ধতিতে মোট ৮০টি গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠন হতে (যে সকল সংগঠনের বয়স ন্যূনতম ১ বছর হয়েছে) ১ জন করে ৮০ জন সুফলভোগী বাছাই করা হয়।

সুফলভোগীদের নিকট হতে একটি নির্দিষ্ট প্রশ্নপত্রের মাধ্যমে প্রশিক্ষিত তথ্যসংগ্রহকারীদের মাধ্যমে তথ্য-উপাত্ত সংগ্রহ করা হয়েছে। স্টেকহোল্ডার হিসেবে যেসকল প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে আধুনিক প্রযুক্তি যথা আধুনিক জাতের উচ্চফলনশীল ধানের বীজ, সবজি বীজ, চারা, ভার্মি কম্পোস্ট ইউনিট, মৌ-বাক্স (কলোনী ও রাণী মৌমাছিসহ), বিভিন্ন প্রজাতির আধুনিক জাতের ফলের চারা, ৩০-৪২ দিন বয়সের ফাউমী, সোনালী জাতের মুরগির বাচ্চা ও খাকী ক্যাম্বেল ও জিন্ডিং জাতের হাঁসের বাচ্চা, দেশী কার্প (রুই, কাতলা, মৃগেল) মাছের পোনা ইত্যাদি সংগ্রহ করে প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে বিতরণ করা হচ্ছে সেসকল প্রতিষ্ঠানের সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্মকর্তাদের সাথে মতবিনিময় করা হয়েছে। এছাড়াও প্রকল্প এলাকার নির্বাচিত জনপ্রতিনিধি যথা উপজেলা পরিষদ চেয়ারম্যান, ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ চেয়ারম্যান ও মেম্বারদের নিয়ে এফজিডি করা হয়েছে।

৪. প্রাপ্ত তথ্যাদির বিশ্লেষণ ও উপস্থাপন কৌশল

উল্লিখিত পদ্ধতিতে প্রাপ্ত গুণগত (Qualitative) তথ্যাদি বিশ্লেষণপূর্বক বর্ণনামূলকভাবে প্রতিবেদনে উপস্থাপন করা হয়েছে। প্রাপ্ত পরিমাণগত (Quantitative) তথ্যাদি কম্পিউটার সফটওয়ারের (মাইক্রোসফট এক্সেল) মাধ্যমে বিশ্লেষণ করা হয়। গড় ফলাফল সারণি ও আলোকচিত্রের মাধ্যমে প্রতিবেদনে উপস্থাপন করা হয়েছে। তথ্যসমূহ পাঁচটি পৃথক ভাগে ভাগ করে প্রতিবেদনে উপস্থাপন করা হয়েছে। প্রথমতঃ মূল্যায়ন টীম কর্তৃক কম্পোনেন্ট-এর অগ্রগতি প্রতিবেদন পর্যালোচনাপূর্বক প্রদত্ত মতামত উপস্থাপন, দ্বিতীয়তঃ প্রকল্পের প্রচার ও প্রকাশনা কার্যক্রম পর্যবেক্ষণ সংক্রান্ত তথ্য উপস্থাপন, তৃতীয়তঃ গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের সদস্যদের নিয়ে সম্পন্নকৃত দলীয় আলোচনার তথ্য বিশ্লেষণ ও উপস্থাপন এবং সরেজমিনে প্রকল্পের কার্যক্রম পর্যবেক্ষণের ছবি উপস্থাপন; চতুর্থতঃ সুফলভোগীদের নিকট থেকে এককভাবে প্রশ্নোত্তরের মাধ্যমে প্রাপ্ত তথ্যাদির বিশ্লেষণ ও উপস্থাপন, পঞ্চমতঃ স্টেকহোল্ডারদের নিকট থেকে মতবিনিময় ও এফজিডি'র মাধ্যমে প্রাপ্ত তথ্যাদি উপস্থাপন এবং একজন সুফলভোগীর কেইস স্টাডি উপস্থাপন।

৪.১ প্রকল্প এলকার নির্বাচিত স্থানীয় জনপ্রতিনিধিদের মতামত

- এলাকায় বাস্তবায়নাধীন লালমাই-ময়নামতি প্রকল্প (আবাআখা প্রকল্পের বার্ড অংশ) সম্পর্কে তারা প্রত্যেকেই ভালভাবে অবগত আছেন।

- প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগী নির্বাচনের ক্ষেত্রে মাঠ কর্মীগণ তাদের সাথে পরামর্শ করে থাকেন এবং তারা তাদের সাধ্যমত তাদেরকে পরামর্শ ও সহায়তা প্রদান করে থাকে। তবে কোন কোন ক্ষেত্রে মাঠ কর্মীগণ তাদের সাথে পরামর্শ না করে কিছু কিছু সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়ে থাকে। তার কারণ আমাদের ব্যস্ততার কারণে আমরা তাদেরকে পর্যাপ্ত সময় দিতে পারিনা।
- প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগী নির্বাচনের ক্ষেত্রে তুলনামূলকভাবে দরিদ্র পরিবারকে অগ্রাধিকার প্রদান করা হয়ে থাকে। তুলনামূলকভাবে ধনী পরিবারকে সদস্য হওয়ার ব্যাপারে নিরুৎসাহিত করা হয়।
- প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগী হলে তাদেরকে বিভিন্ন ধরনের আধুনিক জাতের ধান বীজ, সবজি বীজ, সরিষা বীজ, ফলের চারা, হাঁস-মুরগির বাচ্চা, মাছের পোনা, কেঁচো কম্পোস্ট ইউনিট, মৌবাক্স, মাশরুম বীজ ইত্যাদি এবং বিভিন্ন রকমের দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন বিষয়ক প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদান করা হয়।
- কিছু কিছু সুফলভোগী প্রকল্প থেকে উপকরণ, প্রযুক্তি, প্রশিক্ষণ ইত্যাদি পাওয়ার পর তাদের কাছে বলে। তবে বেশীরভাগ সুফলভোগীই উৎপাদন উপকরণ, প্রযুক্তি প্রশিক্ষণ ইত্যাদি পাওয়ার পর তাদেরকে জিজ্ঞাসা করলে এগুলো সম্পর্কে বলে, জিজ্ঞাসা না করলে তারা সহজে বলে না, কারণ তারা ভাবে এগুলো বললে ভবিষতে তাদের কাছ থেকে অন্যান্য সুযোগ কম পাওয়া যাবে।
- প্রকল্প হতে এ সকল সুযোগ সুবিধা পেয়ে সুফলভোগীগণ যথাযথভাবে কাজে লাগিয়ে উপার্জন বৃদ্ধি করে অর্থনৈতিকভাবে অনেক লাভবান হচ্ছে।
- প্রকল্পটি কমপক্ষে পাঁচবছর বাস্তবায়িত হলে সুফলভোগীগণ দৃশ্যযোগ্য মাত্রায় সুফল পেতে সক্ষম হবে। তবে ১০ বছর পর্যন্ত প্রকল্পের মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি করা সম্ভব হলে গ্রামে গড়ে উঠা সংগঠনগুলো সুফলভোগীগণ নিজেরা চালিয়ে নেওয়ার মত দক্ষতা ও সক্ষমতা অর্জন করবে এবং গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনগুলো স্থায়িত্বশীলতা অর্জন করতে পারবে।
- প্রকল্পটি সদর দক্ষিণ, লালমাই ও বুড়িচং উপজেলার অন্যান্য ইউনিয়ন ও গ্রামগুলোতে বাস্তবায়ন করা প্রয়োজন।
- প্রকল্পের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা যথাযথভাবে অর্জন করতে হলে প্রকল্প এলাকার সকল নির্বাচিত জনপ্রতিনিধিসহ গণ্যমান্য ব্যক্তিদেরকে আরও বেশী

সম্পৃক্ত করতে হবে। এ লক্ষ্যে তাদের ও প্রকল্প এলাকার গণ্যমান্য ব্যক্তিদেরকে নিয়ে প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নে তাদের ভূমিকা ও কর্তব্য সম্পর্কে দিনব্যাপী কর্মশালা করা যেতে পারে। এছাড়া বিশেষ করে ঋণ প্রদানে সুফলভোগী নির্বাচনে তাদের পরামর্শ ও সুপারিশ নেওয়া যেতে পারে।

- জন প্রতিনিধিগণ আরও মনে করেন যে, মাননীয় অর্থ মন্ত্রীর স্বপ্ন প্রসূত এ প্রকল্পটি যথাযথভাবে বাস্তবায়িত হলে SDG -1 (No Poverty), SDG-2 (Zero Hunger) এবং SDG-11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) অর্জনে সহায়ক হবে যা বর্তমান সরকারের রূপকল্প-২১ এবং ৪১ বাস্তবায়নকে ত্বরান্বিত করবে।

৪.২ প্রাপ্ত তথ্যাদির আলোকে মূল্যায়ন কমিটির পর্যবেক্ষণ

- কম্পোনেন্টে-এর আওতায় ভিত্তি জরিপ সম্পন্ন করে প্রকল্প এলাকার প্রতিটি গ্রামের জন্য যে গ্রাম তথ্য বই প্রণয়ন করা হয়েছে তা সত্যিই প্রশংসার দাবীদার। যে কোন উন্নয়ন প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের শুরুতে এ ধরনের জরিপ ও তথ্য ভান্ডার সৃজন আবশ্যক বলে কমিটি মনে করে।

- স্থানীয় গণমাধ্যমের সহায়তা নিয়ে **কম্পোনেন্টে-এর** কার্যক্রম প্রচারের ব্যবস্থাটি প্রশংসনীয়। এছাড়া এ যাবত কম্পোনেন্ট-এর আওতায় সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে যে সকল উৎপাদন উপকরণ, প্রযুক্তি ও অন্যান্য সুবিধাদি বিতরণ করা হয়েছে তা স্থানীয় পত্রিকায় প্রচার এবং প্রকল্প অফিস কর্তৃক বার্ডে স্থির আলোকচিত্রের ডিসপ্লে বোর্ড স্থাপনও ভাল উদ্যোগ।

- সুফলভোগীদেরকে প্রকল্পের আওতায় প্রদত্ত ট্রেডভিত্তিক দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন বিষয়ক প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদান করা, প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সের ম্যানুয়াল প্রণয়ন ও মুদ্রণ করে সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে বিতরণ করা প্রকল্প পরবর্তী এ কার্যক্রম চলমান রাখতে সহায়ক হবে।

- গ্রামবাসীদেরকে প্রকল্পে সুফলভোগী হতে উদ্বুদ্ধ করার জন্য প্রকল্প পরিচিতিমূলক বুকলেট প্রণয়ন করে বিতরণ করা হচ্ছে। প্রণীত বুকলেটে প্রকল্পের আওতায় যেসকল সুযোগ-সুবিধা প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে সেগুলোর উল্লেখ রয়েছে। বুকলেট পড়ে গ্রামবাসীগণ

প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগী হওয়ার আগ্রহ প্রকাশ করছেন এবং সদস্য হিসেবে অন্তর্ভুক্ত হচ্ছেন। এ ছাড়া কোয়েল পালন ও ড্রাগন ফলের চাষ বিষয়ক বুকলেট প্রণয়ন করে সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে বিতরণ করা হচ্ছে। এর ফলে সুফলভোগীগণ উপকৃত হচ্ছেন।

- প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগী ও অপরাপর গ্রামবাসীদের মনে প্রকল্প সম্পর্কে ইতিবাচক ধারণা সৃষ্টি করতে সক্ষম হয়েছে। বিশেষ করে প্রতি মাসে নির্দিষ্ট পরিমাণ টাকা সঞ্চয় জমা করলে প্রকল্প হতে সমপরিমাণ উৎসাহ সঞ্চয় জমা করার বিষয়টি অত্যন্ত প্রশংসিত হচ্ছে। প্রত্যেক সুফলভোগী মনে করে এ ব্যবস্থা শুধু এ প্রকল্পেই রয়েছে, অন্য কোন প্রকল্পে এমন ব্যবস্থা আছে বলে তাদের জানা নেই। তারা মনে করে উৎসাহ সঞ্চয় প্রদানের বিষয়টি বর্তমানে চলমান সময়ের চেয়ে (২ বছর) আরও বৃদ্ধি (৪/৫ বছর) করা হলে গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের স্থায়ীত্বশীলতার নিশ্চয়তা বিধান হবে।

- প্রকল্পের মাধ্যমে গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের তহবিল সৃজনে প্রতি বছর ১.৫ লক্ষ টাকা করে দুই বছরে ৩.০ লক্ষ টাকা ঘূর্ণায়মান তহবিল প্রদানের বিষয়টি সুফলভোগীগণ ইতিবাচক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিতে দেখছেন।

- গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের মাসিক উঠান বৈঠক সদস্যদের মাঝে আন্তসম্পর্ক বৃদ্ধিতে এবং প্রশিক্ষণলব্ধ জ্ঞান বিনিময়ে অভূতপূর্ব ভূমিকা রাখছে। এ ছাড়া উঠান বৈঠকে উপস্থিত হয়ে প্রকল্প হতে সমসাময়িক সময়ে কি ধরনের উপকার ও সুযোগ প্রদান করা হবে সে সম্পর্কে সুফলভোগীগণ অবহিত হতে পারছেন। প্রত্যেক সংগঠনের উঠান বৈঠক মাসের কত তারিখে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে তা নির্ধারণপূর্বক অফিস আদেশ জারি করা হয়েছে। জনপ্রতিনিধিদের অবহিত রেখে উঠান বৈঠক করা হয়। জনপ্রতিনিধিগণ আগ্রহী হলে উঠান বৈঠকে উপস্থিত থাকতে পারেন।

- গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের মাসিক উঠান বৈঠকে সদস্যদের উপস্থিতি মনিটরিং-এর জন্য একটি হাজিরা শীট তৈরী করা হয়েছে যে শীটে প্রত্যেক সদস্যের নাম ক্রম অনুসারে লিপিবদ্ধ করা হয়েছে। প্রতি বৈঠকের হাজিরা গ্রহণ করার পর কেহ অনুপস্থিত থাকলে সহজেই শীট দেখে নিশ্চিত হওয়া যাচ্ছে। এভাবে পর্যায়ক্রমে ২/৩ সভা অনুপস্থিত থাকলে অনুপস্থিত সদস্যদেরকে সভায় উপস্থিত করার প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হচ্ছে।

- বার্ড ক্যাফেটেরিয়াতে সুফলভোগীদের প্রশিক্ষণকালীন আহার ও হোস্টেলে আবাসনের ব্যবস্থা করা হচ্ছে। এর ফলে প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সগুলো ফলপ্রসূ হচ্ছে। এ ছাড়া প্রতিটি প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সে তত্ত্বীয় সেশনের পাশাপাশি ব্যবহারিক সেশন রাখা হচ্ছে যেগুলো বার্ড ক্যাম্পাসে অবস্থিত প্রদর্শনী খামার/ল্যাবে, কুমিল্লায় অবস্থিত বাংলাদেশ ধান গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউটে, সরকারী মৎস্য খামারে বাস্তবায়ন করা হচ্ছে। প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সগুলো অধিকতর ফলপ্রসু করার জন্য জেলা প্রাণী সম্পদ কর্মকর্তা, উপজেলা প্রাণী সম্পদ কর্মকর্তা, উপজেলা মৎস্য কর্মকর্তাসহ অন্যান্য বিষয় বিশেষজ্ঞদের রিসোর্স পার্সন হিসেবে আনা হচ্ছে। ফলে প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সগুলো কার্যকরী হচ্ছে।

- প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগীদের ট্রেডভিত্তিক দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন বিষয়ক প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদানের পূর্বে কোন প্রকার উৎপাদন উপকরণ প্রদান করা হয়না। অর্থাৎ নির্দিষ্ট ট্রেডের উপর সুফলভোগীদের প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদানের পর এবং তারা সে বিষয়টি কাজে লাগাতে পারবে কিনা তা যাচাই-বাছাই করে সংশ্লিষ্ট উপকরণ (হাঁসমুরগির বাচ্চা, কেঁচো-কম্পোস্ট ইউনিট, মৌবাক্স, মাছের পোনা, গাছের চারা ধানের বীজ, সবজি বীজ, সরিষার বীজ ইত্যাদি) বিতরণ করা হয়। এর ফলে উপকরণগুলো যথাযথ ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত হয় এবং অপচয় রোধ করা যায়।

- প্রকল্প এলাকায় সবসময় পর্যাপ্ত পরিমাণে ফুল না থাকাতে সুফলভোগীগণ আশানুরূপ মধুর ফলন পাচ্ছে না। অত্র এলাকাতে মৌচাষের সম্ভাব্যতা নিয়ে প্রকল্পের অওতায় চলমান গবেষণাটির ফলাফলের উপর ভিত্তি করে পরবর্তী সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করা যেতে পারে।

- কম্পোনেন্টের আওতায় এখন পর্যন্ত ঋণ কার্যক্রম শুরু করা হয়নি। উৎপাদনমুখী কার্যক্রমের মূলধনের যোগান হিসেব ঋণ বিতরণ আবশ্যক। সুফলভোগীগণ ঋণ গ্রহণের মাধ্যমে আয়বর্ধক কার্যক্রমে বিনিয়োগ করে তাদের অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়ন সাধনে সক্ষম হবে।

- এ কম্পোনেন্টের প্রাথমিক ডিজাইন ছিল শুধুমাত্র কৃষি কার্যক্রমের মাধ্যমে আয় আয় বর্ধক কর্মকান্ড দ্বারা দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন করা। কিন্তু দেখা যায় কম্পোনেন্টের কিছু অঞ্চল শহরের কাছাকাছি হওয়ায় কৃষিজাত অন্যান্য কার্যক্রম যেমন গাভী পালন, দুগ্ধ উৎপাদন, বাঁশ

ব্যবহার করে কুটির শিল্প, সেলাইসহ নানা ধরনের কর্মকাণ্ড সম্প্রসারণের ব্যাপক সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে ।

- এ কম্পোনেন্টের কার্যক্রমের মধ্যে মার্কেটিং লিংকেজ তৈরীর বিষয়টি রয়েছে কিন্তু কোন বাজেট বরাদ্দ রাখা হয়নি বলে এখন পর্যন্ত দৃশ্যযোগ্য কোনো কাজ করা হয়নি । তবে ভার্মিকম্পোস্ট বিপণননের ব্যাপারে ইতোমধ্যে কিছু কিছু উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে ।

- লালমাই-ময়নামতি কম্পোনেন্টটি শুরুতে পাঁচ বছর মেয়াদের জন্য প্রণয়ন করা হয়েছিল, কিন্তু পরবর্তীতে এটি ***আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার*** প্রকল্পের তৃতীয় সংশোধনীর সাথে চার বছর মেয়াদের জন্য একীভূত করা হয় এবং চূড়ান্ত অনুমোদন ও অর্থ ছাড়ের পর মাত্র তিন বছর বাস্তবায়ন করার সুযোগ সৃষ্টি হয় । এমতাবস্থায় প্রকল্পের সবগুলো কম্পোনেন্ট মাঠ পর্যায়ে বাস্তবায়ন করা সুকঠিন হবে ।

৫. সুপারিশমালা

মূল্যায়ন কমিটি মাঠ পর্যায়ে বাস্তবায়িত বিভিন্ন কার্যক্রম পর্যবেক্ষণ, দলীয়ভাবে সুফলভোগীদের সাথে আলোচনা ও মতামত গ্রহণ এবং এককভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য সংখ্যক সুফলভোগীদের নিকট হতে তথ্য সংগ্রহ ও বিশ্লেষণ পূর্বক নিম্নোক্ত সুপারিশগুলো প্রণয়ন করা হয়েছেঃ

- ❖ প্রকল্প মেয়াদে ডিপিপি'তে ৩০০ টি গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠন সৃজনের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণে প্রয়োজনীয় উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ ও কর্মকৌশল যথাযথভাবে প্রতিপালন করতে হবে ।
- ❖ প্রতিটি গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের সদস্য সংখ্যা একটি বাড়ী একটি খামার প্রকল্পের বিধান অনুযায়ী ৩০-৬০-এ উন্নীতকরণে প্রয়োজনীয় উদ্যোগ ও পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করতে হবে এবং একই সাথে নারী-পুরুষ সদস্যের অনুপাত ২ঃ১ অনুসরণে সচেষ্ট থাকতে হবে ।
- ❖ প্রতিটি গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের মাসিক উঠান বৈঠক নিয়মিত চালু রাখতে হবে এবং সদস্যদের শতভাগ উপস্থিত নিশ্চিত করার প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করতে হবে। সদস্যগণ উঠান বৈঠকে উপস্থিত হয়ে যাতে নিয়মিত মাসিক সঞ্চয় জমা করেন সে বিষয়টিও নিশ্চিত করতে হবে ।
- ❖ যে সকল উৎপাদন উপকরণ ও সুবিধাদি (কৃষি ও সেচ যন্ত্র, অতি দরিদ্র সদস্যদের বিশেষ অনুদান ইত্যাদি) এখন পর্যন্ত সুফলভোগী

ও গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠন পর্যায়ে বিতরণ করা সম্ভব হয়নি সেগুলো বিতরণের প্রয়োজনীয় উদ্যোগ ও পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করতে হবে।

- ❖ মধু চাষের জন্য সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে বিতরণকৃত মৌবাক্সের কার্যকরিতা সন্তোষজনক নয়। অত্র এলাকায় মৌচাষের সম্ভাব্যতা বিষয়ে এ কম্পোনেন্টের আওতায় চলমান গবেষণা ফলাফলের উপর ভিত্তি করে পরবর্তী সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করা যেতে পারে।
- ❖ নিরাপদ খাদ্য উৎপাদনের লক্ষ্যে সুফলভোগীদের দ্বারা উৎপাদিত ভার্মিকম্পোস্ট নিজ জমিতে ব্যবহারে উদ্বুদ্ধ করতে হবে।
- ❖ ন্যায্য মূল্য নিশ্চিতকরণের লক্ষ্যে সুফলভোগীদের দ্বারা উৎপাদিত সকল ধরনের পণ্যের মার্কেটিং লিংকেজ তৈরীর বিষয়টি গুরুত্বের সাথে বিবেচনা করতে হবে। কম্পোনেন্টের ভবিষ্যত পরিকল্পনায় প্রয়োজনে পণ্য সংরক্ষণ ও শো-রুম স্থাপনের ব্যবস্থা রাখা যেতে পারে।
- ❖ সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে ঋণ বিরতরণের কার্যক্রম যথানিয়মে নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের মধ্যে শুরু করতে হবে।
- ❖ প্রকল্প এলাকার সকল পর্যায়ের নির্বাচিত জনপ্রতিনিধিসহ গণ্যমান্য ব্যক্তিদেরকে আরও বেশী সম্পৃক্ত করতে হবে। এ লক্ষ্যে তাদের ও প্রকল্প এলাকার গণ্যমান্য ব্যক্তিদেরকে নিয়ে প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নে তাদের ভূমিকা ও কর্তব্য সম্পর্কে দিনব্যাপী কর্মশালা করা যেতে পারে। এছাড়া বিশেষ করে ঋণ প্রদানে সুফলভোগী নির্বাচনে তাদের পরামর্শ ও সুপারিশ নেওয়া যেতে পারে।
- ❖ কম্পোনেন্টের বিশেষ বিশেষ এলাকার জনগণের চাহিদা মোতাবেক গাভী পালন, দুগ্ধ উৎপাদন, বাঁশ ব্যবহার করে কুটির শিল্প, সেলাই মেশিন প্রদান ইত্যাদি কর্মকান্ড ভবিষ্যৎ পরিকল্পনায় ডিপিপি'তে সংযোজনের বিষয় বিবেচনা করা যেতে পারে।
- ❖ কম্পোনেন্টের আওতায় প্রতিটি সুফলভোগীর বাড়িকে একেকটি আদর্শ খামারে রূপান্তরিত করার প্রয়াস অব্যাহত রাখতে হবে।
- ❖ কম্পোনেন্টটির গুরুত্ব, সন্তোষজক ও আশাব্যঞ্জক ফলাফল, বাস্তবায়নাবস্থা, সুফলভোগী ও এলাকার সর্বস্তরের জনপ্রতিনিধিদের চাহিদা ইত্যাদি বিবেচনা করে মূল প্রকল্প *আমার বাড়ি আমার খামারের* সাথে সঙ্গতি রেখে এর মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি করা যৌক্তিক হবে।

৬. উপসংহার

বাংলাদেশ বর্তমানে উন্নয়নের মহাসড়কের দিকে ধাবিত হচ্ছে। এ উন্নয়নকে অর্থবহ ও গতিশীল করতে হলে গ্রামীণ জনগোষ্ঠিকে কোন ভাবেই মূল স্রোতধারার বাহিরে রাখা চলবে না। বিশেষ করে গ্রামের পিছিয়ে পড়া জনগোষ্ঠির উন্নয়ন নিশ্চিত করতে না পারলে দেশের সামগ্রিক উন্নয়ন ত্বরান্বিত ও ফলপ্রসূ হবে না। কুমিল্লার লালমাই পাহাড়ি অঞ্চলটি পিছিয়ে পড়া জনগোষ্ঠির আবাসস্থল। বাংলাদেশ পল্লী উন্নয়ন একাডেমি (বার্ড) কর্তৃক কম্পোনেন্টটি বাস্তবায়নের মাধ্যমে উল্লেখিত এলাকার জনগণের, বিশেষ করে দরিদ্র জনগণের আর্থিক অবস্থার উন্নতি সাধন করাই মূল লক্ষ্য। এ কম্পোনেন্টের আওতায় বিভিন্ন প্রকার উৎপাদন উপকরণ ও সুবিধাদি যথা ভার্মিকম্পোস্ট ইউনিট, উন্নত জাতের হাঁস-মুরগির বাচ্চা, ফলের চারা, মৌ-বাক্স, মাশরুমের বীজ, মাছের পোনা, উন্নত জাতের ধানের বীজ, সবজি বীজ, সরিষার বীজ ইত্যাদি যথাযথভাবে বিতরণ করা হচ্ছে এবং এগুলো কাজে লাগিয়ে সুফলভোগীগণ উপকৃত হচ্ছে।

ট্রেডভিত্তিক দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন বিষয়ক প্রশিক্ষণ যথাযথভাবে প্রদান করা হচ্ছে এবং প্রশিক্ষণ শেষে সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে প্রশিক্ষণ ম্যানুয়াল বিতরণ করা হচ্ছে যেগুলো ব্যবহার করে সুফলভোগীগণ উপকৃত হচ্ছে। প্রকল্পের আওতায় বিগত এক বছর তিন মাসের মধ্যে ২০৮টি সংগঠন সৃজন করা হয়েছে এবং ৭২৭২ জন সদস্য অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা হয়েছে যা প্রশংসার দাবীদার। এ পর্যন্ত ৬৬টি সংগঠনের সদস্য সংখ্যা ৪০ জনের উপরে, ৬৫টি সংগঠনের সদস্য সংখ্যা ৩০-৪০ জনের মধ্যে, ৭৭টি সংগঠনের সদস্য সংখ্যা ১০-২৯ জনের মধ্যে এবং গড়ে প্রতিটি সংগঠনের সদস্য সংখ্যা দাঁড়িয়েছে প্রায় ৩৫ জন যা আশাব্যঞ্জক। গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনের সদস্যদের নিকট হতে ইতোমধ্যে ১২৯.২৭ লক্ষ টাকা ক্ষুদ্র সঞ্চয় সংগ্রহ করা হয়েছে এবং সমপরিমাণ সরকারী সঞ্চয় সংগঠনে জমা হয়েছে। গ্রামোন্নয়ন সংগঠনগুলো মোট ২৯৫.০০ লক্ষ টাকা সরকারী অনুদান পেয়েছে। ব্যাংক সূদসহ মোট ৫৬০.০৬ লক্ষ টাকার তহবিল গঠিত হয়েছে যা অত্যন্ত উৎসাহব্যঞ্জক ও সন্তোষজনক। সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে বিতরণকৃত ভার্মিকম্পোস্ট ইউনিট গুলোর মধ্যে ৬৭৩টিতে কেঁচো সার উৎপাদন শুরু হয়েছে এবং ইতোমধ্যে ৭,১১০ কেজি কেঁচোসার জমিতে প্রয়োগ/বিক্রি করেছে। প্রতিকেজি কেঁচোসার ৮-১০টাকা কেজি হিসেবে বিক্রি করে সুফলভোগীগণ লাভবান হচ্ছে। এ ছাড়া সুফলভোগীগণ প্রতি কেজি কেঁচো ৬০০-৮০০ টাকা দামে ৬১ কেজি কেঁচো বিক্রি করে অনেক লাভবান হচ্ছে।

সুফলভোগীগণ প্রকল্প হতে প্রাপ্ত উচ্চফলনশীল ধানের বীজ জমিতে লাগিয়ে পূর্বে চাষকৃত অন্যান্য জাতের ধানের চেয়ে ফলন বৃদ্ধি করতে সক্ষম হচ্ছে এবং এ সকল ভাল বীজ অপরাপর সুফলভোগীদের মাঝে বীজ বিনিময় কর্মসূচির আওতায় ছড়িয়ে দেয়া হচ্ছে। সুফলভোগীগণ আধুনিক জাতের মুরগি ও হাঁসের বাচ্চা (ফাউমী, সোনালী, খাকী ক্যাম্বেল, জিন্ডিং) লালন-পালন করে অর্থনৈতিকভাবে স্বাবলম্বী হচ্ছে। সুফলভোগীগণ তাদের পুকুরে প্রকল্প হতে প্রাপ্ত মাছের পোনা ছেড়েছে যেগুলো ইতোমধ্যে বড় হয়েছে এবং আগামী কয়েক মাস পর এগুলো বিক্রি করে তারা অনেক লাভবান হতে পারবে বলে আশা করা যায়। প্রকল্পের সুফলভোগীদের আর্থ-সামাজিক অবস্থার উন্নয়নের লক্ষ্যমাত্রা অর্জিত হবে বলে আশা করা যায়। কারণ এ পর্যন্ত যেসকল উপকরণ সুফলভোগীগণ পেয়েছে সেগুলো কাজে লাগিয়ে প্রত্যেকেই আয়ের পরিমাণ বৃদ্ধি করতে সমর্থ হচ্ছে। এমতাবস্থায় কম্পোনেন্টেটির কার্যক্রম অধিক সময়ব্যাপী অত্র এলাকায় চালু রাখার পাশাপাশি এর সফলতার উপর ভিত্তি করে ভবিষ্যতে দেশের অন্যান্য স্থানেও এরকম মডেল প্রকল্প সম্প্রসারণের সুযোগ সৃষ্টি হতে পারে।

Summary of Discussions on "Mid-term Evaluation Report of the Lalmai-Mainati Project (BARD part of the My House, My Farm Project)"

In the fourth working session of the seminar, the research titled " লালমাই-ময়নামতি প্রকল্পের (আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার প্রকল্পের বার্ড অংশ) মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়ন" was presented by Dr. Anowar Hossain Bhuiyan, Joint Director (Agriculture Technology) of BARD. This session was chaired by Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, Director (Rural Economics and Management) of BARD. Mr. Islam welcomed all and narrated the presentation procedure. After that, Dr. Hossain briefly presented the findings of the evaluation study. The observations of the participants, subsequent explanations by the presenter and final comments by the chair are as follows:

1. Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, Professor (Administration) of the Bangladesh Cooperative Academy, Cumilla

congratulated the research team for producing such an excellent evaluation report. He wanted to know from the presenter whether the researchers had found any difference between the baseline and the present status.

In response to this query, Dr. Bhuiyan said, we prepared an exclusive baseline survey for the project but we had to make this evaluation report within one year and seven months after starting the project. That is why we observed a little difference in the status of the beneficiaries compared to the baseline survey. But this evaluation report can be used for further improvement of the project.

2. Mr. Shafiqul Islam, the session chairperson, supplemented that he had a chance to read this report thoroughly when he was Director of the Research Division. "This is a good evaluation report and it would be helpful for further development of the project", he opined. He suggested the research team to conduct another evaluation since the project has completed three years. Also, this report can be presented in the next annual planning conference (APC), he added. After that, he thanked the whole research team and the audience for their patient hearing and concluded the session.

2.5 Business Session 5: Presentation on Paradox and Dynamics of Women Leadership in the Rural Local Government

Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman
Joint Director (Research), BARD

1. Statement of the Research

In pluralistic societies equal political participation of both men and women is extremely important for bringing change and transformation of women and strengthening democratic process. But globally it was found that in the South Asian countries, women's representation in the local governments was the lowest (i.e. only 2%). Women's access to political structure is deemed exigent because politicians hold power over other social institutions and they are able to influence legal provision and it was evident that women's political participation has profound positive and democratic impacts on communities, political parties and people's livelihood. Therefore, without women's integration into the country's political structure, the overall development of the country in general and women in particular will be thwarted. Furthermore, local government renders various services which have a direct bearing on women's life, so women's participation in local government institutions (LGIs) is exigently essential. In this subcontinent, women's representation in the political community was allowed by the Government of India Act in 1935. After independence of Bangladesh, women's representation to local government, especially in the Union Parishad was made in 1997, which provided reservation of one-third seats for women members. Since their entry into it they have been striving hard to consolidate their role and participation in the UP. But their active and vibrant role is yet to evolve to fortify their roles. Since their entry into the UP, women leaders have already passed two decades amidst massive struggle and conflict. In

a traditional society like Bangladesh, amidst women's constrain participation, it is interesting to note that apart from huge men and women members, 23 women (male chairperson 4474) were directly elected as UP Chairpersons following a one-third reservation policy for the term of 2011-2016. But there was hardly any work with these Women Chairpersons (WCs).

2. Research Questions and Objectives of the Study

Although the number of UP Women Chairpersons (WCs) was small but in a social milieu of Bangladesh where women were excluded in all sphere of socio-political life, which triggers the following research questions:

i) What factors helped them become leaders at the community level?
ii) Were there any common patters or factors for their leadership process in the UP of Bangladesh?

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

i) To analyze the socio-economic characteristics of these Women Chairpersons (WCs),
ii) To unravel the contributing factors for leadership process of the women leaders in the UP;

3. Methodology Employed in the Paper

This study emanated from a broader research design of a Ph.D. dissertation and hence focusing on 6 in-depth case studies on the WC, this study tried to delve into socio-economic profiles, the process of their leadership and thus to identify a few common factors for the leadership process of these WCs in the UP following a short checklist. To achieve the purpose of this study, all these cases were abridged substantively deducting some data to make the cases focused and sharpen in line with the research questions. This study is mainly based on primary data. To support primary data some

secondary data were also used. Based on the principles of the qualitative method the selected cases were chosen from different socio-cultural zones of Bangladesh based on purposeful selection and easy access.

4. Summaries of the Findings of the Women Chairpersons of the UPs

In this part some of the findings obtained from the 6 case studies were analyzed in the light of the available literature from other studies. The issues included in the empirical analysis were socio-economic background comprising age, income, education, marital status, land ownership etc., and their leadership process includes family legacy, NGO involvement, political involvement, linkages with the MP, family support and training received by the women representatives etc.

4.1 Socio-economic Profiles of the Women Chairpersons

A strong socio-economic background played a significant role in terms of the efficaciousness of the women leadership. Except for Baroi, all of the women Chairpersons under study had a strong socio-economic base, which might have helped them to play an effective role at the community level, overcoming myriad socio-cultural, political, and administrative bottlenecks, which were inherently embedded and entrapped in the whole rural governance parameter, which is quite complex and complicatedly intertwined with those above factors. Some of the major findings are described below:

- *Age Group:* It was found that out of 6 WCs, 4 belonged to 45 plus age whereas only Parul's age was 38 years, having an average of 44.6 years.
- *Income:* Here it was found that average monthly income of 6 WCs was Tk.52,000.00 (669 US$), which was quite good in the context of Bangladesh society.

- *Education:* From the 6 cases it was found that none of the Women Chairpersons (WCs) had an education above graduate level and a few of them had an education of primary level, which means that education had an insignificant role in terms of the WCs being successful.
- *Marital Status:* Concerning marital status of the WCs, it was found that 3 WCs were widow and the rest 3 were married. In different studies it was revealed that most of the women members in the UPs were married.
- *Land Ownership by Women Leaders:* The average land owned by the women chairpersons is 8.3 acres, which means that the families of the women chairpersons are relatively rich in the standard of Bangladesh society.

4.2 Leadership Process of the Women Chairpersons

Based on the analysis of the salient features and factors of all five cases of women UP Chairpersons, the following summary has been prepared.

- Family Legacy: To become a leader, family legacy plays a supportive role. It was evident from the cases that except for Mina, all 5 UP Chairpersons had deep roots in their family tradition. By observing their close relatives' role in the public domain, some women Chairpersons obtained the proper attitude and stature to serve in the public domain. Thus using their family political network they became UP Chairpersons. In a traditional society, where women are socially, culturally, economically, and politically entrapped and enchained with lots of bottlenecks, in such a context, breaking the bondage of all of those hurdles women may find themselves helpless to become leaders in the public domain, so family legacy may be helpful for those women leaders to participate in the political sphere.

- NGO Background: Most of the women Chairpersons in the UP were found to have been previously involved with NGOs. It was evident that out of 6 UP Chairpersons, 5 were directly involved in different NGOs before they were elected to the UP. Having been involved in NGOs these women leaders obtained enough experience to work at the grassroots level. During their involvement in NGOs they might have received a lot of training and opportunities to interact with many people and situations. Women's prolonged association and work experiences with NGOs helped them to achieve social mobility, conscientization, enough practical knowledge, courage and mental strength, etc., which in turn, might have helped them to form their attitude and behavior, beliefs, and thinking patterns to develop their personality and to achieve some managerial capacity. The combining effects of all those above factors might have resulted and also contributed to their assuming a leadership role in the community.
- Linkage with Political Parties: Leadership does not grow automatically in human life. Some sorts of previous associations and linkages with political institutions can be the cause of the leadership process. It was found that out of 6, 2 Chairpersons had political affiliation from their student life, which might have helped them achieve a leadership position. In the case of 2 other Chairpersons, it was found that their husband was currently directly involved in political parties. The last one had a strong family legacy.
- Family Support: Family support helped the women leaders to emerge as public leaders. In the case of Mina and Nargis, this was quite evident. The 3 others had a strong family legacy, which indicated that they also became women leaders by using their family support.

- Training Received: It was found that almost all of the women Chairpersons attended various training programs during their tenure, which surely helped with their job performance at the UP.
- Linkage with MP: It was found that among 6 UP Chairpersons, all had a linkage with the MP. Undoubtedly for playing an important role in a political institution, a linkage with an MP is extremely essential, as the MP has a direct role in local development, so it is quite natural to maintain a good relationship with him or her.
- Reelected Issue: Among 6 Chairpersons, except for Mina, 5 Chairpersons were elected for more than one term. Mina contested the UP election 3 times, including her current leadership position. This is an important indicator for women leaders. Due to women leaders' huge popularity they could achieve this, which means that they were really performing excellently in their assigned role through their competent leadership. In the context of Bangladesh, most of the UP Chairmen can be found to be involved with corrupt practices, but these women leaders through their honesty, integrity, and quality leadership are trying hard to bring change and transformation at the local level, which might be the cause of their being elected for the second term. Coming to the UP, these women leaders were able to grasp all of the necessary rules, regulations, and practices quickly, and they were also able to adjust to the prevailing established socio-cultural and political milieu of the rural society, which in turn might have helped them achieve success in bringing change and transformation to the rural society. Therefore, people recognized their performance through electing them for multiple terms.

4.3 Common Factors Contributing to the Leadership Process of the Women Chairpersons in the UP

Based on the research questions and a rigourous analysis combining the findings of the salient features and significant factors of all 6 cases of women UP Chairpersons the following common factors that contributed to their leadership process have been identified here. It was observed that in most of the cases, the women chairpersons entered into political space by using their family network and dynastic political legacy, being surrogates for their husbands or fathers. Women's prolonged association and work experiences with NGOs helped them flourish their leadership potential; achieve social mobility, conscientization, enough practical knowledge, courage and mental strength, etc., which in turn might have helped them to form their attitude, behavior, beliefs to develop their personality and achieve some managerial capacity. The combining effects of all those above factors helped them achieving a huge social capital–might have resulted and also contribute to their assuming a leadership role in the community.

5. Policy Interventions and Suggestions

Women leadership in a country grows through various socio-cultural, political, economic and legal processes, structures, and systemic arrangements that allow them to play a role in the leadership process. Women can gain access and strength through a liberal social value system, democratic governance, positive implications of education and ICTs, different socio-political movements, the role of women's organizations and networking, favourable legislation (constitutional provisions, WID policy, affirmative action and programs, etc.), which provide positive impetus for developing women's leadership. Through the NGO network huge numbers of women have

achieved economic emancipation and conscientization by involving them in innumerable income-generating activities and developing enormous social capital at the grassroots level, which have buttressed the cause of promoting women's leadership in Bangladesh. Based on the empirical evidence and the findings of the selected women leaders of the Union Parishad of Bangladesh the following policy recommendations and interventions are suggested for strengthening women's role and participation in the rural local government.

- In a country like Bangladesh, women's position and status in the society are conditioned by various socio-cultural impositions such as patriarchy, purdah, religious superstitions, etc., so the role of education, science and technology can be expanded with a view to modifying the cultural norms and practices embedded in the social milieu. In fact, education is certainly one of the formidable factors that contribute to the transformation of politics and to tackle many of the social ills that Bangladesh is to encounter. Therefore, in order to expand educational facilities more affirmative action should be extended for the cause of women's development in Bangladesh, which can help more women leaders to enter in public space.
- To develop political awareness and consciousness, women should be involved in social, economic, and political activities. Therefore, progressive and liberal thinking should be promoted through democratic governance as these all help with the positive direction for developing women's leadership.
- Political parties play a critical gate-keeping role in bringing women in the leadership process. Therefore, all liberal political parties should introduce some quota for women to be elected in political position.

- The role of women's organizations is very important for developing women's leadership at the grassroots level. Therefore in a bid to integrate the UP women leaders with national-level women's movement, women's organizations and networks should come forward to strengthen women's role and participation in the UP.
- To manage patriarchy, male domination and to strengthen women's role in the UP the reservation quota should be thoroughly reorganized. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the existing reservation quota from one third to fifty percent like the provision of West Bengal, India, where women leaders have brought about formidable changes in rural governance having ensured their 50% reservation in all 3 tiers of local government. The same reservation system can be adopted in the Union Parishad in Bangladesh.
- Drawing evidence from the global scenario it was found that all over the world, women leaders are sensitive and sympathetic to women's issues, interests, and concerns. Therefore, the women leaders in the UP should be involved in those areas where they can contribute their worth to bringing positive changes in the rural governance. In such a case women's involvement and entitlement of shares should be clearly mentioned in the legal framework. For example, 60% of all of the safety net programs channeled at the UP level should be allocated to the women leaders.
- In a bid to enlarge women's participation in political space, an inclusive reservation policy should be adopted. To enlarge the scope of women leaders, one-third of the total seats of the Chairmen should be reserved for the women Chairmen in all the Union Parishads in Bangladesh. For having more new women leaders in the UP it would be better to change

both the reserved seats for women members and the Chairmen in every five years.

- To strengthen women role and participation and to enhance their capacity and knowledge in UP governance, women leaders should be imparted rigorous and frequent training. The training programs can be designed in light of the felt need of women leaders. In a bid to develop mutual understanding and cooperative attitudes among male and female members such training programs can be arranged both separately and jointly for male and female members of the UP.
- In a traditional society like Bangladesh, it is unusual for the local level women to work outside the home, ignoring their family roles and responsibilities. Hence, family members should extend their all-out support so that women leaders can play an effective role in the Union Parishad. Therefore, to translate such family responsibilities and support into an institutional mechanism the concept of a "child care centre" can be introduced at the community level for taking care of the children of the women leaders. Creating provision for such child care centre at the community level will be a salutary attempt in helping with women's leadership at the grassroots level.
- Efforts should be taken to create a team spirit among all the functionaries of the UP. Therefore, the UP Chairman, male members, and the secretary should extend their cooperation by maintaining good behaviour, favourable attitudes, and a positive outlook to women members, and assist them in carrying out their duties and responsibilities properly so that the women members are encouraged to contribute significantly in the sphere of UP affairs. Moreover, local administration should also play a supportive role for the cause of women leaders in the UP.

6. Conclusion

Analyzing the socio-economic characteristics of these Women Chairpersons (WCs), it was found that most of the women had better socio-economic base. All of these WCs were married having their age in the early fifties. Most of the WCs were moderately educated but education had little role in their performance. In fact, WCs at the UP were the product of the family legacy, while some of them emerged as leaders using their social capital gained through NGO involvement. In most cases, the women leaders entered into political space by using their family network and dynastic political legacy, being surrogates for their husbands or fathers. The common contributing factors behind playing their leadership role were their better socio-economic base, family support, previous political network and linkage with political parties and the local MP which in fact provided them a supportive base for their leadership process in the UP of Bangladesh.

Summary of Discussions on "Paradox and Dynamics of Women Leadership in the Rural Local Government"

The presentation of research report on Paradox and Dynamics of Women Leadership in the Rural Local Government was chaired by Dr. Shafiqul Islam, Director (Administration), BARD. At the outset, the chairperson welcomed all to the presentation session and thanked the Seminar management to give him a chance to chair the session. Then he requested the presenter to present his paper. The presenter Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Joint Director (Research), BARD presented the paper briefly and highlighted different issues relating to the thematic areas of the research. After the presentation the Chairperson opened the floor for queries and clarifications, which could be seen below:

1. **Mr. Krishna Kumar Shaha,** Assistant Professor, Comilla University wanted to know whether there was any role of NGOs found to promote women leadership in the study. In reply, the presenter, Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman said that NGOs were found playing a vital role for promoting women leadership in the study area. Most of the women leaders were seen having working experience in NGOs, he informed. Moreover, he mentioned that interestingly there was found no relation between education and women leadership.

2. **Mr. Ranjan Kumar Guha**, Joint Director (Training), BARD opined that only women members were taken as sample in the study. It may not represent the whole scenario. In reply, the presenter said that the study was done on women leadership. That's why women respondents were selected for interviews in the study.

Finally, the chairperson mentioned that the study was designed with some specific objectives. In the study report, the researcher put nine recommendations. The recommendations should be made following the study objectives, he opined. The chairperson thanked the presenter and the participants for their active participation, and concluded the session.

2.6 Business Session 6: Presentation on Empowerment and Food Security among Vulnerable Women Group in Selected Districts of Bangladesh

Abdullah Al Mamun
Joint Director (Project), BARD

1. Statement of the Issue

The World Food Summit (1996) defined food security as a condition "when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life" (World Food Summit, 1996). Food security is built on three pillars: i) food availability: sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis; ii) food access: sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet; and iii) food use: appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation.

Relying on this broadly accepted definition, this report examines the contribution of gender equality to food security and its three components. It assesses the obstacles of women in Asia and the Pacific who face discriminatory laws and social and cultural norms, and its consequences of such obstacles on food and nutrition security. Limited access to educational and employment opportunities restrict their economic autonomy and independence, reducing their access to adequate food. This may occur through the market, where lower economic opportunities for women result in reduced purchasing power for female-headed households. Women's lower economic autonomy may also be manifested in a weaker bargaining position of women within the family. Differential feeding and caregiving practices may favour boys over girls, thus leading to poorer nutritional outcomes for women and girls, and making it

more difficult for women to adequately fulfill even their traditional roles in caregiving and food systems. The cost of this to society is considerable, both in lost productivity, and worse, in health and nutritional outcomes. Challenging the constraints women and girls face and enlarging their access to opportunities is an essential component of the fight against hunger and malnutrition. It is achievable, it is cost-effective, and it may form the basis for a sustainable strategy for reducing food insecurity. However, removal of these constraints requires more than good intentions and legislative reform of discriminatory legal provisions. Social and cultural norms, and the gender roles that these norms impose, must also be challenged. Empowerment—an increased role for women in decision making, at all levels, including the household, local communities, and national parliaments—is required. Women's empowerment is of course a goal in itself, a human right that governments have pledged to uphold. It is also vital for society to benefit from the increased contribution that women can make to food and nutrition security. The potentiality of women cannot be obtained and can only be materialized if there is an overarching effort to reshape hierarchies in current social structures. Inclusive and participatory efforts are essential in reshaping inequitable social structures. A major cause of the persistence of existing gender roles is that many men in the formal sector work long hours, providing at least a partial explanation of why they are not assuming a greater share of family responsibilities. In countries such as Indonesia, Republic of Korea, and Pakistan, more than 30% of all employees work more than 48 hours per week. Male employees especially tend to work excessive hours—both a consequence and cause of gender stereotypes reinforcing the existing division of labour (Lee, McCann, and Messenger 2007, p. 240). While men work long hours outside the home, women work long, unpaid, and undervalued hours at home. The gender roles associated with the existing division of labor are clearly difficult to challenge without rethinking

the broader issues associated with employment patterns and questioning the pressures currently imposed on both men and women. Yet, a number of measures that would alleviate burdens on families would benefit both women and men—e.g., better public transport, water, and energy services, as well as child-care services and institutional care for the sick and the elderly. Both men and women would also benefit from measures encouraging men's caring role, such as nontransferable parental leave for both parents.

The ILO Committee of Experts notes that "measures designed to promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities, such as child-care services, should not be specific to women" (ILO 1999). Achieving equality of treatment of women and men is not a zero-sum game. It should lead to a better balance for all in a healthier and more inclusive society. The involvement of men in achieving a transition to a more equal society will reduce the risks of desirable changes meeting with resistance. It can help convince those in power that empowered women present an opportunity, not a threat (Ambler et al., 2007). Ensuring that men are active participants in strategies for empowerment of women is essential to the cultural change required for redistribution of tasks within the household. Unless such change takes place, improvements to the situation of women may remain only partial, offset by the inequalities in the care economy.

Women working outside the household, for example, may continue to take on all household responsibilities in order to avoid conflicts about "neglecting" traditional duties. While investments that reduce the drudgery of the care economy and improved organization can contribute to women's empowerment, men need to be involved and actively participate in the transitional redistribution of household roles.

Poverty is endemic in most rural areas in Bangladesh, both in terms of absolute numbers and proportions of total

population. To address the poor people, the Government of Bangladesh has launched a number of Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNP) for protecting people from poverty, food insecurity and vulnerability. Being one of the most important SSNP, the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Programme was initiated in the wake of the 1974 famine, mainly designed to reach those households/beneficiaries who were at the highest risk of hunger, the poorest and especially female headed households. Currently about 750,000 women participants (about 3.75 million beneficiaries) from ultra-poor households receive a monthly food grant combined with a package of development services. Women under the VGD programme are very much vulnerable in terms of empowerment both in household and social level. The empowerment is significantly associated with the food security, and the dietary consumption of the corresponding households. Therefore, it is important to know the empowerment situation with food consumption pattern of vulnerable women groups and the influence of empowerment status of household food security and food consumption pattern. Research on the relationship between women's empowerment and nutrition is continually expanding.

In Bangladesh, very few studies have been attempted to see the association of women's empowerment with food security, and nutrition. The study endeavours to explore the current situation of empowerment in vulnerable rural women group, along with their nutritional profile. It is expected that the study will put forward the insights of the association of women empowerment with nutrition, and fill the knowledge gap providing empirical evidence. The study findings will be helpful for the researchers, development practitioners and policy makers to design and implement the VGD programme more efficiently and get insights to combat against the food and nutrition insecurity problems in Bangladesh.

2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess the empowerment and food security status and influence of empowerment status on household food security and food consumption pattern among the vulnerable women group in selected districts of Bangladesh.The specific objectives of the study were to:

i) assess the socio-economic profile of the vulnerable women group;
ii) assess the empowerment situation of vulnerable women group;
iii) find out the Food Consumption Pattern (FCP);
iv) appraise the food security in the household of the vulnerable women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years); and
v) explore the influence of empowerment status on household food security and food consumption pattern.

3. Methods of the Study

3.1. Type of the study and sampling

The present study was the cross sectional study. Sample size was calculated using standard statistical formula at the outset of the study. The appropriate sample size for a population-based survey was determined largely by three factors:

a. The estimated prevalence of the variable of interest (chronic energy deficiency due to food insecurity of women in this instance)
b. The desired level of confidence, and
c. The accepted margin of error.

Sample size was calculated for the key indicator (chronic energy deficiency due to food insecurity of women). The following formula was used to calculate the sample size.

$$n = \frac{z^2 p(1-p)}{a^2}$$

Where, n= required sample size for survey, expressed as number of units of analysis,
z= the standard normal deviate, set as 1.96 (95%CI)
p= the proportion of favorable value of the major study variable,
Here, the chronic energy deficiency due to food insecurity of women is 0.42 (42%)
a= acceptable error of margin, here set at 0.065 (6.5%)

According to Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (2011) report, the chronic energy deficiency due to food insecurity of women is 42%. For this descript cross sectional study with 95% confidence interval, and 6.5% precision, the sample size was-

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.42(1-0.42)}{0.065^2}$$

$$n = 221.49 \approx 220$$

A total of 220 women were selected finally for the study. Women of four Upazilas (Jikorgacha and Bagarpara from Jessore district, Gangachara and Taragonj from Rangpur district) were interviewed. These four Upazilas under two districts were selected purposively for this study. Fifty-five (55) women were interviewed in each of the Upazila. The sampling was done among the VGD beneficiaries who received rice under scale-up plans for 2015. A systematic random sampling method was employed to enroll the required number of participants for the surveys from the total list of Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) beneficiaries in each Upazila. The total list of VGD beneficiaries in the study areas was the sampling frame for the study.

3.2. Inclusion criteria for women

- Women of 15- 49 years of age from VGD card holder beneficiaries;
- Verbal consent from household head to participate in the study;
- Written consent from the selected women participant.

3.3. Exclusion criteria for women

- Women with any known or suspected chronic or congenital diseases; and
- Pregnant women.

3.4. Questionnaire development

Before the survey, a structured questionnaire was developed. Questionnaire was discussed thoroughly and extensive field-testing was done for necessary modifications. The structured questionnaire used for data collection included different components such as: household demography and socio economic status, morbidity status, food consumption pattern, household food security, and women empowerment.

3.4.1 Household demography questionnaire

Information on ethnicity, religion, level of education of household head, number of family members, ownership of the house, number of dwelling rooms, household construction materials, toilet facilities, sources of drinking water, household assets, and land ownership were collected as key indicators of socioeconomic status. Asset index was used as a measure of Socio-Economic Status (SES) which was created by using information on household assets. A list of variables including homestead, land under cultivation, construction materials of the walls, roof and the floor of the house, ownership of household assets

(electricity, radio, television, mobile phone, land phone, chair, watch, table, cupboard, rickshaw, van, animal drawn cart, refrigerator, motor boat), and type of toilet facility astin, brick-cement *(pucca)*, mud and others were considered. For household assets, each of them belonged to categories "owned" or "not owned" by the household.

3.4.2 Household dietary quality and food security questionnaire

For assessing the dietary quality of the household, FCS questionnaire which is already developed by WFP was used in the study (World Food Program, 2015)[1]. The food items for different groups were adopted according to the area. To determine the state of food security, the nine questions of Household food insecurity access sale (HFIAS) were used (Coates, Swindale, and Bilinsky, 2007)[2]. The last three questions of HFIAS were used for the assessment of household hunger (Ballard et al., 2011)[3].

3.4.3 Morbidity questionnaire

Each participant was asked about her illness. A standard series of questions using pre-coded questionnaires designed for recording of specific morbidity symptoms. Morbidity recall period was up to two weeks. Diarrhea was defined as three or more abnormally loose or liquid stools with or without blood in last 24 hours or any number of stools with blood (dysentery). Questions related to menstrual problem and urinary tract infraction were also asked.

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[1]Available from: http://home.wfp.orgistellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp196627.pdf. (Accessed on 5 April, 2015).

[2] Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) for measurement of food access: indicator guide. Washington, DC: Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project, Academy for Educational Development, 2007

[3] Household Hunger Scale: Indicator definition and measurement guide. Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA), 2011.

3.4.4 Women's empowerment questionnaire

Women's empowerment questionnaire comprised a number of questions to figure out the empowerment status, social esteem, and intra household dynamics of the VGD women group in Bangladesh. There were five different domains in which the respondents were asked questions. These domains are decision-making, ownership of assets, control over use of income, leadership, and time and leisure (Sraboni et al., 2014). In the first domain, the respondents were asked about their decision making status and bargaining power in the household expenditure, and raising livestock. Some of the questions also brought out the information such as who decided for the family in issues like food, clothing, children raising, breastfeeding to child, visiting to relatives, and health seeking behaviors. In the second domain, questions were asked about the ownership of different household assets, tools. Interviewee was also asked to provide information on their access and participation concerning credit. Third domain of the questionnaire attempted to reveal the true picture of women's income, and their control over income. If they were found having less control about expenditure, they were asked questions, who was having the full control or influences. The leadership domain looked at the leadership status, and the influences of VGD women group in the society. Questions were asked about their participation and role in the meetings of different community issues, like education, health and nutrition problems, wage etc. Finally, in the last domain of the women empowerment questionnaire, each of the interviewee was asked about their workload, leisure period, activities in leisure time etc.

4. Summary of the Study Findings

Most of the participants are Bangali (96.8%) ethnicity; and Muslim (71.4%). Regarding their occupation, most of them were found to be housewives (77.3%). The study found

an overall empowerment score of 42.61±13.31 (Mean±SD) in a range 0-100. 71.81% respondents reported that they can take decision about household budgeting, whereas 77.3%, 43.2% has the power of small and big items respectively. The decision related to use of family planning methods is made jointly in 76.7% respondents' family. Respondents who possess the power of making decision alone about their children's education, sickness, and teaching norms and behavior are 34.9%, 23.9% and 41.1% respectively, whereas egalitarian decision was made in 61%, 65.9%, and 48.5% families. Most of the respondents (84.45%) claimed that they have control over their husbands' income. The study reveals that 41.8% of the households are severely food insecure, whereas 43.2% are moderately food insecure. It is observed that, households with empowered women are more food secure than the households with less empowered women ($p=0.02$). A positive correlation was found for empowered score with food consumption score ($p=0.190$). A statistically significant ($p=0.000$) negative correlation was found for empowerment score with food consumption score ($r=-0.237$). The study reveals that empowerment of vulnerable women group is significantly associated with the food security, and dietary consumption of the corresponding households. The study suggests further research to determine the cause-effect relationship of these factors, confounding factors that may influence the relationship, and the specific aspects of empowerment of women that effectively influence the food security, dietary consumption, and nutrition profile at larger community.

5. Recommendations

In this study, the relationship between empowerment and the food security of vulnerable women group of Jessore and Rangpur districts in Bangladesh was examined. Apart from investigating the socio economic profile, morbidity

profile, state of household food insecurity, an overall of empowerment score of each study participant was computed. The correlation between empowerment score with FCS, HFIAS was examined. Interestingly, the study reveals that empowerment of vulnerable women group is significantly associated with the food security, and dietary consumption of the corresponding households. However, it was not possible to take different confounding factors that may influence the relationship. The study suggests further research to determine the cause-effect relationship of these factors, confounding factors that may influence the relationship, and specific aspects of empowerment of women that effectively influence the food security, dietary consumption, and nutrition profile at larger community. After scrutinizing the findings, the study makes some recommendations on how disempowerment and food insecurity issues of the vulnerable women group can be attenuated.

1. Employment opportunities need to be created for the vulnerable women group. Income generation activities depending on their needs and capacity could be initiated.
2. Explicit interventions are required to be taken by Government and NGOs to increase women's control of assets; these interventions could include targeted asset transfers to poor women.
3. Ensuring participation of vulnerable women group in different events of society, and inspiring them to speak about their problems and give comments through including them in village welfare committees as well as formal and informal groups would be required.
4. Deep seated systems of property rights that favour men in terms of inheritance, and the difficulty that women face in accumulating assets that they can control, need

to be addressed so that women can build up their control of assets.

5. The study suggests the reforms of inheritance and property rights law more broadly, which should be an important part of the policy agenda to reduce gender inequality.
6. Along with food transfer to VGD women, homestead gardening can be encouraged to increase the food access.
7. Finally, Government, local and international NGOs are required to come forward to resolve the multidimensional problems of vulnerable women group.

Summary of Discussions on "Empowerment and Food Security among Vulnerable Women Group in Selected Districts of Bangladesh"

1. Dr. Md. Mashiur Rahman, Associate Professor of Comilla University stated that as the researcher mentioned the research area in the methodology of the research so the title may be revised by omitting the words 'selected areas' from it. Dr. Rahman opined that it could be better if researcher proposed some hypotheses in the literature or in the framework of the research.
2. Mr. Krishna Kumar Shaha, Assistant Professor, Comilla University opined that before publishing any research paper, the Research Division could organise a research colloquium so that researchers could incorporate the comments of colloquium participants.

Chapter 3
Valedictory Session

The Valedictory Session of the seminar on "Research Highlights of BARD: 2020" was held in the Mainamati Auditorium of BARD at 2.30 pm. The session was chaired by Mr. Md. Shahjahan, Director General, BARD. Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain, Principal, Bangladesh Cooperative Academy, Cumilla graced the occasion as Guest of Honor. Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, Director (Administration), BARD and Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee, Director (Research), BARD delivered their respective speeches in the Valedictory Session of the seminar. Two participants also spoke on behalf of all participants. The brief summaries of the speeches are furnished below:

3.1 Summary of the Speeches

3.1.1 Feedback from the Participants

Dr. Md. Mashiur Rahman, Associate Professor of Comilla University spoke on behalf of the participants. He said that as a rural development academy, BARD was always striving to address the multi-sectoral issues regarding rural development since its inception in 1959. In this long journey, BARD has established a unique working environment and cooperation with various international and regional organizations. He requested the BARD authority to arrange the research highlights seminar before the publication of research works to incorporate the suggestions from the discussants. He stressed that in order to conduct research, the sample size should be large to justify the results and convince policy level. He expressed his gratefulness to DG, BARD for facilitating the seminar and enabling them to participate in the seminar. Finally, he conveyed thanks to the participants and acknowledged the crucial support of the seminar management team and concluded his speech.

3.1.2 Address by the Guest of Honour

At the outset of his speech, Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain, Principal, Bangladesh Cooperative Academy, Cumilla and the Guest of Honour extended sincere thanks to the honourable Chairperson Mr. Md. Shahjahan, Director General, BARD, for giving him this opportunity to attend this seminar as a guest of honour. Later on, he thanked the participants for their enriching comments and lively participation. Referring to the objectives of the seminar, he hoped that the seminar has enlightened the participants as well as the researchers on the concepts and cross cutting issues of research.

Finally, he expressed his gratitude to the organizing team for their meticulous efforts and care. Expressing that, he personally benefitted immensely from the day-long fruitful deliberations and rewarding experiences, he concluded his speech.

3.1.3 Address by Director (Administration), BARD

At the beginning of his speech, Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, Director (Administration), BARD greeted the audience of the concluding session. He extended his whole-hearted thanks to the participants of this seminar for their participation in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic situation. He also offered thanks to all divisions and support services who were engaged to make the seminar successful and suggested that pandemic could be faced with awareness and taking necessary measures on it ignoring fear. He said that we have to keep pace with the current situation to make our activities ongoing. Replying to the suggestion that the highlights seminar should be arranged before the publication, he clarified that a research work is usually published through a series of steps to remove limitations and gaps in the report. Rather arranging a seminar on

research proposals could help avoid those limitations and enhance the quality of a research by incorporating the constructive suggestions of discussants.

He hoped the seminar would deliver the desired outcome at the end. He sought all sorts of cooperation from every corner to make this seminar successful. In fine, he concluded his speech.

3.1.4 Vote of Thanks by Director (Research), BARD

Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee, Director (Research), BARD extended his gratitude to Director General of BARD for his generous support. He also extended his gratitude to the Hon'ble Guest of Honour for his inspiring presence. He expressed his gratefulness to BARD Administration and all related persons of different sections for facilitating the seminar. He conveyed warmest thanks to the seminar management and acknowledged their crucial work to make the seminar successful.

Finally, he expressed his immense gratefulness to the participants for their kind presence in spite of the Pandemic situation and enriching the discussions with their valuable comments and suggestions. He hoped the seminar has delivered the desired outcome at the end. He also acknowledged the contributions of the session Chairpersons, presenters and rapporteurs of the seminar. With this, he concluded his speech.

3.1.5 Address by the Chairperson

The Chairperson of the concluding session, Mr. Md. Shahjahan, Director General of BARD felt extremely delighted to be present in the seminar. He thanked all guests and participants for their active participation in the seminar. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all and especially to the participants for joining the seminar in spite

of the Pandemic situation. He hoped that the research works would inspire junior faculty members of BARD to get more involved in research works. He suggested that Faculty Members could think about initiating some action researches on the basis of findings of the research works. He commented that researchers need to take proper care of topic selection, language, scopes and above all quality of research so that it becomes comprehensive and reliable. The chairperson opined that incentives for the researchers should be increased that could encourage them to engage deeply in research work and come up with effective results.

He stressed that BARD should conduct more research in this era of SDGs, to achieve inclusive growth and development following a pro-people strategy. Lastly, he thanked the organizers, guests, discussants, participants, session chairs and wished their good health & success. With the speech of Director General of BARD, the seminar was formally concluded.

Annexure-I

Seminar Programme

Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD)
Kotbari, Cumilla

Seminar on Research Highlights of BARD: 2020

Date: 20 June 2020, Saturday
Venue: Mainamati Auditorium, BARD

Session	Time	Events	Persons Responsible
Registration and Inauguration	09:30-10:00	Registration	Seminar Directors, Hosts
		Inaugural Ceremony Welcome Address by the Director (Training), BARD Address by the Guest of Honour Address by the Seminar Director, BARD Address by the Director(Research), BARD Address by the Chairperson and formal Inauguration of the Seminar	**Chairperson:** Director General, BARD **Rapporteur:** Mr. Kamrul Hasan

Session	Time	Events	Persons Responsible
Business Sessions (Presentation of Research Highlights)			
Session-1	10:00-10:20	My House My Farm Project (Amar Bari Amar Khamar Project): Challenges and Potentialities **Researchers:** Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee Dr. Abdul Karim Mr. Newaz Ahmed Chowdhury Mr. Md. Tanvir Ahmed	**Chairperson:** Dr. Tofail Ahmed Vice Chancellor Britannia University, Cumilla **Rapporteur:** Mr. Md. Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan
	10:20-10:30	**Discussion**	
	10:30-10:55	**Mid-morning tea and snacks**	**Section Officer (Cafeteria)**
Session-2	11:00-11:20	Agro-based SMEs in Bangladesh: Government Policy, Strategy and Applicability of PPP **Researcher:** Ms. Saifun Nahar	**Chairperson:** Dr. Tapash Kumer Biswas Director(Research), PKSF **Rapporteur:** Mr. Anas Al Islam
	11:20-11:30	**Discussion**	

Session	Time	Events	Persons Responsible
Session-3	11:30-11:50	Challenges and Prospects of Jute Cultivation: A Study on Farmer's Response in Selected Areas of Bangladesh **Researchers:** Dr. Shishir Kumar Munshi Mr. Benzir Ahmed Mr. Junaed Rahim	**Chairperson:** Dr. Maududul Hoq Chowdhury Director, BARD **Rapporteur:** Mr. Md. Abu Taleb
	11:50-12:00	**Discussion**	
Session-4	12:00-12:20	লালমাই-ময়নামতি প্রকল্পের (আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার প্রকল্পের বার্ড অংশ) মধ্যবর্তী মূল্যায়ন **Researchers:** Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam Dr. Anowar Hossain Bhuiyan	**Chairperson:** Mr. Shafiqul Islam Director, BARD **Rapporteur:** Mr. Md. Mosharaf Hossain Bhuiyan
	12:20-12:30	**Discussion**	
	12:30-14:00	**Lunch and Prayer Break**	**Section Officer (Cafeteria)**
Session-5	14:00-14:20	Paradox and Dynamics of Women Lea dership in the Rural Local Government **Researcher:** Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman	**Chairperson:** Dr. Shafiqul Islam Director, BARD **Rapporteur:** Mr. Junaed Rahim
	14:20-14:30	**Discussion**	

Session-6	14.30-14:50	Empowerment and Food Security among Vulnerable Women Group in Selected Districts of Bangladesh **Researcher:** Mr. Abdullah Al Mamun	**Chairperson:** Mr. Abul Kalam Azad Director, BARD **Rapporteur:** Mr. Md. Anwar Hossain
	14:50-15:00	**Discussion**	
Valedictory Session	15:00-16:00	Valedictory Session	**Chairperson:** Director General, BARD Feedback from the Participants Speech by Seminar Director Remarks by the Director (Training) Speech by the Guest of Honour Address by the Chairperson **Rapporteur:** Mr. Zamil Uddin

(Saifun Nahar)
Deputy Director
&
Seminar Coordinator

(Kazi Sonia Rahman)
Deputy Director
&
Associate Seminar Director

(Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman)
Director
&
Seminar Director

Annexure-II

Research Highlights Seminar 2020
Participants' List

Sl.	Name & Designation	Mobile No. & Email
List of Invited Guests and Participants		
1.	Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossen Principal, Bangladesh Cooperative Academy Kotbari, Cumilla	Mobile: 01911202163 Email: bcacomilla@gmail.com iqbal62coop@gmail.com
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5.	Mr. Mohammad Shafiqul Islam Professor (Administration) Bangladesh Cooperative Academy Kotbari, Cumilla	Mobile: 01972-155085 Email: shafiqcoop@gmail.com
6.	Mr. Ganandu Bikash Chakma Professor (Research) Bangladesh Cooperative Academy Kotbari, Cumilla	Mobile: 01553-765658 Email: gbikashcu@gmail.com
7.	Mr. Muhammad Omar Farooq Majumder Research Assistant Bangladesh Cooperative Academy Kotbari, Cumilla	Mobile: 01716-226169 Email: marfarooqcoop@gmail.com
List of Faculty Members and Other Officers of BARD		
8.	Dr. Masudul Hoq Chowdhury Additional Director General, BARD, Cumilla	Mobile: 01819-333428 Email: chowdhury62@yahoo.com

Sl.	Name & Designation	Mobile No. & Email
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Annexure-III

Brief Biographies of the Researchers and Presenters

- Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman joined Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) as Assistant Director in 1988. Presently Mr. Mizan is on PRL. Prior to his PRL, he worked as Director (Project). He did his Honours and Masters from Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh in Agricultural Economics and another Masters in Food and Nutrition Planning from the University of the Philippines Los Banos, the Philippines. He has 32 publications in national and international journals on different aspects of agricultural and rural development. He was a Visiting Research Scholar (Professor) at Kyoto University, Japan.
- Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam is currently serving BARD, Cumilla as Director. He obtained his Honours and Master's degrees from Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh. Later on he was awarded PhD degree by the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University (BSMRAU), Gazipur. He has, to his credit, 30 research publications in different national and international journals, 11 books, more than 30 published articles in popular newsletters and national dailies. His main areas of specialization are agricultural economics, sustainable livelihoods, project monitoring and participatory development.

- Mr. Milan Kanti Bhattacharjee, Director (Research) of BARD has 31 years of experience in rural development management, training, research and action research. He worked in various capacities at BARD, which included services as Director in Charge (Training); Director (Rural Administration & Local Government), Joint Director (Administration); Joint Director (Development Communication); and Joint Director (Rural Economics). His areas of expertise include Development Communication, Participatory Rural Development, and Development Management. His research publications are 20 in number. They include, among others, impact studies on multidimensional development issues including fertilizer crisis, safety net programmes, mass media, institutional perspective of development communication, people's participation; KAP (knowledge, attitude and practice) study, project interventions on women, voter education programmes, youth development, and post training utilization. He conducting studies of national and international organizations including WFP, IRRI, Department of Youth Development, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, BRDB and COAST, Bhola.

- Dr. Abdul Karim, hailed from Chattogram, has been working at BARD since 1992. He has completed his Honours and Masters in Public Administration from the University of Chattagram. He received post-graduate Diploma on Decentralized Planning from NIRD, India, second Masters from Kyushu University, Japan and PhD from IBS, Rajshahi University. He has conducted a number of researches related to local government, institution building, project governance, public service delivery, public sector management and public private partnership. He has provided consultancy services to Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS); Centre for Applied Policy Research (CAPRe), Swiss Deveopment Corporation; UNDP; CIDA; and The Asia Foundation.

- Mr. Newaz Ahmed Chowdhury has worked at BARD since September 1993. He held various positions including Joint Director (Training) over his two and a half decade career at BARD. He did his B.Sc. (Honours) in Forestry from Chittagong University and Master of Rural Development Management (MRDM) from Khon Kaen University, Thailand. He has in total 36 publications to his credit which include research and evaluation studies, journal articles, and seminar papers. He travelled to Austria, Canada, Egypt, Germany, India, Netherlands, Singapore and Thailand for attending various professional courses and degree. His areas of interest spread over areas like forestry, disaster management, climate change, social safety net programmes and project evaluation studies. He can be reached at newazctg@gmail.com.
- Mr. Abdullah Al Mamun, has been serving as Joint Director for BARD, Cumilla for more than 23 years. He did his Bachelor of Science with Honours in Biochemistry and Master of Science in Nutrition *(First class with first position)* from Dhaka University. He did his second masters in Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in Food and Nutrition Planning from University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), the Philippines. He also did his Post Graduate Diploma with Honours in Food and Nutrition Security from Wageningen University, the Netherlands. He has more than 20 research publications in the field of Rural Development, Health and Nutrition, Community Development, Ecological Sanitation and Poverty Monitoring published as books and in renowned national and international journals. He was involved as Project Leader of CBMS- Bangladesh under the auspices of CBMS Network, the Philippines.

- Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Ph.D. serves as a Joint Director (Research) at BARD, Cumilla. Prior to joining at BARD in 1996, Dr. Rahman obtained Bachelor of Social Sciences (BSS) and Master of Social Sciences (MSS) in 1992 and 1993 respectively in Public Administration from the University of Dhaka. He did his 2nd Masters in Public Policy and Governance in 2010 from the North South University, Dhaka. Later on, Mr. Rahman did his Ph.D. in 2015 in Development Administration from National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, Thailand. Mr. Rahman has more than 24 years of experience in social research, training and action research in broader areas of rural development, governance, local government, and decentralization, policy analysis etc. Till date he has 60 publications including research reports, journals artciles, book chaperts, and seminar papers etc. Email: mizanbard@gmail.com
- Mr. Shishir Kumar Munshi, PhD. works at BARD, Cumilla as Joint Director (Ag. Ext.) and has been involved in training, research and pilot experiment projects in the field of agriculture and rural development since September 1996. Dr. Munshi did BSc in Agriculture, MS in Horticulture and PhD in Environmental Science at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Mymensingh in the year of 1989, 1995 and 2011 respectively. For professional purpose he visited The Netherlands, Egypt, India and Malaysia for attending various short courses relating to the field of agriculture and rural development. He has more than 19 years of professional experience in the relevant fields and has 18 research publications as books and articles at home and abroad. Email: skmbard@gmail.com

- Dr. Md. Anowar Hossain Bhuyan is a Joint Director of BARD, Cumilla. He obtained PhD & Masers Degree in Horticulture from BAU, Mymensingh. He started his professional career at BARD in September 2004. Presently he is involved with the project titled "Improving Livelihood of Rural People of Lalmai-Mainamati Hill Areas of Cumilla through Integrated Agriculture Farming" as Assistant Project Director. Earlier he was also involved with a few experimental projects of BARD namely, "Rural Sanitation Improvement and Waste Resource Recycle" funded by JICA; "Sustainable Intensification of Rice-Maize Production System in Bangladesh" funded by IRRI, the Philippines etc. He was associated with a number of researches related to agriculture and rural development. Dr. Bhuiyan has a number of publications including research work, journal article, seminer proceedings, book chapters etc. Dr. Bhuiyan can be reached at: hossainbard@gmail.com.

- Mr. Benzir Ahmed joined BARD as an Assistant Director in 2004. He obtained BSS (Hons.) and MSS degrees in Public Administration from the University of Rajshahi. Later on he did second Masters in Public Policy in Economic Development from Yeungnam University, Republic of Korea in 2016. He also did one year Post Graduate Diploma on Rural Development Management from the National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, India. He has 11 publications in the forms of books and journal articles. He participated in different training courses in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and Republic of Korea. Email: ahmed_benzir@yahoo.com

- Mr. Junaed Rahim joined BARD as Assistant Director in 2006. He did his BA (Hons.) and MA in English Literature from Victoria Government College under National University of Bangladesh. He obtained his second Masters on Public Policy in Economic Development from Yeungnam University, Republic of Korea in 2015. He also attended international training programmes in Delhi, India on Entrepreneurship Development and GIS Application for Rural Development in Hyderabad; India.He has 10 publications at national and international level. Email: junaed_bard@yahoo.com
- Mr. Md. Tanvir Ahmed is an Agricultural Economist having knowledge and field experience in rural development. Currently he is working as Deputy Director at BARD, Cumilla. He completed his Bachelor Degree in Agricultural Economics from Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh. Later on he also completed his MS Degree in Agricultural Economics from University of the Philippines, Los Banos (UPLB), the Philippines. Mr. Ahmed has developed his expertise on Market System Development, Value Chain Analysis, Private Sector Engagement, Farm Management, Production Economics and Rural Livelihoods Development through working in several national and international organizations (e.g. BRAC, IRRI, Swiss contact etc.).
- Ms. Saifun Nahar has been serving BARD since 2007. Currently she is working as Deputy Director. She obtained Bachelor of Social Science (BSS) and Master of Social Science (MSS) in Economics in 1996 and 1997 respectively from National University of Bangladesh. She did her Second Masters in Public Policy (MPP) from Yeungnam University, South Korea in 2018. Ms. Saifun Nahar has about 13 years

of experience in social research, training and action research in broader areas of rural development, gender development, women and child rights, development economics, human resource development, cooperative management etc. Besides, she worked as an assistant project director of three projects implemented by BARD. She has 9 publications to her credit, which include research studies, conference paper and journal articles. She participated in different international training in the Philippines, India and South Korea. Besides, she presented some research papers in international conferences held in Bangladesh and South Korea. Email: sntinni@yahoo.com

Selected Photos of the Seminar

Seminar on Research Highlights 2020
Chairperson: Mr. Md. Shahjahan
Guest of Honor: Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain
Date: 25 June 2020
Venue: Lalmai Auditorium
Organized By: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Kotbari, Cumilla

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Seminar on Research Highlights 2020
Chairperson: Mr. Md. Shahjahan
Guest of Honor: Mr. Md. Iqbal Hossain
Date: 23 June 2020
Venue: Lalmai Auditorium
anized By: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Kotbari, Cumilla
Presenter