

FINAL EX-POST EVALUATION  
OF

*Support to the farmers of the most vulnerable population in the  
Chittagong Hill Tracts to ensure their food security*

Funding Organization: **AECID**

Implemented by: **Asociación AIDA, TARANGO, BNKS**

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AECID: *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* or Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development  
BNKS: Bolipara Nari Kalyan Somity  
CHT: Chittagong Hill Tracts  
CI: Corrugated iron  
FBCCI: Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry  
FGD: Focus Group Discussion  
FXPE: Final Ex-Post Evaluation  
GO: Government Organization  
IGA: Income Generating Activity  
INGO: International Non Governmental Organization  
IPM: Integrated Pest Management  
LC: Learning centers  
MDG: Millennium Development Goals  
MoU: Memorandum of Understanding  
MP: Member of Parliament  
NGO: Non Governmental Organization  
OVI: Objectively Verifiable Indicators  
SAAO: Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer  
TABFS: TARANGO-AIDA-BNKS Food Security  
TARANGO: Training Assistance and Rural Advancement NGO  
ToT: Training of Trainers  
UNO: Upzila Executive Officer/*Upzila Nirbahi Officer*  
UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund  
UP: Upzila Parishad  
VGD: Vulnerable Group Development  
VGF: Vulnerable Group Feeding  
VSLA: Village Savings and Loan Associations

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

This is a final ex-post evaluation of a project entitled *Support to the farmers of the most vulnerable population in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to ensure their food security*. The project was funded by AECID (Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development) to Asociación AIDA, which had implemented it with two of its local partners in two Unions of Bandarban district. The budget funded by AECID for direct costs was 376.289€, with an extra contribution in kind of 108.650€ ensured by AIDA and its local partners (TARANGO and BNKS).

The project had responded to food insecurity of the area, which is traditionally populated by indigenous groups that identify themselves by their own language, culture, traditions, crop techniques and diet. The main objective of this project was – *improving agriculture techniques used by 1500 beneficiaries (60% women) in order to diversify the diet and ensure stock of food during year as well as increase the income of the families*.

### EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The final ex-post evaluation had two major purposes –

- i. Evaluate the result achieved at the end of the implementation of the project comparing the situation ex-ante, and
- ii. Evaluate the relevance, sustainability, effectiveness, efficiency, viability and impact of the project six months after its completion.

It has assessed –

- Impact on agriculture production and diversification,
- Implementation of micro-businesses,
- Impact of VSLA (Village Savings and Loan Associations),
- Participation of women,
- Participation of local authorities in the project implementation, and
- Participation of Department of Agriculture Extension office in the project implementation

To assess the project and to achieve the above-mentioned purposes, the evaluation had employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques over the following phases:

PHASE 1: Document review

PHASE 2: Field visit for qualitative data. Data were collected by observation and by in depth interviews, focus group discussions, and informal discussions of key stakeholders, which ranged from local *Upzila Parishad* (UP) Chairman, Upzila agriculture officer to male and female project beneficiaries.

PHASE 3: Quantitative data collection from the field. Data were collected by conducting a sampling survey amongst 300 people of whom 150 were direct project beneficiaries.

PHASE 4: Data analysis, write up, and report preparation.

## FINDINGS:

1. The TARANGO-AIDA-BNKS Food Security (TABFS) project had responded to local people's food insecurity by providing them with training, farming material (plants, seeds), nurseries, learning centers, savings and loan facilities (through VSLAs).
2. Its specific objective was in line with the major policy orientations of Government of Bangladesh, AECID, MDGs and other concerned stakeholders. The project has adequately responded to the needs and demands of the targeted people.
3. All its components were gender sensitive whereby women played an active role both inside the project's perimeter and inside their respective communities.
4. It had facilitated a relevant amount of activities that were comprised of - identifying and training 1200 farmers, procuring and distributing agro-inputs among them, training 1500 beneficiaries on VSLA, identifying and providing microbusiness training to 300 farmers, conducting numerous meetings and workshops with relevant national and local authorities. It was also involved in research and elaboration of reports/studies on traditional farming techniques, in establishment of management systems for learning centers and nurseries, in local staffs' trainings on agricultural techniques, accountability and monitoring.
5. It had financed and established 4 learning centers and 7 nurseries to meet the local people's needs.
6. The project had worked more with women but ensured, both qualitatively and quantitatively, an equal participation of the sexes.
7. Eight months away from the completion of the project the beneficiaries are still holding on to the nurseries, learning centers, and many VSLA groups. Besides, most importantly, keep on learning, sharing, and disseminating improved farming practices among themselves within their respective communities and even beyond.
8. Both the learning center and nursery facilities, along with the VSLAs, are bright examples of participatory approach to community development, something that this particular project had successfully implemented through out.
9. By fully complying with the Rangamati Declaration of 1998, the project and its agricultural interventions in the area had never exploited the land and other natural resource bases of the CHT, which is imperative for the feasibility of any development initiative here.
10. The project had also kept the volatile political realities of the area in consideration while operating in the CHT. It had well covered both the concerned central and local government authorities in various phases of implementation. Through out the project implementation period (and even beyond that) the government's department of agriculture extension and project's beneficiaries were remained engaged in the improvement of and experimentation with various agricultural techniques.

## OVERALL RATING

Overall rating on a scale of 1 (very good, 1 significantly better than expected) to 6 (the project program is useless, or the situation has deteriorated)<sup>1</sup>

Individual rating

Relevance: 1

Efficiency: 1

Effectiveness: 1

Sustainability: 1

Impact: 1

Feasibility: 1

Coverage: 1

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<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 = very good, 2= good, 3= fully satisfactory, 4= still satisfactory, 5= unsatisfactory, 6= useless.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the January of 2010, a project entitled *Support to the farmers of the most vulnerable population in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to ensure their food security* was launched in two unions (*Sadar* and *Kuhalong*) of Bandarban district of the CHT. Asociación AIDA along with two of its local partners TARANGO (Training Assistance and Rural Advancement NGO) and BNKS (*Bolipara Nari Kalyan Somity*, in English Bolipara Women's Welfare Organization) had initiated and implemented this project with an aim to address the prevailing food security situation of the area. The project was implemented between January 2010 and January 2012.

The core components of the project had directly benefited 1500 people of whom 85% were indigenous. Indirectly it had benefited around 8000 people. The project had identified 1200 farmers and provided all of them with plants, seeds, and various trainings on innovative agricultural techniques. It had built 7 nurseries and 4 learning centers (LC). Today, at the end of the project, all the nurseries and learning centers are managed and run by a management system, which is owned and represented by the communities of the project's beneficiaries. The project had organized 1500 farmers in VSLA (Village Savings and Loan Association) and trained them all on the VSLA. In the process, it had identified and trained 300 peasants on microbusiness, too. Arranging regular exchange meetings with local authorities and organizations, establishing a good working relationship between project's farmers and department of agriculture extension of Bandarban were also part of the project's activities. Besides all the above-mentioned activities, it had given trainings to its local staffs on agricultural techniques, accountability, and monitoring.

### 1.1 CONTEXT AND EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

Keeping all the diverse activities and achievements mentioned above in view, this evaluation process has established its major focus on the food security and the gender equality components of the project. In doing so, it hopes that the findings and recommendations of this report would be fruitful for everyone involved as well as it would encourage equally valuable (further) developmental interventions for the people of the CHT and beyond. The evaluation of the project has two major purposes:

- Evaluate the results achieved at the end of the implementation of the projects comparing the situation ex-ante.
- Evaluate the relevance, sustainability, effectiveness, efficiency, viability and impact of the project six months after its completion.

In harmony with the Terms of Reference (ToR), this final ex-post evaluation will therefore assess the followings –

- Impact of the intervention on agriculture production and diversification,
- Implementation of micro-businesses,
- Impact of VSLA,
- Participation of women,
- Participation of local authorities in the project implementation, and
- Participation of the Bandarban district's Department of Agriculture Extension Office of the Ministry of Agriculture in the implementation of the project.



## **1.2 CRITERIA CHOSEN**

In order to access the underlying features of the project and their impact at the project's end, the Final Ex-Post Evaluation (FXPE) team has chosen to work along the following criteria also suggested in the ToR –

### **Relevance –**

The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirement, country needs global priorities and partners and donors' policies.

### **Efficiency –**

A measure of how various (socio-economic) resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.

### **Effectiveness –**

The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

### **Sustainability –**

The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.

### **Impact –**

The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

### **Feasibility –**

The need to assess a project's security, developmental, and operational policies as well as its humanitarian policies, to ensure that there is consistency and, in particular, that all policies take into account humanitarian issues into considerations.

### **Coverage –**

The need to reach major population groups facing hardship wherever they are.

## **2. BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Bandarban district of the CHT is the scarcely populated and remotely located region of Bangladesh. Like its neighboring hill districts, this district also is the abode of more than 15 indigenous communities since the beginning of history. Today demographically all three of the hill districts' native indigenous population is far outnumbered by the Bengali settlers. In addition,

in the Bandarban district alone 53% people are non-tribal, according to the *Bandarban Zila Tottho Batayan*<sup>2</sup> (Bandarban district Information Window) of the Government of Bangladesh. This demographic shift, its history and adverse impact on the region's political economy is an important issue for social practitioners<sup>3</sup> that can be linked to the fact that poverty headcount rate is highest in Bandarban district.<sup>4</sup> Taking poverty and especially food security and gender components of the Bandarban district into consideration, two local NGOs, TARANGO and BNKS, and their Spanish partner AIDA had initiated this project. TARANGO has developed expertise in rural development and has 12000 beneficiary women member all over the country. BNKS, on the other hand, has been successfully working in the CHT since 1991 in the field of education, health, sanitation, and rural development.

AIDA has been working in Bangladesh since 2006, working on food security in rural areas (agriculture and aquaculture development), women empowerment, education (pre-schools). The project aimed to support mostly women and indigenous farmers of the district. In doing so, it had introduced improved farming techniques and had promoted food stability. Economic changes and development were thus linked up with farmers improved livelihood condition and women's empowerment.

The activities that the project had carried out during its operation time were –

- It had selected 1500 participants (65% women at least) of which 1,200 were trained in agricultural techniques and 300 in microbusiness. They had also received training on group formation and on women's empowerment.
- It had constructed and operationalized seven (7) nurseries to enhance production and marketing of various agricultural products. Trained all participating farmers in microbusiness and worked to facilitate marketing their produces locally.
- It had recovered, innovated, and integrated traditional techniques with current farming systems. Built four (4) learning centers mainly to be utilized for training purposes as well as for facilitating marketing of locally produced agro-products.

This project was therefore primarily a food security project that focused on agricultural and economic development of a population that lives in extreme poverty and is discriminated due to their ethnic identity. It had also paid ample attention to the issue of women's empowerment by bearing in mind that these socially and economically marginalized women are the potential agent of change.

### 3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The FXPE team has regularly consulted the following documents made available to it by AIDA and the partners of the project:

Base line of the project, Action plan up to December 2011, PP presentation on the progress of the project up to September 2011, LF TARANGO, guideline for training on agricultural

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<sup>2</sup> See, [http://www.dcbandarban.gov.bd/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=90](http://www.dcbandarban.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=90)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=130478>

<sup>4</sup> See, Updating Poverty Maps of Bangladesh.

<http://www.bbs.gov.bd/webtestapplication/userfiles/image/UpdatingPovertyMapsofBangladesh.pdf>

development, document of traditional agricultural practices, AIDA and TARANGO monthly activity reports of June 2010, December 2010, June 2011, and December 2011.

### 3.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

At the program area of the project in Bandarban district, the FXPE team had spent 4 days between 8 and 11 September 2012 to collect qualitative data and to train 5 enumerators and 1 supervisor for the qualitative survey, which took place between 13 and 24 September 2011. During the fieldwork the FXPE team visited the BNKS office twice, 1 learning center twice, 3 nurseries once each, 1 VSLA group once, 1 local market once, 1 control area UP Chairman once, 1 program area UP Chairman once, and Department of Agriculture Extension's Bandarban office twice. During the above visits it had conducted the following activities to collect qualitative data.

#### 3.1.1 QUALITATIVE

2 numbers of informal discussions -

- a. 1 number of discussion with 7 key individuals of the project management team. This was to draw ideas on the project at the ground level from a management point of view based on its management experiences, learning, and expectations developed during the intervention.
- b. 1 number of feed back discussion with 4 individuals of the project management team. This was to share the FXPE team's experiences and initial findings on the project.

3 numbers of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) –

These 3 FGDs were conducted amongst 3 different groups of direct beneficiaries who are respectively –

- a. Male farmer group comprised of 10 farmers,
- b. Nursery owners comprised of 10 individuals, and
- c. Female VSLA members comprised of 16 members.

These FGDs, as the major tool for data collection, had helped the team to probe the project according to the 7 criteria suggested above. The team had thus developed insights regarding the program beneficiaries and regarding agriculture production, diversification, micro-business growth, impact of VSLA, etc.

3 numbers of case studies –

Direct beneficiaries of the project were approached randomly and a number of case studies were collected to better grasp this project's impact. Three of such cases were included here to highlight individual's achievements. Followings are the cases –

- a. 1 number of case study of a motivated farmer,
- b. 1 number of case study of a successful farmer, and
- c. 1 number of case study of a pioneer women entrepreneur.

7 numbers of in-depth interviews –

The team had conduct following in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders of this project.

- a. 1 number interview with program area UP Chairman,
- b. 1 number interview with control area UP Chairman,
- c. 1 number interview with control area assistant agriculture officer,
- d. 1 number interview with program area sub-assistant agriculture officer, and
- e. 1 number interview with Upzila Agriculture Officer and a crop production specialist
- f. 2 numbers of interviews with input (seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) traders

Individuals holding government and local government offices were interviewed to learn about their point of views regarding this particular development intervention, its approaches, qualities, contributions in the improvement of individual's life and society in general in relation to the local food security scenario. These interviews also generated supplementary data on the role these stakeholders had played during the project implementation phase and are still playing (at the end of it).

### 3.1.2 QUANTITATIVE

In order to collect the data (quantitative), the FXPE team had assembled a team and had equipped it with a detail questionnaire.

#### **Sampling Methodology -**

Quantitative data collection activities took place under two area categories:

- a. Program - consist of 2 unions (*Sadar* and *Khualong*), and
- b. Control - consist of 1 union (*Soualock*)

#### **Criteria for Control Area selection -**

Selected an adjoining union as control where no intervention is likely to take place in near future. Selection of sample area (village and union) in control area was the same as the program area.

#### **Sample Size -**

The total number of households (HHs) was three hundred (300) and distribution is -

Area	Male	Female	Total
P. Program	45	105	150
C. Control	46	104	150
Overall	91	209	300

Tab 5: Sample size

#### **Criteria for program area household selection -**

To select the ultimate sampling units -

- a. Program union village selection was random,
- b. Selection of framers was random from an AIDA provided electronic list, and
- c. If someone is unavailable then the next farmer was selected following the list.

### **Criteria for control area household selection -**

- a. Control union village selection was random. For each selected village, it identified a starting point (i.e. the first HH for the interview).
- b. Direction determined randomly from a central location of any village.
- c. Moved in a straight line towards the chosen direction; all houses were counted until the edge of the selected place was reached.
- d. The HH selection was random like the starting point for the selected direction. Subsequently, interviews took place after every 'k' HH, where

$$k = \frac{\text{Total Number of HHs}}{\text{HHs to be Interviewed}}$$

- e. In case of an uncertainty or ambiguity regarding the next HH, random selection procedure worked to decide which household to interview.
- f. In case of an incomplete interview in one direction, the surveyor had return to the central location and repeated the process by choosing another direction.

### **Data analysis -**

To prepare and analyze the data it used the SPSS Windows version-16.

### **3.2 LIMITATIONS**

- The fieldwork duration was short,
- Language prove to be a barrier at times,
- Difficult terrain for probing deeper and faster for evaluation purpose,
- FGD turn out was not to the expected mark due to a local time-regime where by people move early in the morning to return at noon and then move out again around 2 pm to be returned at around 5 or 6 pm,
- The TNO was unreachable,
- Planned FGD with input traders had to be abandoned as no one turned up for it,
- Due to the first four limitations mentioned above the team had failed to explore the micro businesses and VSLA components of this project more effectively.

## **4. ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT**

In this section, the report will shed light on the salient features and components of the food security project. The exploration will begin here first by presenting a comparative outline, between the program and control areas, of important demographic issues. This outline aims to generate a socio-economic context of the space where the beneficiaries of the recently ceased TARANGO-AIDA-BNKS Food Security (TABFS) project live. Then, a detail discussion will ensue on the salient features of the project and their major outcomes.

### **4.1 AN OUTLINE OF THE CONTEXT**

The data presented here give a general overview on gender, age, education, religion, household head, property ownership, building materials, access to electricity, access to safety net support, primary and secondary sources of income, etc. of the project's beneficiaries. It confirms that the project had largely reached out to the local women, to the people in 0-40 age group (74%), to the

people with 0-5 year of education (82%), and to the people of Muslims (53%) religion followed by the Buddhists (46%).

## Gender -

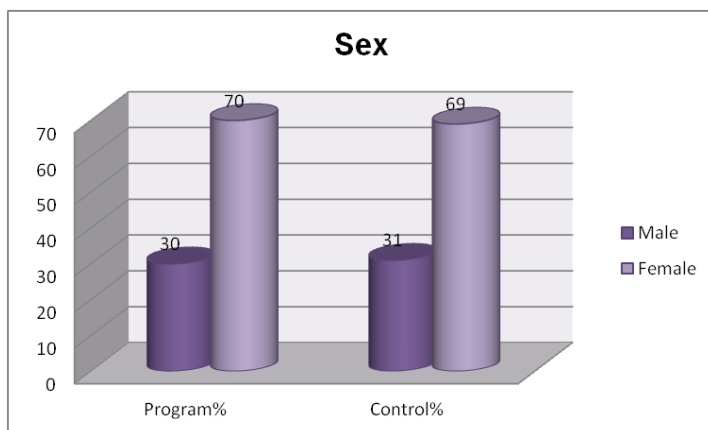


Fig 1: Gender

Base: All respondents

According to the survey, 70% of the program area respondents and 69% of the control area respondents were female.

## Age -

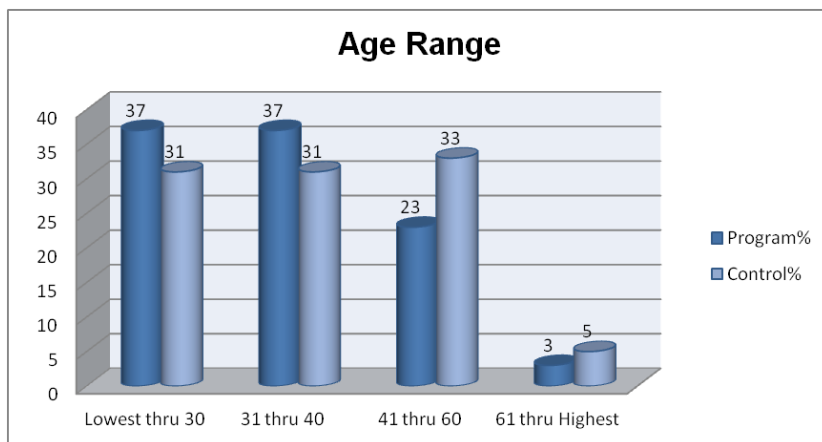


Fig 2: Age

Base: All respondents

The age demographic spectrum of the program and control area varies slightly but significantly. In the program area, 37% of the respondents was below or at the age of 30 and another 37% was in the age range of 31- 40 years. While in the control area, 31% of the respondent were below or at the age of 30 and 31% were in the 31- 40 range. In the program area, 23% was in the age range of 41- 60 years; which was 33% for the control area (10% more than that of the program area). A small percentage of respondents were above the age of 61 in both program and control areas.

## Education -

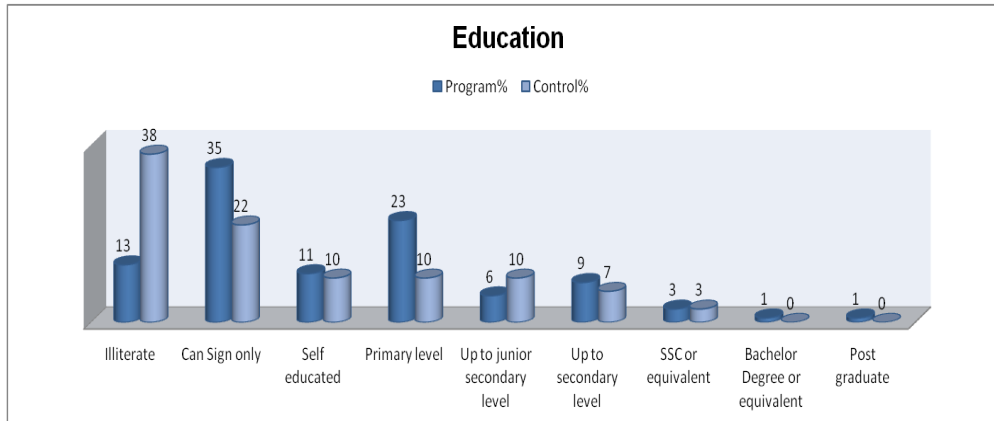


Fig 3: Education

Base: All respondents

In the program area, 13% illiterate, 38% can only sign their names, 11% self-educated, 23% passed the primary level, 6% up to junior secondary, 9% up till secondary, 3% till SSC or equivalent, 1% with bachelor's degree, and 1% had a post graduate degree. The scenario in the control area is different. There, 38% illiterate and 22% can only sign their names, a high divergence in comparison to the program area. Again, 10% control area respondents passed primary level, which is 13% less than that of the program area.

## Religion -

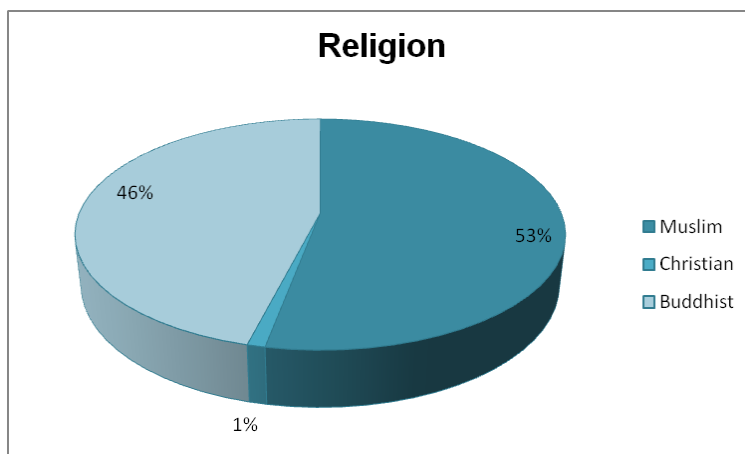


Fig 4: Religion

Base: All respondents

In the program area, 53% was Muslim and 46% was Buddhists. While in the control area, 34% was Muslim and 66% was Buddhists.

### Relation with the HHH -

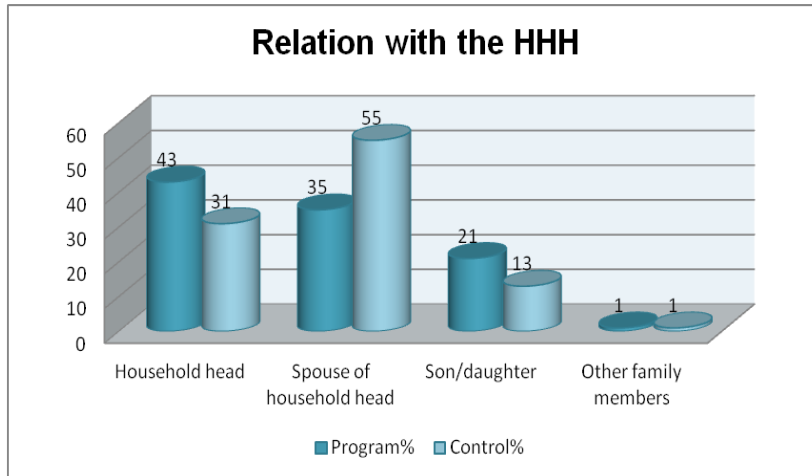


Fig 5: Relation with the HHH

Base: All respondents

In the program area, 43% respondents were household head themselves, while that was 31% for the control area. A lofty 55% of the respondent in the control area were spouse to the household head, which was 35% in the program area. In the program area 21% and in the control area 13% respondents were the children of the household heads'.

### Ownership of the house -

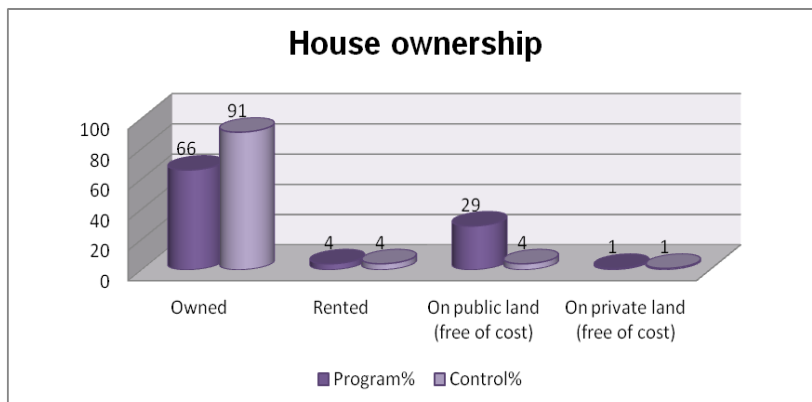


Fig 6: Ownership of the house

Base: All respondents

A mammoth 91% of the respondents in the control area said that it owns its houses, 4% percent said it lives in rented property, and another 4% said that it lives on public land. In the program area, 66% of the respondents said that it owns its houses, 4% lives in rented property, and 29% lives on public land.



### Materials used for the walls of the house -

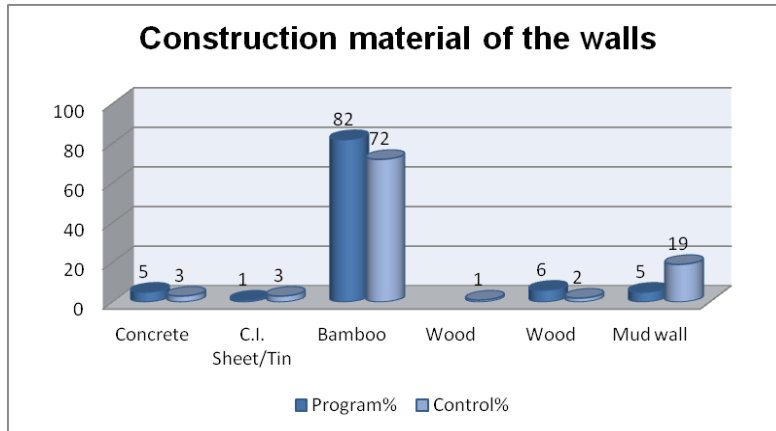


Fig 7: Materials used for the walls of the house

Base: All respondents

Bamboo was the main wall material for 82% program area and 72% control area houses. Next popular material is wood, only 6%, in the program area and mud (19%) in the control area.

### Material of the roof -

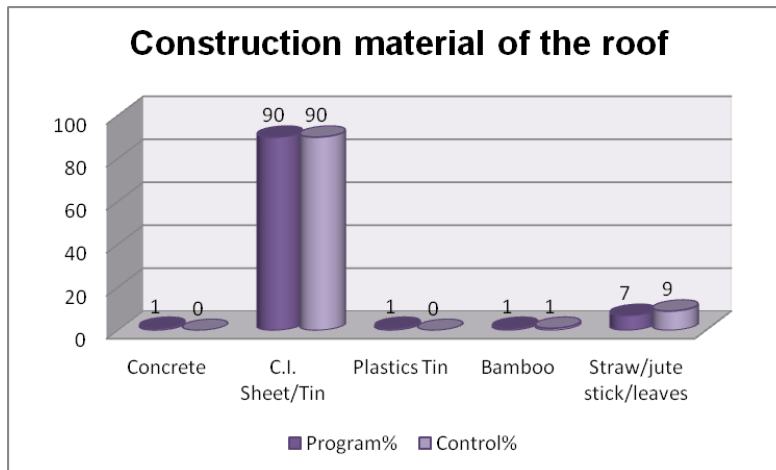


Fig 8: Material of the roof

Base: All respondents

In both program and control areas 90% roof is of CI (corrugated iron) sheet. Next popular material is straw/jute stick/leaves (7% in the program area and 9% in the control area).

### Access to electricity -

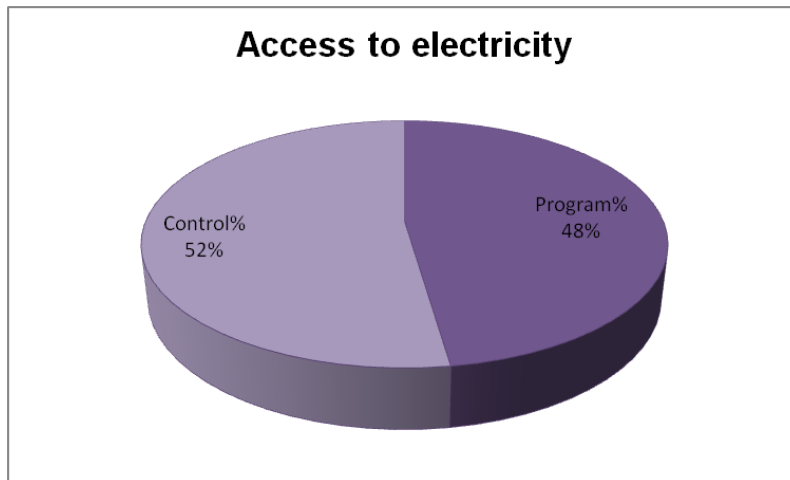


Fig 9: Access to electricity

Base: All respondents

Only 41% program area and 45% control area houses enjoyed access to electricity.

### Access to safety net support -

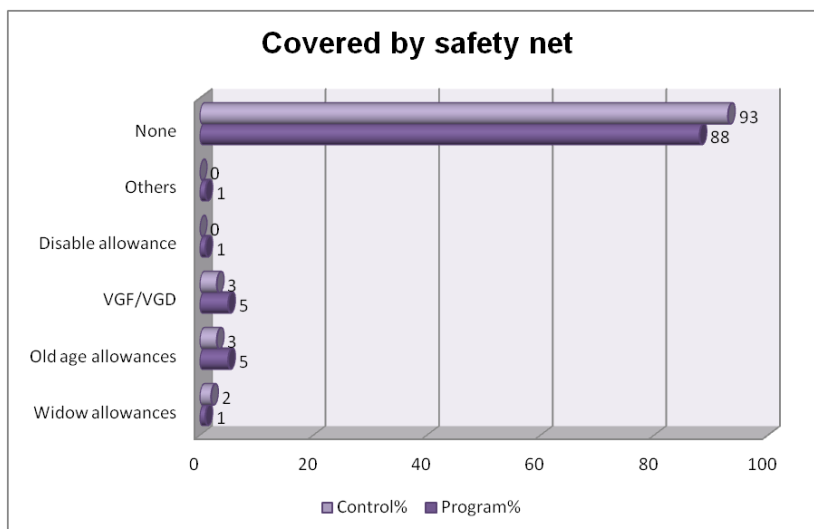


Fig 10: Access to safety net support

Base: All respondents

Access to various safety net supports was almost unavailable for both program and control population as data on people without such support stands respectively at 88% and 93%. Only 5% of the program area was under old age allowance support and 5% was under VGF/VGD program support.

## Primary source of HH income -

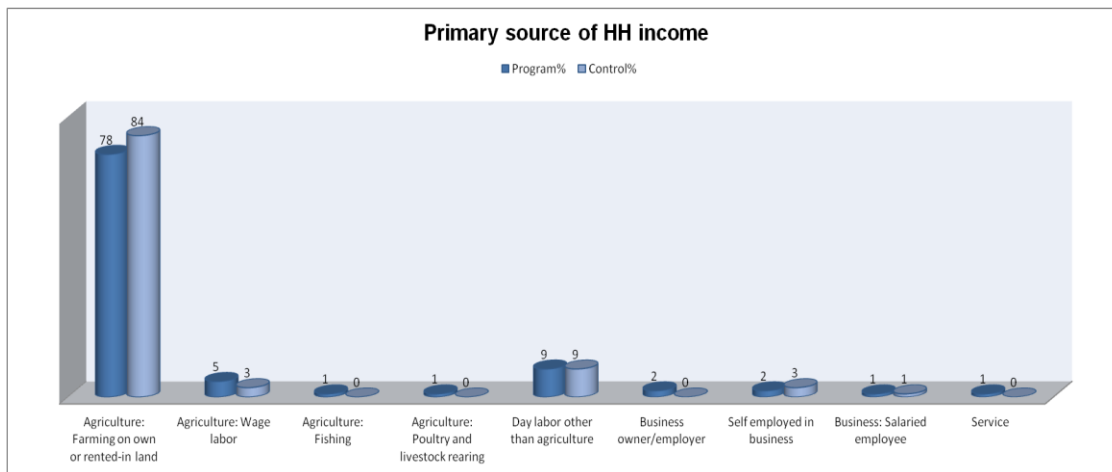


Fig 11: Primary source of HH income

Base: All respondents

Agriculture was the main source of livelihood for most of the respondents in both areas. Farming on own or rented land was the main source of income for both program (78%) and control (84%) population. Only 9% people in both program and control area worked as labor in non-agricultural sectors. Involvement in agriculture wage labor was 5% in the program area and 3% in the control area. In addition to that, a small percentage in both areas ran their own businesses.

## Secondary source of HH income -

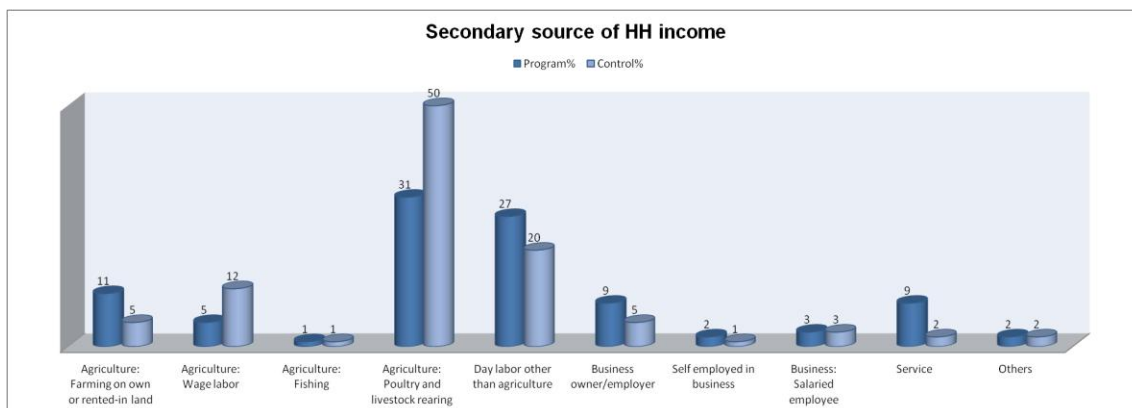


Fig 12: Secondary source of HH income

Base: Respondents with secondary income; in the program area n=125, in the control area n=129

The poultry and livestock rearing business was the most important secondary source of income for 31% program area and 50% control area people. Then, 27% program area and 20% control area people worked as day labors in other's land. In the control area, 12% was involved in agriculture wage labor, 5% was in farming own or rented land and 5% was in business. While in the program area, 11% was involved in farming on own or rented land, 9% was in own business, and another 9% was in various profession.

## 4.2 THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE TABFS PROJECT

This part discusses the major outcomes of the TABFS project. Data presented here, secured both qualitatively and quantitatively, will simultaneously speak for the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, feasibility and coverage. It will assess project's impact on agricultural production, microbusiness, and VSLA. The assessment will also look into the participation issues of the project those concern women, local authorities, and the department of agriculture extension. It demands mentioning that the analysis will pay adequate attention to the project's approach towards gender.

### 4.2.1 AGRICULTURAL TRAININGS AND THEIR IMPACT

The project has developed a training module based on findings from baseline survey and a study on traditional agricultural practices developed during the early phase of the project. The project team prepared the training module focusing on different crops through engaging resource personnel with expertise in the region's agriculture. This training manual had been effectively engaged during numerous Training of Trainers (ToT) and farmers training programs. The project also hired many resource personnel from the government's agricultural department to conduct various training programs. Ensuing figures will give some ideas on the beneficiaries' response to the training programs –

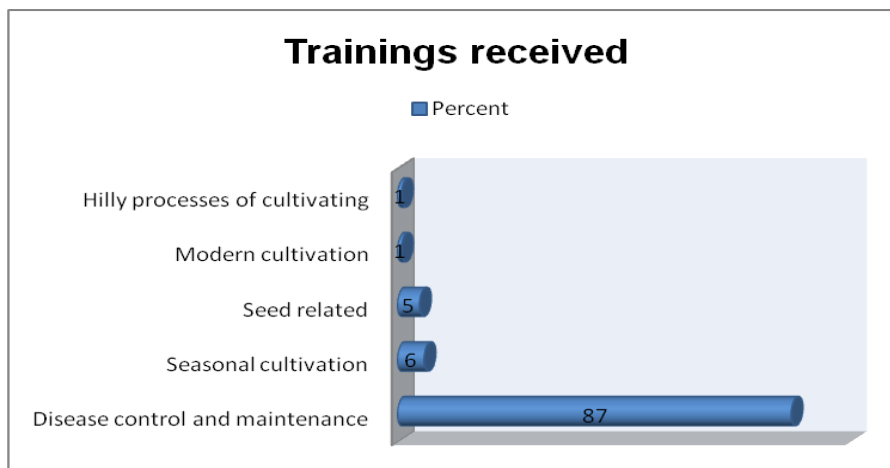


Fig 13: Trainings received

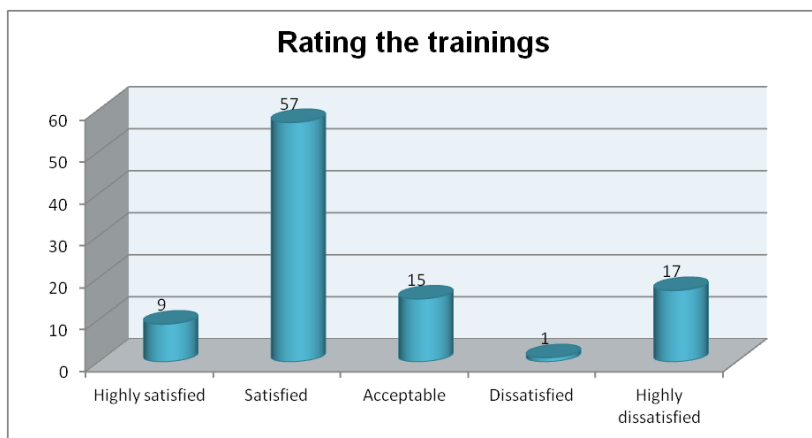


Fig 14: Farmers' ratings of the trainings

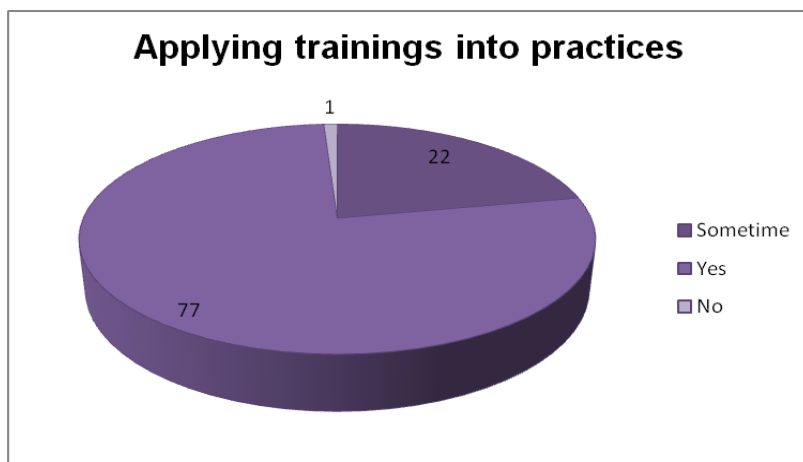


Fig 15: Rate of application

The project had reached 100% of its beneficiary farmers through various agricultural trainings. Most of the farmers responded positively towards the trainings and importantly, majority of them (99%) admitted of applying those trainings into practices. Refreshment training was also organized only for the benefit of around 350 farmers who had failed to capture all or some aspects of the various trainings that they had previously attended. Farmers were very specific in mentioning that they follow appropriate planting time and method, use proper seed rate, apply balanced doses of fertilizers, etc. As a result, production has increased significantly for those who had managed to adapt to the improved techniques; for example, trained farmers reported that they had harvested four (4) mounds of turmeric in a unit of crop field where prior to the training it was only three (3) mounds. Diversification is also taking place as program area farmers are engaging more into vegetable and fruit farming, nursery and mixed orchard development than their control counter part. The following figures and tables will justify the above statements -

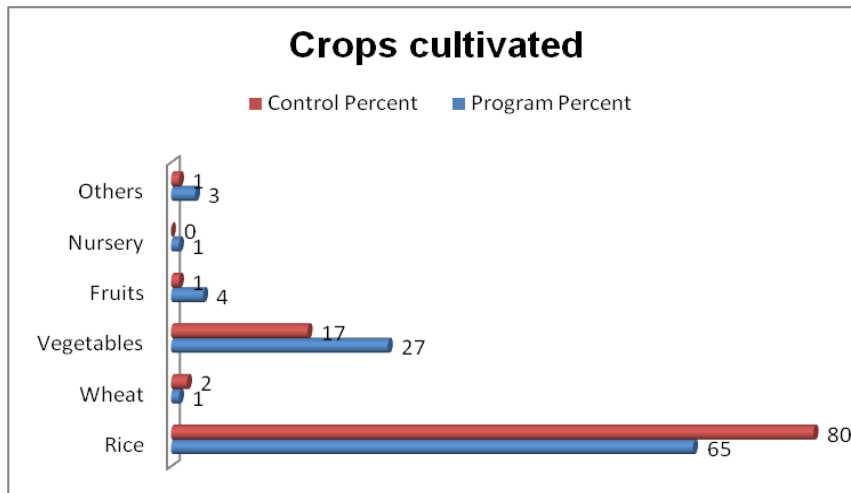


Fig 16: Crops that the farmers cultivate most

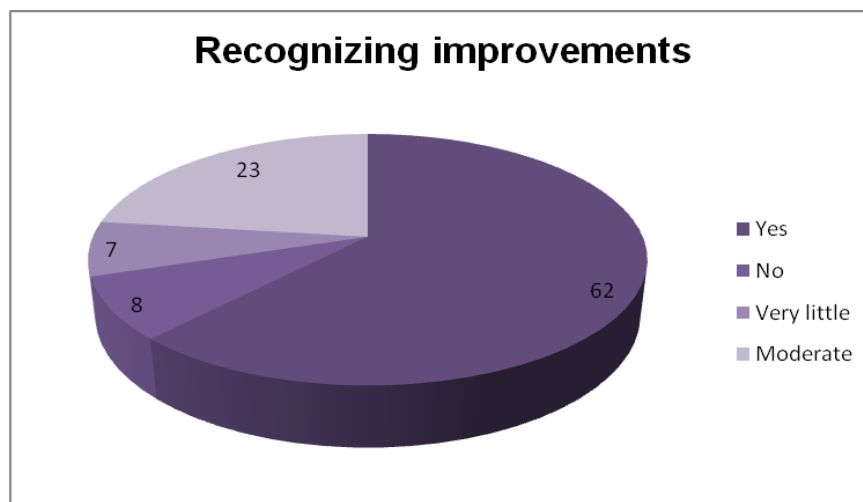


Fig 17: Improvements registered by the farmers

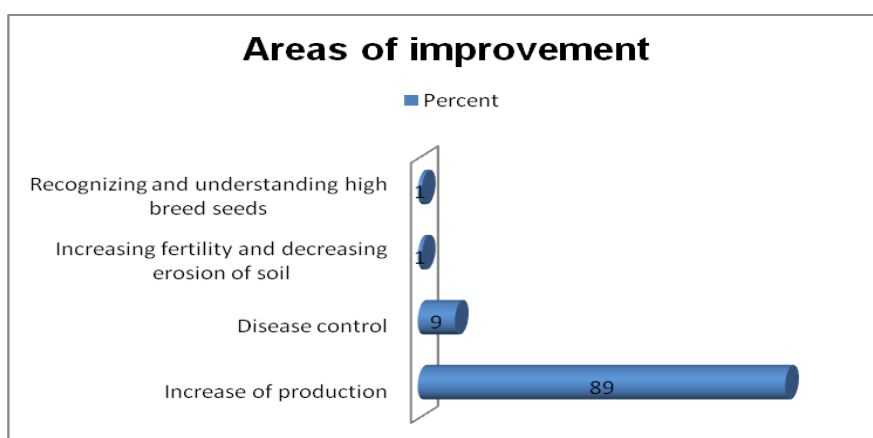


Fig 18: Areas that improved the most

<b>Sales in 2010, 2011, and 2012</b>			
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Lowest thru 10000	11%	11%	7%
10001 thru 20000	24%	14%	8%
20001 thru 50000	33%	25%	38%
50001 thru 100000	24%	45%	36%
100001 thru highest	8%	5%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Tab 2: Sales over last three years

Majority of the training receivers saw improvement and reported increased production, which the last three years' sales also demonstrate. Following the above sales table if we re-group 5 of its variables into 2 – lowest through 20000 and 20001 through highest then we will see that over the three years the second group has experienced a remarkable increase. However, the reverse sales trend that the table projects that the first group (lowest through 20000) seemed to have suffered from during the same time can be attributed to volatile market, which the farmers reported of on several occasions, as well as to a range of mixed causes, as the following table demonstrates, most of which lie beyond human control –

<b>Causes that hampered production</b>		
	<b>Program %</b>	<b>Control %</b>
Drought	1	2
Excessive rain fall	13	13
Landslide	1	1
Wild animals	0	1
Low grade seed/seedling	1	32
Lack of fertilizer	0	3
Pests	0	3
Others	0	3

Tab 3: Causes that hamper production

As a whole, the project's trainings had generated many successes stories and the farmers continued enjoying those benefits. Highly motivated farmers had established 37 mixed orchard demonstration plots. Inspired by their success many control farmers are now copying the program farmers. Pioneer nursery farmers of the project had even supported control farmers in establishing two new nurseries in their areas. These days, both the trained project nursery farmers and young literate farmers (see chapter 6) are volunteering in disseminating useful and improved cultivation techniques within their own communities and beyond.

#### 4.2.1.1 NURSERIES: SUSTAINABLE BEYOND THE PROJECT

The 7 nurseries that were established through the project support are producing different saplings and seedlings except one, which was completely washed out by a recent flash flood. Everyone



Image 1: Nurseries are producing different saplings and seedlings.

involved in nursery management received intensive trainings on nursery management and production technology aspects. For better demonstration as well as for better accessibility, the relevant association of farmers selected and established nurseries near the main roads. The project had engaged 7 farmers to manage the nurseries again in consultation with the respective associations. These nurseries put sapling and seedlings on the market less than the running market price for its group members. In some cases, association members provide support to the nursery managers' to run the cost of the nursery but there are also cases where nursery managers solely bear all its expanses. The owners have reported that they are already getting benefit from the nursery business at a one (input): three (output) ratios. These nurseries are also growing vegetables in the designated plot along side seedlings and saplings of various plants.

#### 4.2.2 VSLA GROUPS: A PLATFORM FOR THE UNDER PREVILAGED

Gender was a built-in aspect of this project and it had successfully mobilized women to voice their decisions and ensure their participations within and beyond this project. It had formed 78 VSLA groups to organize 1500 farmers (1050 women) to promote savings and to disburse trainings and inputs for the improvement of their overall agricultural production that involves management of land to consumption and marketing of the produces. VSLA is one of the most dynamic components of this project that still is active and currently on its 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle. Discussion with the VSLA members confirmed that since the end of the project the groups are mostly focused on savings and loan related issues and less on the trainings and other skill areas. A strong demand and need for such activities is still there that the TABFS project had created and catered during its two-years of work. The following figures and tables will brighten up some of the important facts regarding the VSLA.



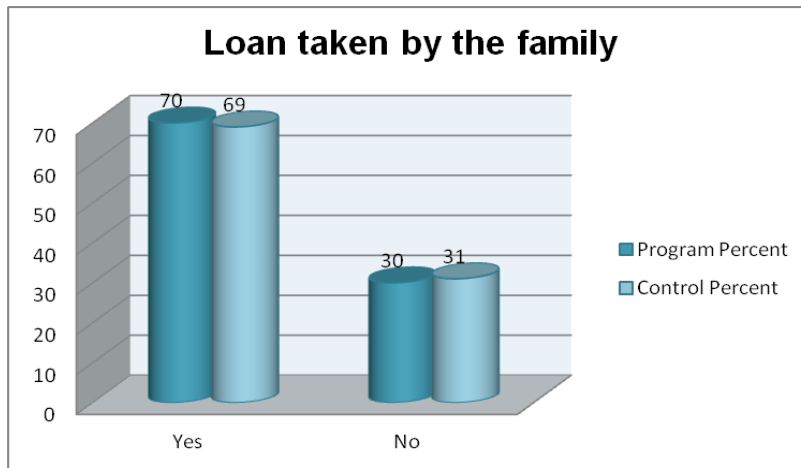


Fig 19: Total size of families that has a loan

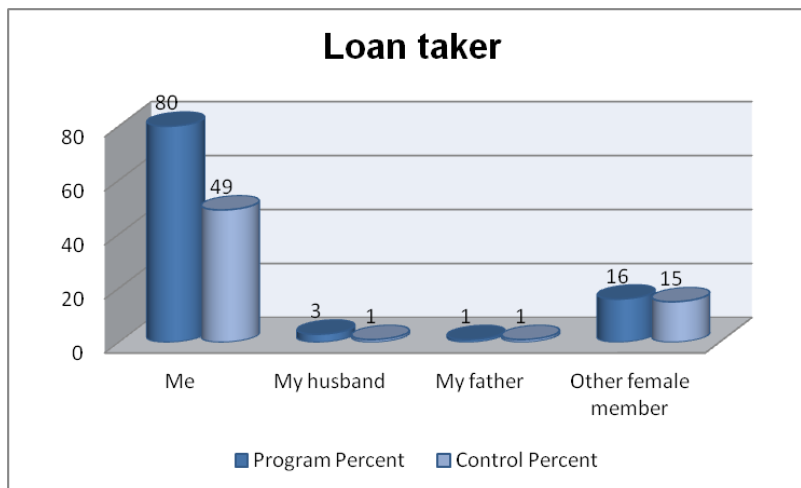


Fig 20: Loan receiver

Figures above show 70% project beneficiaries have a loan and the women of the households' own 96% of that. The figure is nevertheless much smaller (64%) for the control area women.

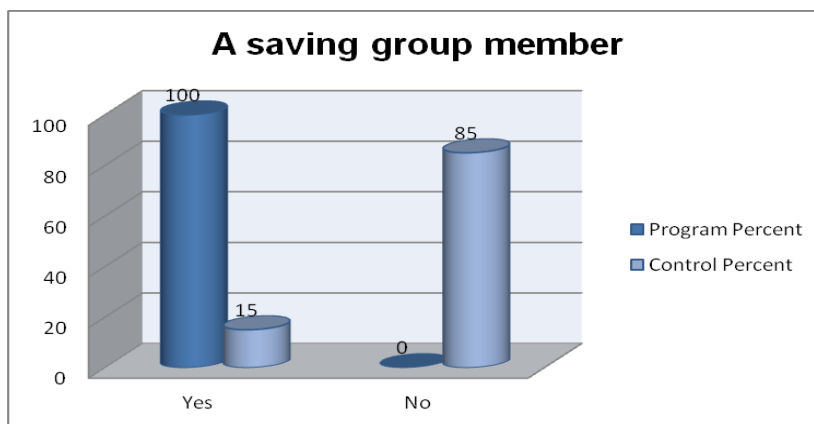


Fig 21: Savings group membership

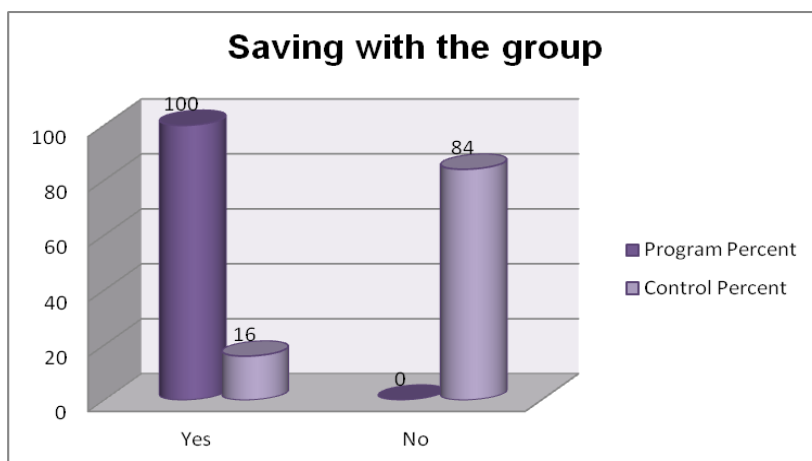


Fig 22: Participation in savings

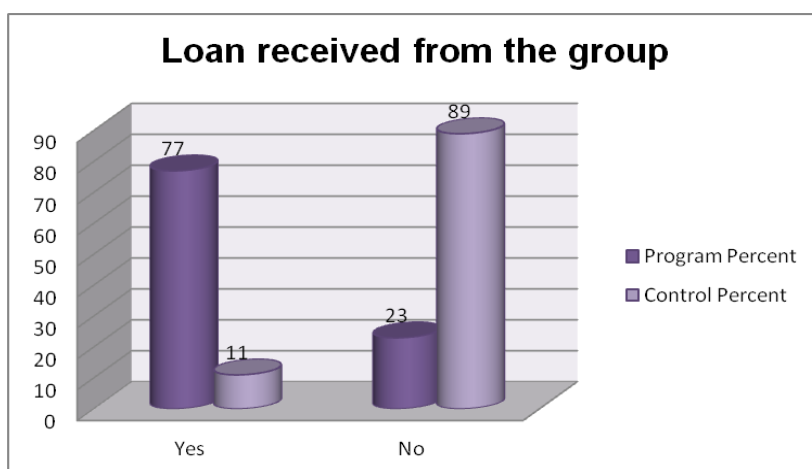


Fig 23: Loan received

Above figures show that all the beneficiaries are VSLA members and all of them have savings with it. Besides, 77% has received loan from the group. On the other hand, the picture is bleak for control population. Only 15% control population belong to any saving group, 16% save with them, and 89% has no access to a loan from there.

In the VSLA, as a very active body, members meet regularly, discuss issues, share information, make decisions and participate in the decision-making processes. For both the under privileged men and women this is the only forum where they can rise their voices and practice democracy. The following tables and a figure will demonstrate that –

Frequency of group meeting	
Weekly	1%
Fortnightly	97%
Monthly	1%
Bi-monthly	1%

Tab 4: Frequency of group meeting

Topic discussed	
Loan	60%
Savings	13%
Agricultural techniques	27%

Tab 5: Topic discussed

Participation in the decision making process	
Yes	98%
No	1%
No idea	1%

Tab 6: Participation in the decision making process

Women's participation in group meetings	
Yes	99%
No	1%

Tab 7: Women's participation in group meetings

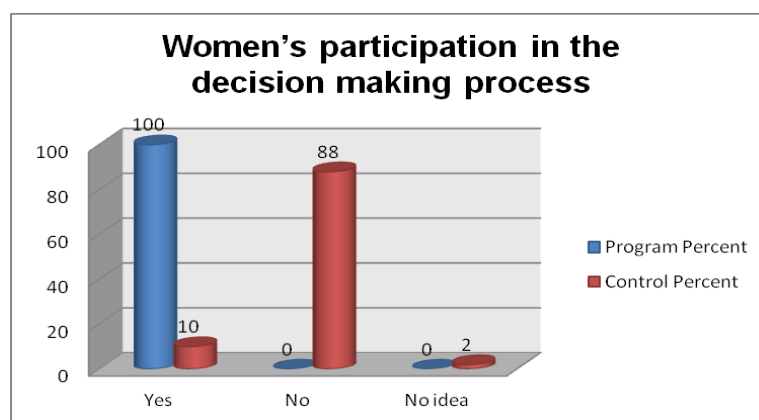


Fig 24: Women's participation in the decision making process

VSLA fortnightly meetings, featured by high turn out, were presenting farmers with a forum where 98% of them took active part in the decision-making processes. Most significantly, 99% women within the groups participated in the meetings and 100% of them contributed regularly in the decision-making processes, which is a mammoth figure compare to only 10% participation rate of women's in similar organizations in the control area. As identified by a group of female VSLA members, most important achievement of this project is that of these VSLA groups that are continuing almost uninterruptedly even eight months beyond the project's lifetime. The following figure on major IGA will present one further evidence on how the VSLA is positively influencing the project's women.

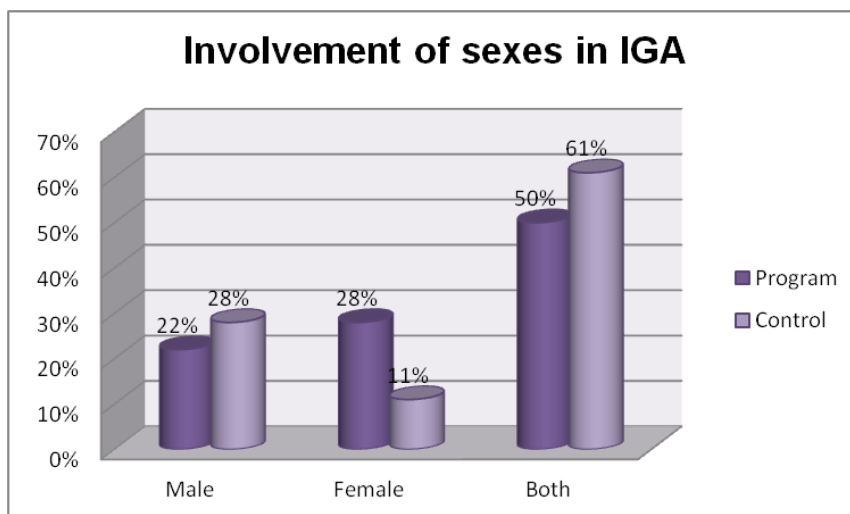


Fig 25: Involvement of sexes in IGA

Homestead garden, crop/fruit cultivation, and poultry/ livestock farm are the major sources of income for the farmers of Bandarban. Here, both sexes, jointly or separately, participate into all of these activities. However, data show that program area's women stood higher (28%) than both of their counterparts, program area's men (22%) and control area's women (11%), when it came to participate into such activities separately. This asserts that women are genuinely claiming leadership role in important economic areas.

#### 4.2.3 FARMERS AND THE IMPORTANT OTHERS: LINKING USEFULLY

In order to be successful it is important for any development intervention to build bridges between its various stakeholders. The TABFS project had also done the same and worked relentlessly to link up its farmers with both local and national bodies/authorities active in the region. It had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Agriculture Extension of the district to keep its farmers linked up with this important government organization. Its agriculture officers, both directly and indirectly, remained involved with the project and its beneficiaries through trainings, module development, and field visits. According to the farmers, this introduction with the agriculture office and officers had helped them a lot and is still helping them in improving their agricultural practices. It had also provided the TABFS project with necessary impetus to form the three farmers' associations. However, prior to all these, it was the local authorities, like the *Union Parshad*, which cooperated with the project implementing organizations in mapping of the project. Such relationship continued throughout the project's life cycle whereby UP heads and members kept participating in various project related events. The UNO (Upzila Executive Officer/*Upzila Nirbahi Officer*) and local MP (Member of Parliament) also attended various program arranged by this project. The following figures and tables will give an idea on the level of engagement that has been established between farmer and agriculture office.

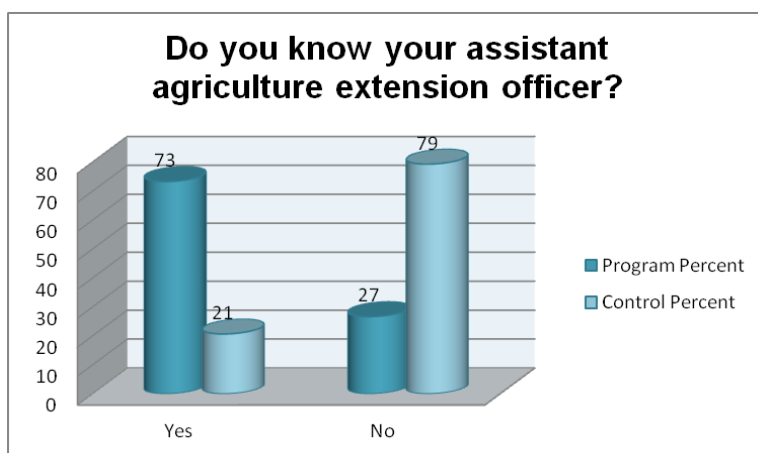


Fig 26: Relationship with one's agriculture officer

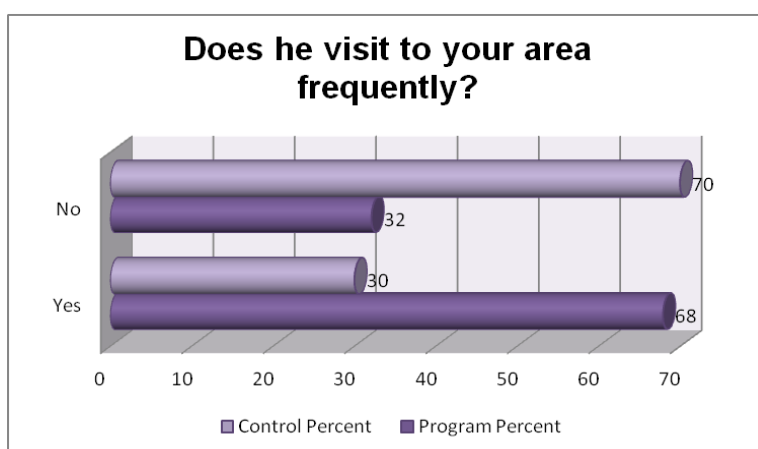


Fig 27: Frequency of visit of agriculture officer

Is the agriculture officer accessible?	
Yes	37%
No	18%
At times	45%

Tab 8: Agriculture officer accessibility

Number of visits to agriculture office in last 1 year	
Never	19%
Once	47%
Twice	31%
More than twice	3%

Tab 9: Frequency of visit to agriculture office

Is the agriculture officer's support/advice valuable?	
Yes	68%
No	7%
At times	23%
Didn't understand	2%

Tab 10: Valuing agriculture officer's support

Farmers value highly the way the government's agriculture officers are extending their support to them. Frequency of visits between these two as well as personal connections justifies that fact. Eventually, all the above connections and knowledge undoubtedly create a demand for quality inputs among the farmers. As a result, input traders of the *Sadar upazila* had enjoyed around 20% increment in seed business and 10% increment in pesticide business during the year 2011-2012. They had attributed incremental sales volume to farmers' growing knowledge in quality inputs, especially in hybrid seeds.



Image 2: Input traders attribute their sales growth to farmers growing knowledge.

These days, the private input companies are conducting different training events for both the retailers and farmers of the locality. This has coincided with various training programs related to improved agricultural techniques offered by the GOs, NGOs and INGOs. According to the input vendors, the on going food security projects as well as the private inputs companies are jointly helping their businesses to expand in this area.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The TARANGO-AIDA-BNKS Food Security (TABFS) project has responded to the food insecurity that is characteristic of the region. It has aimed at increasing the quality and quantity, as well as the diversity of agriculture production for 1500 of its beneficiaries of whom 70% is female. The project has involved various sectors in the process ranging from government's agriculture extension office and NGOs through individual farmers to saving groups and market. People threatened by food insecurity, especially women farmers, were addressed specifically through all of its components. The instruments (research, training, documentation, VSLA, farmers' association, etc.) employed and facilities (nurseries, learning centers) developed in the course of its implementation were appropriate for achieving the best result. However, the project duration of two years from the beginning was too short considering its goal that required mainly agricultural interventions in a place like Bandarban district of the CHT.

This concluding section will therefore assess and rate the project in accordance with the seven criteria put forward by AIDA. The rating of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact, feasibility and coverage relates to the findings and the state of the art at the time of this ex-post evaluation.

### 5.1 RELEVANCE

The TABFS project has addressed areas of food security by providing its beneficiaries with training, farming material (plants, seeds), nurseries, learning centers, savings and loan facilities (through VSLAs), etc. Lack of advance agricultural expertise, market accessibility, access to adequate food and its availability are major problems in the project region and the specific measures devised for agricultural and non-agricultural population render the TABFS project relevant for improving the livelihood of the targeted population. Its specific objective was by and large in line with the major policy orientations of Government of Bangladesh, AECID, MDGs and other concerned stakeholders. The project has adequately responded to the needs and demands of the targeted people (see section 4). All its measures have been gender sensitive where women play an active role both inside the project and inside their respective communities (i.e. responsible for VSLA). Besides, completing 100% of its targeted activities in time or even before that justifies that its approach to the problems were not only appropriate but also were well defined.

Hence, the rating for relevance is 1 or “very good.”

### 5.2 EFFICIENCY

Given the TABFS project scope, the number of staff was small in comparison to the outputs facilitated by it. It has facilitated an incredible amount of activities that are comprised of - identifying and training 1200 farmers, acquisition and distribution of agro-inputs among them, training 1500 beneficiaries on VSLA, identifying and providing microbusiness training to 300 farmers, conducting numerous meetings and workshops with relevant national and local authorities to discuss agricultural options, research and elaboration of reports/ studies on traditional farming techniques, establishing management systems for learning centers and nurseries, providing organizational staffs in agricultural techniques, accountability and monitoring. Moreover, financed a number of very important infrastructures, like 4 learning centers, 7 nurseries, to meet the beneficiaries’ needs. By implementing the above-mentioned activities efficiently and constructing productive infrastructures timely, the project has managed to improve both the amount and quality of agro-products in the area. On the gender front, the above-mentioned project activities further facilitated women’s access to knowledge and material resources vital for their upliftment. Importantly, even though it may seem that the project has engaged itself into too many activities within a short timeframe yet due to its organizational efficiency it has managed to achieve brilliant outcomes.

Hence, the rating for efficiency is 1 or “very good.”

### 5.3 EFFECTIVENESS

The TABFS project was a response to the food insecurity of the area. The project’s major objective, which it has effectively achieved, was to improve agriculture techniques used by its 1500 beneficiaries. The basis of such conclusion is the outcomes, which are identified as the

improved food, income, and gender situation generated by the following major results and their indicators.

- i. Farmers are producing food that is better in quality and quantity as a direct result of trainings, tools and materials that they had received and utilized.
- ii. Farmers established better linkages between their farms and the market because of the VSLA groups, which had provided them with various trainings, (including microbusiness), savings and loan facilities, and had linked them up with the Department of Agriculture Extension.
- iii. Traditional cultivation techniques are recollected, valorized, and integrated in the system because of the research and study that the project had made as well as through the establishment and fictionalization of 4 learning centers and 7 nurseries.

Analyzing the OVI we can see that:

- iv. 1200 peasants (864 women) received trainings on how to better their knowledge of agricultural techniques before the end of the project.
- v. 1200 sets of Tools, equipments and materials have been distributed between the selected peasants before the end of the first year of the project.
- vi. 100% of selected peasants have better the quantity and quality of their yields.
- vii. 7 nurseries for cultivable species crop have been built at the end of the 17th month of the project.
- viii. 1500 peasants (1050 women) have been organized in 78 VSLA groups and have been trained before month 23 of the project.
- ix. 300 peasants have been trained in micro-businesses before the end of month 19 of the project.
- x. Linkages between the peasants and the agriculture authorities have been created before the end of the project.
- xi. A report on traditional agricultural techniques has been prepared.
- xii. 4 learning centers have been built before the end of month 13 of the project.

The rate of implementation of the above indicators within the project's lifetime and the outcomes that they had generated later (see section 4) suggest that this was a well-formulated and effectively executed project. It had good disaggregated indicators and was highly gender sensitive. The project worked more with women and managed gender equity, which was again an outcome of excellent gender analysis. The project's planning was sound; hence, nothing of unexpected sort had happened during the implementation phase.

The rating for effectiveness is therefore 1 or "very good."



## 5.4 SUSTAINABILITY

On the account of sustainability, the TABFS project is found to be highly sustainable. Its beneficiaries are still holding on to the nurseries, learning centers, and VSLA groups; besides, most importantly, keep on learning, sharing, and disseminating improved farming practices among themselves within their respective communities and even beyond. Sustainability of the improved agricultural practices, learning centers, and nurseries can be, to some extent, attributed to the demand for similar activities in the area as well as to SAAOs of the agriculture extension department of the government, whom this project had successfully engaged with its farmers.

All the infrastructures financed and built by the project, are still functional and effective. On top of that, the communities of beneficiaries are now owning and managing them. On a collective level, this was an empowering move and, as the team found, are valued highly by the new owners. On an individual level, learning that took place during numerous theoretical and practical trainings, as well as experiences that one was exposed to by being a part of this dynamic project, are also found to be carried on by the beneficiaries. Improved crop production, management, and marketing techniques are reaping benefit for the beneficiaries (see section 4). Expertise received from this project have been dispersed among the farmers outside of its reach and are now there to be found practiced by many on a regular basis.

Even though it was a short project in terms of duration, yet it has proven to be successful in terms of sustainability. It has developed and applied a number of innovative approaches (see section 6) successfully to respond to the various food security issues of the area, which can be an excellent guide to similar future initiatives.

Hence, the rating for sustainability is 1 or “very good.”

## 5.5 IMPACT

At the end of the project, the impact that it has generated in different fields was very good (see section 4). Again, in particular, the agricultural infrastructures that TABFS project had facilitated have improved its beneficiaries’ socio-economic condition markedly. It has not only enhanced their sense of belonging with a home that is fast changing but has also provided them with valuable tools for mastering that change. The learning centers and nurseries were vital for carrying out close to community activities that both directly and indirectly influenced agricultural production (see section 4 and 6). Both of these infrastructural facilities along with the VSLAs are bright examples of participatory approach to community development, something that this particular project had successfully implemented through out.

The impact generated by the majority of the activities created by or supported by the project has been proven highly positive even eight months after it has been phased out. Impact with regards to infrastructural development (through nurseries, learning centers, etc.) was intended to contribute to increase productivity, food security and gender equality of the population and enhance the initiative of the population. As a commendable example of such enhanced initiative three association of farmers can be named. The TABFS project had created excellent direct impact in this direction. Indirect impact after the project has ended, which could only be stated at the level of individuals, still benefiting many beneficiaries from the skills (improved farming techniques, business and marketing techniques, etc.) that they gained through the project.

Hence, the rating for efficiency is 1 or “very good.”

## 5.6 FEASIBILITY

The TABFS project and its agricultural intervention in the area by fully complying with the *Rangamati Declaration of 1998* never over-exploited the land and other natural resource bases of the project area, which is imperative for the feasibility of any development initiative here. It has given its beneficiaries some form of economic solvency. In addition, at the end of the project, ownership and management responsibilities of every single outputs (learning centers, nurseries, associations, management committees, VSLA groups), realized for the benefit of the farmers during project run time, have been handed over to the farmers themselves. The project's feasibility has also been ensured through the followings –

- i. It has taken the cultural diversity issue of the area into serious consideration since its inception,
- ii. It has always promoted gender equity and equality, and
- iii. It has never created any technological dependency.

Considering all the above as excellent steps taken on the part of this project the rating for feasibility is 1 or “very good.”

## 5.7 COVERAGE

Coverage is defined as “The need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are.” The key questions this criterion generates are who was supported by the action and why. With regard to the TABFS project, the women farmers of Bandarban district are targeted for being immensely vulnerable to food insecurity of the region.

Bandarban poses challenges for all the concerned international and nation bodies with regard to the circumstances of its ultra poor people. In that context, TABFS project was a small but timely intervention. It had addressed and responded to all the key issue areas related to food insecurity of the local people. In this process, it had sensibly covered people who are most vulnerable, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnic or religious identity. In different stages, 864 women out of a total 1200 peasants received training on improved agricultural techniques. In addition, 1050 women out of 1500 peasants were organized in 78 VSLA groups. From the above numbers it may appear that the project was too women focused; however, that was simply not the fact rather was a ground reality that demanded such an attention.

The project had also kept the volatile political realities of the area in consideration while operating there. It had well covered both the concerned central and local government authorities in various phases of implementation. For an example, through out the project time (and even beyond) the government's department of agriculture extension and project's beneficiaries were remained engaged in the improvement of and experimentation with various agricultural techniques. Finally, it can be said that covering equity was central to the success of this project, which it had ensured by situating itself in this particular geographic location and by working amongst the most vulnerable men and women.

Hence, once again the rating for efficiency is 1 or “very good.”

## 6. LESSONS LEARNT

In the following discussion, best achievements of this project's will be presented along with some of its worst limiting factors. Among the achievements, learning centers and farmers' associations, two outstanding contributions of this project, will be briefly discussed first followed by the three case studies on individual achievements. Finally, the section will conclude by presenting five limitations that were identified during this evaluation.

### 6.1 LEARNING CENTERS: WINDOWS OF ACCESSIBILITY

The project had established 4 union based learning centers (LC) in the program areas. The LCs were established keeping physical accessibility of the local farmers in mind, hence it benefits them the most. Both government officials and members of the local government (i.e. *Union Parishad* chairman, member, etc.) consider these centers as highly innovative and revolutionary concept delivered by this project targeting initially the marginal farmers who are long left disengaged from the mainstream.



Image 3: Learning Centers proved to be vital for the indigenous farming communities.

The project organized different training and interactive sessions in these LCs. However, the frequency of interactive sessions has come down after the project had ended in January of 2012. Most importantly however, during our field visit in September 2012, which took place around 8 months after the conclusion of the project, the evaluation team had noted that in many ways these centers continued to be vital for the project's beneficiaries. Interestingly, other projects and organizations are now a days using these centers for different training and interactive purposes of their own for a reasonable pay-and-use basis. Local communities are also using these facilities to organize various socio-cultural events paying a small fee. All the LCs were handed over to management committees consist of the project's members who are highly motivated, competent, and live closest to them. Thus, the 4 learning centers have open up windows of opportunity for

formerly remotely living indigenous farmers to remain attached with each other, with the wider society and the world beyond that.

## **6.2 THE FARMERS' ASSOCIATION: ORGANIZED VOICES**

In collaboration with the government's Department of Agriculture Extension, the project had organized some of its farmers under fruits, vegetables, and spices associations. Through the respective associations, farmers of these specific products have started to work collectively to protect their interest. For instance, in 2011 in the wake of massive price fall of turmeric and ginger the member farmers of spices association demanded a freeze on such imports to help them sustain. It not only met the local authorities with the demand but also went up to the local Member of Parliament, journalists, and the FBCCI (Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry) representatives with their demand. On the other hand, farmers of the fruit growers association exhibited their produced fruits in different agricultural fairs. The project had facilitated both of the initiatives. Likewise, members of the vegetable association received inputs and technical supports from the project. It is worth mentioning that all the member farmers of these associations had received crop-specific trainings on production and management techniques.

## **6.3 POSITIVE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT ON INDIVIDUALS**

A well thought out and sincere development initiative is bound to have transforming effects on those for whom it was devised. The TABFS project has proved to be one such initiative. Through the following three success stories, we will see the nature and depth of positive impact that the project had left on the lives of three marginalized individuals and their communities.

### **6.3.1 KOYONU MARMA: THE FACE OF A MOTIVATED FARMER**



Image 4: Koyonu Marma's success has inspired his neighbors.

Age: 28

Number of household members: 8

Koyonu Marma is a hard working farmer from Roicha. Koyonu is the main earner of his family of eight. He has been involved in farming prior to the project intervention. He was growing vegetables to meet the family's daily need and had a mango garden.

However, he has received a number of agricultural training since getting involved with the TABFS project a couple of years back. Now, he is the president of a VSLA group and a member of vegetable farmers association. He claims that during the training, the project workers noticed his massive interest in farming and provided him with seeds and fertilizer for his fruit and vegetable fields on his asking. The vegetables that he cultivates now have a better yield that provides him with a regular income through out the year. Besides, he is now developing a papaya orchard with the technical knowledge and support gained from the project. He hopes that this will also bring him a handsome return.

Inspired by his success his neighbors are now developing similar fruit and vegetable gardens in the area. He provides them with advice on his own accord. Koyonu wants government to help them build a storage facility so that farmers like him could market their products more effectively. He has registered himself and created an account in the local agricultural office for this purpose. The local agricultural block officer provides him with advice whenever he needs them.

### 6.3.2 FAZLUL KARIM: A SUCCESSFUL FARMER CUM MARKETING MAN



Image 5: Fazlul Karim's family receives better nutrition, thanks to his better income.

Age: 35, Number of household members: 8



Fazlul Karim is a farmer who mostly grows rice and vegetables. He has received a number of agricultural trainings, seeds, and fertilizer through his previous engagement with various organizations. Most recently, he has received training on effective marketing as a VSLA president of the TABFS project. According to him, the marketing training has helped him a lot in strategizing his products' sales that has been witnessing an increase. Fazlul Karim, a member of the vegetable farmers' association also works as a village Police. In his free times, he tries to provide other members of the community with information regarding better marketing techniques. During this interview, the evaluation team had seen him selling 30 kilogram of bitter gourd and 45 kilogram of string beans straight from his vegetable plot to a vegetable wholesaler. He said that his mobile phone has proved to be very handy for effective marketing, a technique that he had learned from the marketing training as a VSLA member.

He has observed positive changes in the standard of food that his family consumes now compare with the past. His family receives better nutrition due to his better income. He no longer needs to buy too many agricultural products from the market. With the help of the project he has built a good rapport with the local Agricultural Extension Office that helps him whenever he needs their assistance.

### 6.3.3 POLI TONCHONGA: THE FACE OF A PIONEERING WOMAN



Image 6: Poli busy collecting papaya from her orchard

Age: 28/29

Number of household members: 6

Poli Tonchonga is a very successful farmer of the Food Security project. She also works as a primary educator in the UNICEF's non-formal education program. She and her husband had a rubber nursery before since this particular project's intervention begun, which they still have. However, the training provided by the project has been the only training that she had received until that point. Her husband too is a project beneficiary but he had received his first training from the government's youth development institute. With their acquired knowledge and with the help of her husband, two of them started to grow papaya and mango in their plots of land.

Their project was so successful that with the income from their first yield they had managed to buy a rickshaw van, which they now use for carrying their products to the nearby markets. They also have a water pump to irrigate their plots of land. Last year they took lease of a larger plot and developed a large papaya orchard of 3200 trees. This team has visited this very impressive and only papaya orchard of the locality that the couple has meticulously developed. We found both of them in the orchard nursing it and heard from them that they equally share the burden of all the works needed here.

Poli and her husband are now considered as the pioneers of successful papaya farming in a locality where most of the people are involved in rubber nurseries. Due to their success with the fruit, people from far and near come regularly to Poli for advice. She also shares the practical issues of papaya farming with her fellow women group members. In this way, the dissemination of such knowledge is taking place faster. The couple confirmed that they used to receive regular advice from the agricultural extension block officers of the Rangamati district.

#### 6.4 SOME LIMITATIONS OF THE TABFS PROJECT

Like every other development initiative, this particular project and its outcomes also suffer from various difficulties and limitations. However, not all of these rise from within the project itself but derives, sometimes, from issues and places beyond its control.

##### 6.4.1 LIMITATION 1: MARKET PRICE LIMITS THE PROJECT'S SUCCESS



Image 7: Spices farmers experience a large drop in their product's price in 2011.

The targeted farmers of the food security project failed to enjoy sustained financial benefit from their increased production. This they attribute directly to output market price, lack of marketing facilities, and lack of storage facilities. In 2011, ginger and turmeric growers were hit hard as they had barely fetched only one-third of the previous year's price. This situation had risen due to a

combination of factors - an increased yield and a government's decision of import. Thus, they incurred huge losses due to that massive price fall and many such farmers outside of the project turned to infamous tobacco farming. The trained farmers of the project however did suffer such loss at a comparatively lower rate as they had harvested approximately 30% more yield from the same unit of land. Thanks to the application of improved cultivation techniques that they had received at the crop specific training events. Anyways, as a cautious move to survive price crash these farmers too cultivated less areas this year compare to the last year.

#### **6.4.2 LIMITATION 2: LACK OF BACKUP INFORMATION**

The impact of agricultural trainings could have been far lasting for the community if the project had thought of distributing hard copies of the agriculture manual among some of the highly motivated and literate farmers of the project. The evaluation team noted that due to their marginalized background, which is often marked by indigenous identity, politico-economic peripherality, illiteracy, and acute poverty, many farmers of the project area had failed to retain and adopt useful technical information regarding sustainable farming. Hence, backup information is a very important input for the hill farmers who generally lack access to government agricultural office and other formal sources.

#### **6.4.3 LIMITATION 3: LACK OF AN EXIT STRATEGY**

The project did not have a follow up mechanism. As a result, post-project drop out had increased among the group members. Frequency of group meetings had gone down, too. Not all association members were consulted concerning the handover of the learning centers. And lack of an operational guideline had crippled the crop specific associations. However, it demands mentioning that these associations were results of good cooperation between the project and the government but the government had failed to link them up with the market.

#### **6.4.4 LIMITATION 4: PROJECT DURATION**

In agriculture, for a better adoption of an improved technology requires several cropping seasons. Practically it requires four to five years to exhibit the impact of any such adoption. This project covered mostly one cropping season to disseminate improved technologies in crop production. Besides, constraints like local cultural contexts, low literacy rate, political realities, difficult and time consuming transportation system often had affected adversely the implementation activities in a single cropping season. Every stakeholder involved including the targeted farmers, agricultural officers, and local government representatives therefore consider that the duration of the project was its biggest limitation.

#### **6.4.5 LIMITATION 5: OVERLAPPING**

Soon after the signing of the CHT Peace Accord in 1997 many NGOs, development projects, and government departments entered into the region and have been working relentlessly since with almost identical issues as a response to ultra poverty. Hence, here it is simply difficult to discern and measure which particular project is having what exact impact on the local people. For instance, it is rather common for an individual farmer to remain engaged with different development projects and NGOs in one or the other way at any given time. During which as a potential client he or she always receives various types of incentives from private input companies. Simultaneously, the same individual may very well be receiving 30 kg rice per family



or women under the government's VGF program. For any development initiative, therefore, this situation is a big challenge and a big limitation in measuring its successes in exact term.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to secure food security there is no alternative but to increase the household production of food. The focus of the current project was appropriate as well as the intervention methods. It has created a strong demand for such intervention among its beneficiaries. Hence, TARANGO, AIDA and BNKS are strongly encouraged to seek funding to pursue further with similar kind of project.

Participation of both beneficiaries and stakeholders is essential to achieve a project's goals. From inception to implementation, it has to be a priority. This project already has an established participatory base that can be utilized for further interventions. Involvement of all stakeholders at all stages of the project will also enhance ownership and sustainability.

A strategy that facilitates increased participation of the local government men can increase participation at the community level. The people of a community know better about the resources and opportunities available to them. Hence, to benefit from this a project must allow the community to modify the interventions brought to them.

The project and all its staffs should be extra sensitive towards the socio-cultural contexts of this particular area in order to "fit" into effectively. Without such sensitivity, any project runs the risk of falling into the traps of cultural bias, which might inflict further injures instead of benefits on the locals.

Flexibility has to be maintained in order to "fit" into the demands of a community in implementing a food security project.

Market and its nature play a big role in the success of any agricultural intervention. It is therefore of high priority that the project should very closely monitor market movements to not to inflict financial damages onto itself as well as on its beneficiaries.

Highly technical but hugely useful information needs to be kept into circulation for the easy access of the beneficiaries. Lack of access to useful information damages project's sustainability.

Four to five years is a minimum requirement for the better adaptation of any improved technology. Keeping that reality in mind agricultural interventions should be planned for the benefit of any community.

Flash flood and landslides are regular phenomenon of this area; hence, mitigatory plans should be taken into consideration while designing a food security project for this area.

A robust monitoring system is must for a project's successful graduation to the next phases. Many problems that threaten success of a project during its implementation phase can be resolved easily if information on the project process had been compiled, aggregated and acted on regularly at each administrative level.

Finally, the project should promote human dignity, gender equality, utilize local resources, support social capital development, and should have an educational component.

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