

Report
on
Evaluation Study of Emergency Flood Response for the People
Affected by Water Logging in Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira Districts

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The report has been produced at the request of and financed by the European Commission. The comments contained herein reflect the opinions of the consultant only.

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Preface

The report has been produced at the request of Islamic Relief (Bangladesh) and financed by the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO). The comments contained herein reflect the perceptions of the local stakeholders and opinions of the consultants only. The overall objective of the study is to examine the effectiveness of the emergency flood response for the people affected by severe water logging recently in the districts of Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira Districts, with particular reference to impacts on the project beneficiaries of the locality.

The field level data are based on Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Group Discussions (GDs), workshops and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with different stakeholders carried out in selected four Upazilas of relief operations. Aside from this, the research team held extensive discussion with the Partner Organisations both at central and field level.

The study is the product of seven-member research team. Besides Mr. Tanveer M Khan and Md. Ayub Ali Khan who are coauthors with me, the other members are Md. Zia Ur-Rahman, Md. Alauddin Sikder, Ms. Shanaz Pervin and Md. Nazrul Islam. I am grateful to all of them. The last but not least in importance is the cooperation provided by the beneficiary and non-beneficiary respondents and other stakeholders in providing us the information sought.

The Partner Organizations, Islamic Relief, OXFAM and Concern were all through extremely supportive. The local NGOs, Uttaran, Bachte Shekha and **Smadhan** provided us the fullest support at the field level. We are indeed grateful to all them and also to other individuals and organizations for the cooperation which made it possible to carry out this study in a short time.

This is the final version of the report. The comments made by the participants on an earlier version in a debriefing session are gratefully acknowledged. I am particularly indebted to Mr. Abdul Awal (ECHO), Mr. Ateeq-ul-Rehman (Islamic Relief, Asia Region), Mr. Nurul Amin Bagmer, Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chaudhury and Mr. Shamsul Hoque Mondal, all from Islamic Relief - Bangladesh, and personnel from OXFAM, Uttaran and Samadahan for their valuable comments. We particularly appreciate the comments and observations made by the IR and other POs on the draft report, however, at some later stage. Following this, we consulted again the primary set of the FGD outcomes, carried out by the facilitators during the field investigations, and accordingly finalised the report. At the same time, it is true that the research team did not have enough time to carry out rigorous and systematic cross-checking-activities during the study.

This is not an impact study in its conventional sense. In evaluating this report, one should keep in mind that there were serious constraints in terms of time and resources, resulting in methodological limitations, and we could not validate some the findings presented. The Report, completed effectively in two weeks time is based on pressing fieldwork of ten days. The Report should, therefore, be seen as an impressionistic one, providing some tentative findings and trend of project impacts. Because we had to stick to the compelling time schedule there might have some shortcomings in the Report.

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ACRONYMS

BWDB	Bangladesh Water Development Board
CBO	Community Based Organization
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GD	Group Discussion
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
IGA	Income Generating Activities
IR	Islamic relief
KABIKHA	Kajer Binimoye Khaddo (Food for Work)
KABITA	Kajer Binimoye Taka (Money for Work)
KII	Key Informant Interview
LG	Local Government
LGI	Local Government Institution
NGO	Non Government Organization
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal / Participatory Reflection and Action
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Committee
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
URRC	Union Relief and Rehabilitation Committee
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGf	Vulnerable Group Feeding
WFP	World Food Programme

BANGLADESHI LOCAL TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

Aman	<i>A wet season rice crop; Transplanted Aman, transplanted in approximately July and Broadcast Aman sown in approximately April.</i>
Aus	<i>A wet season rice crop, sown in pre-monsoon period, approximately April.</i>
Bazar	<i>Bengali name of a market place, which usually sits specific days a week</i>
Beel	<i>Natural depressions which are rich in flood-plain fisheries</i>
Bari	<i>Bari comprises of cluster of households where usually members of the same greater family lives in.</i>
Bhela	<i>Traditional boat made of banana trees.</i>
Boro	<i>A dry season rice crop, sown in approximately November.</i>
Char	<i>A sand bar which is formed within a river or estuary</i>
District	<i>An administrative unit under a Division.</i>
Eidgah	<i>Large congregation place where The Muslims say their Eid Prayer</i>
Gram	<i>Bengali name of village</i>
Hat	<i>A temporary village market, usually held once or twice a week</i>
Kharif	<i>Wet season (mid-April to mid-October)</i>
Khal	<i>Bengali version of canal.</i>
Matabbor	<i>Matabbors or Shomaj leaders control local access to resources, conduct the ritual, social and political activities. Usually they conduct Shalish at local level. (<u>Shalish</u>: Informal quasi-judicial arrangement for settlement of disputes within village(s).) There are para-level Matabbors, Gram-level Matabbors; and Union level Matabbors.</i>
Para	<i>Para Comprises of several baris. The name of 'para' mostly reflects its location within a gram, such as Moddho (middle) para, Uttar (North) Para and Poshim (west para).</i>
Pourasava	<i>Bengali name of Municipality.</i>
Pucca	<i>Houses or roads, made of brick, cement and rod.</i>
Rabi	<i>Dry season (mid-October to mid-April)</i>
Shomaj	<i>Shomaj plays a significant role in the rural decision making process. This is an informal decision making entity; starting from para level, the layers are Gram-level, greater gram level and so on.</i>
Taka (TK)	<i>National currency (£=TK 130, March 2007)</i>
Upazila	<i>Administrative unit under a District; main unit of local government.</i>
Union Parishad	<i>The local administrative unit in between Mouzas and Upazilas</i>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

1. BACKGROUND

The south west parts of Bangladesh, in general, and the river basins of Kapatakha, Hari and Vadra rivers, in particular, have for long suffered from water logging. Bhabadaha Beel, comprising as many as 54 small and large beels, is located in an area adjoining three districts of Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira. The area has hit the headlines of local and national media because of the acute nature of drainage problem. In fact, the congestion problem has been created since 1986. Recently, the cumulative effects of water logging have turned the region into a major disaster area; and it disrupted the lives and livelihoods of 7.8 million people of the three districts, affecting some 10 Upazilas (as per study TOR and relevant project documents)..

During August 2006, Islamic Relief, Oxfam and Concern responded to the vulnerability of the people in those areas, and started food and non food relief distribution among the flood affected people; initially, with their own resources; and subsequently with support from European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO). The three international NGOs coordinated the relief programs among themselves. Their combined efforts covered 28,250 families providing food and non food commodities for two months. The ECHO supported this intervention with a financial support of 1 million Euro. The duration of the project was from 1 September 2006 to 31 January 2007. With this background, as a requirement on the part of the donor agency ECHO, an external evaluation is carried out on the effectiveness and sustainability of the flood response program implemented by the three organizations.

1.2 OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the study is to examine the effectiveness of the Emergency Flood Response project through examining the project design and implementation. More specifically, the study was conducted aiming at (a) assessing the degree to which the objectives pursued in the project have been achieved, (b) investigating to what extent the project's outcome (physical and immaterial services delivered to the beneficiaries) will be sustainable in long term (c) drawing lessons from the interventions of Islamic Relief, Oxfam and Concern.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the flood response project implemented by the three organizations. As regards structure of the current report, Chapter 1 deals with background, objective and scope, and study process while Chapter 2 describes methodology and research design as to how the study was carried out. The perception of the villagers (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) and the UP regarding the relief programme is discussed in Chapter 3. It can be mentioned, in this context, that the comments made in this chapter are completely based on the perception of villagers and the UP; the study team had no influence on it. Chapter 4 is concerned with the findings based on the observations gathered during the field investigation. Finally, Chapter 5 presents a set of recommendations for future direction.

2. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objective of the study, the Team took 'Participatory Reflection and Action' approach, apart from documents review, discussion with the implementing agencies. The methodology was designed in the context of learning from/about the overall project design and implementation, outcomes, and the possible future direction and options for the beneficiaries and agencies concerned. The team, therefore did -

- *Review of documents/reports;*
- *FGDs, participatory workshops, group discussions, key-informant interviews at field;*
- *Consultation with the PO's and GOB personnel; and*
- *Observation.*

3. PERCEPTION OF THE LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THE PROGRAM¹

The study team, in this connection, visited six sample study areas during 10th – 17th March, 2007 across the project areas. The objective of the field visit was to build on the perception of the villagers (beneficiaries & non-beneficiaries) and local stakeholders about the relief program. In the process of learning, the study team visited six Unions of four Upazilas of three districts across the project areas; and consulted some 700 people, including villagers, UP personnel, GOB personnel, and key-informants. It can be mentioned in this context that the planned FGDs had turned into, in maximum cases, large group discussions and/or participatory workshops.

While at the field the team conducted a total of (a) twenty-one FGD/Discussion meeting with the villagers. It can be mentioned in this context that many villagers have taken interest on the topic of discussion and wanted to have their voice. As a result, the number of participants in case of some workshops/discussion meetings had crossed a usual FGD size. (b) six Group discussion meetings with the Union Parishad (UP), three discussion meetings with RRC (Relief and Rehabilitation Committee), and one with PIC (Project Implementation Committee); and had about 10 key informant interviews (which excludes some short interviews/notes). Focal points of these discussions were mostly regarding the beneficiaries' evaluation of the Relief Program; and (c) one discussion meeting with the UNO and Upazila Relief Officer at Keshabpur Upazila; and three discussion sessions with key personnel of field level local POs. the perception of the villagers and the local stakeholders are described in the main report. While appreciating the outcome it should be borne in mind that the chapter (Chapter 3) contains the perception of the villagers (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries), Union Parishad (UP), community based committees (i.e. RRC, PIC etc.), and some key informants though some of these were strongly opposed by the local POs. While the discussion with the UP, the representatives of the concern local POs were present during the discussion.

4. MAJOR FINDINGS

Overall, the relief program was a success; and was highly appreciated by the villagers around the study areas. Villagers were appeared to be happy with the local POs. Around the program area, CONCERN worked with 'Samadhan', and OXFAM with 'Batchte Shekha' and 'Uttaran'. The Islamic Relief didn't have any local POs; Islamic Relief had distributed the

¹ Details about the perceptions of the local stakeholders (beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, UP, Key Informants) are discussed elaborately in the main report.

relief package through the RRC), a committee formed by local people. Some major findings are summarized below –

- **RELIEF EFFORTS OF THE POs:** People, by and large, are happy with the efforts made by the NGOs and the donor ECHO. Oxfam distributed relief to 12,750 HH; Concern distributed relief to 6,000 HH; Islamic Relief distributed relief to 9,300 HH. Out of about 28,050 beneficiary households Islamic Relief covered about 33.2%, Concern covered about 21.4%, and Oxfam covered about 45.4%. They provided about 90 kg of rice, 6 kg of soybean oil, 12 kg of pulse, and 6 kg of salt. SPHERE standard was, reportedly, followed while distributing the relief so that a person can consume at least 2100 caloric intake of food. They also provided other hygiene kits. People, by and large, were found to be aware of the relief program. ECHO was comparatively new to the villagers. During the distribution of relief, the logos and names of the donor, implementing agencies, and POs names were displayed at the distribution spot; but understandable mostly to the literate people. The common village folks were generally not much aware of ECHO though very few beneficiaries were able to talk about the ECHO as donor of the relief program. Among the three implementing agencies IR was comparatively more known to people for this program than Concern and Oxfam. Because IR did the operation directly through the RRC (a community based committee).
- **SCENARIOS OF VULNERABILITY:** Apart from the vulnerability of the poor, the middle income group has been worst hit by the flood as they are shy to receive relief materials through distribution cards standing in the line with the low income group. The pregnant women have been among the worst hit population. Women were in practice of sanitation activities by keeping aloof in a distant place through Bhela surrounded by sacks and polythenes. Children and new born babies were severely affected due to waterborne disease; such as, allergies, skin diseases, asthma etc. The students couldn't pay their school fees and buy their materials. After the flood, though the water logged area has reduced (seasonal) but farmers couldn't grow any crops.
- **POST-FLOOD SITUATION:** Post flood follow-ups are most crucial for villagers' livelihoods with outbreak of waterborne diseases. Assistance to the villagers during the post flood scenario is crucial to make their livelihood sustainable; otherwise they may have to continually depend on the relief. Huge infrastructural damages take place as an aftermath of flood for which reconstruction is necessary. Infrastructural damages disrupt the normal life of the villagers. Road communications are disrupted; and most importantly houses are damaged. The dismal situation with employment opportunities becomes particularly crucial. In such a situation people get involved, usually, in reconstruction ventures but they can hardly afford due to lack of hard cash. At the same time they face severe difficulties in procuring necessary inputs for Boro cultivation.
- **SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES:** Some beneficiaries are in the opinion of increasing the numbers of targeted households, in spite of reducing the relief allocation for each household. People are happy with the NGOs preparing the list of vulnerable people, in general. They are against the UP preparing the list as often they become biased towards their own people due to political reasons. Criteria of selection do not allow some genuine and deserving middle-income group to be enlisted for distribution; household size should

also be a prime consideration in preparing the list and relief goods given. Beneficiaries think that participation of their Para/Gram-based Matabbors/Village elders, in selecting and verifying the listed names, would minimize the errors in 'selecting vulnerable people'. A preliminary list of beneficiaries used to be prepared at first by the POs. Then the list was usually prioritized as category A (most vulnerable people), B (medium vulnerable people) and C (moderately vulnerable people). The final distribution took place based on the priority categories.

- **RELIEF ITEMS:** The list of foods in the relief package was appreciated by the villagers; except that they needed more numbers of polythenes, tents, school fees and books for students, hard-cash, extra medical facilities etc. Some opined that seeds and fertilizer would help them for Boro cultivation.
- **DISTRIBUTIONS:** Beneficiaries and the villagers are appeared to be happy with the POs in distributing the relief though some confusion occurred among the UPs of the area as the total allocation was different in different areas. However, the differences in amount of relief distribution occurred as the impacts of the water logging scenarios were different in different areas. There were apparently no discrimination in respect to gender and religion. Some beneficiaries during the FGDs said that there had been rumors of political motivation in listing the name and distribution of the relief. Some villagers reported that in a few cases, the relief cards were sold, some by beneficiaries and some by the committee people. While the samples respondent could be one of the outlier (rare) persons, this can be interpreted in two ways; (1) vulnerable people need 'hard cash', and (2) Transparency and Accountability of UP, RRC etc. should be enhanced. However, on receiving comments from the IR, the evaluation team investigated the issue. The evaluators learned that the relief that was distributed covered approximately 50% of the affected people. There were requests, grumblings and complaints from those who did not receive relief. The evaluators also investigated the role of the RRC members including the role of the UP Member, examined the process of beneficiary selection and assessed monitoring of beneficiary selection and relief distribution by Islamic Relief. Although limitations were evident, the evaluators expressed general satisfaction on the entire process and found it quite participatory.
- **SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES:** Villagers opined that receiving relief every year may contribute in increasing of dependency within the community. All the stakeholders have firmly opined that 'receiving relief every year' is not sustainable as it makes people dependent gradually; and is opposite to what we mean by "development". The villagers, especially, preferred that some part of the relief should be given through different program and IGAs, such as 'Food for Work', 'Money for work' etc.
- **SOLUTION TO WATER LOGGING:** Rivers' water level outside the embankment has become higher than that in the inside of the Bhabadaha beel over years. Especially, the sluice gates have become inactive due to siltation. Almost all the villagers opined that BWDB's negligence in taking appropriate measures has further intensified the problem. GOB has now realized the necessity; it is reported that the Army is already engaged in dredging works only recently. It also can be mentioned that ECNEC has approved about Taka 700 million to deal with the problem. Villagers have also excavated and re-excavated khals/canals to contribute the efforts.

- *COPING MEASURES: The local people now realize that the “earthen houses” are more vulnerable and hence they are reluctant to build such houses in future. Villagers are also taking flood proofing measures, recently, by converting their houses into brick building. These said to have been possible through credits, family savings. It was also learnt that many poor people are planning to build brick houses by taking loans, and by selling their lands or other properties. Homestead-raising, along with the raising of tube-wells may be good adaptation option in coping with such flood caused due to persistent water logging in the locality. This may be an interim arrangement until a long term solution is reached. A platform containing a cluster of 4 houses may be considered to have secured shelter. In addition to that construction of adequate flood shelters (i.e. raised roads, Eidgah, School-premises) may be another adaptation plan, suggested by large number of the beneficiaries and victims.*

- *ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS: Promoting fisheries activities and duck rearing can be a major option to livelihood in the aftermath of the flood. Women are expecting interest free loans for duck rearing and handicrafts works. To increase the income different IGAs can be undertaken depending on the options that a community prefers. Also there should be reconstruction activities in which beneficiaries would also like to contribute some in form of ‘labor’ for doing the necessary earth work. Such programs would serve a dual purpose; reconstruction of the flood damages, and beneficiaries would get some hard cash.*

- *GOB: Government of Bangladesh from its own sources was not able to provide more than 10 kg of rice as relief, often with some leakages. However, villagers reported that very few District or Upazila level officials have visited the affected areas. But in few places, especially for the case of Burigoalini Union, UNO himself came and gave labor with the villagers of Durgapati and surroundings to protect their villages.*

- *OTHER DONORS & NGOs ARE ALSO WORKING THERE: WFP had significant contribution in the area. Kids were not coming to school even in post disaster situation. WFP’s school feeding program was very encouraging; it brought lot of children back to school. In Satkhira district WFP carried out their “School Feeding Program” in as many as 319 Primary Schools for 10 months long. WFP also provided cookies to the “pregnant women” and “new mothers” for 6 months. In spite of many NGOs such as BRAC, Grameen Bank, Action-Aid and Proshika working in the areas, very few of them got involved in the relief activities.*

- *ROLE OF UNION PARISHAD: Union Parishad is supposed to play a vital role in any emergency situation at local level. But it was learnt that the beneficiaries and common village folks cannot trust the UP as they have demonstrated malpractices in distributing relief. On the other hand UP opined that their role was important in selecting and prioritizing the needy people. But it was also learnt that the Union level committees, such as UDMC, URRC were ineffective due to very low incentive of the committee members. Some UP even doesn’t know about such committee and hardly attended meetings in connection. UP thinks that committees like RRC, PIC etc. do not have any accountability. A clear conflicting views and opinions were observed between UP and the beneficiaries committees, such as RRC, PIC etc.*

- *BENEFICIARIES’ COMMITTEES: RRC/PIC appeared to be very effective in relief, in spite of some limitations. They have the opportunities to be the spokesman of the community;*

and at the same time to be the bridge between donors, NGOs and the villagers. Such committees are actually an outcome of the inefficiencies of URRC. RRC, PIC or similar committees always face continuous pressure from the UP; the RRC members urged that they need to have formal registration to have identity and to establish accountability. Formation of such committee with participation of major occupational classes, retired teachers, religious representatives and vulnerable people with adequate participation of women is considered as crucial.

PERFORMANCE OF THE LOCAL POs & the RRC/PIC

Overall, the relief program was a success. People, by and large, appeared to be happy about the three NGOs; and some of them are very much aware of the ECHO donor. They also are happy with the local POs, in general. The local POs were largely helpful for them as they did the relief operation in such a disastrous situation; and their efforts were also highly appreciated. In the program area, CONCERN worked with “Samadhan” and OXFAM with “Batchte Shekha” and “Uttaran”. The Islamic Relief didn’t have any local POs; rather they were working through RRC (Relief and Rehabilitation Committee). Islamic relief distributed the relief through the RRC, a local community based organization; and they found it as effective. As a consequence, IR is looking for ways to strengthen them, further, in doing such operations. IR is interested to know their (RRC) effectiveness and ways for its further improvement. Oxfam has formed similar committee named PIC (Project Implementation Committee). Concern did not have such committee for distributing the relief in that area; because this was under their working area.

SELECTION OF VULNERABLE FAMILIES

The common village folks were generally found not to be very much aware of the “Selection criteria” under which the relief was distributed. It was learnt by the study team that the criteria of selecting the needy and vulnerable people has raised several issues among the villagers; such as –

- *Many people, especially the middle class within the rural socio-economic context, were not listed due to the existing criteria; such as landowners whose lands were under water without any crops.*
- *There were widows and elderly people who were ignored in the selection process as they had tin-shed houses or brick-floor houses. Some poor people took loan and some sold away their land to make brick build houses to survive in the water logged situation. Uttaran dealt with such issue and included some poor people who had brick-built houses with permission of Oxfam GB Monitors, during the second phase of the distribution.*
- *The list of names ‘after the selection’ appears to have not been well-discussed with the local leaders (i.e. Matabbors, teachers etc.) and UP for verification. UP reported that the VGF list was also verified by the Bangladesh Army at some Unions; and Pos could take help from this.*
- *The target was on households; but there are differences in numbers of the household-members. As a result the allocation for each person became different.*

DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF:

- **DECISION MAKING & PARTICIPATION:** *By and large, the beneficiaries preferred to receive the relief without the intervention of the local Union Parishad (UP) as they thought that the UP would not give them their allocated quantity; and might use it*

(relief) for personal or group interests. The villagers opined that the responsibility of the distribution should be given to the NGOs through adequate participation of the village elders / matabbors.

- *DISCRIMINATIONS: It was true that there were no religious discrimination in distribution operation. The Islamic Relief -RRC and POs went door to door to identify the vulnerable people within huge constraint (such as, water logged situation, time etc.). There had been no reports of gender discrimination also. Rather stakeholders (villagers and UP) opined that more numbers of women were considered as relief-recipient. In a very few cases, there were some reports of politically motivated discriminations in the selection. Due to the variations in household size, discrimination occurred in per head received relief.*
- *QUANTITY: Beneficiaries and the Union Parishad (LGI) were pleased about the quantity that they have received as relief. Previously they used to receive only 5kg-10kg of rice from govt. relief packages through the Union Parishad. They just didn't think that the quantity would be so much; and it made them feel ease and happy.*
- *QUALITY: the quality of relief was very good; and the villagers, and also the UP, have opined that they were very pleased about the quality of the relief. Previously they haven't received such good quality of relief.*
- *RELIEF ITEMS: Though the beneficiaries are happy about the relief in terms of quantity, quality and expectation, but they have talked about some other items of relief that should be included. However, they told the Evaluation Study Team that school fees and other education-cost for their children, firewood, and more medication to fight water borne diseases should have been included in the relief item.*
- *BENEFICIARIES EXPECTATION: Beneficiaries, including the UP, were pleased about the quantity. The quality was much better and the quantity was much higher than the normal expectation. Previously, they used to receive only 5-10 kg of rice from govt.'s relief packages. Villagers reported that they haven't received such good quality of relief before this program. Villagers expected that school fees and books for their children, firewood, and more medication to fight water borne diseases should have been included in the relief item. Though the people were quite happy and gratifying the relief, they felt bad as many needy people didn't have the opportunity to receive the relief. However, the frustration was more acute for them whose names were in the primary list but didn't qualify as of the priority list; out of which some didn't get due to the spelling mistakes and mismatches of addresses.*
- *DISTRIBUTION ISSUES: The beneficiaries, consulted, have opined that the relief operation was done in appropriate time and it was a great help for them. Beneficiaries had pointed out certain issues in this context:*
 - *Due to the spelling mistakes and mismatch of addresses some vulnerable people were not given the relief though their they were assured that they would be given the relief;*
 - *It was difficult for elderly people, especially disables and pregnant, to go to the designated "Relief distribution center"; and carry it back to home. But they also said that others have helped them to carry those.*

COORDINATION ISSUES

There are multiple stakeholders involved the process of this relief operation. The whole operation deserves careful coordination in all the process. The Implementing NGOs, local POs, and other local stakeholders had close coordination regarding the relief program; and these organizations are learning organizations which emphasized options for further improvement in aspects of coordination, such as

STRATEGICAL

- *DEFINING THE RELIEF OPERATION AREA: The operation area was defined based on the affected areas; but many peoples' livelihood was severely affected as they have lands or other sources of income in the affected areas.*
- *SETTING OUT FAVORABLE SELECTION CRITERIA: The 'selection-criteria' deserves readjustments, and the implementing agencies should be revising the criteria, periodically, to keep pace with the changing socio-economic pattern. This will facilitate the donors and the implementing agencies to be able to select and reach deserving or vulnerable people in more numbers and more accurately. UP can help the process by sharing their vulnerable list (VGF, VGD cards, older peoples list etc.)*

OPERATIONAL

- *ENSURING MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIP WITH UNION PARISHAD: Traditionally, the local UPs have been playing the major roles in response to the emergency and disastrous situation at their respective areas. It can not be denied that they are the key institution at the local level to deal with any adversity or developments. Operational efficiency of the relief program can be enhanced through a meaningful partnership with the UP through increasing the state of transparency and accountability.*
- *MAKING UDMC & URRC EFFECTIVE: UDMC (Union Disaster Management Committee) and URRC (Union Relief & Rehabilitation Committee) were formed under the GOB's policy to handle disaster situation and emergency responses; but it is a common feature that these committees hardly sit for the monthly or periodical meetings. The partners already have learnt that 'Strengthening and building capacity of UDMC' on their strategic role is crucial to make these committees 'active' and 'pro-active' in terms of responding and managing such emergency program operations. GOB also should encourage donors and partners to have training programs to strengthen the capacity of UDMC, URRC etc.*
- *BUILDING CAPACITY OF RRC / PIC: Local level participation is crucial for successful operations of relief and other programs. The development agencies are encouraging and emphasizing "first party's (beneficiaries') committees", such as RRC of Islamic Relief. Capacity building of these types of committees deserves special attention as; (a) they can play major role as the spokesman of their community, (b) an efficient RRC or similar committee reduces the chances of middlemen's or third party's negative interventions and can participate more in the decision making process and perform better, especially in disaster management situations. The capacity building, especially in community mobilization, operational management, and decision making of such committee will be beneficial to the development of the community.*

- **COORDINATION AMONG THE LOCAL POs:** *It seems that the local level POs may be implementing similar programs, and in a few cases, with other international agencies in different and/or in the same areas. However, they must share their future action plans and limitations with other local POs, and implementing NGOs before ahead, regarding the similar types operations and possibilities.*

5. RECOMMENDATION & FUTURE DIRECTION

SELECTION CRITERIA NEEDS REVISION AND ADJUSTMENTS:

- **REDUCEING DISCRIMINATION IN PER HEAD RECEIVED RELIEF:** *Differences in various household size cause per head allocation of relief unfavorable, in some case of larger size. HH size was found to be in the range of 3 – 13 in the study area (the upper sample, however, is an extreme case, compared to national average of 5.5). Targeting the household, therefore, resulted in discrimination on quantity received by per person. To minimize such discrimination, household size can be grouped in three or more clusters (i.e. HH size up to 4, HH size 5-8, and HH size above 8). There should be different packages for each group².*
- **UPDATE LIST IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES:** *It is significant that the middle income groups are among the worst hit population as some of them are in process of becoming “future poor”; and they should also be considered for receiving the relief. Many poor people had sold /mortgaged their land away, and/or took loan“; and built brick-build houses to get protection from flood. Brick-built house” criteria need to be revised in accordance with the socio-economic changes. The local POs should be sharing the list of beneficiaries with the Matabbors (Village elders) of their Shomaj / communities. Periodical updates of the vulnerable-peoples’ list is necessary.*

DISTRIBUTION THROUGH LOCAL PARTNERSHIP:

- **DISTRIBUTION THROUGH COMMUNITY BASED COMMITTEE:** *The widespread perception of villagers about involving the UP with such relief operation, especially in selection and distribution, is negative; rather they opined that the local NGO or POs can be involved in the distribution process through participation of a local committee (i.e. RRC), comprising of teachers, Matabbors, local elites but social worker, and vulnerable people. Capacity building is essential for such committee for the improving their operational capability, transparency and accountability, and effectiveness, as a whole.*
- **SEPARATE DISTRIBUTION PLAN FOR ELDERS, DISABLES AND PREGNANT WOMEN:** *villagers reported that it was difficult for elderly persons, especially women, to go to the distribution venues and carry it back to home. The case is more applicable for disabled persons and pregnant women. There should be a separate operation plan so that the elderly and disabled people, pregnant women and other sick persons can receive relief at their home.*

² In debriefing session, however, the participants observed that categorization of households during an emergency situation such as the one under study was hardly feasible.

- *MINIMIZE UP's INVOLVEMENT IN RELIEF OPERATION: UP's involvement with such program shows evidence of malpractices, in handling the job with political motivation and other misappropriation. Although Union-Paroshad's involvements have to be kept at a minimum level but their role should not be ignored altogether.*
- *GOB TO REVISE ITS POLICY: GOB's 'Disaster Management & Relief Policy' emphasized the involvement of the UP in relief and rehabilitation activities. On the other hand, the villagers generally did not want them as a major actor in this context. But the involvement of the UP is crucial in such emergency operation as they are more familiar with the local scenario; and they are also responsible for the total development of the area. Traditionally, the local UPs have been playing the major roles in response to the emergency and disastrous situation at their respective areas. It can not be denied that they are the key institution at the local level to deal with both adversity and developments. However, given the perception of the villagers, and the changed socio-economic scenario, UP's role can be further revised just as 'facilitator' in implementing the program, instead of involving them with the operation. GOB also needs to revise and adjust its concern policies based on the reflection of socio-economic changes and changes in peoples' perception regarding the issue.*

STRENGTHENING THE COPING MEASURES AND FOLLOW-UPS PROGRAM

Many villagers had to move out of their houses, and took shelter on higher roads, schools, etc. or moved away to other places. In some areas, people cannot produce crops since 4-5 years. Long term solution to this water logging problem needs to be prioritized; side by the side short term solution (i.e. more relief) and mid term solution (IGAs) should be there to support the coping measures till the long term solution is achieved.

- *SHORT TERM: it was learned from the beneficiaries that post-flood vulnerability is severe in those areas as water can not be drained out immediately; and also they have nothing to continue with for the next few months. During this period, vulnerability further increases. It appeared to be such that more people are in need of relief and it should be continued for next 2-3 months.*
- *MEDIUM TERM: Donor and partners should pay special attention in this area to build peoples' capacity so that their dependency on relief can be gradually reduced. It is necessary to have post flood programs to overcome the aftermath and uplift the income situation of the vulnerable people. Infrastructural reconstruction (i.e. roads, houses etc.) should be done involving the poor people with income options. Different IGA programs, especially, fish culture, duck rearing etc, can be worked out. It is essential to construct "flood proofing" shelters, roads, and most importantly cluster houses (raised) with water and sanitation provisions (shown in annex-2), to uplift peoples' effort in coping with the vulnerable situations and miseries. Homestead-raising and roads-raising (shown in annex-3) are essential to keep the houses livable during the flood. Soft loans, easy loans, should be given so that individuals can make brick-built houses. Medicare issues of the pregnant women needs special attention. Agencies should launch different IGA programs to uplift peoples' efforts in coping with vulnerabilities. It can also be mentioned, in this context, that significant numbers of villagers' livelihood is changing from farmers to fishermen, in the affected areas. Women, including children, are also collecting small fishes, snails etc. These areas of activities needs further strengthening by the donors and NGOs.*

- **LONG TERM:** Long term solution to this outstanding water logging problem involves immediate dredging of neighboring rivers and canals, along with reactivation of the sluice gates for adequate cross-drainages; however, this involves huge financial implication.

STRENGTHENING EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION:

Many stakeholders are influencing the success of the project. These stakeholders are of different interest groups and socio-economic classes; and their issues are different. In fact, all these stakeholders are important for the effectiveness of such programs. An effective coordination with participation of all these stakeholders in should be encouraged and ensured in order to achieve optimum output. This will also contribute in minimizing errors in carrying out such operations.

STRENGTHENING RRC/PIC:

The membership and the leadership of RRC / PIC / or similar committees, in many cases, overlap with the UP leadership; and there also had been few claims, by the villagers, regarding some misappropriation (selling of relief cards etc.) during the selection and distribution. Villagers generally did not recognize RRC as an authentic actor in relief distribution and can not be held accountable as they did not have any formal registration. However, villagers opined that such committees have the opportunity to become a major actor in the overall local development. RRC needs to have formal registration as 'cooperative' so that they have a formal identity; and also can be more accountable and transparent under the registration framework. There should be enough training aiming at capacity building of the RRC or similar organizations to prepare themselves for an emergency situation.

ABOUT EVALUATION

The beneficiaries and the Union Parishad (UP) are interested about receiving copies of different project related documents/reports, especially the evaluation reports. They also emphasized that the evaluation of such program should be done immediately after the relief-distribution was complete, so that the evaluators could perform their job and evaluate by seeing the actual situation on ground.

This evaluation study can be considered as a basis for planning and designing of follow up program from strategic and operational aspect. Further in-depth study is necessary in this connection to come up with a more comprehensive action plan to reduce peoples' vulnerability and to enhance communities' capacity to cope with the difficulties and disastrous situation.