



**Towards a Gender Transformative Food System: A Synthesis of CARE Bangladesh's Evidences on Agriculture Collectives**

# Literature Review

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women fulfil important roles in agri-food value chains as farmers, businesswomen, entrepreneurs and community leaders, ensuring food security and nutrition, at community and household levels. In a country with nearly 168 million, Bangladesh has shown remarkable improvement in the issue of economic participation of women, especially, in the field of agriculture. However, due to socio-cultural norms in Bangladesh, women continue to experience inequality. While the total number of women who are of working age tends to be higher than men, there is a persistent gender imbalance against women, as identified in various forms including economic participation, health and access to finance.

CARE's She Feeds the World program framework helps people who go to bed hungry—not because the world does not produce enough food, but because of global injustice. She Feeds the World (SfTW) brings together the best of CARE and our partners' approaches into an integrated framework to solve these problems and helps us work with others to scale them up to reach more people.

The purpose of this study to review the collectives using the SfTW framework that CARE engages within the food and nutrition sector intending to provide learning and recommendations for the engagement of collectives for gender-transformative change in food and water systems programming. This study seeks not to replicate existing evidence, but to produce new learnings, and thus it is vitally important to understand where the evidence strengths and gaps are regarding CARE Bangladesh's understanding of how well agricultural collectives promote and create gender-transformative food systems as defined by SfTW. This study will review three of CARE Bangladesh's projects (i. **SHOUHARDO II**; ii. **SAMMOW**; and iii. **Where the Rain Falls**) where evidence agriculture collectives for gender-transformative Food System are prominent.

### Evidence of Learning from the Agriculture Collectives:

Literatures reviewed in this synthesis of 'Agriculture Collectives for Gender-transformative Food System' from three most successful projects of CARE Bangladesh, which directly worked with women to strengthen their skills and confidence in sustainable agriculture practices, financial inclusion, market engagement, gender equality, and food and nutrition security. The major evidence found:

#### 1. Women's Empowerment:

##### SHOUHARDO II:

- Women's contributions to household income, women's control of income, and women's management of household income increased substantially during the project period as evident in the final qualitative and quantitative evaluations.
- Over the SHOUHARDO II project period, economic hardship was reduced. Men uniformly noted the contribution of women's employment.
- Federating women through EKATA groups, making them considerably empowered, were, confronting households where violence was taking place.

##### SAMMOW:

- The wage of male agriculture day labour was almost twice the wage of female agriculture day labour.
- The gap in terms of the percentage of wage of female agriculture has gone down from 76.5% to 48.4%, approximately 37 percentage points.
- The EKATA group has increased the wage bargaining power and empowered the women of the group.

##### Where the Rain Falls:

- Around 50% of households experienced increased mobility of their women and participation in the family decision over the baseline (only 14.1% of households)
- Women mobility was significant in the agriculture field and even more remarkable is women in one-third

of households went to the market despite social barriers and insecurity.

- Overall, women of at least 49% of households of primary, secondary and tertiary groups were able to equally participate in household financial decision making over the baseline (only 16.98% households).

## 2. Access to and control of productive resources

### SHOUHARDO II:

- In the income-generating activities (IGAs), provision of sewing machines, money to invest in small shops, and bicycle vans generated income for landless households lacking adequate courtyard space or adjacent ponds.
- The likelihood of sustainability appeared greatest where, during the project, beneficiaries saved or purchased their vegetable seeds, purchased their vaccines and medicines for their animals, or bought their minnows and supplies for their fish ponds.
- Regarding technology adoption, both field crop producers and vegetable producers actively adopted new technologies.

### SAMMOW:

- Around 12 per cent of the beneficiary households have agricultural land (avg. 4.14 decimal) or agriculture and homestead land (Avg. 7.09), which is very low. Some beneficiary households even live in khas land.
- In asset holding 42 percent household possesses poultry (on average 1.2), 17.2 percent has cattle and the average cattle number is less than one, 33.5 percent has small consumer durable goods, 29.3 percent has a mobile phone, and households have some sort of transport equipment.
- The financial liability of the households has gone down as dependence on credit has gone down. Some beneficiary left some of the credit programs and formed informal savings club and save their money to the local bank.

### Where the Rain Falls:

- The project has created the scope for a significant proportion of vulnerable women in the rural areas to be involved in community-based adaptation to manage climate change through the SuPER agriculture approach.
- As 98% knew about climate risks, more than 80% knew the major drivers of climate change and around 90% received an early warning, it can be concluded that at least 80% of households knew about climate risks and adaptive option.

## 3. Inclusive markets

### SHOUHARDO II:

- Beneficiaries made good use of group-based opportunities: collective animal vaccinations and courtyard sessions for training and counselling.
- All indicators (QPE, SHOUHARDO II, 2015) for access to markets and services significantly improved. Nearly all farmers (98 percent) reported access to agri-inputs or financial services by the time of the endline, though only about half (52 percent) reported access to the nearest point of sale.

### SAMMOW:

- Women work as a group in most cases and even in individual case they do not break the wage norm they practice, that is, the individual wage rate never goes below the market wage rate set by the group.

## 4. Nutrition

### SHOUHARDO II

- Based on a new understanding in recent years, it now appears that a critical pathway for reducing chronic undernutrition involves the provision of multiple nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive inputs to

households in vulnerable areas, thereby permitting synergies among these inputs.

- This multisectoral “convergence” approach was fully adopted by SHOUHARDO II (as it had been in SHOUHARDO I ) with highly impressive results in terms of stunting reduction, as documented in the final quantitative evaluation
- Impressive vegetable yields resulted from high-quality seeds, tools, information, and market linkages, and led to increases in both home consumption and market sales. Small livestock and fish also improved diets and generated income.

SAMMOW:

- The household dietary diversity score is 4.36 and the women’s intra-household food access score is 4.35.
- The overall food security of the households has improved. They face hardly food hardship now compared to two or three years ago and can now have almost three meals in a day. They also told that they can now access better food as well.

## 5. Social protection

SHOUHARDO II

- The projects were also prepared for post-shock assistance, particularly the provision of food assistance, and this was put into effect after cyclones and more serious flooding.

## 6. Multiplying impact

SHOUHARDO II

- SHOUHARDO II was most successful in strengthening existing government systems, while the government was responsive to many project initiatives, particularly those relating to livelihoods (and most particularly with livestock and fisheries).
- SHOUHARDO II also encouraged VDCs to prepare community action plans focused on activities discussed above and to negotiate with UPs to ensure budgets for particular community action plan activities.

SAMMOW:

- The higher income due to higher wage rate induces the beneficiaries to invest in livestock asset such as cow rearing, goat rearing, poultry rearing, etc. the holding of large livestock such as cow and buffalo has increased among the beneficiary households.
- More than 90 percent of landlords accept the proposed wage and signed in an agreement that they will not pay a wage below that proposed threshold.

Where the Rain Falls:

- Overall, the project has reduced the food insecurity of its participants from 3.35 average food insecure months in baseline to 2 food-insecure months at the end of the project.
- The farmer-to-farmer extension approach contributed significantly to the diffusion of adaptive capacities by receiving access to services from government stakeholders as more than 80% of secondary and tertiary participants acquired this capacity learning from primary groups.

## Analysis and Identification of Evidence and Gaps:

SHOUHARDO II:

- While indicators of overall hunger decreased significantly between the baseline and endline, household food insecurity was still an issue that needs to be addressed.
- As noticed by the final evaluation team of SHOUHARDO II that knowledge of infant and child feeding was impressive, but it was less clear that all messages were being followed, and the team noted multiple gaps between knowledge and practice

SAMMOW:

- The Strategic Framework of the project shows the extensive engagement of the private sector, especially in capacity building production and collective marketing. But no evidence found in this connection.

- The Project aimed to improve the household's nutritional condition, strengthen household productivity, and reduce income poverty in the long term, through developing an understanding of women's marginalization and exclusion in the agricultural value chain.

WtRE:

- The project had worked on climate adaptive agriculture, connected Union Parishad and the local governance, and also have projected significant change production and income. But the evidence of an inclusive market for the agriculture products, the improvement in the nutrition status for the women producers and their families, and enrolling for social safety nets and other protections schemes are completely missing in the documentation available.

## Recommendations:

This report examines key successes and challenges and provides recommendations based on secondary literature. For shaping up a gender-transformative food and market system, there is further understanding required in addition to current evidence.

- Collect further evidence on women empowerment in terms of changes and improvement in terms of building agency, changing relations and transforming structure.
- A further study is recommended on project beneficiaries' status in the changing policy environment in social protection.
- The issue of sustainability of women platforms and project developed collectives after the end of the project could be a beneficial query for the organization to design future projects building on such models.

## 1.0 The Big Picture

Globally, women comprise over 37 percent of the world's rural agricultural workforce, a ratio that rises to 48 percent for low-income countries (estimates based on International Labour Organization models for 2020). Women fulfil important roles in agri-food value chains as farmers, businesswomen, entrepreneurs and community leaders, ensuring food security and nutrition, at community and household levels. Social norms that don't value women, market systems that do not reach poor people, climate change threatening productivity, and policies that fail the poorest and most vulnerable people are the causes of hunger and malnutrition around the world.

With a population of nearly 168 million, Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world, with a history of frequent natural disasters such as cyclones and floods. However, it has shown remarkable improvement in human development and a significant poverty reduction. Measured against the international extreme poverty line, poverty fell from 18.5% in 2010 to 13.8% in 2016<sup>i</sup>. Agriculture is a key sector in Bangladesh, but it is highly exposed to risks. While agriculture is a source of employment and livelihood for nearly one in two adults in Bangladesh and contributes about 16 percent to GDP.<sup>ii</sup> The issue of the economic participation of women in Bangladesh is imperative since the integration of women into the workforce will be necessary if the country is to maintain high levels of GDP growth over the long term. Women's economic empowerment is not just about access to economic assets but also to the physical infrastructure that provides transformative changes. However, due to socio-cultural norms in Bangladesh, women continue to experience inequality, especially in rural Bangladesh. While the total number of women who are of working age tends to be higher than men, there is a persistent gender imbalance against women, as identified in various forms including economic participation, health and access to finance<sup>iii</sup>.

CARE's She Feeds the World program framework helps the more than 800 million people who go to bed hungry—not because the world does not produce enough food, but because of global injustice. She Feeds the World (SFTW) brings together the best of CARE and our partners' approaches into an integrated framework to solve these problems and helps us work with others to scale them up to reach more people. It helps us get solutions to more people in need, faster and more sustainably, involving interventions that incorporate gender, governance and resilience as a common approach, across six areas of change. This framework seeks to contribute to the realization of the rights to food and nutrition security of women small-scale producers and their families, in terms of greater sustainability, production, income, nutrition, equality and resilience. The Agricultural Collectives for Gender-

transformative Food Systems project focuses on CARE’s understanding of the contribution of agricultural collectives with regards to the She Feeds the World (SfTW) framework. It builds on CARE’s experience on collectives by putting women at the centre and working with women-focused collectives to improve their market capabilities and their productivity and to increase their earnings and decision-making power over agricultural and household incomes and assets.

## 2.0 Purpose of the Study:

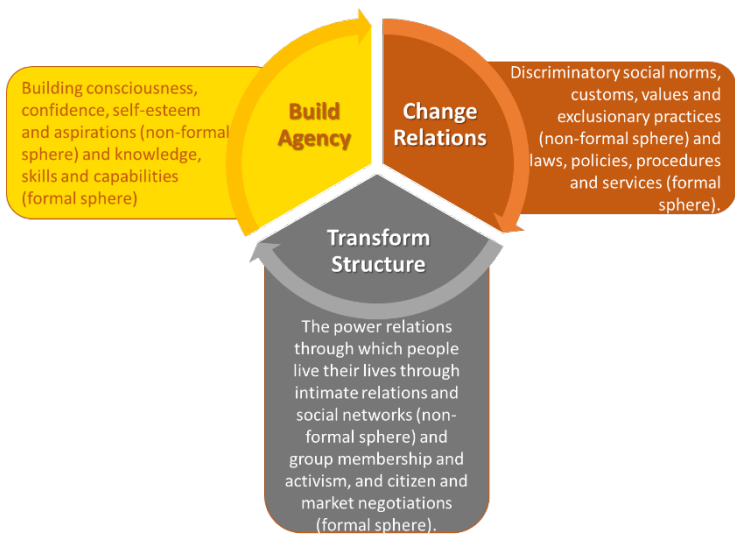
The overall goal of the Collectives Research seeks to undertake a review of the collectives that CARE engages within the food and nutrition sector intending to provide learning and recommendations for the engagement of collectives for gender-transformative change in food and water systems programming. CARE’s She Feeds the World (SfTW) Framework will be used in this study as a lens to analyse six areas of focus: 1) women’s empowerment; 2) access to and control of productive resources; 3) inclusive markets; 4) nutrition; 5) social protection; and 6) multiplying impact. CARE’s Gender Equality Framework should also be applied as an important lens to understand the state of changes at the Agency, Structure and Relations level. This study seeks not to replicate existing evidence, but to produce new learnings, and thus it is vitally important to understand where the evidence strengths and gaps are regarding CARE Bangladesh’s understanding of how well agricultural collectives promote and create gender-transformative food systems as defined by SfTW. This study will review three of CARE Bangladesh’s projects (i. SHOUHARDO II; ii. SAMMOW; and iii. Where the Rain Falls) where evidence agriculture collectives for gender-transformative Food System are prominent.

## 3.0 Understanding CARE’s Frameworks:

CARE’s goal in the SfTW framework is to fulfil the rights to food security and nutrition for women and youth small-scale producers and their families. SfTW builds on CARE’s 70 years of experience, in promoting an integrative approach to food and nutrition security, that not only promotes access to critical inputs like water, land, seeds and finance, and access to markets, but also includes an explicit focus on nutrition, safety nets and social protection in times of crisis, and puts women’s empowerment at the heart of everything we do. As mentioned earlier, this is an integrated model, involving interventions that incorporate gender, governance and resilience as a common approach, across six areas of change, each backed with evidence of success, and a range of toolkits and documents behind them. Applying tools and practices across all these six areas, in flexible and adaptive ways that fit different local contexts, will contribute to CARE’s ultimate goal: Fulfilling the rights to Food and Nutrition Security for 50 million women and youth small-scale producers and their families, in food systems that are Sustainable, Productive (including profitable & nutrition-sensitive), Equitable and Resilient (SuPER).



Source: [www.CARE.org](http://www.CARE.org)




CARE’s Gender Equality Framework (CARE, 2018) is based on CARE’s experience that achieving gender equality and women’s voice requires a change in three connected areas: agency, structures and relations. One of the key pillars of She Feeds the World is its focus on women’s empowerment, building on this gender equality framework. CARE defines women’s empowerment as the total of changes needed for a woman to realize her full human rights – the interplay of changes in, **Agency**: her aspirations and capabilities, **Structure**: the environment that surrounds and conditions her choices, and **Relations**: the power relations through which she negotiates her path. CARE uses a gender transformative approach, in other words, program strategies that seek to build social attitudes,

behaviours, and structures that support gender equality for people and communities. This includes explicit strategies to engage with men and boys, as well as promoting women’s empowerment.

### 4.0 Evidence of Learning from the Agriculture Collectives:

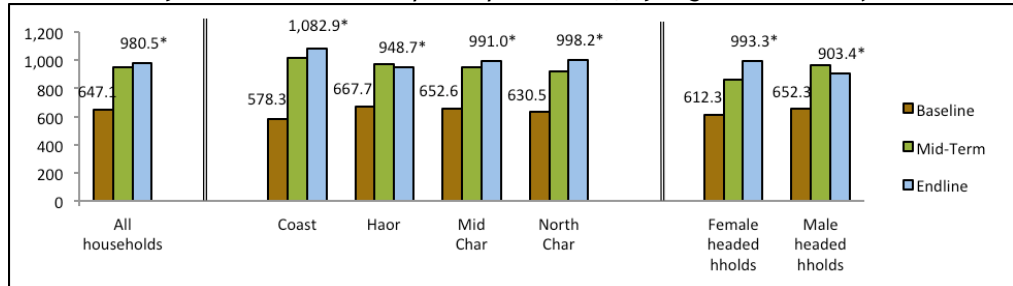
Literatures reviewed in this synthesis of ‘Agriculture Collectives for Gender-transformative Food System’ from three most successful projects of CARE Bangladesh<sup>iv</sup>, which directly worked with women to strengthen their skills and confidence in sustainable agriculture practices, financial inclusion, market engagement, gender equality, and food and nutrition security. These projects also engaging with men and boys to support efforts for greater equality and continued to push the envelope on high-quality programming. SFTW framework is used in this synthesis of agriculture collectives, to extract evidence from research, evaluation, advocacy and influencing strategies, that fuelled structural changes and scale up proven approaches to improve women’s food and nutrition security in these projects. The evidence collected through the lens of 6 (Six) area of change, the accumulation of evidence is illustrated here according to those focused areas.

Area of Change	Types of Activities
 <b>4.1 Women’s Empowerment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building Agency</li> <li>Changing Relations</li> <li>Transforming Structures</li> </ul>

**SHO HARDO II**  
Building Agency:

- Women’s contributions to household income, women’s control of income, and women’s management of household income increased substantially (grew more than 50 percent to 981TK. ) during the project period as evident in the final qualitative and quantitative evaluations.

*Mean monthly household income per capita (in TK), by region and sex of household head*

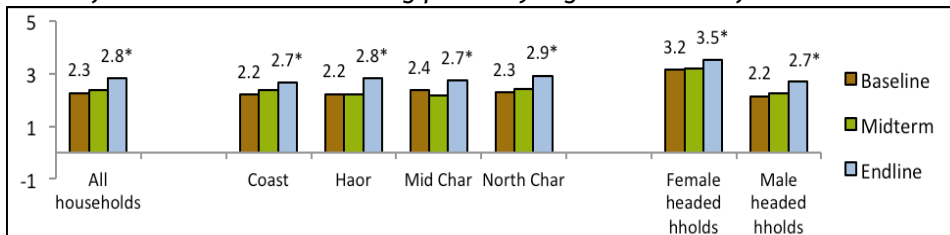


Note: Stars (\*) indicate that difference between endline and baseline value is statistically significant at the 10% level or greater.



- Beneficiaries believed these contributions added to the improvements most of them experienced in year-round food security and improved household harmony.
- Women’s empowerment increased substantially in terms of decision-making power, freedom of movement and earning cash income. The largest improvement came in women earning cash income, particularly in male-headed households.

*Index of women's decision making power by region and sex of household head*



Note: Stars (\*) indicate that difference between endline and baseline value is statistically significant at the 10% level or greater.

- Relationships between husbands and wives improved, with higher incomes and improved food security, noted particularly in SHOUHARDO II. According to the final evaluation of the project, this effect was greater than anticipated.
- Mobile phones and the ability to communicate more frequently contributed to women’s mobility and improved relations between spouses.

**Changing Relations:**

- Over the SHOUHARDO II project period, economic hardship was reduced. Men uniformly noted the contribution of women’s employment. Neither women nor men complained that income-generating responsibilities of women adversely affected time for other responsibilities.
- SHOUHARDO II beneficiaries indicated the transition taking place concerning women’s mobility. A large increase in the mobility of women and adolescent girls, with advantages from the new independence accruing to both women and men. Men also indicated concerns for their wives’ safety and the need to accompany them on longer excursions. Some visits to markets, particularly where the selling of produce was involved, were restricted to men.
- The key factors appear to be the effectiveness of the training and courtyard sessions often reaching men as well as women; the increased community support for women’s empowerment, including among religious and community leaders; and cooperation of men, often better recognizing the economic advantages of women being employed and more mobile.
- Women and men alike indicated that they make decisions together. This was emphasized in SHOUHARDO II training and courtyard sessions, that joint decision making had increased and that women could now often decide on their own how to spend the new sources of income that they had earned. Joint decisions included arrangements for their children’s marriages.

**Transforming Structure:**

- Federating women through EKATA groups, making them considerably empowered, were, confronting households where violence was taking place. Women’s groups threatened to take the case to the UP for Salish (village court), but the resolution was possible without involving the UP. EKATA women also indicated that they were ready to respond to cases of eve-teasing, but that there had been no cases during the project period.
- Among adolescent girls and women, the projects increased the awareness of and frequently group action to prevent child marriage, dowry, and violence against women.
- Women and girls in the EKATA groups were encouraged “smart and self-confident” and to be ready to “confront people socially,” e.g., raising issues and discussing decisions with their husbands and parents. Parents of the adolescent girls in EKATA groups were invariably supportive of their involvement.

**SAMMOW: vi**

**Building agency:**

- The wage of male agriculture day labour was almost twice the wage of female agriculture day labour.

According to the Impact Assessment, the wage rate for male agriculture day labour has increased by around 23 percent, while that for female agriculture day labour has gone up by around 46 percent

- The gap in terms of the percentage of wage of female agriculture has gone down from 76.5% to 48.4%, approximately 37 percentage points.

**Changing Relations:**

- Before the program, the male would take major decisions of the households, but now, women can take some household-level decisions side by side of male to some extent.

**Transforming Structures:**

- The EKATA group has increased the wage bargaining power and empowered the women of the group. The women argue that the EKATA approach has taught them about the seasonal calendar of the agricultural activity and the demand structure for agriculture day labour by drawing a seasonal calendar. They are now much more united than earlier.

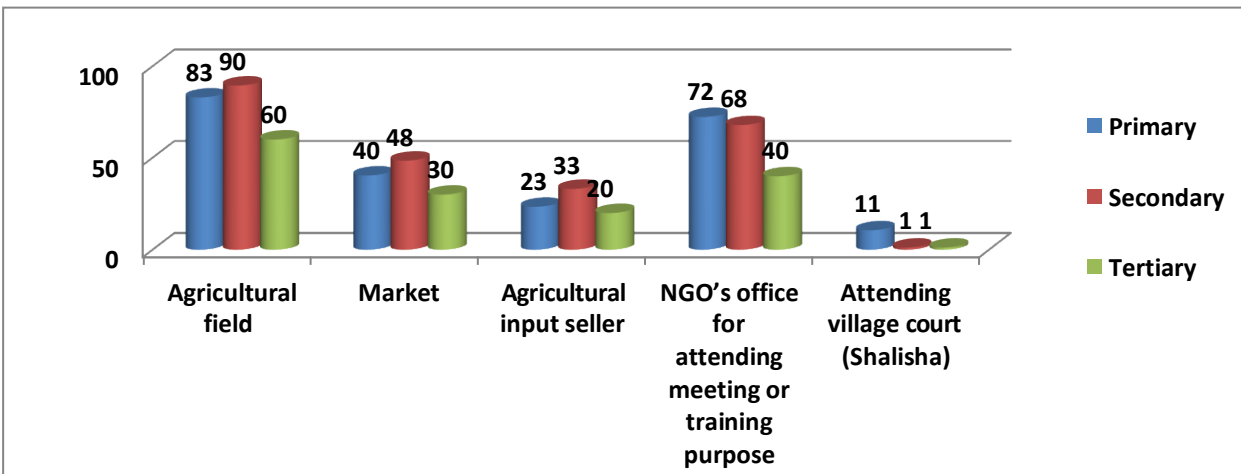
**Where the Rain Falls<sup>vii</sup>:**

**Building agency:**

- Around 50% of households experienced increased mobility of their women and participation in the family decision over the baseline (only 14.1% of households i.e. 35.9% increased over baseline)
- Overall, women of at least 49% of households of primary, secondary and tertiary groups were able to equally participate in household financial decision making over the baseline (only 16.98% households).

**Changing Relations:**

- Women mobility was significant in the agriculture field (83% primary, 90% secondary and 60% tertiary households), and even more remarkable is women in one-third of households went to the market despite social barriers and insecurity.



*Household experienced mobility of their women to different places outside the house*

- Gender equality was enhanced as spouses of more than 50% households regardless of primary, secondary and tertiary category helped each other for their work in agriculture, cattle rearing, poultry rearing, child-rearing and children education

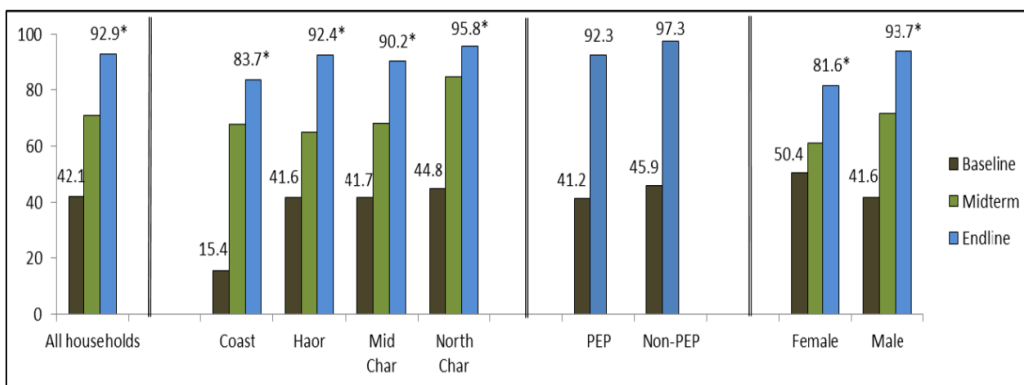
## 4.2 Access to and Control over Productive Resources

- Land
- Water
- Inputs
- Technology and Information
- Finance

## SHOUHARDO II:

- In the income-generating activities (IGAs), provision of sewing machines, money to invest in small shops, and bicycle vans generated income for landless households lacking adequate courtyard space or adjacent ponds.
- The likelihood of sustainability appeared greatest where, during the project, beneficiaries saved or purchased their vegetable seeds, purchased their vaccines and medicines for their animals, or bought their minnows and supplies for their fish ponds.
- Regarding technology adoption, both field crop producers and vegetable producers actively adopted new technologies. Both male- and female-headed households experienced significant increases in technology adoption, although increases were greater for male-headed households.

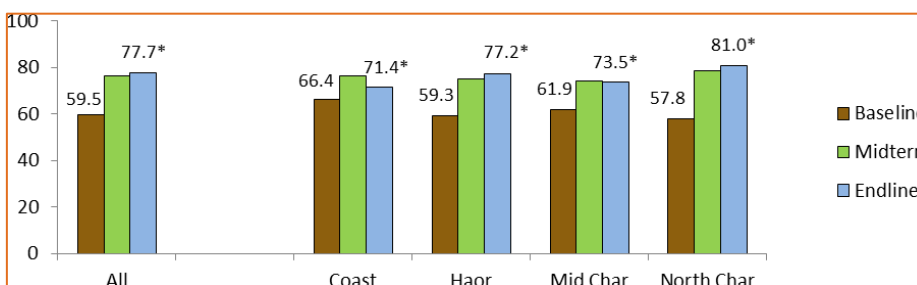
*Percent of field crop producers adopting the minimum number of technologies (three), by region and by sex of household head*



Note: Stars (\*) indicate that difference between endline and baseline value is statistically significant at the 10% level or greater.

- The project helped in arranging the vaccination of livestock, recognizing the vulnerability of these animals, particularly cows, to diarrhoea and other intestinal problems after a flood.
- Significant gains have also been achieved in access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Access to improved drinking water has increased in all four regions.

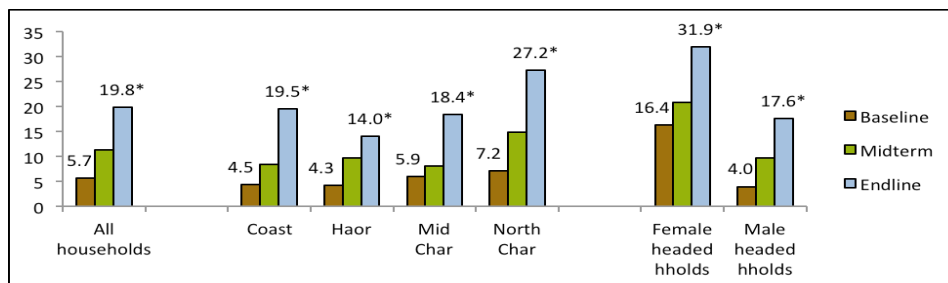
*Percent of households with access to an improved drinking water source, by region*



Note: Stars (\*) indicate that difference between endline and baseline value is statistically significant at the 10% level or greater.

- Beneficiaries made good use of group-based opportunities: collective animal vaccinations and courtyard sessions for training and counselling.
- The percent of women with control over economic resources rose sharply in all groups. The proportion more than tripled, a trend that was also seen by region. Despite the significant gains, the indicator fell short of its LoA goal of 25 percent of women overall. The only groups to meet or exceed the goal were women in North Char and female-headed households (32 percent).

Percent of women with control over economic resources, by region and sex of household head



Note: Stars (\*) indicate that difference between baseline and endline values are statistically significant at the 10% level

**SAMMOW:**

- Around 12 percent of the beneficiary households have agricultural land (avg. 4.14 decimal) or agriculture and homestead land (Avg. 7.09), which is very low. Some beneficiary households even live in khas land.
- In asset holding 42 percent household possesses poultry (on average 1.2), 17.2 percent has cattle and the average cattle number is less than one, 33.5 percent has small consumer durable goods, 29.3 percent has a mobile phone, and households have some sort of transport equipment.
- The financial liability of the households has gone down as dependence on credit has gone down. Some beneficiary left some of the credit programs and formed informal savings club and save their money to the local bank.

**Where the Rain Falls:**

- The project targeted a majority of woman participants (70%), and the target group was mostly vulnerable and marginalized smallholder farmers owning land up to 141 decimal (0.57 hectares).
- The project has created the scope for a significant proportion of vulnerable women in the rural areas to be involved in community-based adaptation to manage climate change through the SuPER<sup>ix</sup> agriculture approach. The average yearly income from agriculture increased significantly compared to the baseline data, from initial BDT 21,211 to BDT 32,599 for primary group members, BDT 31,669 for secondary group member and BDT 31,000 for tertiary group members due to SuPER agriculture interventions.
- As 98% knew about climate risks, more than 80% knew the major drivers of climate change and around 90% received the early warning, it can be concluded that at least 80% of households knew about climate risks and adaptive option.
- 84% of households across primary, secondary and tertiary levels have adaptive capacities receiving information and other services related to crop production from the staff of public and private organizations compared to only 23.4 % households having that capacity during baseline.
- 50% each of primary and secondary farmers practised at least four adaptive agriculture technologies namely: changing cropping time, cultivation of flood-tolerant Aman rice, sack gardening of vegetable adapted to flood and mustard cultivation in fallow land to compensate crop loss due to flood. Almost half of women farmers were directly involved in practicing flood-tolerant Aman rice and mustard crop putting them in the driving seat.
- About half of the households have received services from the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and more than 15% of households received services from agriculture research institutes while more than 50% households received services from NGO and the vast majority of households (>70%) received access to private agriculture input sellers at the locality indicating a strong informal linkage of targeted households with different stakeholders.



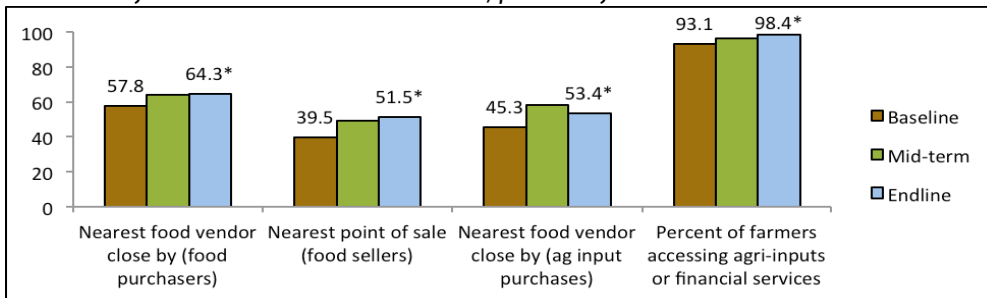
### 4.3 Inclusive Markets

- Inclusive Value Chain and Market Systems
- Analysis
- Food Processing and Value Addition
- Collective Marketing Skills and Structures

#### SHOUHARDO II:

- All indicators (QPE, SHOUHARDO II, 2015) for access to markets and services significantly improved. Nearly all farmers (98 percent) reported access to agri-inputs or financial services by the time of the endline, though only about half (52 percent) reported access to the nearest point of sale.

*Indicators of access to markets and services, percent of households at endline*



Note: Stars (\*) indicate that difference between endline and baseline value is statistically significant at the 10% level or greater

- Vegetable cultivation, although new as a cash crop to many farmers, was adopted with enthusiasm and with larger quantities than expected sold on the market
- The IGA component was able to rescue many former farmers who had lost their cropland to river erosion. While it was expected that IGAs would contribute to protecting beneficiaries against shocks, the extent to which they assisted these particular former farmers were not anticipated.

#### SAMMOW:

- The women work as a group in most case and the individual case (452 women) they do not break the wage norm they practice, that is, the individual wage rate never goes below the market wage rate set by the group.

#### Where the Rain Falls

- No evidence found



### 4.4 Nutrition

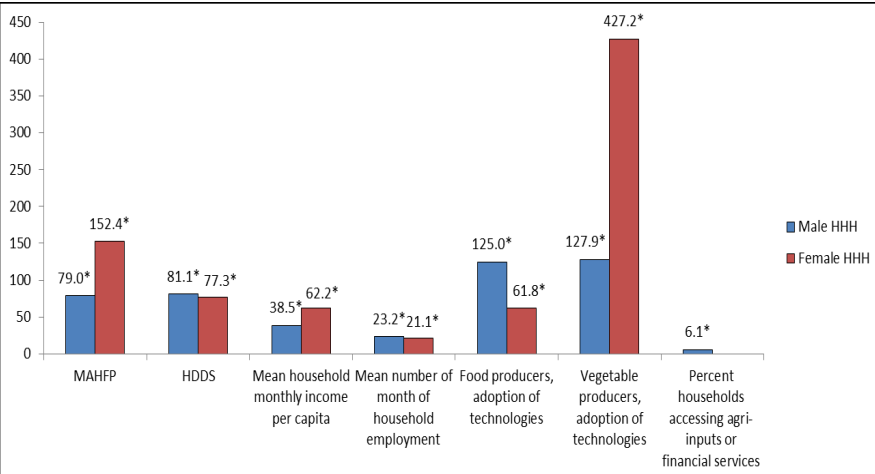
- Promoting Positive Nutrition Practices
- Homestead Food Production
- Improved Sanitation and Water Access
- System Strengthening and Coordination

#### SHOUHARDO II:

- Based on a new understanding in recent years, it now appears that a critical pathway for reducing chronic undernutrition involves the provision of multiple nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive inputs to households in vulnerable areas, thereby permitting synergies among these inputs.
- This multisectoral “convergence” approach was fully adopted by SHOUHARDO II (as it had been in SHOUHARDO I ) with highly impressive results in terms of stunting reduction, as documented in the final quantitative evaluation
- Impressive vegetable yields resulted from high-quality seeds, tools, information, and market linkages, and led to increases in both home consumption and market sales. Small livestock and fish also improved diets and generated income.
- Female-headed households were far more likely to adopt technologies related to vegetable production while male-headed households adopted field crop technologies at a greater rate. Both

groups improved significantly across almost all indicators.

Percent difference from baseline to endline of key livelihood indicators by sex of household head



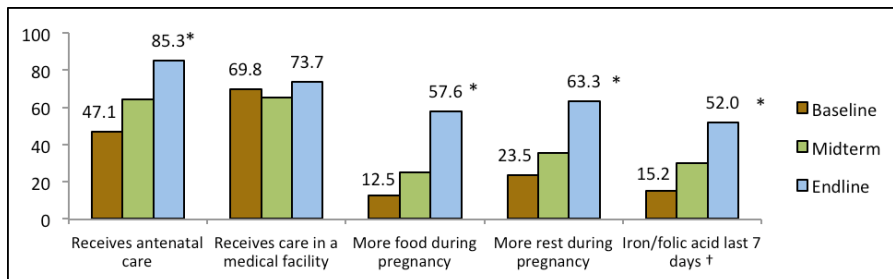
Blue bar: % change from baseline to endline, Male HHH  
 Red bar: % change from baseline to endline, Female HHH

Note: Stars (\*) indicate that difference between endline and baseline value is statistically significant at the 10% level or greater.

Note: For 'Percent of households accessing agri-inputs or financial services', female-headed households decreased 2.8 percent from baseline to endline. This change was not significant.

- At endline, almost all households reported nearly 11 months of adequate food provisioning, compared with only about six months at baseline.
- Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) was improved for all households, with female-headed increasing the most of all sub-groups. Dietary diversity scoring carried out during evaluation yielded surprisingly positive results, indicating a minimal gap between knowledge and practice in food consumption.
- Beneficiaries generally reported that their children’s weights had increased steadily every month, some indicating that their child had won a prize for showing healthy progress along with the growth chart.
- Awareness of infant and young child feeding messages significantly increased, beneficiaries informing that an infant should consume only breast milk for the first 6 months, after which the child should receive complimentary food (semi-solid food, with gradually increasing amounts of egg, fish, rice, lentils, and liver) in addition to breast milk.
- Significant improvements were achieved in caring practices for mothers. A substantially higher percentage of women received antenatal care, additional food and rest during pregnancy, and iron/folic acid<sup>38</sup> at endline than at baseline. This shows that key messages communicated by CHVs during GMP and courtyard sessions led to behaviour change.

Caring practices for mothers, percent of women utilizing practice or receiving service





† Pregnant and lactating women

Note: Stars (\*) indicate that difference between endline and baseline value is statistically significant at the 10% level or greater.

- The majority of beneficiary mothers reported that they exclusively breastfed for 6 months and continued breastfeeding for 2 years with extra food. Only rarely did mothers report that they could not exclusively breastfeed, convinced that they were not producing enough breast milk.
- Mothers, mothers-in-law, and, in SHOUHARDO II areas, targeted adolescents were also aware that

<p>breastfeeding should commence within 1 hour of birth and that colostrum should be fed to the infant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improved practices that did take place in the projects, together with improvement in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices, decrease the incidence of diarrheal disease infection reported for the SHOUHARDO II projects, as found in the quantitative evaluations.</li> <li>○ Both men and women beneficiaries were trained about proper handwashing practices at the courtyard sessions and “Trio”x group sessions.</li> <li>○ A significant increase in access and use of sanitary latrines in SHOUHARDO II, and the beneficiaries perceived this as a major advance in their communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SAMMOW:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The household dietary diversity score is 4.36 and the women’s intra-household food access score is 4.35.</li> <li>○ The overall food security of the households has improved. They face hardly food hardship now compared to two or three years ago and can now have almost three meals in a day (food insecurity reduced during follow up at 50% from the baseline 93.6%). They also told that they can now access better food as well.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Where the Rain Falls:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No evidence found</li> </ul>

 <p><b>4.5 Social Protection</b></p>	}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food Aid</li> <li>School Feeding</li> <li>Cash</li> <li>Vouchers</li> <li>Safety nets</li> </ul>
<p><b>SHOUHARDO II:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The projects were also prepared for post-shock assistance, particularly the provision of food assistance, and this was put into effect after cyclones and more serious flooding.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>SAMMOW:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No evidence noticed</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Where the Rain Falls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No evidence noticed</li> </ul>		

 <p><b>4.6 Multiplying Impact</b></p>	}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy and Influencing for Scale</li> <li>Partnerships and platforms</li> <li>Innovation and Research</li> <li>Evidence and learning</li> </ul>
<p><b>SHOUHARDO II:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SHOUHARDO II worked collaboratively and on the whole effect, with government health service officers providing MCHN services, including behavioural change counselling in the community via courtyard sessions and Extended Programme on Immunization (EPI) centres plus some door-to-door services.</li> <li>○ SHOUHARDO II was most successful in strengthening existing government systems, while the government was responsive to many project initiatives, particularly those relating to livelihoods (and most particularly with livestock and fisheries).</li> <li>○ Older women and men described earlier constraints to mobility, while younger women and men and those with SHOUHARDO II exposure (women’s empowerment or EKATA) reported that women were freer to go further from home, some noting the value of mobile phones to keep their husbands informed.</li> <li>○ Some non-beneficiaries, usually women, actively participated in courtyard sessions without</li> </ul>		

receiving the food ration, livelihood assets, or EKATA membership, but learning and utilizing the courtyard messages.

- SHOUHARDO II used management score sheets to rate UPs, UDMCs, and Union Development Coordinating Committees, and then used service fairs, “open budget” facilitation, and the activation of standing and special committees.
- SHOUHARDO II also encouraged VDCs to prepare community action plans focused on activities discussed above and to negotiate with UPs to ensure budgets for particular community action plan activities.
- In many villages, VDCs were still meeting monthly, and, in one village, they were meeting jointly with EKATA group members. However, SHOUHARDO II experience suggests that such meetings are likely to decline over time.
- Responses from the beneficiaries suggest that SHOUHARDO II was highly effective in connecting beneficiaries with government officials.
- SHOUHARDO II had provided a book to government officials at the Upazila level, containing the names and contact information of all former project volunteers and that he/she would use the volunteers for his activities.
- SHOUHARDO II provided multiple inputs (livelihoods, MCHN, WASH, EKATA, ECCD) to vulnerable households (consistent with multisectoral nutrition theory and experience indicating the synergistic benefits).
- Working productively with some government officials—whose primary orientation is responding to problems rather than preventing them—was challenging. The most serious challenges are in MCHN where, post-program, former beneficiaries are now dependent on “community clinics,” still too distant for most of them, and in disaster management, where government attention is primarily focused on disaster relief rather than preparedness. (There is no government official at the Upazila or union level whose sole responsibility is to address DRR issues.)
- The importance of WASH inputs and counselling emerged as having more importance than might have been appreciated at the onset of the program.
- The improved spousal relationships resulting from increased incomes and food security and the effects of the IGA component in rescuing families who lost farmland due to erosion. The projects also had some negative unintended effects, including, in some areas, the exacerbation of a culture of dependency.
- Encourage programs to be genuinely multisectoral, with targeted food-insecure beneficiary households receiving inputs from multiple sectors, thus taking advantage of the synergies of convergence in vulnerable areas of the country. SHOUHARDO II and the earlier SHOUHARDO I are excellent models.

**SAMMOW:**

- The higher income due to higher wage rate induces the beneficiaries to invest in livestock asset such as cow rearing, goat rearing, poultry rearing, etc. the holding of large livestock such as cow and buffalo has increased among the beneficiary households.
- Better food access ensures better health and the opportunity of education and capability of accessing education opportunity has increased.
- The female agriculture day labour of the villages, adjacent to the program village, also benefit from the program as like as a program village. This is because the female agriculture day labourers in those villages are aware of the wage rate of the nearest village and the process of forming the group and thereby act in unity.
- The EKATA group of the program village informally has taken initiatives to increase the wage rate for women agriculture day labourers in these villages. Therefore, it is very much apprehended that the program has created a spillover effect, almost equivalent to the program impact.
- More than 90 percent of landlords accept the proposed wage and signed in an agreement that they will not pay a wage below that proposed threshold.
- The landlord argues that the increased wage initially increased the labour supply and creates a



more enthusiastic labour supply.

- Agriculture Laborer Women argued that wage has to be increased every year in accordance to the inflation rate; otherwise, the immediate gain may erode within a limited time.
- The Project's effort of advocacy has successfully increased the wage of female agriculture day labour and the increased income has increased access to better livelihoods.

### **Where the Rain Falls**

- Overall, the project has reduced the food insecurity of its participants from 3.35 average food insecure months in baseline to 2 food-insecure months at the end of the project.
- The farmer-to-farmer extension approach contributed significantly to the diffusion of adaptive capacities by receiving access to services from government stakeholders as more than 80% of secondary and tertiary participants acquired this capacity learning from primary groups.
- The majority of households (>90%) have gained a sense of ownership and responsibility for the continuation of the learning after the project ends and the majority of households (>75%) can afford the tested technologies/learning after the project support is withdrawn.
- Overall, all the three targeted Union Parishad (Holokhana, Panchgachi and Jatrapur) in Kurigram allocated budget (BDT 150,000) in their annual plan for the year 2017-2018 considering climate vulnerabilities and risks compared to only one Union Parishad (Holokhana) during the baseline BDT 200,000 for the financial year 2016-2017).
- About the national policies on climate change adaptation and DRR like NAP 2013, NAEP 2012, Seed Policy, NAPA 2005 and BCCSAP 2009. So, neither duty bearers nor rights holders knew about the opportunities, roles and responsibilities. This eventually created inadequate ownership of these stakeholders to this informal linkage with the households.

## **5.0 Analysis and Identification of Evidence and Gaps:**

All three reviewed projects have differences in their goals and dimensions. In terms of agriculture collectives, the three projects' approaches were different according to their project goal. SHOUHARDO and SAMMOW both projects used EKATA as a women's platform, while WTRF used the FFS model for collective actions. As the SFTW framework harnesses cutting edge research and innovation, it made the areas visible that are not well documented in CARE Bangladesh's evidence base regarding agricultural collectives. Among the six areas of change of SFTW framework, 'Social Protection' is the particular area, where no evidence is documented except one from SHOUHARDO II. Even in SHOUHARDO II, some important moves at the policy level, especially with the Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Land on Social Protection targeting and access to Khas<sup>xi</sup> land by the landless and destitute were not recorded in any evaluation. 'Inclusive Markets' is another area where very minimal evidence is found after reviewing all available pieces of literature of CARE Bangladesh regarding Agriculture Collectives in particular to these projects. According to the project goals, objectives and strategic areas, there should have been much more shreds of evidence in these areas, as all these projects have worked with poor and extremely poor women on agriculture production, the local government system who deals with social protection schemes as the implementer from the government side. Particularly, SHOUHARDO II Project, which had Disaster risk reduction, local governance and food rationing components that have straight connections with social protection schemes. Furthermore, in evidence from SAMMOW and Where the Rain Falls Projects, there very minimum or no evidence noticed in the area of 'Nutrition' and its practices.

Overall limited policy actions have been taken for greater impact and sustainability in all three projects. It could be considered as an opportunity missed, especially for a huge project like SHOUHARDO II, which was partly funded by the government and had recognition in multiple ministries.

Project wise analysis of gaps and further enquiries required are provided as follows:

SHOUHARDO:

- While indicators of overall hunger decreased significantly between the baseline and endline, household food insecurity was still an issue that needs to be addressed, as more than 40 per cent of households reported hunger at endline.
- As noticed by the final evaluation team of SHOUHARDO II that knowledge of infant and child feeding was impressive, but it was less clear that all messages were being followed, and the team noted multiple gaps between knowledge and practice.xii
- SHOUHARDO II's works in terms of social protection (food aid, Cash, Voucher, School Feeding and Safety Net) require more evidence to measure its footprints in this area. There are strong possibilities that evidence is available, which might not come in front due to the objective and director of the certain assessment that is reviewed in this study.
- 'One consistent exception mentioned was that women should not go to the market alone. Unlike the case of decision making, this increased mobility seemed fairly recent' this is a finding of the endline qualitative evaluation, which could have more evidence to support.
- Evidence of 'Inclusive Markets' are either inadequate or requires more examples of the market system and value chain related information that SHOUHARDO II had been involved with.

#### SAMMOW:

- 'The program is successful in various indicators such as empowering the women, improving the household food security, increasing household asset base (physical and financial), and increasing better opportunity for health and education.' this statement of the impact assessment is not fully evident with facts and data, which required a further enquiry.
- The Strategic Framework of the project shows the extensive engagement of the private sector, especially in capacity building production and collective marketing. But no evidence found in this connection.
- The Project aimed to improve the household's nutritional condition, strengthen household productivity, and reduce income poverty in the long term, through developing an understanding of women's marginalization and exclusion in the agricultural value chain. There is inadequate evidence on almost all the above improve areas and connection with narrowed down to women agriculture wage within a large value chain.

#### WtRF:

- The project had worked on climate adaptive agriculture, connected Union Parishad and the local governance, and also have projected significant change production and income. But the evidence of an inclusive market for the agriculture products, the improvement in the nutrition status for the women producers and their families, and enrolling for social safety nets and other protections schemes are completely missing in the documentation available.
- It is evident that only 6-10% households across primary, secondary and tertiary category were represented as a member of Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC), 2-4% households as a member of UP standing committee and 30-38% households as a member of Community Risk Assessment (CRA). These findings indicate poor access of targeted households to the local power structures particularly to the Union Parishad for ensuring their rights/entitlement. This evidence has shown the missed opportunity by the project of enrolling the poor and extremely poor in the formal social protection interventions.
- All the best practices of the project should be piloted in other districts of the country involving farmer groups and their apex organizations in partnership with different government agencies like DAE, RDA and Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) utilizing their IPM club and village-based groups respectively. This example of multiplying impact could have been evidenced more in the final evaluation.

## 6.0 Recommendations

This report examines key successes and challenges and provides recommendations based on secondary literature. As all three projects have ended, the recommendations could only be beneficial for further research and program design with a similar type of approaches. For shaping up a gender-transformative food and market system, there is further understanding required in addition to current evidence.

- At this point, a small range of enquiries on specific issues, i.e.,
  - i) Gather more understanding on the continuation of positive nutrition practices, i.e., the current status of the best practices, keeping eye on the sustainability issues;
  - ii) Women producers access the market system and analyze the value chain to determine their contribution and attribution; - could tell the true impact stories of those projects.
- Collect further evidence on women empowerment in terms of changes and improvement in terms of building agency, changing relations and transforming structure. Among these transforming structures could be further examined, as it was less evident in all the projects and also as structural changes require time, which could happen after few years after the project ends.
- The policy and political context have changed and the government of Bangladesh has created a good policy environment for all development agendas, especially social protection. A further study is recommended on project beneficiaries' status in the changing policy environment in social protection.
- The issue of sustainability of women platforms and project developed collectives after the end of the project could be a beneficial query for the organization to design future projects building on such models.

## 7.0 Conclusion:

Eradication of extreme poverty, enhance gender equity, strengthen empowered participation of women and thereby amelioration of household-level food security is the key development agenda of the current time. Bangladesh over the past couple of decades has achieved significant progress in all these indicators. It is quite understandable that these projects have accomplished a few years back, and during this time, many changes occurred in terms of policy and practices. Therefore, there was very limited scope to find out more evidence or study in-depth for identified gaps. The SFtW framework is designed in a way that has eased the synthesizing process and bring out the gaps of evidence very clearly. Among the considered projects for this review, SHOUHARDO II is the largest one, and in a true sense has a huge volume of data and evidence. Unfortunately, when put in the SFtW framework the gaps for evidence became prominent. In comparison, the Pathways SAMMOW and Where the Rain Falls (WtRF) are two small projects with very limited opportunity to generate large number of evidence, still it is quite reasonable to have evidence in terms of market, nutrition and social protection as the project documents suggest that these projects also had the intention to get the result in those areas.

## References and Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/10/24/bangladesh-continues-to-reduce-poverty-but-at-slower-pace>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31044>, Bangladesh: Policy Options for Agriculture Insurance, 2018.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/31262>, Economic Empowerment of Women through Resilient Agriculture Supply Chains: A Geospatial and Temporal Analysis in Southwestern Bangladesh, The World Bank Group, 2019.

<sup>iv</sup> i. SHOUHARDO II – the Flagship Non-Emergency Food Security Project under MYAP-USAID (2010 – 15);

ii. Pathways SAMMOW III – with the financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2012 – 14); and

iii. Where the Rain Falls – a community-based adaptation project of CARE Bangladesh (2017 – 19)

<sup>v</sup> All information regarding SHOUHARDO II has been extracted from, i. ‘Qualitative Evaluation of Food for Peace Development Food Assistance Projects in Bangladesh’- FANTA; ii. ‘Final Quantitative Performance Evaluation SHOUHARDO II Multi-Year Assistance Program’ – TANGO, iii. ‘Quantitative impact evaluation of the SHOUHARDO II Project in Bangladesh’ – TANGO, 2015

<sup>vi</sup> All information regarding SAMMOW has been extracted from, ‘An impact assessment of the SAMMOW project on women agriculture day laborers, their household and communities’; Dr. Mohammed Abu Eusuf & Md. Abdul Khaleque, 2014.

<sup>vii</sup> All information regarding Where the Rain Falls (WtRF) Project has been extracted from, ‘Where the Rain Falls (WtRF) Phase-III Final Evaluation Report’ - Dr. Syed Samsuzzaman, Dr. Md. Muzaffar Ahmed, Jahida Mustari, and Shahid Hossain. 2019

<sup>viii</sup> The QPE used the IPTT definition of this indicator, which is defined as adoption of three improved technologies.

<sup>ix</sup> SuPER (Sustainable, Profitable, Equitable and Resilient) Agriculture Approach, is a set of principles that guides CARE’s work in small-scale agriculture in a changing climate. For more information, please see <https://careclimatechange.org/our-work/super/>

<sup>x</sup> In “Trio” groups (separate courtyard sessions for mothers, fathers, and grandmothers led by group leaders of the same sex and age group) the same family might get the same message in three different ways.

<sup>xi</sup> Government owned fallow land, where nobody has property rights. It is land which is deemed to be owned by government and available for allocation according to government priorities.

<sup>xii</sup> These gaps between knowledge and practice were found frequently in the projects. The high levels of knowledge demonstrated by beneficiaries are testimony to the high quality of BCC extension services in the projects, coupled with the inevitable desire among respondents to please. The shortfalls in actual practice appear to result from some combination of inadequate autonomy of decision making by the respondent and both resource and time constraints.