



Government of Bangladesh



Lessons from the Chars Livelihoods Programme, Bangladesh (2004-2010)

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Ten Years of 'War Against Poverty':

**What Have We Learned Since 2000 & What Should We Do
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**Ten Years of ‘War Against Poverty’:
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Lessons from the Chars Livelihoods Programme (2004-2010)**

1 Introduction

The Chars Livelihoods Programme Phase One (CLP1) was a Department for International Development (DFID) funded integrated rural livelihoods development programme, running from early 2004 to early 2010 in north-west Bangladesh. Based on the remote River Jamuna sand islands (chars) of five Bangladeshi districts¹, CLP1 specifically focused its interventions on 55,000 extreme poor households² who were ‘assetless’ and owned no land.³ Echoing the Millennium Development Goals, CLP1’s objective was to halve extreme poverty in the riverine areas of Bangladesh by 2015.

The CLP1 pathway aimed to increase the income and wealth of extreme poor households through a number of mutually re-enforcing activities. At CLP1’s heart was “asset transfer”: a one-off significant productive asset grant to participant households. Supporting this transfer were interventions targeted at the household level: basic infrastructure improvements to mitigate against environmental vulnerability and improve household sanitation facilities and access to clean drinking water; homestead garden inputs to increase household food security; social development education to raise social and human capital, and improve social cohesion; cash stipends to buoy consumption and support the asset transfer; and enterprise activities to boost household level income earning opportunities. In addition, large pilots were undertaken in the health, nutrition, education and community based savings areas. Significant employment opportunities were also provided during relatively food insecure seasons for participant households and the wider community through various public cash-for-work schemes.

As CLP1 has drawn to a close, it is time to review and assess its approach. Does the CLP1 model work, and in what circumstances? What lessons can be drawn for other extreme poverty reduction programmes? The following paper attempts to answer these questions and is based on six years of CLP1’s implementation experience, activities and empirical evidence.

2 Background to Bangladesh & chars context

Bangladesh is characterised by poverty; 146th on the Human Development Index, 35 million Bangladeshis live below the extreme poverty line.⁴ This extreme, often chronic, poverty is synonymous with hunger and malnutrition: nearly 50% of Bangladeshi children are underweight and nearly a third of the entire population is malnourished.⁵ As such, Bangladesh is ranked 67 (out of 84 countries) on the Global Hunger Index with a rating of 24.7; a score considered alarming by the index’s developers.⁶ Gender inequalities are also

¹ These districts were Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Sirajganj and Bogra.

² Households living in under the extreme poverty line, as defined by DFID Bangladesh, represent the poorest 10% of the population. Jackson (2009), using inflation adjusted 2005 BBS HIES data, calculates this to be those households living on less than Tk.22 per capita per day at the national level and for Rajshahi Division, covering the CLP1 working area, Tk. 18 per capita per day. However, it should be noted that although CLP1 focused on the poorest 10%, in the char areas this does not mean only 10% of the population was targeted. It is estimated that, on average, 30% of households across CLP1’s working area qualified for the programme.

³ CLP1 defined ‘assetless’ as the household owning productive assets worth less than Tk.5000 (currently equivalent to approximately £50) and landless to mean owning absolutely no land, either homestead or agricultural. Other selection criteria included joblessness, no outstanding loans to micro-credit institutions, length of residency in their village and non-recipient of other grant or credit based programme. See www.clp-bangladesh.org for further details.

⁴ Number of extreme poor households taken from BBS (2006). Bangladesh is 146th out of 182 countries surveyed on the HDI, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_BGD.html.

⁵ Mascie-Taylor & Goto (2008).

⁶ See www.ifpri.org/publication/2009-global-hunger-index for further details.

highly prevalent, with Bangladesh ranking 108 (out of 109 countries) on the UN gender empowerment measure.⁷

Nonetheless, between 2000 and 2005, the number of people below \$1.25 a day⁸ in Bangladesh declined from 58% to 50%. This significant poverty reduction was coupled with high levels of economic growth and increases in per-capita consumption expenditure.⁹ Although there has been a substantial decline in households living in poverty over the last decade in Bangladesh, a significant part of the population still live below the poverty line.

2.1 The chars context

Chars are low-lying temporary sand islands formed and reformed yearly through silt deposition and erosion. Although mainly habitable and cultivated, the remote River Jamuna chars are inundated with flood water throughout the monsoon season (June – September), making inhabitants' lives subject to environmental instability, prone to seasonal migration and pronounced asset, income and consumption fluctuations. It is estimated that char households migrate up to five times a generation, with poorer households moving more times due to the relative vulnerability of their homestead land.

Home to approximately one million people, the isolated River Jamuna char communities are severely deprived and face multiple livelihood challenges. The poverty that characterises char households is not just a lack of income or assets; they also experience limited access to healthcare, education services, markets and other government institutions, and inadequate infrastructure. Labour markets are also constricted, with limited diversification in the rural Bangladeshi economy resulting in few off-farm employment options. Most char households are reliant on daily wage employment for survival. Moreover, the limited and fluctuating opportunities and wages for agricultural activities rarely allow for human capital investments or asset accumulation. Although local government exists in the chars, due to the remote location and difficult environment, many services are limited, absent or lacking. Power is invested in local elites through stable lines of patronage and deeply entrenched social and cultural norms.

Char households are particularly sensitive to seasonal income and consumption trends and are considered the most food insecure in Bangladesh.¹⁰ The depressed employment period between the planting and the harvesting of the *aman* (rice) crop from September to November is associated with *monga* (seasonal hunger). *Monga* itself can be prolonged and intensified due to a number of factors including the severity of the near annual preceding floods and monsoon. Although anticipated, this seasonal decline in income has the most significant impact on the poorest households in the community, who in times of scarcity such as *monga*, use various coping strategies to subsist. Household coping strategies employed are often trade-offs between short-term survival and longer-term economic goals and can include the distress sale of assets, reduction in consumption and high interest usury. Subsequently, the impact at the household level can be severe with sustained losses in income, assets, consumption and future household growth.¹¹

Under-nutrition is also widespread on the chars and is caused by both an inadequate diet (quantity and quality) and poor sanitation and hygiene behaviour and conditions. Prolonged chronic under-nutrition has multiple long-term implications. Malnutrition limits proper cognitive development in children. Female adults who are malnourished are more likely to have children who are, in turn, malnourished. Adults who were undernourished in their

⁷ For further details on the gender empowerment measure see the Human Development Report 2009: Country Factsheet Bangladesh.

⁸ At 2005 international prices adjusted for purchasing power parity.

⁹ Serrajudin *et al* (2007).

¹⁰ WFP (2002).

¹¹ Khanker (2009) and Carter & Barrett (2006).

childhood are less productive later on in life.¹² Thus, malnutrition is a human condition that can be passed down and perpetuated between generations. A recent CLP1 survey showed that 61% of char children were undernourished; and similar to the national average, 50% of char children were stunted.¹³ However, 1 in 5 char children were wasted and 50% were underweight, compared to national levels of 1 in 7 and 43% respectively.¹⁴

3 The CLP Pathway Model & Overview

3.1 The CLP Pathway Model

Working in a remote, institutionally weak and environmentally volatile region was challenging and needed careful consideration of what the right entry points were, and how to balance processes and methodologies. Alternative methodologies were considered; many were tried and adopted or rejected. Given early experiences, CLP1 focused on simplifying processes to ensure goods and services were delivered directly to extreme poor households while placing strong emphasis on checking activities were completed as contracted, and carefully examining the impact evidence, in large part to adjust delivery processes. Over time, CLP1 created a model which reduced extreme poverty in a location others had not reached.

The centre piece of CLP1's approach was the transfer of productive assets to 55,000 extreme poor households through a core participant in each household. The vast majority of those selected to be direct recipients of the transfer were female, viewed as central participants in the development process, and targeted through applying the criteria of being able to attend weekly social discussion meetings. This transfer was supplemented with a monthly household cash stipend for 18 months to support household consumption and the cost of undertaking their income generating activity.¹⁵

In addition, these 55,000 core participating households were further supported with a range of complementary interventions. These included annual employment opportunities for up to 50 days on public works during *monga* or the provision of cash safety-nets if no household member was able to work; inputs and training to engage in livelihood activities, such as homestead gardening; and support for the development of social capital through group formation, and an 18 month curriculum of awareness raising and capacity building, initially focusing on asset selection and management. In addition core participant households were prioritised for work opportunities on a cash for work programme, raising households above the high flood line.

The sequencing of these interventions was specifically timed to either meet the seasonal needs of households or to build layers of mutually re-enforcing interventions. A simplified model of the delivery sequencing of these inputs and life-cycle of the core-participant household in the programme is given in Figure 1.

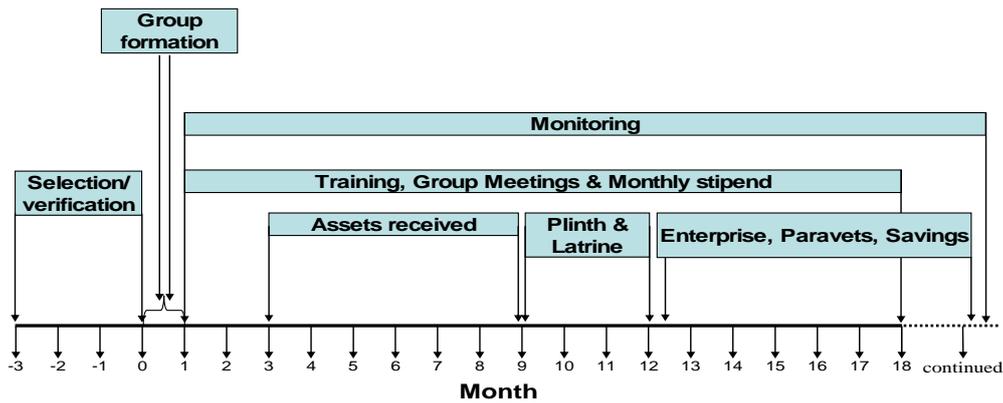
Figure 1: CLP1 activity sequencing over the life-cycle of the participant household

¹² DFID (2010).

¹³ DFID (2010), p.6.

¹⁴ IML (2010b).

¹⁵ For the first six months, the households would receive two cash stipends: one a livelihood support grant of Tk. 250, the other a household support transfer of Tk. 350. The household grant was continued for a further 12 months.



3.1.1 Beyond the core participant household

The 55,000 core participants households and up to 45,000 additional poor households had their homes raised on plinths above flood levels, received latrines and, where required, tube-wells. Many chars households were also offered both *monga* and dry-season (January-April) cash-for-work. Piloted in some of CLP1’s working areas, households were also offered membership of a Village Savings and Loans Association.

Other activities to promote enterprise development and improve access to markets, savings and credit benefited all 900,000 residents of the island chars. This provision of wider community support went some way to negating potential community criticism of CLP1’s targeted approach.

Household income generating activities are as much for household consumption as income generation, although some are run as small, growing enterprises. Poultry rearing and milk production are two examples of activities that were scaled up due to their simplicity and relevance to the livelihoods activities of core participants. The Milk Marketing Project encouraged small dairy farmers to form informal collectives in order to increase the quantity of milk marketed to large liquid milk processors and the price obtained for this milk. The Improved Poultry Rearing Project used a system that increased poultry productivity and decreased chick mortality rates. In addition to providing other income streams, this produce was partly consumed directly by the household.

Furthermore, CLP1 supported the growing and sale of fresh fodder on the chars to mitigate against any seasonal livestock fodder shortages. This was grown from imported Sweet Jambo seed by small scale farmers, including some CLP1 core participants. Produce was mostly consumed by the household but also sold to the local market, including to cattle owning CLP1 core participants. People therefore had access to fresh fodder from February through to the early monsoon, when fodder becomes more difficult to source and prices rise. CLP1 has also experimented with household silage preparation, made from this fresh Jambo fodder on raised plinths, and plans to increase its production into the next phase of CLP.

3.1.2 Promoting livelihoods through enterprise and market based service provision

CLP1’s approach was to help develop livelihood enterprises and promote market-based service provision tailored to households that were diversifying into cattle, and away from cattle-fattening into small-scale land leasing for agricultural production. Priorities included livestock and agricultural services to provide inputs (e.g. vaccines, artificial insemination, fertiliser, fodder, vegetable seed, saplings and farm machinery rentals) and improved market information on the relative values of cash crops, market opportunities and their suitability for production in char soils. Market based opportunities were especially useful for households who had already gone through the initial 18-month asset transfer cycle in CLP1 districts and were ready to continue their momentum out of extreme poverty.

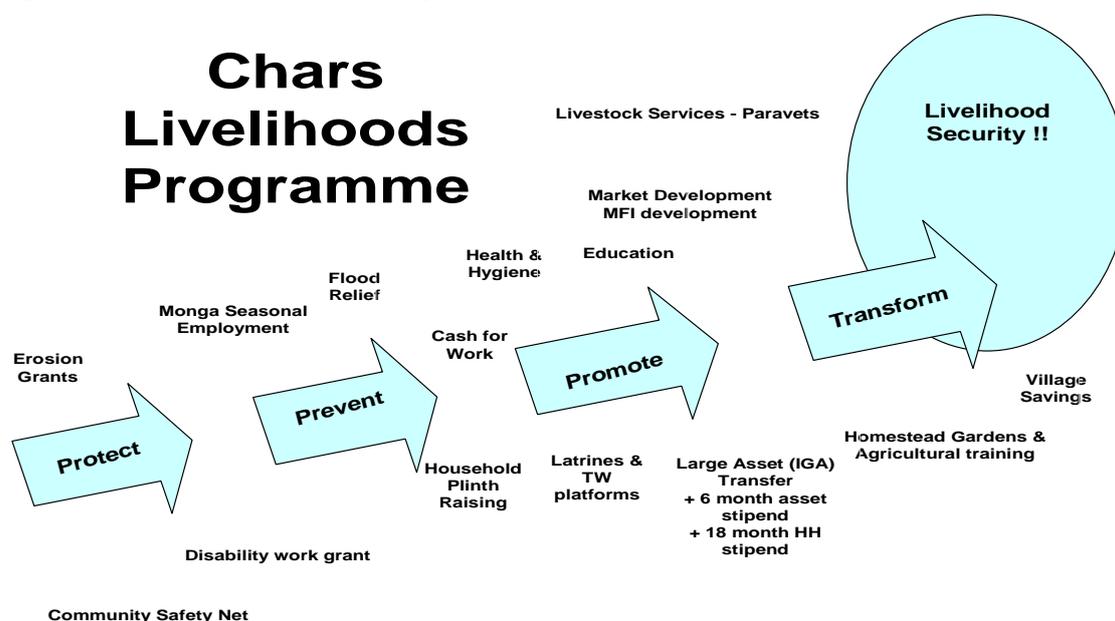
Local Service Providers sold relevant goods and services, primarily to enhance livelihoods of current and previous core participants. Local Service Providers were supported by CLP1 through an appropriate combination of training and subsidy. These included: technical training in their specific business field; provision of working capital (e.g. a subsidy for imported solar fridges, or stove materials); market development through discount vouchers distributed to selected clients; and if necessary, ensuring supply of goods, for example, vaccine from the government manufacturer and the supply of solar fridges. Around 350 Livestock Service Providers (LSPs) were trained and their businesses supported by CLP1, to ensure investments and livelihoods gains made by participants were maintained and have the potential to grow. Vouchers were distributed to participating households for livestock and poultry vaccines and artificial insemination from LSPs and qualified Technicians respectively, for subsequent reimbursement by CLP’s IMOs.

3.1.3 Increasing access to health and education services

CLP1 recognised that access to health and education was crucial for poverty reduction in the medium term but its approach was to first tackle the immediate priorities of the extreme poor: such as household consumption and subsistence. However, the programme explored options for improving access to health and education services in a situation where Government provision was (and continues to be) inadequate and “piloted” a Primary Health Care and Family Planning Project and a Non-Formal Primary Education Project.¹⁶

This core model coupled with a range of peripheral activities to core and non-core households, attempted to provide fundamental support to the extreme poor and a “pathway” to a more sustainable livelihood. An approximate conceptual image of this is shown in Figure. 2. This does not show the breakdown of resources put to any one of these activities but is intended to demonstrate the principle that provision was attempted for households across a spectrum of livelihoods status, amongst the poorest group.

Figure 2: The CLP1 Pathway Model



3.2 Overview of defining CLP1 characteristics

3.2.1 Extreme poverty reduction but not ‘business as usual’

¹⁶ Goodman & Scott (2010).

CLP1 took a holistic but intensive approach to extreme poverty reduction, focused on improving welfare at the same time as supporting household economic growth. CLP1 had a number of design and implementation mechanisms that characterise its approach and these differences are highlighted in the sections that follow.

3.2.2 Programme design, then redesign

Originally proposed as a livestock development project in the late 1990s, CLP1 was designed and began in 2004 as a ‘voice and choice’ programme. However, by 2005 following limited progress in implementation, a significant re-design of the programme was needed. It was belatedly realised that given the context of such weak government capacity and response, a large-scale voice and choice programme would not be achievable and a move towards asset transfer emerged.¹⁷ Despite the more mainstream approach of supporting government to deliver poverty reduction, the potential for unreasonable transaction costs using this mechanism was evident in CLP1, for example from high levels of leakage reported from cash-for-work sites administered by local government.¹⁸

3.2.3 Organisational structure

Although funded by DFID, CLP1 was co-sponsored by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), through its Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. Contracted out by DFID to a private sector international management agency, Maxwell Stamp plc, CLP1 activities and outputs were managed by a team of international and national staff from a Secretariat based in Bogra, 200km north-west of Dhaka, plus five further CLP1 district offices. Programme activities were delivered in the field by up to 21 local NGOs or Implementing Organisations (IMOs). Through these IMOs, over 400 locally based Community Development Organisers (CDOs) worked closely with participant households and delivered many of the core elements of the programme; including the delivery of the 56 week social development curriculum, the transfer of cash stipends and regular monitoring of households. This intensive localised support was considered critical to running and maintaining an adaptive programme, tailored to the real needs of targeted participants.

CLP1 activities were delivered by NGO implementing organisations (known in CLP1 as IMOs). In recent years the traditional approach to working with such organisations has been the ‘partnership’ model in which plans and programmes are either agreed consensually or the local partner submits its own proposal. A defining characteristic of CLP1 was that the relationship with IMOs was defined by accountable contract conditions, with contracts being rescinded if performance was substandard. Strict adherence to the terms of this relationship helped raise implementation standards considerably over other donor funded work in the region, as IMOs realised they needed to deliver in order to continue and successfully win further contracts. This approach was coupled with the installation of online financial accounting software in all its IMO contractors and building capacity in its use. This, in turn, increased the standards of financial management and reporting in general. This resulted in CLP1 knowing its exact cash position at any one time and was a major factor in being able to respond rapidly to widespread flooding in mid-2007. Further, on the monitoring side, CLP1 specified the services and inputs to be offered, the size, scale and standard of deliverables and agreed a fixed price for inputs and services. A sample of these outputs was monitored by an independent verification contractor which helped to significantly reduce IMO over-reporting and leakage, and ultimately ensured quality. All this enabled CLP1 to deliver quality results at a rapid rate and to scale.

3.2.4 Pilot, learn and then scale-up

The CLP1 methodological approach was to pilot interventions, learn from them and then, if successful, scale up activities. The first cohort of 3,160 households (Asset Transfer Project,

¹⁷ For further details on the genesis of CLP1, see Hodson (2006).

¹⁸ See Conroy *et al* (2008).

Phase 1 or ATP1) was an experimental phase, which offered three separate transfer approaches to households.¹⁹ The experience saw CLP1 refine household asset transfer activities and also focus attention on household targeting over its next three cohort groups (Table 1).

Table 1: Background characteristics of CLP1 ATP1 - 4²⁰

	Asset Distribution Dates	Number of Beneficiary Households	Baseline Income – Per Capita Per Day (Tk.)	Baseline Average Asset Level (Tk.)
ATP1	Jan-June 2006	3,160	17.4	3,674
ATP2	Dec-May 2007	8,295	17.4	1,662
ATP3	Dec-May 2008	18,672	20.2	1,876
ATP4	Aug-Feb 2009	24,751	19	2,404

3.2.5 Household identification

Counter to prevailing practices such as participatory wealth ranking, CLP1 developed and applied simple and unambiguous selection criteria as proxies for household income and well-being. Operationally, this process was undertaken by IMO staff, which reduced transaction costs and was ultimately proven to be successful. Data collected from each cohort of households prior to entering the programme showed that they met the characteristics identified with the extreme poor (Table 1). Once households were identified by IMOs, between 3-5% of households were ‘verified’ by the CLP1 senior management team to ensure that they met selection criteria. Despite the costs involved (approximately 450 person work days of Secretariat staff), this demonstrated to IMOs and their staff that CLP1 management was serious in its approach and this significantly reduced initial targeting errors. Without verification, IMO staff would have been more prone to make in/exclusion errors e.g. due to pressures from local elites. The success of this tightening was clearly seen in the average baseline asset levels of ATP2 and ATP3 households in contrast to ATP1 (Table 1).

If the verification process identified households that were not eligible for support then these households were excluded. Similarly if households were identified as meeting CLP1 criteria but had not been included by the IMO then these households were included in the subsequent phase of support. If the selection list contained a targeting error on either measure greater than 5%, the IMO would be asked to repeat the selection process. Needless to say, no IMO had to repeat this more than once, and standards have been consistently high since the lengthy revisions witnessed in the early phases of the programme. The success of the targeting and verification process has meant that it will also be undertaken in CLP2.

3.2.6 Monitoring, improving performance and reducing corruption

Given the large transfer value to a significant number of households, CLP1 introduced a number of monitoring methodologies to ensure that the right inputs (both quality and quantity) were delivered to the correct participants and, if present, leakage was identified and investigated.

Anonymous and random surveys were undertaken annually by independent contractors to gauge if participants were happy with the services they received as well as the impact at the household level of the interventions. At the transaction level, CLP1 also introduced a quarterly independent monitoring of up to 10% of outputs reported by IMOs. These simple methodologies allowed CLP1 to monitor contractor performance, ensure households received what they were entitled to and also meant that where issues arose, matters could be dealt with as they occurred. Leakage monitoring processes developed over time, in particular for CLP1’s major cash-for-work scheme, which ensured that levels of reported leakage dropped

¹⁹ See Scott and Islam (2007), for further details.

²⁰ Adjusted for inflation at a nominal 10% per annum, given at September 2009 prices.

from highs of 19% to less than 1% in the final two years of the intervention.²¹ Again this intensive approach was considered necessary to ensure the greatest returns to the household.

3.2.7 Assets not cash: why?

While lauding the productive capacity of targeted asset transfer programmes, such as CLP1, Sabates-Wheeler *et al* (2009) assert:

'But some concerns have been raised. One question is whether giving assets to poor people is more effective than transferring the cash equivalent and allowing recipients to make their own spending choices.'

Providing such large direct cash transfers to extreme poor women in reality posed too many associated risks. Feedback from partner staff raised questions around both the safe delivery and transfer of cash to these women, with the minimal presence of any security guarantee on the chars. Also female participants' ability to utilise the money without external influence, either in the form of their male relatives or money lenders who might seek to have old debts repaid, was limited. Further, although unpalatable, due to cultural limitations on their mobility char women find livestock markets unsafe and might be put at risk if given 6-8 months household cash-flow as a lump sum. All of these factors made large cash transfers within the chars context both impractical and too high risk.

3.2.8 Extreme poverty reduction at a price

The intensive support offered by CLP1 to targeted households required significant resources: the unit cost for one household participating in CLP1's core programme was approximately £557.²² This figure excludes monitoring and evaluation, and management costs. This is a high unit cost compared to many previous approaches. This is thought to be a consequence of donors often wishing to increase participant numbers on paper, at the cost of meaningful impact at an individual household level. There are also difficulties of applying selection criteria to define a group who will subsequently leapfrog over others' levels of wellbeing. Indeed, the general approach of Bangladesh's own national social transfers portfolio has been described as "nothing for everybody"²³. Although sustainability over five years or longer is yet to be proven, and the evidence is considered at such a time, the experience to date has been encouraging in succeeding to make a lasting improvement in household income and other poverty measures. As discussed below significant impact has been shown both from the relatively small numbers included in the early phases and the larger but more recent ATP3 and 4 intakes.

4 CLP1 Impact on Extreme Poor Households

CLP1 has been extremely successful in meeting almost all of its logframe objectives and maintaining a high standard of output delivery. Beyond transactional success, CLP1 has had a significant and sustained transformational impact at the household level; indicating that asset transfer in the char context is an '*essential component*' to assist households escape from '*low input, low output*' poverty.²⁴ The following section presents some of the major household impacts of CLP1 and counters the argument that social transfer programmes are merely palliative and only allow for a trade off between growth and inequality reduction.²⁵

4.1 Sustainability of increasing the productive asset base

Table 2 shows the significant increases in the value of average household level productive assets over time. ATP1 households, approximately 42 months after joining CLP1 and 24

²¹ See CLP related reports for further details, www.clp-bangladesh.org.

²² Based on 2008 figures, inflation adjusted at a nominal 10% to 2010 prices.

²³ Carrel De Rooy, UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh, personal communication.

²⁴ Sabates-Wheeler *et al* (2009) p. 21.

²⁵ Alderman & Hoddinott in IFPRI (2009) p. 279. To review a clear rebuff of the trade-offs between poverty reduction and economic growth see Ravillion (2003).

months after receiving no further assistance from the programme, increased their productive asset base significantly: from an average initial Tk. 2,024 to Tk. 46,024. Significant increases are also seen for ATP2 and ATP3 households. It is also of note that there were substantial increases (up to 250%) in non-productive assets across all of the cohorts.²⁶ These sustained increases go well beyond the original transfer and are indicative of what can be achieved through targeted and well-delivered programmes.

Table 2: Inflation adjusted average asset values (Tk.) on entry & over time in CLP1²⁷

	ATP1	ATP2	ATP3
Initial Productive Asset Value (Tk.)	2,024	488	486
2009 Productive Asset Value (Tk.)	46,024	34,281	31,934

The increase in the average household asset base was also reflected in the annual returns from the cattle transfers, with evidence of 70% net returns annually.²⁸

Complementary and re-enforcing interventions, such as the support of Livestock Services Providers and increased access to livestock vaccinations have also been shown to be essential: evident in the low mortality rate of livestock (less than 3%).²⁹

4.2 Household income and expenditure

Incomes and expenditures have also increased significantly for participant households, with all four cohorts reporting income levels higher, on average, than the national extreme poverty line, and one early cohort reporting income and expenditure exceeding the national poverty line (Table 3). Even given the differences between how the Bangladeshi extreme poverty line³⁰ and CLP1 income³¹ and expenditure figures were calculated, over time from pre-entry there has been significant increases in mean monthly income and expenditure of participant households.³² By September 2009, average ATP1 and ATP2 households had seen a 66% and 59% increase in income from their baseline figures. These continued increases are evidence of the sustained household impact that integrated asset transfer programmes can have on extremely poor households.³³

Table 3: Mean income and expenditure per capita per day (pcpd) in September 2009 and since entering CLP1³⁴

	ATP1	ATP2	ATP3	ATP4
Months since assets transfer	39-45	28-33	16-21	6-13
Income baseline (Tk pcpd)³⁵	17.4	17.4	20.2	19.0

²⁶ Scott & Islam (2010b).

²⁷ Scott & Islam (2010a).

²⁸ Marks & Sultana (2009). Note that the annualised return figure given in this report is developed from increases in asset values and net income.

²⁹ Scott & Islam (2010b), p.14

³⁰ The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics uses the cost of basic needs approach to calculate the extreme poverty line, in this case using a basket of eleven items to develop its final figure. See www.bbs.gov.bd and Jackson (2009) for further details.

³¹ To calculate income figures the following are included: cash income, CLP stipends, NGO/ GoB stipends, agricultural and livestock product sales, net cash income from livestock sales, loans, begging, dowry, remittances, savings withdrawn, food/ gifts received in-kind.

³² For an explanation of the how the CLP calculates household and income and expenditure, see Scott & Islam (2010b).

³³ All figures taken from Scott & Islam (2010a).

³⁴ Adapted from Scott & Islam (2010b). It should be highlighted that counter to prevailing practice on household income and expenditure measurement, CLP includes lumpy expenditure and cash sources, such as dowries and loans taken and repaid, in its reported figures.

³⁵ Adjusted at a nominal inflation rate of 10% per annum; given at September 2009 prices.

Income in Sept. 2009 (Tk pcpd)	28.9	27.6	24.0	25.8
Expenditure in Sept. 2009 (Tk pcpd)	29.8	32.3	27.7	29.7
Mean monthly hh income since entering programme (Tk pcpd)	n.a.	24.6	25.4	29.5

4.3 Diversifying income streams and investment choices

Diversifying income streams was also evident in the average, 15,000 and 10,000 households selling poultry produce and milk respectively each month and the increases in income derived from agricultural and livestock products of early entry households.³⁶ Evidence also indicates that while livestock investment is the most popular choice for ATP2 and ATP3 households following cattle sales, for the earlier ATP1 households, investment in land is the most popular re-investment choice.³⁷ This is not unsurprising given the positive and significant correlation between agricultural land ownership and consumption in rural areas in Bangladesh.³⁸ Interestingly, while initially savings made up 1-2% of expenditure for households early in their CLP pathways, this percentage gradually increased to a significant 20-30%. This suggests that in addition to incomes increasing, households over time feel more secure to save, rather than consume their income and use it on further investment opportunities. Interestingly monthly monitoring also suggested that an increasing percentage of household heads from early entry households were reporting undertaking no employment opportunities. Given the increased household incomes this is not indicative of a lack of daily wage activities but rather households working on their income generating opportunities.³⁹

Taken together, the increases in both the productive asset base and household cash-flow and expenditure support the structural poverty reduction argument that, *'households that can steadily accumulate assets...will grow their way out of poverty.'*⁴⁰ Productive asset transfer, delivered to a high standard, equates to increased household income streams and interaction within market-based opportunities that landless chars dwellers would normally have neither the asset or income base to undertake.

4.4 Multiplier effects: beyond income and asset improvements

CLP1 has also delivered significant results beyond asset, and income and expenditure improvements. Between 2006-2009, CLP undertook four nutritional and anthropometric data collection campaigns, which evidenced that longer-term recruitment in CLP1 resulted in *'significant reductions in chronic under-nutrition in both mothers and children'*. It was shown that early entry children were 1.3 times less likely to be stunted than children whose families had spent less time in the programme. The longitudinal survey also showed improvements in mothers' BMI.⁴¹

Food security was also shown to have increased in early entry households. Between June 2007 - February 2010 there was a significant 82% and 85% reported decrease in ATP1 and ATP2 households respectively stating that they were food insecure.⁴² While the impact of increased income streams on food security was vital, the effect of consumed homestead garden produce should not be overlooked: monthly, on average, this represented an additional 10% of household food expenditure.⁴³ Results also showed that during the *monga* month of October (2008) ATP1-3 households were consuming Tk. 142 worth of homestead garden produce, four times that of ATP4 households that had just entered the programme. Over 80%

³⁶ Figures taken from CLP website: www.clp-bangladesh.org.

³⁷ Scott & Islam (2010b).

³⁸ Kotikula *et al* (2010), p.12

³⁹ This is also supported by anecdotal evidence from the field.

⁴⁰ Carter & Barrett (2006), p.185

⁴¹ IML (2010b).

⁴² Taken from internal CLP1 monthly monitoring figures and based on the question asked monthly to households, '(H)ow many days in the last seven days have you eaten a smaller portion of food due to a shortage of food?'

⁴³ Conroy & Islam (2009), p.6

of households also stated that the produce grown on their homestead garden was either 'helpful', 'very helpful' or 'crucial' in supporting their family during *monga*.⁴⁴

These positive nutritional impacts were also felt in the wider community. During the 2007 *monga* season Infrastructure and Employment Programme (IEP), children from IEP participating households showed significantly greater mean improvements in height, weight, Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) and were significantly less wasted than children from control households.⁴⁵ In contrast to control households, IEP household food expenditures were also considerably higher, with subsequent gains in protein consumption in the same households.

Piloting late into its own programme cycle, over the 2009 *monga* season, CLP1 tested the impact of a three month combined therapy intervention, through the provision of deworming tablets and daily micronutrients to participant households. The results indicated considerable nutritional outcomes for the pilot. For children in households that were given deworming tablets there was a 40% reduction in wasting from baseline to endline, with a 54% reduction in wasting, over the same period, for those children who had taken both micronutrients and deworming tablets. Comparatively, in the control group the reduction in wasting was only 3.5%. Adults who had taken the combined therapy also suffered the least weight loss over the period.⁴⁶ In CLP Phase 2 (CLP2), the programme will attempt to mainstream regular deworming and micronutrient consumption through a network of supported local health workers.

4.4.1 Monga reduction

Supporting the nutrition impacts and the increased food security of households, a survey undertaken during 2007 showed the positive impact that participation on the Infrastructure and Employment Programme (IEP) and its corresponding safety-net (IEP SN) had on reducing household vulnerability to shock. From similar baselines and in contrast to their control groups, *'there were less distress loans, less asset sales, less migration, less advance labour sales and less begging in IEP and (IEP) SN households'* during *monga* 2007.⁴⁷

4.4.2 Behaviour change

The CDO taught Social Development curriculum, delivered over an 18-month period, supported an increase in human capital within households. In addition to increasing participant knowledge, re-enforcing the various asset and infrastructure transfers in this way was crucial. Significant behaviour change results were seen in relation to reported use of the sanitary latrines provided by CLP, with between 50-60% of pre-entry adults and children using open spaces to defecate to >70% of both groups reportedly using the CLP1 provided sanitary latrine post transfer. Evidence also showed that between early entry and pre-entry households, there was a 50% increase in female decision making related to family planning. Improvements in rights knowledge were evident with over 80% of early entry households able to recall the correct marriage rights in contrast to only 30% of pre-entry households.⁴⁸

Further, in addition to reported behaviour change impacts, early entry households also stated higher levels of self-perceived community respect and intra-household relations. This would suggest that economic empowerment and increased knowledge was leading to decreased social exclusion, improved sanitation practices and enhanced female decision making within the household.

⁴⁴ Conroy (2009)

⁴⁵ IML (2010a)

⁴⁶ All figures from IML (2010b).

⁴⁷ Conroy & Marks (2008), p. 27

⁴⁸ Figures taken from Conroy (2009).

4.5 CLP1 community-wide activities & adaptations

A key transferable lesson learned by CLP1 was the importance of having flexible programming that assisted households to manage predictable and unpredictable shock. These community-wide poverty prevention activities included the CLP's *monga* related IEP, the IEP Advance, the IEP-SN, and a one off, but substantial, flood response in 2007.

4.5.1 The development of the Infrastructure & Employment Programme

Developed and adjusted across five *monga* seasons (2005-2009), after significant piloting in 2005 and scaling up in 2006 a newly designed (and renamed) cash-for-work programme was initiated in 2007. This section goes into detail on the design and subsequent modifications to illustrate the continued process of how Operations and Monitoring sections within CLP1 worked together to provide responsive evidence-based activity design.

The IEP had a dual function of producing infrastructure, in addition to providing employment (and therefore income) opportunities during the traditionally economically depressed *monga* period. Table 4 provides an overview of CLP1 *monga* cash-for-work / IEP activities between 2005-2009.

Table 4: Overview of CLP1 *monga* cash-for-work / Infrastructure & Employment Programme activities 2005-2009⁴⁹

Year	Person Days	Participants	Average Days Worked Per Labourer	Average Daily Wages (Tk.)	Plinths Raised	Plinths Repaired
2005	225,000	14,123	16	80 (Fixed)	0	0
2006	1,016,803	38,000	27	80 (Fixed)	5,729	0
2007	2,634,500	50,750	29	110	10,427	3,500+
2008	755,000	19,371	27	154	6,388	37
2009	821,152	19,706	24	170	6,975	0

In 2007 significantly re-designed from the earlier years, IEP attempted to raise productivity by moving from a fixed daily rate for labourers to piece rate work. Further design features included: an overall minimum 30% quota of job cards set aside for women, in order to help overcome community reluctance to work in mixed groups; a fixed five day work week to allow labourers, especially female, time for other domestic activities; and an increase in IMO implementation, in response to high levels of reported leakage in local government (*Union Parishad or UP*) managed sites the previous year. A compensatory cash grant, known as the IEP SN (discussed below) was introduced for those unable to work moving heavy baskets of wet sand. The introduction of a whole day's explanation and orientation on the scheme, and clear sign boards at work sites, including the NGO Project Manager's mobile phone number, led to a significant reduction in misunderstandings and allegations of malpractice on work sites. From 2008, the methodology behind leakage detection on IEP was changed, from an *ex-poste* survey only to a rolling scheme that visited both completed and active worksites, with dedicated independent teams working throughout the IEP work period. Despite wanting to raise the capacity of local government through the management of IEP, CLP1's zero tolerance approach to corruption led to a reduction in UP managed sites, from approximately 40% to 10%.

In 2008, CLP1 sought to increase the governance and ownership of plinth-raising by further devolving the management of construction to plinth receiving households. CLP1 still provided oversight and assistance, through employing CDOs specifically for labourer selection, wage payment systems and negotiations for available building land. Despite early scepticism from field staff and initial community disputes which required facilitation, in the long run changing the implementation methodology has had positive indirect benefits as the

⁴⁹ Developed from Goodman & Scott (2010) and internal CLP1 monitoring figures, found at www.clp-bangladesh.org.

decision making processes became more participant driven. Due to the success of the scheme in 2008, the number of sites managed by households tripled to 4,500 in 2009.

While some point out that there are moral hazard⁵⁰ and erosion risks in raising and repairing char household plinths, this can be off-set by the household level benefits of this improved infrastructure. Although there is no published comprehensive plinth cost-benefit analysis for CLP1, an independent study for another extreme poverty reduction programme has shown the economic efficacy of raising household plinths in the chars.⁵¹ The returns to char households are clear. Plinths act rather like an insurance mechanism, allowing households to continue living safely on their homestead during floods, support household food security and health through enhanced nutrition from year-round homestead gardens and access to safe drinking water and sanitary latrines, and protect livestock and householders from disease and possible theft.

4.5.2 Other positive benefits: wages and employment during lean periods

The change to IEP piece rate work saw a significant overall increase in the average daily wage for labourers over the years (Table 4). Counter-intuitively, while female labourers earned comparatively less than their male counterparts, IEP wages per capita for female headed households were significantly higher than for male headed households. In 2007, female headed IEP households earned on average Tk.4 per capita per day more than male headed IEP households, with 2008 and 2009 results showing similar trends.⁵² While this is certainly due to smaller household sizes in female-headed households, it shows the greater relative returns to these households and counters any criticism related to CLP1's change to piece rate work.

Public work schemes sometimes are criticised for having an inherent cost for the household, specifically related to foregone income due to programme participation. However, this is challenged by an impact study for the 2007 IEP which showed that only 53% of IEP households surveyed stated other work opportunities were available during the period, at an average wage of Tk.45 for only 1.7 days a week.⁵³ Similar studies undertaken for IEP 2008 and 2009 support these results.⁵⁴ Thus, IEP provided an employment floor at a time of regular seasonal scarcity, and aided families to avoid migration and reduced nutritional intake.

4.6 Responsive & Adaptive Programming

4.6.1 The 2007 flood response

CLP1 sought to be responsive to the needs of the communities it worked with. The introduction of the new IEP system came at a critical time for char dwellers, with two successive floods in July and August 2007 disrupting homestead life, and destroying and damaging nearly 2.3 million acres of agricultural land across Bangladesh.⁵⁵ Despite being outside of CLP1's mandate, a relief supply response was undertaken following discussions and requests from DFID and GoB. Within days of the flood rise, CLP1 mobilised partner staff who delivered 6.3 million person days of food to 128,000 households (both core and non-core participant households) across 713 villages. Two million water purification tablets were also distributed and nearly 4,000 people and livestock were rescued. Only 8-9.5% of

⁵⁰ Moral hazard for example means the prospect that an external agency, in this case CLP1, will perform and / or pay for work that the household could undertake themselves.

⁵¹ Tod, I *et al* (2008), p. 28 and Tanner *et al* (2007), p.22

⁵² Conroy *et al* (2008), Matthews *et al* (2009), Gisby and Kenward (2010).

⁵³ Conroy *et al* (2008), p.14

⁵⁴ See Matthews *et al* (2009) and Gisby & Kenward (2010).

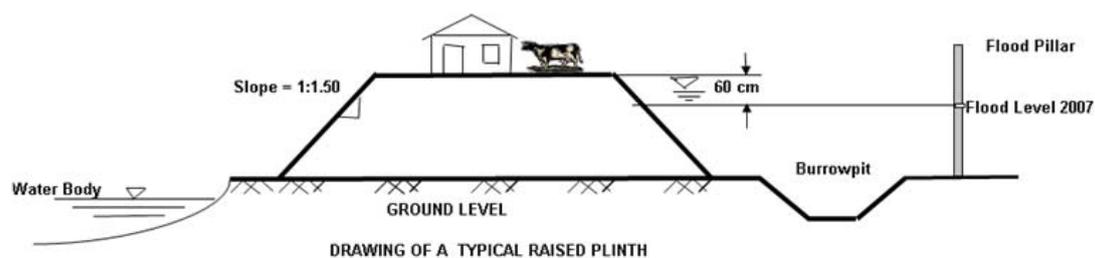
⁵⁵ Cited in Conroy & Marks (2008), p.4

children and adults suffered from diarrhoea over the period.⁵⁶ This speed of response was remarkable and avoided mass migration to river banks and the possible employment of damaging household coping strategies.

In addition to cash crop and food production losses, the destruction of such large swathes of agricultural land had clear implications for employment opportunities during the period. In response to the flood and calls from the Government of Bangladesh, CLP1 expanded IEP activities by one million person days and into three further districts.

Given that over 3,500 plinths were discovered to have been submerged during the flood, through not having been built high enough against a standard datum height, CLP1 developed a new and simple methodology for setting plinth heights. Each village in the CLP working area marked the high flood line during the flood. Cement pillars were subsequently erected and marked using surveyors' levelling instruments with the 2007 high flood level. All plinths erected after this point were built 60cms above this point (Figure 3), which was seen to be a reasonable margin above the flood levels within the projected life-time of the char and its plinths.

Figure 3: Raised plinth side elevation showing flood pillar⁵⁷



4.6.2 IEP Safety-net

While the central IEP offered employment to households who may have been affected by adverse *monga* shocks, running concurrently with the earthworks from 2007 CLP1 offered a small twelve week stipend (initially Tk. 175 per week) to those households unable to participate in the scheme (IEP SN). Although only offered in villages where IEP was active, during the prolonged 2007 *monga* the IEP SN delivered significant results, with these households taking 40% less cash loans and significantly less food loans and credit than control households over the period.⁵⁸ Again, with adjustments to the amount transferred and period of time given over a three-year period, 9,762 households received IEP SNs.

4.6.3 IEP Advance

The successive floods in 2007 caused a delay by one month to the programmed start of IEP. Realising the potential disruption to cash flows and household consumption that this could cause, CLP1 offered every registered IEP worker a Tk. 500 advance against future wages. This initiative worked with over 97% of households using the advance to purchase food, with on average 80% of the advance being spent on food.⁵⁹ In a similar fashion during *monga* 2007 and 2008, stipends were also offered in advance to active CLP1 households to smooth consumption and off-set the need to draw down on assets. CLP1 experience has shown the need for programmes to be flexible to meet household needs as they arise.

4.6.4 Temporary Monthly Food Transfer

⁵⁶ Islam & Marks (2008).

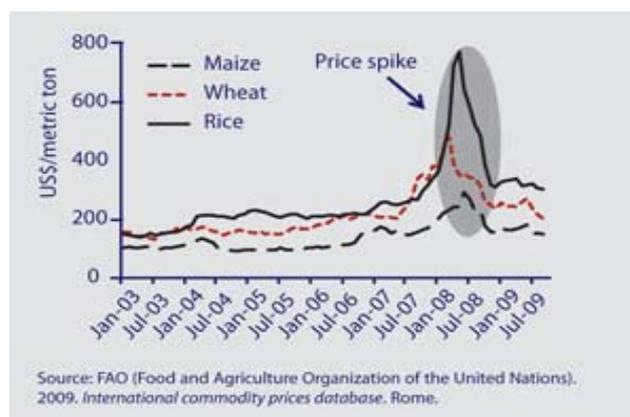
⁵⁷ Figure taken from CLP website, www.clp-bangladesh.org.

⁵⁸ Marks (2008)

⁵⁹ Conroy *et al* (2008)

In August 2008, in a real-time response to a spike in food prices (see Figure 4) CLP1 distributed monthly cash payments under its Temporary Food Transfer (TFT) initiative.⁶⁰ The TFT was offered only while the price of *mota chal* (broken rice) was above a certain threshold. In total, more than 43,000 households were assisted with over 1.18 million food transfers made in the form of a monthly cash stipend. To ensure that the real value of the transfer was relative to each household, the TFT received was adjusted according to household size and was varied according to the price of *mota chal* in local markets. It has been shown elsewhere that fixed cash transfers are less effective in smoothing consumption than those that adjust for price changes.⁶¹ These responsive adjustments enabled households to smooth consumption and for this safety net to be phased out of CLP1 by June 2009.

Figure 4: World Grain Prices January 2003 – July 2009



4.6.5 CLP1 outputs

In addition to the transformational nature that the CLP1 package evidently achieved in participant households, CLP1 also realised significant transactional achievements. Table 5 offers a snapshot of key output achievements of CLP1 over its six year working cycle.

Table 5: Key output achievements of CLP1⁶²

Households raised on plinths ⁶³	90,377	Social development training sessions	3,835,282
Slab latrines	62,203	Local government officials trained	2,632
Assets transferred ⁶⁴	121,164	Enterprise development pilot projects	10,447
IEP cash-for-work days	5,451,652	Pilot health programme – patients seen	709,570
Dry season cash for work days	9,119,908	Learning centres opened	166
Homestead gardens supported	90,879	Reports prepared by IML	40
Cattle vaccinations	178,929		

5 Lessons learnt and questions remaining

The CLP1 implementation experience and impact at the household level presented above offers some key, possibly transferable lessons for other poverty reduction programmes. Questions remain though and they will also be discussed in the following section.

5.1 Lessons learnt

5.1.1 Finite Asset Transfer

The Chars Livelihoods Programme Phase 1 delivered a range of goods and services directly to household participants effectively and with positive household level results. These goods and services were high value but were provided during a limited period of eighteen months. Emphasis was placed on the appropriateness of these transfers for the recipients, the efficiency of delivery, and the examination and feedback from a set of large-scale impact

⁶⁰ Anecdotal evidence collected from the chars by IMOs suggested that rice quadrupled in cost during this period.

⁶¹ Sabates-Wheeler *et al* (2009) p. 10

⁶² Figures taken from key achievements section of CLP website, www.clp-bangladesh.org.

⁶³ This figure includes 407 multiple cluster plinths.

⁶⁴ Including 67,896 cattle, 39,995 goats and sheep, 12,378 poultry and 895 other assets (land leases etc.)

monitoring devices. While many social transfer projects around the world have focussed on establishing long-term predictable cash payments, often primarily for consumption, and have had some notable national level successes, many developing country governments are wary of creating long-term on-budget commitments which are seen as irreversible and unaffordable, despite evidence that schemes could be relatively inexpensive and effective. In the Bangladesh chars context, with its high concentration of extreme poor households living in precarious conditions, but who are fundamentally able to benefit from productive opportunities if made available to them, CLP1 has shown that a finite-term transfer package can indeed raise livelihoods to the point where people improve their own household income, diversify investments, and are more resistant to livelihoods shocks.

5.1.2 Recognising the need to be adaptable and responsive

CLP1 targeted and aimed to support extreme poor households that were prone to both localised shocks, such as flooding and seasonal food insecurity, as well as more widespread shocks including drought and food price fluctuations. The initial design concept, with a significant governance and ‘voice’ component, was modified once the implementation team were faced with realities in the field. A substantially more direct approach replaced this process-lead model and asset transfer became the cornerstone of the programme with a number of supporting components. Throughout its programme cycle, CLP1 continually demonstrated its ability to adapt to address realities on the ground as they happened. Furthermore, elements of project design were revised with each cyclical iteration and growing operational experience and confidence grew and monitoring feedback became available. The successive adaptations of the IEP are evidence of this.

Despite targets outlined in the logframe CLP1 remained adaptive and responsive to shocks such as the flooding of 2007 and the food price increases during 2007/08. Significant resources were used tactically in order to cushion core as well as non core participant households against the effects of these shocks. These responses were essential to avoid losing household level poverty reduction gains that had already been made through the programme.

5.1.3 Delivery mechanisms and accountability

It has often been noted informally that in this context and at this scale, a private sector model has been very efficient at delivering its agreed programme design, in ways which government or NGO-delivered projects sometimes find challenging. CLP1 aimed to simplify all aspects of its delivery and placed great emphasis on operational efficiency and verification of inputs by its contractors. It deliberately named these Implementing Organisations rather than “partners” and held them accountable for achieving the terms of their contracts, tolerating only small degrees of divergence from agreed plans. Reality checks, frequent field visits and good communication were helped enormously by the CLP1 Secretariat office being based within the project area, rather than in the capital. Coupled with investments in online financial management capacity, this approach has done much to raise standards in the local NGOs with which CLP has worked.

Having ensured that the intended recipients had indeed received the productive assets, cash, infrastructure improvements, training and other support they were due, and monitoring including counterfactual evidence, the project could be confident that resulting impacts were a consequence of the project. From four cohort intakes, and improvements to the model with each iteration, the evidence gathered so far is that participant households do indeed achieve an exit from extreme poverty, as measured by expenditure against regional comparators. Indeed, CLP1 data shows that participant households are diversifying productive assets as their livestock are sold and a greater proportion of expenditure is reinvested into further livestock and land leases.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ As suggested by changing expenditure patterns reported through CLP1’s monthly monitoring of participant households.

5.1.4 Importance of clear monitoring and evaluation systems

Recognising the importance of information to demonstrate progress, identify lessons learned and impact CLP1 had an Innovation, Monitoring and Learning Division (which will continue during CLP2). To ensure quality was maintained and to verify the quantity of outputs, the IML Division recruited an independent organisation to verify a sample of IMO declared outputs. This contractor reported directly to the IML Director. The fact that IMOs knew there was a high probability that they would be visited each month by an independent team resulted in a significant improvement in implementation quality, preventive management approaches and a reduction in leakage.

As discussed, IML Division also developed systems to monitor progress against targets set in the logframe and to monitor outcomes, such as changes in nutrition status, income and expenditure and asset status. CLP continues to recognise the need to use these data to inform policy makers and practitioners on what works and what does not. Therefore there will be a greater emphasis on communicating messages externally during the second phase of the programme.

Although there have been significant transformational impacts of CLP1, it acknowledges that it needs to continue to monitor households who have graduated from the programme. As such, into CLP2, CLP1 households will continue to be monitored on a sample basis.

5.1.5 Pilot and learn

Across CLP1 interventions there was always a great emphasis on piloting, learning and adapting. The success of the programme in achieving its goals means that this approach is critical for successful poverty reduction, even if pilots result in failure or partial success, the process is critical.

5.2 Questions remaining

5.2.1 Sustainability

However, there remain unanswered questions around the long-term sustainability of the approach, particularly at a household level. Time and continual monitoring of the CLP1 cohorts will demonstrate whether households are able to maintain this level of new found status. How they will be able to maintain this new level of livelihoods once CLP1's CDOs, living nearby to project villages during the 18 month process, is a main concern. What new social and patronage dynamics and conflicts CLP1 has created through its approach, for example by the provision of substantial sums to the very poorest, is not entirely understood. This is the subject to review and examination early in subsequent work.⁶⁶

5.2.2 Health provision: a key driver of poverty reduction

Although health provision was only named a pilot in the CLP1 logframe, this did not prevent the CLP1 team from recognising the central role health services make to ensure both exit from and prevent re-entry to, poverty. Like other goods and services on the chars, adequate health is not supported across such distant and difficult terrain by the government, non-government or local private sectors. CLP1's regular IMOs run field clinics, with services were made available to the whole local population, coupled with targeted subsidises using vouchers provided health care in more than half of CLP1's working area. Although CLP1's initial thinking was to kick-start privatised health, this is now seen as overly ambitious. Nonetheless the role of local private sector expertise is still considered central and essential, for example through community health workers selling basic products and alerting medical personnel to cases needing treatment or potential referral. Long-term, health provision will need funding and implementation either from or through GoB or other donors. The dilemma

⁶⁶ The second CLP contract (CLP2) started in April 2010. Its approach is similar but revised following an intensive design process and inception phase. Its working area initially overlaps with CLP1, but will work in new island char areas. For more information see clp-bangladesh.org for details.

for a project such as CLP1 is that the scenario of adequate provision by GoB looks to be a long way off. In the meantime, constant awareness of the cost-effectiveness of health interventions remains a priority, with emphasis on preventive health, hygiene, sanitation and nutrition, and advice on and availability of family planning products and services. CLP2 will continue to work with a wide range of service providers and take opportunities for further integration into the national system where possible.

5.2.3 Re-examining voice and choice

While the greatest impact, as intended, has been at household level, this has spawned new local dynamics which need further understanding, analysis and responses. The 'basic need' that CLP1 had to (and did) address was household income and food security. As people's fundamental needs have been met, so their aspirations alter and demands are articulated and raised. Subsequently, although the voice and choice model was rejected as highly difficult to implement by CLP1, there are reasons to re-examine what governance gains are possible through exploring rights based approaches, from the household, community and local government levels, to build on what has been done and learnt. For example, there are many who have not been included in CLP1's Social Development agenda. These discussions, once re-prioritised, will be widened and better targeted. CLP1's work with local government will be re-examined to consider how UPs can take more of a role in service provision on the chars. This will help move providers and the entitled towards an improved relationship.

5.2.4 Household sanitation and clean water provision: give, subsidise or promote?

CLP1 took an exceptional position on sanitation provision, by paying all the costs of providing latrines to core participant households. Driven by technical reasons, namely the chars sand, latrine construction needed to be a high standard, which meant the design included five cast concrete rings, top slab and iron superstructure and was costly (approx. Tk. 5,000). Given the extreme poor's inability to afford such a high cost relative to their unpredictable low incomes, CLP1 paid for the construction and installation of each latrine. This is radical given a growing trend in the use of community led sanitation methodologies to persuade participants to build their own low-cost latrines. CLP1's objectives remain consistent with the latter approach, namely the elimination throughout the community of the practice of open defecation, coupled with other behavioural changes such as hand-washing. CLP2 intends to place further emphasis on achieving this and to examine whether, and how, applying a subsidy, affects access and use of sanitation facilities.

CLP's approach to drinking water access is also in contrast the common practice in Bangladesh, which has been to provide water points for free to the users across the country. With many tubewells installed on a shared basis without maintenance agreements being upheld and water points evidently out of use, the CLP1 has taken a different approach. Shallow tube wells, when divided by a number of user households, are affordable even to the poorest (depending on how households prioritise their expenditure). As such, CLP1 started approaching groups of households in need of raised, protected water points to share the costs of installation and promoted tubewell purchase. CLP1 has undertaken to subsidise this through the provision of the concrete apron once a shallow tube well has been installed.

5.2.5 Promoting and supporting functioning markets and local service provision

A further area needing further consideration is in helping ensure markets function to bring relevant and affordable goods and services to the poor. This is not easy as the distances and times needed to deliver goods and services are indeed one of the main drivers of widespread poverty in the area. Beside the visible market stalls trading in agricultural inputs and products, the failure in the provision of adequate health, education, law and justice in the chars can be attributed to market forces.

It remains to be seen how far the Local Service Provider model can be expanded. These will potentially include in CLP2: Artificial Insemination Technicians, who will be provided equipment plus an incentive to work on the distant chars through distributing vouchers to core participants and helping with transport costs; builders of fuel-efficient and smokeless stoves who will be trained and provided with a working capital subsidy for costly materials; solar lighting vendors and recharge station operators who will be provided working capital to invest in stock and a compensatory grant to cover the opportunity cost of lost interest while their clients repay costs; and village seed bank operators will buy, save and sell locally adapted seed, and provide advice on cultivation. The sustainability of the LSPs' model and their ability to maintain viable businesses in the chars, and the level of on going support required to ensure they survive needs calibrating and again will be monitored, reviewed and adapted if necessary.

6 Conclusion

In the global context, how applicable CLP1's lessons learnt to extreme poverty reduction elsewhere depends on 'elsewhere's' own context: there are no blueprint formulas for tackling localised and often unique causes of extreme poverty. However, methodologies exist that can assist practitioners to learn from their locality and tailor programmes that are responsive to need, realistic and have real impact at the household level. As Guspata (2009) suggests, understanding the mechanisms behind poverty in the chars was instrumental in designing a successful poverty reduction programme.⁶⁷ For CLP1 this took time and was achieved to a certain extent through trial and error with significant resources.

CLP1 transferable lessons and methodologies include, knowing the local context and understanding what works, being prepared to experiment, learn and adapt (accountably) and being tolerant of failure, within reason. Creating accountability and adaptable monitoring mechanisms, which are revised back into project design are also essential. Having the scale of resources, relative to participant numbers and expected impacts, to enable a project to afford and manage all of these and implementation is a valuable consideration, particularly in light of the growing global financial crises.

Over CLP1's six years of implementation it achieved its logframe commitments as designed and reduced extreme poverty in the River Jamuna chars. Given the resources and sufficient intellectual freedom, the programme has been able to identify a suitable model for poverty alleviation in its own context, solving many of the technical and management puzzles along the way. It has also gone far beyond its original brief in the range and depth of issues and continues to explore solutions to extreme poverty.

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