

## **Evaluation of Environmental Awareness Training of BRAC**

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## INTRODUCTION

BRAC is concerned about the sustainable development of Bangladesh as well as the sustainable development of its programme. The whole process of developing an Environment Group which would coordinate BRAC's environmental activities began in December 1995. A four member research team, called the Environment Group (EG), was given the responsibility of setting up this cell. The first activity of the cell was to conduct an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) of key BRAC programs directly using the natural resources: Agriculture, Fishery, Forestry, and Sericulture programs. It also provided sufficient information to (i) direct the cell on further BRAC needs in terms of environmental research, (ii) prioritize future environmental actions and (iii) elaborate the process, the objective and components of the newly formed environment group.

A general environmental education/awareness training related to BRAC activities for staff and program participants was perceived by the Senior management of BRAC as well as the group members as the first issue to tackle. Without a basic understanding of environmental issues and how they relate to the quality improvement of BRAC activities and program participants' livelihood, environmental change would not be efficient and sustainable. Based on this the EG conducted a questionnaire survey to assess the level of environmental awareness of BRAC head office staff and accordingly the group developed a training module and was conducted a half day environmental awareness orientation for all BRAC head office staff in October 1996. Including BRAC's senior management a total of 213 head office staff took part in the orientation course. The course was found to be useful. After successful completion of the orientation programme it was decided by the BRAC management that this awareness training should be provided to all BRAC staff particularly for the field level staff who are working directly with the rural people. Before starting the programme for BRAC field level staff, a training manual was prepared by the EG group to conduct a TOT for the selected trainers who, in turn will provide training to BRAC field staff. A total of 22 trainers were selected from among BRAC's established training centres (TARCs) to form the core group.

A six day training module has been developed for field level training. The EAT programme at the field level has already started in May 1998 at 10 Training and Resource Centres (TARCs) for the Area Managers and Programme Organizers (PO) and at area the offices for Programme Assistants (PA) according to the design of the program. A total of twenty field and TARC based participants were provided with training every month and each batch consists of 20 to 25 participants. Participants were selected from different programs (i.e. from RDP, NFPE, HPD) in order to get participants from diversified field in order to make the training meaningful. It was expected that by the middle of the year 2000 the Environment Group would be able to train all BRAC staff. It was expected that once the staff will provide training they will start disseminating or imparting the important messages which they learnt during the training programme among VO members through

different BRAC forum such as Village Organization (VO) meetings, BRAC schools, health forum etc.

Every week 20,000 BRAC staff meet with over two million families and 34,000 teachers to disseminate various programme related messages. Therefore, it is easy for BRAC participants to disseminate the important messages related to environment which in turn will help to achieve the goal of sustainable resource management of our country as well the sustainable development of BRAC's development programmes.

To maintain the quality of the training, Environment Group has developed an evaluation system of the training programme.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study was to evaluate the training programme and make recommendation for further development of the training. To get feedback on the training from different programme personnel about the quality as well as its practical implication was also another important objectives of the study.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

This report was prepared based on training observation, meeting with senior management personnel, group discussion with trainers, trainees (AM, PO, PA), HO staff, interview of programme personnel (RDP, HPD, NFPE).

This evaluation report consists of capacity development, quality of the training, feedback both on the contents and techniques used in training, limitations and suggestions for future improvement of the training.

## **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

The following methods and techniques were used for the professional development of the trainers:

1. **Class room observation:** Maximum of the training sessions conducted by the trainers either in TARC or in area offices were monitored by the member of the Environment Group. The intention behind this was to identify the problems of the trainers both in delivering contents as well as conducting training and gave suggestions accordingly after each day training session. This was found quite effective particularly for the development of the newly recruited trainers.
2. **Monthly refreshers**  
Regular updating with recent information: Changing Environment and it's continuous degradation is a major environmental concern for Bangladesh. If we cannot make ourselves aware with the changing environment and it's consequences, proper awareness campaign could not be done. Keeping this fact in mind a booklet on different environmental facts and figures has been prepared for the environmental trainers.
3. On the other hand, different news media are now much concern about environment and it's related hazards. Therefore, environmental trainer were requested to collect and preserve information on a regular basis from different news papers and later tyo discuss among themselves during the monthly refreshers time. The decision of bringing one resource person during the monthly refreshers time was found very effective.
4. **Training/ workshop :** Training/ workshops are some of the recognized methods for improving knowledge on particular subject. Some of the trainers have already received such kind of training and attended workshop and this is a continuous process. The Environmental Trainers were conducted workshop with various community groups of different concerned wetland areas of the country to protect bio-diversity. This is basically a National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP) follow up activity. It is expected that the trainers would be able to make a good use of this practical experience. The trainers will also be offered

outside training on Environment in due course of time which will help them to think globally and act globally.

5. Assignments : Trainers were asked to prepare reports or documents on different BRAC interventions as well as on different Environmental concern areas. These assignments were found particularly helpful to the trainers for making them understand more about the programs which will help them to correlate the contents of the training with the real world examples. On the otherhand, programs participants would also be interested by learning more about the Environmental consequences of the programs which are currently implemented by the EG. There are many environmental concern areas in Bangladesh. At the time of conducting the training sessions trainers needed to explain these environmental concern areas to make participants aware about the situation. Therefore, it would be useful if they (trainers) can visit these areas with particular assignment. This will of course enrich their level of confidence as well as their analytical capability to address these problems in a more meaningful way.

#### **Training Status**

Starting in May 1998, there were 2384 field staff have already been trained with environmental issues as of November 1998. Out of the total 2384 participants, 840 were provided training in different TARCs and 1544 in different area offices of BRAC. There were 1765 participants from RDP, 505 from NFPE and 114 from HPD participated in this training. A total 42 batches (6 managers, 36 POs) of TARC based training and 72 batches of field based training were conducted (more detail in Table 1).

During August-October period the training was postponed due to the devastating flooding situation of Bangladesh. At that time the trainers were engaged in different relief operations and which on the other hand, was a good lesson to make them understand about the degraded environment of our country.

**TABLE: Number of participants of different programmes covered by the training**

Program	No. of participants						Total
	AM		PO		PA		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
R.D.P	66	9	299	85	885	389	1733
N.F.P.E	25	12	155	86	164	36	478
H.P.D	12	0	37	37	25	8	119
<b>Grand Total</b>							<b>2330</b>

**Table: Total number of training conducted by trainers**

Name of the TARC	Place of training with number		Total
	TARC	Field	
Mymensingh	4	11	15
Savar	5	6	11
Pabna	6	5	11
Faridpur	6	4	10
Rangpur	2	10	12

Jessor	6	11	17
Comilla	4	6	10
Sree mongal	2	6	8
Madhupur	3	7	10
Rajshahi	4	6	10

### **Feedback**

From the discussion with programme personnel, participants (field staff) and trainers it was found that the EAT is a very useful and worthwhile training programme of BRAC. This may play an important role on conservation of natural resources, proper waste management, health and sanitation, as well as to change the personal behaviour towards the environment friendly use of the natural resources.

Programme personnel were found with very much positive attitude about the training programme though there were few persons who said it was not an important aspect for BRAC since BRAC is working with poorest people of the country who always thinking of food and shelter.

As the participants mentioned, this training has changed their way of looking and managing their surrounding environment towards making them environment friendly. They also mentioned that they have started understanding the relationship of different environmental components and the importance of the ecosystem. They also understand the need for conservation, affect of environmental degradation on health and economy.

From the field visits it was found that the attitude of officials have been changed after receiving the training. Now they are more cautious about safe disposal of medical waste, plastics, and use of

chemicals in agriculture and fisheries. They were found aware of cleanliness of the office and the conservation of nature and natural resources.

Trainers have feedback on content level and management aspect of the training. Some important feed-backs of the trainers at the management level were as follows:

1. The participants of the TARC and the field level should be informed about the training schedule at least two months before starting the training programme.
2. The attendance of the TARC based participants were observed always very poor even after receiving the official invitation letter.
3. Sometimes unscheduled involvement of trainers other than training activities interrupted the training classes.
4. Some of the participants were found unable to attend the full six day training programme in order to manage their routine activities .
5. To make the environmental awareness training programme much more fruitful all participants (PAS) wish to take training from TARCs not from area offices where they mentioned could not concentrated on lectures properly.

Important feedback at the academic level:

1. To include few new topics e.g. natural disaster, IPM etc. in the training manual.
2. Arrange separate time to show the video and slides.
3. Provide necessary handouts to the area office level participants.
4. Journal about Environmental issues.
5. There should be two trainers in each training class.
6. Use of video and slides at the field level training.
7. Arrange study tours to the selected environmental concern areas.

The above mentioned feedbacks were consulted with senior management and they assured to take necessary action to make the program sustainable.



## Quality

A questionnaire survey was conducted among the all head office personnel of different programs to assess their knowledge about Environment. They were also asked what would be the possible contents of the proposed environmental awareness training and the different modules of the training programme had been selected accordingly. An attempt was taken after starting the training to collect feedback on the contents of the module and the result was found positive for the TARC based training. Here it is mentioned that there are two types of training (1) TARC based training for Area Manager and PO's and the (2) Area office based training for PA's. It was a continuous feed back both from the program participants as well as from the trainers that the PA's cannot concentrate on the training due to their busy schedule. It was suggested by many of the senior personnel whether the training for the PA's could be reduced to three full days with selected contents which are more relevant to their daily activities.

After passing few months of training, trainers were asked to do field visit on a continuous basis to learn more about BRAC programme sand prepare report and present findings at the time of monthly refreshers. Some of the topic of the field visit included:

- RDP
- NFPE Programme
- HPD Programme

It was found from the assignment submitted and presented by the environment trainers that they well well oriented with the issues of BRAC activities. They also made efforts to observe and make comments on environmental effects of BRAC programmes such as Agriculture, Sericulture, Fisheries, Poultry and Livestock, Health service and BHCs, NFPE etc. They have also very clear understanding to make suggestions for environmental improvement of those programme.

## **Limitations:**

### **Training**

This timely initiative of BRAC to train all of its more than 20,000 permanent staff on Environment is a first time initiative ever taken by others in our country in a such big way. After conducting the ToT by the Environment Group and also by conducting few training sessions, the training module was finalized for full scale operation. Since the subject is new to the trainers it has now been decided that during monthly refreshers one resource person will conduct one session to enrich the professional skills of the trainers on environment.

(2) Trainers: Maximum of the trainers are new not only with the contents of the training but also in BRAC. Although they were found not confident enough at the time of conducting first few training sessions but these limitations were found to overcome shortly with the help of their continuous updating mechanism. It was reported by the trainers that they do not get enough time for reading related materials for their own development due to their involvement other than environmental training activities. Later on, by developing a monthly schedule of different activities to enrich their professional expertise this problem was found to be solved. It has been decided that every month at the time of refreshers the trainers will sit for an examination and the objective of this examination was to overcome their different limitations and also to grow their interest for the reading materials.

### **Future improvement**

#### **Future needs and strategies:**

The ultimate objective of this awareness training was to make sure the wise use of nature and natural resources. Keeping this truth in mind the trainers will need to develop a follow-up mechanism. On the other hand, during the training program the participants were asked to develop as well as maintain certain activities which are directly related to environment. These include development of waste management system in offices, minimum and optimum use of polythene in daily activities, inform VO members about environmental consequences. A monitoring system

should have to develop to monitor all these activities to get the maximum benefit out of the training programme.

Since trainers are from different educational background and this is a new subject for them, they need more time to study for their self development. Research findings from BRAC Environment Research Group should be made available to the environmental trainers on a regular basis. Short course or training out side BRAC might be arranged to enrich their knowledge and capacity in this field.

### **Programme implications**

Now a days environmental degradation is a burning issue of our country and BRAC is working with the poorest population of the country who are the ultimate victim of this environmental degradation of nature and natural resources.

Environmental aspects and awareness training programme of BRAC is the recognition of this issue. By the year of 2000 BRAC is planing to make aware all of its staff about environment which certainly have positive impact on the sustainability of its development programmes.