

Engaging Men and Boys in the Journey towards Gender Equality and Women Empowerment: Gender Quality Action Learning

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ACRONYMS

CFPR	Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GJD	Gender Justice and Diversity
GQAL	Gender Quality Action Learning
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
RED	Research and Evaluation Division
VO	Village Organisation

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of the study were to explore the effects of GQAL (Gender Quality Action Learning) programme, initiated by the Gender Justice and Diversity programme of BRAC, on men in the areas of changing gender roles, shifting gender norms and reducing VAW (violence against women) at household and community levels. Qualitative research methods were employed to achieve the objectives. Data collection techniques used in this study were: case studies and focus group discussions (FGDs). After receiving GQAL messages, men's engagement in reproductive activities and their role in ensuring their female family members' participation in decision-making as well as their role in promoting women's economic empowerment were investigated through case studies. Case studies were also conducted to explore men's acts of protesting VAW both at family and community levels. Data were collected from two villages in Gobindoganj *upazila*, Gaibandha district: one village where there was programme intervention and another village where the programme had no intervention. The respondents from the intervention group received GQAL training during 2011 - May 2014. After intervention the respondents developed positive attitude and practice over sharing domestic activities, support to women's rights in decision-making at the household level as well as enhancing women's economic empowerment. They were also found active in protesting violence against women. The respondents worked in creating awareness on issues addressed by GQAL programme among their friends, relatives and neighbours in different ways. The attitude and practice of respondents in the intervention group distinctly different from respondents in the non-intervention group depict positive effects of the programme.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since its inception BRAC has been working in the field of empowerment of women and marginalised group. As a part of BRAC's attempt to achieve its goal of gender equality, BRAC Gender Justice and Diversity (GJ&D) section have been taking various projects and initiatives towards women's empowerment since 2005. Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) programme is one such initiative.

In 1995, BRAC initiated the GQAL Programme with the aim of improving gender relations at staff level within the organisation. This training programme was expanded in 2001 to include members of Village Organisations (VO) on a pilot basis. The goal of this initiative remained similar, but with increased focus on fostering gender equality and equity among villagers. More specifically, the aim of this intervention was to build a favourable attitude towards women's empowerment, and also to ensure gender equality and equity in the family, society and organisation at village level.

The programme worked to increase knowledge and bring changes in the perception, attitude and behaviour or practices on specific themes: (1) division of labour, (2) discrimination, (3) empowerment and (4) violence against women. The broader themes included some specific issues. The issue of social differences between men and women in household and income generating activities were covered by the theme of division of labour while equity in education, food intake and rights were included in the theme of discrimination. The theme of empowerment dealt with division of property, decision-making power on household assets and women's mobility, and issues like dowry, domestic violence and marriage related violence had been brought under the theme of violence against women.

The findings of a study conducted by an external evaluation team (Mahmud and Mahbub 2004) indicated the fact that the intervention of GQAL programme could bring significant changes in gender relations of power, control and status in the community level. The intervention also contributed in reducing gender discrimination caused by deeply rooted patriarchal ideology in the family and community. At the same time, Research and Evaluation Division (RED) of BRAC recommended that the GQAL programme correctly addressed practical gender needs and had the potentialities to fulfill those needs by strengthening various events and forums of the programme. Following these recommendations the programme was launched in 2005-2006 in 10 Specially Targeted Ultra Poor areas under Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR) programme.

In 2006, RED again evaluated impact of the programme, and revealed that the programme was successful in bringing positive changes in the attitude of community people regarding issues of gender discrimination, empowerment, violence against women, child marriage and dowry.

However, RED strongly recommended to continue the programme in order to achieve programme's goal of creating an egalitarian society. Following the success of the programme, the programme was extended in 2007 to 50 Specially Targeted Ultra Poor areas. The project continued till 2011. In 2011, the training covered 10 *upazilas*, raised awareness among 30,000 household members and trained 3,000 gender justice trainers (BRAC Annual Report 2011, p. 23).

At present, the programme is being implemented in eight *upazilas* in eight districts: Brahmanbaria, Mymensingh, Gazipur, Gaibandha, Naogaon, Shirajganj, Bagerhat and Faridpur during the period of 2011 to 2015. From 2011 to 2013 the programme was implemented under the name POSITION and in 2013, was renamed as GQAL.

GQAL has been implemented through various events and forums: (1) gender awareness training in family life and development of household action plan¹ (2) court yard meeting, (3) meeting with Union Parishad members, (4) Quarterly sharing meeting with local journalists and media, (5) informal discussion with students, teachers, school management committee and parents, (6) Popular Theatre and CD show, (7) House to house visit², (8) commitment follow-up³ and (9) formation and follow-up by EVAW (Ending Violence Against Women) committee with local elites.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The general objectives of this study were to explore the effect of GQAL on men in the area of changing gender roles, shifting gender norms and reducing VAW at household and community level.

The specific objectives were to know whether-

- i. Men were involved in reproductive activities (household activities and caring activities towards children and elderly family member)
- ii. Women's decision-making role was valued, recognised and supported by men at family level
- iii. Men were supportive in creating favourable environment for women's economic empowerment at family level

¹ Three half day training with the aim to create gender awareness on 10 areas at family life: food and nutrition, education, health service and treatment, work, rest and recreation, ownership, access to and control over resources, domestic violence, sexual harassment, violence against women and children, Govt. and Non Govt. services, environment and women. Here, couples were provided with training. After receiving training, the individual is called Gender Justice Educator.

² In order to observe the behavioural change project staff visits the house of the trained participant. During the visits, the staff also identifies problems the participant faces in implementing training and tries to come up with solutions.

³ In GQAL training, the trained participant adopts an action plan (*Amader Protigga*) that they vow to follow in their everyday life. Project staff follow-up that the plan is followed by the participant. They also identify challenges faced in implementing the training and try to provide solution to the problems.

- iv. Men were aware and sensitised in recognising violence/sexual harassment against women

1.2 Method

The study employed qualitative research methods to achieve its objectives. The data collection techniques used in this study were: case studies and focus group discussions (FGDs). After receiving GQAL message, men's engagement in reproductive activities and their support in ensuring their female family members' participation in decision-making as well as their role in promoting women's economic empowerment were investigated through case studies. Case studies were also conducted to explore men's act of protesting VAW both at family and community level. Five FGDs were conducted to know men's attitude towards the idea of sharing domestic activities including women in the decision-making process as well as creating favourable environment for women's economic empowerment. FGDs also explored the challenges, if any, faced by men in practicing their learnings they received from GQAL.

Twelve case studies were conducted to achieve the objectives of this research. Among these, eight were conducted on male Gender Justice Educator⁴ who received training during 2011 to 2014. The other four case studies were conducted on men living in the study area who received GQAL message through other events of forum than training.

Among five FGDs, one was conducted with male gender justice educators, two with men who received GQAL messages from other means and not from training, and other two FGDs were conducted with men from Shundoel village in the adjacent union of Taluk Kanpur under Gobindoganj *upazila* in Gaibandha district which was out of GQAL intervention at the time of data collection.

1.3 Study area

Data were collected from two villages in Gobindoganj *upazila* in Gaibandha district. Out of the two, one was under GQAL intervention and another area was out of GQAL intervention during the period of data collection. Intervention village was Mohadebpur in Shibpur union and the control area was Shundoel village under Taluk Kanpur union in the same district.

⁴ After receiving GQAL training and as mentioned in footnote 1, the individual is called Gender Justice Educator.

1.4 Selection of samples

In order to select respondents for data collection for the case studies, a list of men receiving GQAL training during the period between 2011 and May 2014 in the intervention area was collected. The total number of such men was ten. From this list, respondents were selected randomly for case studies. The number of interviews depended on the information received from each case. Therefore, when additional information was not coming from subsequent case, the study stopped taking another case. By following this strategy, case studies were conducted one after another, and repetition of information provided by the case studies started from the eighth case. Therefore, the study conducted eight case studies on men who received GQAL training.

About men who did not receive GQAL training, the study selected such cases who received GQAL messages through other means instead of training. Here, four men were selected from this group for conducting case studies.

2. FINDINGS

Findings of the study have been presented in this report under the headings of men's participation in reproductive activities, men in promoting women's role in decision-making at family level, men's role in women's economic empowerment and men's role in protesting violence against women (VAW). Here, the attitude and practice of respondents were explored regarding the issue of sharing domestic activities, including women in decision-making and men's role in women's economic empowerment while only practice has been explored in the case of men's role in protesting VAW. The study did not take men's attitude towards VAW considering the issue as sensitive which could not be explored through FGDs. In the case of economic empowerment, the study only explored men's attitude towards the issue of women's engagement in income generating activities as well as their practice of supporting women to have control over their own income.

Although the result of this study has been drawn from five FGDs and 12 case studies, the six case studies that represent the information of all case studies have been depicted as cases in details in this report.

2.1 Men's participation in reproductive activities

Respondents' perceptions on gender division of labour at domestic sphere as well as their attitude towards removing this division and challenges they faced in changing gender roles were explored in this study. The study also tried to see whether men received GQAL messages through training or other means (courtyard meeting, CD show) of GQAL was working to change gender roles in the household level.

The study revealed that men from the intervention group had positive attitude towards sharing domestic activities with their female family members while traditional attitude of dividing work into women's and men's work was reflected from discussions with men from the control group. Although both groups opined that earning money to support family was the main activities of men, while domestic/household activities were women's major area of responsibilities, men from the intervention group identified several types of caring and household activities which, they thought, could be or should be performed by men along with their female partners.

While identifying men's and women's work, men from the control group were found to reveal a tendency to divide the work between sexes on the basis of the traditional division of public and private sphere. The identified all work related to domestic sphere (reproductive activities) as women's work while all work that were done outside home were identified as men's work.

On the other hand, some works were mentioned by men from the intervention group at household level as both men's and women's work. Therefore, the traditional attitude

of identifying household activities as women's work were not reflected from discussions with men from the intervention group.

2.1.1 Work considered as women's work at household level

Men from both the intervention and control groups identified some activities which they opined as women's work at household level. Those were: cooking, making bed, washing dishes, cleaning, laundry, sweeping, collecting water and fuel, taking care of elderly or sick family members, taking care of husband and sewing and farming vegetables in the yard.

Men from the control group mentioned some activities as "women's work" which were considered as both men's and women's work by the intervention group. Those were: rearing cattle, preparing children for school, grinding, boiling and drying out rice and rice residues, and seed preservation. That is, men from control group identified the part of agricultural work usually performed in the house after men bring the crops home from field as women's work. Assisting men in farm land was also considered as women's work by some of the respondents from control group, while other from the same group opposed it by saying that women should not go to the field due to their *purdah*.

2.1.2 Work considered as men's work at household level

Men from both the intervention and control groups identified some work as men's work, those were: going to *bazaar* or market to buy daily necessities, taking sick family members to hospital or doctor, grazing, going to *bazaar* or market for selling milk and egg of cattle or poultry raised by female family members of the household. They also mentioned that it was men's duty to take part in social gatherings or events like wedding ceremony on behalf of their families.

However, men from the intervention group mentioned some domestic activities as men's work which control group denied to view as men's work due to the space the activities took place. These included: assisting female family members (wives) during cooking, making bed, preparing food for cattle, taking care of children, collecting fuel, making bed in the morning and raising children from sleep for school. Men could also assist their wives or other female family members by assisting them (women) in doing homestead gardening, according to respondents from the intervention group. In this case, they mentioned that they (men) could assist their wives in fencing and making cages and preparing soil with fertiliser. They opined that men could support their wives in caring activities related to sickness by feeding the patient with medicine.

Difference between two groups in identifying men's and women's work: It was revealed that men from the control group had tendencies to identify men's and women's work on the basis of the space in which the particular work was performed. In the case of agriculture, respondents from this group pointed out those activities as men's work which were performed in the field and as soon as it came home after harvesting, the work was identified as women's work by this group. Although, most

of the respondents mentioned that this part of agricultural activities (such as grinding, drying out rice and rice residues and preservation of seeds) were usually done by both male and female members of a household due to the work pressure during the harvesting period, they opined that women had a major responsibility to perform these tasks. However, they identified the task of warehousing and marketing of crops as men's work.

In the same way, men from the control group divided site of caring activities in two ways- for example, in the case of taking care of sick family members, they identified feeding, bathing and providing medication which were usually held inside house and considered as women's work while taking the sick to doctor and buying medicine which take place outside home were considered as men's work. Most of the men from this group, therefore, pointed out that all the activities related to caring were mainly women's work except the part related to public sphere, like market, doctor's place, clinic, hospital. One of the respondents, a 35 year-old from the control group commented: *The main duty of a wife is to take care of her husband and serve him food in time.*

Respondents from the control group opined that the works that were identified as women's work could be performed by male family members only when female family members were not present in the house (for example, when women went to natal home) or unable to do their duty due to sickness. One of them also mentioned that he remained jobless most of the time in a year. During that time he assisted his wife in household activities. But in that case he argued that he would not do it if he had job outside. One respondent from the control group who was a 35 year-old commented:

Why would men assist women in their work? Women do not help men in doing their work outside. Men do much harder work than women. Besides, if men do women's work, then why do we need women in the house?

In contrast, respondents from the intervention group did not show the same attitude as the control group. Apart from pointing out certain domestic activities as both men's and women's work, they opined that it was men's duty to assist women in their household activities in order to reduce their workload in the domestic sphere.

2.1.3 Men's participation in domestic activities

Attitude of men from the intervention group was reflected in their practice. It was revealed from the case studies that male gender justice educator (GJE) and other men who received GQAL messages through CD shows or courtyard meetings performed such activities of domestic sphere that were identified as "not men's work" or "women's work" by the control group. Most of the GJE under the study revealed that they did not divide household work on the basis of sex. Rather they were found to show the tendency to share domestic activities of all types starting from cooking to laundry after being intervened (Case 01, Case 04 and Case 05). Their practice of domestic activities was found to take two patterns:

Assisting women in those work which men from both the groups considered as exclusively the work of women: Men intervened by programme reported to have assisted their wives in cooking by collecting or supplying fuel, and water as well as providing cooking ingredients hand in hand. Here, men themselves did not cook in the presence of their wives or other female family members (Case 01 and Case 04).

However, during emergency like sickness of female family members or when they (female family members) went to their natal home, men with GQAL messages were found to accept the task of cooking with positive attitude, while the opposite attitude was revealed by men without GQAL intervention during FGDs. One member of the latter group commented: *I would rather starve than cooking, which is women's job, not mine.*

The situation of men from the intervention group was same before receiving GQAL intervention. By following the traditional gender roles, men from this group also did not assist their wives in cooking, which they thought exclusively as women's work.

According to the comments of a wife of one of the respondents from the intervention group:

He (her husband) never thought of helping me in cooking before. After receiving GQAL training he has changed a lot and to my surprise, he now assists me by providing with water and spices while I cook! He also does other household activities now which he never did before. He helps me doing those works which I had to carry out by my own before.

Performing those household activities which was started to be viewed as "both men's and women's work" after intervention: Men's involvement in domestic activities showed that some work, that were considered only as women's work were started to be viewed as "work for both gender" after the intervention. After receiving GQAL intervention, it was revealed that men started to perform several household activities, like cleaning cattle sheds, feeding cattle, cleaning courtyard, washing and drying clothes, growing homestead vegetables (Case 01) and taking care of sick family members (Case 05).

2.1.4 Perceived benefits of men engaged in domestic activities

The intervention group expressed different views on the benefits of sharing domestic activities compared to the control group. While the former group considered the act of sharing as a positive attempt towards a happy family life, the latter group thought that it was problematic.

Men from the intervention group opined that the act of sharing domestic activities with one's wife improved the relationship between husband and wife. According to their view, the act of sharing could open a space of interaction that could remove misunderstanding if any in their relationship. The act of sharing such activities also could create realisation in both party (husband and wife) about each other's workload which in turn made them value and respect to other's work. The benefits of reducing women's workload of domestic activities were reflected in the following comment made by a daughter of one of the respondents from this group:

Earlier my parents always fought with each other over trivial matters. After both of them received GQAL training, the situation changed. Not only that, now my father also encourages my mother to be involved in income generating activities to bring financial solvency to the family.

The above comments also indicate how the practice of sharing reproductive activities creates favourable situation for women to be involved in productive activities (Case 01).

On the other hand, although a few respondents from the control group opined similar to the respondents in the intervention group, most respondents from that group pointed out that there should be a division of labour between men and women. According to them, if men performed or assisted female family members to perform household activities, it would create problem for men in performing their “major” work in the field or outside home. According to them, if women were over-burdened with their work, they could take help from other female family members or female neighbours. Therefore, they (control group) reported that men should avoid doing “women’s work” unless they had family emergency like serious sickness of female family members. Most of the respondents from the control group mentioned that sharing household activities would only benefit women, not men by reducing women’s and increasing men’s workload.

2.1.5 Challenges men faced in performing household activities and their strategies to respond challenges

Men from the intervention group reported that they did not face any problem while sharing domestic activities with their wives, except the case that sometimes they became victims of teasing or mocking by some of their neighbours and family members for doing “women’s work”. One from this group said: *Those are mostly women, not men, who tease us if we do household work.* On the other hand, another comment came from a respondent who was 26-years old and unmarried from the intervention group: *When I try to do household work, my neighbours often tease me by saying that no woman would agree to marry me.* The comments reflected the reality that due to being socialised in a dominant patriarchal ideology, any attempt to break the stereotypical gender roles were mocked and opposed by both men and women.

However, facts were revealed that men, even after getting GQAL training, themselves felt shy in doing domestic activities which they learnt as women’s work from their childhood as a part of their socialisation in a patriarchal setting (Case 01). But after receiving GQAL intervention, they were motivated to confront the challenge.

Male respondents after receiving GQAL intervention reported that their awareness and experience of getting benefits from sharing household activities with their wives made them capable of ignoring the comments and teasing made by their friends and relatives. One commented during FGD:

At the beginning when I started to do household activities with my wife, some of my neighbours used to tease me for doing my “wife’s job”, then I replied to them: “what’s

the problem of doing the same work as my wife's? If she can do these all day long, why can't I?"

Some men from the same group also reported the experience of being teased as an opportunity to create awareness among teasers about the benefits of sharing domestic activities. It was also revealed that before receiving GQAL training, one of the respondents in a case study was involved in the BRAC Popular Theatre as a performer. In that case, after receiving the training, he felt an extra urge to make people aware over the positive side of men sharing domestic activities for the family as well as to create example in his own family by doing so (Case 01). According to him:

I am involved as a performer in theatre related to various social issues including GQAL as a part of awareness raising activity. If I, myself, do not practice these in my own home, then how would I change the society? It is necessary for men and women to share everything in the family life in order to have peace in home.

Moreover, it was found that respondents who received GQAL messages and training were able to bring changes in some of their neighbours' attitude through their attempt of transferring their combat to teasers into awareness raising activities (Case 01).

On the other hand, the same problems regarding teasing and commenting, mentioned by control group, but in this case they were different from the intervention group in three points. First, they viewed the jokes made by their neighbours humiliating enough to make them avoid performing "women's work". Second, they themselves thought that doing household work was degrading for men. They believed that if they did "women's work", their wives would not value them, and their wives, in turn, would become "disobedient" to them. Third, they opined that if they became involved in domestic activities they would suffer from inferiority complex for "turning out to be women" and that in turn would damage their social interaction and prestige. One comment came from this group was: *If men do women's work, then what would be the difference between men and women?*

Respondents from control group reported that they usually did not perform domestic activities. They performed these tasks only when they were compelled to do in a particular situation, like their wives or none of their female family members were not at home for some days, or in the case of their (female family members') serious sickness. So, when they had to do it they usually clarified their stand by informing the teasers that "they were doing these (cooking) having no other alternative, they would not do it if they had other options".

Men from the control group reported about their bitter experience in trying to perform "women's work" (like cooking) in the case of family emergency due to their lack of practice. The experience they mentioned included, food burn, hand burn, unboiled food, hand injuries and eye burn.

2.1.6 Recognition of domestic work as “work”

Men from intervention group considered women's work in domestic sphere as important for the maintenance of family although it could not bring money directly. They justified their point by saying that women performed varieties of tasks all day long in the household and if women invested the same amount of labour outside, like in any organisation or in land, they (women) could have earned lot of money. They also opined that women played a very crucial role in maintaining family through their domestic and caring activities without which other family members would not be able to perform their duty outside.

Most of the respondents from control group expressed different views. According to them, women's works which they (women) performed inside house were tedious but easy and simple. From their opinion it was reflected that they did not value women's work since it did not bring money for family as men's work did. One of them commented during FGD, *Although women work all day long, their work is light and easygoing. They don't work hard like men do.*

2.1.7 Recognition of women's need for leisure

Since male respondents from intervention group opposed the traditional attitude of viewing women's domestic work as of less status and also thought that women performed their work all day long without taking any break, they opined that women should take at least one to two hours leisure time in a day. This leisure would help women to be fit and relaxed both physically and mentally to perform their activities with new energy. Otherwise, women would suffer from ill health, bad temper, mood swing which in turn could leave impact on other family members and their relationship.

Their attitude in this regard has seen to be reflected in actions taken by respondents having GQAL messages, especially training. It has been revealed that after coming home at late night from work, respondents of this group took food by their own and did the relevant works without disturbing wives' sleep (Case 01).

However, respondents with GQAL message revealed that men in the group thought that women were in need of recreation like men. In their leisure time, women can take recreation from watching TV, chatting, visiting neighbours, and listening music. According to them, women could take recreation from hearing religious speech from TV, radio or from cell phone.

Men from control group were seen to have expressed different opinion for having the attitude of viewing domestic work as easy, as well as of seeing women “doing nothing” at home. Most of them opined that women did not need to have fixed time for rest. Some of them went by saying that it was not necessary to think about the issue of women's leisure since they always remained in home. Men's work was hard and tiring, and they had to work all day long outside the home to earn. So, women should give their attention to take care of their husbands or male family members when men returned home from work. One of the male respondents from this group commented:

Women work inside home, so, there is no need to think about their rest very much, they can take break whenever they want while men are not at home. When men come home after their work women should take care of them.

According to the comments of another respondent:

Women have to work hard during a certain period of the year when crops come home from field after harvesting. This time men also work hard. They both need to take rest at this point of time. Otherwise, women have flexibility in their household activities all the year round, so, they can easily make time for leisure.

2.2 Men in promoting women's role in decision-making at family level

Positive attitude regarding women's capability of making decisions at household level were reflected from male respondents' opinion during FGDs with intervention group. Most of the respondents from this group opined that while taking any decision for family it was important to ask female family members since they (women) stayed at home all day and therefore, women knew the real situation and need of the household better than men who usually most of the time had to stay outside home for their work.

In contrast, men from control group expressed their reservation in including women in decision-making process. According to them, women only having necessary knowledge and experience should be asked while taking decisions, otherwise they should be kept excluded from the process. They (men) justified their arguments by saying that women did not have contact with outside world and therefore, did not have the capacity of playing role in decision-making. Many of them also added that if women were asked about their opinion about family or private matters the family would face problems because of women's nature of disclosing family secrets to neighbours. One of the respondents from this group who was 35 years-old commented: *If wife's opinion is taken in all matters, it is obvious that it will bring disaster for the family.* He justified his comment by saying that:

Last week I had no money in my hand. Then I sold two domestic chickens without letting my wife know about it, and managed to buy food for family. Whenever she knew the matter she started fighting with me. If I asked her before selling the chickens, my whole family would starve. So, there is no benefit of asking wife's opinion before taking any decision.

The attitude reflected from the above comments was found common for most of the respondents of control group. Many of them opined that women were not intellectually capable enough to play role in decision-making at any level. Therefore, most respondents from this group agreed with the comment made by one who was 40 years of age: *women have to accept whatever men decide.*

Exception was seen for one respondents from control group who opined that although he did not consult with his wife about every day matter, he used to ask his wife's opinion when he took some major decisions, like household repairing, mortgaging land and selling or buying cattle. He did it in order to avoid conflict with his wife.

Identified areas of decision-making where women must be included or not included:

Male respondents from intervention group identified some areas of decision-making where they thought that their female family members' opinion must be valued, and those were: deciding about food and medical treatment for sick family members, gynecological problems, children's education, marriage, clothes, buying cattle and poultry. They also opined that women should be asked while taking major decision, like buying and mortgaging land, for the household.

On the other hand, although like intervention group a few respondents from control group identified the same areas of decision-making where women could play role, most of them opined that women were not capable of giving opinion in any matter of the household. But some from the same group opined that women's decision-making role should be limited to certain matters like food, clothes, children's education. Therefore, in general, most of the respondents from this group opined that men should decide in which area of decision-making women should be included. Men from intervention group did not mention any area where they thought that women must be kept excluded from the decision-making process.

Perceived benefits of including women in the decision-making at household level: The justification the male respondents showed for including women in the decision-making process was that women knew better about the needs of household since they always remained involved with the matters related to domestic sphere. The example they (men) mentioned in this matter that women knew about the types of food needed by each family members according to their age and health far better than men did. Women's opinion, therefore, were very important in arranging proper diet for family member keeping the financial budget of the household under consideration.

Most of the men from intervention group also opined in favour of taking women's opinion while taking decision about property related matters. Many of them reported to have belief that women had especial kind of insight through which they could decide whether any investment, either in terms of money or assets, would be beneficial for the family at certain point of time.

Considering the attachment women had with their children, men from the intervention group opined that women's opinion should be taken while deciding any matter related to children.

The areas mentioned by them in this regard were children's education and marriage. Most of the participants agreed to the point that women performed best in knowing children's opinion about marriage as well as in convincing children to agree to get married to the person their parents choose for them. Not only in this aspect, women knew better whether their children were ready to get married both physically and mentally, according to male respondents.

The positive attitude regarding women's inclusion in decision-making was reflected in the behaviour of respondents from intervention group. Case studies revealed that GQAL worked two different ways on two different categories of respondents.

2.2.1 GQAL brought change in respondents' attitude and practice

Most of the respondents did not consider women as capable of being part of decision-making process before receiving GQAL messages. It was seen that GQAL message created a base on men's psychology to accept women as an equal partner of decision-making. But it was not easy for both men and women to practice the message in their life at first. Case study 05 showed that Jibon (25) one of the respondents had little doubt about GQAL message at the beginning, but was fully convinced when he became benefitted by his wife's and mother's opinion in various decisions. In that case, at first, instead of expressing her opinion directly, his wife, Mukti (22) strategically influenced her husband's decision. Here, she was found to have played role in the decision-making process through another men whose opinion had acceptability to her husband. After getting benefit from that particular decision, Jibon came to know about Mukti's role in influencing the decision, and became convinced about the benefits of asking women's opinion during decision-making.

Another aspect of this case study should be mentioned here that although receiving GQAL training and messages Mukti did not approach with her opinion to Jibon, out of the fear of being labelled as "one taking opportunity of GQAL". Hence, it was not easy for her as well, at the beginning, to be included directly in the decision-making although having awareness over her right from GQAL messages (Case 05).

Therefore, it could be said that GQAL messages made respondents aware of the benefits of including women in the decision-making process, and motivated them to practice in their life. Respondents internalized the message fully when they could link the message to their personal experience gathered through their practice.

However, women's role in the decision-making process was seen to have followed a pattern after being intervened by GQAL: women played major role, most of the time more than men, in decisions regarding cooking, buying food and daily necessities, and clothes, and in the case of taking decisions regarding buying and selling land and cattle, mortgaging land, children's education and medical women were consulted by men.

2.2.2. GQAL provided with logical ground to take stand in favour of previous positive practice

Respondent belonging to this category had the practice of considering women's opinion in the decision-making process even before he received GQAL messages (Case 04). Here one of the respondents, Anwar (46) had the practice of taking his wife's opinion from the beginning of their marriage. Due to arranging a separate household with his wife Monwara (35) immediately after marriage as well as their young age at that time, Anwar consulted his wife while taking any decision for their household. In this case, his behaviour appeared to have influenced less by dominant ideology, and therefore was "different" from most of his male neighbours.

GQAL messages, in Anwar's case, provided him with the logical explanation of his act of including women's voice in the decision-making. Although, he had this practice before, he did it out of his nature and habit of viewing his wife's role differently than other men did. That time, for being "different" he had been subjected to jokes and comments by his neighbours, and he always lived with embarrassment for his habit of valuing wife's opinion. Before being intervened by GQAL, he did not have the ground and strength to raise his voice against neighbours' comments and mockery. GQAL messages provided him with insight to link his personal experience of being benefitted by his wife's opinion to the logic of his act. By providing with the ground of argument in favour of his act, GQAL motivated him to challenge the negative reaction of his neighbours through his involvement in creating awareness over the issue among teasers.

2.3 Men's role in women's economic empowerment

Men from intervention and control group showed different attitude towards women's engagement in income generating activities. While men from intervention group were positive over women's involvement in income generating activities, the other group was found to have more traditional view on the matter. Most of the respondents from control group showed negative attitude towards women earning income. Comment from one of such respondents came as such: *Wives should stay in home, why would they go out? If they get money in their hands they would be spoiled.*

Although few men from control group showed positive attitude in this regard, all of them were found to be more in favour of not allowing their female family members to work outside home. Some from intervention group was in favour of letting their female family members work outside home, if necessary, depending on the nature of work. None of them from this group showed any negative attitude towards women earning income for families; rather they thought it as necessary considering their poverty. Some from both groups opined that although women should be involved in income generating activities to add income to families, they should select those works which they can do from their house.

Respondents' opinion regarding women's economic independence was explored in the following aspects:

2.3.1 Identified area of income generation for women:

Men from both groups identified some areas of economic involvement which they considered as appropriate for women. The area most men mentioned included rearing livestock, producing vegetables in the homestead land for marketing after household consumption and tailoring. Unlike control group, few from intervention group also opined that women could work as village doctor after taking relevant training if they were educated. Apart from these above mentioned works, men from both groups identified handicrafts as the work by which women could earn money for families.

2.3.2 Viewing women's income as "supplementary" or "main":

Men from control group viewed men as the breadwinner of the family. Considering the need and poverty in the context they were living in, women's income could bring financial solvency to the family. So, they encouraged women to work after managing their household duties properly. Most men in this group considered women's income as supplementary to the main income earned by men. Many of them opined that earning of their female family members was "nothing" compared to their (men's) financial contribution to family.

On the other hand, like control group although respondents from intervention group also viewed men as the breadwinner of the family, they did not show this attitude of viewing women's earning as "nothing". Many of them viewed women's involvement in IGA along with male family members as essential to support families.

2.3.3 Combining women's engagement in IGA and purdah:

Although both groups preferred those work, for women, which they could perform from home, men from control group were found to take more rigid stand in this regard. According to this group, women "must" choose those work for income generation for which they don't need to go outside. Therefore, women would be able to maintain *purdah* in such a form so that there would be no need to contact any men outside their families.

In contrast, most men from intervention group opined that it was preferable that women stay at home, but if necessary they could go outside home by maintaining proper *purdah*. They also focused on talking relevant training for women which would require them to go out.

2.3.4 Perceived benefits of women engaging IGA:

Men from control group were found to give excess focus on the disadvantage of women's engagement in IGA, rather than its advantages for the family. According to one of them, *if women started earning, poverty and peace together would be out of the home*. He justified his comment by saying that,

If women have money, they won't give value to what their husbands say, and as a result tension would be created between husband and wife, and the home turns to be hell!

Most of the men from the same group opined that women's involvement in other activities cause women's failure in performing their "main" responsibility. They gave the example that if women gave their concentration on IGA, they would fail to serve food to family on time as well as to clean home. They also mentioned the fact that their family prestige would be damaged if their female family members went out for work.

On the other hand, men from intervention group mentioned that if women contributed in family income it became beneficial for family in various aspects. They opined that women's income could bring financial solvency for the family and thus would open up the scope for savings. They considered this savings as the safeguard for future, and this could also enable them to invest capital on starting any new business or making household assets. Few respondents from control group expressed the same opinion although in general they highlighted more on the negative consequence of women engaging in IGA.

Men from intervention group also opined that women's engagement in IGA was crucial for the geographical and social context they lived in. According to them, since most of them lived on agriculture, they remained unemployed or jobless during certain periods of the year. During these periods, women involved in IGA could play a major role in providing financial support to families.

2.3.5 Attitude towards women's control over income

Although men from control group showed negative attitude towards the idea of women having money in their hand or having freedom of deciding about its spending, respondents from intervention group did not have such attitude.

The positive attitude of respondents from intervention group regarding women's control over their income was reflected in their practice. In their household, their wives were found to have decided about their own earnings as well as their husbands' (Case 06). In most of the households in the case studies women were seen to have consulted to invest money on household assets like land, cattle and water pump. It was shown in most of the cases that spending on daily necessities of the household was mainly decided by women.

However, men from intervention group opined that they should co-operate with women in their income generating activities depending on their (women's) needs and types of their work. In general, the attitude of control group was negative towards supporting women's involvement in IGA. One from the latter group commented: *What else we can do for women? We (men) are feeding them by working all day long.* On the other hand, men from intervention group were seen to have attitude of supporting their female family members' involvement in IGA through following ways:

Supporting the part of work requiring to be performed outside home:

Male from intervention group felt that they could assist female family members in generating income by performing those part of their (women's) work requiring to be performed outside home. For example, if their wives worked as tailor, men could help them by buying sewing machine, thread, scissors, needle and other necessities from market. In the case of poultry business, men could go to market to sell the poultry products produced by their wives at home.

Respondents' attitude was reflected in some of the case studies where they were found to have assisted their wives' poultry business by taking their products (eggs, milk, and chicks) in the market place or *bazaar* (Case 06 and Case 04). Case Study 06 also showed that respondent helped his wife by assisting her in vaccination of livestock. By using his social network he managed embroidery order for her from a factory. In this case, he did the necessary coordination between his wife and the factory in order to reach the products to the factory as well as to ensure the smooth flow of order.

By sharing household activities:

Most men from intervention group opined that men could contribute in creating favorable environment for women's IGA by sharing household activities. According to them, their act of sharing reproductive activities would reduce women's workload at the domestic sphere that would enable them to invest more time and energy in income generating activities.

Respondents from intervention group were seen to share domestic and caring activities with their wives, which in turn caused their wives to invest more time on IGA. The activities they reported to have performed at home included assisting in cooking, washing clothes, taking care of children and sick, serving food, bathing children, collecting and feeding cattle feed (Case 06).

Creating favourable environment to increase the range of as well as to ease women's work:

Men from intervention group opined that they could contribute in increasing women's capacity for generating incomes by providing them with favourable environment for increasing their scope of work. They also focused on providing necessary information to their female family members, if they (men) had, on relevant training within their capacity.

Many respondents showed the reflection of their positive attitude of supporting women's economic engagement into actions. Some from intervention group inspired their wives for increasing their work range. Shabuj, one of the respondents in case studies, encouraged his wife, Aleya, to start doing embroidery when she used to make only quilt to make earning. By doing necessary coordination and sharing domestic activities, he also created favourable environment that motivated his wife to think about the extension of her existing work she had during that time. In the case of rearing livestock, he also provided his wife with necessary support regarding infrastructure by making room for cattle. He supported her by arranging mosquito net for cattle. Shabuj also took steps to ease Aleya's embroidery work by bringing chairs with which his wife and mother felt comfortable in doing embroidery work, and electricity to their home so that Aleya and his mother Jobeda could work till night without having difficulties. Shabuj gave Aleya the moral support by appreciating her contributions to their family income to his relatives and neighbours, as well as confronting the jokes and negative comments made by others for his act of supporting Aleya through sharing domestic activities (Case 06).

However, most men from both groups opined that women should be involved in such a way that their involvement in IGA did not hamper them to perform their major responsibility of taking care at home. In this regard, they presented their logic by saying that if women had to stay longtime outside home, then their activities of taking care of sick family members or children would be hampered. Therefore, women should choose such work as IGA which they could perform without going outside, according to men from both groups, although most men from latter group did not like the idea of women's engagement in IGA in general.

2.4 Men's role in protesting violence against women (VAW)

The study showed that GQAL programme made the respondents consider such acts, like teasing, commenting, wife beating, child marriage, demanding dowry as violence which they did not see as serious crime before. Rather, it was their general attitude of showing many of the above mentioned acts as private matter that should not be interfered by others outside family.

Effect of programme in the area of VAW was different for respondents from different social status. GQAL was found to make respondent belonging to the status of ordinary villager, sensitised enough to protest VAW at household as well as at the community level from their social positioning (Case 02). This category of respondents did not play any role in addressing and settling matters related to VAW at community level, and did not even think of raising their voice at family level before receiving intervention. Before they accepted teasing, wife beating, giving and receiving dowry, child marriage as the part of their everyday experience, and viewed it as a social practice, and they, therefore, did not find any wrong with continuing those practices.

Another type of respondent belonged to that group whose opinion were valued by the community and they used to play major roles in influencing judgment or decision during *shalish* or other meetings arranged to resolve disputes related to familial or community matters. Case study related to this category of respondent showed how GQAL messages included VAW as major agenda for respondent to work on in resolving disputes. The messages was seen to make the respondent, who is a village leader or *matabbor* of his area, equipped to view VAW as in need of community's consideration in order to ensure justice at all level of community (Case 03).

Considering these two ways of GQAL's effect on respondents, their involvement in protesting VAW both at family and community level could be described as follows:

2.4.1 Became aware of consequence of VAW

Respondents became aware of the legal, physical, psychological and social consequence of acts of VAW like child marriage, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dowry, rape and illegal fatwa. Although some of the respondents knew the fact that there were some acts which were legally punishable for example child marriage, dower etc. they accepted and practiced those acts considering those as part of social customs without viewing the problems from physical and social perspective.

After being aware of social and physical consequence of these practices they were motivated to take their stand against these acts. This fact was reflected in the case when one of the respondents was trying to convince his relatives to stop arranging child marriage for their daughter highlighting the health and social consequences of child marriage apart from the legal side. The respondent tried to make his relatives aware of the fact that child marriage would cause ill health, early pregnancy and birth complications. They also tried to focus on the effect of child marriage on bride's education and economic independence (Case 02 and Case Study 04). In the case of sexual harassment, the respondent was also found to have prevented harasser by highlighting how the act of sexual harassment ends both victim's and perpetrator's education (Case 02).

2.4.2 Achieved capacity of viewing every day practices critically

This awareness provided them with new lens to see their everyday practice critically. Respondents reported that there were incidents, like wife beating, child marriage, sexual harassment and demanding dowry, which they did not consider as crime or offence before they received GQAL message. At present, respondents who used to torture their wife physically (slapping, beating) were found to have stopped this evil practice (Case 06), while most of them played an active role in preventing incident of this kind both at community and family level (Case 02 and Case 03).

2.4.3 Took actions against VAW

Respondents took both individual and collective actions to prevent acts regarding VAW at family as well as at community level. Most of them were found to play role at individual level in incidents of sexual harassment, wife beating, and dowry. In this case, at the beginning the approach they followed was to convince the perpetrators about the social, moral, physical consequence of their acts as well as about the negative possible impact on their family life, and then, if perpetrators were not convinced, they made them (perpetrators) aware of the legal consequence (legal punishment) of their acts. Facts were revealed when respondents took individual actions in preventing child marriage, sexual harassment, wife beating and dowry related incidents (Case 02, Case 03 and Case 04).

Many of the respondents took collective actions in protesting child marriage and dowry at community level. Respondents' attempts in this case followed two patterns- first, by taking collective actions by organising neighbours, elite or influential community members and other like-minded community people, in most cases, who were inspired by GQAL messages (Case 02, Case 03 and Case 04), and second, by instant involvement in the incidents suddenly took place in front of respondents (Case 03).

2.4.4 Include the issue of VAW in the agenda of dispute resolution at community level

Case study related to village leader or *matabbor* who were involved in resolving dispute at community level before GQAL showed that after being sensitised over the

issue of VAW, now he could recognise some common practices like child marriage, wife beating as crime (Case 03). His involvement in an incident of wife beating by one of his neighbours mentioned in the Case 03 indicated the fact that he did not consider the incident as a “usual form of conflict between couple” or “private matter” any more. Rather he played a role in protesting VAW through his act of resolving dispute by using his acceptability and social position in the community.

3. DISSEMINATION OF GQAL MESSAGE

Most of the respondents worked in creating awareness on the issues addressed in GQAL programme among friends, relatives and neighbours. Their act of awareness raising over the issues followed three patterns: by sensitising people when they took attempt to prevent a particular incident related to VAW, by discussing the issues addressed in GQAL in every day interaction with community people and by setting example by their own practice for others to follow.

Most of the respondents played a role in preventing child marriage, wife beating, dower, sexual harassment either by individual or collective action. The case studies revealed that whenever they got involved in those incidents their approach was to make concerned parties aware of the negative consequence of that particular act of violence. Almost all incidents related to VAW mentioned in the case studies showed that respondents were successful in preventing those incidents by highlighting social, physical, psychological as well as legal consequences of child marriage, wife beating, dower and sexual harassment for individual as well as for family (Case 02, Case 03 and Case 04). Exception was seen in an incident of child marriage mentioned in Case 02 where despite his attempt of preventing child marriage, respondent failed to stop it since other factor appeared much prominent, for victim's parents to consider than the long-lasting consequences of child marriage on the victim. In this case, victim's mother had already invested much money on the arrangement of her daughter's marriage by taking loans from others and denied to cancel the marriage when respondents came to convince her.

Some respondents created awareness on GQAL messages during their everyday interaction with relatives and neighbours. They raised the issue as topics of conversation whenever they got opportunity during their informal gatherings with community people like in tea stalls, market place or *bazaar*, as well as during formal meetings (Case 03 and Case 05). They encouraged neighbours to attend various events, like CD shows, popular theatre, court yard meetings, of GQAL programme (Case 03).

Most of the respondents from case studies set examples for neighbours to follow through their own practice of changing gender roles in the household. Neighbours were interested to know the causes of the positive changes in respondents' house, like financial solvency and reduced domestic violence. When they found out that practice of sharing household activities including women in the decision-making process as well as creating favourable condition for women's economic empowerment were causes of the positive changes respondents' household, they (neighbours) felt motivated to follow them (Case 01, Case 05 and Case 06).

4. DISCUSSION

Patriarchy determines certain roles for men and women. According to the prescription of patriarchy, women's main responsibility is to perform reproductive activities while men's task is to carry out productive activities, that is, to support family by earning. This division is based on the idea on which masculinity and femininity is constructed. Masculinity is socially constructed attributes imposed on men that deter men to be involved in caring and household activities. Rather, it requires them to be strong, independent, non-expressive, rational, non-emotional, vocal, dominant and leaders. On the other hand, femininity is such a social construction that bears the attributes opposite to that of masculinity. According to the idea of femininity, women are caring, nurturing, emotional, passive, submissive, dependent and obedient. On the basis of the construction of these two ideas, masculinity and femininity, a strong division of labour is created according to which women are rendered to activities which are associated to care while men are assigned to the world that is linked to power.

The patriarchal ideology was reflected in the mentality of respondents from control groups about division of labour in the household as well as about the issue of women's inclusion in decision-making process. Intervention group was not found to be completely free from this mentality, since they also were found to bear dominant ideology through their attitude of seeing household and caring activities as the main task of women. Like control group, they were also in favour of allowing women in income generating activities to such extent which did not hamper their "main" task of the "private" space.

There is no doubt that GQAL intervention was successful in bringing the changes in the mentality of respondents being intervened, since significant difference in terms of attitude and practice had been found between intervention and control group. Although viewing household activities as the main task of women, GQAL messages had convinced them about the benefits of sharing household and caring activities by men. As a result, they made themselves involved in transforming the gender roles by breaking the existing gender division of labour in the household. In this case, GQAL messages worked against the idea of masculinity that deterred men from caring activities.

The findings revealed that crossing the patriarchal boundary of gender roles was not easy for either men or women. In the case of sharing reproductive activities, male respondents had to face constraints both from men and women. Gender is the product of social doing of some sort (West and Zimmerman 1987) and men and women "do" gender by engaging in the socially determined tasks for them (Berk 1985). By playing the socially determined roles individuals hold them accountable to the normative conception of men and women (West and Zimmerman 1987, 2009). Any perversion from socially expected roles make individual's act to be questioned. The

conception of gender requires individual to conduct tasks in order to be labeled as men or women having “essential nature” of men and women by others he/she interacts with (West and Zimmerman 2009). In this context performing housework is an important way in which women confirm femininity while by act of avoiding housework all men produce masculinity (Schneider 2012). In other words, men and women create gender deviance when men do “women’s work” and women do “men’s work”, and performing “women’s work” by men is viewed to be more deviant than the act of performing “men’s work” by women (Schneider 2012).

The findings confirmed the tension created by the so called “deviant” act when all male respondents who were in the process of this “perversion” revealed to have experienced negative comments and jokes from their relatives and neighbours (Case 01). The obligation of “doing” gender was seen to have inbuilt in the feelings of “insecurity” in performing different tasks than socially determined tasks. This fact was revealed when respondents from control group denied doing household works out of their fear of losing social prestige as well as the respect from their female family members. One comment from control group came as such: *If I do my wife’s work, people will call me as obedient to wife. I don’t need such name.*

Although respondents from intervention group expressed similar experience of being teased while performing household activities, GQAL provided respondents from this group with the awareness through which they overcame the challenge. The fact was explicit in the strategies taken by intervention group against neighbours’ negative reaction. After being intervened, many of the respondents were seen to have set example to follow on the issue which they were teasing about by the neighbours (Case 01).

However, the idea of femininity prevented women to take part in the sphere of decision-making. In a patriarchal setting, men played the main and only role in the decision-making process both at private and public space. Although, women were apparently given some power to decide on specific issues, the major life changing decisions were taken by men in this system. The idea of “orchestration power” given by Woolley and Marshall (1994) is worth of mentioning here. According to this idea, decision about daily shopping or buying daily food is a routine, time consuming and tedious work. When inequalities between spouse exist, it may be the case that more powerful one delegates this routine work of deciding every day’s “less important” matter for example, buying daily necessities, to less powerful side, and he keeps authority for himself to make decisions about “major” and “important” issues which determine the major characteristics of the household. In this case, the former is said to have “orchestration power”. Furthermore, gender division of decision was seen where “Deciding how much to spend on food, household supplies, gifts and clothing are female decisions, while deciding how much to spend on insurance is a male decision” (Woolley and Marshall 1994). The manifestation of this power inequality was found to be explicit in the attitude of few respondents from control group, while most from this group showed negative attitude towards the idea of including women’s opinion in any matter of household.

In contrast, men from intervention group were not found to have “orchestration power” although in most cases, mainly their wives or female family members took the frequent and tiring decisions, like buying foods and other daily necessities, they (women) were also seen to be consulted by their husbands or male family members while making major decisions for the household (Case 04 and Case 05). In this case, it could be said that respondents from intervention group were on the way to leave their practice of imposing their decision on other family members, or more specifically women without taking other perspective under consideration.

The study also showed men’s engagement in creating favourable environment for women’s economic empowerment. In exploring this, the study took men’s attitude towards women’s engagement in income generating activities as well as their role of promoting women’s role in economic decisions under its scope. Significant difference was revealed in the attitude between intervention and control group. Although it was common for most of the respondents from both groups that they view women’s involvement in income generating activities as beneficial for their families to some extent due to their poverty, control group was seen to take a rigid stand against women’s control over economic decisions and resources. Their rigid and negative stand was reflected in their attitude of viewing “economic freedom” as harmful for women as well as for families. Although they viewed that women’s engagement in income generation could bring financial solvency, it would also cause conflict in families by making women “disobedient to man”. They also showed negative attitude towards women having power to decide over family income. Most respondents of this group revealed to have perception that if women had money on their hand, man’s power, authority and traditional role as a provider would be under threat.

In contrast, respondents from intervention group showed positive attitude towards women’s involvement in IGA, and this attitude was found to be reflected in their practice. This involvement also created favourable condition for women to participate, with men, in economic decision that influence their lives and their families. Case Study 06 is a reflection of the positive change caused by respondent’s awareness of the benefit of encouraging women’s economic involvement at the level of earning as well as of decision-making. This case study showed that how a woman’s position in her household was changed after being engaged in IGA, that in turn put her in a stronger position to participate in the decision-making process at the household level (Case 06). Apart from men’s role in promoting women’s IGA through providing them with information, equipment, facilities, the case showed that male respondent was contributing in women’s economic empowerment by sharing domestic and caring activities, which was considered as one of the major barriers of women’s full participation in productive activities.

In a patriarchal social setting like in Bangladesh, the act of violence against women is supported through views or ideology which justify, excuse, trivialise and deny and minimise violence against women. The findings showed that men having GQAL message were found to have taken active part against this patriarchal norm. It was seen that from the respective social position, men having GQAL messages challenged the problematic attitudes and behaviours of men around them as well as taken action both at family and community level.

5. CONCLUSION

Study reveals the significant difference between intervention and control group in terms of attitude and practice on the issues dealt. This difference indicates the success of the programme in making men involved in the journey towards gender equality. Here, it is interesting that although the messages the programme is delivering challenge the unequal power relation between men and women, the male respondents from intervention group did not take the messages as threatening, rather they were seen to be convinced to bring changes in their attitude and behaviour which they used to think as “normal”. Considering the positive reaction of men to GQAL messages, it could be said that the programme was successful in reaching the community, especially men, in an acceptable manner, although the intervention aimed to bring changes in existing power relation legitimised by the dominant patriarchal ideology.

However, the programme is still being implemented in the area from which the data has been collected. Therefore, the men who were taken as respondents here still on the process of receiving GQAL messages from various events of the programme running in their area. Here, it can be said that the behaviour and attitude they showed regarding women’s equal participation in decision-making, women’s economic empowerment, sharing domestic activities as well as violence against women may be influenced by the ongoing intervention to some extent which may not be the same after the programme is phased out from the area in 2015.

Since the intervention does not involve asset transfer, rather it works on dominant ideology and belief through pointing out the benefits of changing existing attitude and practice, it can be expected that the benefits of the intervention will sustain. This aspect was reflected from the case studies where male respondents were seen to have motivated to change their behaviour after being convinced by GQAL messages highlighting the benefits of sharing domestic activities, including women in decision-making process, creating favourable environment for women’s economic empowerment and protesting violence against women. Here, the fact is also revealed that men became fully convinced only when they received benefits of their practice, and then started creating awareness among their neighbours and relatives highlighting the benefits they themselves received by following GQAL messages.

Despite success, the fact must be acknowledged that although the intervention appeared to be successful in bringing changes in the attitude towards and practice in certain areas, respondents from intervention group still hold the dominant patriarchal ideology. This traditional ideology, which was deeply rooted in their psychology for being brought up in a patriarchal set up, was reflected in their attitude of having reservation on women’s engagement in IGA that did not go to the traditional idea of *purdah*. They were also seen to have tendency to support women’s IGA by providing the assistance to those part of their (women’s) work requiring to be performed outside,

rather than encouraging women to perform those by their own by creating favourable environment for women to go out with the aim to increase their mobility. The same is true in the case of respondents' view on gender division of labour where they consider some work (like cooking) as exclusive for women, and they do not feel themselves responsible to perform this task in the presence of their female family members. In spite of these facts, there is no doubt that respondents from intervention group were now in the process of changing the stereotypical gender roles.

In conclusion, the programme could claim success in providing respondents with critical lens to evaluate their every day practices from gender perspective. By challenging the traditional idea of masculinity and femininity, the programme aimed to attack patriarchy and the strength of the programme lied in its strategy of reaching men who had accepted the messages positively instead of taking the intervention as attacking to the privileged position they enjoyed in the traditional settings.

The success of GQAL revealed from the study indicated the necessity of running the programme for a longer period of time to ensure gender equality at family and community level.

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ANNEX

Case studies

Case 01. Sharing domestic activities

Location – Area: Kolachipa, Village: Mohadebpur, Union: Shibpur, *Upazila*: Gobindoganj, District: Gaibandha

Menar Ali from Mohadebpur village in Shibpur union under Gobindoganj *upazila* in Gaibandha district works as a carpenter in a nearby factory. He lives with his wife Morjina Begum (30), son Abdul Matin (13) and daughter Taslima Khatun (11).

Md. Menar Ali (40) received GQAL training in 2013. He was involved in BRAC Popular Theatre as a performer even before he received the training. He used to perform in theatre aiming to create awareness over the issue of health and gender and GQAL messages were added to his area of performance since GQAL programme started in their area in 2011.

Daily routine of Menar Ali has been significantly changed after he received GQAL training containing the message on the equality in terms of food, work, education, medical, property, violence and sexual harassment.

Menar Ali gets up from sleep very early in the morning, and does some household activities before going for his work, which he never did before. Now every morning he performs some work related to cattle rearing like cleaning cattle sheds, feeding and storing food for cattle for the rest of the day. Then he goes to the factory and works till evening. On coming back from work, he takes dinner with his wife and children. Sometimes, he comes back late in the night and then he serves food himself if he finds his wife sleeping.

On the other hand, after getting up from sleep, his wife Morjina (30) sits for cooking after cleaning the house inside. In the meantime, she also sends children to schools. After finishing cooking, she usually spends time making quilt for her daughter which she thinks will be needed for her marriage in future. Then, she takes lunch with her children after their school. She usually spends time by chatting with her female neighbours until evening when she prepares dinner. In the meantime, she also feeds cattle and raises them to their sheds. After finishing cooking, she spends time with her children by chatting. The whole family usually has dinner together after Menar Ali comes back home after work. He also takes care of his children and wife if they are sick by feeding, fanning, medicating and bringing them to the doctor or hospitals.

Menar Ali has one day off from work in a week, although he needs to go to work that day sometimes. If he remains in the house that day, he usually performs work related to household, like repairing house, cleaning courtyard, homestead gardening, washing and drying out clothes and bathing cattles.

Menar Ali's daily schedule was different before receiving GQAL training. He would never share household activities with his wife Morjina before. He learnt from the training about the benefits of sharing domestic activities at household level and then felt motivated to practice his learnings in his own life. Before training he never thought of doing any household related activities in the morning before he went out for work. That time, he used to chat with his neighbours between the time he got up from his sleep and went for work. He would also pass his free time idly.

Before receiving GQAL messages, it was their family practice that female members used to have their meal after serving meal to male members. But after training, it has become their regular practice of having meal together.

Along with sharing domestic activities, Menar Ali has started to value his wife's opinion while taking any decision for the family. He consults with his wife Morjina in taking decision regarding children's education, savings and buying and selling assets.

The messages of the training have impacted on the attitude of Menar Ali towards the issue of violence against women and equality at family life. At present, he does not consider any work as "women's work" or "men's work", and always try to share domestic activities while he is at home. He thinks that it is not only GQAL training, but also his involvement in spreading GQAL messages through his performance in Popular Theatre that is responsible for the change they have in the family. After being convinced of GQAL message, he feels that if he himself does not practice these learnings in his own life, his performance in GQAL related theatre would fail to inspire other people in translating GQAL messages to action. He also considers his involvement in popular theatre as strength or opportunity through which he works in sensitising community over the issue of equality at family level.

Although his involvement in performing domestic activities was ridiculed by his neighbours at first, soon the benefits of his act took neighbours' attention. One of his neighbours Azadul Islam (40) felt inspired to see that after bringing changes in behaviour Menar's family life has become peaceful.

Azadul found that the relationship between Menar and his wife has improved and they have stopped fighting over trivial matters. Azadul, then, has started to share domestic activities, as well as to value his wife's opinion in decision-making. Before, it was his (Azadul's) regular practice to beat his wife in the case of any disagreement between them. Now he has stopped his act of wife beating and he now, also is experiencing the positive changes in his family life which again inspires others for doing the same.

Case 02. Sexual harassment and wife beating

Location- village: Mohadebpur, Union: Shibpur, *Upazila*: Gobindoganj, District: Gaibandha

Thirty two year old Shohag Mondol lives in Mohadebpur village in Shibpur union under Gobindoganj *upazila* in Gaibandha district. He is unmarried and lives with his mother Shefa Begum (50) and grandmother Nurunnahar Begum (75). He received GQAL training in 2013, and got a refresher training in 2014. Apart from the training, he received GQAL messages also from other events of the programme like CD show, popular theatre and courtyard meeting.

Although Shohag was indifferent about taking actions to prevent violence against women, he has made several attempts to protest child marriage, sexual harassment and domestic violence several times after receiving GQAL training.

In 2013, Shohag was informed by one of his female relatives Jobaida (37) that her daughter, Nesa Begum (14) was being harassed by a boy called Ripon (19) on her way to school. At the beginning, this boy disturbed Nesa by writing romantic letters and after failing to get response from Nesa, he began to disturb her by calling bad names, indecent physical gesture as well as loud comments and whistling. After being victim of such humiliation, she then informed her mother Jobaida about the problems she was facing on her way to and from school every day.

After being informed about the incident, Shohag went to Ripon, and tried to persuade him not to disturb Nesa again. Then, he tried to convince Ripon by highlighting the importance of concentrating on studies at a young age rather than making relationship. But, Ripon did not change his behaviour and made Shohag's attempt unsuccessful. But Shohag did not stop pursuing. He then again talked to Ripon. This time he (Shohag) made him aware that the act Ripon was doing with Nesa was legally a punishable offence. Shohag also warned him that if he did not stop harassing Nesa, he (Shohag) would take legal steps against him. This warning worked well on Ripon and since then Nesa have not been victims of sexual harassment by him. In the same year Shohag got involved in another incident related to wife beating in his own family.

Shohag's uncle Ariful Mondol (48) did not have peace in his family life since he did nothing to support his wife and children and passed his time idly. He used to torture his wife Runu Begum (40) both physically and mentally. In one of Shohag's visit to his uncle's house in the neighbouring village one afternoon, he found that his uncle Ariful was shouting at his wife Runu on trivial matters. Out of his anger, he threw out things like plates, glasses, utensils and whatever he got in front of him. Then the intensity of his anger increased to such a height when he started to beat his wife. He was so furious that Shohag failed to save his aunt during that time. But later, he raised the matter while having dinner with his uncle's family, and tried to point out the consequences of his anger to his uncle. He tried to convince him that he gained nothing out of his anger that day except doing some damages to his relationship with his wife as well as to the household assets he threw out during his anger. He also tried to highlight the possible impact of this kind of parents' act on children's physical and mental development. Although on that day his uncle did not like all of Shohag's points, he gradually became convinced to change his behaviour towards his family after having discussion with Shohag several times after that particular day. Shohag also managed to motivate Ariful to be engaged in income generating activities to support his family.

All attempts to prevent violence against women taken by Shohag did not end with success. In February 2014, he heard that one of his neighbours, Rizia Begum (43) arranged marriage for her thirteen-year-old daughter, a student of a nearby primary school. Then he asked suggestions to his mother Shefa about how to prevent this marriage and Shefa discouraged him not to get involved with other's private matters. After that, Shohag also tried to make his mother aware of the demerits of child marriage and also told that he could not sit idle when it happens as a gender justice educator of GQAL programme. Shohag then went to Lipi's mother Rizia in order to convince her to stop the marriage. He highlighted the physical consequence of child marriage like early pregnancy, pregnancy and health related complications, mental immaturity to adjust with married life as well as the social consequence of child marriage. But Rizia told him that she had already invested lots of money in making arrangement of this marriage by taking loans from others and at this point it would not be possible for her to stop the marriage. Then Shohag came back and again went to Rizia taking three of his neighbours with him, Jafar Uddin (40), Likhon Sarkar (25) and Muslim Uddin (25), who received GQAL training and messages with him. They again failed to convince Rizia since she had already spent lots of money on this marriage. Rizia then went to some influential people of the area to request them not to allow Shohag protest her daughter's marriage, otherwise she would fall in a big financial problem. These influential requested Shohag to let the marriage happen considering Rizia's situation.

Despite their request, Shohag declared that he would not let any child marriage happen in his area. Finding no other way, Rizia had to give her daughter in marriage from his brother's house which was in another village. After that, Shohag has not heard about any incident of child marriage in his area. However, Shohag did not feel the urge as he does now to play a role in violence related matters due to his lack of knowledge and indifferent attitude towards women's

rights and equality issues. For example, he himself did not know before that sexual harassment is a punishable offence by state law. He learnt it from GQAL training. He also knew that women can take legal steps if they become victims of dowry, child marriage, illegal fatwa and rape. At the same time, he is also aware of the fact that although wife beating is legally a crime, but women usually do not go to the court to file case against their husbands and in-laws out of their fear of being abandoned by their husbands. He, therefore, thinks that this reality should be considered by policy makers and development practitioners in order to address the problem of violence against women.

Case 03. Dowry and wife beating

Before receiving GQAL messages, I would like to get involved in shalish regarding problems like family conflict for land and property and did not take issues like wife beating, dowry, and sexual harassment seriously as areas of my involvement in social work. After being aware of the consequences of violence against women from GQAL, now I take up a strong stand against those misdeeds. (Shaharul, Village leader, Jhakobari area, Mohadebpur)

Location- village: Mohadebpur, Union: Shibpur, *Upazila*: Gobindoganj, District: Gaibandha

Forty year old Md. Shaharul Islam lives in Mohadebpur village in Shibpur union under Gobindoganj *upazila* in Gaibandha district. He is a farmer and works in his own land. He grows rice and vegetables in his land which are enough for his own consumption. After his work, he spends most of his time in social work. He also acts as a chairman of the *bazaar* committee of Kamarhat *Bazaar*, the only *bazaar* that is surrounded by five/six villages. He is also a village leader (*matabbor*) of Jhakobari area. He plays an important role in resolving rural disputes on issues like property related problems or family problems.

In 2012 Shaharul received GQAL messages through CD shows and court yard meetings, and started to see the problems he usually solved through new eyes. In 2014 he became involved in such an incident in one of his neighbours' families which he would not get involved considering the problem as "very" personal if he did not receive GQAL messages.

In January 2014, Jalil Mia (35) who lives in Mohadebpur village arranged marriage for his daughter Jaigun (14). Since it was a child marriage, Jalil arranged the marriage secretly without informing anybody in his neighbourhood. But immediately after marriage, it was revealed that his son-in-law Rashed (22) was a drug addict and soon he started demanding dowry from Jaigun. When Jaigun refused, she became a victim of beating and other forms of physical torture by her husband. Jalil Mia, therefore, tried to meet his demand of dowry as much as possible due to her daughter's peace in home. One day, while Shaharul was sitting in *bazaar*, he saw Rashed beating his wife Jaigun on their way to Jalil's house. It took the attention of other villagers. Then, Shaharul and other villagers ran to stop Rashed and after that Rashed became angry and asked them not to interfere in his family matters.

In the same evening, Shaharul went to Jalil and came to know the real story about how Jaigun was being tortured by her husband for dowry. Then Shaharul called Rashed and Jaigun in his house and tried to convince Rashed about the consequences of drug addiction as well as wife beating. Although, during this time, Rashed also accused Jaigun of having extra marital affairs, Jaigun denied it, and Shaharul, however, managed to convince Rashed of leaving his habit of demanding dowry as well as his addiction to drug. With the mediation of Shaharul the couple reached an understanding to start a new life without dowry demand and misunderstanding.

After that Jaigun passed few days without being tortured in her husband's house. Soon Rashed took his old form of torture, this time in a more intense way. Then Jalil again went to Shaharul

to ask him to settle the problems and he (Jalil) was very desperate to come to a solution because he thought that the situation would lead Jaigun to commit suicide. Then Shaharul informed the UP member and other influential members of his village about this matter and with their support they arranged a village meeting (*shalish*) on the matter with the presence of both parties involved here. It was decided in the meeting that the couple would go for divorce and Rashed would pay necessary compensation, like, dower and maintenance costs to Jaigun according to the rules of divorce.

Although Shaharul was engaged in solving disputes of community people even before he received GQAL messages due to his acceptance and his social position, after being intervened by the programme he settled the issues addressed in GQAL with a new understanding. Before, he considered wife beating as the usual form of conflict between husband and wife, and he, therefore, did not consider it as a “big” problem to interfere. Same was the case for child marriage which he did not consider as crime from the social point of view, although he knew it as a crime by law. But after getting GQAL messages he felt himself responsible to take a stand against those acts which he did not take as the area as worth of his interference before.

Shaharul also plays role in creating awareness over the issues addressed in GQAL through his everyday interaction with community people in the *bazaar*, tea stall and in informal as well as formal meetings. Apart from giving messages by his own, he also motivates his friends and neighbours as well as his family members to participate in different events like CD show, popular theatre, courtyard meeting organised by the programme in his area.

Shaharul’s effort in making his community free from violence against women, however, is not free from obstacles and challenges. He now has been considered as enemy by many who could not serve their interest at the cost of women’s sufferings due to Shaharul’s interference. He also needs to invest much time to settle down those issues of others that make him give less time to his own work and family. In some cases, he also has to spend money from his own pocket to help the victims. He, however, did not see these challenges as big enough to prevent him from his journey to a violence free community.

Case 04. Decision-making, child marriage, domestic violence, household activities

Location- Village: Mohadebpur, Union: Shibpur, *Upazila*: Gobindoganj, District: Gaibandha

Anwar Hossain (46) residing in Mohadebpur village in Shibpur union under Gobindoganj *upazila* in Gaibandha district is a three-wheeled automated vehicle driver. He also works as a tailor in his house when he cannot go out with his vehicle due to bad weather or political disturbance. He has his wife Monwara Begum (35) and his three children- his son Arif Raihan (15) and his two daughters Atiya Khatun (8) and Arobi Khatun (6) in his home.

In 2013, Anwar Hossain first heard about GQAL messages from his wife Monwara Begum (35) who, till that time, participated in two events of GQAL, like CD show and courtyard meetings. After getting a positive impression of GQAL messages from his wife, he got inspired to know about the message more but could not manage his time due to the nature of his work that required him to be on constant move. Finally in May 2014 he and his wife Monwara received GQAL training by being inspired by GQAL staff. After receiving the training, Anwar attended two court yard meetings and watched CD shows organised by GQAL programme in his own courtyard twice.

Since their marriage in 1992, with Monwara, Anwar have been living separately from his parents due to some family conflict. Since both of them were very young at the time of their marriage,

they both became depended on each other in making any household decision. It was their practice even after taking GQAL training that they consulted each other while buying or selling any things for their household. In case of buying cooking materials like utensils, knife, pot etc. Monwara informs his husband about the need, then they discuss whether they will buy those considering the amount of money they have in their hands that time. If they both agree, they go to market together and buy these. Since the natal home of Monwara is very close to the market place of crockeries and utensils, Monwara always like to go there with her husband.

Monwara mainly decides daily necessities like oil, food, fuel that need to be bought. Anwar goes to the local *bazaar* and buys these according to the list Monwara provides. If Monwara suddenly needs anything, she informs Anwar about the requirement by cell phone and on the way of his coming back home from work Anwar brings the thing. Monwara herself also goes to the nearby market to buy things she suddenly needs since Anwar has to move far away with his vehicle.

Anwar has one goat and 30 hens in his house. Several months ago, he had to sell his only cow to manage money to repay loan he made to bear medical costs when suddenly his son Arif got seriously sick. Anwar got Tk. 27000 as cow's price and after consultation with Monwara he spent Tk. 20000 for repaying loan and bought a goat for Tk. 7000/-. They sell remaining poultry eggs after their family consumption. Anwar takes eggs to the market to sell. Now they are both planning to start a retail shop in their house. Here, Monwara will sell things along with her household activities and Anwar will take care of buying or supplying the items and other maintenance side.

Although Monwara's opinion is included in decision-making from the beginning of her married life, after receiving GQAL training Anwar became more aware of the importance of taking wife's opinion in every matter and most importantly got the logical ground of his act which he has been practicing since his marriage without investing much thought on it. Before getting GQAL messages, he was mocked by his relatives and neighbours for giving importance to his wife's opinion. He felt embarrassed and shy when others made jokes at him by saying: *wife is the boss of this house, not husband* or labelled him as "obedient to wife". Now he does not feel bad when they make jokes rather he encourages them to do the same. He has also seen changes in the behaviours of many of them who used to laugh at him since they also received GQAL messages. GQAL messages gave him strength to motivate his neighbours to include women's voice in decision-making.

Being inspired by GQAL messages, he has started to share domestic activities with his wife which he never did before. Now he tries to assist Monwara in household activities, like cooking, washing clothes, carrying water etc. He also plays a role in preventing violence against women in which he was not so active before 2014.

Abdus Sobur (30), a neighbour of Anwar, is a day labourer. He used to spend all of his earnings on gambling. His wife Julekha (25) tried to prevent him from gambling, but failed. Julekha used to be the victims of physical torture like beating, slapping along with verbal assault like shouting, bad names if she asked money for buying food and other household necessities. After being informed about the situation from Monwara, Anwar took steps to solve the problem. He went to Sobur, and tried to convince him to leave his habit of gambling. He highlighted the bad side of his habits as well as the negative consequence of bad relationship with his wife. He encouraged him to consult his wife before taking any decision. Anwar also took Sobur to some CD shows and courtyard meetings of GQAL programme. Gradually Sobur's behaviour changed towards his family. Still he sometimes goes for gambling, but the frequency is lower than before.

In June 2014, Anwar took collective action to stop a child marriage arranged by his own brother Sarwar (49) for his daughter Rekha (13). After being informed about the matter by his wife Monwara, Anwar decided not to let his brother do it. He and Monwara went to Sarwar's house in order to convince him about the demerits of child marriage considering her daughter's health, education and overall future. On that day, Sarwar did not agree with Anwar and Monwara, and promised to marry his daughter. Then, some days later Anwar again went to Sarwar's house, but this time he did not go alone. About this incident he informed his neighbours, who received GQAL messages and were also against child marriage. This time Anwar brought some of these neighbours to Sarwar's house and tried to prevent him from arranging child marriage by highlighting the legal consequence of it. This time he along with his neighbours strongly protested the act. Although not immediately, but a few days later Sarwar decided to stop the marriage.

In 2008, before receiving GQAL marriage Anwar arranged marriage of his eldest daughter Arifa Begum (20). At that time, she was 14 years old and soon after their marriage she became victim of various physical complications. Apart from those she was also facing problems of adjustment in her married life. She is still suffering from the consequences. After receiving GQAL messages, Anwar and Monwara could link their personal experience with her daughter's life to GQAL message related to child marriage and try to protest and prevent child marriage whenever they are known about any incident of this kind.

Case 05. Decision-making, caring activities and economic empowerment

Location- Village: Mohadebpur, Union: Shibpur, *Upazila*: Gobindoganj, District: Gaibandha

Sri Jibon Chandra Barman (25) lives in Mohadebpur village in Shibpur union under Gobindoganj *upazila* in Gaibandha district. He has four family members living with him- his wife Sri Mukti Rani Barman (22), his two daughters Juthi Rani (5) and Jui Rani (1) and his mother Shita Rani (55). In 2012, Jibon received GQAL training and got two refresher training in 2013 and 2014. He also participated in other events like popular theatre, CD show and court yard meeting organised by the programme.

Farming was his major source of livelihood. After receiving GQAL messages and being advised by his wife Mukti Rani, he started another business to make another source of income. According to her advice, he bought a power tiller which he could use in his own land, and also use it to in other's land to bring extra earnings. He, at first, did not have enough money to buy it. When he shared his financial inability to his wife Mukti and mother Shita Rani, his mother advised him to wait till the period of harvesting, he then would be able to manage money by selling crops and their only calf. But Mukti opined that it would not be wise for them to sell calf in that year, since it was very young, and they should wait till it became adult in order to get better price. Rather she advised him to mortgage her ornaments. Shita Rani did not like the idea at first, but Mukti made both her husband and mother-in-law agree with her.

It was not the regular picture of decision-making Jibon had in his house before he received GQAL messages. Before 2012, Jibon never consulted with his wife and mother on any matter. He used to think that they did not have the capacity to give opinion during the decision-making process since they remained at home all the time and passed their time in cooking. As a result, it was part of his life that he quarreled with his wife and mother if they raised questions to the decisions he took alone. After receiving GQAL messages, he started to practice the learnings in his family life to get the benefits. Although at the beginning he had doubt about the idea of including women in the decision-making process, he, later, became convinced about the idea after being benefitted by his wife's and mother's opinion on many occasions.

In January 2013 Jibon decided to make a new kitchen room in his house. When he sought his wife's opinion, she advised that he should not spend money on new room, since money would be required for his sister's marriage after two months. He followed her advice and found it useful later.

After two months, while arranging marriage for his sister Purnima Rani (18) with Shapan Chandra (24), a resident of the neighbouring union, Jibon found that he lacked financial capacity to bear all the cost related to wedding. At first, without consulting Mukti and her mother Shita, Jibon took the decision to sell 25 decimals of his land to manage cash. Mukti did not like the idea, but hesitated to express her opinion to Jibon out of her fear of being misunderstood by her husband who may think that she was taking "advantage" of GQAL training that they both received a year ago. She then went to one of Jibon's cousins Chitto Ranjan (42) to request him to advise her husband to mortgage the land instead of selling. She picked Chitto Ranjan to achieve her objective since she knew that Jibon used to value Chitto Ranjan's opinion while taking any major decision. Mukti also requested her brother-in-law not to disclose her name when he would talk over the matter to her husband. Mukti was successful with her plan. Jibon valued Chitto Ranjan's opinion and mortgaged the land instead of selling.

Nine months later Jibon managed to get back his land after repaying the loan. Then he got to know from his cousin that the idea was not his, but Mukti's. He then became so happy with his wife's idea for which he got back his land, he then realised that if he had sold the land at that time, he would lose the chance to get it back. Since then Jibon decided to take opinion from his wife on all matters while taking any decision.

Although Mukti and her mother-in-law were involved in decision-making about buying daily necessities like oil, utensils etc. or about other matters to some extent before receiving GQAL messages, their opinion began to be valued more by Jibon after receiving the training. Mukti now does not hesitate to buy cosmetics or clothes for herself without asking Jibon. Jibon also consults Mukti and Shita before taking any major decision, for example, on property or marriage related matters.

Mukti and Shita plays major roles in deciding matters like children's education and clothes. In January 2014, after consulting with Jibon, Mukti decided to admit their elder daughter Juthi (5) to a nearby primary school. Then they asked opinion from Shita, who at the beginning did not agree to the idea and asked them to wait one more year. Then Mukti succeed to convince her mother-in-law by showing the logic that if Juthi would start going to school from the early age, a habit of going to school would be developed in her and she would be inspired as well, and this would, therefore, be good for her future. But since Juthi looked younger than her age, the school authority at first denied to take her in the school. Then Jibon came back home and consulted with Mukti about the possible solution. Mukti went to the school again and showed Juthi's birth certificate to the school authority as proof of her daughter's age. After being convinced the school authority took Juthi as their student.

Jibon's attitude has positively changed towards the idea of sharing domestic activities. Before receiving GQAL messages, he used to think that domestic activities including cooking, taking care of sick family members were "women's work" and he usually never thought of doing these. GQAL intervention has changed his attitude. In 2013, Mukti got pregnant and she had been sick most of the time during her pregnancy. Jibon took care of his wife during this time by taking her to doctors for regular checkup as well as taking regular care of her at home.

In 2014, Jibon's mother Shita got seriously sick, but it was difficult for Mukti to give her mother-in-law the necessary attention and care as she was already over-burdened with her household

activities including looking after her one year old daughter. At that time, Jibon took care of his mother by feeding, giving medicine and all other related activities. Although he wanted to take her mother to the doctor, she did not want to go. Then he consulted Mukti and went to the doctor alone and brought medicine for her.

The positive changes that took place in Jibon's family gradually took their neighbours' attention. They are now interested to know the reasons behind this change. Since both Mukti and Jibon are Gender Justice Educator, they tried to spread GQAL messages through their everyday interaction with their relatives, neighbours and other community people. Jibon highlights the importance of including women in the decision-making process as well as sharing house chore and caring activities by men. He realised from his own experience that decision taken by one family member never could bring good for the family as it ignores other's need and perspective.

Case 06. Economic empowerment

Shabuj Sarkar (27) residing in Chokondarhar area in Mohadebpur village under Shibpur union in Gaibandha district, is a van driver. He has his wife Aleya Begum (22), his daughter Shati Begum (8), son Alamin Sarkar (2) and his mother Jobeda Begum (60) in his house.

Both Shabuj and his wife Aleya earns to support family. Shabuj earns Tk.7000/- per month from driving, while Aleya earns Tk. 4000/- by making quilt and doing embroidery and also by rearing livestock. At present, Shabuj does not have poverty in his house. But the picture was not the same in the past as now.

In 2004, Shabuj and Aleya got married. Then, Shabuj did not work regularly, and as a result, he often had fight with his wife due to his inability to provide minimum maintenance cost to his wife and mother. The fight, sometimes, went to such extreme form that he would beat his wife. After the birth of their first child Shati, their relationship worsened.

Shabuj and Aleya got opportunity to receive a three-day training called *Poribortito Jiboner Shondhane* under BRAC programme called POSITION which is now called GQAL since July 2011. Here, they came to know about the rights and benefits of providing equal food for all family members regardless of sex as well as including both men and women in the decision-making process at the family level. In 2011, Shabuj, for the first time heard from the training about the benefit of men sharing domestic activities in the house to reduce women's workload, which in turn would provide women with time to be involved in other activities beneficial for the family. Therefore, they both started to think about how to remove poverty, which was the main source of their conflict and sufferings, from their life.

After receiving the training in 2011, Shabuj tried to work regularly, and he also encouraged Aleya to be engaged in income generating activities by rearing cattle. Aleya started to earn income by selling milk from her cow which she got from her father at the end of 2011. She also kept some milk for family consumption.

At that time, Shabuj and Aleya were looking for other means of earning income and consulted each other. They also took the opinion of Jobeda, Shabuj's mother. That time, Shabuj and Aleya decided to lease a land. They managed a portion of the required money from their savings of both, and the rest by taking loan from a NGO working in their area. They produced rice in this land for their own consumption and also for selling to the market. Shabuj was involved in field related activities like preparing land, sowing seeds, weeding and harvesting, and after harvesting, Shabuj, Aleya and Jobeda together were involved in post-harvesting work, like boiling, drying out and preserving rice. Keeping enough rice for their own consumption, they used to sell the surplus. They also got poultry feed from their processing of rice. Since 2011 till

now, they have leased three lands in this way. Besides, Shabuj has the practice of giving all his earnings to Aleya who decides how to spend those as per the family's requirements.

Since the beginning of 2012, being advised by Shabuj, Aleya started generating income from embroidery with the support of Jesmin (30), one of Shabuj's cousin. Jesmin was involved with a cottage industry in the nearby town. She managed embroidery orders for Aleya from this factory. Therefore, Aleya started to have orders to make embroidery in different types of clothes, like bed sheet, shawl, pillow cover etc. according to the design format provided by that factory. Besides, she also became known in her neighbours for her work of stitching quilt, and started to get orders of quilt from them. Her mother-in-law Jobeda assisted her in doing these works.

At this point of time, Shabuj and Aleya again received a training called "Gender Awareness in Family Life" of the same programme as before, but that time under the name GQAL programme, in March 2013. After receiving this training, this time they started to discuss about the positive side of couple's sharing activities and opinions in family life in their neighbourhood. They also talked about the negative consequences of some of the existing social practices, like child marriage to their neighbours. Till now, they also attended many CD shows and courtyard meetings arranged by GQAL programme. They keep in touch with various committees or forums of GQAL, like gender justice educator forum, end VAW committee, community leaders' forum, SHAMPRIITI forum and youth volunteer. They think that now they have another kind of relationship with the members of various GQAL forums, which they named as "GQAL relationship" apart from the social and human relationship one usually have.

At present Aleya has six goats, apart from the cow she got in 2011 from his father. She has a plan to sell the goats when these become older to get good price. Last year, she sold two goats and got good price. At present, she also has 15 hens and eight ducks. Most of the eggs she gets from these are sold to the market after keeping a few for their own consumption. Besides, some of the eggs are used for breeding, and she earns money also by selling chicks.

Shabuj assists his wife Aleya in her work. In the case of livestock, he helps Aleya in vaccination as well as with selling the products by taking those to the market place. Shabuj has made a room in between their kitchen place and tube well. He has also arranged mosquito net for the cattle. Every morning before going to his own work he collects cattle feed from the field and stores these for the whole day.

Shabuj assists in her embroidery work by managing orders from the factory through his cousin, by reaching the products to his cousin Jesmin who then takes those to the factory. Shabuj also bought four chairs for his wife and mother since they feel convenient to do embroidery work while sitting in a chair. Shabuj has arranged solar electricity in his home considering the problem Aleya and Jobeda had in doing their embroidery work till late night for not having electricity in their home.

Shabuj always suggests Aleya to extend her area of work. Before, Aleya used to make quilt only, then Shabuj advised her to do embroidery also. He also first took initiative to coordinate his cousin to manage embroidery work from factory.

Shabuj helps Aleya by sharing household activities, like assisting Aleya in cooking, bathing children, serving food for himself and other family members, looking after family members in the case of sickness, cleaning cow barn. Now, he stores cattle feed for the day before he goes for work, which he did not before. Shabuj becomes more involved in sharing household activities when his wife and mother have big orders of embroidery and therefore have to be occupied with work most of the day.

The changes Shabuj experienced in his life after being intervened by GQAL programme has been observed by his relatives and neighbours. Some of them also made jokes with him for sharing domestic activities with his wife, and valuing her opinion while taking any decision. But he does not care about their jokes since he believes that his wife's works and intellect have made this positive change in their family.

Shabuj now feels guilt for his past behaviour of beating Aleya. At present, he appreciates his wife's intellect and hard work before his family members, neighbours and friends.