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Assessing the Performance of GQAL in Changing Gender Norms and Behaviour

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Executive summary

BRAC has been promoting women's empowerment and more equitable gender relations in the home and in the community as part of its overall development programs for poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor. Specifically, the Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) Program for members of Village Organizations (VO) was initiated by Training Division first in 1999 and then later jointly with Research and Evaluation Division (RED) in January 2001 with this aim in mind. In 2005, the Gender Justice & Diversity Section was established in BRAC to facilitate mainstreaming gender equality in the organizational and program level and for advocacy at the national level. Soon afterwards, GQAL was launched with TUP members in Specially Targeted Ultra-Poor (STUP) areas, in response to recommendations made in the Mid-term Report (MTR) of Phase I of Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty-Reduction (CFPR). Inclusion of GQAL activities in 2005 has helped emphasize the importance of changing gender relations at household and community level, including working with men as agents of change along with women.

GQAL has developed a number of strategies to deliver on the above. One has been to identify and train women, men and couples as Gender Justice Educators (GJEs) who commit to changing gender relations and raise voice against gender discrimination and Violence against Women (VAW) within their own homes and also at the community level. Changes at the community level are initiated through the courtyard meetings (*uthan boithaks*) where women and men from the community are encouraged to attend. GJEs normally conduct these meetings

In April 2011, the Gender, Justice & Diversity Section, BRAC requested BRAC Development Institute (BDI) to undertake a research to assess changing gender relations and practices in GQAL areas – particularly changes that had been reported by their field based program officers from several program areas. With this in mind, BDI agreed to undertake a study with the following broad objectives:

- 1) To assess the level of gender equality within households and in the wider community in GQAL program areas, and compare with a similar non-GQAL area.
- 2) To assess the extent to which the wider community mobilizes to take action against gender inequality and violence against women.

The specific objectives were as follows:

- a) To measure the level of practice and attitudes with respect to gender division of labour in the home, domestic violence, gender inequality in terms of healthcare, nutrition and education, and community mobilization around violence against women in the selected areas.

- b) To assess whether specific gender norms with respect to the above have changed in the wider community in the last five years.
- c) To document the ways in which the community has engaged in collective action around practices of gender discrimination and violence, with the aim of identifying different supports and barriers.

The study was designed to assess the possible impact of the GQAL program interventions on actual practices with respect to gender justice and gender based violence within households, perceptions about changing norms and practices among individuals and in the larger communities, and community mobilizations around gender justice and violence against women. To perform the assessment information would be collected from households and the wider communities. In order to ensure a fair regional spread data was collected from three districts – Netrokona, Gaibandha, Rajbari - that, by and large, captured the geographical physical and cultural diversity of rural Bangladesh. In each district information was collected from one well performing ('good') GQAL program area, one 'average' performing ('average') GQAL area and a nearby CFPR area with no GQAL interventions. The 'good' and 'average' GQAL spots would allow comparison between areas with differential program performance. The non-GQAL spot would allow comparison of outcomes between areas with and without GQAL program interventions, and also identify changes in practice regarding gender justice and gender inequality that was driven by non program forces (economic, social, policy related). The fact that all the study areas were former CFPR intervention areas provided a built in control for variation in unobserved factors that might affect the outcomes of interest.

Hence, data were collected from a total of nine spots, three in each district. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for data collection. The following data collection tools were employed:

1. Random household survey with ever married women in households that had at least one adult male member: 120 household interviews using short pre-coded questionnaire in each spot
2. Key informant interviews (KII)
3. Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
4. Field observations

Sixty two key informant interviews were carried out with BRAC Staff and community members, including school teachers, *imams*, marriage registrars, *Gram Daridro Bimochon Committee* (GDBC) members and Union Parishad (UP) members (male/female). Four FGDs were held in each of the 6 'good' and 'average' spots with elite men, elite women, GJE men and women and TUP women. Three FGDs were carried out in the 3 non-GQAL spots as there are no GJEs there. Hence, the total number of FGDs was 33. Elite male participants of FGDs were service holders, businessmen, UP members, *muezzin*, *imam*, farmers, teachers, *shalishdars*, *matbors*, while elite women were NGO workers, teachers, family planning workers, and wives of elite men.

Outcomes

Outcomes to measure actual practice and perception regarding gender justice and gender based violence were identified according to four themes based upon the gender quality index developed by the program, and using selected indicators from those identified by the program. The broad themes were:

- Gender role changes at the household level
- Reduction in domestic violence
- Increased community mobilization against VAW
- Equitable access to healthcare and nutrition

Major findings

Impact of GQAL program

1. There is a strong association between presence of the GQAL program and the outcomes of interest. There are significant difference in outcomes between ‘good’ GQAL and non-GQAL areas, and in some cases there are also differences in outcomes between ‘good’ and ‘average’ performing GQAL program areas.
2. The most visible effect of GQAL program appears to be in changing perceptions and attitudes regarding gender roles in the household (less in altering actual practice), increasing access to healthcare and nutrition and in efforts at community mobilization around VAW. However, the issue of sexuality and the relationship with violence is not explicitly addressed.
3. The observed changes were relatively greater in TUP and Gender Justice Educator households than among the elite households.
4. There is variation by performance of GQAL program with regard to community mobilization against VAW. In ‘good’ performing GQAL areas, successful community initiatives were in the form of collective action against early marriage, spousal abuse, and sexual harassment, while in non-GQAL areas, community mobilization around VAW was viewed only in terms of the community conducting a *shalish* on a VAW incident. Additionally, in GQAL areas these collective actions involved a variety of actors including youth clubs, school committees, and community elite, suggesting the capacity of GJEs to mobilize other actors in the community.
5. While women in all study areas were equally likely to engage in income generating activities, women in ‘good’ performing GQAL areas who received assets under the TUP program were more likely to report improvement in various dimensions of women’s status, in their self confidence as well as in gender relations at home, compared to income earning women in non-GQAL areas.

6. There is also regional variation in several outcomes that appears to be related to contextual factors, which have been identified below.

Possible factors influencing GQAL performance

The variation in GQAL program performance (i.e. difference in observed outcomes between 'good' and 'average' GQAL areas) is related to two factors: capacity of program staff at the field level to mobilize the broader community and their responsiveness, and the context in which the program operates. More specifically these factors are:

1. Committed and skilled individual staff

Skill and commitment of the GQAL staff in establishing relationship with the community at different levels is one of the key factors in determining the success of GQAL program. In particular, their ability to respond to situations where an intervention is necessary (for instance, stopping early marriage, mediating/negotiating changes in gendered practices), ability to engage and motivate people to change as well as to demonstrate changes through their own practices were critical.

2. Capacity to mobilize elite interest and involvement

Elite interest and involvement makes a significant difference in the effectiveness of the GQAL program, as many of the desired outcomes depend at the very least on the tacit or sometimes visible support of the elite as well as their leadership roles.

3. Capacity to engage other civil society actors

The presence of active civil society bodies such as school committees, youth clubs, etc also play a strong supportive role and contributes to the characterization of a 'good GQAL spot.' The involvement of the youth is particularly effective as change in gender roles and norms when initiated by the youth have a greater chance of sustainability.

4. Presence of other rights-based/women's empowerment organizations

The presence and activities of other organizations mobilizing and campaigning around rights or women's empowerment, strengthens learning and application of that learning from GQAL. It is the multiplicity and the intensity of the campaigns from these different sources that may account for the better performance of GQAL programs in certain areas and for regional differences in the success of the program.

5. Broader community characteristics

The underlying economic, social and political characteristics of the community can shape both the effectiveness of the program and desired outcomes either positively or negatively. For example, strict class divisions and lack of social cohesion between classes may subvert or impede GQAL interventions that promote economic empowerment of or

attitudinal changes towards poor working women. The infrastructure or access to different types of resources (education, health, work, etc.) can also have an impact on the performance of the GQAL program.

Possible factors that influence gender equality outcomes in non-GQAL areas

The general change in gender equality outcomes observed in non-GQAL areas have to do with a number of factors that operate at a macro level, and hence influence either positively, sometimes negatively, the types of outcomes aimed by the GQAL program. These include:

1. BRAC programs

BRAC programs particularly those relating to education, maternal health and nutrition, social development programs such as Community Empowerment Programmes (CEP) and other awareness raising programs as well as legal aid programs have an impact in and of themselves.

2. Government programs

Government policies relating to education, health, income generating projects, particularly in terms of creating greater access to health and education, providing stipends, safety net measures, creating work opportunities for poor women and awareness raising campaigns against gender based discriminations and relating to laws is an important driver of change and one that is recognized and widely accepted by community members.

3. Laws

Greater awareness on laws relating to marriage, divorce, polygamy, harassment and perceived stricter implementation of such laws is seen to have an effect of bringing about slow but tangible changes in the ways people negotiate around these problems.

4. Media

Mass media (TV, radio, 'dish') has become one of the most important and effective conduits to changing gender norms and practices. Not only is it a platform for government and non-government organizations to air their campaigns, social messaging through dramas or even simply the exposure to different ways of thinking, being and practicing broadens the horizon of reference against which people assess attitudes and actions practiced in their communities. Therefore, access to media is a powerful factor in bringing about change.

5. General increase in level of education

The overall level of education in the community makes a difference in the kinds of attitudes and behaviours practiced in the community.

6. Increase in women's economic opportunities

Overall, economic opportunities and particularly access to women's economic opportunities is one of the most important premises for changes in gender norms and practices. Women who engage in income generation and have control over their income have the potential to act as the initiators for change in gender relations. Both government and non-government agencies are playing a crucial role in taking initiatives that create work opportunities for women.

7. Mobility and exposure

The increasing mobility of people internally within the country and the trend of international migration is exposing people to a wide variety of norms and practices particularly in relation to women. These are being adopted at the local level to recreate gender norms and practices, thereby creating change.

Recommendations

1. The GJEs are the cornerstone of the program and investment in their training is crucial to strengthen GQAL programs across program areas. Hence, we strongly recommend that greater emphasis be placed on raising capacity of GQAL staff on building commitment and establishing relationships with the community (e.g. greater emphasis on developing skills on facilitation, motivation and interpersonal communication).
2. GQAL program should be cognizant of the commonalities between women of different social classes with respect to the barriers to seeking justice. This should be addressed in the design of program interventions to build social cohesion so that elite women who face similar problems as the poor are not excluded and can be mobilized more effectively and systematically.
3. The GQAL program should give sufficient attention to the particularities of the context of the community if the program is considering scaling up. The delivery mechanism of the program needs to be flexible in order to adjust to local conditions such as the nature of elite involvement, nature of civil society, social cohesion, and given a certain degree of autonomy at the local level to recognize and address these factors. For example, greater collaboration with existing school committees/youth clubs, or effective activation of such bodies, perhaps through technical assistance could have a significant impact in the operationalization of the program (See Box 2).
4. Given that gender norms and practices have been changing, monitoring indicators used by the GQAL program need to be re-thought and narrowed down. For example under indicator one (gender role changes at the household level) the indices "holds children to lap" and "gossips with wife and children in leisure time" are practices that have become common place and are no longer significant in indicating changes. Under indicator three (increased community mobilization against domestic violence) the index "sends both boys

and girls to school” and under indicator four (more gender equitable access to health care and nutrition) the index “all members of family take meal together at least once a day” are also common place practices.

5. One issue that GQAL does not address is that of sexuality though it addresses violence and abuse, the nature of which is often sexual. This is an area that cannot be ignored if GQAL is serious about bringing lasting change in gender relations especially within the household.
6. The fact that many of the GQAL participants may be adolescents living adult lives should be recognized by the program. Now that BRAC is in the process of drafting a strategy to work more effectively with adolescents, it would be an opportunity to address issues of gender, discrimination, etc for that age group through the GJE.
7. We would strongly recommend that the relationship between the GQAL program and the TUP program be explored thoroughly (whether there is a direction of causality or if it is the case of a virtuous cycle), which could help strengthen and complement both programmatic interventions. GQAL program should be mainstreamed within BRAC and other BRAC program staff should be provided with GQAL training that would greatly increase the effectiveness of program interventions, particularly those related to social and human development, human rights, and women’s economic and political empowerment. For instance, with GQAL training, *Shasthyo Karmis* (SK) and *Shasthyo Shebikas* (SS) under the BRAC Health Programme (BHP) program, who already have easy and regular access to households can deliver messages regarding gender discriminations in health and nutrition, can monitor health and nutrition practices and strengthen GQAL interventions. In the study areas, CEP was found undertaking certain actions that resonate with objectives and outcomes targeted by the GQAL program. Their activities were particularly evident in the non-GQAL areas, although in a less clearly defined and articulated manner. The role of the CEP should be strengthened by giving them GQAL training in non-GQAL areas, or through closer collaboration of CEP with GQAL, where both programs exist. This type of collaboration between BRAC programs is happening in ad hoc manner in many places but needs official recognition in order to scale up. GQAL may also consider ‘tracking’ a number of GQAL educators from various backgrounds – TUP, SS, CEP to understand more deeply the drivers of change and causality.
8. There are noticeable synergies with other NGOs in the study areas, which may be one of the factors positively affecting the performance of GQAL in these areas. It may be worth exploiting these synergies to initiate further interaction, strengthen and complement program interventions. For example, key informants and FGD participants mentioned the awareness raising programs around gender roles of Swabolombi and Shathi and plays by Ashar Alo, legal awareness programs under Swabolombi, BNWLA and MJF or the health and nutrition programs of Swabolombi, Poppy, VARD, PROSHIKA, NIDP, Shathi and TMSS.

9. TUP members in ‘good GQAL spots’ were more likely to perceive that they were able to use TUP assets successfully to earn an income and bring changes in their living standards. However, whether it is the fact that respondents in areas where GQAL was successful are better able to manage their assets or whether it is the outcome of a successful TUP program, where improvements in peoples’ economic status enabled greater incorporation of GQAL values and practices, needs to be further explored.

1. Introduction

BRAC has been promoting women's empowerment and more equitable gender relations in the home and in the community as part of its overall development programs for poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor. Specifically, the Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) Program for members of Village Organizations (VO) was initiated first in 1999 and later again in January 2001 with this aim in mind. An external evaluation of GQAL in 2004 found that it had contributed to a significant degree in bringing about a positive change in villagers' perceptions with respect to gender relations of power, control and status¹. It also reinforced NGO programs and media campaigns with respect to the wider negative consequences of gender discrimination within the family and society.

At the same time, independent and Research and Evaluation Division (RED) evaluations of Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction (CFPR) Program indicated that while the practical needs of ultra poor women were being met through the program, there remained some scope for strengthening interventions to address the ultra poor women's strategic gender needs. This evidence of success in improving gender relations and supporting BRAC members in successfully adjusting to the impact of change on gender relations through GQAL encouraged BRAC to consider introducing the methodology to the CFPR program. The GQAL component was introduced to Specially Targeted Ultra Poor (STUP) areas in 2005 and 2006.

In April 2011, the Gender, Justice & Diversity Section, BRAC requested BDI to undertake a research to assess changing gender relations and practices in GQAL areas - changes that had been reported by their field based program officers from several of their program areas. For example, changes regarding sharing of household work, reduction in domestic violence, registration of land/property in the name of women.

With this in mind, BDI agreed to undertake a study with the following broad objectives:

- 1) To assess the level of gender equality within households and in the wider community in GQAL program areas, and compare with a similar non-GQAL area.
- 2) To assess the extent to which the wider community has been mobilized to take action against gender inequality and violence against women.

¹ Project details of GQAL for VO members in the TUP area, 2007-2011.

The specific objectives were as follows:

- a) To measure the level of practice and attitudes with respect to gender division of labour in the home, domestic violence, gender inequality in access to healthcare, nutrition and education, and community mobilization around violence against women in the selected areas.
- b) To assess whether specific gender norms with respect to the above factors have changed in the wider community in the last five years
- c) To document the ways in which the community has engaged in collective action around practices of gender discrimination and violence, with the aim to identify the supports and barriers.

2. Background to GQAL and CFPR

In 1995, the GQAL program was launched to improve staff gender relations as well as to improve the quality of BRAC programs. Immediately before that, the GAAC - Gender Awareness and Analysis Course - was introduced to all BRAC staff in 1993 with the aim of enhancing awareness and analytical capacity of staff

From 2000 to 2005, GQAL for staff continued in a loose form. In 1999, the staff training under GQAL reached its peak "...close to 90% of BRAC staff was covered by the program. But subsequently staff turnover and the enormous expansion of the organization's workforce meant that the numbers of current staff members within BRAC who have experience of the GQAL program constitute a fraction of that figure" (Ghuznavi, 2008: 4).

In 1999, positive changes at the field office level helped BRAC to realize that an adapted version of the GQAL staff training could be provided to the VO members in order to improve gender relations and enhance gender equality at the community level. Accordingly it was implemented in a few area offices. Between November 2001 and December 2003 the GQAL program was piloted with VO members in collaboration with RED.

An evaluation to assess the effects of the pilot phase was carried out in the first half of 2004 by Simeen Mahmud and Amina Mahbub (report of the evaluation of the Pilot Project on GQAL with BRAC VO 2004). Some of the findings of the study were positive. The assessment found that GQAL could contribute to improving women's decision making authority and their status in the family, but it was also felt that the effects of the program on actual behaviour could not be felt so soon after the completion of the pilot phase.

In 2005 the Gender program of BRAC was renamed and restructured as the Gender Justice & Diversity Section under HRD, to facilitate mainstreaming gender equality at the organizational and program level and for advocacy at the national level. Soon afterwards, GQAL was launched with TUP members in Specially Targeted Ultra-Poor (STUP) areas, in response to recommendations made in the MTR of Phase I of CFPR and based on the positive results of the GQAL pilot results. The GQAL component was introduced to STUP areas in 2005 and 2006. The main purpose this project was to improve gender relations and enhance gender equality of ultra poor women and children with the mutual support of family members at household level especially from the male members, and actions taken by the community to build a platform movement on gender discrimination and violence against women and children.

The Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction Targeting the Ultra Poor (CFPR-TUP) program was first launched in 2002. Extreme poverty is often treated as an intractable problem by many governments and civil societies worldwide. However, set against Bangladesh's situation and backed by three decades of learning from BRAC's rural poverty alleviation programs, CFPR identified specific factors that differentiate the ultra-poor and that have been used in practical targeting and service delivery strategies for its second phase. The binding constraints on the ultra-poor's own improvement efforts are caused by the interlocking effect of: 1) their economic context and lack of proximity to markets; 2) family structure and composition; 3) personal capacities, human and social capital; 4) lack of NGO membership and 5) severity of material poverty².

To respond to these constraints and to go deeper than conventional poverty reduction strategies, CFPR 2 proposal articulated a clear livelihoods oriented strategy with a two-pronged delivery model and a supportive management system. The first prong was designated as '*pushing down*'. In it, ultra-poor women were selected to participate in the delivery of an integrated package of economic, social and healthcare interventions. In CFPR Phase 2, these included Special Investment, Enterprise Development and a program of complementary Social Development interventions and Essential Health Care.

The complementary second prong was designated '*pushing out*' in which decision makers and opinion leaders in the wider society are involved as partners in addressing the problems faced by ultra-poor households³. In CFPR Phase 2, activities included: i) social development activities to build organizational strength and awareness among Village Organizations, community members and local government actors; ii) providing human rights and legal services; and iii) creating awareness about and pressure for action on extreme poverty at local and national contexts through advocacy and various awareness-raising activities, organization-building support and public health and related activities.⁴ The gender perspective is maintained at every level of the program conceptualization and delivery. This was strengthened by piloting GQAL in CFPR working areas from 2005 following mid-term appraisal of Phase 1.

² Proposal for CFPR Phase 2, Executive Summary

³ See Annex 14 for brief description of program components under the '*pushing out*' strategy

⁴ Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: Targeting the Ultra-poor Targeting Social Constraints (2007-2011)

As identified by GQAL itself, in terms of its goals, the GQAL component complements both the 'pushing down' and the 'pushing out' approaches within the broader ultra poor program. It is part of the 'pushing down' strategy because the component activities are designed to help men and women from ultra poor households to recognize gender-based discrimination, and to develop more gender-sensitive and equitable relations within the family. The component also addresses the need for ultra poor and other groups of men to become more aware and to participate in ending gender-based violence in the family and society. For these reasons, the process can be considered part of the 'pushing down' approach.

"The process of gender equitable change necessarily requires the involvement of other community members, such as VO members and their male partners, members of the *Gram Daridro Bimochon Committee* (GDBC), *Palli Shomaj*, and elected women Union Parishad members. As such, members of the community also take part and become change agents for establishing gender equality within the family. Changes in gender roles are not possible in isolation; they require broader community support and understanding. A combination of these groups together will generate synergy of changes. For these reasons, the process also includes 'pushing out' elements"⁵.

As mentioned in the End of Project Review Report of CFPR II "CFPR's approach to creating pathways for women's empowerment combines important process elements to foster the end result. For power to come to women in TUP households, the program ensures access and competent control over resources and provides social space for growth of agency and achievement. This strategy is evident from examining the project inputs (e.g., asset transfer, stipends), competency (through the enterprise development together with mentoring and handholding), social space (featuring the delivery of key messages allows for growth of agency and self-confidence). Finally, the graduation model provides a vehicle that allows the review of achievements against economic, health and social criteria."⁶

Inclusion of GQAL activities in 2005 helped place emphasis on the importance of changing gender relations at household and community level, including working with men as agents of change along with women. The latest progress report of GQAL makes this clear and states: "Ultra-poor women are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of bad governance, including physical insecurity and violence. There was a clear need to work with men in ultra-poor households and the wider community, to raise awareness and generate commitment to positive gender relations."⁷

The expected output of the GQAL activities within CFPR phase 2 was as follows:

Gender equality successfully promoted and mainstreamed throughout the program.⁸

⁵ Project details of Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) for VO project in the TUP area. GQAL for VO members and STUP, (2007-2011). GQAL internal document.

⁶ End of Project Review Report, CFPR II, October 2010.

⁷ GQAL for VOs in the STUP Area – Half Yearly Report, January to June 2011, p 2

⁸ This is Output 6 of the CFPR LFA version 6 September 2011

The following output indicators were set:

- At least 40% males are involved in STUP and TUP household domestic work including child-care.
- 50% of men and women recognize and articulate that violence against women and children is a crime.
- At least 10% men and women mobilize against gender-based violence.⁹

The main programmatic interventions are as follows:

Training: Women members and their male relatives from selected TUP spots act as ‘Gender Justice Educators’. Three and a half days training is organized with 24 participants in each batch on topics such as areas of discrimination in women’s lives; gender based violence, the division of labour; gender dimensions and practices relating to access to food and nutrition, healthcare & treatment, education, mobility and access to and control resources.

Courtyard meeting: With STUP members and their male relatives facilitated by the ‘Gender Justice Educators’.

Refresher Training: Three half day training is organized for Gender Justice Educators (GJEs) after a year and a half.

Follow up monitoring: This includes door to door visit and interviews with the Educators to identify actual changes at the family level and overseeing courtyard meetings.

Functional linkages with the local BRAC forum by organizing bimonthly meetings with Gram Shova, quarterly meetings with Guardian forum as well as building links with *Palli shomaj* and GDBC and Union Parishad representatives.

Media campaign for community awareness and social mobilization to end gender based discrimination and violence against women and children.

Popular theatre to reinforce messages about gender equity and social mobilization against domestic violence against women & children.

Focus group discussion with male group & female group are carried out to stimulate awareness and ideas within the community about how to apply this learning in practice.

⁹ Project details of Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) for VO project in the TUP area. GQAL for VO members and STUP, (2007-2011). GQAL internal document.

Capacity development forum: Regular staff meetings, trainings and workshops for team members to follow up the project activities, problem analysis and their capacity development. GQAL has developed a number of strategies to achieve its goal. One has been to identify and train women and couples as GJEs who commit to changing gender relations within their own homes and also at the community level. Changes at the community level are initiated through the courtyard meetings (*uthan boithaks*) where women and men from the community are encouraged to attend. These meetings are normally conducted by the GJEs.

Profile of Gender Justice Educators¹⁰

Gender Composition of GJEs				
Origin	F	M	%F	Total
STUP	868	764	53%	1,632
<i>Palli Samaj (CEP) members</i>	62	60	51%	122
<i>Shasthyo Shebika</i>	36	33	52%	69
VO members	440	398	53%	838
GDBC members	18	185	9%	203
UP members	85	16	84%	101
Others	23	12	66%	35
Total	1532	1468	51%	3000

It is noteworthy that more than half of the GJEs come from STUP households, suggesting that when provided with space and opportunity, women and men from ultra poor households are able to perform as role models and change makers. Another significant point is the inclusion of Health Volunteers (*Shasthyo Shebikas*) as GJEs. As explained to the Review Team during the field visit, in locations where *Palli Samaj* does not exist, GQAL selects *Shasthyo Shebikas* as they are in direct contact with every household in the locality and are better able to transmit messages since they hold a position of trust in the community.

The End of Project Review Team for CFPR II observed that “CFPR’s approach of combining clearly defined pathways towards empowerment that can be measured and emphasizing the importance of changing gender relations at the household and community level is a strategy that has been effectively delivered. It provides evidence that a combination of strategies, inputs, information and mentoring addressing both empowerment and equality issues is a critical ingredient to poverty reduction”. It also recommended that GQAL strategies be mainstreamed in CFPR Phase 3 operational areas, e.g. by training TUP clients as Gender Justice Educators (GJEs), promoting GJEs as change makers, creating spaces to discuss gender issues by holding courtyard meetings. Another recommendation was that GQAL continues to support CFPR Phase 3 by ensuring technical assistance and mentoring, and if need be, monitoring support.

¹⁰ Figures from GQAL MIS, provided to the CFPR Review team by Md. Rafiqul Islam, GQAL Manager as reported in the Joint End of Project Review Report of CFPR II, October 2011

3. Methodology

Study design

The study was designed to assess the possible impact of the GQAL program interventions on actual practices with respect to gender justice and gender based violence within households, perceptions about changing norms and practices among individuals and in the larger communities, and community mobilizations around gender justice and violence against women. Information was collected from households and the wider communities. In order to ensure a fair regional spread data was collected from three districts – Netrokona, Gaibandha, Rajbari – that, by and large, captured the geographical physical and cultural diversity of rural Bangladesh. In each of the three districts we collected information from one well performing (‘good’) GQAL program area, one ‘average’ performing (‘average’) GQAL area and a nearby CFPR area with no GQAL interventions. The ‘good’ and ‘average’ GQAL spots would allow comparison of outcomes (see below) between areas with differential program performance. The non-GQAL spot would allow comparison of outcomes between areas with and without GQAL program interventions, and also identify changes in practice regarding gender justice and gender inequality that was driven by other forces (economic, social, policy related). The fact that all the study areas were former CFPR intervention areas provided a built in control for variation in unobserved factors that might affect the outcomes of interest.

GQAL ‘good’ and ‘average’ spots were selected by the research team from lists provided by RED and GQAL program staff¹¹. Non-GQAL spots were selected with help of GQAL program staff within same district, and where the TUP program had been completed 1-2 years earlier (2006/07) (since GQAL program interventions were introduced in areas where there were TUP programs graduates)¹². In total, there were thus nine spots, three in each district. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for data collection.

Data collection instruments

The following data collection tools were employed:

1. Household survey: 120 Household interviews using short pre-coded questionnaire (see annex) in each spot
2. Key informant interviews (KII)

¹¹ CFPR evaluation done by RED identified high and medium performing areas. GQAL program staff ‘good’ and ‘average’ spots. ‘Good’ and ‘average’ spots for the study area were selected from the common ‘good’ and ‘average’ spots from the two lists.

¹² The following criteria were established for non-GQAL spots to be included in the study: a) has more or less (not too less) 300 households; b) there is no GQAL program there; c) preferable that it is a TUP graduate spot, having graduated not more than 3-4 years ago, since all the GQAL spots are TUP spots that graduated around that time; and d) located in the district but not adjacent or very close to GQAL spots to avoid diffusion problems.

3. Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
4. Field observations (FO)

A **random survey** of 120 households within a certain radius of the 'spot' (wider community within which the Gender Justice Educators work) was done, excluding households that did not have at least one adult male family member. Our respondent for the survey was the female head or wife of the male head. It was ensured that there were at least 8-10 educators included in the survey. The survey questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the Gender Quality Index used by the program, to allow measurement of the levels of some of the indicators of gender equality with respect to actual practice and attitudes/perceptions. In the case of household interviews with Gender Justice Educators, some additional questions were asked regarding her experience as a Gender Justice Educator and whether she had been able to use her training in her work and in her own life. The survey instrument was short, pre-coded and extremely focused.

In each spot in depth interviews were conducted with **key informants** to ascertain community perceptions of the programs and about changing gender practices, as well as community initiatives around gender justice and violence against women, according to the themes outlined in the Gender Quality Index. The interviews focused on gaining insight into the changes that are occurring in the community and the reasons for the changes, as perceived by BRAC staff and community members. In addition, various BRAC staff members were asked to provide brief accounts of their activities.

KIIs were conducted with the following persons:

- BRAC Area/Branch Manager
- GQAL Field Organizer (FO), GQAL Program Supervisor (PS)
- Other BRAC program staff (paralegal, health worker)
- UP member/Person in similar position
- Community members, GDBC members

In each spot there were four **FGDs** to gather information about changing gender norms, the community perceptions of why these norms have changed and also collect information on specific community initiatives against gender discriminatory practices with the following groups:

- Gender Justice Educators (only in GQAL areas)
- CFPR women members
- Elite women in the wider community
- Elite men in the wider community

The field investigators were asked to record their **field observations**, paying particular attention to the following points. These would help to characterize the context of the sample areas and contribute to the analysis of the GQAL program and identify regional variations, if any.

- Location and communication
- Neighbourhoods
- Overall economic condition of the village (agriculture based or not, factory/ mills, poultry farms, fishing, general conditions of poverty, structure of houses, etc)
- Sanitation facilities
- Health facilities
- Education facilities and education levels of men and women, school going practices of children
- Work (men, women, any differences between class, religious groups)
- Social awareness, problems, superstitions
- Social relations (between rich and poor, between religious communities)
- Gender relations (work, violence, equality/inequalities, etc)
- Religious fundamentalism (*purdah*, strict gender codes, etc) and social practices (dowry, early marriage, etc)
- Involvement with NGOs
- Comments on TUP
- Attitude towards researchers

Outcomes

Outcomes to measure actual practice and perception regarding gender justice and gender based violence were identified according to four themes based upon the gender quality index developed by program, and using selected indicators from those identified by the program. The broad themes were:

- Gender role changes at the household level
- Reduction in domestic violence
- Increased community mobilization against VAW
- Equitable access to healthcare and nutrition

Framework for analysis

The analysis will compare outcomes at both household and community levels according to type of spot, i.e. 'good' versus 'average' spots and 'good' versus non-GQAL spots. The objective will be to assess: a) whether outcomes vary by the level of performance of the program as defined by program staff (compare outcomes between 'good' and 'average' spots), and b) whether outcomes vary according to the presence of the GQAL program in the area (compare outcomes between 'good' GQAL spots and non-GQAL spots). We will also try to identify outcomes for which observed differences are most visible (large) and outcomes for which observed differences are not that apparent (negligible or no difference). Relevant differences by district will be highlighted, especially relying upon the qualitative data, since there are likely to be other influencing factors (besides the GQAL interventions) that vary by region like levels of poverty, infrastructure, economy, availability of services, and so on.

When outcome differences are statistically significant, we will assume that differences are real, and associated with program differences, i.e. either with the performance of the program when differences between outcomes in 'good' and 'average' spots are statistically significant, or with the presence of the program when differences between outcomes in 'good' and non-GQAL spots are statistically significant.

Implementation

The implementation of the work took place from May to October 2011 as follows:

- Collection of background information from RED and GQAL for selection of spots
- Preparation of survey questionnaire, check lists and guidelines for KIIs and FGDs
- Training of field investigators
- Field testing of survey instrument
- Deployment of field staff, monitoring of field work by research team members,
- Data entry
- Transcription of FGDs and KIIs and report writing
- Survey data analysis
- Final report writing and presentation

The following documents were provided by the GQAL program staff:

- Social maps of selected spots
- Total household listing of selected spots
- List of TUP member households in selected spots

- List of GQAL Educators in selected spots
- For each pair of ‘good’/‘average’ spots selected the name of a non-GQAL TUP spot.

Three teams of four investigators (two men and two women) were deployed in the three regions. Each team consisted of at least one member with extensive FGD experience who would be responsible for compiling and drafting the FGD reports. In addition, at least one member of the team had extensive experience in conducting household surveys. The field research team were provided with training for two days and participated in pre-testing the data collection instruments. Field visits were made by three of the research team members to monitor data collection and ensure data quality. One mid level qualitative researcher who participated in the fieldwork compiled the findings from FGDs from the all three spots in each district in a pre-structured format in order to facilitate analysis and final report writing.

The final report was drafted by Lopita Huq, Maheen Sultan and Simeen Mahmud.

Survey areas

The table below shows the names of shortlisted GQAL spots from which three ‘good’ and three ‘average’ spots were selected by the research team (shown in italic).

List of selected areas for the field work

	Zone	District	Area	‘Good’ Spot	‘Average’ Spot	TUP spot
1	Rangpur	Kurigram Gaibandha	Kurigram Sadar Sundarganj	Harishwar	Shonarai Haat	
2	Rangpur	<i>Gaibandha</i> Gainbandha	Mahimaganj Shaghata	<i>Jibonpur</i>	<i>Dimla</i>	<i>Jirai</i>
3	Faridpur	<i>Rajbari</i> Rajbari	Pangsha Goalando	<i>Jhaugram</i>	<i>Katakhali</i>	<i>Gofur Mondol Para</i>
4	Faridpur	Madaripur Madaripur	Kadambari Rajoir	Mridhabari	Shormongol	
5	Mymensingh	<i>Netrokona</i> Netrokona	Netrokona Sadar Atpara	<i>Karli</i>	<i>Mobarakpur</i>	<i>Panchkahanla</i>
6	Mymensingh	Kishoreganj Kishoreganj	Kotiadi Kishoreganj Sadar	Terogati	Kashurar Char	

4. Profile of respondents

In this section we describe the socio economic profile of respondents. Table 1 presents the demographic and socio economic information on the 1096 survey households, heads and respondents.

Table 1. Demographic and SES profile of survey households by type of spot

	Type of spot			All spots
	'Good'	'Average'	Non-GQAL	
No. of households	366	364	366	1096
HH size (mean)	4.86	4.99	4.95	4.93
Adult males (mean)	1.55	1.44	1.40	1.46
Adult females (mean)	1.46	1.47	1.43	1.45
Children under 17 yrs	1.86	2.08	2.11	2.02
% female head	6.01	5.77	5.74	5.84
% head primary+edu	45.6	39.4	26.4	37.1
% resp primary+edu	42.6	40.4	32.5	38.5
% HHs NGO member	37.4	38.7	37.4	37.9
% HHs TUP member	8.5	6.6	7.7	7.6
% resp IGA	37.4	42.6	39.6	39.9

The 'average' household profiles appear roughly similar across spots with a few exceptions: there were slightly more adult males and fewer children (under age 17) in the households in 'good' spots compared to households in other spots; both the head and the respondent in 'good' spots were more likely to have more than primary level education than the head and respondent in other spots. In all areas around 40 percent of respondents were engaged in income generating activities.

In total sixty two key informant interviews were carried out in the nine selected spots for the GQAL Study in Netrokona, Gaibandha and Rajbari. Key informants included BRAC Staff – BRAC STUP Manager, STUP PO, BDP Manager and BDP PO/PS (where TUP program has closed down completely), BHP SS/SK, BRAC paralegals, BRAC GQAL FO/PS – and community members, including school teachers, *imams*, marriage registrars, GDBC members and UP members (male/female).

The total number of FGDs was 33. Four FGDs were held in each of the 6 GQAL spots ('good' and 'average') with elite men, elite women, GJE men and women and TUP women. In the case of the 3 non-GQAL spots only three FGDs were carried out in each area since there were no GJEs in those areas. Elite male participants of FGDs were service holders, business men, UP members, *muezzin*, *imam*, farmers, teacher, *shalishdar*, *matbor*, while elite women were NGO workers, teachers, family planning worker, and wives of elite men.

5. Findings by theme

The findings will be presented on five broad themes: a) Changes in gender roles in the household; b) Gender equitable access to healthcare and nutrition; c) Women's income generating activities and asset transfer; d) Reduced Gender Violence and e) Community mobilization against VAW. The analysis will explore the changes that have occurred in the communities under each theme, and attempts to draw out the differences, if any, in the changes in the pre-designated 'good GQAL', 'average GQAL' and non-GQAL spots.

The quantitative data from the household survey has been used to compare outcomes at the household and respondent levels according to the type of spot. We will only use proportions to measure outcome differentials, which have been tested for statistical significance (using standard t tests). The findings will be presented first.

The qualitative data from the key informant interviews and FGDs has been used to characterize the contexts in which the GQAL program interventions were made and comparison of perceptions about changes in the communities in the thematic outcomes. Regional (district) differences in outcome changes will also be referred to when significant. Finally, possible explanations for these changes (or lack of changes) will be presented based upon the drivers of change or barriers identified by KIIs and FGDs.

a) Changes in gender roles in the household

Quantitative findings:

In order to assess changes in gender roles in the household we collected information on selected indicators of actual practice with respect to gender roles and indicators of women's perceptions about gender roles. The findings are presented in tables 2a and 2b respectively.

The extent to which men shared in household work like cooking and arranging bed or clothes was not very large (ranging from 11% to 2% for cooking and 13% to 2% for making beds and arranging clothes). But despite low levels of participation generally, adult men in 'good' GQAL spots were significantly more likely to share in household work compared to adult men in non-GQAL spots, while there was no difference by program performance. More than two thirds of women reported they could purchase something of their own choice without having to ask permission, but the women in 'good' spots were more likely to be able to do this compared to women in non-GQAL spots. The vast majority of women reported that they spent time with their husbands watching TV or movies; there was no difference between 'good' and non-GQAL spot but women were somewhat more likely to spend time with husbands in 'good' spots compared to 'average' spots.

Table 2a. Distribution of sample households (%) according to indicators of actual gender role in the household

Indicator	Type of spot				All spots
	'Good'	'Average'	T value	Non-GQAL	
No. of households	366	364		366	1096
1. Do male HH members cook?					
Yes	11.2	9.9	0.57	1.6	7.6
Never	42.6	53.0		74.0	56.6
Sometimes	46.2	37.1		24.3	35.9
all households	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0
2. Do male HH members arrange bed/clothes?					
Yes	13.1	9.1	1.74	1.9	8.0
Never	37.4	49.2		71.9	52.8
Sometimes	49.5	41.8		26.2	39.1
3. Can you purchase something of your own choice?					
Yes	81.7	75.8	1.94*	67.2	74.9
No	18.3	24.2		32.8	25.1
4. Do you and your husband spend time together watching TV or movie?					
Yes	83.1	88.9	2.16*	85.8	85.9
No	16.9	11.1		14.2	14.1

Note: Difference in proportions between 'good' and 'average' spots and between 'good' and non-GQAL spots are tested for statistical significance using T values. * = significant at 5% level; ** = significant 1% level or less.

In order to assess perceptions about gender roles in the household women were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with certain statements. Many women (more than half) agreed that it was acceptable for women to eat alone when hungry and that men should fetch water for cooking. But women in 'good' spots were much more likely to believe this compared to women in non-GQAL spots. Overall half of the women disagreed that men's work was more important than women's, but women in 'good' spots were far more likely to disagree than women in non-GQAL spots. More women (about two thirds) disagreed that only men should take the decision on major household purchases; there was no difference between 'good' and non-GQAL spots, but surprisingly more women in 'average' spots disagreed compared to women in 'good' spots. Finally, about one third of the women believed that family members highly valued her work/contribution to the family, and there was no difference by type of spot.

Sharing of household work by adult male family members was not very common generally, but a positive change (relative greater sharing) was apparent associated with GQAL program. By contrast, it was much more common for women to be able to buy something of their own choice, and again the likelihood was greater in areas having GQAL interventions. Perceptions regarding gender roles were altering faster than actual practice, and also appeared to be associated with the program. However, the belief that family members valued women's work and contribution to the family was not widely held, nor was there any relationship to the GQAL program.

Table 2b. Distribution of respondents (%) according to indicators of perception regarding gender role in the household

Indicator	Type of spot					All spots
	'Good'	'Average'	T value	Non-GQAL	T value	
No. of respondents	366	364		366		1096
1. It is alright for women to eat alone when hungry						
Agreed	73.5	73.1	0.13	63.1	3.03**	69.9
Disagreed	26.5	26.9		36.9		30.1
2. Men should bring water for cooking						
Agreed	64.2	63.2	0.29	32.2	9.12**	53.2
Disagreed	35.8	36.8		67.8		46.8
3. Only men should take decision of major purchases						
Agreed	39.1	30.8		43.2		37.7
Disagreed	60.9	69.2	2.36*	56.8	- 1.13	62.3
4. Men's work is more important than women's						
Agreed	40.2	39.8		61.5		47.2
Disagreed	59.8	60.2	0.09	38.5	- 5.89**	52.8
5. Respondent feels that family members value her work						
A lot	34.7	41.8	- 1.96	37.2	- 0.69	37.9
Some	57.1	51.1		58.2		55.5
not at all	8.2	7.1		4.6		6.7

Note: Difference in proportions between 'good' and 'average' spots and between 'good' and non-GQAL spots are tested for statistical significance using T values. * = significant at 5% level; ** = significant 1% level or less.

Qualitative findings

Context

One of the main emphases of GQAL activities has been to break down traditionally held belief and practice that all household work is the sole responsibility of the female members of the household and in particular that of the wife of the household head. The gendered nature of the public and private domains served not only to restrict women's mobility within the four walls of the household, but reinforced the devaluation of household work, and thereby women's work, by putting responsibility on men for income earning in the public domain. Socialized within these cultural norms and practices women believe that men's work has more value than their own and they become men's allies in processes that strengthen their low self worth and disempowerment. Even in a changed scenario, where more and more women are engaging in income earning work, both inside and outside their homes, the burden of household work falls unquestionably on women. This is the existing condition in every part of Bangladesh and the GQAL program has attempted to change the status quo of gender roles at the household level as a first step towards gender equality.

Findings

In the 'good GQAL' spots a number of changes were reported by key informants in terms of the sharing of various household tasks between husbands and wives that GJEs attempt to promote. Men bring water for cooking, sweep verandahs, tidy rooms and arrange clothes, wash clothes, put up mosquito net, help in cooking (chops fish and vegetables), repair earthen floors, make earthen stoves, light stove, clean out cowshed. Men in these areas also cook sometimes especially in times of crisis when their wife is away or ill. Men also take care of their children in terms of bathing and dressing children, taking them to school, taking wife and children to doctor when they are ill. In all 'good spots', men were seen to also spend time with their family members.

Some regional differences among 'good' spots were apparent. While all the activities listed above were found in Karli, Netrokona, an *imam* of the area who was supportive of sharing household work, stated that men only do these things when they have time. Relatively fewer activities were mentioned in Jibonpur, Gaibandha, where informants stated that men cook, fetch water, sweep verandah, tidy rooms, bathe, feed and take care of children and take care of their wives when they are ill. Informants of Jhaugram, Rajbari were less forthcoming about the exact household activities that men share. They mentioned in more generic terms that men cooperate with their wives in household work and in taking care of the children. It is noteworthy, that an ex-UP member (male) suggested that women in Jhaugram 'do not do much work – only household work'. This points to the persistence in the disregard of household work as 'work'.

In the 'average' GQAL spots, changes in gender roles in the household were also reported, but they seem to be limited to some household chores and among fewer households. Thus, in Mobarakpur, Netrokona, most men bring water for cooking, sweep verandah, take wives and children to doctor when they are ill, spend time with family members/take their wives shopping, take care of children while the wives cook. On the other hand, some men sometimes bathe and feed children, some men take their children to school, some men tidy the room and clothes and sometimes wash clothes and some men take care of their wives (gives medicine, feeds) when they are ill. Most men do not cook or help in the preparation of cooking unless the wife is ill or away. However, some informants are also of the opinion that most men still believe that household work is women's work. Thus the number of men who do help out are few. An *imam* of the area believes that it is men who are illiterate, unaware and poor who cannot give time to their family or help out with household chores. In Dimla, Gaibandha, the number of activities is fewer and men are said never to cook, while in Katakhal, Rajbari, these changes are limited to only a few families according to the BRAC paralegal and a local schoolteacher.

Whether these changes are widespread or not, key informants stated that the change is revolutionary. Informants stated that stronger spousal relationship, sharing of household work brings peace and prosperity at the household level and strengthens the foundation of family and society. This in turn has an impact at the national level as well. According to an *imam* Islam also validates supporting wives in household work. People feel that there has been a change in

the men's mentality towards household work as well as a change in society in the way that it views men doing household work (no longer demeaning). More importantly, change in men's mentality is resulting in less discrimination between sons and daughters and in greater importance given to wife's contribution to household work.

The difference between GQAL and non-GQAL spots was quite stark. The general opinion was that there has been no change in non-GQAL spots. In Panchkahania, Netrokona, people are of the opinion that the few men who do help in household work are men who have always done so. In Jirai, Gaibandha, informants state that not only is all household work is done by women, women's work is not valued by men. According to a BRAC health worker and others, men do not do any work even when their wife is ill. They would rather get another woman from outside to do the work instead of doing it themselves. Of the few men who do work under these circumstances are very ill tempered about it. A female head teacher in Gafur Mandal Para stated that men provide absolutely no help. Women cannot even enjoy their own earnings. Husbands grab them by their hair and take their money from them. Generally, in non-GQAL spots only a few men sweep the courtyard, fetch water for cooking, look after children while wives cook, feed the livestock when women cannot, take care of their wives when they are ill and spend time with their families. In Gafur Mandal Para, Rajbari, this small change is attributed to an active GDBC committee.

According to BRAC staff, the fact that there has been no change is because there is no 'package' program that includes GQAL implemented in the area. Most other informants offer poverty and the lack of awareness as the reason why no change has taken place. Because of poverty, men work all day and do not have time to help with household work. However the poverty argument seems to be insufficient as a single explanation, as all sample areas are TUP areas where impoverishment is a common condition.

These findings are echoed in the FGDs, with the most positive change in sharing of household work reported in 'good' GQAL spots; some changes being found in the 'average' GQAL spots and the non-GQAL spots having the least change. In all GQAL spots in the three regions (Netrokona, Rajbari and Gaibandha) it was found that the GJE and the TUP members reported more positive changes than the elite women and men. The GJE in Karli, Netrokona felt that the rich and middle class are more resistant to change. There is also an age dimension – in Dimla, Gaibandha, it was reported that younger men were more open to doing household work than older men. The TUP women mentioned that with the change in times sharing household work was a sign of understanding between the couple ("*mil mohabbat*") Elite women in Karli also felt that this was important for mutual peace and understanding.

Drivers of change

Key informants and FGDs in all GQAL spots unanimously identified the GQAL program as the major reason for change in gender roles in the household in both 'good' and 'average' GQAL spots. GQAL's *uthan boithaks*, educator training, door to door awareness raising and motivational work, follow up of commitments and CD shows were mentioned specifically by

many of the informants, even those who are not affiliated with BRAC. Other activities like popular theatre, FGDs with men and women, observations were mentioned to a lesser degree.

The way the GQAL interventions and work of the GJEs have played out is through strengthening spousal relations, and general relations between men and women. They have successfully influenced men's attitudes towards household work and the gendered division of labour in the home. The GJEs have become role models for other people in society. As discussed in the FGD with GJEs in Mobarakpur, Netrokona, they were in their training to bring about changes in their own behaviour first and then gradually to motivate change in people around them. Even people who had not attended *uthan boithaks* were seeing changes in the GJEs' households and trying to emulate the same practices in their own homes. In other words, there is attitudinal change at the larger community level towards what was conventionally seen as women's work. Men who help with household work are less ridiculed by the community. During household visits by GJEs, some men are embarrassed to be seen as uncooperative and therefore feel compelled to help their wives. In particular, the commitment of GQAL FOs was identified as another factor in the success of the program. For example, many of the informants of Karli, Netrokona mentioned Selina Akhter and attributed the changes to her motivational spirit and commitment. In the FGD in Jibonpur, Gaibandha, both elite women and TUP women identified the role of Aslam Bhai, a GQAL staff.

Other drivers of change identified by the informants:

- Changes in men's education - Education is making them more self aware, confident and helping to build a more cooperative attitude. They believe that there is no problem in helping their wives. Elite men in the FGD in Dimla also mentioned the impact of UNICEF in changing school books and including a story where all family members help in household activities.
- NGO campaigns directed towards changing men's attitudes – Awareness programs and posters of NGOs such as Swabolombi and Shathi in Netrokona and plays by Ashar Alo in Jhaogram, Rajbari, have also had a strong impact.
- People are becoming more aware and are exposed to new ideas and new modes of relationships through mass media and mobiles
- Extensive awareness raising and development programs of government and non-government organizations
- Increasing opportunities for women's work, both government and otherwise, are forcing men to take on household responsibilities. Since women are contributing to the household income other family members are willing to do they work the women would traditionally have done. They feel that women's workloads have increased because of their paid work, which is why men help them with the household work. As mentioned in the FGD with elite men in Katakhal, Rajbari, "women are increasingly being educated, both husband and wife are earning and both are helping each other".

- *Tabliq* and *jamaat* also have a role to play in making people understand that the household belongs equally to both the husband and the wife and to follow Islamic principles of husbands helping wives with household work.

b) Gender equitable access to healthcare and nutrition

Quantitative findings

The next set of indicators examined in the survey assessed the extent to which access to healthcare, nutrition and children's education was gender equitable (Table 3). Women's access to antenatal care during pregnancy was fairly common (47%), in keeping with the trend of rising uptake of antenatal care in the general population of women of reproductive age. However, women in 'good' spots were far more likely to report that their husbands took them to see a doctor during their last pregnancy compared to women in both non-GQAL spots and 'average' spots. While having one family meal together was the norm (96%), as many as 40 percent of women continued to believe that their husbands and sons needed more food than themselves or their daughters. However, this proportion was lower in GQAL spots compared to non-GQAL spots (but surprisingly higher in the 'good' spots relative to 'average' spots). The proportion of 6-10 year old children attending school was over 90 percent for boys and girls, slightly higher for girls, without variation by type of spot (but again the 'average' GQAL spot performing somewhat better than the both the 'good' GQAL and non-GQAL spots).

Table 3. Distribution of respondents (%) according to indicators of access to healthcare and nutrition, children's access to education, and perception about need for food

Indicator	Type of spot					All spots
	'Good'	'Average'	T value	Non-GQAL	T value	
No. of respondents	366	364		366		1096
1. Did your husband ever take you to a doctor during pregnancy?						
yes	60.7	47.5	3.88**	34.2	7.64**	47.4
no	36.9	51.6		64.2		50.9
all respondents	100	100		100		100
2. Do all family members in your household take one meal together?						
yes	96.2	98.1	- 1.54	94.5	1.05	96.3
no	3.8	1.9		5.5		3.7
3. percent of 6-10 year old children attending school						
boys (326)	89	94.8		89.0		91.1
girls (312)	91.5	98.4		91.2		93.8
4. Do you think your husband/son needs more food than you/daughter?						
yes	35.2	25.8	2.77*	57.7	- 6.22**	39.6
no	64.8	74.2		42.3		60.4

Note: Difference in proportions between 'good' and 'average' spots and between 'good' and non-GQAL spots are tested for statistical significance using T values. * = significant at 5% level; ** = significant 1% level or less.

Women's access to healthcare during pregnancy and children's access to schooling appears to have increased in all areas, in keeping with overall trends. There appears to be no gender discrimination in children's access to primary school, and this is seen in all spots, so there is no relationship to the GQAL program. However, women in GQAL spots were more likely to have their husbands take them for antenatal checkups compared to women in non-GQAL spots, and women in 'good' GQAL spots were more likely compared to women in 'average' GQAL spots. Hence, there is possibly an association with the program in increasing women's access to health care. However, one should note (as reported in the FGDs) that women often avail ANC accompanied by other women rather than their husbands. It is also possible that GQAL interventions have influenced positively women's perception regarding need for food by men and women.

Qualitative findings

Context

In describing the context regarding women's access to healthcare and nutrition, key informants felt that in the past male and female household members never ate together. In fact women were not allowed to eat with their husband or father-in-law and it was considered shameful to do so. Men would be provided with more food than women and women would be satisfied with eating less. Women would wait until men had eaten and they would eat whatever remained after feeding her husband and in laws. Women themselves also believed that it was the right thing to do. Discrimination in terms of food intake was not limited to the women of the households but extended to discriminatory practices towards daughters. People believed that sons should get more food and nutrition than their daughters as sons will be the ones who will grow up and earn an income for the household. Daughters would simply be married off and were not expected to contribute to their natal family. Similarly, people would give more importance to the health of their sons than to that of their daughters. While sons' illnesses were taken seriously, women and daughters were expected to recover naturally after a few days, without the intervention of doctors. Girls were more likely to be taken to the *kaviraj* who performed *jhar*, *fuk* etc.

No special care was taken of women during pregnancy. According to the informants, men were ignorant and therefore did not provide nutritious food to their pregnant wives. More importantly, conventional beliefs and practices dictated that pregnant women should eat less food, continue with heavy work (like threshing paddy, lifting heavy pails of water) and not rest so that the baby is small and delivery is easier. This is how generations of women dealt with their own pregnancy and when it came to their pregnant daughters-in-law, they meted out the same treatment. Without proper nutrition pregnant mothers would often give birth to weak and poorly developed children. Newborns would die frequently from lack of proper care and treatment.

For birth, pregnant women would be taken to midwives or *kaviraj*, not to doctors. People thought that it would ruin a woman's *purdah* to reveal oneself in front of a non-kin male and

that Allah would take care of the fate of the woman and child. Elders, not husbands, would take pregnant women to the doctor, specifically mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law or sometimes brothers, fathers-in-law. Pregnant women did not receive regular checkups and were not taken to the doctor at all or not on time. As a result, maternal and child mortality rates were high. Also, women would bear a large number of children in the past, making them more vulnerable to risks and fatalities.

There were other factors as well that made access to healthcare difficult. Road communication was not good and hospitals were few and far between which made accessing them difficult and costly. Government initiatives were not adequate and medical supplies were limited.

Findings

i) Meal sharing and nutrition

In all 'good' GQAL spots it was reported that all household members eat together at least one meal a day; some eat two meals together. Women used to believe that men need more food because they work outside; but now they realize that proper nutrition makes men healthy, but lack of it makes women more prone to illness having adverse impact on finances. This acts as a strong motivation to avoid practices that can increase costs for the household. Sons and daughters are also provided equal amounts of food with the realization that both need equal nourishment. But according to a retired teacher, people are not fully aware about nutrition, even when they are from the wealthier families. The FGDs show that by and large educators seem to report greater positive changes, followed by TUP women and the elite groups.

Some changes were reported in the 'average' GQAL spots. In Mobarakpur, Netrokona several informants stated that in some families women continue to feed their husbands first and then eat later. As a GQAL PS commented, this is a difficult practice to change simply because it is so ingrained in our cultural norms and practices and it cannot change in a day. Talking about her own experience, she said,

"Take for example, my case. I also believed in that practice, but slowly my husband started pressing me to eat with him. I used to refuse in the beginning. Later on when he started pressurizing me, I started to eat with him. Then my in-laws also started saying that we should eat together with them. I used to feel embarrassed in the beginning. But I overcame that and became used to eating with all my family members."

In general, there is poor awareness regarding health and nutrition, especially among parents regarding children's nutrition in non-GQAL spots. Some changes have happened due to nutrition issues addressed by BRAC health workers in the areas, but there is still discrimination between sons and daughters' nutrition, although it has reduced.

In Netrokona all FGD participants in the ‘good’ GQAL spot believed in equal food distribution or even having girls eat more as they would leave once married. In the ‘average’ spot (Mobarakpur), both elite men and TUP women felt that men need more food as they work more and work outside, but the TUP women also felt that girls would be married off so they should be given better food. In the Gaibandha ‘good’ spot elite men felt that poor people would not be able to give nutritious food to pregnant women, but GJEs and TUP women felt that eating habits had changed. In the Gaibandha ‘average’ spot (Dimla) elite women and men as well as TUP women said that families do not eat together. Some of the TUP women even thought that it was right that men should eat more. In Gaibandha in the non-GQAL spot (Jirai) both elite men and women justified unequal food distribution: “Men need to eat more as they work harder and earn for the family. Women can bear hunger.” Even the TUP women in the area said that although they ate the evening meal together to save fuels costs (for lighting), in fact men should eat more. In all the FGDs in Rajbari, elite women and men believed that women should wait for men and give more food to the men. In the ‘good’ spot (Jhaugram) TUP women too felt that men eat more because they earn more money.

ii) Antenatal Care (ANC)

The Key Informant Interviews (KII) provide a generally positive picture of changes with regard to care of pregnant women in all spots. According to them, special care is taken to ensure proper food intake (quality and quantity) in case of pregnant women. They are not made to do heavy work, especially in the later period of their pregnancy and given time to rest. Program staff motivates people by saying that this kind of workload is risky for both mother and child and may ultimately cost the families much more for treatment. They are taken to the doctor in case of complications, although an increasing number of men take their wives for regular check up during pregnancy. Both rich and poor ensure proper healthcare during pregnancy. However, the rich can usually afford to provide more food for pregnant mothers than the poor. Although people are much more aware of what should be done for a safe and healthy pregnancy, poor families sometimes cannot provide nutritious food in required amounts to pregnant women even if they want to.

In all three non-GQAL spots, informants were of the opinion that very few families take their wives to the health centre for check up during pregnancy or feed them better or allow them time to rest during the term of pregnancy, although these practices are increasing. In Panchkahania, Netrokona, informants said that this is mainly due to lack of financial resources, not of awareness, and lack of family members in the household who can take up the responsibilities normally undertaken by the pregnant woman. According to the informants in Jirai, Gaibandha, husbands generally do not take their wives to the health centres - other neighbourhood women do. Men feel embarrassed to take their wives to the health centre. In this area, most women do not want to go to the hospital to deliver. Sometimes BRAC has to arrange transportation on an emergency basis when there is a complication.

FGDs also indicated less awareness of the needs for nutrition and healthcare for pregnant women in the non-GQAL areas. In Jirai, Gaibandha pregnant women are given nutritious food

and allowed rest but they are not taken for ANC to health centres. In Gofur Mandal Para of Rajbari, both elite and TUP women show poverty and difficulty of access to resources as reasons as to why pregnant women are not given nutritious food and taken for ANC. However, poverty does not seem to be the main barrier as families in other areas who are as poor manage to provide better nutrition for pregnant women.

There are differences in perspectives between men and women (whether elite or TUP) regarding women's access to healthcare and nutrition during pregnancy. In general, the FGDs with elite men reveal that they have little information or knowledge of pregnancy related practices in their area. In the 'good' spot in Gaibandha (Jibonpur) although the elite men felt that the poor could not afford special care for pregnant women, the TUP women felt that women were provided special food and health care during pregnancy. In Panchkahania, Netrokona (non-GQAL) the elite men felt that only 50% of women go for ANC but elite women and TUP women felt that all classes of women go for ANC. Another interesting aspect was that although husbands do not always take their wives for ANC, women go with other women or seek health services from BRAC or other NGO health workers.

iii) Access to health care

According to key informants gender based discrimination in healthcare among both children and adults have all but disappeared in the areas studied. Treatment is sought from village doctors, government health centres or hospitals depending on the seriousness of the ailment rather than who needs the treatment. There is no discrimination between sons and daughters, men and women in accessing healthcare. But in case of poor families, women themselves refuse to spend money to go to the doctor. According to the GQAL FO in Katakhal, Rajbari, 10-15% people exhibit changes regarding more gender equitable access to healthcare and nutrition. For treatment people usually go to the village doctor first, then to the government hospital and for serious illnesses to the '*boro*' doctor in Goalando. In this area, women can go to the doctor with their own money.

The practices of everyone going to the doctor and families eating together, and greater awareness regarding health and nutrition has been accompanied by other significant changes. Key informants in all areas felt that men are taking more responsibility and greater care for the family's health and nutrition and the changes in their attitude has strengthened family relations. Parents have become very conscious of caring for both sons and daughters. Illnesses are no longer ignored whether in the case of men or women. Pregnant women no longer suffer from malnutrition. Whereas women used to have many pregnancy related complications, maternal and child mortality is now practically non-existent. In fact, a TUP Branch Manager stated that "A BRAC staff will die before s/he lets a mother die." These changes in women's access to healthcare and nutrition is seen by the key informants as a sign of improvement of women's status in society.

Slow changes are beginning to take place in non-GQAL spots as well, but very little in comparison to the GQAL spots. Key informants in Jirai, Gaibandha, stated that both sons and

daughters are now taken to the doctor for treatment. However in such cases where people believe that young girls are possessed (“*batash laga’* or ‘*djinn’er asor*’), they are still taken to the *kaviraj*. Informants of Gafur Mandal Para, Rajbari state that BRAC’s CFPR and BRAC Health Programme (BHP) programs have made people more aware about going to the doctor for treatment since 2007. Earlier they used to go to *fakirs* and *kaviraj*. According to a head teacher there, there is still discrimination between men and women’s access to healthcare in half of the families. When it comes to their own health, women tend to hide their illnesses to save money to feed their children. Even if the husbands want her to go to the doctor, women themselves refuse.

The respondents of the FGDs in the non-GQAL spot (Gofur Mondal Para) of Rajbari felt that access to health care was difficult for both women and men, rich and poor. In both the ‘average’ GQAL spot and the non-GQAL spot in Gaibandha (Dimla and Jirai) TUP women stated that women were not taken to doctors but were treated by traditional healers or village doctors. However, it was only in Netrokona that FGD respondents in the non-GQAL spot reported that women can access proper health care as and when required.

Drivers of change

GQAL interventions like *uthan boithaks*, CD shows at tea stalls, popular theatre, door-to-door visits and observations were identified as having a strong role in creating awareness regarding health and nutritional needs and especially in motivating people to give up gender discriminatory practices. The fact that people are now aware of the repercussions of ill health – that it creates a burden on other members of the family and has huge cost implications, was seen as a successful attempt by GQAL to motivate people to develop habits that will keep all members of the family healthy.

Other BRAC programs were also seen to have made significant contributions. BHP has been providing healthcare and nutrition and delivering messages of the importance of health and problems of malnutrition. BRAC *shasthyo kormis* (SK) and *shasthyo shebikas* (SS) deliver door-to-door services in every village. The motivational work of health workers emphasizing the importance of caring for the health of women as well as men is very effective. Moreover these health workers provide medicine and injections for up to 11 types of diseases at low cost; motivate pregnant women to go for regular checkups and assist them to access health services; identify risky pregnancies and arrange for doctor assisted deliveries in the case of emergencies. They specially provide services to women who do not wish to or cannot afford to go to the doctor. BRAC’s GDBC and *Palli Samaj* (Community Empowerment Programme - CEP) have increased people’s awareness on health and in particular women’s access to healthcare. The Educators of the GQAL program mentioned that the training they received have them a lot of knowledge about health and women’s health needs (Gaibandha and Netrokona Karli FGDs). The FGD in Karli, Netrokona also mentioned a demonstration effect (“one person learning by seeing another”, elite men)

However there were several other factors identified by the key informants as having played an immense role in bringing about these changes, particularly in the non-GQAL spots.

- The government also plays a very strong role. Low cost of treatment in government hospitals has increased peoples' access to healthcare. Government health workers and nutrition workers, (Katakhali, Rajbari) go door to door providing medicine, injections and advice to pregnant women. Family planning workers educate women on maternal and child health and help women to effectively control their fertility. Anti tetanus injections are given to female adolescents under a government program. The government also runs successful awareness raising campaigns on women's health and women's access to healthcare on TV. The FGD with Elite women in Gaibandha mentioned that it is the Government that encourages the NGOs to work on health.
- Healthcare facilities have also improved. The number of government and private hospitals and clinics has increased. Every union has a Union health complex and FWC. It is easier to have access to doctors. Modern technology has reduced costs of treatment
- Peoples' attitudes have changed both due to increased education and to increased access to the media. People are now more educated and they are able to recognize that a *kaviraj* or an *ojha* cannot provide proper treatment. They are exposed to the cultures and practices of different countries through TV, changing the way they think about health. A lot of the learning also takes place through watching small dramas on health and nutrition on TV produced by both government and NGOs.
- Other NGO programs play an equally important role. Swabolombi health workers deliver check up services to pregnant women and give advice for maintaining 'good' health and nutrition. Swabolombi hospital provides people with low cost treatment. Swabolombi and PROSHIKA's awareness campaigns that include open discussions, posters, banners and graffiti (*deyal likhon*) are visible reminders of the importance of health. NIDP, Shathi and VARD's nutrition program has also raised people's awareness.

Even with such changes happening, informants identified obstacles that still exist:

- Poverty is one of the main reasons that some families cannot access healthcare when needed or provide family members with nutritious food
- Financial constraints delay decisions to take pregnant women to the doctor.
- Pregnant women cannot access ultra sonogram facilities because of high cost
- Some husbands do not take their pregnant wives to the doctor for fear she would lose her *pardah*.
- There is more scope for a change in attitude and providing care for pregnant women by her in laws.
- There needs to be greater awareness regarding women's health.

c) Women's income generating work and asset transfer

Quantitative findings

From the household survey we find that overall 40 percent of respondents were engaged in various kinds of income generating activities (IGA). Women in 'average' GQAL spots were slightly more likely to be involved in IGA compared to women in the other spots. The proportion of households that had NGO membership was also similar in all areas and around 38 percent.

The survey covered 83 TUP participant women who had received assets (goats) from the program. The vast majority (89%) reported that they had been able to generate income from transferred assets. TUP women in 'good' GQAL spots and non-GQAL spots were more likely to have earned an income compared to TUP women in 'average' GQAL spots. TUP women were asked whether their economic status, social standing in the community, relationship with husband or male family members and self esteem and confidence had improved as a consequence of owning these assets and generating incomes. We found that TUP women in 'good' GQAL areas were consistently more likely to report a lot of improvement in these indicators compared to both TUP women in 'average' GQAL spots and in non-GQAL spots (Table 4). In other words, improvement in different dimensions of women's status and their self confidence, as well as gender relations in the home, was associated with 'good' performing GQAL areas. This suggests that some synergy must be operating between the GQAL program and women's economic empowerment program of CFPR.

Table 4. Percent of TUP participants respondents reporting a lot of improvement in several status indicators as a result of ownership of asset transferred by the program according to type of spot

Indicator	Type of spot			All spots
	'Good'	'Average'	Non-GQAL	
No, of respondents	31	24	28	83
1. Was able to generate income from the asset	96.8	75.0	92.9	89.2
2. Economic status improved a lot	77.4	50.0	53.6	61.4
3. Social status improved a lot	61.3	25.0	35.7	42.2
4. Relation with husband or male family members improved a lot	83.9	58.3	53.6	66.3
5. Self confidence improved a lot	83.9	58.3	60.7	68.7

Note: T tests were not done because number of cases is small.

Qualitative findings

Context

Key informants of all the areas attested to the fact that even 8-10 years ago women working outside the home were not acceptable either to families or to the communities. Women could

not work outside even if they could not feed themselves and their children properly because of familial pressures. The main reason for disapproval was the practice of *purdah*, which barred women from going out for any reason and particularly from working and earning outside. It was considered to be a matter of shame, particularly for middle class women, not only because “if they work outside their *purdah* will be ruined and they will have to interact with non-kin men” (*imam*), but also because it meant that their husbands were incapable of looking after their families. They were mainly engaged in homestead vegetable gardening and home-based handicraft production. However, it was inconceivable that they would do earth work or even get jobs. This scenario is however undergoing rapid change.

Findings

i) Types of employment for women

In all nine spots where this study was undertaken, interviews indicated that women are increasingly engaging in income generating activities, whether based inside or outside the home. Common home-based income generating activities include poultry and livestock raising, vegetable gardening, bamboo and cane handicrafts, sewing, tailoring, *kantha* embroidery, *bidi* rolling, making puffed rice, making packets for bakeries, weaving fishing nets, making hand held fans, home based small businesses, with some regional variation. Noticeably few types of home based income generating work were found to be done by women in Dimla, Gaibandha.

Some of the common outside paid work women engage in include earth work for road construction, working in rice mills, working as agricultural daily wage labour (weeding, cleaning, in some cases planting and cultivation) and working as domestic help. In some of the areas, women also work as cooks, cleaners in local restaurants or as tailors. They peddle goods door to door, work in brickfields, in poultry farms, hatcheries, sugar mills, *jarda* (tobacco processing) factories, *bidi* factories, in government relief programs such as ‘100 days work’ or KABIKA, and also run small businesses such as grocery stores or variety (*monohari*) stores. They also engage in various seasonal occupations (like, collecting shells from the rivers and selling to local factory) wherever such opportunities are available. It is mostly women from poorer families, who do these kinds of work. Furthermore, women are also engaged in sex work in the brothel in Katakhal, Rajbari, which in turn creates work for women in Gofur Mandal Para as domestic help for the sex workers.

In terms of formal jobs, most areas have women working as NGO workers/health workers, government health workers and garment factory workers. There was a variation in terms of other jobs across the regions and spots depending upon the level of education and the availability of jobs. Thus while in Karli, Netrokona, women have jobs as teachers, lawyers, police, in government offices and banks, in Mobarakpur, Netrokona very few women are educated because of which job holding women are rare. In Dimla, Gaibandha, there are a few girls working in banks, in Ansar VDP and the police and some women have jobs in the local biscuit factory. In Jhaugram, Rajbari the Pangsha clinic offers some women jobs as nurses and cleaners, while a few women have salaried jobs in poultry farms in Katakhal, Rajbari. In Karli, Netrokona the FGD participants also mentioned that migration abroad was an employment

opportunity for women (FGD elite men). Based on the perception of some of the informants, only few women hold jobs in Mobarakpur, Netrokona ('average' GQAL spot), and in all three spots in Rajbari (Jhaugram, Katakhal and Gafur Mandal Para), while relatively more women in Karli, Netrokona and Jibonpur, Gaibandha ('good' GQAL spots) seem to have jobs.

ii) Societal acceptance of women working outside

Thus large scale change is manifest more in terms of increasing engagement of women in home-based income generating activities and outside paid work and it is among the poorer groups of women that this change is largely observed. Before going into an analysis of the drivers of these changes, societal perception of women working outside will be briefly explored. Although all communities have by and large accepted the phenomenon of women working outside, some are more amenable to it, while others are forced to accept it.

In the 'good' GQAL areas, societal acceptance of women working outside is widespread in Karli, Netrokona, and Jibonpur, Gaibandha, with reservation from some community members. Most informants in Jhaugram, Rajbari also affirmed societal acceptance, although a BRAC paralegal working in the area, stated that the influential people in the area feel threatened by women's increasing engagement in paid work as their hold and influence over them is diminishing. Economic empowerment of poor women means that they no longer have to abide by norms established by the influential or to look to them for support.

In 'average' GQAL spots, societal acceptance of women working outside is increasing, although there is also a section of the population which still deems it negatively largely because of religious superstitions. The increasing dearth of poor women available for domestic work is also a reason for disapproval by the elite women in areas where there are greater class divisions, such as in Dimla, Gaibandha. There is a class dimension in views on the social acceptability of women's work outside the home. In Dimla while the elite men were positive about women's paid work with even the Imam felt that women could do all sorts of work while maintaining *purdah*, the elite women felt that poor women were lazy and did not work much. "They don't come to work when called by well-off families. They like to go out to work, even road building work, because they can go and gossip with men. There is no one to discipline them there (FGD with elite women, Dimla). The educators and TUP women in the same village realize that there is a negative attitude among the rich but the TUP women also felt that no one could really stop the women from going out to work.

In 'non-GQAL' areas, there seems to be a lesser degree of societal approval according to the informants, where women's outdoor work is still equated with loss of honour and prestige for the women and their families. In these areas, it seems that the society is forced into accepting this fact since women are no longer abiding by established social norms. This begs the question as to why women no longer feel the need to maintain social norms that restricted their work culture.

In the FGDs held in Jirai, Gaibandha (non-GQAL spot) the same pattern was observed. The elite men claimed not to be negative but the elite women were more openly negative and talked

about the breaking of *purdah* and rough behaviour of women working outside the home. The TUP women are aware of the negative views but choose to disregard these: “Even if society views work outside the home negatively they can’t stop women. The *samaj* says that *purdah* is ruined or a woman’s character is spoiled, but nobody listens to the *samaj* as husbands themselves take their wives to work. For the poor it is not possible to live on the income of only one member (FGD with TUP women). In the Netrokona spots there seems to be a common position across classes in support for women working outside the home, even in the non-GQAL spot. As expressed by elite men in the FGD in the non-GQAL “women are working to survive and it is better to work than to beg or steal. Who will look after the poor women if they do not work? That is why society is positive about their working”. In the TUP FGD in the same village it was said “Since the women are working to survive, it is better to work than to beg or steal. Who will look after the poor women if they do not work?” A common perception in Rajbari, including in the non-GQAL spot, was that women working outside the home was acceptable.

Drivers of change

The GQAL program is not seen to be a primary driver of change in this respect. It is mostly BRAC staff and certain key informants associated with BRAC or GQAL programs, for example UP members, who believed that GQAL program contributed to rising participation of women in income generating work. According to them, the way the GQAL program is creating a change by motivating women to engage in income generating activities instead of being dependent upon men’s income and by changing men’s attitudes towards women earning income, going out and getting work, points to the benefit that the extra income will bring to the household as a whole.

Rather it is the wider socio-economic and development changes that were identified as major forces.

- The rising cost of living due to upward spiralling price of essentials was seen as a major reason for women to break social norms and engage in paid work outside the home, and society feels obliged to accept this fact. In addition, with rising levels of education and exposure to various consumer products in the media there are increasing demands and expectations from family members for new types of household expenditure. All informants felt that it was no longer possible to run a household on the income of one person. FGD with elite women in Gofur Mondal Para of Rajbari, showed that it is only the better off who can afford to limit women’s work to income generation within the home. As a result, both men and women are changing their attitudes about men as breadwinners.
- There is an increase in work opportunities for women. Now, both NGO and government are identified as important drivers of change in their support and promotion of women’s work and employment. NGOs recruit local women in their education, health, nutrition and empowerment programs, which require a minimum level of education. For the first time, many women can aspire to get jobs. The respondents in the FGD with Educators in Jhargoan, Rajbari felt that women with jobs who were doing well were serving as examples and encouragement to other women. Government health and development

projects also recruit locally and have more prestige as government jobs. Local private initiatives like poultry farms, hatcheries, small factories, businesses are also tapping into the female labour market. The availability of opportunities is seen as the crucial ingredient for easier and greater economic participation of women by most informants.

- Asset transfer and income generating projects of various NGOs like BRAC, Netrokona Integrated Development Project (NIDP), and Swabolombi have had a big impact in engaging women in income generation. Asset transfer programs of BRAC and NIDP have allowed people not only to develop economically but enabled them to free themselves from the control or exploitation of the elite, to gain economic security, social respect and reduce gaps between the rich and the poor. It has further enabled women to prove their importance to their families through greater economic participation and increase their value and status in the household, giving them a stronger voice in decision-making. Swabolombi's home-based handicrafts projects have also created a significant access to income earning for women in Netrokona.
- Women are now more motivated to earn income not only because it improves their household economic condition, but also because they realize that through this their value in the household and in particular the respect they receive from their husbands is greater. The role of the various NGO social awareness programs (including GQAL) as well as television programs that directly or indirectly relate to women's economic empowerment were also mentioned. These programs also target changing men's attitudes as well as that of the larger society.
- Greater aspirations for daughters and greater investment in girls' education is slowly changing economic participation and in particular entry of young girls into the job market.
- There is also a perception that women in paid work have better wages and a more secure work environment than before. This is an additional reason for positive change in community attitudes to women's work.

d) Reduced gender based violence

Quantitative findings

The term 'gender based violence' has been used in the wide sense of gender discrimination and not only physical or other forms of abuse. The indicators identified by GQAL and taken up by the present study included children's and particularly girls' access to education, girls' increased mobility and security, reduction of early marriage, verbal divorce, polygamy and on the positive side purchase/transfer of assets in wife's name.

To assess whether there was a reduction in gender based violence at the household level we asked women about actual experience of domestic violence in their lives and their knowledge and perceptions regarding wife beating. Findings are presented in tables 5a and 5b below.

Since this was a quick and short survey, we did not like to ask women about their own exposure to violence from family members. We resorted to indirect questions on experience of violence

and on questions on non-violent forms of oppression. In general, one fifth of the women reported being prevented from going to visit their natal (parental) home; women in non-GQAL spots were much more likely to report such oppression compared to women in 'good' spots, there was no difference by program performance. A very similar pattern was seen with respect to being threatened with divorce although the overall proportion threatened was slightly lower (15%). Half of the women knew of another woman like her who was subject to beating by her husband or another family member. Again, this proportion was much higher among women in non-GQAL spots compared to women in 'good' spots, and there was no difference according to performance of the program.

Next, we examine women's knowledge about divorce and attitudes about wife beating. Only one third of the women knew that verbal divorce was illegal, and women in GQAL spots were more likely to have this knowledge. About one half believed that wife beating was an offence under any situation. Women in 'good' spots were more likely to believe this compared to women in 'average' spots and compared to women in non-GQAL spots. The perception that the extent of wife beating had declined was very common (87%). Again, women in 'good' spots were more likely to feel this compared to women in 'average' spots and compared to women in non-GQAL spots.

In summation, women in all GQAL spots were less likely to be subject to gender-based violence in the broad sense compared to women in non-GQAL spots. Attitudes regarding domestic violence (wife beating) were also more likely to be changing for the better in GQAL areas compared to non-GQAL areas, and the perception that this was declining was more common in GQAL areas as well. It appears that GQAL program may be associated with these positive changes with respect to gender-based violence.

Table 5a. Distribution of respondents (%) according to indicators of domestic violence

Indicator	Type of spot				All spots
	'Good'	'Average'	T value	Non-GQAL	
No. of respondents	366	364		366	1096
1. Restricted from going to natal home					
Yes	16.7	15.9	0.27	27.9	20.2
No	83.3	84.1		72.1	79.8
all respondents	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0
2. Threatened with divorce					
Yes	10.1	10.7	- 0.27	23.2	14.7
No	89.9	89.3		76.8	85.3
3. Knows another woman who was beaten by husband or other family member					
Yes	42.3	41.5	0.24	63.1	49.0
No	57.7	58.5		36.9	51.0

Note: Difference in proportions between 'good' and 'average' spots and between 'good' and non-GQAL spots are tested for statistical significance using T values. * = significant at 5% level; ** = significant 1% level or less.

Table 5b. Distribution of respondents (%) according to indicators of knowledge and perceptions regarding domestic violence

Indicator	Type of spot				All spots	
	'Good'	'Average'	T value	Non-GQAL	T value	
No, of respondents	366	364		366		1096
1. Knows that verbal divorce is not legal						
Yes	37.7	44.2	- 1.79	25.4	3.61 *	35.8
No	62.3	55.8		74.6		64.2
all households	100	100		100		100
2. Believes that wife beating is an offence						
yes, always an offence	61.5	52.7	2.34 *	40.2	5.89 **	51.5
sometimes not an offence	23.5	24.5		27.3		25.1
not an offence	15.0	22.8		32.5		23.4
3. Perception about change in level of wife beating in community in last 5 years						
Increased	1.4	4.7		6.3		4.1
Decreased	96.4	89.8	3.56 *	75.1	8.66 **	87.1
no change	2.2	5.5		18.6		8.6

Note: Difference in proportions between 'good' and 'average' spots and between 'good' and non-GQAL spots are tested for statistical significance using T values. * = significant at 5% level; ** = significant 1% level or less.

Qualitative findings

Context

In all the study areas, the practice of sending children to school was low given very high poverty levels and the lack of awareness among parents regarding the importance of education. Even when boys were sent to school, prospect of schooling for girls was dim. Investment in girls' education was considered a loss as they would be married off and not expected to contribute income to the household. The expectation was that boys would take on responsibility of their parents in their old age which is why whatever meagre resources could be gathered were invested in boys' schooling. Among the poorest families, it was found to be more lucrative to take boys out of school and put them to work as soon as they were old enough to earn an income.

Young girls' mobility was highly restricted. Maintaining *purdah* was one of the justifications of confining girls to their homes. There was no practice of girls going out on their own. In terms of harassment of girls, opinions were divided whether the situation was better or worse in the past. Tendency towards early marriage, verbal divorce and polygamy was very high. Husbands used to beat their wives with little reason and verbally divorced them frequently. Slight discontent between husband and wife would lead to verbal divorce followed by swift remarriage of husbands. They would also divorce wives or take another wife if they only gave birth to daughters. As there was no marriage registration or *kabin nama*, women would have

no resort when their husbands divorced them. Polygamy was most prevalent among the influential elite. There was no practice of taking the first wife's consent.

Cases of purchasing or transferring assets in wife's name were rare. In some cases, land was written in the wife's name as part of the dower (*mohrana*) during marriage, however it was usually not approved by society because of the risk of losing the land in the event of divorce. According to a BRAC SS, who is also GJE and a TUP member, "They thought if land is written in their wife's name they will stand on their husbands head and dance".

Findings

i) Physical abuse

In all the areas, including non-GQAL ones, physical abuse of wives is usually seen as an offence and is felt to be decreasing according to interviews with key informants. However, even in 'good' GQAL areas the FGD discussions came up with instances or circumstances where they felt it could be justified. Both men and women expressed this opinion. The GJEs however, took a stronger stand against physical abuse and said this was not justified in any situation.

In the 'average' GQAL spot in Rajbari (Katakhali) the elite men in the FGDs had different views from the other respondents in FGDs and did not think that physical abuse was an offence. They felt that physical abuse was in fact increasing because wives were less obedient than before.

ii) Children's Education

According to informants in 'good' GQAL areas, parents are sending both sons and daughters to school at least till class five. In Netrokona, informants believed that parents are trying not to discriminate between them with regard to levels of education, as there is now an understanding that both girls and boys can contribute equally to the family, society and the country. However, an *imam* stated that, "girls are educated because educated boys want to marry girls with some education." At the same time a primary school teacher of the same area suggested that "girls' marriage is being delayed for education." In Rajbari, several people mentioned that they do not know of any girl who does not attend school. Parents there believe that boys and girls now have equal rights - girls can get jobs like boys and therefore they also need an education. A GDBC member in the 'good' GQAL spot (Jibonpur) stated that only 2% of the households cannot send their children to school because of poverty and these are families who do not send their sons to school either. Seven to eight year old boys pull rickshaws or vans. The GDBC provides educational support (school costs, books, private tuition) to those who cannot afford it in that area.

The scenario described of the 'average' GQAL spots in this respect is similar. There too all parents try to educate both their sons and daughters till class five and try to educate them upto the same level. Parents believe that education will enable their daughters to protest against violence at their in-laws' household. Girls aspire for higher education because of job quotas especially in the police and the armed forces. But poverty, lack of interest and marriage were

identified as the three main reasons why girls drop out. Boys mainly drop out for work. Unchanging perceptions of son's breadwinner roles and cost of higher education combine to pose obstacles in achieving gender equality in education.

"Parents invest more in boys even with difficulty so that he gets a 'good' job and take care of them in old age." (UP member)

"Even though government has given stipends and benefits to girls, some poor parents who are not that aware still educate their sons further and put daughters to household work after a certain level." (BRAC Paralegal)

"Although girls enroll into high school, they leave school before matriculation. Poor parents cannot afford private tutors as a result many fail and have to repeat matriculation exams. So parents do not want to bear that cost." (SS, Educator and STUP member)

In the non-GQAL areas of Netrokona and Rajbari, not all children attend school. Sons of poor families are put to work, for example in tea stalls or pulling vans and daughters in other peoples' homes as domestic workers, even though the BRAC TUP program has provisions for the free education of children of TUP members. Some however believe that girls are getting more education than boys as it is free for them. In Jirai, the non-GQAL spot in Gaibandha, all children attend school, according to the informants, but girls are withdrawn at 15-16 years or earlier for marriage. Tendency to educate boys more than girls is seen in all three areas as they are expected to earn for the household.

iii) Mobility

Girls' mobility in the 'good' GQAL spots in Karli, Netrokona and Jibonpur, Gaibandha is fairly high. They can go to school/college, local health centre, upazila health centre, to markets for their own purchases, visit relatives living nearby and to the local *palli* doctor. However, whereas girls can go to the district town of Netrokona, some informants believe that Mahimaganj upazila where Jibonpur is located is not a safe area for girls. Places that girls cannot go to include any place after dark, to fairs, cinema halls and outside of the district town. In both Karli and Jibonpur there have been very few incidents of harassment of girls, particularly on the way to school. What many informants suggest is that in the past there was very little harassment as girls would not go out alone, society was more conservative and would not tolerate any misbehaviour from boys, and that both boys and girls were instilled with values that prevented them from interacting and doing anything that would bring dishonour and shame to their families. But in the more recent past harassment has increased and this is blamed on access to mobile phones, movies shown on TV, cable TV, cinema halls and CDs, a general lack of obedience and regard for parents, as well as greater interaction between boys and girls. Most informants (including the GQAL FO, UP member, GDBC member and primary school teacher), except a BRAC paralegal, suggest that in the last few years there are hardly any cases of harassment of girls.

The FGD with elite men in the ‘good’ GQAL spot (Jibonpur) in Gaibandha also suggests that girls and their guardians are better able to deal with cases of sexual harassment. “Even if there are cases of harassment the girls now come home and tell their guardians. The girl’s parents first complain to the boy’s parents. If that does not work then they call a *shalish* with influential people and the boy’s relatives to solve the issue. School teachers also look out and guardians are also more conscious”. That guardians are more aware about sexual harassment of girls was repeated in all the Gaibandha FGDs.

In the ‘good’ GQAL spot (Jhaugram) in Rajbari, the scenario is mixed. Some informants report very few incidents of girls being harassed on the way to school, and it is otherwise secure for girls to walk within the village on their own. Some others oppose this idea and say that it is not always secure for girls to roam around alone. Incidents of harassment do take place. The participants of the FGD with elite men in the ‘average’ GQAL spot (Katakhali) in Rajbari felt that boys who are dropping out from school harass the school going girls.

“It is mainly the youth who have dropped out of school and not working who are the perpetrators. With increased mobility of girls, this trend has risen.” (Primary school teacher)

Moreover, a BRAC paralegal suggests that it is not safe for girls to go out alone even during the day. Field investigators also reported that there is terrorist activity in the area (see Spot Descriptions). The presence of a brothel also suggests the presence of men from outside the locality.

In the ‘average’ GQAL spots, mobility again is fairly high. There are some incidents of harassment of girls in Dimla, Gaibandha, although girls are now more likely to voice their complaints. In Katakhali, Rajbari, there is apparently no harassment of girls and they can go in groups to attend fairs, *pohela baishakh* events, plays, although they do not wander aimlessly around the village.

In non-GQAL areas, girls can go to schools or colleges, to the doctors, to nearby relative’s houses, to the markets and *bazaars*. However, in Panchkahania, Netrokona, key informants state that girls have to silently bear harassment from boys. Harassment has increased and its forms have changed (not only verbal abuse upon seeing girls but also through repeated phone calls and text messages). However, others believe that action of parents along with elders and some other interventions in the society has reduced incidences of harassment. Informants in Jirai, Gaibandha are divided on the issue of security. Whereas some believe that girls can go wherever they want safely, although in a lot of cases parents don’t allow them to go far, both a GDBC member and a Head Teacher said that harassment does take place. A BRAC SK is of the opinion that girls do not get a chance to be noticed by boys because they get married so young. A *madrassa* teacher of Gafur Mandal Para, Rajbari stated that girls come alone to the *madrassa* wearing *burkhas*. Moreover he explained that there is a high prevalence of drug addiction among boys in the area, which the local administration tries to ignore and that the elites are involved in this business.

iv) Age at Marriage

According to key informants in the 'good' GQAL areas of Karli, Netrokona and Jibonpur, Gaibandha, most girls are not married off before 18 years or at least until they have passed their SSC or HSC. Their consent is taken and their choice is given importance by parents. There is a realization that forced marriages ultimately lead to unhappiness. This was particularly the case in Jibonpur after a complaint was filed at the police station against the marriage registrar for registering the marriage of an underage girl. The marriage registrar asked for forgiveness and since then refuses to marry under aged girls. But one or two respondents state that girls are still being married at 15-16 years. In Jhaugram, Rajbari, although most informants stated that girls get married at 18-20 years, a school teacher said that girls usually get married below the age of 16 years. A BRAC paralegal working in the area said that in fact, girls get married between 13-14 years and most marriages take place without their consent.

However, the FGD discussions showed that parents are increasingly taking into account the sons' and daughters' opinions on proposed marriages. TUP members in Jibonpur, Gaibandha ('good' GQAL spot) mentioned that after an incident of suicide by a young man who could not marry the girl he loved the guardians were more careful and ask whether their children agree to the proposed marriage.

In the 'average' GQAL areas, the initial response is again that girls do not get married before 18 years. However, informants in Dimla, Gaibandha said that some girls get married between 15-16 years. Parents prefer to get girls married young because of physical and mental changes during puberty and the risk of losing their reputation. A BRAC paralegal of Katakhal, Rajbari stated that most girls get married at 14-15 years and some even at 13-14 particularly those whose parents are uneducated.

In the non-GQAL areas, age at marriage is lower than 18 years, and particularly among the poorer families girls are married off at 12/13 years in Rajbari and at 14, 15 or 16 years in the other two areas.

v) Verbal divorce

According to key informants, the practice of verbal divorce is practically non existent whether it is in the 'good' or 'average' GQAL spots. The practice of polygamy has reduced considerably in the 'good' GQAL spots, although it is still practiced to some extent in the 'average' GQAL spots. In Dimla, Shaghata for example, men migrate to other areas for work and get married there. Although verbal divorce still exists in non-GQAL areas, there is a reduction in both verbal divorce as well as in polygamy. According to a village doctor/GDBC member in Panchkahania, Netrokona, polygamous men used to be called '*shabbash purush*'. Earlier polygamy was also used as a way to establish control and power in the community because it was usually the wealthy, powerful or the elite who used to have several wives. Legal divorce has increased in some areas like Katakhal, Rajbari ('average' GQAL area) where increasing number of women leave their husbands to remarry. A village doctor and a GDBC member in Panchkahania, Netrokona (non-GQAL area) stated that it is women who are mostly seeking divorce in their

area because “they no longer want to put up with any kind of misbehaviour from their husbands and do not care to maintain the honour of the family.

vi) Property in women’s names

With regard to writing or buying property in their wife’s name, according to key informants, there has been some rise in the practice in the ‘good’ GQAL spots. In the case of buying new land, deeds are often made in the name of both the husband and the wife. All of the informants in Karli Netrokona, knew of several people who have written land in their wife’s name or bought land in the name of both the husband and wife. Similarly, key informants in Jibonpur, Gaibandha and Jhaugram, Rajbari also stated that there has been an increase in this practice. They believe that this is mainly due to the fact that there is a growing realization among men of their wife’s contribution to building household assets as well as to ensure their wife’s well-being in the future upon their own death. However, a BRAC SS stated that this tendency is in fact declining in Jibonpur because of the increasing risk of their wife leaving them. The TUP manager in Jhaugram, Rajbari, expressed a similar sentiment. In Jibonpur Gaibandha participants in one of the FGDs felt that with the reduction of land, it was becoming more difficult to have land in the women’s names (TUP women).

In the ‘average’ GQAL spots, the prevalence of this practice is generally low. One or two informants in Katakali, Rajbari said that some of the wealthier families write property in their wife’s name. Others do not have enough property to give, even if they want to.

Findings were similar in two of the non-GQAL spots, except for Panchkahania, Netrokona, where some informants suggested that the practice is rising. According to them, men now show more concern about their wives’ future upon their own death and therefore try to ensure their care by their children by leaving property in her name. However, the numbers mentioned by informants are small (2-3 people that they know off).

Drivers of change

The GQAL program plays a strong role in the changes that have come about in gender violence. The GQAL program was seen as a major actor in terms of motivating children, particularly girls to complete at least primary level schooling, motivating community action against harassment of girls, raising awareness through educator training and *uthan boithaks* on issues of early marriage, verbal divorce, polygamy, and taking action in the prevention or mediation of such cases, as well as raising awareness and motivating people to ensure some property in their wife’s names. In fact, in some areas monthly meetings are held with the UP chairmen and members where GQAL implementers notify them about cases of divorce and polygamy.

Among the other factors driving these changes:

- Government policies promoting the importance of education, especially for girls. The number of schools and colleges has been increased and they are now closer to home and more easily accessible. The girls’ stipend program is seen as a concrete proof of government commitment to girls’ education.

- The role of various NGOs in promoting education. BRAC goes door to door to motivate people to send their children to school (GDBC member). Not only is education seen as important in itself it is felt that it is important so that a girl can later bring up her children to be educated.
- The role of media in increasing awareness of the importance of education. However, some FGDs raised the question of whether the media was able to reach rural areas.
- Interventions against sexual harassment of girls. First of all, the people are increasingly becoming aware of the laws against sexual harassment. For instance, the participants in the FGD with elite men in Pachkahania Netrokona were aware of the High Court ruling on sexual harassment (2010). The BRAC legal aid program plays a role in promoting this awareness. Awareness regarding this law has provided a solid ground in reference to which steps can be and are taken by the *Union Parishad* or school committees to address harassment of female students. In one of the sites, steps were taken by school committee and UP to punish a serious sexual harassment case. No further case was noted since then. Secondly, parents are also now more aware of the problem and prepared to take steps to punish the perpetrator rather than to hide the fact of their daughter's harassment as a matter of shame. Girls themselves are now more aware of their rights and prepared to complain to their parents and the police. Third, the FGDs reveal that community policing forum also takes steps to prevent/address sexual harassment and calls in the guardians. Fourth, female "victim" support activities of NGOs, provision of legal aid and awareness raising activities (meetings, rallies) of a variety of NGOs (Trust Kallyan Samiti, Swabolombi, Manobadhikar Sangstha) play an important role. Lastly and most importantly students youth clubs and school committees play a very important role in awareness raising on and taking action against sexual harassment.
- Laws are now perceived to be strictly implemented by the government. The mass media is an important mechanism through which people are now aware about these laws. They now know about the law of divorce that you need the consent of 1st wife to marry 2nd time. People think twice about divorcing their wives, as they fear that a VAW case could easily lead to fines or even jail time. They are aware of and they practice compulsory marriage registration.
- Rising cost of living was identified as a reason for the reduction in polygamy. It is now financially increasingly difficult to have more than one wife (Jibonpur, Gaibandha, elite men as well as Karli, Netrokona, elite men and Mobarakpur, educators FGD).
- Increased exposure through greater mobility (internally and internationally) and through greater access to media have also changed people's attitudes to gender violence and also the ways in which they are resolved. Increased level of education was also cited as one of the reasons why gender violence has reduced in some parts. FGDs with elite men added another dimension to this, where the catalyst is the increasing education of children. "As the children are educated, when they see their mother being beaten they are the first to protest" (Jibonpur, Gaibandha, elite men).

e) Community mobilization on VAW

Quantitative findings

In the household survey information was collected on only three indicators for community mobilization around violence. Most of the information on this theme was collected in the FGDs and KIs. Table 6 presents one indicator of the extent to which women are involved in community activities around VAW (participation in protests), one indicator of the extent to which households recognize women's right to own property, and one indicator of women's attitude about the perception regarding the birth of a daughter.

Overall, the level of women's participation in protests against child marriage, polygamy, dowry or violence against women is quite low at 14 percent, but women in 'good' GQAL spots were much more likely than women in non-GQAL spots to report participation in protests, as well as compared to women in 'average' GQAL spots. Around 13 percent of women reported that they had land registered in their names from their husbands or fathers in law, but this fact was not verified during the survey. Women in 'good' GQAL spots were much more likely than women in non-GQAL spots to report having own land, as well as compared to women in 'average' GQAL spots. Most women (nearly 80%) believed that no one bore the responsibility when a girl was born, and this did not vary spot.

Table 6. Distribution of respondents (%) according to indicators of community mobilization around VAW

Indicator	Type of spot					All spots
	'Good'	'Average'	T value	Non-GQAL	T value	
No, of respondents	366	364		366		1096
1. Participated in protest against child marriage, polygamy, dowry or vaw						
yes	20.8	14.6	2.20*	6.3	5.85**	13.9
no	79.2	85.4		93.7		86.1
all respondents	100	100		100		100
2. Husband or father in law has registered property in her name						
yes	20.5	9.6	4.15**	8.2	4.81**	12.8
no	79.5	90.4		91.8		87.2
3. Who is responsible when a daughter is born?						
no one	83.6	75.6		78.7		79.3
either or both parents	16.4	24.4		21.3		20.7

Note: Difference in proportions between 'good' and 'average' spots and between 'good' and non-GQAL spots are tested for statistical significance using T values. * = significant at 5% level; ** = significant 1% level or less.

Women's participating in protests around child marriage, polygamy, dowry or violence against women and having land registered in their own names were not very widespread, but were more common for women residing in 'good' GQAL spots, hence there appears to be an association with GQAL program interventions.

Qualitative findings

Key informant interviews reveal fairly strong regional variation even among the ‘good spots’. There is evidence of a variety of concrete community initiatives taken in Netrokona where both GQAL and *Palli Samaj* played a strong role. For example, awareness raising, prevention and protests by school committees, local/youth clubs and UP member, rallies against harassment and early marriage, discussions held at mosques, prevention of early marriage, marriage with dowry and wife beating by GJEs, PS members, village elite, other community members and UP chairman.

In Gaibandha, BRAC took concrete measures to prevent early marriage and resolve over 100 spousal arguments, divorce and VAW. UP member and school committee punished perpetrators of sexual harassment and UPs received government directive to stop early marriage that UP members disseminated at local mosques. *Shalish* is used to resolve VAW cases. However, in Rajbari, specific initiatives were not mentioned except in the form of discussions held by GJE, elite and community members on VAW, discussion held at school and *shalish* to resolve VAW cases.

Variation in terms of collective action across the ‘good’ GQAL spots, was also confirmed in the FGDs. Both elite women and elite men in Jibonpur, Gaibandha mentioned various individual initiatives, including the woman chair of the CEP. The elite women said that they “did not have the time” for collective initiatives. The TUP FGD respondents were critical saying that in cases of VAW “good people” would listen to them and “bad people” would not.

In the ‘average spots’, key informant interviews reveal that one or two sporadic efforts in each area made by GJE, GQAL FO, CEP members, TUP members and elite to prevent early marriage, marriage with dowry. There were also awareness raising discussions on VAW held by village *matbors*, elite and other influential people. Some initiatives taken by the community are worth mentioning.

In Mobarakpur, Netrokona, a committee was formed of elite, influential people and the youth who committed to fine men who beat their wives, hold accountable those who ask for or pay dowry and prevent early marriage. In Dimla, Gaibandha, BRAC schoolteachers were asked to inform the office of any early marriage cases, but the UP there is inactive. In Katakhalī, Rajbari, there is a harassment prevention committee in the school. However, most informants did not mention any GQAL initiatives.

In Dimla, Gaibandha FGD with the elite women showed that they could not take joint initiatives since they could not agree amongst themselves on what should be done. Interestingly in the same village, the GJEs felt that there had been some joint initiatives while the TUP women felt that there had been none.

In the ‘average’ GQAL spot in Rajbari (Katakhalī) an interesting dimension emerged across the four FGDs. Although the elite men said that initiatives had been taken and there were no constraints, but the elite women said that some elite men beat their wives so ordinary people did not have anyone to go to with such complaints. The elite women bemoaned the fact that no

initiatives had been taken on wife abuse and that they themselves also had not taken such initiatives. If they got the chance they would have taken such initiatives since many of the women said that they themselves were victims of violence (“elite people in society beat their wives, who should women go to for justice”, FGD elite women, Rajbari Katakhal). The GJEs said that although some people had tried to take various initiatives, nobody had listened to them because they were poor. The TUP members clearly said “the elite do not take any initiatives since they themselves are not reformed” (TUP FGD, Katakhal).

The findings from the ‘non-GQAL spots’ provide contrasting evidence. While a few key informants made some reference to discussions held by village *matbors*, elders and GDBC on early marriage, dowry and VAW, and attempts to punish perpetrators of harassment of girls, in general, ‘community initiative’ was taken to mean *shalish* activities. However key informants stated that that *shalish* activities are often politicized or biased and therefore do not mete out justice. The FGDs also demonstrate that there were no initiatives taken to protest or prevent discrimination and violence in the non-GQAL areas as reported in the FGD in Rajbari and Gaibandha.

The FGDs suggested that Netrokona is different in that the non-GQAL spot carried out various initiatives such as *shalish* to deal with violence and discriminatory practices. In Netrokona collective action that address violence and discriminatory practices was much stronger and more effective. In Karli (‘good’ spot) various committees have been formed and are working actively with the participation of locally elected persons and NGO staff including BRAC staff. The same is true for Mobarakpur, Netrokona (‘average’ spot) where various joint initiatives have been taken and various committees have been formed. Various public meetings were held to raise awareness and people made pledges to eradicate VAW. Mobilization included involving UP members and Chair, influential people and educated people. GQAL members went from house to house e.g. on issues of school drop outs. Even in Jirai, Netrokona (the non-GQAL spot), there have been various community initiatives and protests. The law has been used as a threat and various organizations such as the community police, Swabolombi, BRAC, BNWLA and MJF were recognized to have played a role.

A common finding from the FGDs across areas and types of spots was that initiatives concerning dowry were not successful. On the contrary, initiatives concerning keeping children in school, preventing wife abuse, divorce were generally successful. Initiatives seeking to stop early marriage were sometimes successful and sometimes not.

In areas where the GJE and TUP women had involved local influential people and the local elected representatives, they were able to build up community consensus and support. Therefore, they did not face any community resistance in stopping early marriage or wife abuse. However, the various FGD respondents said that they did face resistance from the people concerned e.g. the husband beating his wife or the parents getting their children married. In some cases the initiatives were not collective but taken by individuals. However, they were then able to call in other people including local administration, local government and even local NGOs. Where collective initiatives were taken they were often in the form of *shalish*.

6. Conclusions

Impact of GQAL program

1. There is a strong association between presence of the GQAL program and the outcomes of interest. There are significant difference in outcomes between 'good' GQAL and non-GQAL areas, and in some cases there are also differences in outcomes between 'good' and 'average' performing GQAL program areas.
2. The most visible effect of GQAL program appears to be in changing perceptions and attitudes regarding gender roles in the household (less in altering actual practice), increasing access to healthcare and nutrition and in efforts at community mobilization around VAW. However, the issue of sexuality and the relationship with violence is not explicitly addressed.
3. The observed changes were relatively greater in TUP and Gender Justice Educator households than among the elite households.
4. There is variation by performance of GQAL program with regard to community mobilization against VAW. In 'good' performing GQAL areas, successful community initiatives were in the form of collective action against early marriage, spousal abuse, and sexual harassment, while in non-GQAL areas, community mobilization around VAW was viewed only in terms of the community conducting a *shalish* on a VAW incident. Additionally, in GQAL areas these collective actions involved a variety of actors including youth clubs, school committees, and community elite, suggesting the capacity of educators to mobilize other actors in the community.
5. While women in all study areas were equally likely to engage in income generating activities, women in 'good' performing GQAL areas who received assets under the TUP program were more likely to report improvement in various dimensions of women's status and in their self confidence, as well as gender relations in the home compared to income earning women in non-GQAL areas.
6. There is also regional variation in several outcomes that appears to be related to contextual factors, which have been identified below.

Possible factors influencing GQAL performance

The variation in GQAL program performance (i.e. difference in observed outcomes between 'good' and 'average' GQAL areas) is related to two factors: capacity of program staff at the field level to mobilize the broader community and then responsiveness, and the context in which the program operates. More specifically these factors are:

1. Committed and skilled individual staff

Skill and commitment of the GQAL staff in establishing relationship with the community at different levels is one of the key factors in determining the success of GQAL program. In particular, their ability to respond to situations where an intervention is necessary (for instance, stopping early marriage, mediating/ negotiating changes in gendered practices), ability to engage and motivate people to change as well as to demonstrate changes through their own practices were critical.

2. Capacity to mobilize elite interest and involvement

Elite interest and involvement makes a significant difference in the effectiveness of the GQAL program, as many of the desired outcomes depend at the very least on the tacit or sometimes visible support of the elite as well as their leadership roles.

3. Capacity to engage other civil society actors

The presence of active civil society bodies such as school committees, youth clubs, etc also play a strong supportive role and contributes to the characterization of a 'good GQAL spot.' The involvement of the youth is particularly effective as change in gender roles and norms when initiated by the youth have a greater chance of sustainability.

4. Presence of other rights-based/ women's empowerment organizations

The presence and activities of other organizations mobilizing and campaigning around rights or women's empowerment, strengthens learning and application of that learning from GQAL. It is the multiplicity and the intensity of the campaigns from these different sources that may account for the better performance of GQAL programs in certain areas and for regional differences in the success of the program.

5. Broader community characteristics

The underlying economic, social and political characteristics of the community can shape both the effectiveness of the program and desired outcomes either positively or negatively. For example, strict class divisions and lack of social cohesion between classes may subvert or impede GQAL interventions that promote economic empowerment of or attitudinal changes towards poor working women (See Box 1). The infrastructure or access to different types of resources (education, health, work) can also have an impact on the performance of the

Box 1. Barriers to social transformation

Key informant interviews show that in contrast to all the other GQAL areas where societal acceptance of women working outside is either widespread or increasing, elite attitude towards women, especially poor women working outside in Jhaugram, Rajbari ('good' spot) and Dimla, Gaibandha ('average' spot) is negative. These are villages which have been described as divided along class lines and where there is little social cohesion among the classes. One of the rationales for disapproval is because the elite feel economic empowerment of the poor means that they have less control over the poor to work for them under their terms and conditions.

GQAL program. For example, although people in Mobarakpur, Netrokona are aware about health and nutrition, they have limited access to appropriate medical treatment, particularly in terms of ante-natal care, due to poor road communication.

Possible factors that influence gender equality outcomes in non-GQAL areas

The general change in gender equality outcomes observed in non-GQAL areas have to do with a number of factors that operate at a macro level, and hence influence either positively, sometimes negatively, the types of outcomes aimed by the GQAL program. These include:

1. BRAC programs

BRAC programs particularly those relating to education, maternal health and nutrition, social development programs (CEP, awareness raising programs) as well as legal aid programs have an impact in and of themselves.

2. Government programs

Government policies relating to education, health, income generating projects, particularly in terms of creating greater access to health and education, providing stipends, safety net measures, creating work opportunities for poor women and awareness raising campaigns against gender based discriminations and relating to laws is an important driver of change and one that is recognized and widely accepted by community members.

3. Laws

Greater awareness on laws relating to marriage, divorce, polygamy, harassment and perceived stricter implementation of such laws is seen to have an effect of bringing about slow but tangible changes in the ways people negotiate around these problems.

4. Media

Mass media (TV, radio, 'dish') has become one of the most important and effective conduits to changing gender norms and practices. Not only is it a platform for government and non-government organizations to air their campaigns, social messaging through dramas or even simply the exposure to different ways of thinking, being and practicing broadens the horizon of reference against which people assess attitudes and actions practiced in their communities. Therefore, access to media is a powerful factor in bringing about change.

5. General increase in level of education

The overall level of education in the community makes a difference in the kinds of attitudes and behaviours practiced in the community.

6. Increase in women's economic opportunities

Overall, economic opportunities and particularly access to women's economic opportunities is one of the most important premises for changes in gender norms and practices. Women who

engage in income generation and have control over their income have the potential to act as the initiators for change in gender relations. Both government and non-government agencies are playing a crucial role in taking initiatives that create work opportunities for women.

7. Mobility and exposure

The increasing mobility of people internally within the country and the trend of international migration are exposing people to a wide variety of norms and practices particularly in relation to women. These are being adopted at the local level to recreate gender norms and practices, thereby creating change.

7. Recommendations

1. The GJEs are the cornerstone of the program and investment in their training is crucial to strengthen GQAL programs across program areas. Hence, we strongly recommend that greater emphasis be placed on raising capacity of GQAL staff on building commitment and establishing relationships with the community (e.g. greater emphasis on developing skills on facilitation, motivation and interpersonal communication).
2. GQAL program should be cognizant of the commonalities between women of different social classes with respect to the barriers to seeking justice. This should be addressed in the design of program interventions to build social cohesion so that elite women who face similar problems as the poor are not excluded and can be mobilized more effectively and systematically.
3. The GQAL program should give sufficient attention to the particularities of the context of the community if the program is considering scaling up. The delivery mechanism of the program needs to be flexible in order to adjust to local conditions such as the nature of elite involvement, nature of civil society, social cohesion, and given a certain degree of autonomy at the local level to recognize and address these factors. For example, greater collaboration with existing school committees/youth clubs, or effective activation of such bodies, perhaps through technical assistance could have a significant impact in the operationalization of the program (See Box 2).
4. Given that gender norms and practices have been changing, monitoring indicators used by the GQAL program need to be re-thought and narrowed down. For example under indicator one (gender role changes at the household level) the indices “holds children to lap” and “gossips with wife and children in leisure time” are practices that have become common place and are no longer significant in indicating changes. Under indicator three (increased community mobilization against domestic violence) the index “sends both boys and girls to school” and under indicator four (more gender equitable access to health care

and nutrition) the index “all members of family take meal together at least once a day” are also common place practices.

5. One issue that GQAL does not address is that of sexuality though it addresses violence and abuse, the nature of which is often sexual. This is an area that cannot be ignored if GQAL is serious about bringing lasting change in gender relations especially within the household.

6. The fact that many of the GQAL participants may be adolescents living adult lives should be recognized by the program. Now that BRAC is in the process of drafting a strategy to work more effectively with adolescents, it would be an opportunity to address issues of gender, discrimination, etc for that age group through the GJE.

7. We would strongly recommend

that the relationship between the GQAL program and the TUP program be explored thoroughly (whether there is a direction of causality or if it is the case of a virtuous cycle), which could help strengthen and complement both programmatic interventions. GQAL program should be mainstreamed within BRAC and other BRAC program staff should be provided with GQAL training that would greatly increase the effectiveness of program interventions, particularly those related to social and human development, human rights, and women’s economic and political empowerment. For instance, with GQAL training, *Shasthyo Kormis* (SK) and *Shasthyo Shebikas* (SS) under the BRAC Health Programme (BHP) program, who already have easy and regular access to households, can deliver messages regarding gender discriminations in health and nutrition, can monitor health and nutrition practices and strengthen GQAL interventions. In the study areas, CEP was found undertaking certain actions that resonate with objectives and outcomes targeted by the GQAL program. Their activities were particularly evident in the non-GQAL areas, although in a less clearly defined and articulated manner. The role of the CEP should be strengthened by giving them GQAL training in non-GQAL areas, or through closer collaboration of CEP with GQAL, where both programs exist. This type of collaboration between BRAC programs is happening in ad hoc manner in many places but needs official recognition in order to scale up. GQAL may also consider ‘tracking’ a number of GQAL educators from various backgrounds – TUP, SS, CEP to understand more deeply the drivers of change and causality.

Box 2. Best Practices: community mobilization around violence against women

In Karli, Netrokona, mobilization by multiple actors with multiple stakeholders in different spaces of the community has resulted in a community, united and active in its efforts to combat and reduce violence against women. GQAL Gender Justice Educators and field organizers along with BRAC’s *Palli Samaj* have undertaken extensive awareness raising campaigns through *uthan boithaks*, rallies, protest marches, community meetings, CD shows, theatre, etc. They have further taken action oriented initiatives like prevention of early marriage and marriage with dowry, punitive action against wife beating and sexual harassment. The Union Parishad Chairman and Members and elite members of the community are actively engaged in these processes and initiatives. The local mosque holds after prayer discussions de-motivating and reprimanding acts of violence against women. The school committee and local youth club take awareness building initiatives to educate the local youth particularly in preventing early marriage, marriages with dowry and sexual harassment of girls.

8. There are noticeable synergies with other NGOs in the study areas, which may be one of the factors positively affecting the performance of GQAL in these areas. It may be worth exploiting these synergies to initiate further interaction, strengthen and complement program interventions. For example, key informants and FGD participants mentioned the awareness raising programs around gender roles of Swabolombi and Shathi and plays by Ashar Alo, legal awareness programs under Swabolombi, BNWLA and MJF or the health and nutrition programs of Swabolombi, Poppy, VARD, PROSHIKA, NIDP, Shathi and TMSS.
9. TUP members in 'good GQAL spots' were more likely to perceive that they were able to use TUP assets successfully to earn an income and bring changes in their living standards. However, whether it is the fact that respondents in areas where GQAL was successful are better able to manage their assets or whether it is the outcome of a successful TUP program, where improvements in peoples' economic status enabled greater incorporation of GQAL values and practices, needs to be further explored.

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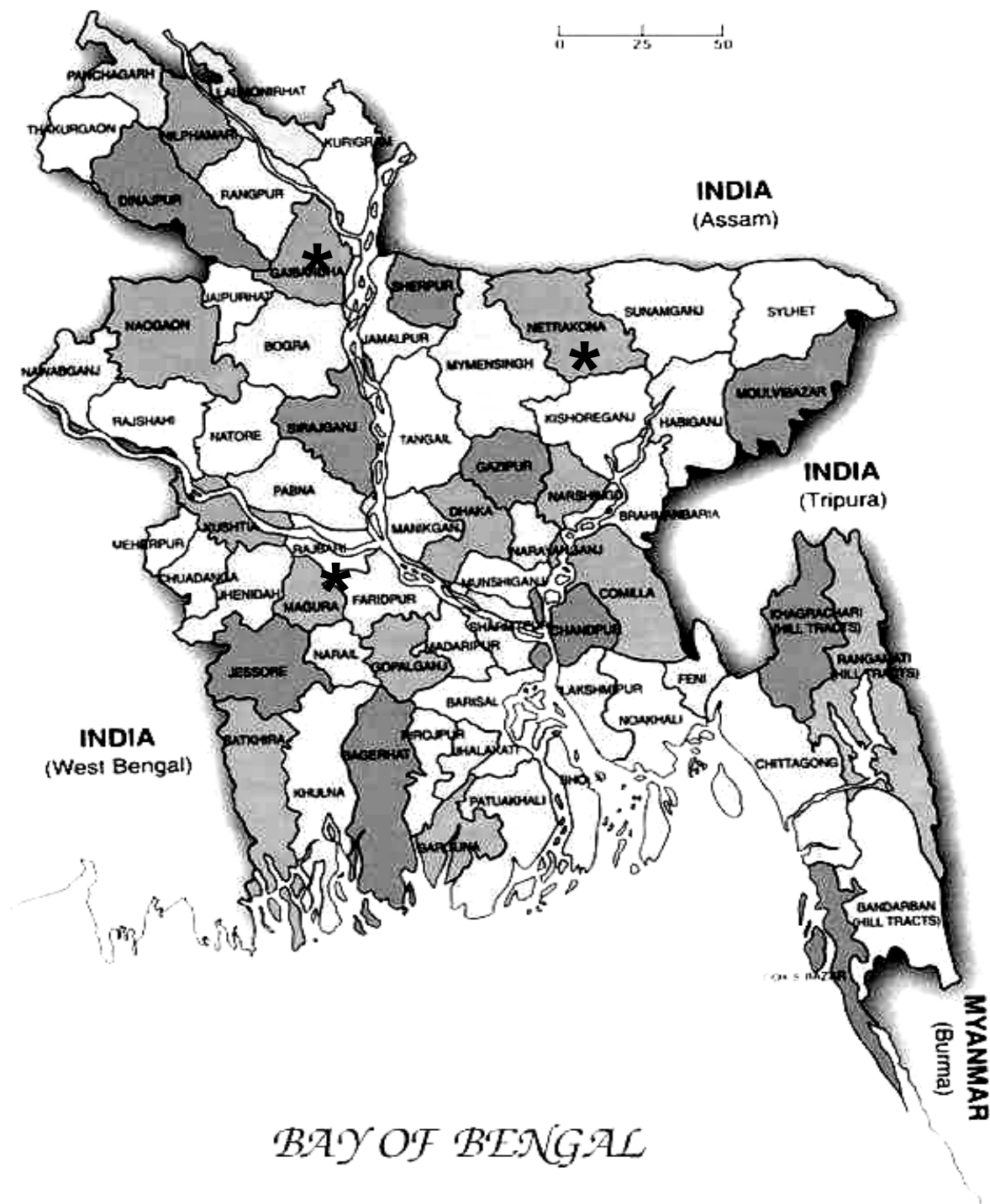
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Annexures

Annex 1. Map of study areas for GQAL study



Annex 2. Survey questionnaire

Assessing gender norms and behaviour in TUP areas

1. Questionnaire ID:

2. $\dagger Rjv$

3. $Dc\dagger Rjv/GjvKv$

4. $\overline{u}U:$

5. $D\ddot{E}i\text{'}\overline{v}Zvi\ bvg:$

6. $Lvbv\ cav\dagger bi\ bvg:$

7. $D\ddot{E}i\text{'}\overline{v}Zvi\ aib: (GK\mathbb{W}aK\ D\ddot{E}i\ n\dagger Z\ cv\dagger i)$

$GW\dagger KUi = 1$ $GW\dagger KU\dagger i\ i\ \overline{x} = 2$ $\mathbb{W}UBD\mathbb{W}c\ m\text{'}\overline{m}'' = 3$ $\dagger KvbUvB\ bv = 4$

8. $Lvbvi\ aib: GW\dagger KUi = 1$ $\mathbb{W}UBD\mathbb{W}c = 2$ $Dfq = 3$ $\dagger KvbUvB\ bv = 4$

9. $Lvbv\ m\text{'}\overline{m}''\ msL\text{'}\overline{v} = 1.$ $me\dagger gvU =$ $2. cv\beta eq\overline{c}\ ci\text{'}\overline{l} =$ $3. cv\beta eq\overline{c}\ bvi\text{'}\overline{x} =$
 $4. \dagger Q\dagger j\ \mathbb{W}k\ddot{i} =$ $5. \dagger g\dagger q\ \mathbb{W}k\ddot{i} =$ $(cv\beta eq\overline{c} = 18+; \mathbb{W}k\ddot{i} = 0-17)$

10. $mv\mathbb{W}rKvi\ MnbKvi\text{'}\overline{x}\ bvg:$

Section A: Respondent information

$Lvbv\ m\text{'}\overline{m}''\text{'}\overline{i}\ Z\text{'}\overline{v}$

	1. eqm	2. $\wedge eev\mathbb{W}K$ $Ae\overline{v}$	3. $m\dagger e\ddot{v}vP$ $\dagger kbx\ cvk$	4. $cavb\ \dagger ckv$ $(tek\text{'}\overline{x}\ mgq)$	5. $Gb\mathbb{W}RI$ $m\text{'}\overline{m}''\ \mathbb{W}K\ bv$
11. $Lvbv\ cavb$					
12. $D\ddot{E}i\text{'}\overline{v}Zv$					
13. $\overline{v}gx\ (h\mathbb{W}\text{'}\overline{v})$ $Lvbv\ cavb\ bv\ nq)$					

2. $\mathbb{W}eev\mathbb{W}K\ Ae\overline{v}$: $\mathbb{W}eev\mathbb{W}Z = 1$; $\mathbb{W}eaev/\mathbb{W}ecZxK = 2$; $ZvjvKcvB/Avjv\text{'}\overline{v}/c\mathbb{W}iZ''^3 = 3$

3. $\mathbb{W}k\mathbb{W}vM\mathbb{Z}\ \dagger hvM\text{'}\overline{Z}v$: $\dagger hB\ Kvm\ cvk - \dagger hgb: 5g\ \dagger kYx\ cvk = 5$;

$KLbI\ \overline{c}\dagger j\ hvq\mathbb{W}b = 0$; $Gm.Gm.\mathbb{W}m.\ cvk = 11$ $GBP.Gm.\mathbb{W}m.\ cvk = 12$ $\mathbb{W}e.G./Gg\ G\ cvk = 13$

4. $cavb\ \dagger ckv$:

$\mathbb{W}bR\ K\mathbb{W}IKvR = 1$ $K\mathbb{W}I\ \mathbb{W}\text{'}\overline{bg}Ri = 2$ $AK\mathbb{W}I\ \mathbb{W}\text{'}\overline{bg}Ri = 3$ $e\text{'}\overline{emv} = 4$
 $\dagger UW = 5$ $\dagger R\dagger j = 6$ $c\mathbb{W}ienb\ k\mathbb{W}gK = 7$ $\mathbb{W}bgvY\ k\mathbb{W}gK = 8$
 $\mathbb{W}k\mathbb{W}KZv = 9$ $Qv\hat{I} = 10$ $M\mathbb{W}nbx = 11$ $PvKi\text{'}\overline{x} = 12$
 $miKvi\text{'}\overline{x}\ KgPvi\text{'}\overline{x} = 13$ $\dagger eKvi\ (KvR\ LR\dagger Q) = 14$ $A\dagger b\text{'}\overline{i}\ Av\dagger qi\ Dci\ \mathbb{W}bfik\text{'}\overline{x}j = 15$
 $Avq\ MnY\ K\dagger i = 16$ $Kgv\mathbb{W}kqvj\ fv\dagger e\ nvm\ giM\text{'}\overline{x}/Mi''\ cvjb/\ kvKmeRxi\ evMvb/\ n\text{'}\overline{W}k\ddot{i} = 17$
 $Ab\text{'}\overline{vb}'' = 18$

5. $Gb\mathbb{W}RI\ m\text{'}\overline{m}''$: $n\text{'}\overline{v} = 1$; $bv = 2$

14. $Lvbv\ cav\dagger bi\ mv\dagger\text{'}\overline{v}Zvi\ m\mathbb{W}uK$:

$\overline{x} = 1$ $gv = 2$ $\mathbb{W}b\dagger R = 3$ $\dagger Q\dagger j\ i\ eD = 4$ $Ab\text{'}\overline{vb}'' = 5$

15. $h\mathbb{W}\text{'}\overline{v}Zv\ M\mathbb{W}nbx\ nb$, $Av\mathbb{W}b\ \mathbb{W}K\ Ggb\ \dagger Kvb\ KvR\ K\dagger ib\ hv\ \dagger\text{'}\overline{v}K\ A\text{'}\overline{v}DcvRb\ nq?$

$n\text{'}\overline{v} = 1$ $bv = 2$ $c\dagger hvR''\ bv = 99$

16. DËi`vZvi mšvb msL`v (RxeZ) I 6-10 eQi i tQjtgq`i gta` KqRb eZgvb`çj hv`Q (msL`v wjLb; 6-10 eqmx mšvb bv`vKçj Kjvg B tZ cthvR` bv = 99 wjLb)

	A. tgvU	B. 6-10 eQi eqmx mšvb`vKçj:	
		1.KqRb`çj hv`Q?	2.KqRb`çj hv`Q bv?
1. tQj			
2. tqtq			

Section B: Gender equality index

B1. Gender role changes at the household level

17. Avcbvi Lvbvi ci`I m`m`iv wK KLbI ivbv Kçi?

n`v = 1 KLbI bv = 2 gvtSgv`S = 3

18. Avcbvi Lvbvi ci`I m`m`iv wK KLbI weQvbw cÎ, Kvco`Pvco` ,Qvq?

n`v = 1 KLbI bv = 2 gvtSgv`S = 3

19. Avcbw wK KLbI Avcbvi wb`Ri c`Q`>` wb`Ri Rb` wKQ wKb`Z cv`ib? n`v = 1 bv = 2

20. Avcbw Ges Avcbvi`vgx wK KLbI GKmv`_ e`m mgq KvUvb (thgb, wUf t`tL, Mí Kçi, GKmv`\_ hvÎv, tgvjv ev wmbgvq hvq wK bv)? n`v = 1 bv = 2 cthvR` bv = 99

21. Avcbw wK wb`gv<sup>3</sup> e<sup>3</sup>e` ,tjvi mv`_ GKgZ?

		GKgZ = 1 wØgZ = 2
21.1	¶lav jvM`j tqtqiv A`c¶lv bv KçiB tL`q wb`Z cv`i	
21.2	ivbvi Rb` ci`I t`i cwb Avbv DwPr	
21.3	eo tKbvKvUvi t¶tÎ ci`I t`iB wmxvš tbqv DwPr (Rwg, evox, Mi`, f`vb, wUf)	
21.4	ci`tIi KvR bvixi Kv`Ri PvB`Z tekx` ,i`ZcY	

22. Avcbvi evoxi m`m`iv msmv`i Avcbvi KvR ev Aw`_K Ae`vb`K KZUK gj` t`q?

A`bK = 1 tgvUv`gwU = 2 G`Kev`iB bv = 3

B2. Reduction in domestic violence

23. Avcbv`K evevi evox t`tZ wK KLbI evav t`qv n`qtQ? n`v = 1 bv = 2

24. `vgx`xi gta` gvtSgv`S SMovSwU n`qB`v`K| Avcbvi`vgx wK KLbI SMovi GK chv`q Avcbv`K Zvjv`Ki ûgwK w`tqtQ? n`v = 1 bv = 2

25. Avcbw wK Avcbvi gZ Ggb tKvb gwnjvi K`v Rv`bb hv`K Zvi`vgx ev cwie`i i Ab` m`m` gvai Kçi`Q? n`v = 1 bv = 2

26. Avcbw wK g`b K`ib th, tKvb Kvi`Y`x`K gvai Kiv Aciva?

n`v, Aciva = 1 bv, Aciva bv = 2 tKvb tKvb t¶tÎ Aciva bv = 3

B3. Increased community mobilization around violence against women

27. Avcbvi GjvKvq MZ 5 eQi eD`K gvai Kiv t`to`Q bv K`gtQ?

t`to`Q = 1 K`gtQ = 2 GKB iKg Av`Q = 3

28. Avciḅ ḡK KLbI evj" weevn, eû weevn, tḡšZK ḡKsev bviḡ ḡbhvZḡbi wei"× ciZevḡ Ask ḡbḡqḡQb? n"v = 1 bv = 2

29. Avcbvi bḡḡ Avcbvi ḡvgx ḡKsev kīi/kviox ḡK mḡúĚ jḡL/ḡKḡb ḡḡqḡQ? n"v = 1 bv = 2

30. Kvi I hḡḡ tḡḡq nq, Zvnḡj GUv Kvi t"vI? gv = 1 evev = 2 Kvḡivi bv = 3 GUv tKvb t"vI bv = 4

31. AvBb ewnfZ ZvjvK KvḡK eḡj? ḡḡL ḡḡL ZvjvK = 1 f j DĚi/Rḡḡb bv = 2

B4. More gender equitable access to healthcare and nutrition

32. Avciḅ hLb MfeZx ḡQḡjb, Avcbvi ḡvgx ḡK AvcbvḡK Wv³vḡi i KvḡQ ḡbḡq ḡMḡqḡQḡjb? n"v = 1 bv = 2 cḡhvR" bv = 99

33. Avcbviv ḡK ḡḡḡ AšZ GK tejv ciievḡi i mevB GKmvḡ_ Lvb? (ḡvgx bv ḡKḡj ciievḡi i Ab" ci"lḡḡ i mvḡ_ Lvq ḡK bv) n"v = 1 bv = 2

34. Avcbvi ḡvgxi ev tQḡji ḡK Avcbvi ev Avcbvi tḡḡqi PvBḡZ tekx LvIqv i cḡqvRb? n"v = 1 bv = 2

35. Avciḅ hLb tklevi MfeZx ḡQḡjb, ZLb ḡK AvëvḡmvḡbvMvg KḡiḡqḡQḡjb? n"v = 1 bv = 2 cḡhvR" bv = 99

36. n"v nḡj, tKb? (GKḡaK DĚi nḡZ cvḡi) ev"Pv m"/ mḡVK RvqMvq AvḡQ ḡK bv RvbḡZ = 1 MfKvjxb mgh RiUjZv ḡQj = 2 tQḡj bv tḡḡq t"vI Rb" = 3

37. Avciḅ ḡK ḡbqḡgZ ḡUḡf tḡḡLb? n"v, ḡbqḡgZ = 1 n"v, gvḡSgvḡS = 2 bv = 3

38. Avciḅ ḡK ḡbqḡgZ tḡḡWl ḡḡbb? n"v, ḡbqḡgZ = 1 n"v, gvḡSgvḡS = 2 bv = 3

Section C: [Only if respondent is a TUP member]

39. Avciḅ GB ḡcvMvg tḡḡK ḡK aiḡbi mḡúḡ tḡḡqḡQb? (GKḡaK DĚi nḡZ cvḡi) Mi" = 1 QvMj = 2 nvm/giMx = 3 UvKv = 4 ḡKQ bv = 5

40. Avciḅ ḡK GB mḡúḡ e"envi Kḡi Avq DcvRb KiḡZ mdj nḡqḡQb? n"v = 1 bv = 2 cḡhvR" bv = 99

41. Avciḅ tḡ mḡúḡ tḡḡqḡQb Zvi dḡj ḡbḡgv³ weIq,ḡjvḡZ tKvb DbḡZ nḡqḡQb?

		n"v, AḡbK nḡqḡQ = 1 n"v, Aí ḡKQ = 2 bv = 3; cḡhvR" bv = 99
1	Avcbvi AḡḡK Ae"v	
2	mgvḡR Avcbvi Ae"vb/ mḡḡvb	
3	Avcbvi ḡvgx Ges/ ḡKsev Lvbi Ab"vb" ci"l mḡḡm"i mvḡ_ mḡúK	
4	ḡbḡRi AvZḡekvm	

Annex 3. Description of ‘spots’ in Netrokona, Gaibandha and Rajbari based on field observation¹³

1. ‘Good spots’

1.	Karli Netrokona Sadar Netrokona	1. Location and communication: Located at a distance of 5km from Netrokona Sadar upazila, near the <i>Chollisha</i> bazaar, next to a river. All roads within the village are <i>kuchcha</i>. People usually walk everywhere. Village divided into 3 main neighbourhoods. 350 households in the village. Houses are scattered. 2. Economic context: Most people are poor and dependent on agriculture. Two main crops – paddy and jute. Most people work as agricultural labour. Some are daily wage labourers, rickshaw pullers and small businessmen. A few people have jobs. Businesses revolve mainly around <i>Chollisha</i> bazaar. Some also gather shells from the river and sell them. Most houses are built of jute sticks, straw, thatch and tin. Only the few rich and middle class families have semi-<i>pucca</i> and <i>pucca</i> houses. 3. Social context: There are four Hindu families who are engaged in business. Muslim families are mostly dependent on agriculture and other forms of work. ‘Good’ relationship exists between the Hindu and Muslim families. Women from both communities were found to sit and gossip together. Social sanctions are quite strict. There is a youth committee for the prevention of eve teasing, early marriage, violence against women. People in general are very aware of these issues. The community is religious but not overly conservative. Women wear <i>burkhas</i> but they are seen to go out on their own. 4. Access to education and health: There is one government primary and one BRAC pre-primary school in the village. Girls have to go to <i>Chollisha</i> bazaar to attend high school. Most women do not have education and only a handful of men have some education. Among women, those who are educated have mostly completed class 5 or class 8. There is one deserted community clinic in the village. Therefore they have to go to <i>Chollisha</i> bazaar, Upazila Health Complex or Sadar Hospital to access healthcare. Sanitation system is poor. 5. Work: Income earning work is mostly done by men. Most women are engaged in rearing poultry and livestock, vegetable gardening. Poor women dig earth, work in rice mills, work as domestic workers and migrate out for work in garment factories. Men and women work together in rice mills. 6. NGO involvement: Most households are involved with one NGO or the other, though not everyone has a positive view of NGOs. Both men and women are aware about education, health and violence against women because of the GQAL program. GQAL FO Selina Akhter plays a particularly active role. The NGO Swabolombi also has a strong presence and plays an active role in the community.
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¹³ Description and percentages and based on observation and conversations with community members.

2. Jibonpur Gobindoganj Gaibandha	1. Location and communication: Village is located 15km away from the upazila, but communication is excellent. All roads in the village are <i>pucca</i>. There are CNGs, vans and <i>bhotbhotis</i> available for travel within the village. It is a large village with approximately 400 densely clustered households. 2. Economic context: The economic condition of the village is medium. There are poor households but very few ultra poor households. There are also quite a few rich and educated families. There is not much agricultural land. The two main crops are paddy and sugarcane. There are three rice mills in the village and a sugar mill next to the village. Both men and women work on the land and in the mills. Everyone is engaged in some form of work or the other – jobs, businesses, agriculture, daily wage labour, rice mills, transportation. Both men and women teach. Men also work in government offices and banks. About 15% of the villagers are internal migrants (for garment work and others) and about 5-7 people are international migrants. Very few of the houses are built of straw or thatch. Most houses are built of tin. The rich have brick houses with tin roofs. 3. Social context: People in this village are extremely social and aware. They are aware about education, health and violence against women. There is high mobility of both men and women in the village. Women can easily access schools, colleges, hospitals and any other place within the village. Women are also seen to attend social functions. They have free access to all households and are helpful to each other. The relationship between rich and poor is very congenial. There is religious conservatism but not widespread. Some houses are surrounded by tin fences. Some women wear <i>burkhas</i> but very few school-going girls veil themselves. There are 3 mosques in the village but very few people seem to attend them. The <i>imam</i> lives in another village and comes here only to lead Friday prayers. It is the <i>muezzin</i> who gives the <i>azaan</i> and leads the prayers regularly. One of the mosques holds Arabic classes for children. 4. Access to education and health: There are two government primary and two BRAC schools in the village. There is also a <i>kishori</i> club. All children attend school. Even children from poor families receive private tuition. Everyone is health conscious. They go to Mahimaganj union for healthcare. Unsanitary conditions are not seen anywhere. 5. Work: All men and women, and particularly the poor are engaged in income earning work. There is no obstacle to women working. Husbands and wives are seen to go to work together. Women work in the fields, in rice and sugar mills, dig earth, run small businesses and work in shops. Educated women have jobs. There are quite a few women (and men) who teach in schools and colleges. But some men were found idling at the tea stalls, drinking tea, gossiping and watching CDs. 6. NGO involvement: There are 3-4 other NGOs apart from BRAC that provide micro credit. A lot of families stated that their condition has improved because of the TUP assets. The GQAL program has made people aware about education, health, work and violence against women and in particular about gender equality in work, food allocation and health. GQAL FO Aslam bhai is quite popular.
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3.	Jhaugram Pangsha Rajbari	1. Location and communication: Jhaugram is located next to a main road at a distance of 5km from Pangsha upazila. There is a railway junction 1 km away from the village, at Pangsha bazaar. People use auto rickshaws, vans and cycles to move around the <i>kuchcha</i> roads of the village. Padma river is 5-7 km away from Jhaugram. Most houses are clustered, though a few are found scattered. 60% of the households have electricity. 2. Economic context: Most of the households are economically fairly well off, only a few of the households are poor. Most people rely on agriculture. Some people depend on daily wage labour, transportation services and businesses and a few have jobs. Both men and women are engaged in income earning work. People keep some of what they produce for their own consumption and sell the rest at Pangsha bazaar. Most households have a monthly income of taka 5000-6000. Some have lower incomes whereas others earn more than taka 8000 a month. The village has plenty of ponds and fruit trees. The houses are mostly semi-<i>pucca</i> and <i>kutchha</i>. 3. Social context: It is a Muslim community. There is one mosque. The <i>imam</i> lectures on gender relationships, against religious fundamentalism and superstitions and on gender awareness after prayers. The community people are religious but not fundamentalist. There is low tendency of women to wear <i>burkhas</i>. The younger generation seems respectful of the elders in the community. Gender relations in the village seem to be good in the sense that men and women help each other in their work. Instances of wife beating, eve teasing, early marriage and polygamy are low. However, dowry is one of the reasons why some girls get married late. Men and women, girls and boys can roam around the village freely. Girls can go to Pangsha bazaar on their own to shop. Both men and women participated in election campaigns and women's knowledge regarding voting rights was noteworthy. However, certain sources reveal that there is significant terrorist activity in the area. So even men do not stay out too late at night. 4. Access to education and health: People are generally aware about educating their children. Most children go to school. There is no visible discrimination between sending sons and daughters to school, although boys seem to study further than girls. There is one government primary and one BRAC school in the village. They have to go to Pangsha bazaar for higher education. There are high schools, colleges and universities in Pangsha bazaar. Majority of the people are educated. Tendency for religious education is low. Most people are aware about health issues and both men and women are taken to the doctor for illnesses. BRAC health workers are very active in the village. 5. Work: Men work in agriculture, daily wage labour, transportation. They have businesses and jobs. Women usually work in agriculture, dig earth, work in the brickfields, make handicrafts and also have jobs. Some men and women migrate to others areas, including Dhaka for work and jobs. 6. NGO involvement: There are various NGOs working in the area including BRAC, GB and ASA. Women view NGO activities positively. The relationship between government and NGOs is fairly good.
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2. 'Average spots'

1.	Mobarakpur Atpara Netrokona	1. Location and communication: Mobarakpur is 2km far from Atpara upazila and 18 km from Netrokona town. It is mainly a <i>haor</i> (wetlands) area. The nearest <i>pucca</i> road is one and a half kilometers away. All roads in the village are <i>kutchha</i>. It is divided into two neighbourhoods. It is quite densely populated with 300 households in the village. 2. Economic context: The economic condition of the people is quite poor. Everyone is dependent on agriculture. The two main crops are paddy and jute. Because it is a low lying land, there is only one paddy harvest a year. No businesses, companies or any other institutions have been set up. Most households live beneath the poverty line. Many work as daily wage labour, in transport and have small businesses. A few people work in the sawmill, while a few others survive on fishing. Most of the houses are built with jute sticks, thatch and straw. The handful of rich and middle class families lives in semi-<i>pucca</i> and <i>pucca</i> houses. 3. Social context: The socio-economic condition of the village is not very good. People are poor and mostly illiterate. There are disputes between certain households so there is not much interaction between families. There are no Hindu families. There is neither too much religiosity nor too much conservatism. Some women wear <i>burkhas</i> while others do not. Women also move around without men. People were initially eager to talk to the research team in the hope that they would receive something. There is violence against women and polygamy in the area. Women believe that husbands can beat their wives up. 4. Access to education and health: There is one government primary, one BRAC school and one <i>madrassa</i> in the village. There are very few educated people in the community. Boys who do study, mostly study in the <i>madrassa</i>. Both girls and boys attend the BRAC school. But boys tend to drop out of school because they are put to work at a young age. However, more children are attending school than before because of BRAC. The health and nutrition situation is not very good. BRAC and Swabolombi provide healthcare but because road communication is difficult, people have limited access to better treatment. Sanitation is very poor. There is one pond in the village where people bathe, wash clothes and bathe their animals. 5. Work: Men are more engaged in income earning work. But women work both indoors and outdoors. At home they earn from making handicrafts and sewing. Outdoors, they dig earth and do agricultural work. Because the level of education is very low (only one local teacher and one or two NGO workers) particularly of women, there did not seem to be any job holding women in the village. 6. NGO involvement: Most people are involved with one NGO or the other. Those who are not, spoke negatively about NGOs. BRAC and Swabolombi are very active in the village. The TUP program was appreciated by all since many families have improved their economic condition with the assets.
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2. Dimla Shaghata Gaibandha	1. Location and communication: Dimla is located in the Padumshohor union under Shaghata upazila. The upazila is 12km away from Dimla. There is a railway line cutting across the village going towards Lalmonirhat. The village is huge, disorderly and fairly unclean. New houses have been built on empty plots of land or right next to the railway tracks. So some houses are scattered with only one family living there. There are also the older clusters of houses. There are <i>pucca</i> as well as <i>kutchha</i> roads. People generally walk to move around the village. There are about 600 households in the village. 2. Economic context: The village has a lot of cultivable land where paddy and jute are grown. There are also plenty of ponds. The majority of the households are poor. There are a few middle class households and about 15-20 rich households. Most people work as daily wage labourers and rely on agriculture. A few hold jobs and some are engaged in business. Poor women work outside, while educated women generally teach in schools and colleges. There are two bazaars in the village and the community's business revolves around them. About 10% of the people migrate to other areas for work. 3. Social context: The village is class divided. The rich interact with each other while the poor interact with their own, where they live near each other. Since the village is very large there is not much interaction between neighbourhoods either. There were some people in the work area who are involved in development work. Religious conservatism was not very apparent. School and college going girls were seen to wear <i>burkha</i>. But women were seen to go to the bazaar for shopping and buying fish on their own. There is violence against women. There were known incidents of murdering a wife, murder of a female as well as a male NGO worker. The team observed a woman going off to her natal home having being beaten up by her husband. Male authoritativeness was also evident. There were also instances of eve teasing. There is scope for romantic relationships as male and female college students were seen to walk around together. 4. Access to education and health: There are 3 government primary schools, 2 high schools, one BRAC school, 7 mosques and a <i>madrassa</i> in the village. Quite a few local men and women are teachers. Most children of well – off families attend school. Teachers and parents are enthusiastic about education. Most people go to the village doctor for treatment. For more serious illnesses they go to Shaghata or Gaibandha. Sanitation system is poor. 5. Work: It is poor women who work outside. Educated women have jobs (as mentioned above, women teach at the schools). But most women are housewives (<i>grihini</i>). Well-off women are derisive of women who dig earth or work as garment workers mainly because they do not get women for their own domestic work. Boys were seen to hang around tea stalls chatting and watching CDs. 6. NGO involvement: There are quite a few NGOs in the village providing micro credit. Most households are involved an NGO. The BRAC schools are decorated with GQAL posters. Teachers, elite men and women are aware of the GQAL and TUP program. Majid bhai from GQAL is quite popular. Women who received assets from TUP are pleased with the program as they have been able to improve their economic condition using these assets. However, there is also some resentment because many feel that the true poor did not receive assets.
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3.	Katakhali Goalando Rajbari	1. Location and communication: Katakhali is located 6km away from Goalando upazila, next to a main road. It is about 4km from the Dhaka-Khulna highway. This spot is comprised of 8 villages. The area is mainly a low lying land formed by the silt from the Padma river. There are <i>pucca</i>, <i>semi-pucca</i> and <i>kutch</i>a roads in this area. There are clusters, rows as well as scattered houses. 50% of the households of electricity. 2. Economic context: Half of the households in the spot are poor, 1/3 are middle income houses and about 20% are rich households. People are engaged in agriculture, business, jobs, daily wage labour, transportation, etc. There are several poultry farms in this area. Most people have a monthly income of taka 2500-3000. Some earn taka 4000-6000, while others starting from taka 6000 to 20000, 25000 or even 30000. There are also lots of ponds and a canal in this area. 3. Social context: There are 5-7 mosques and one temple. Although the number of Hindu families is small, there exists a good relationship between the two religious communities. Tendency to wear <i>burkha</i> is low. Some families show a touch of modernity. There is no evidence of religious fundamentalism. In terms of gender relations, there is low level of wife beating, eve teasing, divorce and early marriage, but dowry is high. Women from the well-off families do not dare to open their mouths even if there is violence committed against them as those who judge (<i>shalish</i>) are members of their family or relatives. Women however can move around freely. They can go alone to the Goalando bazaar. Both men and women were seen attending cultural programs. However, it was also heard that there are terrorist groups in the area, who do not do much in this area, but terrorize people in other areas. Women from educated, middle class families are aware of their voting rights. Both men and women voted in the last elections. 4. Access to education and health: There are two government primary and two high schools, one of which is for girls only. Only the children of the extreme poor do not attend school, while all the rest do. Girls are ahead in terms of results, but boys are ahead in terms of levels of education. About half of the population is educated. About 10-15% children drop out from school. There is no practice of <i>madrassa</i> education. 5. Work: Women are engaged in daily wage labour, handicrafts and agriculture. 6. NGO involvement: BRAC, GB, ASA and CARITAS are some of the NGOs that work in this area. Not all people view NGOs positively. Some believe that NGOs are making the poorer and more indebted.
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3. 'Non-GQAL spots'

1.	Panchkahania Netrokona Sadar Netrokona	1. Location and communication: Panchkahania is located in the Amtoli union. It is located 6km away from Netrokona district town near the Atpara main road. However all the roads within the village are <i>kutch</i>a. The village is divided into 3 neighbourhoods. There 37 Hindu households of the 330 households in the village. It is a densely populated village with clustered households. Communication and transportation is quite good. 2. Economic context: Most people in the village are dependent on agriculture. There are two types of paddy cultivation. Other than that there are plenty of ponds where fish is cultivated. Vegetables are also produced commercially. Since the village is located near the Atpara main road, many men and women from the village go to the upazila to work in the rice mills and broilers. People in the village also do business and hold jobs. This area is relatively better off than the two other areas in Netrokona. The rich have tin houses while the houses of the poor are made with jute sticks and thatch. 3. Social context: There are no communal disputes within the village and the two religious communities live in harmony. Women are aware and spontaneous in their conversations. There is no tendency of violence against women, polygamy and divorce in the area. Husbands and wives seem to have good relationships. However, one or two disparate incidents of quarrels and fights were heard to have happened. There is community policing for the prevention of violence against women. However, dowry is quite high. Two or three mentally/physically challenged children were seen, one of whom was tied up. There is no religious fundamentalism. 4. Access to education and health: There is one government primary and pre-primary BRAC school. Everyone in the village send their children to school. Some of the men are educated and only three or four of the women have completed class five. Nevertheless they are eager for their children's education. People in general are not conscious about health and nutrition. Two NGOs – Swabolombi and Poppy – provide health services in the village. Sanitation system is mediocre. 5. Work: Main source of income for men is from agriculture, sharecropping, daily wage labour and business. Outdoor work for women includes working in rice mills, digging earth and working in poultry farms. It is mainly poor women who work outside the house. There is no difference by religion in terms of work. Men and women were seen to work together in rice mills. 6. NGO involvement: Although most people are involved with NGOs, there are those who have a negative attitude towards NGOs. But there is plenty of evidence of the assets provided by BRAC and NIDP and the income generating work for women organized by Swabolombi, as a result of which many people have improved the economic condition of their households.
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2.	Jirai Gobindaganj Gaibandha	1. Location and communication: Jirai is located in Mahimaganj union, at a distance of 16km from the upazila town of Gobindaganj. However the communication system is good. The village lies not far from the Mahimaganj railway station. Roads within the village are all <i>kutchha</i>. The village is very large and divided into three neighbourhoods. Paschimpara is a Hindu dominated neighbourhood with 120 Hindu households. The neighbourhood is untidy with poor sanitation. Purbopara and Madhyapara are densely populated but clean and tidy. Only a few homes that have electricity. 2. Economic context: People of this area are very poor. Only a few of the households are well-off and educated. Most people survive on daily wage labour. Migration out for work is high at 30%. There is some cultivable land where paddy, jute and sugarcane is grown. There are lots of bamboo groves in the village. Nearby river on the eastern side provides livelihood for fishermen. Some people have small businesses at the railway station. 3. Social context: There is not much interaction between the few well-off people and the ordinary people of the village. The poor work outdoors. Women caked in mud were seen to return home after a hard day's of work outside. There exists good relationship between men and women on the whole. Women went door to door to campaign during elections. There is not much religious conservatism. Most women and girls were seen to be walking around without <i>burkhas</i> with one or two exceptions. Women were also seen to sit and chat under trees by the roadside. They are very easy to talk to. Early marriage does exist and marriages do not take place without dowry. 4. Access to education and health: Number of educated people in the village can be counted on one hand. There are three BRAC schools in the village. There is dispute between Jirai residents and the residents of Sripur, the neighbouring village about the school, college and <i>madrassa</i> located at its border. Both claim that they fall under their village. But children of the village all attend school. The only educated man Musa Ahmed is a computer teacher at the <i>madrassa</i>. According to him, although the villagers are uneducated, the new generation is becoming educated. Most people go to the village doctor when they are ill. The BRAC SS takes pregnant women to the hospital or health centre for check ups and advice them. 5. Work: It is generally men who are the main breadwinners. Most of the poor people depend on daily wage labour. Some run shops or drive vans. Women work in the fields, as domestic workers or cooks/ helpers at local restaurants. No one objects to women working outside. 6. NGO involvement: Poor households have improved their lot with the assets from BRAC TUP program. However many poor people did not receive these assets. Therefore, many women seemed to harbour negative sentiments regarding NGOs.
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3.	Gofur Mandal Para Goalanda Rajbari	1. Location and communication: Gofur Mandal para is located 4km away from Goalando upazila with a main road on one side and the river Padma and her branches on the others. The 3km long village only has 1 km <i>kutchra</i> road, so communication within the village is poor. The houses are clustered. About 40% of the households have electricity. 2. Economic context: About 80% of the people in this area are poor, 15% of middle income and 5% rich. Most people earn about 2000-3000 taka a month. Some people earn above taka 5000. Main source of livelihood is from daily wage labour. Amount of agricultural produce is very small. There are several ponds in the village. In general the economy of the village is vulnerable. 3. Social context: It is predominantly a Muslim area. There are two mosques. People in general are not invested in religion. No women were seen wearing <i>burkhas</i>. Tendency for wife beating, eve teasing and divorce was seen in the area. Polygamy is prevalent among poor families and it is practiced with the intention of increasing household income through wives' work. Everyone is fairly busy with their own work and not bothered about women working outside or their mobility. Women cast their vote according to their husbands' decision. A fourth year Honours student was elected UP member this time. 4. Access to education and health: More boys than girls attend school. Children of poor and fisher families are unable to attend school. About one third of the children attend school. There is one government primary school, one high school and one BRAC school in the area. Some children go to Goalando or Faridpur for higher education. Most people are not aware about health and nutrition. Poor people do go to the doctor when they are seriously ill, even if they wait a while and have to borrow money to do so. However, women usually hide their illnesses because of poverty. Better off families do not discriminate between male and female members for treatment. 5. Work: Most people are daily wage labourers. Women are also engaged in daily wage labour, making handicrafts and in domestic work. A brothel is located near the village where some women work as sex workers and some women do domestic work for sex workers. 6. NGO involvement: GB, BRAC and CARITAS were seen to be working in this area. Most people view NGOs positively. But the relationship between NGOs and the local government is not very good. The government officers believe that NGOs bring in money in the name of peoples' welfare but fill their pockets instead.
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