

Exploring State of Governance at Union-Level and Its Relevance for Wider Influencing



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Researched & Written by

Akhter Hussain, Ph.D.

Research Associate

M. Mafijur Rahman

Editorial Team

Rubayet Hamid
Kazi Niaz Ahmed
Munir Uddin Shamim

Photography

SETU and Local Governance Projects, CARE Bangladesh

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Glossary

Gram Adalat	Village Court
Gram Shava	Village Meeting
Nirbahi	Executive
Para	Neighbourhood
Pourashava	Municipality
Shalish	Dispute Resolution
Shava	Meeting
Union Parishad	Union Council
Upazila Parishad	Sub-district Council
Zila Parishad	District Council

List of Acronyms

ATEO	Assistant Thana Education Officer
AUEO	Assistant Upazila Education Officer
CBO	Community Based Organisation
EC	European Commission
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLs	Natural Leaders
NLOs	Natural Leaders' Organisations
PNGO	Partner Non-governmental Organisation
SAAO	Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer
SETU	Social and Economic Transformation of the Ultra-Poor
UP	Union Parishad
UZP	Upazila Parishad
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGf	Vulnerable Group Feeding
ZP	Zila Parishad

Executive Summary

Weak governance has been identified by CARE Bangladesh as an underlying cause of poverty and marginalisation in all four impact statements. Furthermore, it is seen as a domain of change in CARE Bangladesh's pathways of change for achieving impact in the lives of the poorest and the most marginalised.

CARE-Bangladesh is implementing Building Pro-poor, Inclusive and Gender Sensitive Local Governance Project to contribute towards building participatory, inclusive, pro-poor and gender sensitive governance in Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat Districts. At the same time, Social and Economic Transformation of the Ultra-Poor (SETU), a Government of Bangladesh and UKaid partnership project, which is funded by Deep/Shiree, is being implemented in Rangpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha districts of Bangladesh.

Objective of the Study

The overall objective of the study was to assist CARE Bangladesh to document state of governance at Union-level and how CARE Bangladesh is facilitating transformation through participatory inclusive governance.

Approach and Methodology

For the purpose of the study, data and information were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Field visits were undertaken in the districts of Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat. Focus group discussion sessions with different stakeholders of the projects were conducted. They were the members of Natural Leader Organizations (NLOs), chairmen and male and female members of the Union Parishads, CARE officials, PNGO staff and community people. In-depth interviews were conducted with CARE officials responsible for the management and implementation of the projects that included members of the management teams, field level implementation officials, PNGO officials and selected NLOs members. Observation formed another important method in collecting data and information. Both published and unpublished literatures were studied to collect data and information from secondary sources.

Policy Environment Related to Local Governance in Bangladesh

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh made explicit provisions for having local government units at different tiers of administration. In recent years, there have been a number of developments towards strengthening of local government system in the country. A new law Union Parishad Act 2009 replaced the old UP Ordinance of 1983. It has incorporated many provisions to turn UPs as more effective representative organisations. The new Act has recognised the importance of community participation and made provision for constituting Ward Shava¹ in each ward. The Article 8 of the Act has declared the UPs as administrative unit which is in line with the provisions of the Constitution. The other important provision that has been incorporated in the new Act is the declaration of Citizen's Charter by the UPs. This will help people to know about their rights and at the same time the responsibilities of the UP towards the community (Article 49).

¹ Ward Shava requires the elected UP representatives to meet the voters twice in a year for local level planning, selection of beneficiaries of various government schemes, and to ensure transparency and accountability.

State of Governance at Union- Level in Northwest of Bangladesh

Building Pro-poor, Inclusive and Gender Sensitive Local Governance Project intends to contribute towards building participatory, inclusive, pro-poor and gender sensitive governance in Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat Districts of Bangladesh. The specific objective of this project is to improve the capacity of 35 selected UPs to provide leadership for pro-poor development and facilitate better access to services and resources for the poorest and most marginalised citizens. It seeks to improve the accountability and responsiveness of local government in Bangladesh, specifically the UPs.

Social and Economic Transformation of the Ultra-Poor (SETU) is funded by eep/shiree: a Government of Bangladesh and UKaid partnership implemented in Rangpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha districts of Bangladesh.

The project purpose of SETU states that women and men of 20,000 extreme poor households in Northwest Bangladesh are empowered to collectively address the causes of their economic, social and political exclusion. Governance is an integral part of SETU's project logic, which emphasises the need to facilitate collective action by the extreme poor and institutionalisation of poverty reduction initiatives by the local government institutions. One of the project outputs of SETU is, UPs are supported to develop improved capacity, downwards accountability and responsiveness for engaging with and meeting the development needs of extreme poor men and women (pro-poor governance).

The projects made a number of interventions to make the UPs more functional and responsive especially to the demands and needs of the extreme poor and women of the local community. It included making the UPs more responsive to the delivery of public services; constitution and functioning of UP Standing Committees; transparency and accountability; regular functioning of Village Court; plan and budget preparation with the active participation of UP representatives and Natural Leaders (NLs). It was observed that the project covered UPs have now become more responsive to the rights and demands of the poorer sections of the local society. In all these UPs, all the UP standing committees have been formed with co-opted members particularly from the Natural Leaders' Organisations (NLOs)². The projects create Natural Leaders Organisations at the local level, organise para meetings with them and establish network with the Union Parishads and local level institutions of the government service delivery agencies. All these initiatives are taken to involve especially the poor and the marginalised in the planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of UP and line departments' activities. These initiatives are very relevant to ensure inclusive good governance at the local level by ensuring poor peoples' participation and accountability of institutions and organisations at the particular level.

Under the current initiatives, UPs are taking up women focused projects. These projects provided sewing machines and tailoring trainings to the women beneficiaries. This has helped the women to engage themselves in gainful activities. The NLOs played an important role in persuading the UPs to take up such projects and in the selection process of the beneficiaries. The important point that needs to be noted here that the Union Parishad is now extending its roles and functions. They are now working beyond their traditional role of developing infrastructure and safety net programmes by providing livelihood and income generating options to the women of the poor and vulnerable households. These initiatives are also contributing towards the process of empowerment of the marginalised women living in rural areas.

² The term Natural Leader comes from Bengali Word *Swavab Neta*. These are people within the targeted communities who demonstrated the potential and willingness to lead and support their neighbours in undertaking collective action. Natural Leaders Organisations are formed at union-level where leaders from the most marginalised communities work together as a pressure group.

With respect to UP budget, now open budget sessions are held on a regular basis. People from all walks of life attend those sessions and also put forward their suggestions and recommendations to be incorporated in the budget document. Now, in many cases the suggestions and recommendations made especially by the poor are taken into consideration and budget documents incorporate those.

Transparency, accountability and effectiveness are essential for good governance at any level. It was observed that there has been clear improvement in the area of transparency and accountability. Natural Leaders are found to be holding regular meetings with UPs. Here it should be noted that the projects activate UP standing committees. During field visits to various UPs it was observed by document review that the said committee meetings are being held on a regular basis. The committees were found to be keeping track of activities of the UPs. In this area, the PNGOs provide necessary assistance to the committee as well as the UP chair and secretary.

The projects under study identified and formed Natural Leaders Organisations (NLOs) at the local level. The NLs come from the poor and the marginalised sections of the community and also perceived to champion the cause of their peers. The projects are trying to build their capacities to uphold the interest of their community by actively participating in the activities and functions of the UPs. It appears that there has been a noteworthy development in the level of understanding, awareness and knowledge of the NLOs. It clearly appeared that in overwhelming cases these NLOs now possess better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and what functions they need to perform to protect the rights and entitlements of the poorer community people and above all how to advocate for key issues with UPs and concerned service providing agencies. The other important aspect that has been observed is that now these bodies have acquired knowledge and skills in building rapport and networks with especially local government bodies and government service delivery agencies working at the field levels. Here it may be mentioned that the projects are working to activate UP standing committees. It was reported that now increasing number of NLO members are co-opted to these standing committees. This particular process indicates that the local government bodies now recognise these bodies and put much emphasis on their participation for mutual benefits.

The projects intend to ensure regular communication and coordination among the local level key stakeholders. The objective is to lay its claim by the NLOs for participation in the local development process and thereby ensure the rights of the poorer sections of the community. This relationship is producing positive results while lobbying for inclusion and better distribution of safety net programmes benefits and redressing various grievances of the common people. The other important development observed is reliance of the UPs on the NLOs for help and assistance. In many of its standing committees the NLO members have been co-opted as members.

CARE Bangladesh governance framework stipulates four impact statement groups, namely, extreme poor impact group, marginalised women impact group, constraints to governance in Bangladesh, and opportunities for local governance in Bangladesh. The two projects are making positive impacts on them. The extreme poor and marginalised women are being included in the governance process by creating opportunities for their participation. The poverty situation is also improving because of their increased access to state and other resources. This has been made possible because of their inclusion in the governance process. On the other hand, constraints to local governance are also being addressed by building the capacity of the Union Parishads and strengthening network and relationship between various stakeholders and service providers. It should further be mentioned that the new UP Act has created more opportunities for inclusion

through participation of the community at large, and accountability and transparency of the Union Parishad. Recently, the Government, with funding from the World Bank, has embarked upon to implement the Local Governance Support Project II (LGSP II). Funds will be directly provided to the UP with greater autonomy to use them. This project will include all the UPs of the country. The projects under implementation may avail these opened up opportunities to promote inclusive governance at UP level.

Projects' Relevance to Inclusive Governance

CARE Bangladesh governance framework stipulates four impact statement groups. It revealed that the projects under implementation are addressing them. Although Union Parishads consists of elected bodies, yet they cannot ensure inclusion of all, particularly the poor and the marginalised, in the local level governance process. It has been observed that the poorer section of the communities still remain in the periphery and cannot join in the mainstream governance process as they lack awareness of their rights, do not have platforms to act in a concerted manner and, at the same time, the other stakeholders of the local governance process also lack capacity to deliver services to the rights holders due to lack of awareness and capacity. Under the UP legal framework, the UP can constitute 13 standing committees on subject areas including health, education, agriculture and law and order etc. For ensuring local community's participation in these committees, the provision of their inclusion through cooption has also been made. But in reality, these committees are seldom formed and even when formed, remain only on papers. Again, the UPs in almost all cases are either ignorant or not aware of the roles and functions of such committees. They also lack capacity to make them functional, even after formation. As a result, the whole purpose of having these committees to assist the UPs in their functioning as well as monitoring and supervising the delivery of services by the government agencies generally gets defeated. But the CARE Bangladesh's governance framework stipulates the inclusion, especially of the poor and the marginalised in the governance process. These standing committees are being used as vehicles for inclusion of the poor and the marginalised for ensuring their rights and entitlements to various services provided by the UPs and other government agencies working at that particular level.

The Village Courts or Gram Adalats were envisaged with the vision of a more formal and authorised judicial units at the grassroots for quick and easy resolution of local disputes through efficient dispensation of justice. But it has been observed that in the operational procedure i.e. with respect to acting as jury, generally the poor and the marginalised are not included. The reasons are the lack of awareness of the poor and reluctance of the UPs to involve them in the process. The two projects promoting inclusion of the poor and the marginalised under implementation are helping the poor to become aware of their rights and at the same time facilitating in changing the mindset of the UPs to include them in the dispute resolution process through the Gram Adalats. This initiative is in line with the concept of inclusive governance as envisaged by CARE.

The projects create Natural Leaders Organisations at the local level, organise para meetings with them and establish network with the Union Parishads and local level institutions of the government service delivery agencies. All these initiatives are taken to involve especially the poor and the marginalised women in the planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of UP and line departments' activities. These initiatives are very relevant to ensure inclusive good governance at the local level by ensuring poor peoples' participation and accountability of institutions and organisations at the particular level.

It has been mentioned earlier that inclusive governance requires to involve representatives of all relevant actor groups (if appropriate); empower all actors to participate actively and constructively in the discourse; co-design the framing of the problem or the issue in a dialogue with these different groups; generate a common understanding about the framing of the problem, potential solutions and their likely consequences (based on the expertise of all participants); conduct a forum for decision-making that provides equal and fair opportunities for all parties to voice their opinion and to express their preferences; and establish a connection between the participatory bodies of decision-making and the political implementation level (Trustnet, 1999, Renn, 2008). It appears from the analysis and findings of the current study that the issues and aspects mentioned above relating to good governance are being addressed by the two projects that are under implementation. Here it should be mentioned that the achievement of the desired level outcomes and standards will be a long drawn affair but the process is on towards those directions.

Observations on the Projects

In Bangladesh, the central government's de-concentrated administrative apparatus has its full presence at the Upazila level. As such, for ensuring effective inclusive governance, the government line agencies at the Upazila level also need to be addressed by the project especially for developing their awareness of the benefits of inclusive governance. They will also ensure inclusion of the poor and the disadvantaged in the benefits and services rendered by the line agency officials working at the UP level. At the same time, can also play an effective role in motivating UPs to practice and institutionalise inclusive governance in their functioning. It revealed that this particular element, administrative structure at the Upazila level did not receive adequate attention of the projects under study. The Members of Parliament (MPs) in Bangladesh now play the role of advisers to the Upazila Parishads. This arrangement has created opportunity for the MPs to have a say in the affairs of the local government bodies. On the other hand, provision for separate allocations for the MPs has been made under the safety net programmes of the government. As a result, now the MPs play effective role especially in the distribution of benefits under various safety net programmes. The projects under study have not taken this aspect into consideration. To ensure inclusive governance at the local level under the existing legal framework, advocacy is needed at the sub-national and national level. In this particular area of advocacy, the projects have limited interventions.

Existing Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have been included in the projects. But these CBOs have been formed earlier under the sponsorship or facilitation of various projects that have or had varying goals and objectives to achieve. It implies that achievement of their projects' goals and objectives are their primary responsibilities. Because of the above mentioned fact, it appears that focused and dedicated participation of the included CBOs is somewhat limited than desired level for obvious reasons.

Knowledge management and sharing, that includes collation and dissemination of gathered insight, particularly on inclusive governance through the implementation of the project, received limited attention of the projects.

Lessons Learned

CARE Bangladesh governance framework stipulates four impact statement groups. Lessons learned are mentioned below under each of them.

Extreme Poor Impact Group

- Lesson 1: Inclusive governance for ensuring rights of the poor and the marginalised needs the participation of them in the governance process. This indicates participation in the decision-making process, especially of the local government institutions concerning their interest through their own organisations.
- Lesson 2: Poor people's organisations can work best for their interest. Formation of the Natural Leaders' Organisations is ensuring better service delivery at the local level for the benefit of the hard core poor. These organisations can advocate, lobby and network with Union Parishads and other agencies at both government and local level.
- Lesson 3: Interest group organisations like the NLOs not only work for the benefit of their members but also help the service delivery organisations like the UPs and other government departments in effectively implementing their projects and programmes, as these people's organisations secure peoples support and cooperation for them.
- Lesson 4: The community based organisations (CBOs) can promote inclusion and participation, especially of the women, poor and the marginalised in the local governance process. These organisations can advocate and lobby with concerned agencies to ensure the rights of the poorer section of the local community.
- Lesson 5: The CBOs can also work as linking pins between the Union Parishads, other service delivery agencies and the NLOs.

Marginalised Women Impact Group

- Lesson 6: Marginalised women's empowerment can be achieved by including them in organisations working for safeguarding their interest. In this case, the NLOs are acting as such forums.
- Lesson 7: Income generating livelihood options strengthen the process of empowerment of the marginalised women. Tailoring training and sewing machines given to them are the contributions in the above mentioned direction.

Constraints to Governance

- Lesson 8: Networking leads to better governance. In this case, interaction with the NLOs and the CBOs are helping the UPs in addressing the demands of the poor and the marginalised.
- Lesson 9: Stakeholders' organisations help the inclusive governance process by ensuring participation. The NLOs are serving the said purpose on behalf of the extreme poor and marginalised women.

Opportunities for Local Governance in Bangladesh

- Lesson 10: The institution of Gram Adalat, if properly activated, can resolve large number of disputes at the local level, thus freeing the formal judicial system from the burden of increasing number of litigations.

Lesson 11: Sharing and dissemination of information and knowledge help the case of the poor and the marginalised by including them in that process.

Lesson 12: Transparency and accountability of UPs lead to improvement of credibility of the UPs as local bodies. The activation of the standing committees and co-option of the NLO members in different committees has ensured transparency of the activities undertaken by the UPs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and observations of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Larger the number of poor people with developed awareness and capacity, higher is the possibility of success in creating demand from below and also realising their rights from concerned agencies. To increase such number of poor people, it is recommended that new members on a regular basis should be included in the NLOs. This will also increase the number of change agents at the grassroots level which is critical to bring about qualitative change with respect to inclusive good governance at the local level.
- The NLOs have been formed under projects facilitation with the broad objective to act as rights based organisations and platforms of the poor and the marginalised for building a network, especially with the concerned stakeholders. Now these bodies and platforms do not have any legal status. But for the purpose of sustainability through a stakeholders' consultation and sharing process, these bodies could be turned into registered CBOs with specific mandate.
- Network needs to be established with other projects and NGOs to tap their resources for taking up projects and programmes by the UPs and NLOs for the benefits of the extreme poor and marginalised women.
- For policy change, advocacy and networking activities should be taken up at the sub-national and national levels.
- A system should be developed to collate, document and disseminate information, knowledge and lessons learned through the implementation of various innovative project activities for others to benefit and replicate wherever possible.
- As new elected chairmen and members have taken office, the project interventions targeting them should be implemented again to orient them and help in changing their mind-set for ensuring inclusive governance at the local level.
- As now the Upazila Parishad is in place, it is imperative to establish a functional linkage between the UPs, Upazila Parishads and the NLOs in the future for better achievement of the project's goals and objectives.

I. Introduction and Background

Local government is an integral part of the overall governance process of any country. The local government institutions perform many functions within their legal jurisdictions. The scale and scope of these activities are, however, limited. But being closer to the community, the development activities and the services provided by the local government institutions can have immediate impact on the lives of the different sections of the community, including the extreme poor and the marginalised. As local government institutions are nearer to the community, these can ensure their inclusive participation in different activities that include planning and implementation of development programmes and projects; monitoring of delivery of services and involvement in various safety nets programmes of the government.

To be inclusive is a core value of good governance; in terms of equal participation, equal treatment and equal rights before the law. This implies that all people - including the poor, women, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups - have the right to participate meaningfully in governance processes and influence decisions that affect them. It also means that governance institutions and policies are accessible, accountable and responsive to disadvantaged groups, protecting their interests and providing diverse population with equal opportunities for public services such as justice, health and education.

Recently the terms "governance" and "good governance" are being increasingly used in development literature. Bad governance is being increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of all evil within the societies. Weak governance has been identified by CARE Bangladesh as an underlying cause of poverty and marginalisation in all four impact statements. Furthermore, it is seen as a domain of change in CARE Bangladesh's pathways of change for achieving impact in the lives of the poorest and most marginalised.

CARE Bangladesh understands poverty as the deprivation of certain capabilities and freedoms. Poverty encompasses deprivation in well-being, not just as measured by income or consumption poverty, but also inferior outcomes in areas like education and health, and in vulnerability and powerlessness as well. Poverty is therefore multidimensional, dynamic and contextually specific. The question of why some people suffer from lack of access to resources and opportunities compared to others is essentially a political question. Poverty is created and maintained through the operation of unequal power relations in the economic, social and political spheres. Thus, governance is important for two main reasons. Firstly, because participation is a right with intrinsic value, and secondly, there is an increasing support to the argument that development results are more long-lasting, significant and relevant if people have participated in defining these results and governments are held accountable to achieving these results. The quality of governance is critical to poverty reduction. Since effective and efficient delivery of basic services by the public sector matters most to the poor, weak governance hurts them disproportionately. Good governance facilitates pro-poor sector reforms and state and local government policies, as well as sound macroeconomic management.

Before starting programme design it is essential to first understand how governance works, analyse how power is exercised in the management of common affairs, and the incentives inherent within formal and informal systems. These will affect the capability of people to participate and influence decisions, and hence also their access to resources and services.

Key components, therefore, of governance analysis are to understand context, and in particular how historical processes have shaped the current systems and structure, the actors and institutions that exercise power, and the norms and incentives that govern their behaviours and relationships. Underlying this is an analysis of how power works. Power can be exercised formally and informally, and visibly and invisibly. This will shape decision-making and affect the relationship between state and citizen.

1.1 The Projects: Goals and Objectives

CARE Bangladesh is implementing Building Pro-poor, Inclusive and Gender Sensitive Local Governance Project to contribute towards building participatory, inclusive, pro-poor and gender sensitive governance in Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat Districts of Bangladesh. The specific objective of the project is to improve the capacity of 35 selected Union Parishads to provide leadership for pro-poor development and facilitate better access to services and resources for the poorest and most marginalised citizens. It seeks to improve the accountability and responsiveness of local government in Bangladesh, specifically the Union Parishads through a two-pronged strategy of enhancing the capacity of UPs to respond to the needs and demands of their constituents, and to demonstrate pro-poor tendencies in resources and services allocation and clear developmental leadership; and through enhancing the capacity and opportunity for citizens, particularly the most marginalised and poorest citizens, to participate in political and development processes, therefore creating an environment favourable for improved dialogue and representation of the interests of the extreme poor in local government decision-making process at UP level.

The target groups of the proposed actions are 35 participating UPs, and up to 70 local level community-based organisations (including organisations of the poor) as well as networks that represent the interests of the poorest people and women. 354,630 extreme poor plus other community people (1.12m) including 315 natural leaders from the extreme poor will benefit from improvements in governance and pro-poor development during the project. The final beneficiaries will be all poor people in the selected unions (total around 1.12m), especially about 354,630 extremely poor men, women and children.

At the same time, Social and Economic Transformation of the Ultra-Poor (SETU) is funded by eep/shiree: a Government of Bangladesh and UKaid partnership implemented in Rangpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha districts of Bangladesh.

The project purpose of SETU is that: Women and men of 20,000 extreme poor households in Northwest Bangladesh are empowered to collectively address the causes of their economic, social and political exclusion. SETU seeks to graduate people out of poverty by expanding the pool of capabilities and freedoms of these people; integrating economic, social and political dimensions of empowerment. Governance is an integral part of SETU's project logic, which emphasises the need to facilitate collective action by the extreme poor and institutionalisation of poverty reduction initiatives by the local state.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The overall objectives of the study were to assist CARE Bangladesh to document state of governance at Union-level and how CARE Bangladesh is facilitating transformation through participatory inclusive governance. Specific objectives of the study included the following:

- to explore and document the state of governance at union-level in Northwest of Bangladesh;
- to document how CARE Bangladesh is scaling up participatory inclusive governance model in 53 unions under SETU and EC Governance Projects, and how transformation is taking place and its relevance to the local governance in the context of Bangladesh; and
- to provide recommendations for future programming of CARE Bangladesh and how to mainstream the model at country-level.

1.3 Scope of Work

The scope of work included the following:

1.3.1 Exploring the state of governance at union-level

- Review of CARE Bangladesh documents: CARE Bangladesh's Governance Strategy Paper, CARE Bangladesh's Impact Statement Documents, In Pursuit of Power, Learning Documents and Research Reports produced on Botlagari Inclusive Governance Model, SETU and EC Governance Baseline, SETU and EC Governance Framework;
- Review of relevant literature in Bangladesh;
- Conduct of study at a control union.

1.3.2 Documenting the process of scaling up of Botlagari Inclusive Governance Model

- Conduct field study to understand how transformation is taking place in working Unions in relation to participatory inclusive governance;
- Identify areas that are relevant to the local governance context in Bangladesh.

1.3.3 Providing recommendations for CARE Bangladesh for its future programming

- Synthesise the learning through a reflective process with selected project staff;
- Provide options to CARE Bangladesh on how to influence outside actors to facilitate mainstreaming.

2. Approach and Methodology

The methodology used for conducting the study included the following:

2.1 Sources of Data and Collection Techniques

For the purpose of the study, data and information were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Field visits were undertaken in the districts of Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat to collect data and information. A number of tools were developed to collect data and information from relevant sources. The tools consisted of guidelines and checklists for conducting focus group discussions, interviews and observation. On the other hand, various government documents, literature on local government, and governance and policy documents of the development partners and NGOs constituted the secondary sources. The primary level information was collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussion meetings and observation. Information was collected from secondary sources through desk study of relevant literature and documents.

2.1.1 Focus group discussion

Focus group discussion sessions with different stakeholders of the projects were conducted. They were, the members of Natural Leader Organisations (NLOs), chairmen and male and female members of the Union Parishads, CARE officials and PNGO staff, and community people. These discussion sessions provided a host of information on subjects mentioned earlier.

2.1.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with CARE officials responsible for the management and implementation of the projects that included members of the management teams, field level implementation officials, PNGO officials and selected NLOs members.

2.1.3 Observation

Observation formed another important method in collecting data and information. Observation visits were undertaken to acquire first-hand information.

2.2 Document Review

To collect data and information from secondary sources, both published and unpublished literatures were studied. These included Local Government Acts and Ordinances, books, journals and relevant documents on governance, local government and NGO activities. Besides, various documents of development partners were also consulted.

3. Theoretical Premise

3.1 Inclusive Governance

It has been observed that each decision-making process has two major aspects: what and whom to include, on one hand, and what and how to select (closure), on the other (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003). Inclusion and closure are therefore the two essential parts of any decision or policymaking activity. It means the different stakeholders within the society put their preferences and values to the process based on their personal or collective experience. Inclusive governance, as it relates to the inclusion part of decision-making, requires to:

- involve representatives of all relevant actor groups (if appropriate);
- empower all actors to participate actively and constructively in the discourse;
- co-design the framing of the problem or the issue in a dialogue with these different groups;
- generate a common understanding about the framing of the problem, potential solutions and their likely consequences (based on the expertise of all participants);
- conduct a forum for decision-making that provides equal and fair opportunities for all parties to voice their opinion and to express their preferences; and
- establish a connection between the participatory bodies of decision-making and the political implementation level (Trustnet, 1999, Renn, 2008).

Inclusive governance needs to address the second part of the decision-making process as well i.e. reaching closure on a set of options that are selected for further consideration, while others are rejected.

Renn and Schweizer (2008) identified six concepts of inclusive governance. According to them, when designing procedures that represent the goals of inclusive governance, one needs to answer the question of whom and what should be included and by which means and procedural rules a final product is reached. These questions cannot be answered without referring to the concepts or even philosophies of participation and collective decision making. One can differentiate between six distinct prototypes of structuring processes that channel public input into public policy-making. These prototypes can be termed as functionalist, neo-liberal, deliberative, anthropological, emancipatory and post-modern.

Functionalism conceptualises society as a complex structure, recognising essential functions for social survival either from an individual actor's perspective or from society's point of view. Each social action is assumed to be functional in assisting society's survival. Social differentiation produces structures that specialises on the fulfillment of specific functions. In this sense, participatory exercises are necessary in order to meet complex functions of society that need input (knowledge and values) from different constituencies.

Neo-liberal approach to citizen participation draws on the philosophical heritage of liberalism and Scottish moral philosophy (Jaeger et al, 2001). Neo-liberalism conceptualises social interaction as an exchange of resources. In this concept, deliberation is framed as a process of finding one or more decision option(s) that optimises the payoffs to each participating stakeholder. Neo-liberal decision-making consequently focuses on individual interests and preferences.

Deliberative citizen participation is mainly influenced by Habermasian discourse theory (Habermas, 1987). Discourse theory and discourse ethics advocate more inclusiveness for

legitimate and sustainable political decision-making. In discourse ethics, only those political and judicial decisions may claim to be legitimate that may find the consent of all affected parties in discursive opinion formation and decision-making processes.

Anthropological citizen participation is mainly influenced by pragmatic Anglo-Saxon philosophy. It is based on the belief that common sense is the best judge for reconciling competing knowledge and value claims. Pragmatism postulates that ideas are to be judged against their consequences in the social world. For participatory decision-making, this approach has far-reaching consequences. The moral value of policy options can be judged according to their consequences.

The basic ideas of emancipatory participation are derived from a Marxist or neo-Marxist social perspective (Jaeger et al, 2001). The goal of inclusion is to ensure that the less privileged groups of society are given the opportunity to have their voices heard and that participation provides the means to empower them to become more politically active. The main emphasis in the emancipator school is the empowerment of the oppressed classes to acknowledge their objective situation, and then become aware of their own resources to change the negative situation in which they live, develop additional skills and means to fight these unjust structures.

The Post-modern approach to citizen participation is based on Michel Foucault's theory of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis rests on the three basic concepts of knowledge, power and ethics. Foucault is interested in the constitution of knowledge. He assumes that knowledge formation is a result of social interaction and cultural settings. Truth then depends upon historically and socially contingent conditions (Foucault, 2000).

The trend of public participation sometimes creates ambiguity. In many cases, participation is neither associated with actual changes in the traditional behavior of decision-makers, nor explicitly connected with actual decision-making processes. It is often no more than a crisis management tool or a tool to prevent crisis that is left aside as soon as the crisis is over while decision makers restart 'business as usual'.

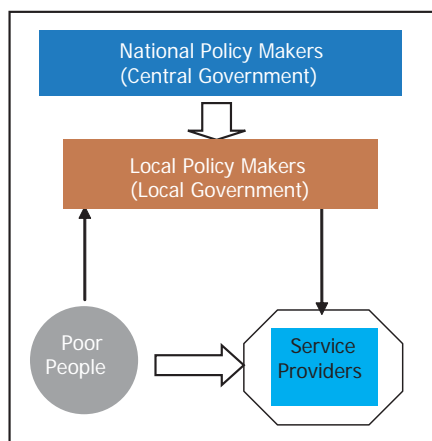
Inclusive governance has been central to the development debate in the last two decades. On one hand, the international development policy agenda since the 1990 Washington Consensus focused on good governance, privatisation and responsive service delivery through decentralisation. On the other hand, national and international civil society and citizenship and deepening democracy literature focused on the 'rights based approach' for development and participation as primary citizenship right for civic engagement to claim other human rights.

3.2 Inclusive Governance and Decentralisation

A study by the Commonwealth Foundation (1999) found growing disillusionment of citizens with their governments, based on concerns about corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor, and the absence of connection to or participation by ordinary citizens. The lack of responsiveness concerned especially delivery of public services. Decentralisation, in the context of the 1990 Washington Consensus, was generally considered as a major way to enhance efficient and responsive delivery of service (Zanetta 2005). Guided by the principle of subsidiary, responsibility for service provision should be allocated at the closest appropriate level consistent with efficient and cost-effective delivery of services. Due to their

close proximity, local government officials are considered to be in a better position than state officials to assess the needs and preferences of their citizens; moreover, they are in a better place to make decisions over the distribution and allocation of resources and public services. In addition, management of public services can improve in terms of accountability and performance in the hands of sub-national officials, rather than with far removed national bureaucracies and elected officials (Ostrom et al. 1993). The following figure shows an overview of the basic accountability relationships within a devolved system of local service provision.

Figure: Basic Accountability Relationships



Tidemand, Steffensen and Olsen (2007), adapted from World Bank (2004).

In addition, if successfully implemented, decentralisation can potentially reduce red tape and bureaucracy, improve credibility and legitimacy of the government, foster innovation while minimising the risks in case of failure (Rondinelli 1983) and promote local democracy, among other things, through greater representation of diversity by greater public input in pluralistic political environments (Pauly 1973). Decentralisation can be defined as the transfer of responsibilities for public functions and services from central government to lower levels of government. It can take on different functions and intensity in different countries. Decentralisation can consist of three functions: fiscal, institutional or administrative, and political (Smoke 2003). Decentralisation may also differ in intensity or degree. Rondinelli (1983) distinguishes between the modes of deconcentration, delegation and devolution. Devolution concerns the strongest form of decentralisation, with transfer of competencies, especially in service delivery, to local authorities that elect their own mayors and councils, gain financial autonomy, and have independent decision-making authority in the allocation of investments. Devolution is therefore an inherent political process and has also been termed 'democratic decentralisation' (Litvack et al. 1998).

The development of inclusive governance is directed towards restoring the political dimension of decisions on activities and situations associated with risks and impacts in order to better address the expectations of the society and the complexity of actual situations. It aims at improving the quality, efficiency and practicability of decisions. It is about creating progressively the conditions for interested people and groups, associated in new forms of active territoriality, to engage in framing the issues and questions surrounding the preparation of decisions, in particular in identifying and evaluating possible options. This

implies an actual transformation of decision-making processes and regulatory frameworks, and necessitates a change in the roles, culture and practices of public and private actors.

Such change requires more than occasional participatory processes. However, it does not constitute a revolution, but rather a progressive transformation of decision-making patterns therefore adapting or completing the existing organisation of democracy. The articulation between citizen participation on one hand, and democratic representation and private decision making processes on the other hand allows improving the quality of decisions without challenging the legitimacy of private and public decision-makers.

4. Review of CARE Bangladesh Documents on Governance

The scope of work as mentioned in the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the current study required the study of relevant documents and reports concerning the projects. The documents reviewed included the following:

4.1 Governance Framework: The Social and Economic Transformation of the Ultra-Poor (SETU) Project, (June 2009)

The SETU governance framework provides a way to model what the project intends to do. The framework draws on the tenets of a methodology known as Outcome Mapping, which focuses on outcomes as behavioural change. Outcomes are defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organisations with whom the project works directly. The outcomes can be logically linked to the activities and strategies of the project; however, the changes observed may not be caused by them; hence making only assertions of contributions and not attribution, differing from conventional, linear logic models such as logical frameworks.

The above is quite relevant to governance related initiatives which is concerned with relationships between different actors concerning how power operates and resources are distributed. More specifically, strengthening the capacity of the Union Parishad (UP) as a project output actually indicates a change in state; however, this really means that the UP body has a different set of skills and knowledge and also uses these capacities, which is actually about a resultant change in behaviours and actions of the UP. The Governance Framework of SETU guides the project answering the following four questions: Why? (What is the vision to which the project will contribute?); Who? (Who are the project's direct stakeholders it seeks to influence?); What? (What are the changes that are being sought?); and How? (How will the project contribute to the change process?).

Some of the successes in Nijera were the formation of the Natural Leader (NL) Forum which brought natural leaders (NLs) from within the union together. This Forum allows for sharing of experiences and practices, quickening the spread of solidarity. The inclusion of NLs in UP decision making processes, particularly the allocation of Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Programme cards (government-run social safety net programmes), were also high points for the project, as it has led to a clear perception that the targeting of these types of government safety nets have improved.

The project purpose of SETU is that: Women and men of 20,000 extreme poor households in Northwest Bangladesh are empowered to collectively address the causes of their economic, social and political exclusion.

SETU governance framework provides a guide to the detailed design of project activities, and it also gives guidance through these same elements to the monitoring and evaluation of the project's contribution to the behavioural and relational changes that it seeks. SETU governance framework contains four components:

a. Vision Statement: There will be an increase in the dynamism and deepening of democratic processes and practices within the Union, resulting in greater participation, and ownership of development processes by poor and marginalised citizens, particularly women; and greater

³ *Nijera- Nijeder Janyia Nijera* is a project of CARE Bangladesh and Ramnathpur Bahumukhi Nabayan Sangha (RBNS) piloted and developed a community-led approach based on community solidarity as a means of socially and economically empowering the poor in a number of areas in north-west Bangladesh.

accountability, transparency, and inclusivity (particularly of women leaders in UPs) in public decision making.

b. Outcome Challenges: Outcome Challenges were articulated for the key project stakeholders identified. The outcome challenge incorporates multiple changes, as changes in people, groups and organisations cannot be understood in isolation from one another; moreover, to achieve long lasting development outcomes, it is important that multiple changes are taking place, which are often interrelated logically and, even, sequentially. The stakeholders identified for the SETU Governance Framework were: extreme poor and poor, organisations of the extreme poor, and Union Parishad.

c. Progress Makers: Progress Markers are the milestones of change for each of the outcome challenges. They show the complexity of changes associated with each stakeholder and also the information that the project can gather to monitor its achievements towards the outcome challenge. Progress Markers advance in degree along a pathway from changes the project would expect to see as an early response to its basic and early activities, to what it would like to see the stakeholders doing, to what it would love to see them doing if the project was having a profound influence. In this way the project can trace what has been accomplished, and also regularly monitor the success of its strategies, adjusting the project more regularly than the usual monitoring and evaluation process allows.

d. The strategies articulate how the project intends to achieve the outcome challenges. The strategies and their related activities can be understood in terms of those that are targeted at the individual level of the stakeholder (individuals, group or organisation), or at other stakeholders that are relevant, or those strategies and activities which seek to change the enabling environment in which the stakeholder exists.

4.2 CARE Bangladesh Governance Technical Strategy Document (August 2009)

The purpose of this paper was to share within and beyond CARE Bangladesh best practices within the organisation on governance. This paper was basically a culmination of a series of discussions in CARE Bangladesh undertaken from November 2008 to June 2009, drawing on the experiences across CARE Bangladesh's governance projects (in particular Nijeder Janiya Nijera, SHOUHARDO, SHARIQUE). The purpose of this Technical Strategy Paper on Governance was to define the basic principles of CARE Bangladesh's governance programming, ensuring the sharing of best practice and coherence across projects, strengthening future programming and the shift to a programme approach.

For CARE International, governance is the exercise of power in the management of public affairs; the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. Governance is a dynamic, political process through which decisions are made, conflicts are resolved, diverse interests are negotiated, and collective action is undertaken.

CARE governance framework shows the ways in which governance takes place in a given context. There are formal actors, for example: corporations, donors, parliament, religions, NGOs, civil society, the media, the army, the police etc. through which power is exercised and that link state and citizen. There are informal actors, for example: social movements, ethnic groups, caste groups, religious groups, civil society, etc. and procedures and institutions for state-citizen interaction.

Governance has been identified as an underlying cause of poverty in CARE Bangladesh's four impact statements, as well as an integral part of the domains of change, for achieving the visions for each impact group. These impact statement groups and governance agenda are: extreme poor impact group, marginalised women impact group, constraints to governance in Bangladesh, and opportunities for local governance in Bangladesh.

This document provides governance outcomes and strategies for above mentioned impact statement groups. For extreme-poor impact group, governance is not simply about government or focusing on formal systems and processes, but as a relational concept, must also address power inequities existing in both the formal and informal realms. This is about expanding notions of citizenship to include those currently outside the social contract between state and citizen, and hence focusing more on state legitimacy to its citizens than purely state effectiveness. These are various ways to improve downward accountability of state to its citizens, concentrating on both the role of elected representatives and also state functionaries which are known as Nation Building Departments (Line Ministries), recognising that this requires a change in political culture in the state and among political leaders, and a concurrent change in democratic principles among citizens, with the latter exercising their rights and fulfilling their obligations. The enfranchisement of the extreme poor and marginalised groups such as women, religious and ethnic minorities is not possible, however, in the absence of efforts to challenge the exploitative economic, social, and political relations which have and continue to keep them outside of civil society.

For marginalised women impact group, when working with such women it is important to integrate men into the analysis, collective action, and social change efforts, as without meaningful change in this stakeholder, it will be impossible to achieve the desired outcomes at the household, community and institutional level, challenging masculine power relations in the formal and informal realms. Further, the debate concerning elites becomes more nuanced with this impact group, as it may be considered essential to include religious local leaders and institutions in CARE's activities given the importance of religious and cultural beliefs in the causes of women's exclusion. By working in partnerships with others in these networks and also by expanding the inclusion and voice of these networks, CARE Bangladesh will be more able to contribute to the desired outcomes.

4.3 Promoting Inclusive Governance in Bangladesh: Empowering the Extreme Poor (Learning & Policy Series, Briefing Paper, Issue 01, May 2010)

The Learning and Policy Series aims to share learning, analysis and policy recommendations from key areas of CARE International UK's work with practitioners, policy makers and academics. This briefing paper highlights key findings from in-depth research on the DFID funded Nijera Botlagari Good Governance Initiative in Botlagari Union, north-west Bangladesh, implemented by CARE Bangladesh and Ramnathpur Bahumukhi Nabayan Sangha (RBNS). This paper conceptualises inclusive governance as it means incorporating diverse voices and bringing decision-making closer to citizens, broadening and deepening the influence of citizens.

The Nijera Botlagari Good Governance Initiative promoted inclusive governance by opening up spaces for citizen participation and deliberation in public affairs, working closely with the UP body to enhance their capacity and willingness to engage and listen to citizens, particularly extremely poor people. The initiative has promoted dialogue between state and

citizens through strengthening or creating a number of participatory spaces, which include: the natural leader forum, gram sabha assemblies, participatory planning and budgeting, UP evaluation, UP skills development workshops, standing committees, and joint targeting of government services.

Research for this paper used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the changes seen in Botlagari Union over the period of the Good Governance Initiative. The research found that the voice of the most marginalised, and particularly women, has been promoted. They experienced significant changes individually and in relation to social, cultural and political institutions. There are more functioning spaces for citizen participation in Botlagari Union than in the other unions surveyed. Natural leaders have increased the access of extremely poor people to resources. The study also shows local government decision-making is more responsive. Poor citizens' increased voice, as well as their oversight and monitoring activities, was widely felt to have resulted in a more responsive UP body, with natural leaders and UP members stating that the targeting and allocation of government services and resources had improved. Natural leaders, particularly women, are experiencing higher social status with a sense of enhanced confidence and importance. They are arbitrating disputes, including in the previously out of reach domain of shalish.

The study implies that these findings have important implications for practices and policies promoting inclusive governance in Bangladesh, but also potentially in other contexts. These implications are: the barriers the extreme poor face must be recognised and addressed, participation resulted in better government, the extreme poor should be advocates for their own rights, and decentralisation reforms should ensure substantive citizen participation.

4.4 Promoting Inclusive Governance in Bangladesh: Empowering the Extreme Poor, (Roopa Hinton, May 2010)

This paper aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on promoting inclusive governance by drawing on the experiences of CARE Bangladesh and Ramnathpur Bahumukhi Nabayan Sangha (RBNS) in the implementation of the Nijera Botlagari good governance in Botlagari union in north-west Bangladesh. Research for this paper comprised a literature review on participation and accountability relationship between state and citizen, a cross union comparative analysis of key measures of inclusive governance, and the application of a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods to fieldwork in Botlagari union. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to examine the changes seen in Botlagari union over the course of the project, exploring the quality of citizen participation in formal and informal space.

The paper demonstrated that both voice and accountability are desired outcomes to promote inclusive governance. Voice is the capacity of people to express their views and the formal and informal channels they can use to do this. It is important for three related reasons: it has intrinsic value; it is an essential building block for accountability; and it allows those who exercise it to arrive at the values, standards and norms against which power-holders will be judged, facilitating the creation of new political actors, preferences, positions and interests.

Accountability captures a relationship between different parties. As per this paper, accountability relationships exist at many levels, in different forms, and in different yet interrelated directions. Citizenship provides a tool to bring together accountability and voice. It is by definition concerned with vertical relationship or social contract between state and citizen.

The Nijera Botlagari Good Governance Initiatives in Botlagari union aims to promote inclusive governance systems, strengthening the relationship between the UP and the extreme poor and other marginalised groups such as women. The project uses community solidarity to empower the most marginalised to participate in decision-making processes. To this end a number of participatory spaces and practices have been established by the project. These are: Natural Leader Forum, Gram Unnayan Committees (GUCs), Gram Sabha Assemblies, participatory planning and budgeting process, UP evaluation process, UP skills development workshops, standing committees, and joint targeting of government services.

CARE Bangladesh has used the community solidarity approach to transform economic and social relations in a number of unions. The study shows a deeper insight into the nature of citizen engagement. The percentage of respondents reporting meeting their UP members often was higher among natural leaders than in any other well-being category. Natural leaders identified significant felt-changes in how they are treated by power holders as a result of their leadership role within their community and their participation in local decision-making process. A critical dimension of voice and active citizenship is the opportunity for extremely poor citizens to participate. The participatory spaces and processes all aim to create the capacity and opportunity for people to participate in decision making process and to increase their access to information. In this way voice can be amplified and the UP's accountability to citizens enhanced. The comparison across the unions, where community solidarity process has been implemented, showed UP body capacity was highest in Botlagari union as it was the only one to have both short-term and long-term plans.

Natural leaders have taken on the role of negotiating on behalf of extreme poor for access to services and resources. As a result of their negotiations and increased access to these resources, interviewees stated that they no longer have to engage in advance labour selling. There was also a sense of greater UP support enabling the access of extremely poor people to public resources such as land. A real innovation in promoting inclusive governance has been the advent of joint planning models including the participatory budgeting process and of the government resources such as safety net programmes.

The evidence of the paper strongly suggests that there have been clear changes at the individual level among extremely poor in Botlagari union as they have increasingly come to see themselves as citizens with rights and entitlements. The findings of this paper strongly suggest that the project has transformed institutions—social, cultural and formal.

The relationship between the UP and poor was felt to have improved substantially by all parties. Space for dialogue appear to have strengthened the relationship between local government and citizens, providing local government with information on needs and issues facing a cross section of the community, supporting process of prioritisation and generating state responsiveness. The improvement in responsiveness is also intrinsically related to efforts to increase transparency of governance process through access to information.

This paper argues strongly in favour of extremely poor people acting as advocates for their own rights and entitlements, as only they can demand and negotiate for their own interests in the highly dynamic and contested space of citizenship and rights. The paper also points to the mechanisms and processes which support the substantive participation of the poor in decision-making.

4.5 Inclusive Governance: Transforming Livelihood Security Experiences from CARE Bangladesh, (Roopa Hinton, May 2011)

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the transformative potential of inclusive local governance in generating more secure livelihoods and coping strategies of extremely poor people. In depth quantitative and qualitative research was conducted between 2008 and 2009 on inclusive governance in Botlagari union. The aim of the study was to look at CARE Bangladesh's work to promote more inclusive governance at the local level. The research documented changes both in how decisions are made in the UP council and the nature of the decisions. A quantitative analysis was done comparing distribution of Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards, over the period of 2004 to 2008. More detailed qualitative analysis was conducted in a smaller number of unions looking specifically at the linkages between inclusive governance and changes in livelihood securities of vulnerable households. Eight households were surveyed to explore changes in livelihood and coping strategies before and after CARE Bangladesh's interventions.

The paper first outlines CARE Bangladesh's approach to promoting inclusive local governance, and then present the changes in livelihood security observed in the research, linking these changes to its work on inclusive governance.

Inclusive governance means incorporating diverse voices and bringing decision making closer to citizens. CARE Bangladesh's inclusive governance approach aims at broadening and deepening citizen's influence in the decisions that affect their lives, seeing this as a right and also a key strategy for graduating people out of conditions of extreme poverty and chronic vulnerabilities.

Across the surveys a number of trends have emerged. Firstly, the diversity of livelihood strategies has increased over the project period. Secondly, the nature of livelihood and coping strategies had changed, with a general trend towards more equitable terms. Thirdly, there were increased importance of government schemes and resources in livelihood strategies. Fourthly, community-led-collective action also comprised a new livelihood strategy.

These changes in livelihood strategies highlight the power of combined efforts of different actors within the inclusive governance approach to protect the most vulnerable and to build assets and resilience. CARE Bangladesh facilitates process of empowerment via community-led social analysis and collective action that can be of social and economic nature in the poorest communities. Through this, extremely poor women, men and communities have built capabilities and assets, improving their resistance and resilience to shocks. Social collective actions undertaken in their communities have built solidarity amongst extremely poor people. These types of initiatives have also built their confidence and social status within their own communities and with elites.

UP is a key partner in the inclusive governance model. CARE Bangladesh has built their capabilities to develop and implement their own visions and strategies for poverty eradication based on a stronger understanding of poverty and vulnerability. This research shows that the long-term plan included by UP are the creation of small-scale livelihood opportunities for the poorest, the provision of loans to poor household for small businesses, and the provision of inputs for income generation.

There has been a major shift in the political culture in UPs. The nature of the relationships between natural leaders and UP can be termed as highly constructive. The participatory and collaborative nature of decision-making is amply demonstrated by joint targeting of government services and resources. The findings of the research strongly support the need for empowered local actors in protecting vulnerable households and enhancing their livelihood.

Finally, the study looked at the institutional effects of building inclusive local governance on livelihood outcomes of the poorest people. It, therefore, speaks to policy recommendations in the arena of strengthening governance systems and processes. These emphasise the role of empowered local actors; support integrated and cohesive local plans; invest in capabilities of local actors, and ground policies in rights.

5. Policy Environment Related to Local Governance in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a unitary state. The Constitution of the Republic made explicit provisions for having local government units at different tiers of administration. Different Articles of the Constitution clearly delineate the nature and character of the local government system that the country ought to have. Article 11 declares, "the Republic shall be a democracy in which effective participation by the people shall be ensured through their elected representatives in administration at all levels". In addition, Article 59 stipulates, "local government in each administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies composed of persons elected in accordance with law and Act of Parliament shall lay down the functions of the local government bodies which may include administration and the work of public officers, the maintenance of public order and the preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development". Article 60 of the Constitution further states that "the Parliament shall by law, confer powers on the local Government bodies to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds" (GOB).

At present, in Bangladesh, there are two different and separate systems in place: a de-concentrated government that includes Divisions, Districts (Zila) and Upazila and a local government system that includes the Union Parishad (UP), Upazila Parishad (UZP), Zila Parishad (yet to have elected Parishad), Municipalities (Puroshava) and the City Corporation.

5.1 Recent Developments

In recent years, there have been some positive developments in the country to accelerate the process of decentralisation, strengthen the local government thereby ensuring people's participation in the governance process, especially at the local level.

Very recently, the government has embarked upon to launch the Local Governance Support Project II (LGSP II) with credit support from the World Bank. This project would be a continuation of the LGSP I. In 2006, the government, with credit support from the World Bank and support from UNDP, UNCDF, Danida and EC, launched the Local Governance Support Project (LGSP). The project covered the UPs in Bangladesh in phases. Among others, performance based direct fund transfer was the most important salient feature of this project. In the similar tune, some other projects, with financial support from various development partners, have also been launched and many of them have already been implemented in different parts of the country. Some of the important features of these projects are:

- Direct fund transfer to local government institutions, particularly UPs, for the delivery of basic services;
- Capacity building of UPs;
- Promoting community's participation in the planning, supervision and monitoring process for ensuring transparency and accountability;
- Awareness development and capacity building of the communities;
- Engagement of NGOs to provide capacity building support;
- Technical support, supervision and monitoring of the government agencies.

The successive Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) also recommended strategic agenda for Bangladesh for achieving the goal of accelerated poverty reduction through different elements that include, among others, local governance and decentralisation.

5.2 Union Parishad Act, 2009

Recently, a new law, Union Parishad Act 2009, replaced the old UP Ordinance of 1983. The new law has incorporated many unique provisions which will help in turning the UPs as more effective representative organisations. The new Act has rightly recognised the importance of community participation and made provision for constituting Ward Shava in each ward. It further stipulates that at least two meetings should be organised and $\frac{1}{2}$ would constitute the quorum of such Shava (for details, please see Article 4 of the Act). This arrangement will ensure transparency and accountability of the UPs. At the same time, more direct contact with the UP and the community will be established and strengthened. Under the new Law, the UP secretary has been made responsible to record the proceedings of the Shavas and present them in the next meeting of the Shavas. However, in view of the existing workload of the UP secretary, how far he will be able to discharge function effectively in this particular area is to be seen in the future. Further, under the provisions of the new Law, the UPs, if necessary, can seek opinion of the experts on various matters [Article 42 (12)]. This will help the UPs in taking more informed decisions than before.

The Article 8 of the Act has declared the UPs as administrative unit which is very much in line with the provisions of the Constitution. This will help in strengthening the position of the UPs as local government institutions. In the same vein, Article 10 (7) has ensured the management of the officials working within the jurisdiction of the UPs. This provision will help in ensuring better delivery of services at the local level, as now the UP will be able to effectively oversee and monitor the activities of these officials. The Act also made the provision for the creation of a three member Chairman Panel of which one must be a women member. This will help in creating new leadership at the grassroots level. At the same time, it will also help in further empowerment of the women in general and UP women members in particular. The Article 38 (6) stipulates that rules should be framed for the distribution of functions and responsibilities between the members elected from the general seats and the women reserved seats. This will have positive impact in removing confusion regarding their respective roles and responsibilities.

The UPs are required to establish Standing Committees chaired by an UP member and composed of UP members and co-opted member of the local community. In addition, the community is also involved in the implementation of development schemes through the Project Implementation Committees (PIC) and the Project Monitoring Committees (PMC).

The other important innovation that has been incorporated in the new Act is the provision of the declaration of Citizen's Charter by the UPs. This unique feature will help people to know about their rights and, at the same time, the responsibilities of the UP towards the community (Article 49). The Article 50 says that the UPs will use modern technology to ensure good governance and the central government will extend assistance and cooperation in this particular area. If implemented, modern technology would be brought at the grassroots level.

Under the new law, the tax base of the UPs has been expanded [Article 65 (4)] by including new sources of revenue at the local level. Local institutions like private schools, coaching centres, private hospitals etc. are required to seek registration from the UPs by paying required registration fee (Article 82 and 85). The right to have information that has been incorporated in the new Act is a milestone in ensuring free flow of information, and transparency and accountability of the UP (Article 70). Finally, the other noteworthy positive aspect of the new Act is that the UP Chair and members have been declared as the Public

Servant. This particular provision elevated the positions of the local representatives in the eyes of the local electorates and also ensured recognition from the central government.

However, the New Act also appears to have certain limitations. The Article 73 (1) states that the central government in line with its policy can provide guidelines to the UP on financial management, personnel management, formulation of projects and selection of project beneficiaries etc. The guidelines will be mandatory for the UP. Such provision undermines the autonomy of the UPs in those spheres. It is apprehended that on certain occasions the central government in the name of providing guidelines might try to control the activities of the Parishads. According to the Article 39, the Official nominated by the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) will conduct inquiry into any allegation lodged against the UP. This provision keeps opportunity open for the central government bureaucracy to exercise control over the UPs in the name of inquiry (GoB, 2009).

The functions of UP are wide ranging and do not correspond with the allocated resources. In reality, the UPs are mostly involved in the selection and implementation of small development schemes, sanitation programmes (latrines), local level revenue collection, registration of births and deaths, social safety net activities such as distribution of relief goods and vulnerable group feeding (VGF), preparation of list of widowers and widows for pension distributions, organisation of food/cash for work activities (Kabikha) and maintenance of law and order including conflict resolution.

6. State of Governance at Union-Level in Northwest of Bangladesh

The Union Parishad, the oldest of the local bodies that exists in Bangladesh, though important, is not the sole determinant of inclusive and good governance at that level. A number of other stakeholders also contribute to the local governance process and constitute the local governance environment. These stakeholders include the Union Parishad, government line departments and its officials working at the field level, especially at the Union and Upazila levels; the local community; NGOs and the civil society organisations functioning at the local level. Harmonious and synergic interactions among the above stated component elements are essential for having desired level of governance i.e. good local governance. As part of the study, an effort was made to assess the Union-level state of governance in Northwest Bangladesh where the two CARE projects are under implementation. The findings and observations are presented below. Here, it needs to be mentioned that the two projects under study intend to achieve a number of results or objectives in context to inclusive governance at the Union Parishad level.

To achieve the above mentioned results and objectives, a number of activities are under implementation in the project-covered Union Parishads. These activities are focused on different stakeholders of the two projects. The following discussion on the state of governance in the targeted areas have taken into consideration the above facts and tried to figure out what changes are taking place and how, and finally, what are the outcomes. To have a clear understanding of the changes and outcomes, the prevailing state of governance in non-project Unions were also looked into.

Union Parishads is the pivot of the governance process at the local level. The UP, as the local government body, is delivering a number of services and implementing programmes that also include safety net programmes of the national government. They play important role in beneficiary selection and distribution. The project is making effort to increase the capacity of the UPs in delivering these services with the active participation of the poor and the marginalised.

6.1 Union Parishads are Acquiring Increased Capacity to Lead Pro-Poor Development Processes

The local government bodies need to cater to the needs and demands particularly of the poorer and marginalised sections of the local communities. The projects under implementation intend to make the UPs more functional and responsive as our experience in this respect suggests that they are apathetic to these. The project made a number of interventions to make the UPs more functional and responsive, especially to the demands and needs of this particular section of the local community. It included making the UPs more responsive to the delivery of public services; constitution and functioning of UP Standing Committees; transparency and accountability; regular functioning of Village Court; plan and budget preparation with the active participation of UP representatives and Natural Leaders (NLs).

During field visits, it was observed that the project-covered UPs have now become more responsive to the rights and demands of the poorer sections of the local society. In all these UPs, all the UP standing committees have been formed with co-opted members particularly

from the NLOs (Natural Leaders' Organisations). The standing committees are holding regular meetings and overseeing the activities of the various service delivery agencies. It was reported that services in general have considerably improved. Now, the government officials like the SAAO, Health and Family Welfare Assistants, and Assistant Thana Education Officer (ATEOs) are more visible in the unions.

With respect to UP budget, it was mentioned that now open budget sessions are held on a regular basis. People from all walks of lives attend in those sessions and also put forward their suggestions and recommendations to be incorporated in the budget document. Discussion with UP Chair, members, and NLOs and the CBOs revealed that in many cases the suggestions and recommendations made especially by the poor are taken into consideration and budget documents incorporate those.

6.2 More Transparent and Accountable UPs

Transparency, accountability and effectiveness are essential for good governance at any level. In other words, it can be said that these are pre-condition for good governance at the local level as well. The current project intends to achieve this objective with active participation and interaction between all actors that are involved in the governance process at the local level. They include the communities, NLOs, CBOs, UPs, local civil society and the government officials. Here, it may be mentioned that the above are the constituent elements of the governance process. The study team tried to collect information on the above by applying various methodologies, namely, review of records and documents, and interviews and focus group discussions with concerned stakeholders.

It was observed that there has been clear improvement in the area of transparency and accountability of local bodies' functionaries, i.e., UP chair, members and the secretary. Natural Leaders are found to be holding regular meetings with UPs. Here it should be noted that the projects activate UP standing committees. During field visit to various UP, it was observed by document review that the said committee meetings are being held on a regular basis. The committees were found to be keeping track of activities of the UPs. In this area, the PNGOs provide necessary assistance to the committee as well as the UP chair and secretary.

The other important aspect that has relevance to transparency and accountability of the UP is the formulation of annual budget through pre-budget meetings and, later, open budget meeting. It was reported that in project-intervened UPs, budgets are being formulated through a participatory process. This includes consultations at various levels. In this particular task the NLOs play an important role. They facilitate the UPs to hold *para* and ward level meetings on budget. In those meetings suggestions and recommendations are collected particularly from the poor and the marginalised communities. The UP, after giving due consideration to those, prepare a draft UP budget and present it to the community in an open meeting. In those meetings, new suggestions and recommendations are again collected and later, after due scrutiny, the UP budget is prepared. Here it needs to be mentioned that in open budget meeting government functionaries, especially working at the Upazila level are invited as observers. The above measures and mechanism have considerably improved the transparency and accountability situation of the project-covered UPs.

The projects under study identified and formed Natural Leaders Organisations (NLOs) at the local level. They come from the poor and the marginalised sections of the community and

also perceived to champion the cause of their peers. The projects are trying to build their capacities to uphold the interest of their community by actively participating in the activities and functions of the UPs.

6.3 More Pro-active NLOs with Enhanced Knowledge and Capacity

It has been perceived that the NLOs can be effective organisations to ensure poor people's rights and their access to services provided by the UP and public or government organisations. The envisaged role of the NLOs is to facilitate demand driven and responsive service delivery rather than confronting with the local government organisations, as well as with other government service delivery organisations working at the local level. Firstly, it is believed that NLOs can work as vanguard organisations raising poor and marginalised people's voices and secondly, through that process ensure their rights. The projects intend to create strong support base for the poorer sections of the community people in claiming their entitlements of various services and benefits, that are particularly meant for them by developing the capacities of the NLOs.

It has been observed that most of the actors involved in the local governance process, both the community—particularly the poor—and the service providers (local government institutions and government agencies), lack clear understanding about the basic public services that they are entitled to and to provide.

In light of the above, a number of project interventions were made to enhance knowledge and capacity of the NLOs. Field observation, interviews and FGDs conducted in the field projected that there has been a noteworthy development in the level of understanding, awareness and knowledge of the NLOs. It clearly appeared that in overwhelming cases, these NLOs now possess better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and what functions they need to do for protecting the rights and entitlements of the poorer community people and, above all, how to advocate for these issues with UPs and concerned service providing agencies. The other important aspect that has been observed is that now these bodies has acquired knowledge and skills in building rapport and networks with, especially local government bodies and government service delivery agencies working at the field levels.

Here it may be mentioned that the projects are working to activate UP standing committees. It was reported that, now in increasing number, NLO members are co-opted to these standing committees. This particular process indicates that the local government bodies now recognise these bodies and put much emphasis on their participation for mutual benefits.

6.4 UPs are Undertaking Projects Benefiting the Women

In Bangladesh, rural women, particularly of poor households, are vulnerable and marginalised. They are economically poor and also left out of inclusion in projects that intend to increase the wellbeing of the participants. Under the current initiatives, UPs are encouraged to take up women focused projects. These projects provided sewing machines and tailoring trainings to the beneficiaries. This has helped the women to engage themselves in income-generating activities. It was reported that the beneficiaries are now having regular earnings which has instilled confidence in them. The NLOs played an important role in persuading the UPs to take up such projects and in the selection process of the

beneficiaries. The important point that needs to be noted here is that the Union Parishad is now extending its roles and functions. They are now working beyond their traditional role of developing infrastructure and safety net programmes by providing livelihood and income generating options to the women of the poor and vulnerable households. These initiatives are also contributing to the process of empowerment of the marginalised women living in rural areas.

6.5 Increased Rights Holders' Awareness and Capacity due to the Facilitation of the Projects

The projects also intend to develop rights holders' awareness and build their capacity. Here it should be mentioned that the rights holders under the inclusive governance, particularly, includes the poor and the marginalised among other members of the local communities. It is perceived that if their awareness level and capacity could be increased then they will be able to demand for better services from the UPs, government agencies and institutions. Rights holders' awareness and capacity could be developed by making them aware of their rights and organising them in some form of platform to put pressure on service delivery organisations in a concerted manner. The projects facilitated the process of forming poor people's organisations called NLOs. In the process, through various activities, the poor people who became members of these organisations have been made aware of their various rights and how they can realise them in an organised way. Discussion meetings with NLOs, UP chair and members, and project officials and the partner NGOs revealed that the projects have played a crucial role in organising the poor and forming NLOs, and making them aware of their rights and, finally, building their capacity in the broad areas of networking, lobbying and advocacy for realising their rights.

6.6 More Effective Interaction between UP, NLOs and Service Delivery Agencies

The projects intend to ensure regular communication and coordination among the local level key stakeholders. The objective is to lay its claim by the NLOs for participation in the local development process and, thereby, ensure the rights of the poorer sections of the community. During field visit, it was observed that the above mentioned initiatives have produced good result in building rapport and networks with different stakeholders. This relationship is producing positive results while lobbying for inclusion and better distribution of safety net programmes benefits, and redressing various grievances of the common people. The other important development that was noted that now the UPs, in many cases, rely on NLOs for help and assistance. It was further reported that the NLOs have also gained confidence, especially of the UP administration and management, as in many of its standing committees the NLO members have been co-opted as members of those committees. These are positive developments for ensuring inclusive governance at the local level.

CARE Bangladesh governance framework stipulates four impact statement groups, namely, extreme poor impact group, marginalised women impact group, constraints to governance in Bangladesh, and opportunities for local governance in Bangladesh. The discussion of the preceding pages indicates that interventions of the two projects are making positive impacts on them. The extreme poor and marginalised women are being included in the governance process by creating opportunities for their participation. The poverty situation is also

improving because of their increased access to state and other resources. This has been made possible because of their inclusion in the governance process. On the other hand, constraints to local governance are also being addressed by building the capacity of the Union Parishads, and strengthening network and relationship between various stakeholders and service providers. It should further be mentioned that the new UP Act has created more opportunities for inclusion through participation of the community at large, and accountability and transparency of the Union Parishad. Recently, the government with funding from the World Bank has embarked upon to implement the Local Governance Support Project II (LGSP II). Funds will be directly provided to the UP with greater autonomy to use them. This project will include all the UPs of the country. The projects under implementation may avail these opened up opportunities to promote inclusive governance at UP level.

7. Projects' Relevance to Inclusive Governance

CARE Bangladesh governance framework stipulates four impact statement groups, namely, extreme poor impact group, marginalised women impact group, constraints to governance in Bangladesh, and opportunities for local governance in Bangladesh. For extreme poor impact group, governance is not simply about government or focusing on formal systems and processes, but as a relational concept, must also address power inequities existing in both the formal and informal realms. This is about expanding notions of citizenship to include those currently outside the social contract between state and citizen, and hence focusing more on state legitimacy to its citizens than purely state effectiveness. When working with marginalised women, it is important to integrate men into the analysis, collective action and social change efforts; as without meaningful change in this stakeholder, it will be impossible to achieve the desired outcomes at the household, community and institutional level, challenging masculine power relations in the formal and informal realms. Constraints to governance in Bangladesh state that the capacities of the Union Parishad are very weak. It lacks a clear vision of development and poverty reduction. They have limited functional authority over service providers. They also have limited financial authority and are resource poor, limiting their ability to respond to and address the causes of poverty in their union. Opportunities for local governance in Bangladesh takes into account that currently there are changes underway in local governance in Bangladesh, particularly focused on reforms at the Upazila Parishad level.

The current study revealed that the projects under implementation are addressing the impact statement group as mentioned earlier as could be seen from the succeeding discussion.

Union Parishad is the lowest tier of the local bodies. Here it needs to be mentioned that the majority of the population of the country live in the rural areas. As such, the existence of this body of local government has great significance for the wide majority of the country's population. In spite of the above reality, Union Parishads are yet to emerge as effective and efficient local bodies with adequate power, functions and resources to deliver a wide variety of services to the rural masses. Moreover, as these are elected bodies, hence could not ensure inclusion of all, particularly the poor and the marginalised in the local level governance process. It has been observed that the poorer section of the communities still remain in the periphery and could not join the mainstream governance process as they lack awareness of their rights, do not have platforms to act in a concerted manner and, at the same time, the other stakeholders of the local governance process also lack capacity to deliver services to the rights holders due to lack of awareness and capacity. The other important reason for such state of affair is also the lack of awareness about the roles and responsibilities of the UPs, particularly of the poor and their lack of participation in various activities to realise their various rights and services meant for their benefits.

In Bangladesh, most of the services are delivered by the line departments of the central government. However, the UPs are also assigned with a number of functions relating to service delivery, especially safety net services that mostly concerns the poor and the marginalised. Under the UP legal framework, it can supervise and monitor the services of the line departments of the central government. For this purpose, the Act has made provision for constituting 13 standing committees on subject areas including health, education, agriculture, and law and order. For ensuring local community's participation in these committees, the provision of their inclusion through co-option has also been made. But in reality, these committees are seldom formed and even if formed, remain only on papers.

Moreover, the provision of co-option of community representatives in these, in most of the cases, is not followed in the right spirit in the sense that the UP Chairmen influence the process and put their own supporters in the constituted committees. Again, the UPs in almost all cases are either ignorant or not aware of the role and functions of such committees. They also lack capacity to make them functional even after formation. As a result, the whole purpose of having these committees to assist the UPs in their functioning, as well as monitoring and supervising the delivery of services by the government agencies, generally gets defeated. But the CARE Bangladesh's governance framework stipulates the inclusion, especially of the poor and the marginalised in the governance process. These standing committees are being used as vehicles for inclusion of the poor and the marginalised for ensuring their rights and entitlements to various services provided by the UPs and other government agencies working at that particular level.

Local disputes in the Bangladesh villages are traditionally resolved through the intervention of village/neighbourhood leaders and elders in informal sittings or councils known as shalish. The Village Courts or Gram Adalats were envisaged with the vision of a more formal and authorised judicial unit at the grassroots for quick and easy resolution of local disputes through efficient dispensation of justice. But it has been observed that in the operational procedure i.e. with respect to acting as jury generally, the poor and the marginalised are not included. The reasons are the lack of awareness of the poor and reluctance of the UPs to involve them in the process. The two projects promoting inclusion of the poor and the marginalised under implementation are helping the poor to become aware of their rights and, at the same time, facilitating in changing the mindset of the UPs to include them in the dispute resolution process through the Gram Adalats. This initiative is in line with the concept of inclusive governance as envisaged by CARE.

The projects create Natural Leaders Organisations at the local level, organise *para* meetings with them, and establish network with the Union Parishads and local level institutions of the government service delivery agencies. All these initiatives are taken to involve, especially the poor and the marginalised in the planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of UP and line departments' activities. These initiatives are very relevant to ensure inclusive good governance at the local level by ensuring poor people's participation and accountability of institutions and organisations at the particular level.

It has been mentioned earlier that inclusive governance requires involving representatives of all relevant actor groups (if appropriate); empowering all actors to participate actively and constructively in the discourse; co-designing the framing of the problem or the issue in a dialogue with these different groups; generating a common understanding about the framing of the problem, potential solutions and their likely consequences (based on the expertise of all participants); conducting a forum for decision-making that provides equal and fair opportunities for all parties to voice their opinion and to express their preferences; and establishing a connection between the participatory bodies of decision-making and the political implementation level (Trustnet, 1999, Renn, 2008). It appears from the analysis and findings of the current study that the issues and aspects mentioned above relating to good governance are being addressed by the two projects that are under implementation. Here it should be mentioned that the achievement of the desired level of outcomes and standards will be a long drawn affair, but the process is on towards those directions.

8. Observations on the Projects

In Bangladesh, the central government's de-concentrated administrative apparatus has full presence at the Upazila level. Though in recent years, the Upazila Parishad (elected local government) has been reintroduced in the country with the provision of transferred and reserved subjects. Still the public bureaucracy has considerable leverage over the Union Parishads through distribution of various government resources. Again, here it needs to be mentioned that the government officials working at the UP level are responsible to their line agency officials located at the Upazila level. As such, for ensuring good inclusive governance, the government line agencies at the Upazila level also needs to be addressed by the project, especially for developing their awareness of the benefits of inclusive governance. They will also ensure inclusion of the poor and the disadvantaged in the benefits and services rendered by the line agency officials working at the UP level. At the same time, it can also play an effective role in motivating UPs to practice and institutionalise inclusive governance in their functioning. A review of the projects activities revealed that this particular element of administrative structure at the Upazila level did not receive adequate attention of the projects under study.

The Members of Parliament (MPs) in Bangladesh now play the role of advisers to the Upazila Parishads. Under the law, their advices have been made mandatory for the UZPs. Here it may be noted that the Union Parishad Chairmen are also members of the Upazila Parishads. This arrangement has created opportunity for the MPs to have a say in the affairs of the local government bodies. On the other hand, provision for separate allocations for the MPs has been made for the MPs under the safety net programmes of the government. As a result, now the MPs play effective role, especially in the distribution of benefits under various safety net programmes. The projects under study have not taken this aspect into consideration and have not included any activity to work with the MPs to safeguard the interest of the hard core poor and the marginalised.

Advocacy plays an effective role in policy change in the desired direction. To ensure inclusive governance at the local level under the existing legal framework, advocacy at the sub national and national level is needed. The national level advocacy needs to focus on change in the policy regime relating to local governance. On the other hand, advocacy at the sub-national level needs to focus on implementation of the existing policies and provisions already made by the government. In this particular area of advocacy, the projects have limited interventions.

Existing Community Based Organizations (CBOs) have been included in the projects to further strengthen the community's demands, especially of the poor and the marginalised sections of the rural societies. Here it needs to be mentioned that these CBOs have been formed earlier under the sponsorship or facilitation of various projects that have or had varying goals and objectives to achieve. It implies that achievement of their projects' goals and objectives are their primary responsibilities. The achievement of goals and objectives of the current projects have been added to their primary objectives. Because of the above mentioned fact, it appears that focused and dedicated participation of the included CBOs is somewhat limited than desired level for obvious reasons.

Knowledge management and sharing that includes collating and disseminating of gathered insights, particularly on inclusive governance, through the implementation of the project received limited attention of the projects. But these are essential to multiplying the benefits among the project-covered UPs and also to other non-project-included UPs.

9. Lessons Learned

CARE Bangladesh governance framework stipulates four impact statement groups, namely, extreme poor impact group, marginalised women impact group, constraints to governance in Bangladesh, and opportunities for local governance in Bangladesh. The governance projects studied are being implemented in line with the above mentioned governance framework. In the process, many lessons are being learned. These are mentioned below under each of them:

Extreme Poor Impact Group

- Lesson 1: Inclusive governance for ensuring rights of the poor and the marginalised needs the participation of them in the governance process. This indicates participation in the decision-making process, especially of the local government institutions concerning their interest through their own organisations.
- Lesson 2: Poor people's organisations can best work for their own interest. Formation of the Natural Leaders' Organisations is ensuring better service delivery at the local level for the benefit of the hard core poor. These organisations can advocate, lobby and network with Union Parishads and other agencies at both government and others located at local level.
- Lesson 3: Interest group organisations like the NLOs not only work for the benefit of their members but also help the service delivery organisations like the UPs and other government departments in effectively implementing their projects and programmes as these people's organisations secure peoples' support and cooperation.
- Lesson 4: The community based organisations (CBOs) can promote inclusion and participation especially of the women, poor and the marginalised in the local governance process. These organisations can advocate and lobby with concerned agencies to ensure the rights of the poorer sections of the local community.
- Lesson 5: The CBOs can also work as linking pins between the Union Parishads, other service delivery agencies and the NLOs.

Marginalised Women Impact Group

- Lesson 6: Marginalised women's empowerment can be achieved by including them in organisations working for safeguarding their interest. In this case, the NLOs are acting as such forums.
- Lesson 7: Income generating livelihood options strengthen the process of empowerment of the marginalised women. Tailoring training and sewing machines given to them are contributions in the above mentioned direction.

Constraints to Governance

- Lesson 8: Networking leads to better governance. In this case, interaction with the NLOs and the CBOs are helping the UPs in addressing the demands of the poor and the marginalised.

Lesson 9: Stakeholders' organisations help the inclusive governance process by ensuring participation. The NLOs are serving the said purpose on behalf of the extreme poor and marginalised women.

Opportunities for Local Governance in Bangladesh

Lesson 10: The institution of Gram Adalat if properly activated can resolve large number of disputes at the local level, thus freeing the formal judicial system from the burden of increasing number of litigations.

Lesson 11: Sharing and disseminating of information and knowledge help the cause of poor and the marginalised by including them in that process.

Lesson 12: Transparency and accountability of UPs lead to increase in the credibility of the UPs as local bodies. The activation of the standing committees and co-option of the NLO members in different committees have ensured transparency of the activities undertaken by the UPs.

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study suggests that the projects under implementation focusing on the four impact statement groups, namely, extreme poor impact group, marginalised women impact group, constraints to governance in Bangladesh, and opportunities for local governance in Bangladesh, are integral part of the governance framework for ensuring inclusive governance at the local level. The mechanism of organising the extreme poor and marginalised women by creating Natural Leaders' Organisations to ensure their meaningful participation in the governance process to safeguard their interest and rights is producing encouraging results, and bringing positive outcomes in the desired direction.

On the basis of the findings and observations of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Larger the number of poor people with developed awareness and capacity, higher is the possibility of success in creating demand from below and also realising their rights from concerned agencies. To increase such number of poor people, it is recommended that new members on a regular basis should be included in the NLOs. This will also increase the number of change agents at the grassroots level which is critical to bring about qualitative change with respect to inclusive good governance at the local level.
- The NLOs have been formed under projects facilitation with the broad objective to act as rights based organisations and platforms of the poor and the marginalised for building a network, especially with the concerned stakeholders. Now these bodies and platforms do not have any legal status. But for the purpose of sustainability through a stakeholders' consultation and sharing process, these bodies could be turned into registered CBOs with specific mandate.
- Network needs to be established with other projects and NGOs to tap their resources for taking up projects and programmes by the UPs and NLOs for the benefits of the extreme poor and marginalised women.
- For policy change, advocacy and networking, activities should be taken up at the sub national and national levels.
- A system should be developed to collate, document and disseminate information, knowledge and lessons learned through the implementation of various innovative project activities for others to benefit, and replicated wherever possible.
- As new elected chairmen and members have taken office, the project interventions targeting them should be implemented again to orient them and help in changing their mind-set for ensuring inclusive governance at the local level.
- As now the Upazila Parishad is in place it is imperative to establish a functional linkage between the UPs, UZPs and the NLOs in the future for better achievement of the projects' goals and objectives.

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Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Name of Activity

Assisting CARE Bangladesh to document state of governance at Union-level and how CARE Bangladesh is facilitating transformation through participatory inclusive governance

Background Information

CARE Bangladesh understands poverty as the deprivation of certain capabilities and freedoms (CARE Bangladesh, 2008). Poverty is, therefore, multidimensional, dynamic and contextually specific. Poverty and vulnerability are driven by powerlessness, preventing the fulfilment of needs and rights. The question of why some people suffer from lack of access to resources and opportunities compared to others is, essentially, a political question. Poverty is created and maintained through the operation of unequal power relations in the economic, social and political spheres. Governance is important, therefore, for two main reasons. Firstly, because participation is a right with intrinsic value. Secondly, there is increasing support to the argument that development results are more long-lasting, significant and relevant if people have participated in defining these results, and if governments are held accountable to achieving these results.

Weak governance has been identified by CARE Bangladesh as an underlying cause of poverty and marginalisation in all four impact statements. Furthermore, it is seen as a domain of change in CARE Bangladesh's pathways of change for achieving impact in the lives of the poorest and most marginalised.

Governance is the sum of the many ways in which individuals and institutions, public and private, exercise power to manage their common affairs. It is, therefore, the rules of the game of how public affairs and goods are managed, reflecting who has power and control, and those that do not.

Good governance is defined as the effective, participatory, transparent and accountable management of public affairs guided by agreed upon procedures and principles, to achieve poverty reduction and increased social justice.

Before starting programme design, it is essential to first understand how governance works, analysing how power is exercised in the management of common affairs, and the incentives inherent within formal and informal systems. These will affect the capability of people to participate and influence decisions, and hence also their access to resources and services. Key components, therefore, of governance analysis is to understand context, and in particular, how historical processes have shaped the current systems and structure, the actors and institutions that exercise power and the norms and incentives that govern their behaviours and relationships. Underlying this is an analysis of how power works. Power can be exercised formally and informally, and visibly and invisibly. This will shape decision-making and affect the relationship between the state and citizen.

CARE Bangladesh is implementing ***Building Pro-poor, Inclusive and Gender Sensitive*** Local Governance Project to contribute towards building participatory, inclusive, pro-poor and gender sensitive governance in Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat District of Bangladesh. The specific objective of the project is to improve the capacity of 35 selected Union Parishads to provide leadership for pro-poor development and facilitate better access to services and resources for the poorest and most marginalised citizens. It seeks to improve the accountability and responsiveness of local government in Bangladesh, specifically the Union Parishads (UPs), through a two-pronged strategy of enhancing the capacity of UPs to respond to the needs and demands of their constituents and to demonstrate pro-poor tendencies in resources and services allocation, and clear developmental leadership; and through enhancing the capacity and opportunity for citizens, particularly the most marginalised and poorest citizens, to participate in political and development processes, therefore, creating an environment favourable for improved dialogue and representation of the interests of the extreme poor in local government decision making at UP level.

The target groups of the proposed actions are 35 participating UPs, and up to 70 local level community-based organisations (including organisations of the poor), as well as networks that represent the interests of the poorest people and women. 354,630 extreme poor plus other community people (1.12m) including 315 natural leaders from the extreme poor will benefit from improvements in governance and pro-poor development during the project.

The final beneficiaries will be all poor people in the selected unions (total around 1.12m), especially about 354,630 extremely poor men, women and children.

- Result 1: Improved capacity of selected UPs to lead pro-poor development processes
- Result 2: Improved links, networks and interaction between citizens (especially the poorest and the most marginalised) and Local Authorities
- Result 3: Local community based and civil society groups representing the interests of the poorest and the most marginalised citizens are empowered to participate in democratic local governance
- Result 4: Knowledge management, advocacy and learning systems established to promote participatory pro-poor local governance at multiple levels.

At the same time, CARE Bangladesh's Social and Economic Transformation of the Ultra-Poor (SETU) is funded by eep/shiree: a Government of Bangladesh and UKaid partnership implemented in Rangpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha districts of Bangladesh. The project purpose of SETU is that: Women and men of 20,000 extreme poor households in Northwest Bangladesh are empowered to collectively address the causes of their economic, social and political exclusion. SETU seeks to graduate people out of poverty by expanding the pool of capabilities and freedoms of these people integrating economic, social and political dimensions of empowerment. Governance is an integral part of SETU's project logic, which emphasises the need to facilitate collective action by the extreme poor and institutionalisation of poverty reduction initiatives by the local state. It features on SETU's three-year project outputs:

- Output 1: Extreme poor women and men are mobilised to actively engage in processes of community-led development, defined by self-determined needs and priorities (social inclusion).

Output 2: Extreme poor women and men are supported to participate in and benefit from the economic opportunities through improved access to markets and dignified employment (economic empowerment).

Output 3: Union Parishads are supported to develop improved capacity, downwards accountability and responsiveness for engaging with and meeting the development needs of extreme poor men and women (pro-poor governance).

Output 4: The capacity of project stakeholders, for working with the extreme poor and for influencing wider policy making processes is increased (learning and influencing).

Governance is a relational concept, capturing the power relations and inherent inequities in these relationships in decision making processes governing the management and use of public resources. Hence, governance sits not just within the output concerned with enhancing UP capacity (output 3), but also within the other outputs through which extreme poor women and men's capacities to participate are enhanced by enhancing their social inclusion and economic opportunities. Building the skills and capacities of the UP is not enough alone to result in the types of behavioural changes needed in the local state to achieve pro-poor developmental outcomes.

Purpose of Consultancy

The purposes of this consultancy are:

1. To explore and document the state of governance at union-level in Northwest of Bangladesh.
2. To document how CARE Bangladesh is scaling up participatory inclusive governance model in 53 unions under SETU and EC Governance Projects, and how transformation is taking place and its relevance to the local governance in the context of Bangladesh. Particularly focusing on analysing outcomes in terms of attitudes and behaviours of UPs to understand how CARE's governance work can go further.
3. To analyse the policy environment regarding local governance in Bangladesh, identifying policy gaps both in terms of design and implementation of local governance reforms.
4. To provide recommendations for future programming of CARE Bangladesh and how to mainstream the model at country-level; and identify policy areas for CARE Bangladesh.

Main Activities

1. Exploring the state of governance at union-level.
 - Review of the following documents of CARE Bangladesh: CARE Bangladesh's Governance Strategy Paper; CARE Bangladesh's Impact Statement Documents; In Pursuit of Power; Learning Documents and Research Reports produced on Botlagari Inclusive Governance Model, SETU and EC Governance Baseline; SETU and EC Governance Framework.
 - Review of relevant literatures in Bangladesh.
 - Conduct of study at a control union.

2. Conducting a review of policy environment related to local governance context in Bangladesh, in particular, the current state of legislation, and directions and politics of future plans, analysing both *de jure* and *de facto* realities.
 - Producing a policy analysis identifying major gaps and areas of policy relevance to CARE Bangladesh's governance work.
3. Documenting the process of scaling up of Botlagari Inclusive Governance Model and its relevance to wider country context.
 - Identify possible research gaps building on previous documentation - learning and research reports on Botlagari Inclusive Governance Model and other projects documentation, and also based on the policy gaps identified above.
 - Conduct field study to understand how transformation is taking place in working Unions in relation to participatory inclusive governance.
 - Identify areas that are relevant to the local governance context in Bangladesh.
4. Providing recommendations for CARE Bangladesh for its future programming and how CARE can influence Government and development actors to mainstream the learning generated from participatory inclusive governance model.
 - Synthesise the learning through a reflective process with selected project staff
 - Provide options to CARE Bangladesh on how to influence outside actors to facilitate mainstreaming.

Expected Outputs

1. Consultant will produce a report not more than 30 pages to accomplish all the purposes including a 4 page executive summary. The report will cover documenting the CARE's governance model, how it is contributing and is relevant to the context of local governance and policy analysis, and possible research gaps.
2. Consultant will share the learning generated from this work with senior CARE staff at the Head Quarter.

Annex 2: List of Persons Met

Introducing Session at Rangpur Regional Office Participant List

Sl. No.	Name	Designation	Name of the Project
1	A.N.M Kaiser Zillany	Technical Coordinator-Knowledge Management	SETU
2	Saifuddin Ahmed	Technical Coordinator - Advocacy and Lesson Learning	SETU
3	Reazul Islam	Technical Coordinator- Economic Development	SETU
4	Md. Shafiqul Islam	Technical Coordinator-Community Mobilization	SETU
5	Arshad Hossain Siddique	Technical Coordinator- Economic Empowerment	SETU
6	Shamsuzzaman Siddique	Technical Coordinator- Action Research Coordinator	SALT
7	Trisontha Rani Roy	Action Researcher	SALT
8	Md. Salahuddin	Team Leader	Local Governance Project
9	Romena Akter	Technical Coordinator-Community Empowerment and Advocacy	Local Governance Project
10	Gias Uddin Ahmed	Technical Coordinator- Training	Local Governance Project
11	Md. Saiful Islam	F&AO	Local Governance Project
12	Md. Sarwar	Technical Coordinator- Learning and Monitoring	Local Governance

Purbo Damodorpur Gram Samiti

Union: Damodorpur, Upazila: Sadullhapur
Gaibandha

Sl. No.	Name	Age	Group
1	Salu Mia	30	NL Member
2	Dulali Rani	45	CBO Member
3	Habibur Rahman	35	CBO Member
4	Panful Beoa	62	NL President
5	Monjuara Begum	37	CBO Member
6	Sahinur Begum	36	CBO Member
7	Jahanara Begum	35	NL Member
8	Achir Uddin	47	NL Member
9	Safa Mia	35	CBO Member
10	Srimoti Rongguni	45	CBO Member
11	Salema Beoa	47	CBO Member
12	Sajeda Begum	42	CBO Member
13	Morjina Begum	46	CBO Member
14	Aklima Begum	43	NL Member
15	Anjali Rani	32	NL Member
16	Sarmeen Begum	26	NL Member
17	Archona Rani	30	NL Member
18	Haider Ali	68	CBO Member

Meeting with UP Representatives

Union: Domodorpur
Upazila: Sadullahpur, District: Gaibandha

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1	Saidur Rahman	Chairman
2	Nurnahar Begum	Women Member (Reserve)
3	Monowara Begum	Women Member(Reserve)
4	Hojiron Begum	Women Member(Reserve)
5	Alamgir Hossain	Member
6	Amirul Islam	Member
7	Abu Bokkor Sarkar	Member
8	Abdur Rashid Sarkar	Member
9	Khabir Uddin	Member
10	Abdus Salam	Member
11	S M Wahed Murad	Member

Meeting with Community People

Village: Chotosalmara
Union: Hossainpur, Upazila: Sadullahpur
District: Gaibandha

Sl. No.	Name	Age	Membership
1	Tohamina	27	NL
2	Shipon	30	CBO Member
3	Morim	45	CBO Member
4	Salom	25	Villager
5	Rujina	25	CBO Member
6	Beauty	20	CBO Member
7	Lipi	22	CBO Member
8	Nur Jahan	40	Villager
9	Momina	23	Villager
10	Aminul	30	NL
11	Johurul	35	NL
12	Sajahan	28	NL
13	Majharul	21	Villager
14	Kuddus	50	Villager
15	Ohed	60	CBO Member
16	Jomirul	27	Villager
17	Isahaq Mondol	28	Villager
18	Abdur Jobbar	50	CBO Member
19	Mojnur	28	CBO Member
20	Josna	30	Villager
21	Mokbul	50	Villager

Meeting with UP Representatives

Union: Hossainpur

Upazila: Polashbari, District: Gaibandha

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1	Ali Ashraf Md. Ziaul Islam	Chairman
2	Md. Sahin Mondol	Member
3	Morsheda Begum	Women Member
4	Purnima Rani	Women Member
5	Sweety Begum	Women Member

Meeting with Upazila Parishad Representative

1. S M Khademul Islam Khudi, Upazila Chairman, Sadullahpur, Gaibandha
2. Rikta Begum, Vice-Chairman, Palashbari, Gaibandha

Control UP

Union: Faridpur

Upazila: Sadullahpur, District: Gaibandha

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1	Md. Nazrul Islam	Member
2	A Masud Sarkar Milon	Member
3	Abu Jahid Sidikki	Member
4	Santona Khatun	Women Member
5	Maya Begum	Women Member

Meeting with NLS

Cholbola Union

Upazila: Kaliganj, District: Lalmonirhat

Sl. No.	Name	Age
1	Sushil Chandra Roy	37
2	Ashrafal Jaman	23
3	Ariful Islam	25
4	Binoy Chandra Roy	38
5	Hazrat Ali	24
6	Kishori Mohona	42
7	Roijuddin	41
8	Basona Begum	24
9	Samoli Begum	25
10	Soilen Chandra Roy	27

Meeting with UP Representatives

Cholbola Union

Upazila: Kaliganj, District: Lalmonirhat

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1	Mizanur Rahman	Chairman
2	Ziaul Haque	Member
3	Nur-e-alam	Member
4	Foyezuddin	Member
5	Sahidul Islam	Member
6	Khabir Uddin	Member
7	Badsha Mondol	Member
8	Rashid Sheikh	Member
9	Bishwanath Borma	Member
10	Soilen Chandra	Member
11	Shefali Rani	Women Member
12	Maleka Begum	Women Member
13	Alpona Rani	Women Member

Union: Saptibari

Upazila: Aditmari, District: Lalmonirhat

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1	Abdus Sohrab	Chairman
2	Rojina Begum	Women Member
3	Morsheda Begum	Women Member
4	Jesmin Akhter	Women Member
5	Abdul Jalil	Member
6	Ayub Ali	Member
7	Abdullah	Member
8	Belal Hossain	Member
9	Mizanur Rahman	Member
10	Fakrul Islam	Member
11	Samsul Islam Bakul	Member
12	Abdul Khaleq	Member
13	Aminur Rahman	Member

Meeting with Control UP

Union: Durgapur

Upazila: Aditmari, District: Lalmonirhat

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1	Md. Salekujjaman Pramanik	Chairman
2	Jahanar Begum	Women Member
3	Seuli Begum	Women Member
4	Laili Begum	Women Member
5	Meherul Islam	Member
6	Md. Shawkat Ali	Member
7	Md. Rafikul Islam	Member
8	Saher Ali	Member
9	Abdus Sattar	Member
10	Md. Khalilur Rahman	Member
11	Sri Doyanath Bormon	Member
12	Md. Sohrab Ali	Member
13	Md. Jabed Ali	Member

Meeting with PNGO Personnel

Sl. No.	Name	Designation	Organisation
1	Sk. Mahabbat Hossen	PM	SAP-BD
2	Md. Shariful Islam	FF	SAP-BD
3	Md. Anisul Hoque	FF	SKS
4	M A Razzaq	FF	SAP-BD
5	Md. Jashim Uddin	FF	SAP-BD
6	Md. Dulal Hossain	PO	SAP-BD
7	Shhmali Samer	PO	SAP-BD
8	Md. Ripon Mondol	CFO	RBNS
9	Md. Akhter Hussain	CFO	RBNS-SETU
10	Farhana	CFO	RBNS-SETU
11	Saira	CFO	RBNS-SETU
12	Idris Ali	CFO	RBNS-SETU
13	Vogirat Chandra	CFO	SKS
14	Md. Mizanur Rahman	CFO	SKS
15	Rezaul Haque	PO	SKS
16	Asaduzzaman	FF	SKS
17	Shirin Akter	FF	SKS
18	Md. Ashrafur Islam	PO	SKS
19	Md. Faysal Wahid Shawon	FF	SKS
20	Md. Abdur Rahman	PM-LGP	SKS

Meeting with Project Officials

Sl. No.	Name	Designation	Name of Project
1	Md. Salahuddin	Team Leader	Local Governance Project
2	Romena Akter	Technical Coordinator- Community Empowerment and Advocacy	Local Governance Project
3	Shahida sultana	CF	Local Governance Project
4	Delwar Hossain	AR	Local Governance Project
5	Hamida Akter Banu	CF	Local Governance Project
6	Md. Mozaffar Hossain	AR	Local Governance Project
7	Md. Saiful Islam	F & AO	Local Governance Project
8	Taibur Rahman	PO	Local Governance Project
9	Rusel Mistry	PO	Local Governance Project
10	Shafiqul Islam	TC-CM	SETU
11	Md. Sarwar	TC-L&M	Local Governance Project
12	A N M Kaiser Zillany	TC-KM	SETU
13	Gias Uddin	TC-Training	Local Governance Project



CARE Bangladesh

Pragati Insurance Bhaban (9th - 13th floor)
20-21, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka- 1215
Phone: +880 2 9112315, 9119294, Fax: 8114183
E-mail: info@bd.care.org
Website: www.carebangladesh.org

Institute of Governance Studies

BRAC University
SK CENTER (5th - 7th Floor), GP, JA- 4, TB Gate
Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212
Tel: +88-02-881 0306, 881 0320, 881 0326, 883 5303
Fax: +88 02 883 2542, Email: igs-info@bracu.ac.bd
www.igs-bracu.ac.bd