



RED Update

The quarterly newsletter of the
Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC

Volume 3, No. 1

March 2004

Research on BRAC's Ultra Poor Programme

The Elite, *Gram Shahayak* Committee and the Ultra Poor

The CFPR/TUP programme wants to leverage its support for the ultra poor by involving the village elite who have the willingness and ability to help the disadvantaged in their community. The idea of the *Gram Shahayak* Committee emerged out of this need. RED has already carried out two studies on this issue. The first one was a joint study with the BRAC Advocacy and Human Rights Unit that aimed to provide a better understanding of the secondary stakeholders of the CFPR/TUP programme. The second one was process documentation on the formation of two *Gram Shahayak* Committees. RED has recently initiated another study that will be using Participatory Action Research methodology to better understand the ultra poor's perception and their relationship with the elite.

An Exploratory Study of the Determinants of Change in the Lives of the TUP Members

RED carried out an exploratory study on the TUP members of the year 2002 on their perceptions of change, the differences and its determinants. The study combined participatory rapid appraisal methods with in-depth case studies. The main variables that were important in determining the ranks were food security status, homestead land security, health status of the adult earning members of the household, age, and household's demographic structure. The findings of this exploratory study will be used to develop the instruments for a larger mid-term assessment to be initiated in May 2004.

Mid-term Evaluation of Health Interventions

A mid-term evaluation of the CFPR/TUP programme is being carried to measure the health outcome of the interventions. The changes in the lives of the TUP members regarding their morbidity, health-seeking behaviour, water and sanitation, child immunization, family planning, and the health services network will be looked into.

Study on SME Unit of BRAC Bank Done

An assessment of BRAC Bank's operations in terms of geographical poverty outreach and employment creation has been completed. The findings reveal that 19% of the total portfolio is concentrated in poorer areas, 11% went to the poor districts with income poverty index (IPI) 45.1-50, and 7% went to the districts with IPI above 50. The median number of employees (including owner) of sampled enterprises was five. Fifteen percent of the employees of the sampled enterprises were employed after getting BRAC Bank loan. Twenty-nine percent of the enterprises reported hiring new employees after getting loan from BRAC Bank.

Study on Pre-Primary Graduates Initiated

BRAC initiated pre-primary education programme in 1997 for children aged below six years. On completion of one-year pre-primary course the learners enroll in formal primary schools. RED is conducting a study to compare the learning achievement of the formal school students who had BRAC's pre-primary education with those who did

not have such education. Data were collected through an independent test, interviewing teachers, and classroom observation. The report is expected soon.

Education Watch 2003-04 Update

Education Watch 2003-04 aims to do in-depth research on deprivation and negligence in access and quality of primary education and to explore the measures of ensuring quality Education For All (EFA) in the country. A pilot study was done and the instruments were finalized. Fieldwork will start soon.

Study on the Efficacy of Home Fortification of Weaning Foods with Sprinkles Done

RED conducted a study to investigate the efficacy and effectiveness of sprinkles intervention, on either daily or weekly basis, in improving the anaemia status of young children in Bangladesh. In collaboration with the Hospital for Sick Children, Canada the study was carried out on 12-24 months old children in 13 villages of Kaliganj *upazila* under Gazipur district. The intervention was given for 8 weeks in both weekly and daily dose groups.

The findings reveal that at the end of the intervention 54% of children from both daily and weekly group advanced from anaemic to non-anaemic state. The intervention was found to be well accepted by the mothers. The most commonly reported benefits were been increased children's appetite, active participation in playfulness and reduced disease episode. Sprinkles also promoted a healthy weaning practice. While sprinkles

should be available to the general population, efforts should be made to reach the poorest section of the society through special programmes.

Flexible Administration of Micronutrient Sprinkles under Study

RED has recently initiated a new collaboration with the Hospital for Sick Children, Canada to test a flexible administration of micronutrient sprinkles. The objective of the study is to control iron deficiency anaemia among infants and young children through increasing flexibility in dose administration and compliance in a real life setting. Using a community-based cluster randomized clinical trial three different doses will be tested – a) use of 60 sachets of sprinkles in 60 days; b) flexible use of 60 sachets over 90 days; and c) flexible use 60 sachets over 120 days. The study is being conducted in Kaliganj *upazila* of Dhaka district.

Evaluation of BRAC's Forestry Programme Continues

An evaluation of BRAC's forestry programme is being carried out to design the programme based on ecological distribution of the plant species. The study aims to find out local demand of the plant species for extension of the social forestry programme, to know the germination status of different species, the status of the environmental issues of the nursery programme, and to compare the performance of different nurseries operated by BRAC, BRAC's village organizations, individual owners, and the government. The study is expected to be completed soon.

Medical Waste Management Pilot Research in Progress

RED has initiated a pilot study to develop an appropriate medical waste management system in hospitals and clinics. The study is being conducted in two children hospitals and one BRAC health centre to create awareness among hospital staff, develop appropriate waste management guideline, and introduce

environment-friendly, healthy, and economically viable in-house waste management system. The hospital staff were trained on in-house management of medical waste. It was found that the perception of occupational injury has been changed among them after receiving the training. The waste management guidelines and the implementation of in-house management system in hospitals are being finalized. This pilot project is expected to be completed in July 2004.

Study on the Cultivation of Medicinal Plant Initiated

An exploratory study on the cultivation of medicinal plants in Bangladesh is being carried out since December 2003. This study aims to explore the demand and market for medicinal plants as well as the prospect of BRAC nursery to promote the cultivation of medicinal plant. The study is in progress.

Dissemination Workshops Held

Anaemia Prevalence Survey 2003

RED and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Government of Bangladesh jointly conducted the 'Anaemia prevalence survey of urban Bangladesh and rural Chittagong Hill Tracts' in 2003. Professor Harun KM Yusuf and Farhana Haseen of BRAC presented the key findings in a workshop held in Dhaka on 22 March 2004.

Home Fortification of Weaning Foods

A workshop on "Home fortification of weaning food with sprinkles: a new strategy to control iron deficiency anaemia among infants and young children" was held on 11 February 2004 in Dhaka. The workshop reviewed the interventions in controlling iron deficiency anaemia, shared experiences of the on-going sprinkles project, and formulated a strategy of home fortification to improve iron and other micronutrient contents of weaning foods. Fifty-one participants, representing governmental, non-governmental, UN and international agencies in Bangladesh attended. The workshop was jointly organized by the Institute of Public Health Nutrition, Government of Bangladesh and BRAC, and sponsored

by the Micronutrient Initiative, Dhaka and Hospital for Sick Children, Canada.

Formative Research for Social Marketing of Micronutrient Sprinkles

A workshop was held in Dhaka on 23 February 2004 to design a formative research to identify social marketing and distribution strategy for micronutrient sprinkles in Bangladesh. Seventeen participants from different organizations attended the workshop. Different tools were developed and refined. The ground work of the study and interviewer training have been completed. Field work will start soon.

RED Staff Contributed in International Workshops and Conferences

Dr Nasima Akter, Senior Research Associate presented a paper titled "A comparative analysis of medical waste management situation in some selected countries" at the International Conference on Environment and Development held on 4-8 February 2004 in Calcutta, India. She also presented another paper on "Environmental assessment of the poultry sector of BRAC's ultra poor programme" at the International Symposium on Environmental Management held on 7-8 January 2004 in Dhaka.

Recent Publications

(Arranged alphabetically)

Journal articles, books and book chapters

Chowdhury AMR and Bhuiya A. The wider impacts of BRAC poverty alleviation programme in Bangladesh. *J Int Dev* 2004;16(3):369-86.

Halder S and Mosley P. Working with the ultra poor: learning from BRAC experiences. *J Int Dev* 2004;16(3):387-406.

Zohir S and Matin I. Wider impacts of micro-finance institutions: issues and concepts. *J Int Dev* 2004;16(3):301-30.

Newsletter and newspaper articles

Matin I and Alam A. Doing more with micro-finance: a BRAC experience. *The Daily Star*, 23 Feb 2004.

Sattar MG. Para-professionals in development: a community trend-setter. *The Weekly Holiday*, 26 Mar 2004.

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Published by:

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