



BASELINE SUMMARY REPORT



Findings from Bangladesh: CARE contracted with TANGO International to design and support the implementation of a global evaluation framework for Pathways. The Dhaka-based consulting company Mitra & Associates was contracted by CARE to lead the quantitative household survey, while the qualitative survey was led by Murad Bin Aziz, the Action Research Coordinator of CARE Bangladesh in 2012. The data was submitted to TANGO who later analyzed and developed this baseline report.

CARE's Pathways program builds on and is inspired by the vital roles that women play in smallholder agriculture around the world. Pathways helps to improve poor smallholder women farmer's productivity by empowering women to more fully engage in equitable agriculture systems. Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and implemented in Malawi, Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Mali, and Tanzania, Pathways is designed to improve the food security and livelihood resilience of poor smallholder women farmers and their families. Pathways Sammow Program targets two of the poorest districts of the northwest hunger belt of Bangladesh, Rangpur and Nilphamari, involving 1,445 women who are agricultural day laborers, farmers, or involved in agricultural input business and are members of EKATA groups.

Methodology

The framework for evaluation methodology guidelines and complementary baseline studies was developed in May 2012. TANGO led the development of a standardized set of data collection tools, including the quantitative survey instrument for use at the household and individual levels. Some sections of the instrument were contextualized by the evaluation team in Bangladesh. Qualitative participatory tools were also developed for evaluators to collect information through focus group discussions. Data collection was conducted by external enumerators and CARE and partner staff using paper surveys in October 2012. The data was entered into MS Excel and later exported to SPSS for data analysis.

The longitudinal study design is a non-experimental design intended to compare pre- and post- program results. The survey was conducted with 480 households drawn randomly

from all households with a female member of a CARE EKATA group. In addition, qualitative baseline data was obtained with four profiled hamlets, also called paras: three in the Nilphamari district and one in the Rangpur district. These paras were purposively selected by CARE Bangladesh.

Summary of Baseline Findings

Qualitative data suggest that the majority of women are involved in agriculture through working as laborers in the agricultural fields. In the last five years, in addition to their household activities of cooking, cleaning and caring for children and the elderly, women have become involved in nearly every aspect of agricultural production, except ploughing. Three quarters of participants reported income from non-agricultural wage labor and about two-thirds from agricultural wage labor with slightly more male-headed

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households reporting income from these two sources. Of the 454 households in the household survey, 88% were headed by males and 12% by females. Women who are involved with agriculture are doing so mostly as agricultural wage laborers and not on their own land. Significantly more women in female-headed households were literate (23%) than those in male-headed households (10%), but about 58% of all surveyed women reported no education. As measured by the Women’s Empowerment Index developed as part of this study, just one woman in the survey achieved the threshold of Pathway’s aggregate empowerment measurement. Results of the baseline analysis in key topic areas are listed below in accordance with Pathway’s goals and objectives.

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

About 94% of households reported not having enough food or money to buy food in the three months previous to the survey with the poor and extremely poor reporting 8-10 months of food insecurity. On average, households in the survey consumed between four and five food groups daily out of a total of 12 different food groups. Male-headed households had statistically significant greater dietary diversity than those headed by females, though women and men in male-headed households had approximately the same dietary diversity.

LIVELIHOODS RESILIENCE

Households reported experiencing an average of 1.4 shocks over the last five years. Statistical differences between gendered households were seen in dowry and death of a main income earner.

Table 1: Shocks experienced in the past 5 years, by sex of household head

Types of Shocks	Male-headed Households %	Female-headed Households %	Total Sample %
Illness or injury of other HH member/s	28.7	22.6	28
Illness or injury of main income earner	22.4	20.8	22.2
Increase in food prices	21.9	28.3	22.7
Main income earner migrated for work	19.5	18.9	19.4
Wedding costs	10.5	5.7	9.9
Dowry	10.5*	1.9	9.5
N	401	53	454

* Significantly different at $p < .05$
Categories are not included with less than 10% response

Among those households who reported experiencing a shock, 82% reported having to implement at least one coping strategy to reduce impact of future shocks. The majority reported the use of a negative coping strategy such as taking out loans (53%) and use of credit (79%). The most commonly cited strategies were to invest in savings (22%) and diversify income generating activities (19%). Nearly three-quarters of households did not engage in an adaptation strategy in response to a shock over this time span.

ECONOMIC POVERTY REDUCTION

Surprisingly, the quantitative survey found that female-headed households had greater income than those headed by men, averaging about \$14 USD per month (per capita) compared to about \$11 for male-headed households. However, the sample size of female-headed households is too small to verify this. Women in focus groups reported receiving significantly lower wages than the wages received by men for comparable work. Additionally, this is contrary to what is generally known in Bangladesh about the vulnerabilities of female-headed households. However, expenditures were

approximately equal to income for both sets of households demonstrating that all are expending at about the same rates. Migration is a significant livelihoods factor in the program region and many households are dependent on migration to urban areas for income, but it is a dynamic impacting gender issues in significant ways. Women are becoming more mobile when men are away, and the burden on their time and daily activities is increasing when their husbands and other men in the family are away. Just short of three-quarters of households have savings in formal or informal institutions with somewhat more male-headed households reporting savings (74% versus 60%). Household asset bases were significantly higher for male-headed households compared to those headed by females, nearly six times as high when land ownership was factored in and about double when land was taken out of the equation. However, only about 10% of households in the baseline owned land.

ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES AND MARKETS

Approximately 71% of female participants took out at least one loan in the year prior to the survey in similar proportion to men; 86% made their own or joint decision to take it out, which was more frequent for those in female-headed households. Qualitative information suggests that men may play a larger role in this decision-making when loans are accessed by females from microcredit groups. About half of the households in the survey accessed loans from money lenders (only men receive these loans); half accessed from NGOs; and one-third of households received loans from friends or relatives. Qualitative information revealed that women's access and knowledge is extremely limited in agricultural extension, inputs, and markets. Agricultural extension services appears to be mostly utilized by men, however, qualitative data suggest they are not very active in the communities surveyed. Focus groups indicate that insecticides, growth hormones, fertilizer, seed, and agricultural equipment, when accessed, is under the control of male farmers. Males are also more likely to go to markets, although migration has forced women to attend markets.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND PRACTICES

Only 23 out of 454 women in the survey indicated they were involved in agricultural production outside of agricultural wage labor. This is too small of a group to consider a valid sample for quantitative assessment. Therefore, there is no quantitative reporting in this baseline relating to crop diversity and yields; and post-harvest, storage, and value chain practices. These arenas are strongly under the purview of men, which impacts the ability of women to be productive in their home gardens. However, through agricultural wage



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labor, women are involved in a vast array of farming activities across all major crop areas in the region. The main field crops in the region are rice, maize, potato, jute and tobacco.

SELF-CONFIDENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

About two-thirds of women reported participation in formal or informal groups. Half of women surveyed reported being in an agricultural producer's group, 38% were in water user groups, and 15% were involved with a credit or microfinance group. Institutions of particular value to women are EKATAs (CARE women's empowerment groups), which dispense safety net benefits, cash for work programs, and local health services, particularly family planning support. Only one in five women had confidence in speaking out about community issues at the local level. Very few (4%) expressed an opinion in public in the year previous to the survey. While voting patterns are high for women (93%), 59% indicated their voting decisions in the last election were determined by their spouse.

HOUSEHOLD INFLUENCE AND DECISION MAKING

Men had considerably more decision-making, control, and participation in most domains. The quantitative survey indicates that, generally, women have greater control over income they earn themselves, their medical treatment, and children's education. However, focus groups of women and men indicate that women's decision-making in these areas is usually subject to the approval of their husbands.

Table 2: Women with sole or joint control over domains, by sex of household head

Types of Domain	Females living in:		Total Sample
	Male-headed household	Female-headed household	
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Household Income & Expenditure Domains (60%+)	63 (398)	66.7 (48)	63.4 (437)
Ag Income & Expenditure Domains (60%+)	58.6 (152)	_a	59.9 (167)
Household Asset Domains (50%+)	63.6 (349)	75.6 (41)	64.9 (390)
Agricultural Asset Domains (50%+)	84.9 (239)	_a	86.6 (268)
Health Care	79.7 (349)	67.6 (37)	78.5 (386)
Reproductive Health	89.1 (302)	_a	88.4 (319)

_a Insufficient data for reporting purposes

SOCIO-CULTURAL NORMS AND GENDER EQUITY

About one quarter of respondents expressed attitudes that support gender equitable roles in family life. Nearly all men and women agreed in the household survey that husbands should help with traditional women’s household duties when women are working outside the home. About 60% of both men and women believed that men should make most household decisions. Focus groups indicate there is shame and humiliation if men are seen as overly involved in women’s

work. Banks are seen as inaccessible by women in the absence of land deeds being in their name. Close to 85% of both men and women believed that a woman must tolerate violence to maintain stability in the family. There are indications that gender-based violence routinely exists in communities, though campaigns against it and prosecutions are helping violence to trend downward.

Considerations for Implementation

Findings from the baseline study indicate that Pathways objectives are relevant to the target area and population. If Pathways intends to develop activities for members of collectives to reinforce livelihoods through agricultural production, it will be necessary to address the current limitations to personal development, decision making, mobility, and women’s familiarity with and access to a market setting. CARE Bangladesh should gather more data regarding women’s access to productive resources, markets, and practices. Activities should include actions aimed at raising men’s gender awareness. Specific modules on domestic violence and other forms of sexual gender-based violence are recommended. Support initiatives to facilitate women’s participation in the program will also help CARE Pathways to realize its objectives. Given the paucity of agricultural collectives in Pathways operational areas, using EKATA groups as a starting point for agriculture productivity and empowerment is a clear comparative advantage of CARE interventions.

Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. To learn more, visit www.care.org.

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