

Accelerate Livelihood of Left-behind Older Workforce (ALLOW) Project

Project Duration: 1st October 2011 to 30th September 2014

Project background:

A consortium of three NGOs- HAI (HelpAge International, Bangladesh), Pidim Foundation and BITA (Bangladesh Institute of Theater Arts) launched the project in October 2011 with GOB & UKAID fund, channelized through Shiree. Two Upazilas viz. Roumari of Kurigram district and Ramgoti of Laxmipur district were selected for implementation of the project. Whereas Pidim Foundation was selected for Roumari and BITA for Ramgoti, HAI being the lead organization signed contract with Shiree and continued to play intermediary roles like channelization of project fund, performing other supportive roles like project coordination, monitoring of activities carried out by its partner-NGOs etc. The activities of ALLOW revolved around development of livelihood of extremely poor older people belonging to families affected by migration of the principal earning members to distant places. They were selected from among landless households having no cultivable land and their per-day per-capita income was no more than BDT 28. In total 500 older people including both men and women are being supported under the project. They were given cash grant of BDT 15,000.00 each for undertaking IGA (Income Generating Activities) of their own choice. The most favored IGA was cow rearing. The other activities carried out with grant money are sheep rearing, running small business, bamboo work etc. Acquiring livestock alone was not good enough to make profit and sustain IGA. The area is remotely located and prone to seasonal floods, which contribute to high rate of animal mortality. So, the project arranged series of training in animal husbandry coupled with livestock vaccination against most common but dreadful diseases like Foot and Mouth disease, Anthrax, Black quarter etc. All these efforts eventually started to bear fruits. A large number of the beneficiaries could increase their stock through breeding and earn money by selling milk produced by the livestock.

Paying attention to the health of the Older People (the Right Holders supported under the project) was also an important project activity. The project staff routinely delivered health messages among them in group meetings. They talked about the problems people face as they grow old and also how to deal with them. This helped them maintained their health and continue with activities of daily living. Besides the project organized health camps where the OP came and had health checkup by doctors from Upazila Health Complex. They also got medicines free of costs from project budget, on doctor's prescription. The procedures were repeated, which helped the Older People keep safe from onslaught of ailments. The doctors also advised the OP how to protect them from age related cardio vascular diseases, arthritis, ARI, thinning of bone, diabetes etc. The discussions were very productive and helpful for dealing with the diseases. Another type of health camps were organized for treatment of eye related diseases/complications under the auspices of Ispahahi Isalmia Eye Institute and Hospital. The doctors from its Jamalpur Base Hospital came with medical apparatus/tools and ran the camp. They performed eye test for refractive error and identified patients with cataracts. Based on the outcome eye lens were provided with subsidized costs. Those who had cataract were sent to Jamalpur Base Hospital for operation. The operations were done free of costs. As a whole the morbidity was reduced and the OP enjoyed good health comparing others in the same age group.

Besides IGA and health, the project works for realization of rights and dignity of Older People through social inclusion by holding series of advocacy workshops, consultation and building linkage with LEB (Local Elected Bodies), government counterparts and other stakeholders. The purposes of these initiatives are two folds. One is to increase visibility of Older People in mainstream development programs implemented by government and non-government organizations and the other is reassessment of government safety net program giving more focus on Older People. The area being most vulnerable to seasonal floods, attention was given to mobilize people's opinion in favor of protecting the Older People from the plights caused by floods. Advocacy workshops were conducted with local government and NGO officials, LEB leaders and social activists in order to persuade them to include Older People in their DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) program policy and priority. Similarly consultation meetings are held with LEB leaders to woo their support for inclusion of Older People in government safety net program in a meaningful and substantive way. All the initiatives taken under the project helped to bring a positive change in the attitude of people, their leaders and development actors towards Older People, which will ultimately help to build a old age friendly society in the future.

All project activities are executed through 20 Community Service Centers (CSC) formed by the OP (Older People) supported under the project. An Executive Committee comprising 7 members and headed by a Chairperson looks after all the activities of a CSC. CSC helps the project staff in their work and play multifarious roles with regard to protection of assets owned by its members, collection of savings from its members, solving family disputes, accessing government healthcare and other services, organizing meetings, exchange of data/information etc. The savings fund maintained by CSC is used for lending among its members at the time of economic hardship. The roles of CSC have been very vital for successful implementation of the project. They will not over even after project closure. They roles have been redefined and a local committee formed with responsible citizen/local leaders to oversee the activities of CSC.

Basic information

District	: 1 (Kurigram)
Upa-zila	: 1 (Rowmari)
Union	: 4 (Dantvanga, Sholmari, Bondhober, Rowmari sadar)
No. of village covered	: 20
No. of Household	: 500
No. of Senior citizen covered	: 5000
No. of community service centre	: 20
Total staff	: 04
Total budget (in BDT)	: 12,368,898
Donor of the project	: DFID

Project goal

Goal: Older people and their family members from 500 HHs, who ‘left behind’ due to economic migration of wage-earner of the family, have retained and lifted their economic status.

Activities performed

1. Community awareness.
 - a. Performed Community service centre (CSC) meeting.
 - b. Group discussion of on geriatric care
2. IGA development
 - a. Transfer of cash grant for initiate IGA
 - b. Replenishment of lost asset.
 - c. Livestock vaccination.
3. Distribution of goods
 - a. Rice from Union council under VGF program
 - b. Blanket, wrapping cloth
 - c. Medicine
4. Lobbying and advocacy
 - a. DRR workshop
 - b. Consultation with Union Council
 - c. Consultation with Upa-zila Health complex
 - d. Market linkage meeting
 - e. Linkage meeting with Microfinance organization
5. Organize Health camp
6. Organize Eye camp
7. Burial support
8. Day observation
9. Older people Capacity building
 - a. CSC based training on DRR
 - b. Refreshers training on accounts keeping
 - c. IGA Training
10. Staff capacity building
 - a. Staff skill development training
 - b. Training on savings Village management
 - c. Basic training on CMS-2 (Change Monitoring System)
 - d. Basic training on CMS-4
 - e. Refreshers training on CMS-2
 - f. Refreshers training on CMS-4
11. Preparation for winding up of project operation
 - a. CSC Categorization
 - b. Preparation of plan for carried out CSC
 - c. Annual impact assessment by HAI (Help Age International)