

SIDEP (Strategic Initiatives for Development of Extreme Poor) Project

1. Introduction Part-I (2002 to 2007)

The project was started in the year 2002 aiming at improvement of health and nutritional status of extremely poor and vulnerable people living in the remote area of Jhenaigati upazila of Sherpur district. The area located up north adjoining Indian boarder of Meghalaya district and is infamous for recurring flashfloods and elephant attack. Then the name of project was LISS (Local Initiative Support Service). High maternal and child mortality in the area was a major concern of government and its development partners. Pidim took many initiatives to improve living condition of the target people. Health education coupled with income generation and linking with government service outlets including hospitals and clinics was central to project concept and strategic considerations. There were 2100 households divided into 90 groups included in the project by the end of 2007. The groups were represented by female heads of the targeted households. Project staff delivered as many as 37 health messages on mother and child health and nutrition in group meetings. They also followed up health education with the women and their family members during house visits helping them recollect messages taught in the class and observing their application in the family. One of the other activities that could create lot of interest among mothers was preparation of PER (Protein and Energy Rich) baby food by mixing pulverized rice and lentils with molasses, Soya-bin oil and water. The food was nutritious, palatable and safe for babies. Moreover the ingredients could be stored in plastic containers separately for many days and used to prepare porridge at any time even when mothers were not at home.

In addition Pidim trained young and energetic women numbering 30 from local community into health service cadres called Para Health Worker (PHW). They learned various knowledge and skills from project staff, government doctors, staff from upazila livestock and agriculture departments. As they became adept in the work, groups were gradually graduated by handing over responsibilities to PHW. Handing over of groups to PHW was the unique in the sense of sustainability of the project. Among the activities entrusted to PHW are - (a) ANC and PNC, (b) child growth monitoring, (c) organizing child immunization, (d) organizing poultry livestock vaccination, (e) treatment of certain livestock diseases. Some of the services are rendered free of costs, while they charged certain amount of fees from delivery of other services. They also get income from selling of some medicines prescribed by doctors. Many of the PHW managed to earn substantial amount of money from selling their services to their neighbors and people from adjoining areas, which helps them keep in the job long after Pidim graduated its activities in the area. The other health service cadre that came under purview of the project was TBA (Traditional Birth Attendants). Their role in rural health sector is undeniable. They perform more than 90% of all child delivery in rural Bangladesh. The project staff worked with local TBA arranging training and linking them with government run Community Clinic, Family Health and Welfare Centres, hospitals etc. They got training from government doctors, hospital nurses and health professionals on 'safe delivery practices' in the form of theoretical and practical lessons. The training helped the TBA identify and send pregnant women with obstetric complication to government hospital in time. The results were quite impressive. Maternal and child mortality rate declined significantly within a very short period of time.

Besides, Pidim helped people improve family's water and sanitation through cash transfer and interest free loan. Supply of clean water and safe disposal of human excreta contributed in improvement of family hygiene in general. The other problems having debilitating effect on health were deficiency of micro nutrients in diet and dietary habit. Health education made the people aware of their dietary needs and also helped adopt appropriate health behaviors and dietary practices. Side by side Pidim engaged selected farmers or (Lead Farmers) in setting up demonstration plots for round the year production of fruits and vegetables by lead farmers. Learning from the lead farmers local residents grew fruits and vegetables on homestead and its periphery. Consumption of vegetables with regular meals supplemented vitamins and minerals in their diet and that helped a lot in improving health and nutritional status of the targeted people particularly that of mother and children. Excess amount of vegetables produced were sold in local markets adding to their family income. In addition, Pidim helped the target households raise poultry and livestock in order to meet the demand for protein as well as cash income. Training plus routine vaccination of poultry birds and domestic animals were other major and important activities undertaken under the project. The work was done with the help of technical support and expertise of Upazila Livestock department. This helped check in outbreak of livestock diseases in the area. Besides, Pidim issued soft term loans to the group members for beef fattening and rearing of milk cow. An increase in poultry birds and livestock also increased family income. The project was evaluated by external consultant (Mr. M. M. Shafiqur Rahman) in Feb 2007. In his evaluation report Mr. Rahman mentioned that 'The health condition of the members improved noticeably which is reflected in the reduction in morbidity among the members – some diseases have already disappeared, the duration of sickness declined (from an average of 20 days to 10 days) and disruption of their normal life declined, especially among the income earning patients (from 26 to 11 days). A similar observation was made by Mr. Rafique Uddin Ahmed and Mr. Sheikh Shafiul Islam, external consultants, who again evaluated SIDEP project once again in May 2013. From the interview they learned that the targeted people had knowledge and means to prevent many contractible diseases like dysentery, diarrhea, pox, hepatitis, ARI (Acute Respiratory Infection), malaria, skin infections etc. They also showed health seeking behaviors by consulting doctors about illness at early stage, which saved them from unnecessary suffering and medical costs that would be needed when health conditions got worse.

The reference people were extremely poor and vulnerable to seasonal variation of market price of food and essential commodities. Considering the situation Pidim provided agriculture loan backed up by training. The purpose was to increase agriculture production and at the same time reduce vulnerability to fluctuation of market price of food. Training was an essential part of the credit deal and given only after completion of training facilitated by project staff. Development Facilitator (agriculture) and Development Facilitator (poultry and livestock) prepared lesson plan based on TNA and conducted training. Government officials from agriculture and livestock department helped them in their job. They also visited training class and taught lessons to the trainees. Training was imparted primarily on horticulture and animal husbandry. Pidim also selected young men and women from targeted households and arranged month long training course on development of 'plant nursery' in government horticulture center located in Jamalpur district town. Coming back from the training they were issued IGA loan for self employment. Among the IGAs were – (a) cultivation of papaya and banana, (b) production of different types of

baby plants by setting up nursery, (c) goat and cattle rearing etc. However outbreak of plant and animal diseases often hampered agriculture production. Project staff and government officials from upazila agriculture and livestock departments paid regular visits to the area and met borrower in FGD to assess field situation and find out solution to problems facing the farmers. Face-to-face discussion was proved to be very effective in maintaining agriculture production by containing spread of disease. Besides, Pidim set up 15 AIC (Agriculture Information Centers) one in each target village, using room facilities provided by the local residents. The centers were furnished and supplied with books, gazettes, magazines, posters, agriculture implements, radio etc. They were opened to all people living in neighborhoods for reading and learning about agriculture during pastime. The centers provided opportunity for the villagers to learn and update themselves with development in the field of agriculture research and new agriculture production techniques.

IGA loans were given on borrower's choosing. While many opted for agriculture loans, the other took loans for running petty business, purchase of rickshaw/rickshaw van, sewing etc. The group leaders helped Pidim in management of loans. They maintained close contact with their members who took loan from Pidim and kept the office informed about the progress in IGA. A large number of group members engaged in multiple IGA with borrowed money over the years and could augment their family economic substantially and break the vicious cycle of poverty. In his 28 Feb 2007 report Mr. M.M. Shafiqur Rahman mentioned that "As an anti-hardcore poverty project, the LISS-Jhenaigati could significantly reduce the incident of hardcore poverty (from 57 to 20% of its members) over the last four years of its intervention in the **area... ..** A reduction of 37 percent in hardcore poverty over such a short span of time (4 years) is really a praiseworthy performance compared to both national (5% over 1995/96 to 2000) and local level (12% over last four years) achievement in this regard". It was again echoed in May 2013 evaluation report. The evaluators quoted from the people saying "We are no more poor today. We can earn and meet our needs. Pidim has helped us how to overcome poverty through adopting multiple IGA and becoming aware of better life and living".

Gender development was also a key component of the project. Pidim worked with group members and their counterparts to fight against all form of discrimination based on age and sex. Polygamy, dowry, domestic violence, child marriage etc. were at rife in project area. They put the life of women and female child at danger. Also discrimination against older people was a serious problem negatively impacting on their health and nutritional status. Such discrimination robbed women, children and older people their human dignity and honor. Pidim formed alliance with group leaders, LEB (Local Elected Body) representatives, civil society members and government officials to eliminate all form of discriminations based on age and sex. It trained members of local youth clubs, group and LEB leaders in gender and helped them work as local vigilante for gathering information on child marriage, polygamy, domestic violence, dowry etc. and calling for action by local leaders and law enforcement agency including officials from government social welfare department. Side by side Pidim arranged folk song and drama by hiring artists from local art club and folk singers. Scripts for drama were written by school teacher and local writers portraying life of women and female children fallen victims of gender discrimination. The artists performed their play in school premises and open venue in many occasions in front of hundreds of onlookers. The activities helped mobilize public opinion against sex discrimination and

violation of women rights. Local residents joined Pidim and its local counterparts to promote rights of women and children in the area. As a result the incidences of child marriage, polygamy, domestic violence were effectively contained. Also mobility of women and their right to family decision making were accepted in their families. Mr. Rafique Uddin Ahmed and Mr. Sheikh Shafiul Islam, Consultants wrote in their May 2013 evaluation report that “After ten years of project implementation, women’s mobility was not limited to household and their relatives’ home. They developed professional linkage with different organizations and individuals..... Opinion of female members was getting importance in the process of family decision making. Social recognition of them enhanced due to multiple identity facilitated by the project. Severity of domestic violence was reducing as per the opinion of the respondents. Women’s choice was honored in regard to reproductive and family planning activities. Both girl and boy child were treated equally in the family and even in the society, which was considered as the outcome of project interventions and advocacy.”

The plight of older people was no way better than that of any other marginalized groups in project area. Majority of them lived in isolation without care and protection. They suffered from multiple disabilities and illness. People’s opinion was not at all in favor of aging people. They considered older people as social waste and burden to the family. This attitude prevailed at all levels in the society. As a result the older people remained unseen and left out of mainstream development program. Focusing on the plight of the older people Pidim organized community people to protect older people from neglect and isolation. Social pressure was created on the children and relatives to fulfill their obligation to the senior members of their families. Side by side Pidim helped the Older People (OP) to organize and form Senior Citizen Clubs (SCC) using the venue of Agriculture Information Centres. More than 600 OP were registered in 15 SCC. They were very enthusiastic in coming to their Club and pass their time mingling with fellow club members. This helped break monotony and their feeling of isolation. Pidim gave them cash grants for buying goats, construct/repair their house and supplies of baby plants. They took great interest in goat rearing and nursing baby plant in their garden. It brought them joy and also cash income. Yet again Pidim provided supplies of food, clothing and toiletries to them during religious festival. In addition, doctors from upazila hospital came at the centers and checked their health once a month. Pidim maintained sock of medicine at its Jhenaigati office complex and supplied them to OP as per prescription prepared by the doctors. The quality of life of older people eventually improved due to various project interventions. In May 2013 evaluation report the evaluators mentioned, “The outcomes of those gracious activities were mentionable. The older people were treated with honor and respect.... The family members of the older people also behaved goodly.”

2. Introduction Part-II (2007 to 2013)

Pidim inducted CMDRR (Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction) into the project logical framework in consideration of the risks posed by natural hazards like flashfloods, prolonged drought and elephant incursion, to the life and livelihood of the people in Jhenaigati and adjoining Nalitabari upazila. It became apparent that no development initiative could make a lasting impact in life and livelihood of the people in the area without tackling the problems created by recurring natural hazards. Thus years of development efforts can go in vain by a single incidence of natural hazard. So building community resilience to natural hazards became

imperative to overall development of people in the area. In view of this focus of the project was shifted from group-centred to community-centred approach. To make it more relevant Pidim renamed the project as SIDEP (Strategic Initiatives for Development of Extreme Poor) and aligned its strategies with the approach. It converted all 15 AIC (Agriculture Information Centres) into Community Resource Centres or CRC and put all its efforts and available resources to build the capacity of CRC to address the problems ensuing from natural hazards on a sustainable basis. At the same time all the activities carried out under LISS were continued on a larger scale covering more than 5000 households under the management of CRC. Each CRC had one female staff (Social Animator) helping in record keeping and delivering various health and other services to the community people under the supervision of CRC Mgt. Committee. Pidim also helped its development partners, government counterparts and other stakeholders form an apex body called StakeNet (Stakeholder Network) to facilitate the work of CRC. The members of StakeNet met once a month in Pidim Jhenaigati Office Complex and reviewed work plan submitted by CRC and took decision on fund allocation based on project policy and budgetary provisions. Pidim also organized numerous training and workshop for the members of StakeNet members. They helped the members develop their cognitive ability to understand various development issues and discharge their duties more efficiently.

Many initiatives were taken under CMDRR program to reduce risks posed by flashfloods, elephant incursion, drought etc. The people who live on the floodplain are mostly poor and vulnerable to seasonal flashfloods. Pidim provided matching funds to hundreds of such families to raise their homestead with Vertivar Grass hedges grown on its slops. Raising of homestead with the protection of grass hedges saved their life and assets from onrush of flashfloods. Another major challenge faced by the people living in the area adjoining Indian boarder comes from elephant herds foraging for food during harvest seasons. They caused enormous damage to human life and family assets. Using traditional method local people tried to stave off elephant attack by torching kerosene soaked rags held on sticks. The people sometimes got supply of kerosene and in some instance generator from government department and other NGOs. Pidim did not consider the method very useful and cost effective. Chasing out elephants was very risky and also it took heavy tool of human spirit and energy. People participating in the chase at night became very exhausted and failed to attend their work next day. Failing to earn income they often went hungry. So Pidim tried to find out alternative solutions to the problem. It provided solar light system free of cost to one of the families living near Indian border. To the surprise of many it worked exactly what was expected. No elephant entered in the neighborhood of the family ever since solar light was installed. Inspired by the result Pidim supplied more solar light systems to other families alongside Indian border. The result was the same. There was no incidence of elephant attack after installation of solar light. So the demand for solar light systems continued to rise. Because of its limited resource Pidim could not satisfied the need of all the people. However people tried their own way to get fund and install solar light system in their house.

There were other activities carried out under CMDRR program. Prolonged drought and flashfloods cause damage to soil and its productivity. Health of people was affected due to scarcity of water and poor agriculture output. Pidim took several measures to bring together local farmers and agriculturists/researchers from various government departments and research institutions for exchange of ideas and information. It helped CRC arrange FGD (Focus Group

Discussions) and Field Assembly Day and gather people for discussion with government officials and experts on problems ensuing from natural hazards. There were numerous FGD and Field Assembly Day held during the course of project implementation over the years. Attending such gathering government officials and experts answered questions raised by the villagers and gave solutions to their problems. This kind of interaction with experts help the people increase their knowledge and understanding about various critical issues confronting their life and find out solutions to their problems. Mr. Manas Bhattacharyya and Ms. Chayanika Kunjwal from ASK, V-30/3, DLF-III, Gurgaon-122002, India visited Jhenaigati (under an agreement with Cordaid) and made their observation on the impact of CMDRR in the life and livelihood of the people in the project area. In their report they wrote, “The community people confirmed the relevance for the interventions related to CMDRR and accepted that project interventions were necessary for them to cope up with and manage the disaster. Looking at the low socio-economic status of the target communities, poor awareness on social issues and hazard management, low education status and their overall vulnerability to the hazards and the other developmental issues; the project interventions and CMDRR component of the project stand relevant for the community and their development”.

3. Highlights of work done during July to Dec 2013

Like before StakeNet (Stakeholders Network) continued to play a major role in steering project activities during the final stage of the project. The reconstitution of CRC (Community Resource Centres) at the beginning of 2013 brought new impetus in delivering various health and other services to local community. The chairpersons who represented their respective CRC in StakeNet made valuable contribution to StakeNet and its operation. The members of StakeNet attended monthly meetings for 6 times and reviewed project work and made recommendations for solutions of field problems. They also helped in allocation of cash grant and material support among target people. Besides, they set up field schedules and work plan for next month for its members.

On the other hand all 15 CRC were directly involved in implementation of project work. CRC Management Committee helped Pidim in organizing FGD (Focus Group Discussions) and Field Assembly Day. FGD were organized on various issues related to agriculture productivity and human health. Officials from upazila government agriculture department meet farmers in FGD held at CRC and answered questions raised by the later. They also made recommendations on crop management including control of plant diseases. Among the topics mostly discussed with the farmers were – (a) selection of crop and crop rotation, (b) disinfection of seeds, (b) soil treatment, (c) plant fertilization, (d) control of pests and fungal infection etc. The most common problems faced by the farmers were rotting of roots and stems of different crop such as egg plant, turmeric, banana, papaya etc. Attack by grass hopper and pest was also reported by the farmers. The officials advised necessary treatment for the diseases. Lack boron and sulphur in soil inhibited growth of plants and their productivity. So they also advised dose of micronutrients for application to the soil. Similarly Upazila Livestock Officer took part in FGD and answered to many questions put forward by the participants. Among other duck plague and high mortality of ducklings and chicks were major concern of the people. The officer recommended solutions for all the problems. He also gave tips on poultry feed, housing and prevention of common poultry diseases.

While doctors from upazila health complex dealt with problems of human health in FGD. They listened to the villagers, examined their health and recommended cure for their health problems. Frequently asked questions were about – (a) skin rash/dermatitis, (b) malaria, (c) diarrhea etc. Besides giving advice to cure of diseases the doctors talked about prevention of common diseases which often cause damage to public health. In total 30 FGD (2 per CRC) were held in presence of 1550 villagers.

One of the other activities that drew public attention was Open Venue Discussion (OVD) under the chairmanship of StakeNet president. OVD were held at school premises and Eid-day-prayer ground (Eidgah) for 4 times. Dr. Abdul Mannan, Senior Scientific Officer from government Horticulture Department in Jamalpur came and participated in the discussion with the villagers. Discussion was primarily held on production of drought resistant crops in areas where underground aquifer dries up during summer. The officer named the crops suitable for drought prone areas. Among the crops were – litchi, plum, ginger, turmeric, pineapple etc. Dr. Mannan also explained various aspects with regard to crop management and control of pest/ plant diseases. He also listened to the villagers and answered their questions. The discussions were genial and the participants gained lot of knowledge and ideas about drought resistant crops and their management.

Exposure visit: The project arranged exposure visit to government Horticulture Centre in Jamalpur for members of CRC, Social Animators and office staff. They were 30 in number. Dr. Babul Chandra Sarkar, senior Research Officer introduced them with various activities being carried out at the centre. He explained about importance of preservation of endangered species of local fruits and crops. He emphasized on the benefit of growing local variety fruits and vegetables, as they are perfectly adapted to local climatic conditions. Dr. Sarkar also answered various questions raised by the participants. The discussions were focused on control of plant diseases and replenishment of micronutrients in the soil. The participants shared their newly learned knowledge and experience with their fellow citizens and members of CRC and StakeNet after coming back from the exposure visits.

3.1 Training imparted by project staff: Besides government officials/experts, the project staff participated in discussions with villagers separately at CRC and exchanged ideas and information on soil enrichment, control of pests by pheromone trap, IPM (Integrated Pest Management) etc. They also imparted hand-on-training to 162 farmers from 15 CRC in preparation of vermin-compost. The farmers produced compost in RCC ring using special type of earth worm supplied by the project. Application of vermin-compost brought two folds benefits. It decreased production costs with simultaneous increase in yield of crop and vegetables. Overall the training contributed in boosting up agriculture production in the area.

Although Pidim had changed its stance and development approach, the health education conducted under LISS project never lost its relevance in the area. Meeting its demand project staff delivered health messages to a total of 1255 villagers in 24 groups. The lessons were taught for 8 hours in 4 days per group. Many topics discussed in the class were about ante and post natal care, care for neo-natal babies, child immunization, prevention of diarrhea, ARI, dysentery,

night blindness, anemia, family hygiene etc. The participants received the education pretty well with gratitude. They also tried to follow lessons and change their health behaviors. Following old style the project staff also demonstrated how to prepare PER (Protein and Energy Rich) diet for the children in all 15 CRC. There were 512 women present during demonstrations. Learning from the demonstration many prepared the diet and used it as winning food for their children.

3.2 DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction): Pidim carried out many activities with the help of CRC under its DRR program. They included livestock vaccination, homestead raising, distribution of specific type of drought resistant rapeseeds, smokeless stove and water filter. Vaccination camps were set up and livestock vaccines were administered by Vet. Assistant from government livestock department. Vaccines were supplied by Upazila Livestock Department. PHW (Para Health Worker) helped project staff organize vaccination camps. They made announcement public in local market and public place by hand-mike. The villagers had to pay BDT 10 per animal for the vaccine. In total 19 such camps were organized. Vaccination was administered to 1885 cattle against foot and mouth disease, 322 against black quarter and 76 against common cold. On the other hand 345 goats were vaccinated against PPR. Moreover de-worming tables were administered to 2628 cattle. All the initiatives directly contributed to bring spread of animal disease under control.

Bangladesh is situated in river delta. Here normally house is constructed on raised earth. Seasonal floods cause soil erosion. So earth packing surrounding homestead is often needed in order to protect house from collapsing. But soil and topographical conditions in Jaheigati are different and pose challenge unlike other areas. Its soil is sandy and speedy water of flashfloods makes it hard to protect homestead. Pidim has long been trying to help the people in the area raise homestead with Vertivar grass hedges grown at its slops. This system of raising homestead and growing of Vertivar Grass Hedges provided protection from on-rush of flashfloods. Following its past practice Pidim distributed matching cash grant to 40 extremely poor households for homestead raising. Each of HH was provided with cash grant worth BDT 6,000.0 for the purpose. The recipients spent on average BDT 10,000.0 to complete the work. They managed the remaining portion of the money from their own savings.

Farmers living in areas hard-hit by prolonged drought needed help for sustaining their livelihood. The matter was raised over and over in discussions with government officials and experts. Taking advice from scientist in Horticulture Center in Jamalpur, Pidim distributed drought resistant rapeseeds (BARI-14) among 150 poor farmers – one kg each on trial basis. It also supplied fertilizers necessary for soil enrichment. In total 60 acres of land was brought under rapeseeds production. The result was very encouraging. The farmers got a total yield of 24,000 kg of rapeseeds, which brought them an average net income of approximately BDT6, 500.0. Pidim previously helped groups of other farmers try with other drought resistant crops such as ginger, turmeric and arum under DRR. The results were also very positive. They continued with the crops and maintain the level of income from their undertakings. Growing of crops was done under close supervision of project staff and technical experts. They farmers also did their best to follow through instructions given by experts. It was a joint effort by farmers, project staff and government officials which brought success.

The other activities carried out under DRR were promotion of smokeless stove and special type of water filter. The initiatives were taken in consideration of people exposed to health risks caused by toxic fume from oven and high concentration of iron present in drinking water. People often complained about women suffering from chronic respiratory infections. There were also reports of stomach ailment caused by high concentration of iron in drinking water. Pidim distributed 200 environmental friendly ovens among poor households through CRC on cost sharing basis. Ovens were purchased from German Aid Project (GIZ) for BDT 530.0 each. Of the amount BDT 380.0 was paid by Pidim and the remaining BDT 150.0 by the recipient. The benefits of smokeless over are being felt in the area. This will protect women from lung infection. Similarly distribution of water filter among poor households was appreciated by the people. It was a special type low cost water filter manufactured in Habiganj of Sylhet district. Pidim procured water filters through agent. The filters cost BDT 460.0 each. Of the total Pidim provided BDT 310.0 and the remainder BDT 150.0 came from recipient. Usages of water filter helped ease off stomach ailment. Seeing the benefit many people purchased water filter on their own.

Raising public awareness on the threat of global warming and its consequences was also a part of DRR program. Pidim joined government and other NGOs in bringing out public rally on 'International Disaster Mitigation' Day. It helped CRC bring out rally participated by 475 civilians. They were students, members of local community, social and religious institutions. The theme of the day was 'how to protect people with disabilities from the wrath of natural hazards'. After file passed the main roads the rally ended at upazila office premises. The UNO and public figures/dignitaries including StakeNet president spoke on the occasion highlighting the importance of the day. They emphasized on inclusion of challenged people in the mainstream development programs including mitigation of disasters.

3.3 Support given to Older People: Helping Older People (OP) overcome their physical and social barrier was one of the important objectives of SIDEP project. There were 620 OP supported under the project. Many of them belonged to very poor families abandoned by their relatives. Doctor from government upazila health complex paid regular visits to club members and examined their health giving them advice and prescribing medicines once a month. Pidim supplied medicines to the OP free of cost. The support was very necessary for protecting health from debilitating effect of chronic illness. Repairing of house sheltering the OP was an important activity of the project. Pidim provided cash grant to 43 OP for house repairing. It constructed house for 118 OP previously. Of them, 3 were reallocated to other OP, when the occupants died due to old age complications. Safe house saved OP from extreme weather conditions.

Access to food by the OP was a big problem for them, which took heavy toll of their health and wellbeing. Pidim sensitized local community to the issue and helped its members create social pressure on relatives and caregivers to do their duties towards older people. It eventually worked and many OD were rehabilitated in their families. As a token of goodwill Pidim distributed food parcels, clothing and toiletries among the OP during religious festivals. This was repeated in the concluding months of SIDP project. All 620 OP received food parcels, clothing and toiletries worth BDT 1150.0 each during Eid and Christmas holidays.

Pidim continued with distribution of goats and pigs among the members of Senior Citizen Club through CRC, as a part of its effort to develop livelihood of older people. It donated goats among 79 OP, one each. Also pigs were donated among 10 OP, one each. The total number of goats donated earlier was 572. The goats produced 501 kids. Of the total 17 died and 190 were donated to other OP. Sharing of kids with fellow elder persons was introduced in the policy only recently. This will help build social contact and rapport among the older people. The program provided opportunity to the OP for self-employment and income, which in turn helped restored their self-respect and dignity.

The members of Senior Citizen Clubs were assembled in the premises of Pidim Jhenaigati Office Complex and later on brought out a procession bearing festoon and banner to celebrate 'International OP Day' on 1 October, 2013. CRC members and local leaders joined them in the procession. In total 482 persons attended the rally. It was a very memorable day for the OP. They walked passed roads with conviction and boldness raising slogan for their rights. The rally ended up at the courtyard of Upazila Office. Government officials, StakeNet president, school teachers, media officials and other senior citizens addressed the gathering. They talked about how to realize the rights of OP and protect them from neglect and sufferings they face in their family and in society at large. Responding to a call by StakeNet president the participants took vow to make individual effort and work together to create an OP friendly society.

3.4 : Folk drama: Pidim has long been involved in campaign for rights of women in Jhenaigati. The methods used for campaign were folk-drama, folk-song, public rally etc. There was no exception this time. A drama was staged at six public spots extolling the contribution of women in the society. It also depicted the struggles and trials of women for making their voice heard in the society. The total number of participants present on the occasions was 8205. The campaign launched by Pidim for last 10 years helped bring a significant change in social psyche and respectability of women in society. The women now enjoy freedom and rights to make choice in controlling their life.

3.5 Project review workshop with PHW and TBA: The workshops were held separately in presence of project staff and president of StakeNet. One was held on 20 Nov 2013, while the other on 28 Nov 2013. The first one was attended by TBA. They were 15 in number- one from each CRC. Each of them described their work and their experience with child delivery. They expressed their gratitude to Pidim for giving them opportunity to learn and became adept skilled birth attendant. They also thanked Pidim for giving them a sense of purpose and dignity of their vocation. A similar view was expressed by PHW (Para Health Worker) when they met for the last time on 28 Nov 2013 in Pidim Jhenaigati office. They became emotional recounting their transformation from rustic-little-know-persons to self-managed social service providers. Because of their acceptance to local community many of them got elected in local Union Parishad/ Council. They also had regular income from their services to local community. Their income helped them earn respect from their neighbors. Again some of them reunited with their husbands and started their life anew.

3.6. Conclusion: After long 11 years of successful implementation the project was finally phased out on 31 December 2013. The project brought a significant improvement in the health and

nutritional status of women and children in the target areas. The mortality rate of mother and child was reduced effectively. The project also helped the people create alternative livelihood options, which ramped up family income considerably. The incidence of child marriage, domestic violence, polygamy, dowry etc. had declined over time due to continuous campaign launched under the project. Women now bring cash income to their families and take part in social activities, which were not seen at the beginning of the project. The development of local service providers (PHW & Lead Farmers) and TBA added to the benefit of the community. The project work will not suffer at closure of the project. The service providers now have strong links with government and other service outlets. They help people seeking to government funds and services. On the other hand the induction of CRC into the system added new dimension to project development initiatives. Community became the focus of the project once the CRC started operating in the area. With their help Pidim could make valuable contribution to build community resilience to natural hazards, remarkably to flashfloods, drought and elephant incursion. Besides StakeNet (an apex CRC) left its footprint in fostering cooperation between people and development partners including government departments and experts. The amount of information exchanged during public meetings and workshop was staggering. The people living in the remote corner of Sherpur district learned a lot from the exchange and apply their knowledge in improving their life and livelihood.