

Final Evaluation of the Nodi O Jibon Project



By

Md. Iqbal Hossain, Suraiya Khatun Putul,
M. Anwar Hossain and Martin Whiteside

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Glossary

CBA	Community Birth Attendant	
CBO	Community Based Organisations	
CDC	Community Development Committee	
Char	Landmass that changes shape through erosion and build-up of sand and silt	
CLP	Char Livelihood Programme (UKaid and Ausaid funded)	
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	
HH	Household	
IGA	Income Generating Activity	
NGO	Non Government Organisation	
NoJ	Nodi O Jibon (River and Life) PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview	
UNO	Upazila Nirbari Officer (Sub-district Chief Executive Officer)	
US	Unnayan Shamannay	
VDC	Village Development Committee	

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Glossary.....	2
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
Relevance – results against the logframe	4
2. BACKGROUND	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Description of the NoJProject	9
2.3 Evaluation Methodology.....	10
2.4 Limitations.....	10
3. IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY: RESULTS AGAINST LOGFRAME	12
3.1 Relevance and Limitations of Logframe Design	12
3.2 Output 1 – NGO Services	12
3.3 Output 2 – Government Resources	13
3.4 Output 3 – Private Sector Engagement	15
3.5 Output 4 – Donor Resources.....	15
3.6 Immediate Objective – 10,000 extreme poor families Benefit.....	16
3.7 Goal	17
3.8 Relevance - Risks and Assumptions	18
3.9 Relevance - other Changes	18
4. EFFICIENCY - PROCESS ISSUES	20
4.1 Funding Level and Budget Allocation.....	20
4.2 Partnership Approach and Effectiveness.....	21
4.3 Concern Management	22
4.4 Direct Delivery.....	22
4.5 Monitoring and Evaluation	23
4.6 Mainstreaming equality, HIV and AIDS and DRR	24
5. EFFECTIVENESS - WHAT WORKED AND WHAT DID NOT	27
5.1 Introduction	27
5.2 Targeting	27
5.3 Community Organisation Approaches and Empowerment.....	28
5.4 Training and Learning.....	31
5.5 Asset Transfer	31
5.6 Income Generating Activities (IGAs)	32
5.7 Market linkage	34
5.8 Advocacy and rights-based approaches	35
5.9 Exit Strategy	38
6. LESSONS LEARNT AND SUGGESTIONS FOR NoJ – 2	39
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	41
ANNEX 1 – PEOPLE INTERVIEWED	43
ANNEX 2 – DOCUMENTS CONSULTED	46
ANNEX 3 – EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE	47

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nodi O Jibon (NoJ or 'River and Life') project operated in the northern char area of Bangladesh from April 2006 to March 2011. The NoJ project was implemented through five implementing partner NGOs, one direct delivery area, one technical NGO working on production and market links and one advocacy NGO.

This is the final evaluation, which was conducted by a team of Concern staff lead by an independent consultant. The project was assessed against its logframe using DAC criteria of impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Impact – results against the logframe

Goal - *extreme poor families living on island chars achieve improved livelihood security.*

Immediate Objective - *10,000 extreme poor families in Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Pabna Districts, benefit from expanded NGO services, improved GoB services, private sector linkages and foundation investments directed towards achieving services or investments of comparable quality to those provided on the mainland and proportional to the levels of poverty that exists in island chars.*

The immediate objective was partly achieved while the project was operating but there are concerns about how much of the improved services will be sustained. A significant contribution was made towards the goal, and some of the livelihood outcomes of the project are likely to be sustained, through the achievement of:

- About 2,000 households (20%) graduating from extreme poverty.
- Over 5,000 women with sustainably increased confidence in community and family matters;
- Over 7,500 women with increased knowledge on rights and livelihood issues;
- About 5,000 households with increased assets
- Over 5,000 HHs with increased agricultural production and kitchen gardens;
- 22 CBOs and 485 groups formed with up to 50% likely to remain positive contributors in the community;
- Increased awareness of Char issues by decision makers at all levels (including from significant national television and other media coverage).

Output 1 – NGO Services: *Six NGOs are providing expanded services for 10,000 extreme poor families on 83 island chars in three districts.*

The evaluation found that while the NoJ Project was providing funding, NGO services were markedly improved. However since the funding ended there is limited continuation of these services or alternative services through funded expected from Output 4.

Output 2 – Government Resources: *the Government of Bangladesh provides expanded high quality safety net and health services for the extreme poor on 83 island chars in three districts.*

Health, safety net, veterinary and other services did improve significantly during the project and some of that improvement will continue. However in some cases the improvements were not institutionalised and dependent on personal commitment or on the project paying transport costs and are likely to diminish when people are transferred or travel support ends.

Output 3 – Private Sector Engagement: *Sustainable business linkages established between the private sector and the producers of livestock products, groundnuts and one non-traditional product produced specially by the extreme poor on 83 island chars of three districts.*

There were improvements in production and the local market and middlemen responded to these. Creating special links for non-traditional products with specific firms was less sustainable.

Output 4 – Donor Resources: *National and international foundations allocate an additional Euro 1 million for programmes for the extreme poor in the selected chars of three districts.*

NoJ managed to raise around ¼ of the target amount in cash or kind, but this does not necessarily cover the range of service provision developed under NoJ.

Relevance to needs of the extreme poor

The project was successful in targeting the extreme poor and was relevant to the priorities of the extreme poor, and particularly of women. The objective of trying to ensure access to sustainable services was particularly relevant in the char context.

The logframe under-valued the importance of capacity building and organisational development at a community level which was needed in order to be able to make best use of the four project outputs and also to be able to continue to demand and sustain the services after the project ended¹. In practice however, the project invested significant energy in building this capacity and this was very successful.

Efficiency – process issues

Overall management by CWW was found to be good despite there being significant staff turnover and gaps in recruitment.

The NoJ had around \$350 available per target beneficiary, this was about 1/5 of the amount per beneficiary of the two much larger char programmes. It is estimated that about 20% of participating households graduated out of extreme poverty.

There is concern about the proportion of the total budget allocated to management and also the degree of underspend. The current financial systems do not make it easy for managers to monitor expenditure against outputs, but it is understood improvements are underway.

The partnership approach with local NGOs in general worked well with Concern considered a respectful partner. However periods without a Concern Project Coordinator and budget cuts, with

¹ Community organisation and capacity building was included at activity level within the logframe.

key staff reduced during the project, meant that at times response rates from Concern were slow. The principle of a direct delivery area to demonstrate best practice was sound.

Equality, HIV and AIDS and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) were reasonably well mainstreamed. The gender dynamics between the groups which are lead by women and the CBOs, where in some cases men have taken over, is a tricky issue that needed further attention.

Monitoring and evaluation was a weakness, with absences and changes in M&E staff during the project and in practice there was some divergence between project implementation and the logframe. There seem to have been improvements in the last year with a new staff member. There was a reasonable baseline, but the sampling frame used for the endline survey created problems of comparability. Clearer linking of data collected, in these and other surveys, to indicators reflecting logframe outputs was also needed. Lack of appropriate data weakened the ability of this evaluation to make a quantitative assessment of project achievement.

Effectiveness – what worked and what did not

Concern has a policy of targeting the extremely poor. In NoJ this involved working with three types of household – welfare, day labourer and those with a long-term migrant. This targeting seems to have been successful and was largely accepted by the wider community without creating divisions. Within the groups there was further targeting on poverty grounds for whom to receive key assets and this seems to have been effective. An issue was that targeting was done at the start, when groups were set-up, and understandably the situation changed over the life of the project. Generally there wasn't a system for dealing with new very poor in the community (can they join the group?) or for dealing with households that successfully graduate out of poverty (should they stay in the group?)² – this wasn't a serious problem during the life of the project, but could become more of an issue with the long-term continuation of the groups.

The women's groups were remarkably successful in building women's capacity and self-confidence. Groups are involved in saving, and this is usually towards a group income generating activity rather than a 'saving and loan' facility for members. In many cases there is an effective apex structure (referred to as a CBO) representing the groups at a wider community level, however it was sometimes unclear to what extent the CBO represented the groups or the wider community. Some male community leaders and husbands of group members had been invited to join the CBOs, but the appropriate role in the CBO's governance of these men is unclear.

Poorer group members have received various asset transfers, most successfully a goat, and many had used the offspring to either build a small herd or to invest in alternative assets and income generation. Group members had also been introduced to improved seed and some new crops with an impressive expansion in production and engagement with local markets. In one excellent case a bazaar on the char had been developed. Training and market linking for some value added crop processing and sewing activities have been less successful.

² There was a decision, following an interesting targeting drift study, for those not considered to be extremely poor to remain within the groups to avoid upset.

Advocacy at sub-district level has been directed at improving government services to the chars. Sub-district Char Alliances have been formed of varying capacity and impact, depending largely on the level of influence of the people and organisations involved. In one sub-district, a Char Development Committee, led by the UNO, is proving a sustainable institutional mechanism to organise services to char dwellers. The key issue of land rights remains a major challenge.

At the national level, a series of programmes on the chars on television proved very successful in raising awareness of char issues. This was backed up by advocacy actions by the National Char Alliance and the advocacy partner. However with the departure of the leader of both initiatives (to become Governor of Bangladesh Bank!) this national work has been less dynamic in the second half of the project.

Exit Strategy and NoJ-2

There was a clear phase-out and phase-over plan. The exit strategy for NoJ-1 was slightly compromised by partners and stakeholders hoping and planning for NoJ-2, which is understandable.

Some of the lessons learned for NoJ-2 include:

- (a) NoJ-2 partners should be chosen on effective performance in NoJ-1;
- (b) Group savings to be improved to provide security and loans for members;
- (c) More flexibility on group membership, enabling new very poor to join, clarity on whether graduates should leave and enabling new groups to form; Greater clarity and guidance on the role of CBOs in relation to representing the wider community and the governance role of husbands and community leaders within the CBO;
- (e) Clearer strategy for ensuring increased sustainability of Government service improvements based on institutional changes and perhaps more Char Development Committees at sub-district level;
- (f) Clarity on level of person required as members of the local Char Alliances and whether these should be at District or Sub-district level;
- (g) Clear focus on community capacity, women's empowerment, agriculture and land access;
- (h) More focussed asset transfer, social protection and graduation on transparent pre-agreed timeline³.
- (i) Market links to be more focussed on the local market, with more group marketing and development of bazaars in the chars;
- (j) Clearer focus for national advocacy and learning with, if possible, more collaboration with CLP and SHOUHARDO;
- (k) Clear baseline, endline and indicators explicitly linked to the logframe and graduation process;
- (l) A 'post NoJ-2' phase-out period, providing limited support and learning over perhaps two years to ensure maximum sustainability and return on NoJ investment.

Conclusion

³ For instance see the emerging thinking from CGAP in Focus Note 69 (2011) – Reaching the Poorest: Lessons from the Graduation Model

The evaluation team conclude that about 2,000 HHs have achieved significant and sustainable improvement in HH livelihood with 10,000 HHs receiving some direct benefits and about 20,000 some indirect benefits (health services, agricultural technologies etc.) Overall NoJ-1 has produced significant results with considerable capacity built among char women and some sustainable livelihood and service improvements. There was a need for a clearer strategy on how to sustain service improvements, the most appropriate form of community organisation, and how to manage and monitor graduation.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

The Nodi O Jibon (NoJ or 'River and Life') project operated in the northern char area of Bangladesh from April 2006 to March 2011. The final evaluation took place in May 2011, two months after the programme had closed. The evaluation team was led by an international consultant, Martin Whiteside supported by three Concern Worldwide in Bangladesh staff from programmes separate from NoJ –Md. Iqbal Hossain, Suraiya Khatun Putul and M. Anowar Hossain.

2.2 Description of the NoJ project

The project called '*Nodi O Jibon* -NoJ (Island Chars Resource Mobilisation) is funded by Irish Aid (MAPS) and Concern Worldwide with a budget of Euro 3.1 million for 5 years. This project started in April 2006 and ended in March 2011, it was based on the lessons learned from previous project in Char areas of Dimla Upazila titled 'Rural Development Project -RDP' that was implemented from April 2000 to March 2006. In addition, the NoJ was designed to reach the extreme poor people of island chars and address the MDG (1, 3, and 5) and the key issues they face include inadequate earning and employment opportunity, natural disasters, low or no access to government services (health, safety net, education), high level of existence of long term debts and migration through mobilising resources from all corners.

The NoJ project has been supporting over 10,000 extreme poor families (covering 50,000 population directly) in the 51 remote char islands of 24 unions under 7 upazilas of three northern districts (Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Pabna) through five implementing and two strategic partner organisations (ASOD, OVA, UDPS, BOSS, JSKS, JOBS-IRIS and Unnayan Shamannay). The project strives to achieve the goal 'Extreme poor families living on island chars in Bangladesh achieve improved livelihood security' and the Immediate objective '*10,000 extreme poor families in Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Pabna Districts benefit from expanded NGO services, improved GoB services, private sector linkages and foundation investments directed towards achieving services or investments of comparable quality to those provided on the mainland and proportional to the levels of poverty that exist in island chars*'.

The expected Outputs of the project are:

1. NGO Services: Six NGOs are providing expanded services for 10,000 extreme poor families in 83 island Chars in three districts
2. Government Resources: The government of Bangladesh provides expanded high quality safety net and health services for the extreme poor on 83 island Chars in three districts
3. Private Sector Engagement: Sustainable business linkages established between the private sector and producers of livestock products, ground nuts and one non-traditional product produced specifically by the extreme poor on 83 island chars in three districts

4. Donor Resources: National and International foundations allocate an additional Euro 1 million for programmes for the extreme poor on 83 island chars in three districts

In this partnership process, Concern itself does not provide any services for the project participants rather it provides financial and technical support in qualitative programme implementation and monitoring of project activities to maximize the efficiencies of NoJ partner NGOs to deliver institutional services for the residents and advocate for contributing towards bringing changes in the approaches, practices and policies which negatively impacts the lives of target population at different level of the society. The aim of partnership is to develop a cost effective and sustainable way of dealing the rights issues of poor people, which could help them to get access towards basic services and establish rights as a citizen of Bangladesh like any other segment of the society⁴.

2.3 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was based on DAC criteria of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability supplemented by more detailed ToR (see Annex 4). The outcomes were assessed against the logical framework in the original proposal.

The team reviewed a wide range of reports produced by the NoJ Project, including the annual activity reports, the partner completion reports, the baseline and endline surveys, the mid-term evaluation and other policy papers produced during the life of the project (see Annex 2 for documents consulted). A workshop for NoJ staff and partners was held at the start of the process in order to raise some of the issues to be covered in the evaluation and to ensure the process was participatory.

Field visits were made to all the implementing partners and visits made to individual participants, groups and CBOs and key informants in 8 Unions in 7 Upazilas. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with 20 groups and 11 CBOs. These were chosen at random from a stratified list of groups in which the partner had indicated which groups were strong, medium and weak. Group from a range of strengths were selected. In practice the random selection of groups was also constrained by the availability of ex-field staff able to guide us to the groups. Focus group discussions were held without the participation of NoJ field staff, to avoid influencing the discussions, but these staff were available at completion of the interview as key informants to provide further information.

FGDs were also held with three upazila level Char Alliances as well as the national Char Alliance. Key informant interviews were conducted with a variety of staff from JOBS and Unnayan Shmannay and also with staff from two other Char Programmes – SHOUHARDO and the Char Livelihood Project (CLP). Key informants included family planning, agricultural, veterinary and health staff, local officials and politicians, paravets, community birth attendants and teachers.

Finally the draft findings were reported back to a final workshop of senior Concern staff and NoJ partners, providing a further opportunity to test and explain our findings, and incorporate any additional evidence provided.

2.4 Limitations

⁴ Summary from the Evaluation ToR

A major part of the purpose of the evaluation was to verify and interpret the changes revealed in the endline survey compared to the baseline. Unfortunately the endline survey, commissioned from a Bangladeshi Consultancy Company, used very different stratified sample proportions compared to both the baseline and the project participants – with a much higher proportion of very poor. This made simple comparisons of endline with the baseline very difficult. Despite various discussions with the Concern staff commissioning the endline, it was difficult to understand how this mistake happened. An attempt was made to get the raw survey data and compensate for the difference in sample proportions – but this failed due to difficulties in converting the files in the limited time available.

Table 2.4 – Stratified samples used in the different surveys

NoJ surveys	Sample size	Very Poor	Poor		Other
		Welfare poor HHs	Long time migrant	Day labourer	
Baseline survey	833	20%	21%	59%	
Endline survey	378	56%	10%	34%	70 ⁵
Total Programme Participants	10,118	19%	22%	59%	1314 ⁶

An added difficulty was that although indicators for the NoJ outputs were developed with partners, they were not specifically tracked in the endline survey. This meant that there were no specific indicators available to the evaluators that adequately captured the percentage achievement of each of the four Outputs. Neither the baseline, nor the endline survey were explicitly structured around the logframe outputs indicators, although they did provide data that could be used as proxy indicators for some of the Outputs.

It was therefore difficult for the final evaluation team to produce reliable quantified data as evidence for achievement of logframe objectives and for changes attributable to the project. The evaluation therefore relies heavily on qualitative information collected during the evaluation; where appropriate this has been backed-up with quantitative data. However the reliability of the quantitative data needs to be treated with caution.

⁵ These were mainland residents interviewed as a control comparison.

⁶ These households were identified as project participants at the initial phase of the project. But during the targeting drift study, those were identified as little better off households in the group. To maintain the group harmony and community support, those were kept in the group as 'intermediary households'. They did not receive any hardware support (e.g. asset transfer) but received software support (e.g. training) like as other group members.

3. IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY: RESULTS AGAINST LOGFRAME

3.1 Relevance and Limitations of Logframe Design

The logframe design was relevant but ambitious in terms of developing sustainable services and resource mobilisation; this was particularly the case in relation to the expectation that NGO service provision would be built to continue after the project funding period had ended (Output 1).

A gap in the logframe was that the outputs did not include the development of community capacity to both demand services and interact with service providers to make the services more effective⁷.

This would have made a more balanced design with outputs on both service provision and the community capacity to demand and use those services. Despite not being a formal output, this community capacity was built by NoJ and is a significant and relevant achievement of the project.

There was a concentration through Output 1 on effective NGO service delivery **during the project**, and this was effective. While this was understandable, it perhaps detracted from a concentration on exploring ways of developing sustainable NGO service delivery to continue after the project. This was perhaps an unfair challenge of the logframe, which made NGO service delivery an objective in its own right, rather than a means to an end. Despite some success in Output 4, sustained NGO services growing from Output 1 and funded through Output 4 will be difficult to achieve. It is questionable whether 'NGO services' should be an objective, rather than a means to an objective. The immediate objective in the logframe seems to be the 'sum' of the Outputs rather than the 'consequence' of the outputs⁸. This could have been identified in the mid-term review and also might have become clearer earlier if the various surveys had been structured more explicitly against logframe indicators.

3.2 Output 1 – NGO Services

Six NGOs are providing expanded services for 10,000 extreme poor families on 83 island chars in three districts.

Table 3.2 – Some indicators of NGO services

Indicator	Baseline 2007	Internal survey 2008	Endline 2011	Mainland 2011
Have links with NGOs	14%	49%	82%	42%
Micro-credit service	10%		10%	100%
Agri-support	3%	0.5%	92%	
Relief support	9%	9%	91%	20%

⁷ Our understanding is that this Output was included in the original design, but cut out at a late stage due to Concern being worried about developing liabilities towards too many CBOs.

⁸ This is advised against in

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multimedia/publications/documents/tools/europeaid_adm_pcm_guidelines_2004_en.pdf

Received support from development project	<1%	6%	13%	17%
Received health support	4%	28%	35%	7%
Received awareness building	24%	4%	82%	46%

It is difficult to interpret what the quantitative data tells us in relation to this output. The trend is certainly broadly positive although it is difficult to attribute or have confidence in some of the figures. The logframe suggests an indicator of the 'number of new NGOs working in island chars' but this does not seem to have been defined or tracked.

Slightly over 10,000 households were direct beneficiaries of services from five NoJ funded NGOs on 51 chars during the life of NoJ. Of these 8,800 were within Concern's 'Extreme Poor' category being either welfare (very poor), long-term migrant (poor) or day labourer (poor)⁹. 4088 goats, 3173 chickens and 128 sheep were transferred as assets and 214 sheep and 334 cows were part of the revolving loan scheme – benefiting approximately 4,900 households.

There were five implementing NGOs and one of the technical NGOs (JOBS) also delivered services directly. A lower than target number of chars were reached, partly because some chars merged or were re-defined, and some of these were no longer really 'island chars', however it is considered that this output was largely met during the life of the project. The main NGO services provided were training, group development, access to agricultural inputs, asset transfer, pre-primary schooling, health service and advocacy and support for increased government services.

It is not clear from the logframe what level of NGO service delivery would be sustained after the end of the project. The NGOs in question provided the services while the NoJ funding was available but were largely unable to continue to do so once the funding ended. The funds raised under Output 4 have been insufficient to continue to deliver more than a fraction of the services achieved under NoJ. Some NGOs have continued to provide some services in a bridging arrangement while waiting for NoJ-2 funds, but this is not sustainable for more than 6 months.

Output largely achieved during the project but the majority of services unlikely to be sustained without further funding.

3.3 Output 2 – Government Resources

The Government of Bangladesh provides expanded high quality safety net and health services for the extreme poor on 83 island chars in three districts.

Table 3.3 – Some indicators of Government services

Indicator	Baseline 2007	Internal survey 2008	Endline 2011	Mainland 2011
Received VGD/VGF services	38%	47%	95%	6%
Received widow benefit	1%	3%	9%	6%

⁹ Concern uses a slightly unusual categorisation of 'extreme poor' to include all the very poor and about half the poor.

Received old age benefit	4%	4%	10%	7%
Received sanitary latrine support	1%	16%	22%	7%
Received <i>khas</i> land support	<1%	<1%	5%	9%
Education service	13%		76%	20%
Health Service	8%	28%	90%	27%
Family planning	2%		40%	20%
Received Ag Extension service	3%	11%	18%	13%
Received Dept Fisheries support	<1%	1%	19%	8%
Received Dept Livestock support	15%	33%	80%	8%
Rcvd Dep. Public Health sup.	18%	48%	4%	8%
Rcvd Dep. Education service	1%	25%		16%
Rcvd Union Par. Services	18%	54%	53%	43%

The overall trend on these figures is **extremely positive**. Although some of the figures seem a bit doubtful, the overall picture is clear and represents a major achievement from the start to end of the project. The comparison with the mainland is also very positive, although the figures need to be interpreted with caution – the char sample is of ‘project participants’ whereas the mainland is from the general population. Despite this, it is clear that project participants were by the end of the project getting access to services at a comparable or better level than those available to the general population.

During the project, the NGO partners, groups and CBOs managed to get additional char households onto the various safety net programmes by using advocacy approaches. A comprehensive needs based system of safety net is not yet available, with additional allocations handed out on a supply led basis ‘we have funding for two additional families from your char’, but this reflects Government capacity limitations rather than failures by the project.

The project supported an expansion of mobile clinics, vaccination camps and family planning visits through a mixture of advocacy, organisation of host communities and support to travel costs. Training of Community Birth Attendants (CBAs) has been supported although the amount of training and in-service support means services are still quite rudimentary.

The combination of advocacy and organisation of groups/CBOs by NoJ has contributing to attracting one-off government resources -for instance in 2009 NoJ linked groups received 2 shallow tube wells, shallow well irrigation pumps, one power tiller, 3,400 packets ORS solution, 1044 tree saplings, 100 packets livestock medicine and 200 participants received free treatment at Upazila health and Family Planning Dept.

Government services improved during the project; but the degree of improvement in both quantity and quality in comparison to what would be considered acceptable is difficult to assess because of lack of clearly defined standards or targets.

The experience since the end of the project has been mixed. Some of the additional government services continue to be provided. In some cases CBOs have the phone number of the government officials or local politicians and are able to report failure of provision or request specific services (e.g. if there is a human or livestock disease outbreak). On the other hand there was some evidence of

scaling back of provision following the closure of the project and the ending of transport support. In some cases reduced services were due to key personnel being transferred – a commitment to providing services to char dwellers had been built at a personnel level but not at an institutional level, and had ended once the individual moved (see section 5.8.3).

80% achieved during NoJ with 40% improvement likely to be sustained

3.4 Output 3 – Private Sector Engagement

Sustainable business linkages established between the private sector and the producers of livestock products, groundnuts and one non-traditional product produced specially by the extreme poor on 83 island chars of three districts.

The indicators in the logframe don't seem to have been measured in any of the surveys. The JOBS completion report suggests that:

- 5,380 HHs earned an average of BTK 5,800 (\$70) per year at the end of the project through crops¹⁰;
- At the end of NoJ 558 HHs were growing a total of 81 acres of groundnut with an average income of \$31 per HH.
- 344 HHs had earned an average of BTK 9,190 (\$115) from cattle fattening and 71 HH had earned an average of 1,555(\$20) from sheep fattening;
- 120 HHs were earning an average of BTK1000 (\$13) per month from making prayer caps (*Topi*)

Output 3 suggests that a key constraint in the chars was a lack of business links. Actually where there is sufficient production of the right type and right quality and transport costs are not too high then the dynamic local market and entrepreneurs are effective. Market problems in the Chars are more often due to poor transport or lack of appropriate quantity and quality of production than lack of business links.

NoJ was successful in increasing production of a number of traditional and less-traditional agricultural crops and these were sold through the local market. There was some encouragement of group selling of bulked produce with groups/CBOs contacting middlemen to arrange purchase. There was one successful example of the establishment of a bazaar (market place) on a Char. There was mixed success in establishing links between char dwellers and specific companies (e.g. Bengal Meat). Attempts to set up specific market for non-traditional products like prayer caps and embroidered garments had limited success with issues of quality, volume and prices received by the producer.

70% achieved and local market links are likely to be sustainable

3.5 Output 4 – Donor Resources

National and international foundations allocate an additional Euro 1 million for programmes for the extreme poor in the selected chars of three districts.

¹⁰ For more details see Section 5.8

Table 3.5 – Donations to NoJ Project Areas

Name of the Foundation/Donor	Donation Amount in BDT	Donation in Kinds/Projects
Koinania (National NGO)	4,500,000	149 Housing support to JSKS Char
Koinania	2,000,000	WATSAN (Tube-well, Latrine) and Health camp with medicine
SQUARE Group	70,000	Donation for NoJ High School
SQUARE Group	42,000	Installation of Tube-well in the char areas
Individual donor (Chitra Rani Saha)	25,000	To one NoJ project participants to repay the loan from local money lender
Body Shop Foundation	600,000	Stressed Women in Char (small livelihoods project for 1 year), BOSS implemented
Sheikh Rehana Siddiqui Fund	250,000	250 Solar Lamps to char people with transport and distribution cost
Southeast Bank foundation	4,500,000	2000 Solar lamps and educational materials with transport and distribution cost
Southeast Bank foundation	2,000,000	5000 Blanket for the char people with transport and distribution cost.
Dhaka University Student Forum	75,000	Warm cloths for the baby and children in the char
Action Aid Bangladesh	12,500,000	Women’s health rights project for 5 years (BOSS is implementing)
Total	26,562,000	

It is considered that approximately Euro 250,000¹¹ is additional and directed towards the extreme poor. It is not clear whether some of these funding links may be sustainable and indeed grow¹².

25% of the targeted 1 million Euro achieved

3.6 Immediate Objective – 10,000 extreme poor families Benefit

10,000 extreme poor families in Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Pabna Districts, benefit from expanded NGO services, improved GoB services, private sector linkages and foundation investments directed towards achieving services or investments of comparable quality to those provided on the mainland and proportional to the levels of poverty that exists in island chars.

The immediate objective as stated is the really the re-stating of the four LF Outputs in a combined form rather than the livelihood outcome from achieving these outputs as would be more logical. This makes the objective not particularly useful in evaluation terms.

¹¹ Exchange rate – approx Tk100 = 1 Euro

¹² In addition GTZ has allocated BTK 50,000,000 for a Wetland Bio-Diversity Project for 5 years (JSKS and UDPS are implementing in the island and mainland char areas, Bangla Vision did not charge full costs (BTK 50,000 per episode) and donated its VAT contribution, and a journalist has taken responsibility of higher education of one girl of a distressed household in the char

Although the endline survey provides some comparison of some services between the Chars and the mainline it is difficult to assess service quality. The logframe didn't define what services 'proportional to the level of poverty' means in practice. Given these difficulties the evaluation team could only make an approximate qualitative assessment on the degree of achievement of this objective. This is based on the percentage achievement of the four outputs and an assessment of the degree these are being sustained following the end of the project.

Immediate objective 50% achieved

3.7 Goal

Extreme poor families living on island chars achieve improved livelihood security

The goal is only level in the logframe where livelihood security is featured. Some of the livelihood security from the NGO services of Output 1 is likely to be more sustainable than the NGO services themselves.

Table 3.7 – Livelihood data from the various surveys

Indicator	Baseline 2007	Internal survey 2008	Internal survey 2010	Endline 2011	Mainland 2011
Annual income welfare family	12,700		42,900	34,300	15,200
Annual income migrant family	23,800			41,800	66,300
Annual income day labourer family	21,200			38,400	7,000
Long term migration	34%		43% ¹³	20%	23%
% day labour	50%			21%	18%
Ownership of land	38%			27%	63%
Ownership of house	33%			29%	
% women who eat dinner	76%		2.38 meals/day	79%	84%
Duration of lean period	4	4	3	4	4

- There have been significant increases in income (and expenditure) across all wealth groups, but greatest for welfare families (most likely to receive an asset transfer through NoJ?). However there is no adjustment for inflation. Income appears better than the mainland.
- Both long-term migration and the % engaged in day labour seem to have reduced, but this may be a result of including a higher percentage of welfare families in the endline sample.
- Little change in number of meals taken or length of hungry period – but see sampling caution (above);
- The % who own land or a house seems to have gone down– but see sampling caution (above);

¹³ A different definition was used

In terms of livelihood security the project had some impact on 10,000 households. However a more significant change in livelihood was achieved by those considered to have graduated from extreme poverty. The project with support from partner NGO staffs conducted graduation study considered this to be about 17% that met the following criteria:

Compulsory:

- Take three square meals round the year with dietary diversity
- Monthly per capita income more than Tk. 694
- Monthly per capita expenditure more than Tk. 606

Secondary:

- Own agricultural land (50 decimal or more) and cultivate two crops per year;
- Own homestead land with more than one CGI sheet house;
- Ownership of household assets like at least two adult cows, goats sheep, poultry, trees, bamboo bushes, shallow tube-well pumps etc.
- Have share cropped 100 decimals (1 acre) of land for last two years;
- Possession of household furniture (showcase, cot, solar panel, TV etc.) and level of indebtedness is low;
- One or more member of HH engaged in income earning and deposits savings regularly;
- Eligible boys and girls are going to school;
- Women in the HH are engaged in social institutions like SMC, CBOs and have access to UP and Upazila level government offices for claiming and negotiating services and resources.

The endline survey considered 19% had graduated, apparently using the same criteria as above.

The evaluation team consider that: **about 2,000 HHs have achieved significant and sustainable improvement in HH livelihood with 10,000 HHs receiving some direct benefits and about 20,000 some indirect benefits (health services, agricultural technologies etc.)**

3.8 Relevance - Risks and Assumptions

The identified risks were appropriate. The issue of target drift was identified and monitored by a survey – the management of this is discussed under other sections of this report. The risk of inadequate comparative advantage for some char products was a constraint for some of the sewing initiatives and bulky agricultural goods.

The risks and assumptions column in the logframe mainly lists risks. Assumptions are important in a logframe because they link outputs from one level to the results of the next level up. Being more explicit about assumptions should have exposed some weakness in the logic – like the importance of local organisation to be able to interact with NGO, Government and private sector agents.

3.9 Relevance - other Changes

Given that the logframe was not completely aligned to the actual outputs of the NoJ Project it is worth recording here some of the other achievements of the project. The details are discussed later in the report. These changes are relevant to the attainment of the project goal and consistent with the beneficiaries requirements.

- >5,000 women with sustainably increased confidence in community and family matters;
- >7,500 women with increased knowledge on rights and livelihood issues;
- 4,700 households with increased assets
- >5,000 Hhs with increased agricultural production and kitchen gardens;
- 22 CBOs and 485 groups with up 50% likely to remain positive contributors in the community;
- Increased awareness of Char issues by decision makers at all levels (including from significant national television and other media coverage).

4. EFFICIENCY - PROCESS ISSUES

4.1 Funding Level and Budget Allocation

It is interesting to compare the funding level per HH of NoJ with the two other much larger projects working in the chars:

Table 4.3a – Comparison of funding and target beneficiaries in three programmes

Project	Target beneficiaries HHs	Budget	Budget/HH
CLP-1	55,000-90,000	\$80 million	\$900-1,450
CLP-2	67,000	\$128 million	\$1,910
SHOUHARDO- 2	85,000	\$139 million	\$1,640
Nodi O Jibon	10,000	\$3.5 million	\$350

The table shows not only that NoJ is much smaller than the other two projects, but that the budget per household is much less (about 20%). Overall the scope of what NoJ is doing is very similar to the other two projects, with a combination of asset transfer, training, community organisation and work on service delivery. If anything, NoJ is slightly broader with its investment in advocacy through the Char Alliances. However the amount available for asset transfer per HH in NoJ seems to be less, with only a proportion of the poorest households receiving the larger assets, compared to the other two programmes.

It is interesting to note that if one looks at the cost of NoJ per graduating family (about 20% of target HHs), then the cost of NoJ per graduating HH is similar to the cost per HH of the other two programmes. However it is not clear whether the other two programmes expect to graduate all their target HHs – if they did then the cost per graduating household would be quite similar.

Table 4.3b – NoJ consolidated budget

Heading	€	%
Concern Management	1,051,453	33%
Monitoring & Evaluation	69,247	2%
Research contract	90,361	3%
Dimla Direct delivery	144,043	5%
Alliance & Advocacy -US	296,516	9%
Private sector Involvement-JOBS	303,286	10%
Grant to PNGO for Out Put 1	723,419	23%
Fund for producer group activities	300,000	9%
Sub-total	2,978,325	94%
Overhead 7%	206,945	6%
Total	3,185,270	

Unfortunately the project budget and the actual expenditure were received by the evaluators rather late in the evaluation process and with very different headings – so it is difficult to comment in depth.

The budget suggests rather a large proportion of total funds going to Concern management and overheads (39%). While recognising that significant support was provided by CWW to the implementing partners, this still seems high.

Table 4.3c – NoJ Budget and Expenditure 2006-11

Heading	Total BTK		% budget spent
	Actual	Budget	
National staff costs	40,125,294	57,451,675	70%
Direct Project Operating costs	14,349,868	19,805,156	72%
Total partner Support	129,963,748	140,014,078	93%
Monitoring and evaluation	3,302,080	7,667,855	43%
Direct Support costs	22,112,993	20,663,039	107%
Indirect support costs	21,065,000	37,139,784	57%
Total	230,918,983	282,741,587	82%

Comparing the actual expenditure against the budget suggests that there was very significant under spend across nearly all budget lines. In this context, the cut-backs made during the project seem strange.

It also seems that the project coordinator has difficulty in accessing expenditure figures against headings that reflect project outputs. This makes project management difficult. It is understood that improvements in CWW financial systems are underway.

4.2 Partnership Approach and Efficiency

At the concept note development stage Concern engaged some local NGOs (who were working or had experience in the target Upazila/sub-districts level) to contribute to conceptualizing and designing NoJ. A team then appraised the local NGOs against set criteria and selected a number of them to be partners in NoJ. Formal partnership agreements were signed once funding was approved. Once the project started Concern provided training on using PRA for beneficiary targeting (social mapping, well-being analysis, etc.) and assisted partner NGOs to do the targeting. A range of further training was provided during the implementation of NoJ

Partners were happy with Concerns partnership approach – considering it was base on mutual respect. They felt involved in design, planning and review. Partners did however find Concern slow in responding to requests and slow in making comments on any reports submitted.

Concern placed a Project Officer in each of the two Districts, covering the implementation of 2-3 partners and sitting in the offices of one of the partners. Some partners did not feel this was a satisfactory arrangement, feeling the PO was interfering in the day-to-day implementation, but

others were satisfied. It was difficult to understand exactly what the underlying cause of the problem was; it seems to have been a combination of:

- Lack of understanding by some stakeholders on PO role – was it implementation? was it monitoring? was it supervision? was it capacity building?
- Sitting in a partner’s office perhaps confused roles further and made ‘interference’ easier;
- In at least on case there were personality issues.

Recommendation 4.2 – the role of the Concern Project Officer (PO) needs to be clearly defined and understood by all stakeholders. A greater focus on monitoring would have been helpful in NoJ-1. It may be better to locate the PO somewhere other in a partner’s office.

4.3 Concern Management

The NoJ Project has experienced a number of changes in staff at headquarters level (see Annex 4). However it has come under the same Head of the Char Programme since 2008 which has provided some consistent and stable management. There have been two Project Coordinators, with a 15 month gap between them when there wasn’t a person with this specific responsibility in post. For the first three years there was a partnership Coordinator, but budget constraints meant that this post was abolished and for the final two years on the project this post was not filled. Critically this overlapped with the gap in project coordinator – so there was 15 months without either project or partnership coordinator. The field based Project Officers at different times covered as Partnership Coordinators, however there was also significant turnover among these Project Officers.

Given the amount of staff turnover and gaps in posts being filled, it is commendable that the overall management and direction of the project seems to have remained relatively consistent without major upset. This is a tribute to both CWW and partner staff.

The management has worked well to include partners in decision making, to use the Dimla component for learning, to encourage good practice in community development and ensure compatibility with Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) criteria.

4.4 Direct Delivery

From April 2000 to March 2006 Concern Bangladesh implemented an integrated rural development project “Living on the Fringe” (Promoting People-Centred Sustainable Development in Chars of Dimla through Capacity Building of Local Community and Local Government) in remote char areas of Dimla Upazila under Nilphamari District. The project was developed from an initial emergency relief and rehabilitation programme of Concern Bangladesh.

The evaluation of the “Living on the Fringe” project found some best practices/good learning from the project:

- The formation of Community Development Committee (CDC) developed social capital in the areas, with the community initiating development efforts, and with Concern working only as a catalyst.

- The CDC has become not only a community organization but also it has already developed its separate identity as the representative and authority of the community. Whoever from the local administration needs any sort of assistance, to go to the remote char areas he/she first approaches the CDC. In this sense, the CDCs work as the helping hands of the local administration to ensure various public services in the remote char areas.
- The people were using the community centres for organizing social events, conducting salish (village court), celebrating different national and international days. The CDCs also had their office and management in the community centres.
- There was resource mobilization from the Union Parishad and Upazila headquarters.
- The joint development plan was an impressive exercise of the CDC and the Union Parishad. It not only increased the accountability of the Union Parishad but also increases poor people's access to local resources. However, one round of planning was perhaps not enough to build confidence that the process will be sustained beyond the life of the project which was scheduled to end March 2006.
- The sustainability of the above interventions was dependent on continued monitoring. A pragmatic phase-out strategy had to be developed to ensure the sustainability of the outcome of the project.

The NoJ project was an opportunity to phase-out the work in Dimla over a longer period, while consolidating the achievements made. It was also an opportunity to use the learning and the demonstration opportunities from Dimla to inform the work in the new chars and with new partners. Therefore the work in Dimla was continued using a direct delivery approach by Concern staff.

In practice the Dimla project was used for learning, with partners visiting and organising exchange visits by members of CBOs. This was very positive and provided an example of what community organisation can deliver at group and CDC level. In addition some of the agricultural trials and demonstrations from Dimla informed the work in the other areas.

One issue was that the basic difference in formation between the CDC (which was formed first) and after that the groups were formed, and the CBO which was formed second (after the groups), does not seem to have been fully recognised. Thus some of the ambiguities within the community organisation structure were perhaps not identified, debated and experimented with as much as they could have been (see section 5.3 for further discussion). However overall both Dimla and partner community organisation was of high standard and successful.

4.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Changes in Concern staff meant that there were gaps in the M&E system over the life of the project. There is a comprehensive activity reporting system by partners on a monthly and three monthly basis and this is compiled into an annual activity report. The system is adequate, but would be improved with greater use of tabulated data which also could compare progress against plans and cumulative progress over the years.

What seems to be missing is reporting of outcomes against indicators in the logframe. This clearer use of the logframe would also have improved the baseline survey, mid-term evaluation report and endline survey. If the logframe had been used actively in this manner some of the issues highlighted in Section 3.1 would probably have been identified and corrected. This would also have required clearer definition of the indicators and agreement on how they should be collected and what the targets should be.

The mid-term evaluation was not very forensic or critical and was a missed opportunity for identifying and correcting some of the issues and weaknesses of implementation and design.

The issue of the sample used for endline survey has already been highlighted in section 2.4. The baseline survey was very comprehensive and seems to have been well conducted. There were several questions relating to receipt and experience of both NGO and Government services in both baseline and endline surveys, which was a good start. However it is not clear which combination of replies really measures the indicator, or whether slightly different questions would have reflected the indicator better. This would have been made clear if the surveys had explicitly reported against logframe indicators.

Currently limited details on all participant households are held in a database by Concern that is updated regularly. However when records are updated the old record is lost. A change in database design would enable tracking of household data over time, including recording key events such as asset transfer or inclusion in a government safety net. As such the database could become a powerful tool in tracking outcomes and progress to graduation and helping to understand attribution to project activities.

Recommendation 4.5(a) - Careful attention should be paid to the sampling methodology in baseline and endline surveys and the different surveys should be comparable.

Recommendation 4.5(b) - Logframe outcome indicators need to be clearly defined, including the collection method, and milestones for different dates set. Progress against these milestones need to be explicitly reported on in baseline and endline surveys, mid-term review and annual reports.

Recommendation 4.5(c) – The project participant database could be designed to be able to track change over time towards graduation and include key project inputs such as asset transfer.

4.6 Mainstreaming equality, HIV and AIDS and DRR

4.6.1 Gender Equality

NoJ worked explicitly with women as representatives of their households. Most groups were entirely of women, although a few had a male secretary if required because of women's literacy constraints. The women's groups were clearly empowering of the women, with women reporting increased personal self-confidence, respect within their households and respect in the wider community through their participation in the group. Direct observation showed confidence across the group, with women keen to answer questions from the visitor and to demonstrate what had changed for

them through the project. They had discussed their membership of the group and got approval from their husbands and they discussed what they had learnt, and any household implications of what they were undertaking as part of NoJ with their husbands. In some key aspects, like cultivating field crops or marketing on the mainland, their husbands would have a greater involvement, and this seemed to work well – conforming to local gender norms and getting the task done, while not significantly undermining the women’s ownership of the process.

There were no cases reported of husbands, brothers or sons taking over project generated assets of the women, although this doesn’t mean it hasn’t happened. However it is also important to realise that the women are operating as part of a family unit. Women’s knowledge, confidence and social standing are being enhanced, but fundamental gender roles may not necessarily be being challenged.

The quantitative survey results show a remarkably positive trend in relation to gender equality and it seems likely that a significant proportion of the change is attributable to the NoJ project.

Table 4.6.1 – Gender indicators from the quantitative surveys

Issue	Baseline 2007	Endline 2011	Mainland 2011
Respondents who completely agree that ‘women should have equal rights to men’	52%	86%	
% of women involved in decision making about having children	50%	90%	90%

Girls are being explicitly included within the NoJ promoted schools projects, and the importance of closer secondary schools is particularly important for girls. A significant emphasis had also been placed on reducing early marriage and dowry payments, and most groups were confident that they had made significant steps to reducing this.

The gender situation in relation to the CBOs is more variable. In some CBOs women clearly retain ownership; however in others the involvement of male community leaders and husbands in key leadership positions (President, Secretary, Cashier etc.) seems to represent a significant shift in power from women to men. However it should be said that many women group members didn’t necessarily see it this way and seemed pleased for these men to be playing this role. Some considered the male involvement in the leadership was a temporary phase for the CBO and that women would be elected to move into those positions as their skills increased.

More guidance on the role of both community leaders and husbands in the structure of CBOs should have been provided. Different models for CBO structure could be tried, but these need to be developed out of explicit discussion on gender equality. It is probably better for men to occupy specific advisory rather than executive roles. The role of cashier/treasurer may be particularly important to be occupied by a woman.

Recommendation 4.6.1 - more explicit discussion, testing of models and provision of advice to partners is required on the role of men and community leaders in CBOs

4.6.2 Religious equality

Participants and partner staff are monitored for religious balance and this seems mainstream. However it is not quite clear how this information is used in practice.

4.6.3 Equalities – disability and age

Most group members were reasonably physically fit and not elderly. It is not clear if this was because the women group members are actually representing households, and most women with disabilities or elderly women live in households with an able-bodied or younger women to represent it. When this issue was specifically asked about, some poor older women were identified within the community who would have been eligible to be members. They wanted to join but could not because the group was not taking new members (see section 5.2).

It is not clear if some very elderly and disabled households are being excluded inadvertently from the project. This is an issue that could be monitored in NoJ-2.

4.6.4 Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS

Information and knowledge on HIV and AIDS are not very widespread in rural Bangladesh. However all NoJ groups seemed to have had discussions and training. This is a topic where more explicit training of men would have been useful.

4.6.5 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

All groups had received DRR training and the feedback to the evaluation team was that it was interesting and useful. Key responses have been raising homesteads on plinths and encouraging the storage of food and water rations. The organisation of most of the savings group (see Section 5.3) meant that group members could not withdraw or borrow money from the group savings to meet an individual emergency (e.g. getting a sick child to a hospital). This could have been designed into the system to make it more appropriate as a risk reduction mechanism.

5. EFFECTIVENESS - WHAT WORKED AND WHAT DID NOT

5.1 Introduction

The NoJ project, working through five implementation partners and two technical partners did a wide variety of activities and used a variety of different approaches. The project completion report, which is not yet available, should give an overall summary. The evaluation team, with its limited time in the field, was only able to get a flavour of a sample of what worked and what did not. The following sections provide some analysis of these observations. However it should be remembered that the sample base of many of the observations was small and for a limited timeframe.

5.2 Targeting

NoJ activities in each community started with a process of selecting the poor and very poor to be group members. This usually involved a public meeting, use of PRA tools and house-to-house visits – with eligible households being selected in a participatory and transparent manner. Women from selected households were invited by partner staff to form groups, which received training, undertook group savings, and received inputs such as improved seeds.

In addition some group members received a variety of larger assets such as goats or homestead raising. There were not sufficient funds for everyone to receive these assets, so groups selected from among their members the poorest to receive them. Therefore there was a second round of targeting.

Overall there seemed to be very wide acceptance that both rounds of targeting was accurate and fair. Only in one group was serious conflict noted by the evaluators. In a very few cases very poor households had been missed or were not present during the original round of group formation. Some partners did not encourage existing groups to accept these new members, nor did they facilitate the formation of new groups – this seems to be because the NoJ target of 10,000 HHs had been reached. This could at a later date cause problems if it means the groups became ‘fossilised’ with a particular membership, and are not able to respond to the needs of newly arrived or newly poor households. There was concern that this might mean that the very poorest households might be excluded from groups – but it was difficult to find evidence on whether this was taking place or not.

Conversely, by the end of the project, some group members had built-up assets that took them out of the extreme poor category – they had effectively graduated. It is debatable whether such members should formally graduate and leave the group, or whether they are useful mentors and support for others.

The project seemed to stop recruitment once it had 10,000 households on its books. However this did not reflect the fact that 1,300 were later re-categorised as outside of the target group and also that not all the households who participate can be expected to benefit. The re-categorisation in the targeting drift study was an interesting exercise and it was good that the project recognised the

need to keep the 'ineligible' households in the groups and with access to software, while concentrating the hardware on the extreme poor.

Recommendation 5.2a – groups should be encouraged to accept new eligible members, with new groups being set-up if necessary.

Recommendation 5.2b – future projects should consider whether they need to work with more households than the target number to allow for targeting drift and to reflect the percentage of HHs that are expected to benefit as defined in the objective.

Overall targeting was found to be accurate and had been implemented in a way that had been accepted by the community and had not created divisions.

5.3 Community Organisation Approaches and Empowerment

5.3.1 Theory of Change

The project developed CBO formation and development guidelines with participation of the partner NGOs giving the objectives, roles and responsibilities of the NGOs. It is helpful if the theory of change behind the new community organisation is clear so that 'form' of organisation can be developed in line with the 'function' it is expected to perform. In practice the most appropriate 'form' for the new organisational structures created by NoJ was challenging because the CBOs tended to have dual functions of being an apex body for their member groups and a 'Development Committee' for the wider committee.

5.3.2 Groups

485 groups, each with around 20-30 members from poor and very poor households, nearly all of which were women, were created by NoJ. In the partner implemented areas the groups were formed first, with the CBO developed out of the groups. In the Dimla direct delivery area CBOs were formed first and the CBO formed the groups.

The groups were dynamic and empowering for the women involved. The function of the groups seem to be a mixture of:

- Group based saving (usually for a group IGA);
- Organisation of a group IGA and to be the recipients of the IGA profits;
- Distribution of assets available for all group members (e.g. improved seeds);
- Selection of recipients for assets when not enough for all (e.g. goats, sheep, poultry, homestead raising, solar lights etc.)
- Training and group discussions on wide variety of topics including early marriage, family planning, hygiene, immunisation, leadership, livestock keeping, crop production, marketing, DRR, HIV and AIDS, kitchen gardening etc.
- Organisation of a pre-school (which might be open to children for all HHs or just group members) or other community projects like a bazaar (market).

- Acting as a link to service providers such as the NGO and government health services, safety net provision, veterinary services etc.
- Organisation of community events, such as International Women’s Day Celebrations.

For most of these functions the group as set-up was very appropriate. However some training such as for HIV and AIDS, hygiene, community sanitation, early marriage, improved crops and immunisation is important for the whole community, not just women representatives of the poorest households. Some partners (e.g. ASOD) had recognised this by making some training open to all or to husbands of group members.

It is important that schooling and immunisation camps are available to all children, not just those from poor households, and this seems to be the approach taken by most groups. Indeed the groups seemed to have gained community respect by organising events and services open to all.

Recommendation 5.3.2(a) – implementing partners need to differentiate between those functions which are appropriate to be delivered through women’s groups representing only the poorer households and other functions that are more appropriate to be delivered to a wider group or the whole community¹⁴.

The savings function of the groups varied. In the majority of cases members contributed to setting up a group income generating activity (IGA) such as cattle fattening. The profit from the IGA was then divided between members. These IGAs were often quite successful. However the ‘individual saving’ and ‘meeting emergency needs’ functions of most (but not all) groups were not yet generally developed. In most cases savers were not able to withdraw their savings in times of need, nor could they get loans either to meet unforeseen expenditure (e.g. taking a child to hospital) or to start their own household level IGA. This left most household still reliant on moneylenders or neighbours, despite having savings.

Table 5.3.2 – Savings and use of moneylenders

Issue	Baseline 2007	Endline 2011	Mainland 2011
Engage in savings activities	15%	85%	63%
Access to informal loans	58%	54%	63%

The table shows that although savings have increased enormously the access to loans has remained unchanged or been slightly reduced. Qualitative interviews confirmed that when in need of money many group members went to moneylenders because they were not able to access their group savings. Some savings groups do provide loans and others expressed an interest to do so.

Recommendation 5.3.2(b) – Savings groups could be developed to enable savers to take loans against their savings for emergencies or to start IGAs

Some groups have withdrawn their savings from the bank on the end of NoJ and distributed them to the members – effectively winding up the savings group. However some of these have also re-

¹⁴ It is worth remembering ‘form follows function’.

started saving, but are depositing the money with the CBO. This seems a slightly risky strategy¹⁵ and it would probably be better for either individual groups to have their own bank accounts or for them to recycle the money through their members as suggested in Recommendation 5.3.2(b). Where distances to the bank are a limiting factor it may be possible to enable groups to use the emerging mobile banking technology.

5.3.3 Community Based Organisations (CBOs)

22 CBOs were formed by NoJ, since they were formed after the groups most have been in existence 1-2 years and are relatively young. Typically the CBO is comprised of one representative of each of its member groups (often about 20 groups per CBO) and about 2-5 co-opted men who may be community leaders or husbands of group members. Some CBOs are still run by women, with the men playing a back-up role. However in others, men have been given most of the key posts in the executive committee (e.g. President, Secretary, Cashier). In the latter, women group members were not actually complaining about what seemed to the evaluation team to be 'elite capture'.

Some CBOs were observed playing a really exciting community development role. In one case a local election candidate was trying to persuade the CBO to endorse him (the CBO represented 400+ votes) and the CBO was clear what commitments they would expect from a candidate and how they would follow-up to ensure that promises were kept.

CBOs are performing two different core functions and the potential ambiguity between these core functions may cause problems in the longer term:

Apex body – of the different member groups, providing support services to individual groups and providing a combined voice of the groups (e.g. for advocacy) and an ability for groups to coordinate in activities that are wider than a single group. For this function the involvement of non-group member may not be appropriate.

Whole community representative body – this is a function the CBOs have been encouraged to play and which has been facilitated by co-opting male community leaders who are not group members into the CBO leadership. This has been successful in the short term (and while the CBO has been receiving support from NGO staff and resources), with CBOs being part of the organisers of vaccination camps, a bazaar, a secondary school etc. However it is unclear how sustainable this role will be, as the CBO is not constituted to represent the whole community – it is not structured like a village development committee (VDC) (with for instance the committee being elected by the whole community on a regular basis), but it is taking on the role of a VDC. It will be very interesting to see if this role is sustained in the longer term¹⁶.

Many CBOs have their own savings scheme for those that sit on it. This is worrying as it seems to indicate that those elected to the CBO are treating it like 'their group' rather than an apex body, or VDC, on which they are a temporary representative.

¹⁵ There were discussions with group members on different savings strategies at the end of the project, and it was up to group members to decide what to do.

¹⁶ In Dimla the CDCs had gone through planning processes to represent the needs of the wider community. The much more recently formed CBOs of the other parts of NoJ have not really developed this function yet.

Recommendation 5.3.3 – more clarity is needed on the role of the CBO (apex or VDC?), once the role is clear this needs to be reflected in the structure, with greater clarity on the role of co-opted leaders and husbands, to avoid elite capture.

5.4 Training and Learning

A significant quantity of training had been provided to group members and this seems to have been successful in developing skills and building self-confidence. However continued training input, even if at a lower intensity, is likely to be needed to keep the group members learning. Literacy training could be key longer term input.

NoJ had organised training for group chosen individuals such as paravets and community birth attendants (CBAs). The paravets (all/mainly men?) had received both an initial training and a refresher and some were operating effectively as small businesses, selling livestock health services. One had set-up a stall in the newly created bazaar. The paravets seem well linked to the Government veterinary services.

The CBAs were generally working as traditional birth attendants before NoJ and received a short additional training (3-5 days– which seems short, although some apparently have received more). They receive a simple kit, but don't seem to get it replaced or to receive further in-service training from the health department. The income generating opportunities from being a CBA seem limited, with limited payment or gifts of cloth or food, and sometimes they only get 'a meal'. CBAs seem to be replenishing their kits from their own pockets rather than from profits.

Recommendation 5.4 – further work may be needed to ensure CBAs receive sufficient training and back-up and how to make the service sustainable.

5.5 Asset Transfer

Assets included 'large items' like goats or sheep which were not enough to go around all group members, so the poorer received these; and smaller items like seed and saplings which were distributed more widely.

Goats seem to have been particularly successful, with many women group members able to track a path from receiving the goat and using the offspring to either build a herd or pay for other assets like a cow, rent land, improved house etc. The experience with sheep and chickens was more mixed.

4,088 goats, 3,173 chickens and 128 sheep were transferred as assets to approximately 4,700 households.

There was some debate in the project whether, with a limited budget, straight asset transfer could be afforded. In some cases 'passing on the gift' approaches were tried, in which the first female offspring from the sheep or goat would be passed on to another group member. This increases the number of beneficiaries but delays the benefit to each beneficiary (increasing the risk of the asset being lost before the household is lifted out of poverty).

Asset transfer seems to be successful, but this needs to be quantified with more rigorous monitoring in future. Neither the graduation study nor the endline survey attempted to correlate the type of support a HH had achieved with whether they had successfully graduated. This could also be tracked through the participant database.

Recommendation 5.5 – the outcome from asset transfer (e.g. on achieving graduation) needs to be monitored carefully in order to justify the cost. There may be an opportunity to revisit the NOJ-1 graduates to understand the key factors enabling their graduation.

5.6 Income Generating Activities (IGAs)

5.6.1 Crops

NoJ supported a number of IGAs, the most important of which was improved crop farming. This involved improved seed (e.g. BR33 rice and a better storing variety of onion) and the development of some crops that were not widely grown before the project. In particular a variety of onion that stored well enabled farmers to delay sales until the price rises, sell little by little as money is needed by the household and even delay sales until the water is high enough to market direct by boat.

The production increase from the agricultural products is significant:

Table 5.6 – Outcome from agricultural programme 2010/11¹⁷

Crop	Number HHs growing	Acres	Value	Net Profit	Profit/HH Taka (\$) ¹⁸	Profit/Acre Taka (\$)
Onion	2578	1359	15,700,000	14,200,000	5,500 (\$69)	8,830 (\$110)
BRR133 Rice	2040	747	8,552,000	7,000,000	3,400 (\$42)	9,400 (\$117)
Sweet gourd	842	66	1,017,000	680,000	810 (\$10)	10,300 (\$129)
Groundnut	558	81	1,887,000	1,409,000	2,525 (\$31)	17,395 (\$217)
Carrot	295	129	1,029,000	423,000	1,430 (\$18)	3,278 (\$40)
Jute	101	33.7	2,000,000	1,730,000	17,130 (\$214)	51,335 (\$641)
lentil	75	22.7	606,000	529,000	7,050 (\$88)	22,300 (\$290)
Pointed gourd	65	21.7	4,370,000	4,190,000	64,000 (\$800)	20,100 (\$251)
Garlic	43	7	689,000	605,000	14,100 (\$180)	14,100 (\$180)
Wheat	32	10.7	487,000	397,000	9,200 (\$120)	37,100 (\$463)
Tomato	20	1.7	29,000	24,000	1,200 (\$15)	14,100 (\$180)
Potato	15	1.3	47,000	34,000	2,300 (\$28)	26,200 (\$330)

¹⁷ Data adapted from JOBS completion report using last year of production under NoJ for each crop type

¹⁸ At US \$1 = 80 Bangladesh Taka

Crop	Number HHs growing	Acres	Value	Net Profit	Profit/HH Taka (\$) ¹⁸	Profit/Acre Taka (\$)
Radish	15	0.4	23,000	18,000	1,200 (\$15)	45,000 (\$560)
Cabbage	9	2.4	174,000	110,000	12,200 (\$150)	46,000 (\$570)
Cauliflower	8	2	64,000	51,000	6,400 (\$80)	26,000 (\$320)
Total	5,380¹⁹	2485.6	28,122,000	31,400,000 (\$392,000)	5,800 (\$70)	12,600 (\$160)

The table needs to be interpreted with caution as the profit figure is not necessarily the benefit created by the project, as some households would probably have been making a profit from crops even without the project. The main conclusions from the table are:

- The crop programme generated nearly \$400,000 in profits for farmers in 2010/11, about \$70 per household per year;
- The graduation study suggested a monthly per household income of Tk 694 is required to be considered graduated – or around Tk 8,300 per year. The figures above suggest that for many participants crop production was nearly sufficient to lift them above the graduation level 9 and that this would probably be achieved with a little extra income from day labouring or livestock sales);
- Onion and BRRI-33 were the interventions that involved by far the most households and produced the most total income;
- Sweet gourd, pointed gourd, groundnut, carrot and jute were also important and produced significant income, the market was not however assured for carrot and the sweet gourd was heavy and had high relative transport costs;
- The traditional crop jute produced the highest profits per acre, followed by lentils and wheat; radish and cabbage also gave high profits on a small scale;

Overall the crop production intervention appears to have been successful and it seems likely that some of the gains will be sustained as farmers keep their own improved seed or buy from input suppliers.

Recommendation 5.6.1 - NoJ has showed that the char land can produce significant profits. This may increase the incentive for land grabbing. Therefore agricultural programming needs to be linked to land rights advocacy.

5.6.2 Livestock fattening

JOBS used a revolving loan system to enable households to buy cattle or sheep for fattening and resale. A 10% interest rate was charged on the loan and the fund maintained its value during the

¹⁹ Some participants were involved in more than one crop

project. 344 participants bought cattle with an average profit per fattened animal of Tk. 9,190 (\$115) and 71 bought sheep with an average profit of Tk. 1,555 (\$20).

This intervention was interesting as it appears to have produced significant benefits at relatively low cost. If the component continues into NoJ-2 it would be helpful to track loan recipients to see if they graduate from using loans to saving sufficient money to buy their own young stock for fattening.

5.6.3 Other IGAs

Various other IGAs were piloted including cap making (*topi*), embroidery on saris and adding value to crops by food processing (e.g. *muri*). Drop-out rates have been very high and none of these have really proved successful for a number of reasons:

- The quality, volume and/or production deadlines were not sufficient to really interest the business buyer;
- The financial returns to the char women were not usually sufficient to encourage them to take the IGA as a significant enterprise;
- Sometimes the cost to the producer (e.g. in loss of time not earning from other sources) of attending training and costs of setting up the business was prohibitive.

The Chars, and char dwellers houses, may not be the appropriate place to develop these type of enterprises. Certainly a more robust analysis is required before assuming that interventions like these will be profitable. JOBS however is to be commended for trying many options.

5.7 Market linkage

Section 3.4 explained how market linkages were perhaps less of a constraint than thought in the original design – with issues of production volume, time of selling, transport costs and type and quality of product being offered for sale all being relatively more important. Nevertheless NoJ tried a number of approaches to marketing:

- **Special links** - building links between char producers and specific firms, sometimes these were dependent on personal links between the partner and someone in the company, and sometimes they included ‘special deals’ with the company persuaded to offer a ‘special price’ to support poor char dwellers. These types of links have not proved very successful, being rather dependent on the individuals concerned and therefore outside of the control of the char dwellers. ‘Sweetheart’ deals should probably not be considered ‘sustainable market linkage’.
- **Local market** – linking farmers to middlemen in the local market, including simple actions like sharing mobile phone numbers, proved quite successful.
- **Group marketing** – the JOBS completion report claims there are 550 active group leaders selling value added crops, however only a few examples were found during evaluation visits. However group bulking of produce and negotiation of price and transport has the potential to improve returns for farmers.
- **A bazaar on the char** – one excellent example of this was seen in the ASOD area. It was not only providing convenient market access for crops and livestock, but crucially provided market access

directly to women. Indeed group member women were running some of the shops. Moreover the bazaar was a marketing point for livestock remedies. It seems likely that there might have been opportunities to establish additional bazaars if this had been more of a focus of this component.

Recommendation 5.7 – market linkage should start by trying to link producers through the local market; increasing competition between middlemen, group bulking and negotiation of price. The establishment of local bazaars on the chars also needs to be considered. Producing the right product, in the right quantity and at the right time is very important.

5.8 Advocacy and rights-based approaches

5.8.1 Introduction

The rights of char dwellers was central to the NoJ concept – giving them fair access to NGO, Government, private sector and donor resources and services. Advocacy was seen as a key means to establishing access to their rights. The NGO Unnayan Shamannay (US) was contracted to lead on the advocacy component. US mainly worked at the national level, in particular producing 70 episodes of a half-hour TV programme for Bangla Vision which brought char issues to a national audience. This was helped by the charismatic involvement of Dr Atiur Rahman, who was later appointed Governor of Bangladesh Bank. Dr Rahman similarly set-up a high profile national Char Alliance to lead on advocacy issues.

In the last two years of the project, with less involvement by Dr Rahman, national level advocacy has been much reduced despite US receiving significant funding. At a local level the involvement of US and the national Char Alliance has been very limited, however implementing partners have themselves lead in both their own advocacy, usually relating to local government services, and setting up sub-District level Char Alliances. US provided very limited capacity building support and technical advice to implementing partners, although some training was provided.

5.8.2 Advocacy Strategy and Theory of Change

Advocacy needs to have a clear strategy and be grounded in a clear ‘theory of change’. This includes:

- Prioritising policies and practices that need to change at different levels and identifying which of these are amenable to change through advocacy;
- Using force field or other analysis, develop a theory for how each change can be achieved, including how to motivate change, identifying and reducing opposition to change, and motivation for maintaining the change etc.
- Identify and involve potential allies, including beneficiaries.
- Identify clear indicators of change and the means of monitoring that change has occurred and been maintained.

An advocacy strategy for NoJ was produced in 2008, which gave a lot of background but was weak on policy and practice prioritisation, strategy and the theory for change. There was an extensive

review of the char context (20 pages), but then a failure to pinpoint exactly which policies or practices the NoJ Project intended to change (therefore also few clear targets to monitor results against). There is a short section on 'strategy' (1.5 pages), which helpfully identifies the different levels for action, but doesn't really spell out the theory of change (e.g. why 'sensitization of important stakeholders' will lead to them changing their behaviour).

Advocacy is not easy and NoJ is commended for producing a strategy document, however there is opportunity for further development of capacity on this.

Recommendation 5.8.2(a) – advocacy should be based on a clear strategy prioritising policies and practices to be addressed, and for each policy or practice identifying the drivers of change, potential allies and potential opponents. The potential for advocacy on localised issues is significant, but requires more support given to implementing partners. Empowered beneficiaries can play an important role in demanding services and practice change from Government officials and through elected representatives.

Recommendation 5.8.2(b) – land access is a critical but difficult advocacy challenge in the Chars, which requires prioritisation and a clear strategy.

5.8.3 Institutionalising service provision improvements

Partners encouraged improvements to services in the Chars using a number of strategies:

- Exposure visits of key officials (e.g. UNOs) to the chars so that they 'understand the suffering of the Char dwellers';
- Facilitating service provision by Government staff (e.g. Health, family planning, veterinary) through the organisation of health camps, provision of or paying for transport etc.
- Forming a local Char Alliance to appeal to service providers to do more for the char dwellers.

This approach produced some results, particularly when the UNO became committed. The problem has been however that the change has been at a personal level, but is not backed-up by institutional change and therefore has reverted when key staff are transferred or the organisation of camps and/or the provision of transport ends.

In one sub-District the change was institutionalised with the UNO setting up a Char Development Committee, chaired by himself, and involving government officers and NGO staff. This committee actually plans the service delivery. The UNO has since been transferred but the committee has remained and services have remained at an improved level. It may be possible to replicate this approach more widely. It may also be possible to institutionalise service provision by working through the UP standing committees.

In most sub-Districts, services seem to be reducing with the closure of NoJ-1, but it is difficult to say by how much as no clear written norms of acceptable level of service have been defined and the change is not being monitored. In this case a clear definition of what char dwellers can expect would make it easier to hold the government to account. Definition of service levels therefore can be a type of institutionalisation of the change.

Recommendation 5.8.3 – improved services need to be institutionalised within the local government framework. This may involve setting-up a sub-district level Char Development Committee and a clear definition of the services individual Chars should expect (frequency, location, level of staff etc.) This in turn enables more focussed advocacy when backsliding occurs by char dweller organisations (e.g. CBOs), the CAs, NGOs and Char elected representatives.

5.8.4 Sub-district Char Alliances (CA)

CAs have been set-up by the implementing partners in the different sub-Districts. Those interviewed by the evaluation team were quite variable in quality. At their best (e.g. Pabna sadar CA²⁰) they are a group of concerned, articulate and influential people with links to a range of local organisations. As an alliance they are able to assert highly targeted influence and also to provide key contacts and information on issues like legal rights etc. it is likely that they will continue their activities with fairly minimal input from the NoJ partner.

Other CAs were made up of members, who while still committed to char dwellers, had much fewer skills and influence.

Recommendation 5.8.4 – it is very important to have people of sufficient influence and capacity in local Char Alliances. In some cases it may be more appropriate for the CA to be convened at the District level, although much of its advocacy may be directed at the sub-District level.

5.8.5 National Level Advocacy and Char Alliance

The Bangla Vision television programme was a major achievement. Awareness raising on the television was complemented by advocacy by the Char Alliance. Both main political parties included specific policies for the Chars in their election manifestos, char issues were included in the PRSP and there was a separate allocation in the national budget for Char people for the first time in fiscal year 2009-10. **These are major achievements which NoJ should be proud of.** However in the last two years there has been less progress, although there have been some useful meetings with MPs. There is a need for clearer prioritisation of advocacy targets and strategy for achieving these.

The size of both the CLP and SHOUHARDO provide opportunities for influence and risks from being swamped. Although there is a member of the CLP staff on the national CA core membership, this does not seem to have resulted in a clear institutional link between CLP advocacy issues and the CA. There may also be an opportunity for closer advocacy links between SHOUHARDO and the CA.

At operational levels there is an opportunity for greater influencing and learning between NoJ/Concern, CLP and SHOUHARDO (probably trilaterally rather than through the CA).

Recommendation 5.8.5(a) – national level advocacy requires a clear prioritisation of advocacy targets, a clear strategy to achieve the targets and clearer monitoring to track progress.

²⁰ They had discussed Char services with the MP, District Commissioner, Union Chairman, UNO, FP Officer, Livestock Officer as well as organising their own activities in the chars including several health camps etc

Recommendation 5.8.5(b) - there are opportunities for closer collaboration with both CLP and SHOUHARDO at the operational level for learning and at the advocacy level for policy influencing.

5.9 Exit Strategy

Concern encouraged and facilitated each partner and its direct delivery team to have a 'phase-out' and a 'phase-over' plan. This was an example of good practice. However understandably most partners are waiting and hoping for NoJ-2 while also tentatively implementing an exit from NoJ-1.

One consequence of the end of NoJ-1 has been some groups withdrawing all their money from their bank account and distributing it to the members. This has been accompanied by trying to re-start savings linked to the CBO. However of further discussion some of the groups in question would have preferred to continue using their own bank account.

The ending of NoJ-1 has shown many groups and CBOs continuing to meet and save, and their members continuing with the practices learnt under NoJ. There have also been some relatively small but critical weak links in the sustainable continuation of some activities. Some CAs were prepared to continue without funding, but nobody had been tasked with calling the next meeting, so the meetings didn't happen.

A significant improvement in continuity of either NoJ-1 or NoJ-2 could be achieved by medium term low expenditure advisory and logistic support to organisations like the groups, CBOs and CA. This could include a degree of ongoing monitoring.

Recommendation 5.9 – make budgetary provision for low level support (around 10% of previous per annum expenditure) for a period of around 2 years following the end of the main project implementation phase. This could significantly increase sustainability of project outputs at a relatively low cost and improve learning from longer term monitoring.

6. LESSONS LEARNT AND SUGGESTIONS FOR NoJ – 2

- (a) **NOJ-2 partners should be chosen on effective field performance in NoJ-1** – there was significant differences in performance between partners²¹.
- (b) **Group savings to be improved to provide security and loans for members** – there are opportunities to experiment with the rapidly developing mobile telephone banking. Enabling members to either withdraw money or take a loan from group funds either in time of need or to invest in an IGA increases the benefit to members from such saving schemes.
- (c) **More flexibility on group membership, enabling new very poor to join, clarity on whether graduates should leave and enabling new groups to form.** If the groups are seen as permanent, rather than just linked to the project’s timespan, then means of joining and leaving need to be present. Groups should also be able to split, groups end and new groups start – the group process should be dynamic and meet the needs of members. **Greater clarity and guidance on the role of CBOs in relation to representing the wider community and the governance role of husbands and community leaders within the CBO.** There is nothing wrong with trying different approaches to CBO organisation, but field level development organisers need to understand the gender issues and power dynamics which they are working with. There is significant space for reflection and learning on these issues.
- (e) **Clearer strategy for ensuring increased sustainability of Government service improvements based on institutional changes and perhaps more Char Development Committees at sub-district level.** This may also involve more engagement with Sub-district standing committees. There needs to be a clear ‘Theory of Change’ with built-in reflection and learning.
- (f) **Clarity on level of person required for local Char Alliances and whether these should be at District or Sub-district level.** Involvement of individuals and organisations with significant influence is important, as well as access to specific skills (e.g. legal expertise).
- (g) **Clear focus on community organisational capacity, women’s empowerment, agriculture and land access.** Clear indicators and milestones will need to be developed and monitored.
- (h) **More focussed asset transfer, social protection and graduation on transparent pre-agreed timeline.** The ‘Graduation Model’ represents a more structured and time-bound approach to reaching the poor than used in NoJ-1²². Social protection may be used to bridge the period between receipt of asset and when the asset starts being productive – to prevent the very poor from losing the asset. There may be opportunities to learn from the CLP experience.

²¹ These are not reported here because the sample of work for each partner was quite small and the design of the evaluation was to evaluate the whole of NoJ rather than the individual partners work.

²² For instance see the emerging thinking from CGAP in Focus Note 69 (2011) – Reaching the Poorest: Lessons from the Graduation Model

- (i) **Market links to be more focussed on the local market, with more group marketing and development of bazaars in the chars.** This builds on what worked in NoJ-1. 'Middlemen' may play a valid function in the market chain, the trick may be to ensure they compete with each other and don't become exploitative monopolies.
- (j) **Clearer focus for National advocacy and learning with, if possible, more collaboration with CLP and SHOUHARDO.** Advocacy needs to move beyond creating sympathy for char dwellers to focus on specific and changeable rights issues. Land is a key issue.
- (k) **Clear baseline, endline and indicators explicitly linked to the logframe and graduation process.** There may be more opportunities for using the participant database to track both inputs and outcomes at a household level.
- (l) **A 'post NoJ-2' phase-out period, providing limited support and learning over perhaps two years to ensure maximum sustainability and return on NoJ investment.** A small amount of money (perhaps 10% of annual budget) could considerably improve sustainability and increase the long-term return on investment.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Ref	Recommendation
4.2	The role of the Concern Project Officer (PO) needs to be clearly defined and understood by all stakeholders. A greater focus on monitoring would have been helpful in NoJ-1. It may be better to locate the PO somewhere other in a partner's office.
4.6.1	More explicit discussion, testing of models and provision of advice to partners is required on the role of men and community leaders in CBOs
5.2a	Groups should be encouraged to accept new eligible members, with new groups being set-up if necessary.
5.2b	Future projects should consider whether they need to work with more households than the target number to allow for targeting drift and to reflect the percentage of HHs that are expected to benefit as defined in the objective.
5.3.2(a)	Implementing partners need to differentiate between those functions which are appropriate to be delivered through women's groups representing only the poorer households and other functions that are more appropriate to be delivered to a wider group or the whole community.
5.3.2(b)	Savings groups could be developed to enable savers to take loans against their savings for emergencies or to start IGAs
5.3.3	More clarity is needed on the role of the CBO (apex or VDC?), once the role is clear this needs to be reflected in the structure, with greater clarity on the role of co-opted leaders and husbands, to avoid elite capture.
5.4	Further work may be needed to ensure CBAs receive sufficient training and back-up and how to make the service sustainable.
5.5	The outcome from asset transfer (e.g. on achieving graduation) needs to be monitored carefully in order to justify the cost. There may be an opportunity to revisit the NOJ-1 graduates to understand the key factors enabling their graduation.
5.6.1	NoJ has showed that the char land can produce significant profits. This may increase the incentive for land grabbing. Therefore agricultural programming needs to be linked to land rights advocacy.
5.7	Market linkage should start by trying to link producers through the local market; increasing competition between middlemen, group bulking and negotiation of price. The establishment of local bazaars on the chars also needs to be considered. Producing the right product, in the right quantity and at the right time is also important.

Ref	Recommendation
5.8.2(a)	Advocacy should be based on a clear strategy prioritising policies and practices to be addressed, and for each identifying the drivers of change, potential allies and potential opponents. The potential for advocacy on localised issues is significant but requires more support given to implementing partners. Empowered beneficiaries can play an important role in demanding services and practice change from Government officials and through elected representatives.
5.8.2(b)	Land access is a critical but difficult advocacy challenge in the Chars, which requires prioritisation and a clear strategy.
5.8.3	Improved services need to be institutionalised within the local government framework. This may involve setting-up a sub-district level Char Development Committee and a clear definition of the services individual Chars should expect (frequency, location, level of staff etc.) This in turn enables more focussed advocacy when backsliding occurs by char dweller organisations (e.g. CBOs), the CAs, NGOs and Char elected representatives.
5.8.4	It is very important to have people of sufficient influence and capacity in local Char Alliances. In some cases it may be more appropriate for the CA to be convened at the District level, although much of its advocacy may be directed at the sub-District level.
5.8.5(a)	National level advocacy requires a clearer prioritisation of advocacy targets, a clearer strategy to achieve the targets and clearer monitoring to track progress.
5.8.5(b)	There are opportunities for closer collaboration with both CLP and SHOUHARDO at the operational level for learning and at the advocacy level for policy influencing.
5.9	Make budgetary provision for low level support (around 10% of previous per annum expenditure) for a period of around 2 years following the end of the main project implementation phase. This could significantly increase sustainability of project outputs at a relatively low cost and improve learning from longer term monitoring.

ANNEX 1 – PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Name of the PNGO	Name of the Upazila	Name of the district	Name of the Personnel/Groups	Portfolio of the Personnel
JSKS	Bera	Pabna		Group 1: Noboganga Mohila Unnayan Samittee, Gongrajani Char
				Group 2: Jamuna Mohila Unnayan Samittee, Bongrajani Char
			Shamsur Rahman Somej	Chairman, Masumdia Union (01)
			Md. Jahurul Alam	Upazila Livestock Officer (01)
				Executive Director-JSKS and NoJ team members (06)
				Family Welfare Volunteer (01)
				Family Welfare Visitor (01)
UDPS	Bera	Pabna	Atur Rahman Tipu	Chairman, Dhalar Char Union (01)
				Group 1: Kalmi Mohila Dal, Dhalar Char
				Group 2: Aam Mohila Dal, Dhalar Char
				Pre-school Management Committee
				NoJ team members (04)
BOSS	Pabna Sadar	Pabna		Upazila Livestock Officer (01)
				Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer) (01)
				Upazila Family Planning Officer (01)
				Upazila Youth Development Officer (01)
				Pabna Local Char Alliance (10)
				Group 1: Joba dal. Bagunda-Batanipara
			Md Hashmat Ali	Community People , Bagunda village
			Mini Khatun	Community people, Bagunda village
UDPS	Lalmonirhat Sadar	Lalmonirhat		Chairman, Sadar Upazila Parishad (01)
				Upazila Agriculture Officer (01)
				Chairman, Khuniagach Union (01)
				Lalmonirhat Sadar Local Char Alliance (04)
				NoJ team members (02)
				Group 1: Sonali Mohila Dal, Khuniagach
				Gr. 2: Santana Mohila Dal, Khunai ngach
				Santana Co-operative Society (CBO)
			Aminul Islam	Chief Coordinator, UDPS
OVA	Aditmari	Lalmonirhat	Parvez Hasan	Upazila Nirbahi Officer –UNO (Chief Executive Officer of Upazila) (01)
				Upazila Agriculture Officer (01)
				Chairman, Mohishkhocha Union Council (01)

Name of the PNGO	Name of the Upazila	Name of the district	Name of the Personnel/Groups	Portfolio of the Personnel
				Upazila Livestock Officer (01)
				Group 1: Chander desh Mohila Dal, Mohishkchocha
				Group:2 : Nayar Hat Mohila Dal , Mohishkchocha
				CBO: Balapara Co-operative Society
OVA	Kaliganj	Lalmonirhat	AZM Ershad Ahsan Habib	Upazila Nirbahi Officer –UNO (Chief Executive Officer of Upazila) (01)
			Ahadul Hossain Chowdhury	Chairman, Votmari Union Council (01)
			Md Shamsuddin Mia	Upazila Agriculture Officer (01)
				Chairperson, Local Char Alliance (01)
				CBO: Ashar Alo Co-operative Society, Sholmari, Kaliganj
				NoJ Junior High School (04)
				Group 1: Aam Dal (group)
				Group 2: Jam Dal (group)
				Group 3: Kamranga Dal (group)
				NoJ-OVA team members (06)
				Seed Vendor, Kaliganj Bazar
				Seed Vendor, Kaliganj Bazar
ASOD	Hatibandha	Lalmonirhat	Md. Ashrafuzzaman	Upazila Nirbahi Officer –UNO (Chief Executive Officer of Upazila) (01)
				Hatibandha Upazila Parishad (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Women Vice-Chairman) (03)
			Md. Osman Goni	Chairman, Patikapara Union Council (01)
			Md Nuruzzaman	Chairperson, Local Char Alliance (01)
			Md. Nazmul Haque	Upazilla Family Planning Officer, Hatibandha (01)
				Group 1: Karnafuli Dal (group) , Paschim Holdibari Union
				Group 2: Meghna Dal (group), Purba Dawabari Union
				NoJ Hat (NoJ Bazar)
				CBO 1: Paschim Holdibari Samaj Kallyan Samittee
				CBO 2: Purba Dawabari Samaj Kallyan Samittee
			Aminur Rahman	Deputy Chief Executive, ASOD
Direct Delivery Team	Dimla	Nilphamari		Upazila Nirbahi Officer –UNO (Chief Executive Officer of Upazila) (01)

Name of the PNGO	Name of the Upazila	Name of the district	Name of the Personnel/Groups	Portfolio of the Personnel
				Upazila Livestock Officer (01)
				Chairman, Upazila Parishad
				Upazila Social Welfare officer (01)
				CBO: Akota Jano Unnayan Sangstha
				CBO: Daradi Samaj Unnayan Sangstha
				Group Member as Seed Vendor
				Group Member as Seed Vendor
Unnayan Shamannay		Dhaka		Unnayan Shamannay team (03)
				National Char Alliance (07)
JOBS			Moshiur Rahman	Project Manager
			Nurun Nabi	Technical Officer
			Iqbal Hossain	Technical Officer
SHOUHARD O, CARE				Regional Program Manager Regional Tech. Manager-Empowerment Regional Tech. Manager-Infrastructure
CLP, DFID			Steward Kenward	Head, ILM, CLP
			Rafiqul Isklam	
Concern/Project staff			Golam Sarowar Talukder	Project Coordinator-NoJ
			Subhash Chandra Roy	Ex. Project Officer, NoJ
			Shantanu Shekhor Roy	Ex. Project Officer, Dimla Team, NoJ
			Shah Alam	Ex. Field Facilitator, Dimla, NoJ
			Mobasharul Islam,	M&E Specialist-Char Programme
			Imran Ansari	Head of Char Programme
			Nils Den Tex	Assistant Country Director-Programme
			A.K.M. Musha	Country Director

ANNEX 2 – DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

ASOD 2011 – Project Completion Report

BOSS 2011 – Project Completion Report

Char Alliance 2011 – Achievements of CA during the last five years

Char Alliance ? – Terms of Reference

Concern 20110– Char Programme Framework (Draft)

Concern 2011 – Country Strategy Paper

CLP 2011 – wide range of factsheets

JOBS 2011 – Project Completion Report

JSKS 2011 – Project Completion Report

NoJ 2006 – Project Proposal

NoJ 2007 – Baseline Survey report

NoJ 2007 – Cumulative Monitoring Report

NoJ 2007 – Key advocacy issues and budget allocation to them

NOJ 2008 – A Strategy for Advocacy

NoJ 2008 – Cumulative Monitoring Report

NoJ 2008 – Data from 2008 outcome monitoring

NoJ 2009 – Cumulative Monitoring Report

NoJ 2010 – Rapid Outcome Monitoring Assessment Report

NoJ 2011 – Report on Graduation Study

NoJ 2011 – Endline Survey Report

OVA 2011 – Project Completion Report

UDPS 2011 – Project Completion Report

Unnayan Shamannay 2011 – project Completion Report

Lesson learnt (5 years) workshop report

ANNEX 3 – EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Background

Concern Worldwide is a non-governmental, international, humanitarian organisation dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the ultimate elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries.

Concern has been operational in Bangladesh since February 1972 after the Liberation War. Concern commenced its work with relief and rehabilitation programme to address the need of internally displaced people due to war. Since then, Concern programmes gradually expanded across the country both in remote rural and urban areas. To respond the needs of the society and the people and to cope with development changes, Concern shifted its approaches from relief operation towards development, direct delivery to partnership with government and non-government organizations to broadening the lasting and deeper impact of the intervention on the lives of the extreme poor people.

Through the rigorous exercise of organizational restructuring in 2008, Concern's programmes set out to transform the lives of poor people through a sound understanding of the contexts which determine the nature of their poverty. This transformation of lives led Concern to operate interventions through four contextual programme: *char*, *haor*, *urban and socially excluded minority* in remote rural areas, poor people in urban slums and on pavements and people who are poor as a result of being socially marginalised and excluded by the rest of society.

Subsequently an intensive study carried out in 2009 for contextual analysis to understand life and livelihood of Char dwellers and then developed Char programme framework (for details, please refer to Char programme framework). This framework will guide Concern in implementing programmes, defining advocacy strategies in addition to aligning existing projects with the framework to maximize impact of Concern's work and plan future growth in Char areas.

The project which will be evaluated is called '*Nodi O Jibon* -NoJ (Island Chars Resource Mobilisation) funded by Irish Aid (MAPS) and Concern Worldwide with a budget of Euro 3.1 million for 5 years. This project has started in April 2006 (will end in March 2011) based on the lessons learned from previous project in Char areas of Dimla Upazila titled 'Rural Development Project -RDP' that was implemented from April 2000 to March 2006. In addition, the NoJ was designed to reach the extreme poor people of island chars and address the MDG (1, 3, and 5) and the key issues they face include inadequate earning and employment opportunity, natural disasters, low or no access to government services (health, safety net, education), high level of existence of long term debts and migration through mobilising resources from all corners.

The NoJ project has been supporting over 10,000 extreme poor families (covering 50,000 population directly) in the 51 remote char islands of 24 unions under 7 upazilas of three northern districts (Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Pabna) through five implementing and two strategic partner organisations (ASOD, OVA, UDPS, BOSS, JSKS, JOBS-IRIS and Unnayan Shamannay). The project strives to achieve the goal 'Extreme poor families living on island chars in Bangladesh achieve improved livelihood security' and the Immediate objective '10,000 extreme poor families in Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Pabna Districts benefit from expanded NGO services, improved GoB services, private sector linkages and foundation investments directed towards achieving services or investments of comparable quality to those provided on the mainland and proportional to the levels of poverty that exist in island chars'.

The expected Outputs of the project are:

5. NGO Services: Six NGOs are providing expanded services for 10,000 extreme poor families in 83 island Chars in three districts
6. Government Resources: The government of Bangladesh provides expanded high quality safety net and health services for the extreme poor on 83 island Chars in three districts
7. Private Sector Engagement: Sustainable business linkages established between the private sector and producers of livestock products, ground nuts and one non-traditional product produced specifically by the extreme poor on 83 island chars in three districts
8. Donor Resources: National and International foundations allocate an additional Euro 1 million for programmes for the extreme poor on 83 island chars in three districts

In this partnership process, Concern itself does not provide any services for the project participants rather it provides financial and technical support in qualitative programme implementation and monitoring of project activities to maximize the efficiencies of NoJ partner NGOs to deliver institutional services for the residents and advocate for contributing towards bringing changes in the approaches, practices and policies which negatively impacts the lives of target population at different level of the society. The aim of partnership is to develop a cost effective and sustainable way of dealing the rights issues of poor people, which could help them to get access towards basic services and establish rights as a citizen of Bangladesh like any other segment of the society.

2. Reasons and Users of the Evaluation

The reason and overall objective of the evaluation is to conduct an independent, external evaluation on the effectiveness and performance of the project interventions, through all stages of the project cycle using OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, as primary points of reference.

The evaluation will also provide an opportunity to document and develop valuable lessons learnt to inform Concern and its partners the extent to which organisational strategies were met. In addressing these issues, the evaluation will draw out lessons learnt and examples of best practice in “what has worked well” and “what has not” in order to improve future *Char* focused livelihoods security interventions.

The evaluation report will be used by the Concern country office for learning and capturing best practices for future *Char* focused livelihoods security projects. In addition to this, the report will be shared with the Strategy, Advocacy and Learning Unit, based in the Head Office and with other country programmes which have similar projects. The findings and lessons learned in the report will also be shared with other national and local stakeholders and institutions with a view of promoting the best practices and inform national level policy makers.

3. Scope and Focus of the evaluation

This section outlines the main issues to be examined by the evaluation and prioritize the areas to be examined. In general the evaluation will cover the following areas to varying degrees:

Some of the key questions which will need to be considered are:

- What has changed, outcomes and impact both positive and negative in relation to baseline, in relation to the objectives as a result of the activities implemented; how significant is this and for whom
- How these changes came about - to what extent did the chosen approach work
- How much of the changes can be attributed to Concern’s intervention, as opposed to other external factors
- The lessons learned about how change came about, what should be done differently in the future to learn from this experience.
- Based on the evaluation outcome and lessons learned provide appropriate recommendations for follow up phase Nodi o Jibon II

In addition to the above, the evaluation is expected to provide a clear instruction on feasible strategies and approaches to successfully address the livelihood needs and of reducing the vulnerability trend of the risk prone communities. It is, therefore, important to:

- Review the overall performance of Concern and the partner NGOs in achieving the project objectives according to the log-frame and to outline the contribution level to the poverty reduction.

- Evaluate the extent and impact of establishing and expanding the services of the implementing partners in addressing local needs through appropriate interventions.
- Assess the changes in behaviour (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice - conceptual & practical ability) of the target communities due to project activities.
- Evaluate the degree of government services reached to the island chars and extreme poor people especially in safety net, health services, agriculture and livestock
- Examine the performance of group and CBOs in relation to addressing the need of the members and community; establishing relationship with local government to access services and resources; as well as future sustainability of these structures
- Assess the project contribution in attracting foundation donors both national and international; and the amount of funding secured from them
- Evaluate the impact of the project advocacy work through local and national level char alliance that brought change in the lives of extreme poor char dwellers
- Assess the scale of women's participation & position in household and community level
- Evaluate the intervention dedicated for income generation and whether the rate of migration has been reduced as a result of increased income
- Assess the contribution of Concern's Action Research Centre (Dimla) in scaling up ideas to project implementing partners on agriculture, institution building (groups and CBOs) and joint planning with local government
- Examine the level of knowledge and skills of the target groups gained through DRR activities and see the capacity to protect the homestead during disasters
- Assess the quality of the partnership approach and mechanism of the project and strengths and weaknesses of Concern and its partners in delivering the project components ensuring expected quality.
- Assess the improvement in the capacity of the partners in understanding community needs and implementing appropriate measures to address the needs beyond the project period.
- Find out whether the NoJ project interventions contributing towards the broader goal and objectives of the Char programme.
- Review and assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project M&E framework.

3.1. Relevance

The decision by Concern to provide support to the particular intervention of *Nodi O Jibon* is based on problem analysis. The evaluation examines whether the intervention provided the best solution to the problem. Useful questions are:

- Were the correct assumptions made in the original problem analysis?
- How does the intervention relate to problems identified by local stakeholders?
- Were the views of all stakeholders, and particularly women, elderly, marginalized, and other vulnerable groups, represented in the planning process?
- Is the intervention compatible and reflective of Concern policies, approaches and guidelines e.g. Sphere standards and gender guidelines.
- Were there unexpected outputs from the intervention?

3.2. Effectiveness

This section should be an assessment of:

- The achievement of the objectives as set out in the *Nodi O Jibon* project proposal. This will be done via comparison against baseline values, mid-term and end-line survey report using log frame indicators.
- The analysis should assess the achievements at different levels, outputs, immediate objectives, char context objectives and broader Concern objectives. There will be variations in the level of importance attached to each depending on the type of evaluation. However, at the minimum the logic of how the intervention project related to the broader Concern objectives should be tested and whether initial assumptions held up. In assessing impacts and outputs, immediate objectives (results) will be easier to measure.
- Longer term objectives (outcomes and impact) may be impressionistic in the absence of baseline data. Typical questions might be to assess whether the original objectives have been achieved and constraints, and to examine the impact of the intervention on the livelihoods of the targeted beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

3.3. Efficiency

The evaluation should

- Examine the execution and administration of the intervention of NoJ. It will assess the implementation process, its organization, management and procedures and the degree to which the various actors discharged their roles.
- In addition, this section will examine the cost-effectiveness of each intervention, whether inputs, costs and budgets were adequate and reconcile and whether the costs were reasonable in relation to the achievements or could they have been realized more cost-effectively.

3.4. Sustainability, Phasing Out and Exit Strategy

The sustainability of an intervention measures whether it can be sustained financially, institutionally, following the withdrawal of external support. While some interventions falling within area of humanitarian action may not demonstrate sustainability, longer term support e.g. capacity building has an important sustainability dimension. The evaluation should analyze the financial and institutional context of the intervention and particularly in terms of ongoing costs and required capacity. Where interventions are coming to a conclusion the evaluation should set out a timetable that clearly outlines procedures for the transfer of responsibility while taking into account that any exit strategies require time. It should also identify any management training in the interim period to ensure institutional building including the need for a budget contingency.

3.5. Concern Worldwide policies and guidelines:

The Concern Worldwide policies and guidelines (Strategic Plans, Char programme Framework, Equality Policy, P4, Understanding Extreme Poverty, HAP principles etc) should be considered as part of this evaluation The Evaluation Report will consider mainstreaming issues such as Equality/RBA, Capacity Building, Partnership, DRR and HIV & AIDS in favour of a separate analysis.

4. Methodology, Evaluation Team and Time Schedule

4.1. Methodology:

To evaluate what was qualitatively and quantitatively achieved in poverty reduction terms; distil learning; and document valuable learning which could have broader application, the evaluation team will:

- Review the project document (project proposal, logical framework, project reports, research and study findings, case studies, training materials, country annual reports)

and other relevant documents to collect relevant secondary data. The Consultant should look at the baseline report, mid-term review report, end line survey and progress reports against targets and indicators in the log frame and the quality of M&E.

- Determine appropriate participatory methodology for the evaluation in consultation with Concern and Partners.
- Develop an appropriate field survey tool and interview/focus groups questionnaires, (checklist/guides); the process should be participatory to the extent possible and should involve all stakeholders in the project
- Conduct primary data collection, verification, processing and analysis (includes enumerator orientation) through survey, interviews and FGDs with programme participants and other key stakeholders, including partners/project staff, Concern staff of other project and management
- Produce a draft report (see Annex 1 for outline)
- Presentation of the findings to the Bangladesh country team and partner organisations; solicit feedback on the draft report from the country team
- Produce the final report from the analysis (both primary and secondary), maximum 25 pages, plus annexes). The report should include a clear and concise Executive Summary of no more than 3 pages.

4.2. Evaluation Team

The evaluation will be led by a Consultant who will be responsible for overall management of the evaluation and completing the evaluation report as per this Terms of Reference. Concern will form a small team comprising of staff from partners and Concern staff to support the consultant in evaluation process as appropriate.

The profile of the Consultant should, in general, include the following:

- A higher degree (Master) in Sociology/environmental studies/agriculture or related subjects
- Proven experience in Development Programme evaluation in different country, preferably in Southeast Asia with different donors.
- Proven track record and experience in working through Partnership, capacity building and organizational development approach
- Proven experience in Group and Community Based Approaches;
- Proven experience in Socio-economic Empowerment particularly entrepreneurship and income generation approaches.

- Proven experience in analysing sub-sector, rural markets, and value chain management market linkage especially producer's group and group marketing, making market for the poor approach etc.
- Experience in policy analysis, advocacy framework and policy advocacy
- Proven experiences in mainstreaming issues like equality/RBA, partnership, DRR and HIV & AIDS.
- Experience in statistical analysis
- Excellent report writing skills in English
- Proven record of undertaking similar studies in the past for INGOs like Concern

4.3 Time Schedule:

The evaluation will be conducted between 1 March and 21 March 2011. A total of 20 days, of which 15 days must be spent in Bangladesh by the Consultant. The 20 days is inclusive of time for producing the final report, to be submitted no later than 24 March 2011.

5. Reporting and Feedback

The Consultant will produce a report (maximum 25 pages, plus annexes) based on the outcomes outlined above (see Annex 1 for guidance in terms of outline and contents). The report should include a clear and concise Executive Summary of no more than 3 pages. The Executive Summary should present the main findings from the evaluation including recommendations and it should be written in a way that would allow its use as a standalone document. The Concern Worldwide policies and guidelines should be considered in all evaluations. The report will be written in English.

The evaluation team will report to the Head of Char Programme for day to day management of evaluation process but is ultimately accountable to Country Director, providing regular updates on the progress of evaluation to the Concern and Partners. The report will be submitted to the Country Director, shared between members of Concern Bangladesh as appropriate and Concern Worldwide Headquarter in Dublin.

ANNEX 4 – NoJ Staffing

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	11	Remarks
Head of Char Program (Imran)							Imran worked as Head of both Char and Haor program from Sep-Dec 2010.
Project Coordinator							PC (Mrs. Sajeda Begum, first PC of the project) left Concern on 30 June, 2009 and new PC (Sarower) took responsibility as PC on 18 Oct, 2010. [So, there was a vacuume around 15 months.]
Partnership Coordinator							Sarower worked as partnership coordinator from June 1, 2006 – Aug 31, 2008; Farooq worked from Sep 1, 2008 – May 17, 2009. After that there was no partnership coordinator in the field. Among the Project Officers, different times different PO played role as partnership Coordinator. Which was not actually Partnership Coordinator rather coordinating among them. [The position was vacuumed almost 2 years]
POs							Turnover among POs were also high. And different times different PO's played Coordination role in absence of Project Coordinator and Partnership Coordinator. AND ANOTHER VERY IMPORTANT ISSUES WAS, AROUND 15 MONTHS PROJECT HAD NO 2 KEY STAFF MEMBERS. SEE THE RED COLUMNS AND ROWS.
DIMLA DIRECT DELIVERY							
Project Officer							Full time with the project.

