



The Long Road from Household Food Security to Women's Empowerment

Signposts from Bangladesh and The Gambia

Acknowledgements

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Special thanks to Partha Hefaz Shaikh, Amirul Islam, Shamsun Naima Rahman, Wahida Bashar and Maksudur Rahman of ActionAid Bangladesh, and Kujejatou Manneh-Jallow, Buba Khan, Momodouwuri Jallow, Lamin Nyangadoh, Bakary Fadera of ActionAid The Gambia for their support and invaluable inputs into the field studies. Many thanks to Celso Marcatto and Rachel Moussie for their comments and Youjin B. Chung for editing and designing this report.

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FOREWORD

ActionAid has been working on food and hunger issues for over 35 years addressing the basic needs and rights of local communities through supporting them in gaining access to productive resources including land, seeds, extension, irrigation, marketing support and so on.

ActionAid made the shift to a rights-based approach over 10 years ago with a greater emphasis on engaging with policy makers in getting them to respect, protect and fulfil their right to food, and working with local communities to understand their rights and demand the same from the duty bearers.

Women's right is a key plank of ActionAid's work; our understanding of poverty and injustice recognises the denial of women's rights and suppression of their power and voice in decision making within their personal, communal and political spheres.

- In many developing countries, women are the primary producers of food and make up large proportions of rural labour force.
- Women are the primary carers in their families responsible for food provision and nutritional needs of the children.
- Yet, they also make up a large proportion of those living in poverty and hunger.
- They receive little support and are often not recognized as farmers in their own right.
- Evidence suggests that improved access to agricultural support for women will improve agricultural production worldwide and help tackle under-nutrition¹.

Food security interventions often start with and stop at increasing food production at community level and/or improving food security at the household level. Even when targeted towards women producers, they fail to recognise intra-household gender dynamics. Without a clear recognition of women's multiple roles including their productive and reproductive roles, programmes may not build on synergies and address trade-offs involved. We believe taking a gendered approach to addressing food security will make the interventions more sustainable, address the root causes of discrimination and help empower women through instilling greater degree of self-esteem.

ActionAid's International Right to Food Theme commissioned this study to look at local right to food programmes in two very different contexts with the objectives of identifying how far these projects helped increase food security at the community level, addressed women's own food security, helped empower them and changed gender relations. This study is a quick snapshot of projects in Bangladesh and The Gambia, and does not aim to provide a comprehensive assessment of the projects. We do however hope findings from the study including the programming guidelines developed will be applicable more widely across our work on the right to food.

Finally, I believe this report will add to our understanding of local rights programming from a gender perspective, contributing to improved programme quality and resulting in a long-lasting impact on peoples' lives.



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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and objectives of the study

ActionAid has been working on food and hunger issues for over 35 years addressing the basic needs and rights of local communities through supporting them in gaining access to productive resources including land, seeds, extension, irrigation, marketing support and so on.

ActionAid made the shift to a rights-based approach over 10 years ago with a greater emphasis on engaging with policy makers in getting them to respect, protect and fulfil their right to food, and working with local communities to understand their rights and demand the same from the duty bearers.

Women's rights is a key plank of ActionAid's work; its understanding of poverty and injustice recognises the denial of women's rights and suppression of their power and voice in decision making within their personal, communal and political spheres. Not only this, women make essential contributions to agriculture and food security:

- Women are the primary producers of food – Women smallholders comprise an average of 43 percent of the agricultural labour force of developing countries.
- Women are the primary carers in their families, and they are responsible for food provision and nutritional needs of the children.
- Yet, they make up a substantial proportion of the world's poor and hungry.
- They are often not recognised as farmers in their own right, and receive no recognition for their unpaid care work.

This research was commissioned by the Right to Food Theme of ActionAid International with the following objectives:

1. To identify how far the selected food security projects in Bangladesh and The Gambia have helped empower women farmers and improve their food security.
2. To identify to what extent these projects have addressed women's multiple roles in food production, care and provisioning at the household level.

More specifically, this study is meant to uncover how and how far the two projects have:

- enhanced women's food security (particularly access to food), food consumption patterns within the family, and women's nutritional status,
- developed women's sense of empowerment as a result of being able to produce and access more food,
- led to an increase in women's workload,
- taken into consideration women's care and food provision roles in addition to their farming roles, and the need for women and girls to balance farming and food production with their unpaid care work, and
- impacted gender relations within the household.

This study was also designed to highlight critical factors that contribute to the success of a women-targeted food security programme; to demonstrate how food security for women is linked to their enjoyment of other rights; and to identify sustainability criteria for these programmes.

1.2. Brief overview of the two projects (Bangladesh and The Gambia)

1.2.1. FoSHoL in Bangladesh

The *Food Security for Sustainable Household Livelihood (FoSHoL)* Project was run in Bangladesh for four years, from 2004 to April 2009. The project targeted 20,000 resource poor small and marginal farm households in six districts namely: (i) Khulna, (ii) Kurigram, (iii) Noakhali, (iv) Patuakhali, (v) Satkhira, and (vi) Sunamganj. It sought to improve food security for targeted households through a range of interventions in terms of agricultural production, increased household income from farming as well as from non-farm sources, improved health, nutrition and access to information and services.

The originality of FoSHoL is that all participant households were organised into a total of 813 Sustainable Livelihood Groups, which have received support to transform into village-based farmers' organisations. Each group comprises 20-30 participating households, 60 percent of which are represented by women.

These local organisations were federated into 30 Union-based Farmers' Alliances (*Union Moitree*), which have gained visibility and recognition in the concerned districts². In order to ensure greater sustainability of the project, a central FoSHoL Farmer Alliance was formed with representatives from each Union Moitree. This body provides support (not only monitoring and resources, but also seed production and marketing of agricultural produce) to village-based organisations through the Union Moitrees. Each village-based group received training to develop one or more productive activities, and also to build up its own human and social capital (Box 1).

BOX 1.

Major activities performed by village level FoSHoL groups

- Production and marketing of quality rice (facilitated through 98 seed traders buying seeds from trained farmers, and through a processing centre run by the Central Farmer Alliance)
- Improving access to agricultural inputs and environmental-friendly farming techniques (integrated pest-management, production of organic fertilisers) to increase productivity of rice and other crops
- Diversification of livelihoods – increasing access to property resources (in the village) for the poor, such as fish ponds and tree nurseries
- Enhancing skills for poultry and livestock-rearing, and for professional community-based vaccinators (60 percent women) working through Union Livestock Service Centres
- Marketing of agricultural produce – improving skills in crop planning and value addition (vegetables grown in home gardens or open fields)
- Organisation capacity-building – promoting skills in effective communication, negotiation and mobilisation to better access services, information and resources under private and public sectors

The two primary concepts underlying FoSHoL – apart from sustainability and participation – are self-organisation and collective action. At a fundamental level, FoSHoL provides incentives for people to come together by forming groups, experiencing collective action, jointly testing and adopting innovations.

1.2.2. Food Security Projects in The Gambia

Over many years, ActionAid The Gambia has been investing on women's empowerment and agricultural development for both food and income. Specific interventions include: improving women's access to technologies to reduce time and drudgery on and off farm; promoting commodity cooperatives including seed and cereal banks; and campaigning for women's rights to land.

For the purpose of this research, the consultant visited the following four distinct projects:

- The Brufut Garden and horticulture marketing centre, which is supported by ActionAid The Gambia from 2008 to date in collaboration with the Embassy of the Netherlands in Dakar, Senegal.
- The Rural Poultry Farmers' Association (RPFA), which has been supported by ActionAid The Gambia since 2006.
- The Rice Farmers' Cooperative Society (RFCS) responsible for Jahally Tidal Irrigation, Land Development and Commercial Rice Mill Project, which is being supported by Mission Taiwan, ActionAid The Gambia, the Department of State for Agriculture (DOSA).
- The Seed and Cereal Banking Scheme, which is being supported by ActionAid The Gambia through the Kudang Ward Development Apex since 2005.

Brufut Garden is located in the West Coast Region, about 30 km from the capital Banjul. Community leaders have allocated the land to women to grow food about 30 years ago. In the beginning, the women grew rice and maize, and from 1988, they ventured into gardening and horticulture plantation. The Garden now consists of 8 ha tended by 130 women from the Mandinka tribe. As water is a critical factor in maintaining vegetable gardens, the leader of the women's group, Ajaoumaratou, approached various development agencies and secured funds for part fencing and the construction of 15 open wells. Today, the garden is legally established as a community based organisation by the Attorney General's Chambers, as a cooperative by the Registrar of Cooperatives, and it is also a member of the

National Women's Farming Association (NAWFA). In 2007-08, the women approached ActionAid The Gambia in search of support for irrigation and marketing facilities.

From July 2008 to-date, ActionAid in collaboration with the Netherlands Embassy in Dakar and NAWFA is rendering support to the Brufut Garden as a pilot project under the Right to Food Theme. The project³ had the following objectives:

1. To reduce women's irrigation-related work through adequate water distribution for the garden.
2. To develop three additional hectares of the garden.
3. To increase productivity through more appropriate irrigation methods.
4. To improve marketing of vegetable produce from the garden

The **Rural Poultry Farmers' Association (RPFA)** of Central River Region South (CRRS) was established and registered as a community-based organisation in 2001 with assistance from the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), and subsequently from ActionAid The Gambia. Its aim is to support poultry production through training and facilitation of production and marketing. From a total membership of 28 farmers (of which 22 were women) from seven villages, the organisation grew to encompass over 1000 members at one point. Currently, it consists of 499 members with 359 women (72 percent) and 140 men from over 50 villages of 15 clusters. Membership fees have gradually increased from D 25 in 2001 to D 500 in 2007⁴.

In 2006, the RPFA entered into an agreement with ActionAid The Gambia with the following four-fold objective:

1. To increase women's disposable income through poultry production and marketing.
2. To improve the quality of food at the household level through increased availability of chicken meat and eggs.
3. To reduce the dependence on imported poultry and poultry products for domestic consumption.
4. To mobilise women into taking a lead role on policy advocacy and campaigns to enhance local production and marketing.

Key activities included:

- purchase and distribution of 50 to 100 day old chicks to 20 households with vaccines for the birds and loans to other 20 to 40 households,
- purchase of two milling machines to enhance feed processing,
- two deep freezers for storage to pilot consumer shops as marketing channels and, and
- advocacy campaign for pro-poor trade policies.

The **Rice Farmers' Cooperative Society (RFCS)'s Jahally Tidal Irrigation, Land Development and Commercial Rice Mill Project** started as a pilot project to enhance farmers' productive capacity to utilise, fully and efficiently, the abundant fresh surface water of the Gambia River through the method of tidal irrigation. Activities in this project included:

- transforming 440 hectares of previously rain-fed and pump-irrigated fields to tidally-irrigated ones,
- provision of seeds and fertilisers on loan to members of the cooperative,
- introducing rice milling machine for primary processing,
- provision of a revolving fund for marketing, as well as a truck for marketing and trainings on organisational resource mobilisation and management.

For this project, the Taiwanese Agricultural Technical Mission (Mission Taiwan) provided 63 percent of the funding required and ActionAid The Gambia provided the remaining 37 percent. The Department of State for Agriculture (DOSA) provided technical guidance, office space and housing for the project staff. The Cooperative entered into a yearly lease agreement with Mission Taiwan for the transformation of the pump-irrigated rice fields to a tidal irrigation system.

Annual food shortages usually occur four months after harvesting, and this period is known as the "hungry season" in The Gambia. During this period, the urgent need for cash compels farmers to sell their produce at low prices and buy back grains on high interest loans (sometimes as high as 100 percent), which results in medium to long term seed and food insecurity for farmers, particularly women.

Taking this into account, ActionAid The Gambia and other local organisations – including the National Youth Association for Food Security (NaYAFS), the Association for Farmers, Educators and Trainers (AFET), the Agency for the Advancement of Women and Children (ADWAC) and the National Women Farmers' association (NAWFA) – initiated a **Seed and Cereal Banking Scheme** to ensure year round food availability, accessibility and affordability of good quality food and seeds.

The scheme consisted of establishing coordinating structures at national, divisional, district and village levels, and building capacity for advocacy work against terminator seeds through 25 seed and cereal banks in all the six agricultural regions of the country. The project also has purchased five milling machines and two millet threshers to reduce time and drudgery for women who are mainly responsible for processing of all food crops. The impacts of introducing of these machines into rural villages will also be discussed in this report.

1.3. Field studies: Scope and methodology

A common research methodology was developed for projects in both countries, and the following five main topics of investigation were identified:

1. Seasonal livelihoods and coping strategies to address food insecurity (seasonal variations in availability of food and income).
2. Availability, management and distribution of food at household level and community levels.
3. Opportunities for women to produce more food and/or earn additional income.
4. Intra-household dynamics, including allocation of time and resources, decision-making processes and control over household finance.
5. The status of women in the family and in the community (empowerment).

In Bangladesh, a team of three ActionAid Bangladesh staff² accompanied the consultant (Carine Pionetti) to two different districts to meet members of the FoSHoL groups. This enabled the team to collect in-depth information on a range of issues, over a fairly short period of time. Two districts (Satkhira in the South and Kurigram in the Northwest) were selected so as to provide a contrast between coastal regions in the South and regions affected by riverbed erosion and by the *monga* (seasonal food insecurity) in the Northwest of the country. (For details of the research agenda of the field study, see Annex I, Table I).

In The Gambia, the consultant (Meena Bilgi) with staff of ActionAid The Gambia met with various groups and organisations – ranging from the executives and general members of the women’s group of the Brufut Garden, the RPPA, the RFCS, organisations within the Kudang and Jareng Ward Apex, the National Women Farmers’ Association (NAWFA), the National Youth Association for Food Security (NAYAFS), the Association of Farmers, Educators and Traders (AFET), and officials of DOSA and Mission Taiwan (For a comprehensive list, See Annex II).

In both countries, the field study consisted of:

- field visits and focus-group discussion with selected beneficiaries (majority of women), and the use of participatory techniques to involve group members in the analysis,
- individual interviews with group leaders, project staff and gender specialists,
- interviews with various stakeholders – including local partners, private sector and government bodies, and
- observation (visits to sites).

2. MAIN FINDINGS FROM FIELD STUDIES

2.1. Background on Women and Rural Livelihoods

2.1.1. Structural causes of poverty and inequality in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is home to 144 million people. It is a riverine country, formed through silt brought by the rivers. The delta plain located at the confluence of the Padma (Ganges), Jamuna (Bramaputra) and Meghna Rivers is highly fertile, but vulnerable to flood and drought. The Jamuna is a highly flood-prone area, well-known for its shifting sub-channels and for the formation of fertile silt islands (chars), on which people eke out a very precarious livelihood. The country is also prone to cyclones (especially along coastlines) and the rising sea level associated with climate change – all of which represent a lurking threat for the low-lying areas (around 50 percent of the total land mass).

More than 60 percent of the net arable land is cultivated in the rainy season despite the possibility of severe flooding, and nearly 40 percent of the land is cultivated during the dry winter months. Rice, the main crop, is grown and harvested three times a year in many areas (the three crops are known as Aus, Aman and Boro). Not only jute and wheat, but also maize, vegetables and tea (concentrated in the North East) are widely grown.

For the last two decades, the deltaic plains in the South have been the scene of large-scale encroachment by the local elite for export shrimp cultivation, leading to land salinisation and to the eviction of local farmers. ActionAid has been actively lobbying against this internal 'land-grab' issue, which is one of many manifestations of corruption in Bangladesh.

The development sector is extremely active in Bangladesh, ActionAid being one of over 30 large NGOs active in the country. ActionAid works on food security, women's rights, water and health, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and vulnerability originating from disability. Bangladesh has seen a rapid expansion of micro-credit over the last two decades. Numerous banks and institutions have come forward to provide credit facilities, especially to women, leading to new forms of indebtedness amongst the poor.

2.1.2. Situation of women in Bangladesh

Women in Bangladesh play a crucial role in agriculture and rural livelihoods, but as in neighbouring South Asian countries, they severely lack access to and ownership over productive resources and assets⁶. However, women's empowerment has been on the political agenda for a number of years: the *National Policy for the Advancement of Women*, adopted in 1997, promotes women's equality in areas such as education and training, health and nutrition, housing and shelter, political empowerment and public administration and the economy. However, progress on implementing gender equity remain relatively slow.

Since 1997, there are reserved seats for women in local level elections (*Union Parishad*). This law has undeniably served to boost women's presence in local elected bodies. Although elected women tend to involve themselves mostly in domains such as mass education and family planning, "these women representatives have the potential to become change agents for rural women and various NGOs", and many have been trained on various development-related issues, legal aid, and organisational structure of local bodies⁷. Thus, despite many odds, women's political participation is slowly on the rise.

Interacting with women in rural Bangladesh gives a rather unique sense of how that change can happen rapidly with the involvement of women at the grassroots level, provided that interventions are gender-sensitive and well-targeted. As one ActionAid staff puts it: "Women can turn very small inputs into great outputs in Bangladesh". This can be explained by women's keen sense of responsibility and accountability, but also by their extraordinary ability to engage in processes of change. These are some critical dimensions that this report seeks to bring to light.

2.1.3. Structural causes of poverty and inequality in Gambia

The Gambia is typically an agrarian country with population of 1.7 million. It has a total land area of 11,000 km² of which 5500 km² is arable. Two thirds of its population, including more than 50 percent women, depend on agriculture which contributes 28 percent to the national GDP. The horticulture sub-sector makes up for 65 percent of the agricultural labour force, thereby providing employment to 42 percent of the total working population. Small-scale vegetable production is dominated by women farmers with average farm size of less than one hectare per individual, less than five hectares for communal farms and about 15 hectares for sponsored schemes in the peri-urban areas which account for 85 percent of total vegetable production (UNDP, 1998). The industry has vast potentials to support a sustainable economy, and in some cases, it is the main source of income and foreign exchange earnings and savings. In fact, government policies since 1994 have placed strong emphasis on revitalising the agricultural sector.

Despite these opportunities, the sector is marred with serious challenges. The sector is constrained by the vagaries of weather (with only three months of rainfall) which is worsened by the effects of climate change; declining terms of trade for international primary commodities; low public and private investments; inadequate institutional support services particularly in extension and research; limited access to credit, water supply, essential inputs (seeds, fertilisers and agro-chemicals); unequal access to farm mechanisation; paucity of skilled human capital; and an unsatisfactory land tenure system precluding many potential users particularly women from gaining access to land.

Livestock production is an important part of the food basket for many Gambians. It is managed through a traditional free-range system which is extensive, low-input and subsistence in nature. Women play a significant role especially in managing small ruminants. The livestock sector is vulnerable to seasonal variations and there is a growing gap between demand and supply of products like beef, mutton, dairy, eggs and poultry meat. Raising livestock is increasingly difficult for poor women due to the rising price of veterinary drugs and raw materials which are used for feed and housing. The sector calls for enhancement of productive capacity of small and medium scale livestock producers through promotion of appropriate technology, trainings and access to improved services, inputs and marketing.

2.1.4. Situation of women in The Gambia

In The Gambia, 70 percent of agricultural workers are women. They are responsible for 40 percent of total agricultural production, yet their access to means of production and training is negligible. There is high inequality with regards to land ownership and decision making. While women make up 79 percent of unqualified employees, only 17 percent occupy managerial posts. Their representation in the Parliament is only 6 out of 50 members. Women start childbearing at early ages of 15-16 years and continue up to 40-45 years with short intervals between pregnancies, which is the major reason for high infant and maternal mortality. Women suffer more than men from nutritional deficiencies and low literacy. Violence through circumcision of girls is as high as 70 to 80 percent according to various sources.

2.2. Main findings from Bangladesh

2.2.1. Improved food security and more diversified livelihood options

FoSHoL has created several conditions for preventing hunger and malnutrition. This is the combined result of various interconnected activities, including:

- (a) increasing productivity of rice fields,
- (b) production and marketing of vegetables from home gardens, eggs and milk from poultry and livestock, fish from fish ponds, and tree saplings from tree nurseries,
- (c) collective grain banks (“fistful of rice”),
- (d) diversified income opportunities, and
- (e) savings practices at individual and group levels.

The project has introduced a range of practices in rice cultivation, which together resulted in higher yields and less dependence on chemical inputs. Such crop management practices included line-sowing and integrated pest management (using plant-based insecticidal preparations). On the input side, access to quality seeds (produced by farmers of the Alliance) and home-made organic fertilisers also contributed to a rise in productivity.

The adoption of homestead gardening by many members and the emphasis on poultry and livestock-rearing have had a positive impact on household food security. Nutritional security has increased, with food items such as vegetables and eggs being consumed more regularly because they are produced locally and hence do not need to be purchased any more. Fish ponds and tree nurseries are run in some villages⁸.

Overall, food intake at household level has increased, and livelihood options have become diversified (See Box 2)

Income diversification is also a major dimension of household food security.

FoSHoL has increased the scope of earning for poor families by:

commercialising agricultural produce, poultry, dairy products and fish (with variations in the intensity of these activities across regions and village organisations), developing savings activities and rotating funds which provide scope for investment in small trading activities (See Table 1), and increasing women's mobility and thereby women's access to employment.

In addition, women's work contributes to saving larger sums of money at household level, with decreased expenditures on chemical fertilisers and pesticides (they produce organic pesticides and make compost), on children's clothing (many do tailoring at home) and on vegetables (which are now self-produced).

BOX 2.

Increased food intake and diversified livelihoods through FoSHoL activities

- Testimony 1: Shukhjan, a household head: “I bought a cow after obtaining a loan from group savings. After rearing it for few weeks, I sold the cow in the market and bought a calf. I am also using the fallow lands surrounding my homestead for vegetable cultivation. I produce vegetable seedlings myself, and I also save rice seeds from the previous rice crop.”
- Testimony 2: Aparna Das: “Last year, I cultivated rice on a five-katha plot of land as a share-cropper. I grew rice and preserved rice seeds after harvesting. I have been maintaining my family for the last two months by selling eggs of four ducks and vegetables that I cultivated in the land surrounding my homestead. This month, I am growing pumpkin and beans.”

TABLE I.
Small agricultural trade activities performed by women's groups

	Source and cost of produce	Processing activities	Storing period	Marketing	Profit	Overall ranking of benefit
Rice	Individual rice farmers 600-700 Taka/mon*	Drying and packaging (women)	2-3 months	Sold to wholesalers (by women or men)	100-150 Taka/mon	2
Bettlenut	Owners of bettlenut gardens 80-100 Th/pon*	Packaging in air-tight bags (women)	2-3 months	Sold by women (with help of men)	20-40 Taka/pon	3
Potato	Potato farmers 300-350 Th/mon	Open drying for 1-2 days.	5-6 months	Sold to wholesalers (by men and women)	300-350 Taka/mon	1
Chicken	Men buy small chicks from village farmers 50-60 Th/chick	Daily care work done by women	3-4 months	- From house (women) - To wholesalers (both) - Market (men)	50 to 100 Taka/chick	4 (risky, labour-intensive)

* 1 mon = 40 kgs. 1 pon = 80 pieces

Source: PRA with 11 women in Pandul, Ulipur, Kurigram district. 10/01/2011

2.2.2. Gendered coping strategies (with respect to seasonal food insecurity)

Seasonal food scarcity has considerably declined in both regions studied. Poor families may still eat less during the lean season (mid-September to mid-November), but skipping a meal altogether (or even two) which was common practice, no longer happens among the members of FoSHoL groups. Moreover, the collectively managed grain banks have improved access to rice during lean periods (See Box 3).

BOX 3.

Grain banks: “The fistful of rice”

Hindu women call it “the pot of Lakshmi”. Muslim women refer to it as the “Mustir Chal”, or the fistful of rice. This is a practice that all women-only village-level organisations do. Every time they come for their weekly meeting, each woman brings 250 g of rice, which is stored collectively and can be used by various households in times of crisis (the rice is stored in a 40-kg drum). During seasonal food insecurity (*monga*), members can take some rice on loan from the grain bank (out of 20 member families, 15 take rice loans during *monga*). Later on, they have to return the same amount, plus an “interest”: 250 g of rice for every kilogram borrowed (e.g. for 2 kg borrowed, 2.5 kg need to be returned). If the amount of rice saved is larger than required, the organisation sells it and deposits the money in its account.

A woman explains that every time she cooks rice (once or twice a day), she takes out one handful and stores it in a pot. Within a week, she thus collects around 750 g: 250 g for the organisation and the rest for her own individual grain bank, which is very valuable to sustain her family in times of crisis (or “when my husband cannot buy rice”). It is interesting to note that the collective action of creating communal grain banks has led poor families to apply similar principles at the individual household level (saving when there is plenty to mitigate scarcity in times of poverty). This shows a positive spillover effect of this initiative.

When we compare coping strategies during times of food scarcity in the *monga*-affected district of Kurigram *before* and *after* FoSHoL came into play, we find stark contrasts which reveal significant improvements not only in terms of food security, but also in terms of people's wider ability to develop their livelihoods (See Table 2).

TABLE 2.
Women's and men's coping strategies during *monga* before and after FoSHoL (Kurigram)

	Before FoSHoL	After FoSHoL
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selling their labour in advance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This practice has declined.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selling poultry or livestock in order to buy food ▪ Reducing the number of meals (1 meal per day during <i>monga</i>) ▪ Increasing collection of wild edible foods ▪ Eating very simple food (rice + water; potato + salt; boiled banana stem) ▪ Minimising their own food intake so that the rest of the family eats better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no need to systematically sell poultry any longer; “fistful of rice” is in place. ▪ The amount of food eaten during <i>monga</i>, rather than the number of meals, is reduced; at least two meals now ensured, sometimes three. ▪ This practice has declined. ▪ This practice has declined. ▪ Women still eat last (after husband and children) but there is more food remaining for them now.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collecting and selling firewood ▪ Giving their savings to their husbands (who control expenditures) ▪ Very limited seasonal migration (due to lack of opportunities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This practice has stopped (amongst group members). ▪ Now women try to keep some of their own savings. ▪ More work opportunities and better communication facilities have led to more seasonal migration (agricultural labour, rickshaw pulling and factory labour).
Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Borrowing money from up to 10-12 money-lenders during <i>monga</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Men still take loans, but from fewer sources (even the poorest families only borrow money from 3-5 money-lenders).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selling small portions of land (for 500 Ths) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This practice has stopped (amongst group members).
Household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In times of crisis, rice procured was through money-lenders, neighbours and local shops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Now rice is mostly procured through the organisation (FoSHoL group).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sale of ornaments and utensils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This practice has stopped.

Source: PRA with 12 women and 10 men in Pandul, Ulipur, Kurigram district. 10/01/2011

Interestingly, women and men disagree on their assessments of the severity of two periods of the year that are marked by seasonal food insecurity (*monga*): Ashwin-Kartik (mid-October to mid-December), and Phalgun-Chaitra (mid-March to mid-May).

According to women, Phalgun-Chaitra is most severe because it is the rainy season and:

- a) women cannot go out to work or to access food,
- b) the vegetables get spoiled by the rain (or “cultivation of vegetables is difficult during late rainy season”),
- c) “even finding *Sagh* (wild green leafy vegetables) is more difficult”, and
- d) there are natural calamities linked to the rainy season like river erosion.

On the other hand, men believe Ashwin-Kartik is the most severe because it is just before the Boro rice cultivation, which requires high levels of investment: “All the money has to be spent, then we have to wait for four months without any work” (i.e. without any earning opportunity). In short, women's perceptions are primarily based on when food is unavailable, while men pay more heed to shortage of money.



The FoSHoL project has created new roles and responsibilities for women and men. Here, a mixed group of Muslim and Hindu women from Sadi, Kurigram district, are explaining their daily activities from morning to night. © Carine Pionetti

The inequitable distribution of food within the family is linked to deeply-rooted cultural norms and attitudes. One of them is the idea that “men work harder”, and therefore “need more food”. When I asked whether walking a long distance to collect water was not hard work, the women had to agree that this was hard work, and they were doing it. Highly gendered care roles also explain women's selfless attitudes: virtually everyone takes for granted that women are the providers of daily meals, and whether they themselves eat properly is hardly a question of concern in most rural families.

FoSHoL has made an attempt to tackle this by promoting the idea of “meals taken as a family”. This has met with varying degrees of success, with large differences depending on context and family culture. Food distribution within the family remains a concern in Kurigram, where the traditional practice of “women eating last” has not fundamentally changed. The husband and children still get fed first by the wife and mother, regardless of the time of the year, and meal of the day. A woman in Pandul explained: “If I make 7 chapatis for my husband, I will at least keep 3 for myself”, which is an improvement compared to the earlier situation where she would serve all the food available, and hardly keep anything for herself. But despite this improvement, her food intake may still be half that of her husband⁹.

In addition, men eat out much more frequently than women, including during lean period when there is food scarcity in the home. Moreover, when men migrate to earn cash, women are left alone to find solutions for the food crisis affecting the home. This situation has improved as a result of higher income opportunities for women, but the fact that many FoSHoL members still heavily rely on seasonal daily wages speaks of a continuous precariousness. “We can't save anything from these earnings, that's how it is with poor people, the money goes immediately”, says one lady who tries to maximise earning opportunities during the harvest and post-harvest seasons.

2.2.3. Women's multiple roles: balancing care, provisioning and farming roles

FoSHoL has brought about changes in women's workload - i.e. they are “much more active now” compared to earlier. They are responsible for taking care of poultry, cultivating crops in the homestead gardens, preparing organic fertilisers for rice cultivation.

This work comes in addition to the regular tasks women engage in:

- a) working in their own fields, paid work, which, depending on season, includes:
 - rice harvesting and rice-husking,
 - digging and transporting soil,
 - weeding,
 - processing paddy at rich farmers' homes (drying, boiling, sieving and storing),
 - processing chilli (drying and powdering), and
- b) processing rice (preparing flattened and puffed rice at rich farmers' homes), productive work, such as gathering firewood, making cowdung sticks and fetching water, and
- c) care work, such as taking care of children, cooking, serving meals and cleaning the house¹⁰.

Although the amount of work has increased as a result of FoSHoL, women say that they “don't mind” because they also get higher returns: “*Kaaj bayshee, poisha bayshee, shongshar bhalo hoi* (There is more work now; we get more money and our family situation is better)”.

Interestingly, men's workload has also increased. They do more in terms of field cultivation; they go to the market almost every day, and some of them are also active in running FoSHoL groups and getting support from various local partners (See Table 3).

TABLE 3.
Additional work generated by FoSHoL for women and men

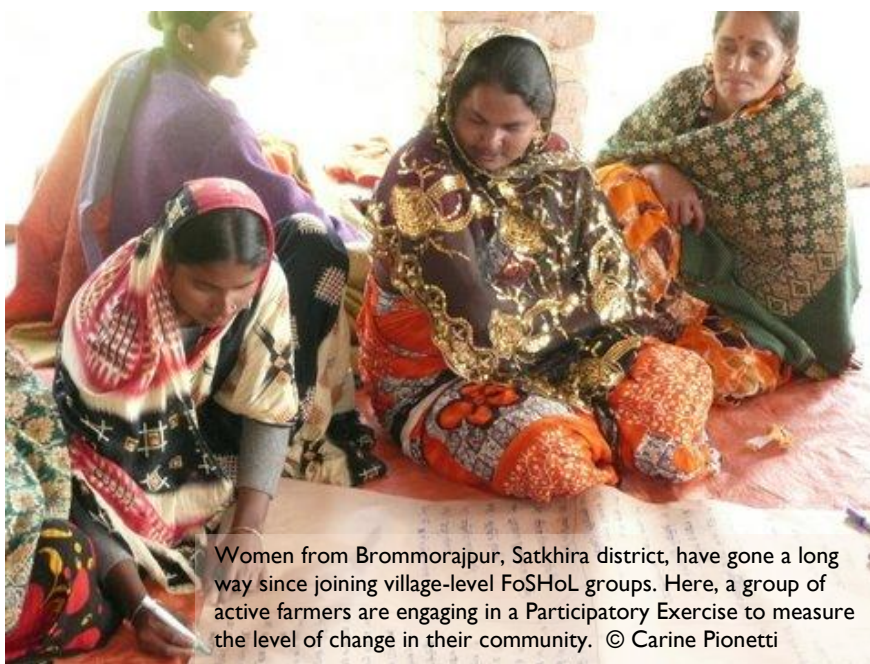
Extra work done by women	Extra work done by men
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly meetings (1-3 hours) • Managing savings and “fistful of rice” • Cashier: accounting work • Vegetable cultivation (labour intensive) • Taking care of cow (feeding, milking) • Running the seed nursery (making seedbeds for vegetables and trees, watering, bundling and etc.) • Selling vegetables from home (“it takes time”) • Tailor work at home (children's clothes) • Preparing organic fertilisers • Preparing flattened and puffed rice for sale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling vegetables in the market (on daily basis) • Selling cow milk • Attending meetings of village-level groups • Applying new rice cultivation techniques • Helping women making bundles of tree saplings • Preparing fences and other items from bamboo • Fish cultivation • Making and repairing fencing for livestock

Source: PRA with 8 women, Sadi, Rajarhat, Kurigram district. 11.01.2011

It is also worth noting that daily labour work opportunities have increased in Kurigram. The majority of FoSHoL group members do daily labour work on a seasonal basis (3 months a year in total, divided into two seasons). This is the time when they buy saree¹¹ and clothes for the children, in addition to food: “We cannot save money to use during *monga*”. Women leave the children at home or with a relative. When asked whether additional support in terms of childcare would be beneficial to them, a group of women thought carefully, and declared that this indeed would be useful as it would allow them to go for paid work more freely.

2.2.4. Impact on gender dynamics at household and community level

In all the communities visited during the study, gender relations have considerably evolved as a result of the group formation and intervention (See Table 4).



Women from Brommorajpur, Satkhira district, have gone a long way since joining village-level FoSHoL groups. Here, a group of active farmers are engaging in a Participatory Exercise to measure the level of change in their community. © Carine Pionetti

The first benefit that women describe and emphasise when speaking of FoSHoL is their increased mobility and self-confidence. When asked how FoSHoL has improved their lives, the response, in both regions studied, is almost invariably: “We have found the courage to come out of our houses”, and “now we can come forward and speak in front of men. We can even speak to officials and strangers”. It is significant that women attribute so much value to this benefit, and that other perhaps more tangible benefits, such as a more balanced nutrition, appear to be relatively less important. For many women involved in FoSHoL groups, having become earners alongside their husbands is in itself a considerable

change. They proudly say: “Now we, too, earn money”, and this has greatly increased their own self-esteem.

TABLE 4.
Change in women's status as a result of FoSHoL project

	Before FoSHoL	After FoSHoL
Women's mobility and assertiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Before, men would not let us go out freely”. ▪ “We were only allowed to go to our in-laws' house, our father's house, and to the field (to bring food for men)”. ▪ People would criticise any woman going out on her own (especially at night) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Now we can work in the fields with our husbands”. ▪ “Now we can go to the market alone” ▪ Some women go to meet various officials (veterinarian) and assert their needs (e.g. to not allow people to make them wait for two hours)
Intra-household dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In most cases, women just obeyed their husbands, unquestioningly. ▪ “Our husbands never asked for our advice”. ▪ “We could not sit and talk with men”. ▪ Very few husbands would encourage their wives to be active and independent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “We now speak up in the family, men listen to us”. “Now they ask for our opinion”. ▪ “Now we freely speak with men, including strangers or officials”. ▪ “After hearing from us, they understand our work, see its benefits, and as a result, they become more supportive of us”¹².
Decision-making processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women had little influence on decisions in the family, and no direct influence on community decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Now we can influence men in the village”. ▪ “Even the police listens to us. And when the government needs to work in villages (e.g. widows' allowance programme, security measures), they approach us for advice”.
Earning capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “We did not use to earn much money (apart from daily labour work)”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Now women are earning alongside men: “That money is giving us more freedom”.

Source: Focus-group discussions with 11 women from Nowapara, and 9 women from Brommorajpur, Satkhira district, 07 and 08/01/2011.

The relationship between women's increased earning capacity, women's bargaining power, and women's status at household level is both complex and location-specific. While several women spoke of how they were now enjoying higher respect and support from their husbands in Khulna area, women from Kurigram have raised issues on domestic violence on many occasions – implying that this problem is still prevalent within communities where FoSHoL is present. Moreover, women's increased earning capacity does not *de facto* mean that women control income directly, or enjoy respect in their homes (See Box 4). Critical gender issues like domestic violence still remain present in numerous communities of Northern Bangladesh.

BOX 4.

Contrasting views on women's economic empowerment and household dynamics

Men's control over women's revenues

- “Men claim all the money earned by women”. (Khulna)
- “*Taka na dile, khata balish nie, chole jao* (If you do not want to give me the money, pack up your things and go)”. This is what men say to women (many, not just one). “In a month, we may hear this 12-15 times”.
- “People will never question the men”.

Awareness and bargaining power

- “Now we are aware. We ask our husbands how much they have earned from selling produce, how much they have spent on what, and how much is left”. (Kurigram)
- Ten years before FoSHoL: “*Amra akon jeera korte paree* (We did not have the voice even to ask those questions. We couldn't do it. Now we can ask these questions)”.

Perceptions of domestic violence

- “He used to hit me when I was not earning; he still hits me now even though I am earning”. (Kurigram)
- According to one woman, the difference is that “before it was in front of everyone, and now it happens inside the house”. One woman says that the incidence of beating has been reduced, but not considerably: “If it was 10 before, now it is 8”.
- When the facilitator asked: “But why does your husband beat you?”, one woman responded: “Why shouldn't he?”. This speaks to internalised inequality in gender relations, which still goes unquestioned by women themselves in some parts of the country, including amongst some FoSHoL group members in Kurigram area.

2.2.5. Control over revenues and marketing constraints for women

Further investigation on “who controls the income” in participating FoSHoL households makes it quite obvious that women only control a very small fraction of the income earned from FoSHoL activities, including activities where they do most of the labour (e.g. homestead gardening and poultry-rearing). This is a major concern from a women's economic empowerment perspective.

Labour contributions by men and women vary with the type of activity. The following are estimates or 'perceptions' from farmers in Satkhira district:

- Fish cultivation: Men do 95 percent of the work.
- Homestead gardening: Women do 95 percent of the work.
- Poultry: Women do 90 percent of the work.
- Livestock-rearing: Men and women do both about 50 percent each.
- Rice cultivation: Women do between 40 and 50 percent of the work (including post-harvest work, and depending on the family and on the season, women do more work during the Boro rice season, and less during the Aman rice season.
- Field vegetables: Men do 70 percent of the work.

Women control more than 50 percent of the earnings from fruit sales, presumably because most of that is sold from the home itself (and not taken to the market by men). During a focus-group discussion, women explained that *they try to sell a few things in secrecy* so as to save some money (either fruit, or husk from rice). But they also say that their husband usually ends up getting this money back from them (by saying he needs money to buy food for the family).

This means that it is not considered legitimate for women to have any money. It is still considered to be a man's responsibility to manage household finances, and this goes largely unquestioned. Development staff tends to assume that women control the income earned from the sale of vegetables or poultry, but this is not always the case (See Table 5).

TABLE 5.
Women's assessment of FoSHoL activities in Brommorajpur, Satkhira District

Activities	Contribution to food security	Household income (in Taka)	Women's income	Profitability	Marketing	
					Where?	Whom?
Homestead gardening	***	800 ¹³	100	***	Home Market	Women Women
Poultry rearing	***	300	50	**	Home Market	Women Women
Livestock (cow)	**	500	100	*	Home Market	Women Men
Fish	**	200	0	***	Market	Men
Rice cultivation	**	650	70	*	Home Market	Women Men
Fruit tree plantation	**	150	90	***	Home Market	Women Men
Field crops (vegetables)	**	200	20	*	Market	Men
Field crops (rice/jute/wheat)	*	100	10	*	Market	Men

Ranking: * = low impact ** = medium impact *** = high impact

Source: PRA with 8 women, Brommorajpur, Satkhira, 08/01/2011

Note: From a food security perspective (and from women's perspective), vegetables from the home garden and poultry are the most significant. It is interesting to note the difference between most profitable activities and securing food.

After this exercise, two questions were proposed to a small group of women:

“If you (women) had more control over money, would the family be gaining or losing?”

→ “Gaining, definitely, because:

- women spend less and more wisely than men,
- men go to the market and spend on cigarettes and tea,
- women are better at saving than men, and
- women always think of the family's well-being”.

“Why don't women go to the market?”

- “It costs extra money (need to rent a van rickshaw for 23-30 Taka, whereas men go by bicycle)”.
- “When it comes to selling, our husbands are there”.
- “Moheela manush abar bazar korey (Women do not do marketing)” - implying that people will talk.
- “It gets dark soon, and we'll face difficulties getting home”: Largely unfounded fear that “something will happen”.
- “We have to go home and oversee children's studies (husbands don't do it, but could do it)”.
- “We don't need to go to the market because buyers come to our house”.

2.2.6. Food security and natural disasters

Natural disasters, especially floods and cyclones, are frequent phenomena in Bangladesh, with enormous adverse effects on poor people's livelihood and food security. This led us to investigate women's perceptions of the impact of different natural disasters on various livelihood options (or, the resilience of livelihood options to disaster-related risk) through a participatory exercise (See Table 6).

The main findings of this PRA session are as follows:

- Field crops and livestock are most vulnerable to natural disasters.
- Women sometimes stay back to take care of animals when there is a flood, which makes them more vulnerable.
- Poultry appears to be quite resilient to all natural disasters.
- Access to safe drinking water is also a problem in Southern Bangladesh due to salinity and arsenic content. Rainwater harvesting is common. Women want to have more tubewells to secure drinking water.

TABLE 6.
Resilience of various livelihood options to frequently-occurring natural disasters

	Field crops	Livestock	Poultry	Fish	Home	Impact on women
Flood	*** Rice gets completely damaged by floods	** Need to put cattle on a raised platform	* No major adverse impact	** Fish leave ponds, but can be replaced	*** Houses get flooded	When going to emergency shelter during flood, women face difficulties (no protection, no special place for women)
Drought	*** Rice and other crops get severely affected	** Cattle suffers from lack of drinking water	* No major adverse impact	** Ponds dry out and fish die	No impact on houses	Women have to walk long distances to find water during drought, and when they do find water, it may or may not be potable.
Cyclone	*** Rice and other crops get severely damaged	** Difficulty to find cattlefeed Cattle shed destroyed	* No major impact	* No major impact	*** Houses get washed away	Loss of house leaves women and children without shelter (more vulnerable than men)

Ranking: * = low impact ** = medium impact *** = high impact
Source: PRA with 7 women from Brommorajpur, Satkhira District. 08/01/2011

2.3. Main findings from The Gambia

2.3.1. Gender roles and responsibilities in Gambian society

The Gambia is, for the most part, a polygamous Muslim society. A typical household is composed of one man and his co-wives (commonly two to four wives), and between seven and twelve children. Families stay together in one compound with a common kitchen and different wives take turns in cooking¹⁴. In most cases, each wife has a separate room for herself and her children, but there are cases where a woman stays separately outside the household compound and manages her household on her own.

Men work in agriculture, but also as carpenters, gardeners, masons, millers and etc, with a minority engaged in the service sector. Their income is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the entire family. It is men's responsibility to buy and store rice in the house. However, the onus of organising food and other requirements for the household is on women. Almost all women work in agriculture. Many of them also earn an income as vegetable vendors and by rearing small ruminants. Traditionally, community leaders allocate land to women so that they can grow vegetables.

By and large, access to agricultural land is divided along gender lines. Women and girls grow rice in the lowlands during the rainy season, and men and boys grow groundnuts and upland cereals (millet and maize) in the upland ecology (See Table 7). Women are responsible for food production, processing and preparation whilst both men and women have equal roles in performing ceremonies and social functions. Decision-making is largely done by men, which has implications for project development, as can be seen below.

TABLE 7.
Gender division of productive, reproductive and social activities

	Productive work		Reproductive work			Social activities		
	Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women
Agriculture	Maize in uplands	Rice in lowlands	Collecting water	20%	80%	Ceremonies	50%	50%
Cleaning	100%	100%	Collecting fuelwood	20%	80%	Festivals	50%	50%
Tilling	100%	100%	Cooking	-	100%	Decision-making	80%	20%
Planting	100%	100%	Washing	-	100%			
Weeding	100%	100%	Cleaning	10%	90%			
Harvesting	70%	70%	Care activities	20%	80%			
Taking produce home	100%	20%						
Pounding		100%						
Milling		Men take to machine						
Selling	100%	80%						

Source: Focus group discussion with Brufut Gardens Women's group and men and women from Jahally perimeter.

Note: Men and women have distinctive roles in agriculture – i.e. men grow 100% of maize in uplands and women grow 100% of rice in lowlands. Hence, all productive work (e.g. cleaning, tilling, planting and weeding) on maize and rice is done separately by men and women respectively.

2.3.2. Findings from specific projects

a) Women's Brufut Garden: Improved water distribution systems

As a result of ActionAid's support, the Brufut Garden increased in area from four to seven hectares, with a total of 130 women currently involved in the project. The National Women Farmers' Association (NAWFA) facilitated trainings on water distribution and management, improved horticultural technologies and marketing strategy. It also constructed a marketing centre with cold storage facilities and established a marketing revolving fund for crop financing.

ActionAid's involvement in the Brufut Garden has led to substantial changes in the management of the garden by women, leading to not only increases in vegetable production, but also to a rise in the women's organisational capacity (See Table 8). The increase in productivity in the garden, owing to improved water distribution systems and better farming practices, has increased incomes for women and improved their access to more and better quality food in the form of vegetables, with positive outcome in terms of nutritional balance.

However, marketing, processing and preservation of vegetables remain major constraints. In an attempt to find solutions, NAWFA in collaboration with ActionAid The Gambia and Mission Taiwan established the Wholesale Horticulture Produce Marketing Centre (WPMC). The aim was to support women's gardens in the creation of a strong, vibrant and cohesive horticultural producer and marketing cooperative. A marketing fund was set up to buy the produce from the garden and to be brought to the central store where they were to be graded and sold to hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and other outlets. NAWFA organised sensitisation meetings and workshops, and the resolution for marketing operations were concluded.

TABLE 8.
Changes brought about by Project interventions in Brufut Gardens

Domain	Pre-Project Situation	Post-Project Situation
Area covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four hectares of used garden land Three additional hectares available but undeveloped for gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seven hectares of developed garden area 19 beds per group member
Irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 open wells Annual digging of shallow wells (by women) and labour-intensive maintenance of these wells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully functional bore-hole and solar pumps Overhead tank (capacity: 30,000 litres) connected to 30 reservoirs (1 000 litres each)
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of local varieties of vegetables and of organic manure (for the most part) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of high quality seeds, fertilisers (when available) and organic manure Improved growing practices
Food security and nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women grew tomato, pepper, eggplant, onion, cabbage, leafy vegetables, radish, okra, cassava etc. Only one growing season 20 percent of the produce was consumed by the family and the rest was sold. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women grow the same types of vegetables, but in larger quantities. Papaya and other fruit trees have been planted. There are now three overlapping growing seasons 30 percent of the produce is consumed by the family; and family members enjoy more balanced nutrition.
Net income and its use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited income from vegetables Income was mostly used to buy food items and clothes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been a two-fold increase in income from vegetables Increased income is spent on buying food items, uniforms, and clothes and to meet school fees.
Women's workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long hours spent collecting water from wells and distributing it in the garden Women spent 12 hours/day in the garden on average Women had little time to rest or undertake other activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's workload has been reduced, resulting from the new water distribution system. Women now spend eight hours/day in the garden on average More time is spent with family, or selling vegetables
Decision-making and access to knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were only informal groups of women Women had limited access to trainings and new skills Women had little cash in their hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's groups are more formalised, well connected to other networks, with water and marketing committees. Women now have access to training and knowledge. Women make their own decision about amount of vegetables to be sold Women have more cash under their control.

Source: Focus group discussion and appraisal with about 60 women working in Brufut Gardens, December 2010



Women from Brufut Gardens describe changes in productivity and consumption of vegetables before and after the project. © Meena Bilgi

The women felt that if the marketing could be done from their door steps, it would reduce their time and energy as well as money on transportation. However, there was only one instance of sale of produce from Brufut Garden through the WPMC. Due to technical problems with the air conditioning system in the storage centre, the first purchases of tomato and eggplant had to be sold at reduced prices. Subsequently, high overhead costs such as fuel for the truck and electricity costs were identified as major drawbacks, and marketing efforts were stalled.

A more adequate marketing strategy developed by and for women could have a multiplier effect in terms of women's benefits from this project. Indeed, data from the field study shows that women's revenues get spent on family well-being, and that women have a high stake in making the best use of their earnings, as shown by the case of Jainaba (See Box 5). Likewise, higher-capacity tanks, more reservoirs, more powerful pumping systems and better capacity-building, access to credit and well-rounded marketing strategies could lead to much larger benefits for women in Brufut Garden.

BOX 5.

Story of Jainaba

Jainaba, a woman producer who is a member of the Brufut Garden, sells vegetables at a nearby market. With the money earned, she spends on education, school uniform/clothes and ingredients for daily cooking. She says: "Education is a must for the children". Jainaba says that she does not inform her husband about her earnings; she herself decides how, when and where to use the money. However, she says that the family has a running debt of approximately D 500/month, due to irregularity in the husband's income. They borrow money from the relatives and friends without having to repay with any interest. The consumption of vegetables in the family has increased because it is not always possible to sell all the vegetables she harvests from her garden, as vegetables are highly perishable, especially tomatoes.

b) Poultry raising through the Rural Poultry Farmers' Association (RPFA): Increased income for women

The RPFA comprises over 1700 households (as of 2008), 75 percent of which are represented by women. Each household manages from 50 to 250 birds, with up to six production cycles managed annually (in the case of broilers). After providing only broilers to its members for eight years (2001-2009), the Association also started providing layers and cockerels in 2010. Moreover, it now also orders feed from Senegal for its members and provides free vaccination of chicks. Other health interventions are paid for by members.

Those members who were supported with housing facility for the birds earned higher incomes than others, because they were able to use feeders and drinkers, to monitor temperature, and to minimise the risk of loss due to animal attacks or stealing (See Box 6).

Project beneficiaries referred to the lack of housing facility for birds as a major constraint. It is only the women who can afford to build poultry houses that are provided with day-old chicks and related resources to undertake the activity. This is a concern in that those members who cannot afford housing are left out and thus not able to benefit. Over the years, poultry farmers learnt that a combination of cockerels and layers/broilers is a more sustainable - and less risky - strategy than rearing only broilers. Many of them expect support in order to multiply the birds, so as to ensure year-round production.

Other concerns raised by women members of the RPFA include:

1. untimely and insufficient supply of broilers (their capacity to raise broilers in two seasons cannot be met),
2. lack of information about where to buy broilers and feed, and
3. rising price of feed (as a result in hiking maize prices) and inability to grow maize due to high fertiliser prices.



Group discussion with members of Rural Poultry Farmers' Association (RPFA), Boiram Village, CRR South. © Meena

It is important to note that most women sell off the birds and use the money in order to buy essential food items, clothes, and to meet children's education fees. Only a few households consume the birds and eggs on festive occasions. Hence, while the objective of increased income has been met by the project, the objective of consumption of protein in the form of meat and eggs by poor women has not been met.

Moreover, neither the women nor the secretary of the Association knew the amount of money spent so far. The record remains with the financial secretary of the association and members are

not updated except in the annual general meetings. This signals a lack of ownership of the association by 'ordinary' women members, who are not empowered to make critical management decisions.

BOX 6.

Story of Safie Ngalland – Boiram Village

Safie Ngalland is a small farmer and vegetable vendor. Her husband works on milling machines and often remains outside the house for his work. She lives with her three co-wives, and in total, there are 35 members living in the same compound with one kitchen including her six sons who all work as labourers, carpenters, millers and etc. She has been a member of the RPFA since 2001 and participated in the initial trainings. An attempt has been made here to calculate her income as well as other benefits from the poultry programme.

She received 100 broilers in 2006, 150 in 2007 and 105 in 2008.

In 2006, only three broilers were consumed by the family, and five died from a disease. Her inputs for that year can be summarised as follows:

- 3 bags of feed at D 400 per bag = D 1200
- 1 bag of maize = D 500
- Milling of maize = D 50
- Kerosene lamp = D 300
- 2 Drinkers = D 100
- 2 Feeders = D 200
- Shelter for poultry = D 3,800 (Long term investment for about 10 years)

Total input cost for one year = D 2730

On the output side, she sold 92 birds for a total income of 9200 Dalasi and thus earning a net income of D 6570. She is content with the outcome:

"I am very happy doing the poultry programme because it has increased my knowledge and skills, I participate in the village level and Zonal meetings where I get chance to interact with other women not only on poultry but also on agriculture and vending. My husband assisted me in constructing the housing facility for the birds which is highly necessary for rearing birds using 'scientific methods'. There is hardly any drudgery and load in this work since sitting at home itself, I can look after birds, children and manage other household chores. Sometimes the village people buy birds from the doorstep; otherwise I sell them in a nearby market. With the income, I buy food ingredients for daily cooking and clothes. I wanted to raise birds for two seasons per year, but I only receive broilers once a year. I would like to continue this work, but I do not know where to buy more broilers from apart from the Association.

c) Tidal irrigation through the Rice Farmers Cooperative Society (RFCS): Increased self-sufficiency at the household level

The RFCS was designed to introduce tidal irrigation in rice production. Tidal irrigation takes advantage of the high river tides to force water into fields, and can be used to cultivate paddy rice in areas where the water contains no salt¹⁵.

TABLE 9.
Changes brought about by tidal irrigation in rice fields

Domains	Before tidal irrigation	After tidal irrigation
Crop variety and duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mostly Touba, a local variety ▪ Rainfed natural tidal irrigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TNS-14 (4-5 months variety), TNS 19 (3-4 months), Rashi (3 months), 31x37 (4-5 months), ATM (3 months) and NERICA (3 months) – the most widely used variety¹⁶
Harvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One growing season (4-5 months cycle) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two growing seasons (Jan-March, July-September)
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 75 kg/hectare ▪ No fertiliser, no pesticides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 60 kg/hectare (should be 50 kg) ▪ NPK¹⁷: 2 bags, Urea¹⁸: 2 bags, no pesticide
Yield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1.5-2 tons/hectare/one season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2.5-3 tons/hectare per season = 5-6 tons/year
Sufficiency and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Home-consumption of produce ▪ Self-sufficiency in rice for 3 months only ▪ No sale due to low grain quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ About 50 percent of harvest is consumed at home and 50 percent is sold (depending on family size) ▪ Self-sufficiency in rice for about 8 month ▪ Use of income for education, health, savings
Knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of compost, timely planting, spacing and nursery preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seed selection, multiplication & nursery, agronomic practices and post-harvest operations (milling) ▪ Marketing skills, participation in trainings, increased ability to speak in front of strangers

Source: PRA with female and male members from the Rice Farmers Cooperative Society (RFCS), Jahally, Patcharr Village, Dec 2010.

In the first two years of the project (2004-2005), a total of 160 hectares of pump irrigated rice fields were converted into tidal irrigation areas. In the subsequent year (2006), the neighbouring 70 hectares of rain-fed rice fields also adopted tidal irrigation to produce two crops of rice per year. This project led to the adoption of new cropping practices, more intensive use of inputs, and an overall increase in productivity, with positive outcomes in terms of food self-sufficiency of farming families (See Table 9).

For the consultant, gendered impacts were difficult to assess for this project because:

- the project design lacked a clear gender focus (for instance, there is no gender strategy in the project, and no gender indicators),
- although the executive committee of the RFCS makes decisions bearing in mind the needs and aspirations of both women and men members, women are less aware than men of critical changes in production and marketing (e.g. volumes and prices), and
- while women have increased their contribution to rice cultivation in uplands as a result of the tidal irrigation project (See Table 10), it is unclear how this change has affected women's food security and status in the family given that control over land, assets, decision-making, and distribution of the product and incomes from the rice fields largely rests with men.

However, by increasing food security for entire families, the project contributed to the resilience of smallholders' livelihoods, thus limiting processes of impoverishment, erosion of land rights and outmigration, which all have adverse consequences for women. Women were also found to have a say in choosing suitable rice varieties, using their own criteria (taste and cooking time) in addition to more general criteria of yield, input requirements and duration

TABLE 10.
Gender roles in rice cultivation in Patcharr Village from the Jahally Tidal Irrigation Project

Activities	Men	Women
Land tilling/ploughing/site cleaning	100%	-
Nursery preparation	80%	20%
Transplanting	30%	70%
Weeding	50%	50%
Fertiliser application	80%	20%
Birds scaring	100%	-
Harvesting	70%	30%
Threshing	50%	50%
Transporting	90%	10%
Drying	50%	50%
Milling	40%	60%
Sales/Marketing	20%	80%

Source: PRA with members of the RFCS, Pacharr perimeter, Jahally Project, Dec. 2010

Note: Before tidal irrigation, women grew rice in the lowlands; after the introduction of tidal irrigation, women started growing rice in the uplands along with men. The table represents the division of labour between men and women. ,

d) Seed and Cereal Banking Scheme: A mixed picture

In essence, the Seed and Cereal Banking Scheme entails seasonal purchase and storing of food grains and fertilisers. The initial stocks were bought using a grant. For instance, the Jareng and Kudang Ward Apex organisations – partners of ActionAid The Gambia – used grants to build up their stocks of groundnut, pearl millet and rice between December 2006 and November 2008 (see Annex 2, Table 1 and 2). Over the year, the apex introduced fertilisers, farm implements and donkey carts. This has helped improve overall productivity due to timely farm operation and availability of good quality seeds, fertiliser and farm implements (See Box 8) – all this without involving the middlemen:

- Aja Fatou Kura, a woman farmer who participated in the project, says: "I got 180 heaps of coos [pearl millet] instead of 20 heaps because of the availability of fertiliser from the bank".
- Kumba Baldeh, another woman farmer from Kununku village says: "I used my only possession of D 500 for ploughing the field since I got good quality rice seed on loan from the bank. I harvested the rice with improved sickle borrowed from the bank and harvested two big bags of rice, which are enough for my family for the season".

BOX 8.

Women's perceptions of the Seed and Cereal Banks: Jafai Kuta Village

Kuta Janka, Nmannding Fatty, Mulie Suso and Di Suso, (two women and two men) from Jafai Kuta, have a lot to say on the Seed and Cereal Banking scheme.

"We wish we knew this system of community storing before; by this time, we would have been far away from hunger", says Di Suso.

"We have seen the overall usefulness of the scheme; with increasing productivity, the stock will gradually increase in the future and there will be less and less food shortage. We have also learnt that farmers are the best providers of seeds and that we are better off relying on ourselves rather than on other external agencies and

Seeds and cereal are stored both for farming (40 percent) and for immediate consumption as food (60 percent). In both the Jareng and Kudang Apex studied, each village received on average 67 bags (each of them weighing on average 60 kg), which amounts to approximately 4020 kg. Each family of five members gets 34 kg of food/seed considering that on an average, each village has a population of 600 people. Each member in one compound gets, on average, 7 kg of food grains, which does not meet basic food requirements of the lean season marked by food scarcity. Hence, while the members of the Apex are happy with the readily available seeds for farming, they find the amount of food grains stored in the banks insufficient to meet their food needs.

e) Milling and threshing machines for groundnut and pearl millet: Altering the gender distribution of labour in post-harvest work

The rationale for introducing milling and threshing machines as part of the seed and cereal bank scheme discussed above was to reduce women's workload and drudgery. Interestingly, the introduction of these machines has led to changes in gender roles, as men now take the responsibility of getting the millets milled. Men also take charge of groundnut oil extraction. For example, Ibrahim, a groundnut farmer, brings 60 kg of groundnuts to the milling machine operator. He receives 20 litres of groundnut oil and leaves the remaining 30 kg of groundnut cake to cover for the milling cost (D100 for 60 kg). The operator is willing to sell the cake which is high in demand. Ibrahim says:

"This is one of the best interventions of the project since it saves a lot of time for women who are primarily responsible for breaking and crushing the nuts either with hands or mouths. Some lucky villages have decorticators. These machines reduce women's drudgery and workload, and thus women are not as tired and they feel better in terms of health. They have more time to rest, spend quality time with family and are able to engage in other activities (such as vegetable selling or participating in [informal women's savings group] meetings)".



Due to lack of financial resources needed to access milling and threshing machines, many Gambian women still open groundnuts with their hands and mouths. © Meena Bilgi

However, the machine is not equally accessible to all households. In Macca village, poor women still open the groundnuts with their hands and mouths – even though there are three groundnut decorticating machines in and around the village. They spend three to four hours for 10-12 kg of groundnuts and need to spend additional time in preparing oil from the groundnut. Lack of financial resources explained their exclusion from the new technology: “We know that the groundnut machine is very fast and would reduce our time and drudgery substantially, but we cannot afford the milling cost (D 100 for 60 Kg of groundnuts)”, says one woman in Macca.

Women from Macca are familiar with threshing machines, as private contractors from Senegal have been using high-capacity machines for millet and sorghum for the last 20 years, moving from one village to the next. Only those who harvested their crop in a timely manner could access the thresher (at a cost). Others had to keep pounding millet manually. Women farmers explain that one 50 kg bag of millet can be pounded by three women in 8 to 10 hours. The work is very demanding and time-consuming, and is done over a period of time (given that the average millet yield per farm is around 600 kg).

A threshing machine was bought through ActionAid The Gambia in 2009, but only six women could use it before it went out of service. This was because the income generated by the thresher was not accounted for, and the Apex had to rethink its strategy before putting it back in use. Furthermore, as there is no tractor to take the thresher to other villages, there is a fear that it will not generate enough income even for its maintenance.

Hence, while there are clear positive impacts on women's workload and health associated with the introduction of post-harvest technology, issues of access and control may prevent women - especially poor women - from making effective use of these machines in their own communities.

2.3.3. Impacts and concerns over nutrition, child birth and literacy

a) Project impact on food security, nutrition and income

Overall, women's food security, nutrition and income have improved from vegetable cultivation, poultry and rice production. The seed and cereal bank is a good concept if managed properly, but it is still quite limited in scale. It has alleviated food insecurity for some families, but not provided a real solution to chronic hunger.

While the intake of vegetables and rice has improved, there is negligible intake of proteins from meat or eggs from the poultry programme since women tend to sell birds and eggs in order to have cash in their hands to buy ingredients for daily cooking and clothes. This programme objective - higher nutrition through access to animal protein - thus has not been met. Incomes from poultry are used to buy ingredients such as oil and spices, and for clothes and education for boys and girls.

In terms of distribution of food within the household, most women reported that they eat all meals together at the same time: Women and girls sit around one bowl of food, men and boys sit around another bowl of food, and everyone eats as much as they want. However, further probing led to a more nuanced picture. One woman said: “Indeed, we give better and tastier portions of the meat or vegetables to men and boys. That is what we have seen our mothers and grandmothers doing”.

With the introduction of the milling machine, one sees more men coming forward to take groundnuts and pearl millets for milling and threshing, which is a positive step. Similarly, men take poultry and vegetables to the market for selling; on one hand, this adds value to women's activities, but on the other hand, raises the critical question of *who controls the income*. Women report that men are more open to the idea of spending money on education of children, which they see as an important development factor.

The amount of work for both men and women has undoubtedly increased as a result of project interventions, but they do not mind since they get better returns and are now in better position to cope with occasional food shortages.

b) Concerns over child birth and education

Most women raise strong concerns over the high birth rate prevailing in their communities: “We are sick and tired of bearing children, one after the other, without any space between births” say several women in chorus. The women start bearing children from the age of 15-16 years and by the time they are into their menopause, they have given birth to 10 to 12 children. Of these, about 50 percent die. They would not like to see their daughters getting married at an early age, but they see no way out of polygamy. One woman commented: “Thank God, I am into menopause

now, I cannot get pregnant". Women thus lack control over their own reproductive health, and this appears as a major obstacle to empowerment in their lives.

Childcare is somewhat easier in the context of polygamous households than in the context of nuclear families. Most women argue that living with co-wives has become a habit and is a part of their lives. When relations are good, they do not have to worry about their children as they are taken care of by co-wives or siblings.

Women who decide to stay away from co-wives face the brunt of child care on their own. Suntu Sanneh, who is in this situation, explains:

"I used to carry my small children to the field for rice cultivation. There was no shed or tree under which the children could be put. Often, they would get wet and fall sick. They would eat wet and cold food which is not good for health. I used to spend a lot of money on healthcare. A day care centre was to be set-up as part of a farmer-managed project supported by the Agriculture Department but it did not function properly. And when children are left alone at home, there is always a fear of losing them."

In terms of education, the picture is quite bleak in The Gambia. Most women are illiterate or have studied up to primary level only. Yet they rate education as their second priority after food. Whenever they can earn additional income, they spend the money on their children's education.

2.3.4. Empowerment of women: The missing link?

The field study in The Gambia reveals that what is lacking in all project interventions is a clear vision and strategy on gender. It also brings forth a number of technical and marketing issues that would need resolving in order to achieve more sustainable and perennial benefits to women. To illustrate, although women producers acquire new skills through various components of the project and become group members, there lacks a strategy for women's empowerment. The relatively lesser role undertaken by women in decision-making and management in the poultry and rice cultivation project (despite the fact that women make up the majority of the RPFA membership), and weak strategy and support systems to build up women's assets in agriculture and to address structural inequality at household level are compelling examples.

Therefore, various projects would gain from being better articulated, and from being informed as whole, with a gendered approach based on the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data. This would in fact shed different light to the project outcomes.

3. ANALYSIS: SUCCESSES AND SHORTCOMINGS OF WOMEN-TARGETED FOOD SECURITY PROJECTS

3.1. Defining key criteria for women's food security, empowerment and gender roles

The main goal of this study was to find out the extent to which two ActionAid country projects succeeded in meeting the following four goals, three of which pertain directly to gender:

1. Improving household food security.
2. Improving women's food security.
3. Empowering women.
4. Bringing changes in gender roles.

In order to provide answers to these questions, we first define key criteria for evaluating each goal, using parameters that emerged from the projects and from women's own expressed concerns (Table 11, column 1)¹⁹. Secondly, we examine each parameter individually, with details on how and to what extent the project addressed it, or fails to address it (Table 11, columns 2 and 3). Finally, the overall performance of the project in meeting each particular goal is evaluated using the following symbols for three distinct levels of achievements:

- ☺ The goal has been achieved to a large extent.
- ☹ The goal has only partially been achieved.
- ☹ The goal has not been achieved (or has only been marginally achieved).

TABLE II.
Analysis of the two projects' outcomes against key gendered criteria

	Food Security for Sustainable Household Livelihood (FoSHoL) Bangladesh	Combination of Various Food Security Projects²⁰ The Gambia
I. Key criteria for improved household food security		
1.1. Food produced on the farm or garden (self-production)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased rice productivity ▪ Production of vegetables, dairy, meat, fruit and fish (in some cases) ▪ Less need to collect wild greens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased rice productivity (more rice available for family) ▪ Production of vegetables and poultry²¹
1.2. Mechanism to cope with seasonal food shortage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rice-saving practices at individual and collective levels (concern: only women's groups are involved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seed and cereal bank run through the project; however, only minimal volumes of commodities are distributed for consumption.
1.3. Availability of cash to buy food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More cash earnings from sale of farm produce. ▪ More work opportunities for men and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diversified sources of incomes from fisheries, poultry, horticulture, farm, labour, remittances and small vending for men and women
1.4. Access to productive resources (land, seeds and other inputs, equipment, irrigation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased access to quality seeds and organic inputs ▪ Access to land still remains a problem due to river erosion and water logging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Various projects have increased: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to water for vegetable and rice production - access to inorganic inputs, and - access to post-harvest materials
1.5. Access to community resources (ponds, forests, pastures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved access and management of: fish ponds, tree nurseries and fruit orchards (with limited benefits to women) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No special provision
Overall performance	😊	😊
2. Key criteria for women's improved food security		

TABLE II.
Analysis of the two projects' outcomes against key gendered criteria

	Food Security for Sustainable Household Livelihood (FoSHoL) Bangladesh	Combination of Various Food Security Projects²⁰ The Gambia
2.1. Food distribution within the household ("who eats first, who eats last")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depending on the area, food intake is still more or less skewed against women who eat last and the least. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everyone eats together, so no apparent inequality in terms of food intake, but better quality food tends to be reserved for men and boys. Power dynamics among the women of a given household influence food distribution.
2.2. Women's health status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women's health seems to have improved as a result of better access to health care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women's health seems to have improved as a result of less drudgery, more cash in hand, more time to rest and more quality time with children.
2.3. Direct access to and control over productive resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women's control over homestead gardens, poultry and livestock have improved, but fields are still largely under men's control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women's land is now irrigated and more productive (Brufut Gardens), and women control poultry. Fields are still under men's control (with some exceptions in the Jahally project).
2.4. Mobility (beyond the community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are now free to go to the field and to work in other people's homes - but they still do not usually go to the market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women can freely access their fields, but mobility restrictions beyond the community are still present.
2.5. Access to paid work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More access to paid work for women partly as a result of better access to information and new skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficult to say whether the project has increased earning opportunities for women.
2.6. Gender-equitable wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wages have increased in recent years, but the gender gap remains. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No data available from the study
2.7. Social capital (female networks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High improvement in women's social capital after the formation of groups at village and Union levels: This is a major outcome of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women's groups have been formed (Gardens) and some cooperatives have been created, but improved social capital is not a major outcome of the project.
Overall performance	☺	☹

TABLE II.
Analysis of the two projects' outcomes against key gendered criteria

	Food Security for Sustainable Household Livelihood (FoSHoL) Bangladesh	Combination of Various Food Security Projects²⁰ The Gambia
3. Key criteria for women's empowerment		
3.1. Capacity to make decision in the family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has increased overall, especially with respect to home production and children's education. However, still a long way to go in terms of the whole farming system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women make day-to-day production decisions, but farm management is still largely in men's hands.
3.2. Reduced workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workload has in fact increased for women (and for men also), but there are associated benefits for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some technologies (irrigation, milling machines) have reduced the drudgery/workload. Rice cultivation has increased women's workload, but with associated benefits.
3.3. Contribution to household revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women now earn from selling farm produce (veg., fruit, eggs, milk and etc) and from doing small trading and labour work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are only marginal contributions from the sale of vegetables due to marketing problems. Women are engaged in small trades.
3.4. Control over own revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quite marginal outcome: Women control revenues from sales taking place from the home directly, but men are now more accountable to their wives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women market poultry or vegetables, and control these (small) revenues. But larger farm revenues are mostly controlled by men.
3.5. Freedom of movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has increased greatly, and has become socially acceptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to say from this study because women's movements are constrained by multiple activities – ranging from vegetable vending, horticulture, agriculture, taking care of ruminants and other marketing activities.
3.6. Incidence of domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depends on the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to say since in most households, there are two to five wives receiving unequal attention from the husband
3.7. Human capital (skills, knowledge...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built-up through numerous trainings (technical and organisational) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better acquisition of technical production skills and organisational capacity - but still a long way to go

TABLE II.
Analysis of the two projects' outcomes against key gendered criteria

	Food Security for Sustainable Household Livelihood (FoSHoL) Bangladesh	Combination of Various Food Security Projects²⁰ The Gambia
3.8. Access to services and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better access to health, water and agricultural services, better understanding of Govt services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has increased in the Brufut Gardens initiative, but there is little evidence on the other projects.
3.9. Ability to speak up in public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has greatly increased amongst FoSHoL members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are quite vocal but often their voices are not heard.
3.10. Ability to influence decision-making in the group and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mixed group decisions are strongly influenced by women. There are more consultations of women in community planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group management decisions are entirely done by men. There has been no evidence on community response to women after interventions.
Overall performance	😊	😞
4. Indicators of changes in gender roles		
4.1. Shared responsibility for daily household food provisioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are still largely responsible for 'putting food on the table', including during times of crisis and regardless of additional workload. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food provisioning is women's role (no change before and after the project).
4.2. Equitable sharing of household responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Care and reproductive work is women's responsibility (with a few exceptions). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are still entirely responsible for care and reproductive work.
4.3. Opportunities for women to work outside the home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities have increased with daily labour activities, small trade, rice cultivation and etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are traditionally involved in vegetable vending and petty trade. Difficult to say whether project has increased the extent of these opportunities.
4.4. Direct involvement in marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Still very limited. Women sell from the house, but they seldom go and sell at the market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are involved in marketing their produce.

TABLE II.
Analysis of the two projects' outcomes against key gendered criteria

	Food Security for Sustainable Household Livelihood (FoSHoL) Bangladesh	Combination of Various Food Security Projects²⁰ The Gambia
4.5. Participation in local institutions	▪ Has increased	▪ Difficult to say
Overall performance	☹	☹

3.2. Critical factors of success

3.2.1. Designing sustainable food programmes

a) Grain and seed banks at individual and collective levels

In Bangladesh and The Gambia, the formation of community grain banks has been central to ensuring food security in the projects studied, despite the differences in approaches. In Bangladesh, women are encouraged in groups to save rice throughout the year in order to face shortage during the lean period. Rice stocks have been progressively built-up by the group, and can be accessed by group members in times of need, not unlike the revolving fund managed by women in their village-level groups. What is noteworthy in this scheme is that: 1) It is internally-driven and demands no assistance from outside players; and 2) it encourages women to save grains at their own households, thus creating an additional safety net for families during periods of seasonal food insecurity.

Also, in Bangladesh, the grain bank is complemented by a very elaborate seed production and marketing scheme, which guarantees timely and affordable access to quality rice seeds for resource-poor farmers through their village-based organisation. Given the frequency of natural disasters and associated crop loss in Bangladesh, this scheme is of vital component of a larger food security project.

In Gambia, the purpose of the grain bank is to aid resource-poor families with periodic distribution of food grains and seeds. Although it brings immediate relief from food insecurity, this more classic form of food aid has several issues associated with it. For instance, the actual amount available to address food needs during the lean period is insufficient; transparency in the selection of poorest household is inadequate; monitoring of the actual use of distributed food grains (sale by male household members being a common phenomenon in some parts of the world) is limited; and food distribution at the household level is unpredictable with the risk of women and girls receiving a smaller share than men and boys.

b) Raising agricultural productivity in a sustainable manner

Food security projects in two countries studied have been designed to increase agricultural productivity, through the use of organic inputs and appropriate farming techniques in the case of Bangladesh, and improved access to irrigation, quality seeds, farm implements and appropriate farming techniques in the case of The Gambia. These approaches, if all goes well, lead to higher yields in rice and vegetables and to increased productivity in poultry and livestock-rearing.

The agricultural methods used in Bangladesh can be characterised as low external input and organic, which tend to reduce the costs of production, limit dependency on chemical inputs, and ensure the ecological sustainability of farming systems. This approach seems more desirable than the one followed in The Gambia, where the intensive use of water from borewells and chemical inputs could lead to various problems in the medium and long-run; such as depletion of water tables, increasing costs of production, soil pollution, and technical problems associated with running solar-operated pumping systems.

It is important to note that investments were designed to raise the productivity of resources directly controlled by women (i.e. not mediated by men or by the market), such as commercial horticultural gardens (The Gambia), homestead gardens (Bangladesh) and poultry and livestock, all of which generate significant revenues for women.

c) Combined approach to increasing household revenues

The capacity to earn revenues is critical to food security in resource-poor families, and yet, it is also highly context-specific. Taking these two elements into consideration, ActionAid's programmes proposed a "basket of livelihood options" to participating households. This is one of the strengths of the FoSHoL Project, which supports a wide range of activities. Each group is free to develop its own strategy based on its resources, skills and interests. Similarly, in the Gambia, food security is tackled through a range of projects, although there is far less overall coherence as boundaries between projects remain fairly hermetic. The groups have no basket of livelihood options from where they can choose and pick. In FoSHoL, different activities complement each other: the savings scheme provides the scope for women to develop small trading activities around puffed rice or ducks' eggs, which themselves benefit from improved production practices and so on.

d) Resilience to natural disasters

The exercise performed with FoSHoL members in Satkhira district, Bangladesh, shows that poultry and livestock-rearing are the most resilient activities, from the perspective of risk posed by natural disasters such as floods, drought

and cyclones. In the present context of climate change, it is vital to ensure that at least some of the livelihood options proposed to women can withstand the consequences of natural disasters, so as to reduce women's vulnerability to shocks – an important determinant of food insecurity in poor households. This dimension needs to be accounted for more systematically in future food security programming.

3.2.2. Empowering women and changing gender norms

a) Importance of the group dynamics and women's increased mobility

In all projects studied, the impact of collective action cannot be overlooked. In Bangladesh, the entire project is premised on the creation of groups (mixed, women-only, men-only) at the community level, and through which skills, knowledge and services are transferred. In The Gambia, women who work in the Brufut Gardens, rice cultivation, poultry production and seed and cereal banks are also members of a group, and they are supposed to make collective decisions.

Throughout field studies, women repeatedly emphasised critical changes that took place in their lives as a result of being members of collective action groups. Through these groups, women benefited from increased mobility (in the process of attending meetings), access to skills, knowledge and services enhanced self-assurance and assertiveness in the community and better capacity to deal with complex social issues (early marriage, land appropriation and etc.). In all cases, groups not only catalyze women's actions, but also create a platform to question traditional gender norms and to make emancipatory choices.

b) Supporting non-traditional roles for women

The Bangladeshi case shows that it is possible for organised women to transcend gender norms and acquire skills that are usually reserved for men. The trained women vaccinators of FoSHoL Union Moitree render a service to poultry and cattle producers, earn a supplementary livelihood from this activity, and have also gained recognition and influence in decision-making relating to agriculture. They have a good understanding of actors and players in the private and public sectors related to poultry and livestock, and are treated with respect by specialists and officials, which is a considerable added value for themselves and other women in their communities.

3.3. Significant gaps in programme design and implementation

3.3.1. From food programming perspective

a) Lack of attention to ecological sustainability (The Gambia context)

A long-term approach to food security should take into consideration ecological sustainability. In this light, the projects in The Gambia ring an alarm bell, as they intensify the use of external chemical inputs, instead of promoting low-cost organic solutions.

b) Low transparency in financial processes (The Gambia context)

Women members of the Brufut Gardens, poultry and rice farmers' association are quite unaware of how the larger organisation is run, how it mobilises resource, and how resources are spent. Moreover, they lack skills in book-keeping and accounting, which would enable them to take a more active role in the organisation's financial management.

3.3.2. From gender perspective

a) Little attention paid to women's multiple roles and increasing workload

Women's unpaid care and reproductive work goes unnoticed by society at large, but also, to a large extent, by development staff. Participatory exercises conducted with women from Kurigram district (Bangladesh) and in the Central River Region (The Gambia) revealed that their day starts at 5 am and ends at 10 pm, and that project interventions in both countries have added new responsibilities and created more work for them. Given the relatively

high returns from these activities, and given that men's workload had increased simultaneously, women did not seem to find the additional work too burdensome. However, in the absence of institutional or project-based support to deal with competing priorities at home and outside, women have to find their own solutions.

Changes in gender roles (women becoming more active in the public domain) has brought about a redistribution of daily chores in some households (men helping with livestock or looking after children), but for the most part, care and food provisioning remain women's sole responsibility (as shown in Table 8 above).

b) *Women's low participation and skills in marketing*

Marketing and entrepreneurship for women are emerging as central dimensions of gender programmes in the development sector, and require specific strategies. Even though none of the three projects studied has a clear objective of increasing women's participation in markets, all do directly imply increased revenues to women accruing from the sale of agricultural produce – and hence directly engaging in marketing activities.

In the projects carried out in Bangladesh and The Gambia, due to lack of marketing skills, women ended up:

- selling small quantities from their home, leaving the bulk to be sold by their husband in the market, which translated into a low level of control by women over revenues (Bangladesh),
- leaving the bulk of perishable items such as tomatoes to rot (The Gambia), and
- relying on (often dubious) intermediaries to sell their produce, which means that benefits are largely appropriated by other actors in the value chain (The Gambia).

Providing women producers with basic marketing skills – including information on prices, trading networks, marketing channels, understanding of cost-benefit ratio and learning to calculate costs of production – could help them in developing a marketing strategy for their produce as a way of increasing their control over farm revenues.

c) *Limited control over farm incomes by women*

From a gender perspective, control over household revenues is an important parameter, as it determines who decides where money is ultimately spent. Various studies show that women's expenditures directly impact household food security and well-being. Men tend to spend more on non-essential items, including cigarettes, tea or snacks taken in restaurants (which is the case in Bangladesh) or alcoholic beverages. Women spend money primarily on food, children's education and essential items.

Hence, it is quite essential that the produce generated by women's activities be directly controlled by them, which is not currently the case in the two projects reviewed. Systematically assessing who controls the revenues derived from horticulture or from raising poultry in The Gambia proved difficult due to complex social structures. One case study does indicate that women directly spend the money they earn from selling poultry, but this cannot be generalised to all project interventions.

Collectively-managed resources may provide women a greater capacity to retain control over the benefits of their activities. For instance, collective land, gardens or tree nurseries can provide the scope for women to manage the benefits more freely than when the resource is owned by individual households (given gender imbalance in access to property and assets). Findings from Bangladesh show, however, that community-based resources managed under FoSHoL (fish ponds, fruit orchards, tree nurseries) mostly provide benefits to men (in two communities, women stated that there is no benefit for them from fish or sapling sales). This dimension of the project needs to be revisited from a gender perspective. In The Gambia, none of the interventions studied focused directly on community-based resources²².

d) *Lack of gender-disaggregated information*

In the Gambian projects, but also in certain areas of the FoSHoL project in Bangladesh, we found that gender-disaggregated information is not always available. In The Gambia for instance, there is no clear record of how many women were involved in various stages of the projects studied. Finding out whether, and to what extent, women actually benefitted is thus difficult to analyse, as information about the household says very little about women's improved food security or social status (especially in the polygamous Gambian context). Also, we observed a lack of data on revenues earned by women from the project in both countries.

e) **Few women in high-level leadership positions**

Gender relations in leadership positions and decision-making processes deserve special attention and monitoring. A clear strategy appears to be lacking in this respect in all projects studied. In Bangladesh, the percentage of women is quite high at the grassroots level (60 percent), but women do not constitute the majority in Union-level organisations, and there are three women and six men in the Central Farmer Alliance. While this ratio is not entirely 'inequitable' given the obstacles for women's participation in leadership positions, sustained efforts should be made to ensure that organisations whose constituents have a majority of women are also governed by a significant percentage of women. In The Gambia, there are many women members in the farmers' associations (including some in managerial positions), but only few have the skills and knowledge to perform well as managers.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In a nutshell, this study brings out six major forms of **constraints** that severely curtail women's ability to produce and access food for themselves and for their families:

1. Lack of access to and control over productive resources (assets, capital, ecosystems, skills, knowledge)
2. Lack of control over household finances, low financial skills (record-keeping, calculating profits, etc...)
3. Excessive time and resources spent carrying out reproductive work at household level
4. Constraining gender norms (lack of mobility, low education levels, early marriage and child-bearing, polygamy, socially constructed "selflessness")
5. Low exposure to services, information and decision-making processes in the community and larger society
6. Low capacity to organise and act collectively in society and in markets

Addressing food security from a gender perspective therefore entails addressing *each of these constraints* in a combined manner, so that achievements in one sector reinforce progress in a different sector.

Four major **strategies** have been identified to address such constraints:

1. **Active participation of women in collective action**
2. **Improved access to and management of productive resources (individual and collective) for women**
3. **Enhanced contributions by women to household revenues (and control over these revenues)**
4. **Optimised time and resources spent in care and reproductive activities by women**

These strategies need to be achieved by building up *natural* capital (gender-sensitive investments in productive resources), *social* capital (supporting the formation of women's groups and associated needs such as daycare centres), *human* capital (access to knowledge and skills and services for women) and *financial* capital (savings' group, access to financial institutions, waivers as collaterals).

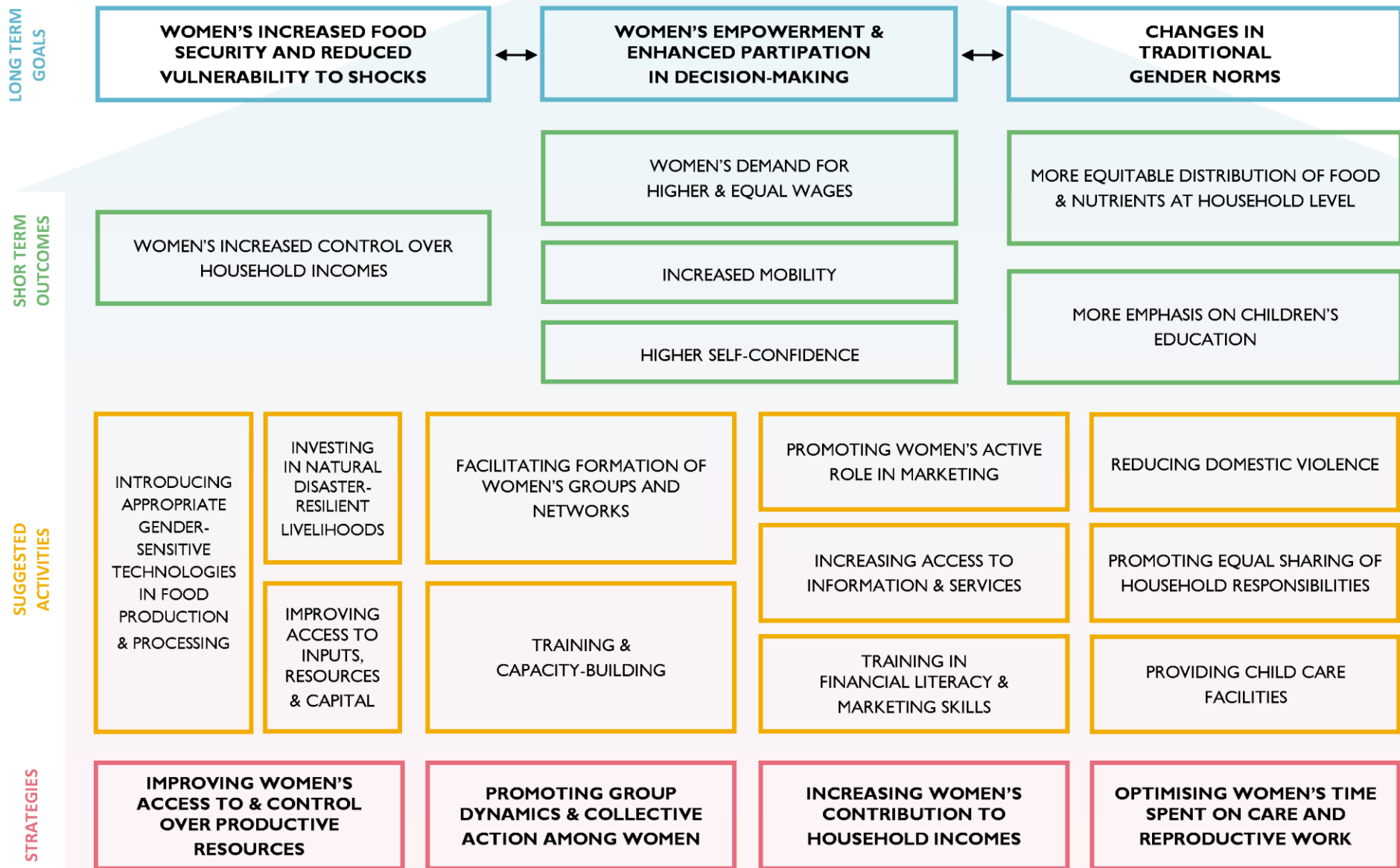
As shown in Figure 1, these four strategies, if well-designed, can deliver specific outcomes that will contribute to long-term food security and women's empowerment.

This comprehensive approach not only **aims** to improve household food security, but also to:

- improve food security for women and girls while reducing poor women's vulnerability to external shocks
- challenge traditional gender norms and
- increase women's participation in decision-making processes at household and community levels.

The studies in Bangladesh and The Gambia clearly show that understanding the constraints faced by women and addressing them in programme design are not only critical in building women's capacity to secure food for their families in the long-run, but also in contributing to women's empowerment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Note: The activities presented in this framework are suggestions based on the field studies from Bangladesh and The Gambia. The relationships between strategies, activities, outcomes and goals are by no means fixed and linear.

5. CONCLUSION

Empowerment – as a process of change, entailing struggles at the individual and collective levels as women take up new roles – defies traditional gender relations and creates new models for women. This struggle is what Bangladeshi women refer to when they speak, for instance, of the initial resistance of male community leaders to the idea that women could form groups and become active in the community.

This study shows that achieving food security requires not only resource mobilisation, but also strategic changes in power relations at the household and community level. Ultimately, when women active in the FoSHoL project identified the “courage to get out of our houses” as their first achievement even before that of “producing more food”, they have made a political statement: Women's increased mobility, out of homes and into the public domain, questions the “natural order of things” where men have the upper hand in terms of access to resources and decision-making.

Whilst The Gambia has various innovative food security projects which all help improve household food security, they are largely compartmentalised and lack a strong gender vision and strategy. This in turn inhibits the 'snow-balling effect' in terms of women's empowerment and changing gender norms.

Linking food security to women's empowerment is thus a pre-condition to addressing the complexity of constraints faced by poor rural women in providing food for their families. Ensuring food security in a sustainable manner therefore necessarily entails improving women's status by aligning food security programmes with an agenda for women's emancipation.

ANNEX I - FIELD NOTES FROM BANGLADESH

This Annex presents an overview of the research (Table I), followed by notes from the field study conducted in Bangladesh in January 2011 by Carine Pionetti, with a team from ActionAid (see report for main findings and outcomes).

TABLE I.
Field study in Bangladesh: details of location, participants, and research questions

Date	Place: village, sub-district, district	Participants	Research agenda
07.01.2011	Tetulia, Tala, Satkhira district (Southern Bangladesh)	22 women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coping strategies ▪ Impact on women's mobility ▪ Women's involvement in marketing produce
08.01.2011	Brommorajpur, Sadar, Satkhira district (Southern Bangladesh)	23 women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benefit from FoSHoL: comparative analysis ▪ Livelihood options and natural disasters (ranking exercise)
10.01.2011	Pandul, Ulipur Kurigram district (Northwest Bangladesh)	22 women, 10 men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collective grain bank (rice) ▪ Coping strategies during monga (before and after)
11.02.2011	Sadi, Rajarhat Kurigram district (Northwest Bangladesh)	16 women, 6 men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women's workload ▪ Savings and credit activities ▪ Control over HH cash flows ▪ Women's entrepreneurship
12.01.2011	Sadar, Gaibandha district	6 women (waged workers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gender analysis of tulsi production (women's economic entrepreneurship)

A. FIELD NOTES – Day I

Location: Tetulia (Nowapara), Tala (sub-district), Satkhira district (South Bangladesh)

Date and time: 07.01.2011 10 am – 4:30 pm

Facilitation/translation: Naima, Partha, Amir

Objectives:

- 1) Understand the earlier stages of group formation under FoSHoL
- 2) Understand the types of changes FoSHoL brought about in terms of:
 - Coping strategies (with respect to food insecurity)
 - Women's daily activities
 - Women's mobility
 - Household dynamics
- 3) Find out to what extent women are involved in marketing produce from home gardens

I. Information about the participants:

Participants	Land holding	Sources of income/livelihood
22 women including: - 8 doing agricultural waged labourers - 6 women from female-headed households	<i>Land holding:</i> between 5 and 10 decimals of land (0.05 and 0.1 acre) Most families have a home garden	- 7 ducks + 4 chicken: 200 Th/month - Agricultural waged labour: 15-20 days per month between December and April - 2 cows + 4 goats: 500 Th/month. After improved livestock management (feed, etc): 1000 Th/month - Men's work: van-rickshaw puller, small vegetable entrepreneur, share-croppers, daily labourers

Reminder: 100 decimals = 1 acre 2.47 acres = 1 ha

2. Main topics discussed:

- a) Formation of groups:
 - Women were not so interested at first. One person (from ActionAid) regularly came and collected data about people's livelihoods for 2-6 months. This person introduced the idea of saving 20 Th per month so that money could later be invested in something else. Slowly, a few women got interested (had heard of successful savings and credit groups elsewhere).
 - When asked: "Why only women's groups?", the participants responded: "Women stay at home, men go away for work".
- b) Criteria for selecting group members:
 - Farmers owning less than 20 decimals
- c) FoSHoL Project helped in resolving a number of issues faced by small farmers:
 - Disease in poultry ("Chicken would catch a disease and die") > training for vaccinators
 - Unproductive gardening ("We would plant vegetables in a scattered manner") > Training on seedbed preparation for vegetables
 - Lack of organisation and capacity in the event of a flood > Better coping strategies, less severe impact of a flood on health (e.g. diarrhoea).
- d) Positive changes in women's lives (see Table 3 below)
- e) Increase in the daily labour wage (though not directly linked to FoSHoL)
 - Despite the increase in daily labour wage, there was no change in the gender gap of daily wages: Women get 80 Th/day (and 60 Th if work from 8 to 1 pm) and men get 100 Th.
- f) Training received through FoSHoL:
 - goat vaccination
 - beef fattening
 - line-sowing of rice
 - fish cultivation (in ponds and in rice fields)
 - preparing seed beds for vegetables
 - growing vegetables on rooftop
 - tailoring (7 groups out of 32 are doing it, during off agricultural season)

3. Participatory exercise

FDG 1. Seasonal calendar and coping strategies during lean seasons (11 women, 10-12 pm)

- a) Seasonal calendar reveals the following:
 - Major field crops in the area are: rice, potato, turmeric, chilli, cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, jute, mustard, wheat, lentil, blackgram, mango, guava and jujube.
 - Vegetables grown in the homestead are: beans, green leafy vegetables, eggplants and long beans.
 - Fruit trees in the area include: coconut, guava, banana and papaya.
 - Lean period: mid-September to mid-November is the most difficult period of the year. Work is scarce. There is very little money. Tensions in the family increase.
- b) Coping strategies:

TABLE 2.
Coping strategies during lean season (mid-Sept.- mid-Nov) in Satkhira

	Before FOSHOL	After FOSHOL
Women	Collect wild edible plants	Still do so, but to a lesser extent
	Eat less, and only once a day	Still eat less, but at least twice a day
	Kill and sell a chicken	"Fistful of rice"
	Women eat last (after husband and children)	Some families now eat together (not all)
Men	Take loan at high interest rate from several money-lenders to spend on food	Take loan with low interest rate from NGO Invest the money in rice cultivation, cattle-rearing or small businesses
	No seasonal migration	Seasonal migration (truck driving, rickshaw-pulling) thanks to better communication facilities
Household	Large number of children (7-8)	Fewer children (2-3) makes it easier to manage food

FDG 2. Female-headed household discussion with 11 women (11 am – 1 pm, facilitated by Naima)

a) Acquisition of knowledge and skills as a means of developing livelihood activities

- Testimonies of women involved in vegetable gardening, seed preservation and cow-rearing:
 - Previously, we usually sold our labour in others' crop fields and in our own land. Some of us used to work in other peoples' homes. Now we do some other activities like tailoring, vaccination to livestock and poultry and homestead vegetable cultivation. We still sometimes work in other peoples' homes. We received training on homesteading vegetable cultivation, farming, and rice seedling preparation by making seed bed and so on in a more organised and improved way.
 - Shukhjan, a household head: "I bought a cow after obtaining a loan from group savings. After rearing it for few weeks, I sold the cow in the market and bought a calf. I am also using the fallow lands surrounding my homestead for vegetable cultivation. I produce vegetable seedlings myself, and I also save rice seeds from the previous rice crop."
 - Aparna Das: "Last year, I cultivated rice on a five-katha plot of land as a share-cropper. I grew rice and preserved rice seeds after harvesting. I have been maintaining my family for the last two months by selling eggs of four ducks and vegetables that I cultivated in the land surrounding my homestead. This month, I am growing pumpkin and beans."
 - Women are skilled in rice seed preservation. Shukhjan dries rice seeds under the sun. If the seeds can be divided nicely by teeth, this means that the seeds can be stored. They also know about integrated pest management (IPM). They are not using any pesticides; they are only controlling pest following IPM methods.
 - During the period of last caretaker government, there was a fertiliser crisis during the Boro rice season. Since we are single women responsible for leading and taking care of the family, we needed to go and collect fertilisers at 9 pm from the Mirzapur market, which is 4 km away from our village. We raised our concerns to local village leaders regarding this, but they did not do anything. We think, after attending FoSHoL group meetings, we are now confident to do by ourselves.
 - Now Union Moitree is known to all. Participants of 17 villages have come to know each other through it. Now we discuss with each other, we know who is going to cultivate which variety of rice. Other villagers come and sit with us and listen to discussions in our group meetings.
- Obstacles/problems faced by female headed household:
 - Need to do-it-all by myself, to take every responsibility (home, family, outside), as there is no one with whom women can share household and other activities.
 - Income, household work and working outside the house - each and every thing needs to do alone.
 - Most difficult is the day to day market, especially buying fish from the evening fish market. In the crowd of men, it is difficult to bargain for goods.
 - Women do not earn as much money as men, so they cannot buy big fish from the fish market.
 - Even though women's participation in society is still limited by many factors, a lot has improved compared to the past.
- Future plan to overcome the limitation:
 - Women are now planning to work together. Doing things as a group of 20 members will enable them to take up many activities, take new initiatives and express their opinions more extensively.
- Example of a divorced woman, who is now the Vice-President of her Union Moitree:

"I live with my father-in-law, mother-in-law and brother-in law. Earlier, I used to work at our own crop land and there was no income. I had limited access to go outside of home. After joining FoSHoL my family was not very supportive of me at first. One day my brother-in-law came and sat with our group during a discussion session. There, he found that the discussions were very much helpful for our livelihood improvements; there are no harmful activities or discussions taking place. Since then, he has become motivated and is also helping me with my activities and providing me all efforts to make my family supportive of me. Now I am working outside engaging activities such as working as a vaccinator and earning money, doing work at crop fields as a sharecropper and doing work for the organisation. I am the vice-president of my organisation".

b) Main activities carried out by FoSHoL group members: Impact analysis

TABLE 3.
Impact analysis of FoSHoL main activities in Tetulia (Satkhira district)

Component	Activities done	Impact. Step1	Impact Step.2	Impact Step.3
Seed preservation & seedbed preparation training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean and level the seed bed ▪ Sow seeds in the seed bed ▪ Cultivate single crop species in the same piece of land ▪ Clean crop just after harvesting ▪ Dry the grain/crop on tarpaulin/cotton ▪ Preserve seeds in polythene bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We use our own seeds for cultivation ▪ We sell them in our villages ▪ We are gaining economic benefits ▪ The amount/extent of seed loss is negligible ▪ We making more productive use of our land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We can sow at the right time since we have seeds preserved in our home ▪ We are gaining economic benefits from the sale of seed ▪ We have become popular and famous in our locality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We are benefiting from higher yields as we are sowing quality seeds ▪ More secured livelihood ▪ We have earned respect for our work
Vaccination of livestock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vaccination & medicine of poultry ▪ Vaccination of goat & medicine for worm treatment ▪ Beef fattening & medicine for worm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We use the vaccine for poultry & poultry worm ▪ We carried out goat vaccination ▪ We carried out vaccination of cows and used powder for worm treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We are benefiting from the reduced poultry mortality rate ▪ We are benefiting from the reduced goat mortality rate ▪ We are benefiting from the reduced cow mortality rate ▪ We are enjoy other economic benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Livestock is safe & and family can earn revenue from livestock ▪ Women have gained credibility and recognition in their locality ▪ Women's nutritional status has improved
Fisheries training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fish culture in paddy field ▪ Putting fish in pond after testing soil and cleaning pond ▪ Use of good quality fingerling ▪ Use of proper amount of fish feed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are conducting paddy & fish culture at same time ▪ Women are cultivating fish in unused canals and channels ▪ Women are selling fish in the market ▪ Women are using fish for own food consumption purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women are enjoying higher profit cultivation of paddy and fish in the same piece of land ▪ Abandoned canals and small water bodies have become productive ▪ With balanced feeding of fish, women are getting higher profits in short time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic development of household ▪ Steady supply of protein supply for the family ▪ Recognition from people in the locality (receiving support and goodwill)
Gender training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equal rights for men and women ▪ Abolishing early marriage ▪ Opportunities for women to attend various events on gender equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women participated in 'International Women's Day' ▪ Women worked to stop early marriage ▪ Women actively participate in different social activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women have more opportunities ▪ Women received support from people in the locality ▪ Women are working to remove biased traditional beliefs on gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effort to create a climate of peace and security ▪ Higher status of women in the community ▪ Questioning traditional beliefs about women

c) Summary of changes that occurred in women's lives:

TABLE 4. Change in women's status as a result of FOSHOL project		
	Before FOSHOL	After FOSHOL
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Before, men would not let us go out freely” ▪ “We were only allowed to go to our in-laws' house, our father's house, and to the field (to bring food for men)” ▪ People would criticise any woman going out on her own (especially at night) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Now we can work in the fields with our husband” ▪ “Now we can go to the market alone” ▪ Some go to meet various officials (veterinarian) and asset themselves (don't allow people to make them wait for 2 hours) ▪ “This doesn't happen anymore”. ▪ “Now those who used to criticise have themselves become active in the community”
Relationship with husband and men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In most cases, women just obeyed their husbands, unquestioningly ▪ “Our husbands never asked for our advice” ▪ “We could not sit and talk with men” ▪ ▪ Very few husbands would encourage their wives to be active and independent earlier. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “We now speak up in the family, men listen to us” ▪ “Now they ask for our opinion” ▪ “Now we freely speak with men, including strangers or officials” ▪ “Now you find quite a few”. “After hearing from us, they understand our work, see its benefits, and as a result, they become more supportive of us”. ▪ Example: “This morning, I had to get up at 5 am to come to this meeting – my husband got up with me, helped me feed the cattle, we had breakfast together, and he dropped me here by cycle”.
Influence in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women had little influence on decisions in the family, and no direct influence on community decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Now we can influence men in the village”. “Even the police listens to us. And when the govt needs to work in villages (e.g. widows' allowance programme, security measures), they approach us” (the Women Farmers' Groups)
Capacity to earn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We did not use to earn much money (apart from daily labour work) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Now women are earning alongside men “That money is giving us more freedom”. ▪ “It's better for the family if both the husband and the wife have income opportunities”

FGD 3. Sale of farm produce in the market (20 women, afternoon session)

a) Produce sold:

- Vegetables: ridgegourd, snakegourd, bottlegourd, sweet gourd, beans, green banana, cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, carrot, eggplant and onion
- Green vegetables: red amaranth, spinach and coriander leaves
- Pluses: lentil, mung bean, blackgram and pigeonpea
- Spices: green chilli, turmeric, garlic and ginger
- Fruit: mango, blackberry, jackfruit, lemon, amla, whiteberry, sapota, banana, jujube, coconut and tamarind
- Dairy and meat products: cow, goat, duck, chicken, cow milk, egg, pigeon and fish
- Field crops: rice, jute, wheat and sugarcane

b) Four main marketing channels:

- from home to villagers
- from home to middlemen (bulk)
- in the local market
- in the sub-district level market

c) Women's role in marketing:

- Women's participation in marketing is large in selling from home to villagers. They also sometimes sell to middlemen (from home), especially if the husband is not around. A few women (unmarried or from female-headed households) take some produce to the market, but this is largely done by men. No women sell in the more distant market, because of:
 - transportation problems
 - difficulty in carry heavy weights
 - it might damage the husband's prestige if the wife sells in public.

B. FIELD NOTES – Day 2

Location: Brommorajpur, Sadar, Satkhira district

Date and time: 08.01.2011 10 am – 4:30 pm

Facilitation/translation: Naima, Partha, Amir

Objectives:

- 1) Find out how women members of FoSHoL groups perceive changes (do an analysis in terms of inputs, outputs, benefits and gaps)
- 2) Compare the economic returns to women from various livelihood
- 3) Understand how natural disasters impact livelihoods and food security (from a gender perspective)

1. Information about the participants:

Participants	Role played in the groups
22 women including: - 2 Rishi women (ethnic minority) - 4 unmarried women	2 are Presidents of Union Moitree 5 are Presidents of village-level groups 3 are cashiers 3 are Secretary Rest are members of local organisations

2. Main topics discussed:

- a) Change in diet after adoption of new practices (FoSHoL)
- b) Waterlogging problem as a major production constraint in the area
- c) Struggle women faced to get to where they are now: Criticism from community, questioning from their husbands, getting a bad name, difficulty in attending meetings... “But now, if someone protests, we don't even think about it anymore”
- d) Change in household dynamics: Women leaders now intervene on issues like domestic violence in their community. They are respected.

3. Participatory exercise

FDG 1. Input/output analysis of FoSHoL

Purpose: Gain an understanding of what people have contributed to the FoSHoL Project; what they have received as a group; and what they have gained from it. Also look at gaps or unfulfilled desires.

Outcome of the PRA:

TABLE 5.
Analysis of inputs and outputs* from FOSHOL Project in Brommorajpur UFKM, Sadar (Satkhira District)

<p>1. What we received from FOSHOL</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The courage to come out of our houses (mental strength, determination) 2. Training (homestead gardening, fish cultivation, duck and chicken-rearing, livestock-rearing) 3. Advice (technical and financial) 4. Seed for vegetables (including green veg) 5. Building for the village-level organisation 6. Capacity-building to develop the organisation 7. Tin, notebooks, pens, tarpaulin 8. Passbook for savings 9. Capacity-building for Moitree development (federation of village-level organisations) 10. Money to build a small Centre for the Moitree 11. Rice seeds 12. Seed money for village-level org (10 to 15 000 Thaka) 13. Trainings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership (for President and Secretary) ▪ Accounting (Cashier) ▪ Vaccination (poultry, livestock) ▪ Disaster-preparedness ▪ Nutrition (2 people for 2 days in a one Moitree) ▪ Violence against women ▪ Ending early marriage ▪ Women and child trafficking
<p>2. What we gave to build FOSHOL</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time 2. Efforts: convincing people to join in, showing the benefits of better agricultural practices (rice, seedbeds for vegetables) by doing it ourselves 3. Building material (for the organisation's building): bamboo, doors, nails, locks 4. Savings: 10 to 20 Th per week (per member), multiplying the organisation's savings (land lease, purchase of a rickshaw van) 5. Land for the building
<p>3. How we benefited from FOSHOL</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improvement in our lives 2. Prevention of disease in poultry 3. Reduced production costs (in farming) and higher returns 4. Vegetables produced without fertilisers 5. Improvement in fish cultivation 6. Opportunity for cow-rearing 7. Taking care of household needs through savings 8. Using the organisation's savings to lease land (for one family) – thus generating a profit 9. Provide vaccinations (poultry, livestock) to villagers outside the group 10. Fistful of rice (collective grain bank) 11. Saved from « backbiting »: people have stopped criticising women for going out 12. Men and women have more equal rights (compared to the past) 13. Now instead of misconduct, we receive support from our husbands 14. Now women can also get involved in agriculture 15. Vegetable production meets our family needs 16. We now also sell vegetables in the market
<p>4. What we still aspire for</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Better opportunities for our children's education 2. Expand the Moitree from sub-district (Upazilla) to district (Zila) level 3. Apply for tender of the local market and operate it for a season (collection of tax) 4. More financial assistance 5. Entering the Village Defence Police 6. Equal rights for men and women 7. Deep tubewells to access safe drinking water

*The order in which women listed the points has been retained

FDG 2. Time line analysis of activities undertaken by FoSHoL group members

2005	Leadership development training Group savings Homestead vegetable cultivation
2006	Fish culture Disaster management training
2007	Poultry-rearing training Livestock-rearing training Organic manure/fertiliser preparation
2008	Formation of KRISHOK MOITREE (open election)
2009	Village-based ANSAR foundation training

FDG 3. Comparative analysis of benefits generated by different FoSHoL activities (1:30 – 3 pm)

Process:

- Participants list all income generating activities (IGA)
- Facilitators together with participants define a list of parameters to investigate
- One participant writes out results in the table (after everyone agrees)

Main findings & Outcome of the PRA: See Section 2.2.5 of the report.

FDG 4. Linkages between natural disasters, food security and women's workload (7 women, 1:30 – 3 pm)

a) Process:

- Find out from participants about all natural disasters that occur in the area. List them.
- List out all livelihood that get affected by these disasters
- Explain the process of ranking: high, medium or low depending on the level of impact

b) Main findings & Outcome of the PRA: See Section 2.2.7 of the report.

C. FIELD NOTES – Day 3

Location: Pandul, Ulipur (sub-district), Kurigram (district)

Date and time: 10.01.2011 10 am – 4:30 pm

Facilitation/translation: Wahida, Amir, Maksud

Objectives:

- 1) Understand the gender dynamics in the FoSHoL groups (representation and leadership)
- 2) Collective grain banks (“fistful of rice”): management, benefits, sustainability?
- 3) Find out to what extent women control the income from different IGA
- 4) Find out how FoSHoL has affected women's and men's workload and responsibility for care work (in the home)
- 5) Have people's coping strategies during the *monga* changed as a result of FoSHoL?
- 6) How do women's and men's coping strategies differ, and how effectively has FoSHoL addressed these differences?

I. Information about the participants:

Participants	Composition of FOSHOL groups in Pandul Union Moitree
22 women and 2 men, including: - 9 women acting as cashiers and presidents of their village-level organisations. - 6 women acting as presidents (5 women-only groups, 1 mixed group) - 2 men presidents of, respectively, a mixed FoSHoL group, and the Pandul Union Moitree.	34 groups in total: - 18 mixed groups - 15 women-only groups - 1 men-only group Amongst women-only groups, some are mixed Hindus-Muslims, some are Hindu-only or Muslims-only (corresponding to Hindu or Muslim neighbourhoods) Amongst mixed (M/F) groups, the gender ratio varies: 18 M/7 F; 23 F/ 1 M. President of Union Moitree estimates that 50 percent of all presidents are women.

2. Main topics discussed:

- a) Early stages of group formation:
 - Women were met with the resistance from old local religious leaders, who used to make the fatwa. These men were few in number, but very powerful.
 - They would say that “it is harmful to society if women go out of their houses”, “Allah will not protect you if this happens in your household”, and etc. First, these people had to be convinced of the benefits of the project.
- b) Slowly these leaders changed as they saw concrete benefits from women's work. They realised that “women becoming more powerful in society doesn't mean that they'll start dominating”. Now these men have become more “aware”.
- c) Change in household dynamics:
 - From being housewives, women have now become producers (know how to use fallow land, can grow vegetables for sale, etc).
 - “My husband is happy even if I put just 10 Thaka in his hand” → This suggests that women do not keep the money they earn.
- d) Control over money earned (household level):
 - “Why do you give the money to your husband?” → “We give some of it, and spend some of it”.
 - It seems, however, that the bulk of the money earned is controlled by men (except when women earn a salary, for instance as a teacher).
 - Women spend relatively small amount of money on:
 - food commodities (rice, salt, oil)
 - pencils, notebook (children's school needs)
 - medicine
 - clothes for children
- e) In mixed groups, women do not go to the market: It is men who sell the vegetables produced by women
 - This raises the question of constraints weighing on women (in terms of mobility).
- f) Mobility of women: “Why don't women go to the market?”:
 - “It costs extra money (need to rent a van rickshaw for 23-30 Th, whereas men go with their own cycle”
 - “When it comes to selling, our husbands are there”
 - “People will talk (« Moheela manush abar bazar korey »)”
 - “It gets dark soon, and we'll face difficulties getting home (fear that something will happen (violence against women))”
 - When asked: “Has something ever happened?”, participants responded No.
 - When asked: “If you go as a group, do you feel it's less risky?”, participants responded Yes.
 - “We have to go home and oversee our children's studies (husbands don't do it, but could do it, they say)”.
 - “I don't need to go to the market because people come to my house (« Paika raja »: big buyers)”.
- g) Management of household finances:
 - “Now we are aware: We ask our husbands how much they have earned from selling produce, how much they have spent on what and how much is left”.
 - “What about 10 years ago (before FoSHoL)?” → “We did not have the voice even to ask those questions. We couldn't do it. Now we can put these questions (« Amra akon djeera korte paree »)”.
- h) Leadership in mixed group:
 - Case 1. Woman president of a mixed group: “How did you get elected as President of a mixed group?”
 - She has good communication skills, she is very mobile, she works as a trained veterinarian, she even goes out at night on her own (she is also a midwife helper). She was involved in different kinds of activities before the group was formed and knows how to motivate people.
 - Case 2. Man president of a « mixed group » of 24 women and 1 man (!). “How did this happen?”
 - “There used to be two men, one of them was the cashier, but he was corrupt. We threw him out of the organisation. Now the other man is President, he is intelligent and we trust him”
 - “Do you (women) have reading and writing skills?” → Yes, they do (so could take up more responsibility in years to come).

3. Participatory exercise

FDG 1. Group-based activities (small trading and grain bank)

- a) Use of savings by members of the FoSHoL groups (village-level organisations)

- Any member can take an individual loan from the organisation. The set policy for repayment is: returning the loan amount + 40 kg of paddy (which goes into the collective grain bank).
 - Members also use some of the organisations' saving to get into small trading activities (buying and selling at a higher price). This is commonly done for:
 - potatoes (procured at 300 Th/40 kg, sold at 500 Th three months later to middlemen (market rate is then 700 Th/40 kg).
 - bettlenut
 - ginger
 - paddy
 - poultry and eggs
 - vegetable
- b) Grain banks ("The fistful of rice"): See Box 2 of the report
- c) Main findings & Outcome of the PRA:
- Women from FoSHoL groups reinvest collectively savings in a range of activities, including small trade in agricultural products. Potato trade is the most profitable, and least labour-intensive, following by rice, bettlenut and chicken. Through these activities, women expand their network beyond the realm of the FoSHoL group – which can be seen as an additional benefit.
 - The practice of collectively saving food grains for the lean season (collective grain bank):
 - benefits almost every group member (15 out of 20 households take rice loans during food insecure periods),
 - leads to benefits both in terms of increased grain and cash availability,
 - encourages women to also save rice for lean season at individual level, and
 - is only done by women's groups. Why not start it with men's groups' too (to break away from the idea that household food security is only of women's concerns).

FDG 2. Comparison of benefits obtained from various income generating activities in FoSHoL groups

TABLE 6.
Participatory assessment of FoSHoL activities
(in terms of food security, income, labour contributions and women's workload)

Activity	Contribution to HH food security	Contribution to munga mitigation	Monthly family income ²³	Women's income ²⁴	Access to market		Labour contributions		Increase in women's mobility
					Female	Male	Female	Male	
1. Homestead vegetable gardening	***	***	300	175 60%	75%	25%	80%	20%	*
2. Poultry and duck rearing	***	***	500	300 60%	80%	20%	100%	0	** (Vaccination)
3. Fish culture	**	*	500	000 0	0%	100%	40%	60%	*
4. Livestock rearing ²⁵	***	***	700	400 60%	50% MILK	50% COW	80%	20%	**
5. Fruit orchard	**	*	100	50 50%	60%	40%	90%	10%	*
6. Tree sapling	*	*	50	00 0	0	100%	40%	60%	*
7. Rice cultivation	**	*	300	30 10%	25% broken rice, husk	75%	60%	40%	***
8. Others ²⁶ :	***	***	1200	500 40%	75%	25%	50%	50%	**

- a) Women's mobility used to be limited to bringing food to their husbands working in the fields, going to neighbours and accessing services. With various FoSHoL activities, women are able to enjoy greater freedom of movement:

- Home gardens – more vegetables available
 - Poultry – easily sold
 - Livestock – sell out cattle, milk, cowdung (has come up after FoSHoL)
 - Daily labour – last resort
 - Rice husking and rice puffing – important as it generates some revenues for women
- b) Women's responses after doing the PRA:
- “We had fun while doing: income earned by women, time spent by men and women”
 - “We didn't know about: how much time we spend doing it (especially rice cultivation) and our own contributions to coping mechanisms”
- c) Observations about the PRA:
- Rice cultivation:
 - Women do not recognise what they do as work –e.g. soaking the seedlings is not seen as work
 - Women did not understand the full cycle of cultivation (before the PRA)
 - Income from fish cultivation:
 - “They sell the fish, they tell us how much they earn, and how much they spend on that day – but not a single penny comes to us”. “They sell fish and become selfish”.
 - Men don't do any work in the home garden
 - Men claim all the money earned by women:
 - “Thaka na dile, khata barish nie, tchole chai” - If you don't give me the money, pack up your things and go”. This is what men say to women (many, not just one) – in a month, 12-15 days they say this to us. People will never question the man
 - Domestic violence:
 - “Matra onno jai, mar kome nai, djodio akon hai koree (He used to hit me when I was not earning, he hits me now even when I am earning)”
 - No real reduction in violence – the difference is that “ague, shobaier shaman, akon beythorey hoi” - Before it was in front of everyone, and now it happens inside the house.
 - Incidence of beating has reduced: “If it was 10 before, now it is 8”.
 - Decline in domestic violence is very marginal (in Kurigram).
 - 'Mental torture' – e.g. man goes off for several days without saying anything, leaving woman and children without any means to support themselves.
 - Also if the husband comes home after eating outside, the wife asks: “You want to have your food? Man will say: “Don't disturb me. Why do you ask? I'll ask if I need to”. “Bhat de” (very degrading language).
 - Women do not know the dignity of life – i.e. they do not know that as a human being, you are supposed to be respected: “Shamee to marbee” - where is the dignity if you don't get beaten by your husband?
 - Wahida-Apa: “When you give women this much input, you will get that much output.
 - But if you give men this much, you'll only get this much”.
 - Sense that women in Bangladesh can go along way with a little push. This is a general feeling I also get from the fieldwork: Their situation may be quite 'hopeless', but in very little time, they have covered a lot of ground, and gained in dignity, determination, capacity to organise, etc...
- d) Main findings & Outcome of the PRA:
- *Increased self-confidence and mobility* are singled out as the key changes that have taken place as a result of their involvement with the project (by women in virtually every group studied). “I can come here, talk, be confident enough to fully express myself”. Access to knowledge (children's education, health issues, better cultivation methods) is also seen as a significant change.
 - *It is still taken for granted at family level that the man is supposed to control household finances.*
 - Labour and income distribution at household level depends on the activity. For example, fish brings no income to women. Poultry-raising is a demanding activity. Men do virtually nothing in the vegetable homestead.
 - *No significant decline in domestic violence.*
 - Women tend to underestimate the work they do.
 - Women find value in being able to work on their own farm (which they could not do earlier). They also contribute valuable inputs for the rice cultivation.

FDG 3. Coping strategies during the Monga (afternoon; mixed group: 11 women, 7 men)

a) Process:

- We explain that we would like to understand how people used to cope with the monga before FoSHoL, and how they cope with it now.
 - First we ask participants to tell us more about the monga.
 - Two periods of the year are mentioned: Ashvin Karthik, and Phalgun-Shatra.
- b) **Main findings & Outcome of the PRA:**
- When asked which one is most severe, women and men give two different answers (very surprisingly)
 - See Section 2.2.2. of the report
 - Quick gender analysis of food insecurity:
 - "In the family, who eats first?": Husband → Children → Women
 - "When there is food scarcity at home..." (especially before FoSHoL):
 - the husband always eats, and usually also has the option of eating outside (restaurant)
 - the wife usually doesn't eat (or eats very little – gives her share to children)
 - sometimes men migrate to look for work (leaving the family behind – so the responsibility of arranging for food entirely rests with women)
 - Impact analysis:
 - Access to knowledge → more opportunities to earn income → more diversified livelihood and better returns from the land → healthier families and children → better scope for children's education
 - Examples:
 - Using fallow land in homestead for cultivation + raising seed beds for vegetables (new cultivation technique) → higher returns → increased scope to commercialise vegetables → new source of earning
 - Weeding, use of organic fertilisers + pest management techniques (use of hand nets, preparation of herbal pesticide made from neem leaves, custard apple leaves and bish) for rice → higher productivity (now get 160 – 200 kg of paddy per 5 decimal of land – instead of 20 to 40 kg earlier) → incentive to intensify farming activities → people lease land to grow rice
 - Cow-rearing practice → cow purchased (through loan) by most FoSHoL members (90 percent, whereas only 40 percent had a cow before FoSHoL) → milk produced → consumed at home and sold in the market
 - Training on poultry treatment/ vaccination → decreased mortality rate in poultry → incentive to have more → returns in terms of food security and revenues (sale of eggs)
 - "Fistful of rice" → better management of grain stocks at household and community level
 - Training on financial management and savings → organisation (village-level group) now saves money → people can mobilise resources (for IGA) → savings fructify through small trade activities
 - Better understanding of the need to save → each individual household now saves 10 Th per week (40 Th/ month) → gets deposited in personal account in the bank → when in need, the family can use this money

D. FIELD NOTES – Day 4

Location: Sadi, Rajarhat (sub-district), Kurigram (district)

Date and time: 11.01.2011 10 am – 1:30 pm

Facilitation/translation: Wahida, Amir, Maksud

Objectives:

- 1) Understand how women's and men's group manage and use their savings
- 2) Which forms of income do women have more control over? Amongst FoSHoL activities, which ones bring direct benefits to poor women?
- 3) How has women's workload evolved in relation to FoSHoL? Has FoSHoL adequately addressed women's multiple roles (including care role)?

I. Information about the participants:

Participants	Main sources of livelihood	Group composition (groups to which participants belong)
16 women and 6 men, including: around 10 women working as seasonal daily labourers (in addition to own farm work)	Agriculture, livestock and poultry, homestead vegetable cultivation Daily labour: earth work, road construction, tailoring, rice-processing, agricultural labour (seasonal)	4 mixed groups: 8M/20F; 9M/11F; 8M/22F; 1M/14F. One women-only group (27 W) One men-only group

2. Main topics discussed:

- a) Saving activities under FoSHoL:
 - Individual savings range from 800 to 9000 Th per person (9 to 100 €), depending on group (every group member has equal amount)
 - Group savings range from 11.000 to 23.000 Th (120 to 250 €).
- b) Women's workload before and after FoSHoL:
 - Women have to manage paid work, work in own field, carry out productive work (gathering firewood, making cowdung sticks) and care work (taking care of children, cooking)
 - Amount of work has increased as a result of FoSHoL– but women do not mind because they also get higher returns
 - Men's workload has also increased
 - Overall impression: “Kaaj bayshee, poisha bayshee, shankshor bhaloh hoi (There is now more work, we get more money, our situation is better)”.
- c) Daily labour work opportunities have increased:
 - The majority of FoSHoL group members do daily labour work on a seasonal basis (1.5 months in Aagra Yaha-Poosh + 1.5 months in Boishak-Dushto). This is the time when they buy saree and clothes for the children, on top of food.
 - Men get paid 120 to 130 Th/day. Women get 100 Th per day (just over 1 €).
 - “We cannot save money for monga (money doesn't stay with poor people)”.
 - Women leave the children at home or with a relative

3. Participatory exercise

FDG 1. Comparison of savings behaviour in women's and men's groups

TABLE 7. Use and management of savings in women's and men's groups		
	Women's groups	Men's groups
When did the group start saving?	One year after group formation	6-7 months after group formation
What is the source of individual savings?	From sale of eggs	By reducing expenses on tea and cigarettes 2-3 days before the meeting
What happens during monga?	Members save 5 Th only (instead of 10Th weekly)	Members save 5 Th only (instead of 10Th weekly)
How is the amount to be saved decided upon?	The group discusses amount, frequency and re-payment rate (resolution)	> Idem
Collection and deposit of savings	Each group member brings agreed amount on meeting day. Gives it to cashier who makes an entry in passbook. At month end, cashier deposits full amount in bank	> Idem
Use of savings *repaid with interest (20 kg paddy for every 1000 Th)	- Used to start-up small trade - Invested in rice cultivation: loan to a farmer (for land-lease)* Purchasing and renting of van-rickshaw (makes 20 TH/day)	Used to start-up small trade in: - rice, jute - cow fattening, goat-rearing Land-lease: collective rice cultivation - Fish culture

FDG 2. Women's changing workload (8 women, Sadi, Rajarhat, Kurigram district, 11 am – 1 pm)

- a) Result of a PRA:

5 AM – 8 AM

Prayer (Muslim) or Tulsi pooja (Hindus)
Clean the house, do the dishes, make the bed
Plastering walls and floor
(If cow) collect the manure

(If poultry) let chickens and ducks out and give them food
Take bath and do the Pooja (Hindus)
Prepare food
Feed children and husband
Send children to school and husband to work
Have breakfast

8 AM – 9 AM

Clean utensils
Wash clothes
Clean the house
Go and collect wood for fuel (about one hour)

9 AM – 4 PM

Women doing waged work (seasonal)

Go to work at 9 am. Return at 4 pm.

Depending on season:

- Rice harvesting
- Digging and transporting soil
- Weeding
- Rice-husking
- Processing paddy (rich farmers' home):
drying, boiling, sieving, storing
- Processing chilli: drying and powdering
- Processing rice: preparing flattened and
puffed rice (rich farmers' home)

9 AM – 1:30 PM

Women working in own field and homestead

- Go to field
- Irrigate the land
- Do weeding work
- Spray manure, ashes, organic fertilisers
- Come back home
- Feed cattle
- Milk cow(s)
- Small children come home
- Give them bath
- Serve lunch for the children
- Serve lunch for husband
- Have lunch (“Then we eat”)

1:30 PM – 5:30 PM (or 4 – 5:30 PM for women doing seasonal waged work)

Prepare cowdung sticks (about 1 hour)
Clean, prepare and package vegetables
Send husband to sell vegetables in local market
If necessary, buy food from local shops
Start preparing dinner
Put cattle back in the cattle shed

5:30 PM – 10/11 PM

Prayer (Namaz, Pooja)
Lighting oil lamp after dark, offering smoke (local customs)
Look after children's studies while beginning to cook
Feed the children
Wait for husband to come home
Husband and wife eat dinner together
After dinner, husband and wife sit together and do the house budgeting (amounts earned and spent)
Put children to sleep
Keep dirty dishes in a pile (no light, so wash up in the morning)
Separate young calves from cows and feed animals for the night
Check everything and go to sleep

Extra work that FOSHOL generated for women

Weekly meeting (1-3 hours)
Managing savings
Putting rice aside and bringing the agreed amount (for rice bank) every week
Cashier: accounting work (sometimes skips lunch or rushes through household chores)
Do vegetable cultivation (labour intensive)
Take care of cow (feeding, milking)
Run the seed nursery: making seedbeds for vegetables and trees

Sell vegetables from home (“it takes time”)
 Tailor work at home (children's clothes)
 Prepare organic fertilisers
 Prepare flattened and puffed rice

Extra work that FOSHOL generated for men

Selling vegetables in the market
 Selling cow milk
 Attending meeting of village-level group
 Applying new cultivation techniques (rice)
 Helping women making bundles of tree saplings
 Preparing fences and other items from bamboo
 Fish cultivation
 Making and repairing fencing for livestock

b) Additional discussion on childcare and aspirations

- Women's additional work means that:
 - the family now has more sources of earnings, and that
 - household expenditures have reduced (decreased expenditures on: vegetables, children's clothes, chemical fertilisers, dairy products and eggs, puffed and flattened rice – *moori* and *jeerey*)
- “Any support for childcare etc?”
 - “Yes, if we live with our in-laws”.
- “Any support from within the group?”
 - “Everyone is very busy with their own work. Very difficult to go and help others. Each woman does her own work”.
- “Would childcare facilities be useful to you?” (we explain the concept)
 - “Yes, that would help us. We also want more paid work throughout the year. FoSHoL activities have improved our situation, but it doesn't take us out of poverty. We need more work in order to give better education to our children”.
- “What most empowering changes have happened as a result of FoSHoL?”
 - “Now we can speak up, express our views”,
 - ” We are now able to ask our husbands for accounts (what is earned, what is spent)”,
 - “We can make our husbands understand the importance of our work (through dialogue)”.

FDG 3. Comparative analysis of incomes generated by various activities (11 women, 11 am – 1 pm)

TABLE 8.
Women's control over income and expenditures generated by various activities

ACTIVITIES	INCOME (in Thaka)		EXPENDITURES (in Ths)	
	Household	Women's income	Spent by wife	Spent by husband
1. Home gardening	500	0	50	450
2. Livestock-rearing	100	50	20	80
3. Poultry-rearing	150	150	100	50
4. Tailoring	300	200	200	100
5. Field crop cultivation	1000	0	0	1000
6. Daily labour	900	900	900	0

- a) One woman draws symbols to represent different sources of livelihood: earthwork, rice harvest, rice drying, tailoring, poultry-rearing and livestock-rearing.
- b) We ask women to rank the different activities according to income size:
 - Homestead gardening (vegetables, jute > can harvest up to 240 kg, sold at 42.5Th/kg). Productive for 6 months/year (largest production period is March-April-May)
 - Livestock-rearing

- Poultry-rearing
- Tailoring
- Field crop cultivation (own and share-cropping)
- Daily labour (3 months/year in total)
- Rice-processing (3months/year in total)

ANNEX II - FIELD NOTES FROM THE GAMBIA

A. List of People Met/Places Visited

a) ActionAid The Gambia

- Dr Kujejatou Manneh, Country Director
- Buba Khan, Africa Right to Food Coordinator
- Lamin Nyangadoh, Head of Policy and Advocacy
- Momodou Wuri Jallow, Partnership & Capacity-Building Manager
- Bakary Fadera, Programme Manager- Action Aid The Gambia Development Area (DA) 8

b) National Environment Agency (NEA), Gambia

- Momodou.B.Sarr, Executive Director
- Alhagie Sarr, Programme Officer Ozone Office

c) Mission Taiwan

- William Tseng, in charge, Rice production, Mission Taiwan

d) NYAFS, NAWFA, AFET

- Alagie Kebbeh, President of NYAFS and Coordinator-National Alliance for Food Security
- Gorgi omar Gaye- Programme Manager, NAWFA
- Dawda Kujabi-Secretary General, AFET

e) Social Development Fund

- Mr. Sonko Fofana, Executive Director
- Ms. Yamundow-Gender specialist, Gambia

f) DOSA, CRR South

- Mr. Ousman Jammeh- Director Agriculture and Live stock, DOSA-CRR South
- Mr. Assan Sillah – Gender Specialist, DOSA-CRR South
- Philip Kampari- Senior Agriculture Officer- Rice, DOSA-CRR South
- Buba Gassame, Senior Agriculture Officer – Horticulture, DOSA-CRR South
- Babali Gassame, Planning and Data Collection, CRR South
- Amadou Jallow – Agriculture Extension worker, CRR Brikamaba
- Manjang- Principle Agriculture Office, CRR South

g) Brufut Women's Garden "Alatentu"

- Members-women
- Mayebojang-Vice president,
- Ajaumaraton-President

h) Village Sinchu

- President, Secretary and members; men and women of Poultry association
- Babucarr- Operator of GN & Coos Mill
- Ibrahim – customer from Mahmud Fana to Ground-Nut and Millet mill

i) Area- Patchar Perimeter and Jahally Perimeter

- President and members both men and women of rice

j) Village- Jafai Kuta and Macca

- Kudang and Jareng Ward members

k) Village Janjangbuieh

- Aliusowe-Farmer

B. Additional Notes

Brufut Gardens

Focus Group Discussion

Marium, the literate daughter of Jainaba, a member of the Brufut Gardens facilitated the discussion in their language with about 60 members of the garden. The members discussed four major topics:

- productivity,
- the amount of vegetables sold
- the amount of vegetables consumed, and
- the use of money before and after introduction of the bore hole.

Marium wrote on the chart paper only when the women came to a common consensus on each of the pre-determined point.

BEFORE THE TANK Bore Hole (BRUFUT GARDEN)	AFTER THE TANK Bore Hole
1. TOMATO 2. CABBAGE 3. ONION	1. TOMATO 2. CABBAGE 3. ONION
PRODUCTIVITY	PRODUCTIVITY (20)
TOMATO TEN (10) PANS	TOMATO SEVEN (7) PANS
CABBAGE FOUR (4) PANS	CABBAGE TEN (10) PANS
ONION NINE (9) PANS	ONION EIGHTEEN (18) PANS
FOR SELLING	FOR SELLING
TOMATO A PAN Δ 250.00	TOMATO
..... Δ 300.00
..... Δ 350.00
CONSUMPTION	CONSUMPTION
20%	30%
INCOME USED:	INCOME USED:
	Education for children Food for family Clothing for children and themselves

Jahally Rice Tidal Irrigation, Land Development and Commercial Rice Mill Project

- Use of income from selling rice: The members of RFCS used stones on the chart paper. The maximum number of stones (7) means more money is spent on food, followed by education, health and clothes. The members reported that they can now afford to eat more fish than before.

TABLE I.
Use of income from rice sales

Items	Scores
Food (Fish)	7 (3)
Education	2
Clothing	2
Health	2
Ceremonies	1
Relatives	1
Tax	1
Buy small ruminants	1

Category	Score
Food (Fish)	7 (3)
Education	2
Health	2
Ceremonies	1
Relatives	1
Tax	1
Clothing	2
Buying of Small Ruminants	1
Fish Money	3

Focus Group Discussion

About 15 men and women members of the Rice Farmers' Cooperative Society (RFCS) sat in a circle around the chart paper. A bilingual member facilitated the discussion. Among themselves, they decided to discuss:

- a) varieties of seeds that they used before and after tidal irrigation,
- b) the costs incurred on different farming activities, and
- c) average productivity and change in knowledge and skills.

They discussed at length on each point- each explained own experiences and worked out an average figure on costing.

Jahally Panchayat Perinote

Before 2005 Tidal Irrigation	After 2005 Tidal Irrigation
<p><u>Seed V (Local)</u></p> <p>Fara com. 4-5 mths Banjano. 4-5 mths Touba - 4-5 mths Sira Wabanding 4-5 mths</p>	<p>TNS-14 - 4-5 mths TNS-19 - 3-4 mths Rashi - 3 mths 31/37 - 4-5 mths ATM - 3 mths ✓ NERICA - 3 mths ✓</p>
<p><u>Prodⁿ Cost</u></p> <p>Ploughing D120 (plot) Fertilizer 4 bags - D1200 Transplant D120 Harvesting D120 Threshing D 60 Ploughing (Manual) D300 Transport (car) 35. Milling D150</p>	<p>D600 1500 (2695) 600 600 550 75 60</p>
<p><u>Prodⁿ/ha</u> 20x50x2</p> <p><u>Knowledge/Skills</u> Compost making/OM Timely planting Spacing Nursery preparation</p>	<p>3 tons/plot = 6T/ha</p> <p>Seed multiplication Agronomic practices Post harvest handling Nursery preparation Sales/Marketing Milling - operation Seed selection Seed multiplication</p>

Seed and Cereal Banking

The initial stock was bought from a grant from DA for D 7, 36,215 and D 1, 253,310 by Jareng and Kudang ward apex organisation respectively over December 2006 to November 2008. In 2009, 3081 bags (multiplied by on an average 60 kilos per bag = 1, 84,860 kilos) was in stock in Jareng and Kudang ward apex organisation.

TABLE 2.
Food and fertiliser stocks in the Jareng Apex & Kudang Ward Apex

Jareng Apex				
Cluster	Groundnut* (bags)	Pearl millet*	Fertiliser	
Jareng	116	118	164	
Ngawar	41	54	56	
Mamudfana	152	285	163	
Sub Total	309	457	225	
Kudang Ward Apex				
Cluster	Groundnut*	Pearl millet*	Rice*	Fertiliser
Kudang	142	133	239	81
Pateh	282	333	46	221
Teneng fara	75	112	31	102
Sambel	33	144	48	68
Sub Total	532	722	364	472
Grand Total	841	1179	364	697

*In bags of 50 to 70 kilos

Note: The bank agent, Musa Kunba Ceesay, provided recent information from the Mamudfana cluster.

Distribution Date of Pearl millet: 27.07.2010

Repayment Date: 31.07.2011

TABLE 3.
Record of food grain disbursement in the Jareng Apex

Village	Population	Disbursement in the cluster	Disbursement in the village	Amount (in kilos) per person
Mamudfana	1463	391 bags	158	6.47
Batty-Njou	1046	-	129	7.39
Mbayen	460	-	72	9.39
Bamba Kolong	147	-	29	11.83
Madina Chameng	38	-	3	4.73
Total	3154	391	391	Average =8 kilos

Data collected by personal interaction with Musa Kunba Ceesay on 18th December, 2010

NOTES

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- ¹ FAO. 2011. State of Food and Agriculture. Chapter 4: Gains from closing the gender gap. Rome: FAO. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e04.pdf>
 - ² ActionAid Bangladesh. 2009. *FoSHoL Project: Background*, Internal document. Dhaka: ActionAid Bangladesh.
 - ³ Depending on the availability of funds, this pilot project was to be replicated in 14 member villages of the NAFWA.
 - ⁴ The currency in The Gambia is the Dalasi with 40 Dalasi being roughly equal to £1 (or USD 1 = D 26)
 - ⁵ Partha Hefaz Shaikh, Amirul Islam and Naima Rahman for the visit to South Bangladesh (Khulna area) and Amirul Islam, Wahida Bashar and Maksudur Rahman for the visit to Northwest Bangladesh (Kurigram area).
 - ⁶ Agarwal, B. 1994. *A Field of One's Own, Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
 - ⁷ For more information on women's rights in Bangladesh: See <http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/womensit/bd-w-sit.pdf>
 - ⁸ Fish ponds are largely managed by men, and were not studied in depth as part of this study. Families do consume some fish, but a significant part is sold by men. In several meetings, women asserted that they "get no direct benefits" from the fish, as men keep all the money earned. In the case of tree nurseries, women are called upon to help with sapling production, or with packaging at the time of selling, but the nurseries appear to be largely run by men, with marginal benefits accruing to women (despite their labour contribution).
 - ⁹ Unfortunately, we could not collect specific information relating to pregnant women and lactating mothers, two highly vulnerable groups in case of malnutrition.
 - ¹⁰ For details, see Annex 1.
 - ¹¹ Saree is traditionally worn by women in Bangladesh and throughout South Asia.
 - ¹² Example: *Rina, Satkhira Sada* says, "This morning, I had to get up at 5 am to come to this meeting – my husband got up with me, helped me feed the cattle, we had breakfast together, and he dropped me here by cycle".
 - ¹³ Roughly, 70 Taka = US\$ 1
 - ¹⁴ This is based on observations made by the consultant, who interacted with about 200 women during the course of her survey.
 - ¹⁵ See http://www.icdf.org.tw/web_pub/20020726133447Gambia.pdf for more details on tidal irrigation.
 - ¹⁶ These are hybrid varieties were introduced to replace the local varieties for better yield by Mission Taiwan and DOSA. The farmers received them as part of extension work done by DOSA.
 - ¹⁷ Most fertilisers contain three elements essential for growth, NPK which stands for Nitrogen (N) Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K).
 - ¹⁸ Urea has the highest nitrogen content of all solid nitrogenous fertilisers in common use.
 - ¹⁹ The order in which criteria appear is *not* indicative of priority.
 - ²⁰ This title refers to the four ActionAid-supported projects studied in The Gambia: The Brufut Gardens, Rural Poultry Farmers' Association (RPFA), Jahally Tidal Irrigation, Seed and Cereal Bank and the attendant introduction of milling and threshing machines.
 - ²¹ There is a significant difference between the two countries: in FoSHoL, beneficiaries engage simultaneously in several productive activities whereas in The Gambia, the poultry project only deals with poultry, the horticulture project only deals with vegetable production, etc -- which means comparatively less livelihood diversification, and a weaker outcomes in terms of household food security).
 - ²² In the Brufut Gardens and rice cultivation, water is managed collectively, but the land is managed individually and the milling machine is operated through a cooperative.
 - ²³ This is based on estimates of volumes sold by the household (excluding volumes consumed)
 - ²⁴ These figures do not corroborate other findings, which provide much small estimations for the percentage of revenues directly controlled by women. This calls for further research.
 - ²⁵ Livestock rearing involves: production of milk, cow fattening and sale of veal.
 - ²⁶ Other activities that generate an income include: tailoring, rice husking, puffed rice making, blanket making (*nokshi kata*), and daily labour work (road construction, road maintenance, brick breaking, agriculture).