

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

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Enhancing Disaster Resilience in Borobogi Union, Barguna district, Bangladesh - *Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction Program in Taltoli Upazilla*



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People living in the low lying Bangladesh delta are extremely vulnerable to cyclones. Although Bangladesh has a disaster management system, it does not empower communities to manage risks. Barguna is an extremely isolated part of Bangladesh which provides a rough, inhospitable terrain for people who have migrated in recent decades due to land shortages elsewhere. The Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) project is an 18 months program implemented by ACF in Taltoli Upazilla of Barguna to reduce risk and increase capacity, especially of women and landless people, across 10 sea-bordering villages. Specific objectives are: 1. To reduce community and household risk by establishing sustainable community risk management systems that link to Union government, other key bodies and neighboring communities; 2. To reduce risk and build capacity of female headed households and landless living outside the embankment and through small-scale mitigation and resilience building works; 3. To reduce risk and foster sustainable social protection for women and girls through community based action and links to external systems.

The main purpose of the final project evaluation is to examine whether the project reached its intended objectives, identify gaps, draw lessons, and suggest recommendations for better implementation in the future. The outcome criteria include coverage, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, gender, impact and sustainability. The evaluators also reviewed the external factors and project cycle management issues that affected final outcomes. The evaluation tools included review of documents, interviews with ACF and partner staff and group discussions, household interviews and transect walks within communities.

The main lessons learnt were: i) Building resilience requires adequate investment. Clearly, one agency cannot address all the structural and non-structural factors causing people to be vulnerable. It requires a well-coordinated and synergistic approach by multiple actors. ii) The creation of institutions at the village level is clearly effective, but its effectiveness is conditioned by the existence of effective government institutions, cyclone shelters and strong houses and embankments. iii) Women forums should be an essential project component, but agencies must invest more on the capacity building of these organizations because women generally do not play community leadership roles. iv) Improved livelihoods opportunities can reduce vulnerability. But agro-based livelihoods in disaster-prone contexts can be unproductive unless a resilience approach is used. v) Since every disaster is unique and numerous social, political, and economic factors influence vulnerabilities and risks, investments in communities' ability to research and innovate individually and collectively are important.

Key program recommendations: i) Document and disseminate the highly successful project targeting and committee capacity-building approach; ii) Be more aware about power relations to further reduce the chances of local influential people monopolizing the committees; iii) Empower communities to play a more significant role in the post-disaster relief and recovery phase; iv) Convince the government to treat VDMCs as a wing of UDMCs and play a supportive role to

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UDMCs at the village level in early warning dissemination, evacuation, relief distribution and amplifying the voice of vulnerable people to create effective local governance for DRR; v) Ensure that committees arrange regular meetings for the larger community to keep them engaged in project activities and inform them about village and union disaster plans; vi) Enhance the sustainability of committees by undertaking a smaller 6-9 months project which focuses solely on the software work of increasing committee capacities; linking the committees to other NGOs interested in working in these areas; and getting the committees registered with relevant government departments; vii) Experiment with cyclone resilient houses for a smaller number of households but with larger per household investment for concrete plinth and use the ensuing success for creating evidence to change national discourse and policies. viii) Learn from CPP about specification of search equipment and import them if allowed and necessary. ix) Invest more in the capacity of women to participate actively within Women forums and the ability of Women forums to influence village decision-making and assist those female-headed households requiring special assistance; x) Invest greater effort in identifying the risks to program inputs being provided, for example house repair and livelihoods support; xi) Focus on more resilient forms of livelihoods support, for example off-season cultivation through provision of rain water harvesting and deep-wells; xii) Pilot first with a limited number of households about various livelihoods strategies that can withstand cyclone, preferably with a higher per household investment; xiii) Organize lesson learning exercise at a village level with both the committees and consolidate their learning from Cyclone Mahasen as an on-going process; xiv) Focus more on networking with other NGOs on DRR good practices and to have them provide services in these areas which ACF cannot; xv) Advocate with the government for providing more cyclone shelters; xvi) Develop a proper strategy to roll out IEC material to the wider community for use beyond project life and generate continuous knowledge.

Key management recommendations: i) Undertake more thorough risk analysis for the program inputs being provided to disaster-proof them as part of the PCVA process; ii) Arrange more training for staff on DRR and hire an experienced national or expatriate DRR expert for the entire length of future projects; iii) Continue searching for and utilize national DRR and gender experts on short-term basis and to engage more experienced partner NGOs; iv) Stronger processes for identifying partners and for taking immediate termination decisions once corruption is discovered are needed; v) More regular monitoring at the senior management level of whether projects are slipping behind schedule and to take immediate remedial action is needed; vi) Greater focus on clarifying procurement rules and requirements for program staff early on through a project procurement meeting would be helpful. vii) Modify the monitoring plan so that it clearly specifies the role of all staff in the project's monitoring, including the frequency, modality, project dimension and indicators; how this information will be analyzed and summarized and then fed to progressively higher levels of the ACF team, and what decisions and follow-up each level would undertake. The team could constantly monitor the progress on the common program dimensions (e.g., effectiveness, efficiency etc) that eventually will be part of the project evaluation TORs. viii) It may have been better to pilot the livelihoods and house repair activities with a smaller number of families given their uncharted nature. ix) Inform communities well in advance of project closure and follow-up plans.

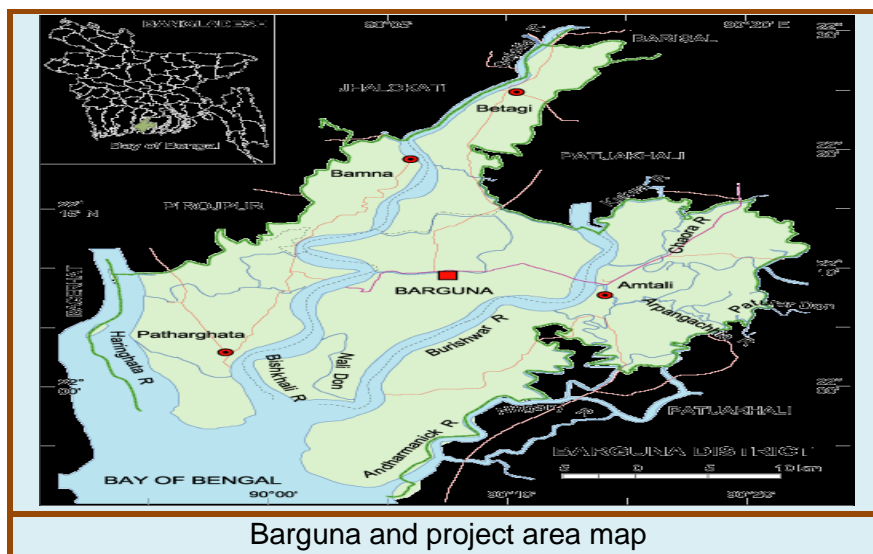
C **HAPTER 1: BACKGROUND**

This chapter provides an overview of i) the emergency context in Bangladesh, ii) the specific project developed and implemented by ACF with Spanish Government funding and ACF co-funding which is the subject of evaluation in this report, and iii) the project evaluation approach and constraints. The chapter serves the purpose of placing the whole evaluation in its proper context and in familiarizing readers with project constraints and scope.

1. Disaster Context in Bangladesh

People living in the low lying Bangladesh delta are extremely vulnerable to tropical storms, cyclones, storm surges, flood and cyclical high tides which frequently result in water logging, with water inundating land for prolonged periods following the initial flood or high tide. Though Bangladesh has a system of embankments, they obviously do not repel cyclones and they additionally have limited effect on flood as many landless persons (as much as 80% in some villages) live on the water side of embankments. Furthermore, embankments on the sea-board and their drainage control systems are commonly in a state of disrepair and are rarely managed by the communities, who have the greatest stake in their functionality. Due to the very low lying nature of the Bangladesh delta and rise in the sea level owing to accelerating climate change, substantial loss of coast line and possibly an increase in hydro-meteorological disasters such as cyclones and rain fed floods is anticipated.

Although Bangladesh has a Disaster Management system in place (National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015, Standing Order on Disasters), communities are not empowered to manage their risk. Risk is managed above the community level and is amplified by slow external processes. For example, existing embankments have limited effect as they are often in disrepair and communities are not empowered to ensure their functionality. The contradiction is that communities are always the first to respond to disasters, are best positioned to derive solutions, and possess capacity that could be applied if released. The landless, in particular female-headed households, are unable to cope with losses. Disaster impacts include damage or loss of shelter, productive and personal assets, water points, embankments, environmental damage, crop loss and deaths. Such shocks exacerbate under-nutrition and disease and prohibit livelihood and food security gains. Compounding the risk are several underlying factors. Foremost, women and girls suffer gender-based marginalization. Communities have little or no ongoing organization. Medical facilities and trained personnel are rare. The scarcity of water points mean that hundred of persons on average share a well and others drink from their pond due to difficult access. Many children drop out of school to work. Micro-credit schemes are leading to indebtedness and asset forfeiture. Land outside of the embankments is disappearing due to erosion and sea rise. Finally, the embankment is damaged and expected to degrade further. The conclusion is clear: a Risk Reduction intervention is vital.



2. Overview of the Project

Barguna is an extremely isolated part of Bangladesh along its southwestern coast. The project area was formerly part of the mangrove forest, Sundurban, and has only been inhabited substantially since the British period. It provides a rough, inhospitable terrain for people who have migrated in recent decades from the northern parts of the country due to land shortage. The Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) project is an 18 months program implemented by the ACF Bangladesh Country Office in Taltoli Upazilla (formerly Amtoli) of Barguna district covering 10 villages in 3 unions (Borobogi, Nishanbaria and Sonakata). The program started in November 2011 and is funded by AECID, Spanish cooperation with ACF co-financing. This project focuses on gender and Disaster Risk Reduction and livelihoods measures at households and community level. The CMDRR project aims to reduce the risks across 10 sea-bordering villages and increase capacity of vulnerable women and landless people. The communities are empowered with the formation of Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) and Women Forums to become central actors in their risk management. ACF along with its partner Sangram (a local NGO) is implementing this program along with technical supports from DRR and FSL experts. The aim of this program is to:

- Reduce risk,
- Enhance social cohesion,
- Empower communities and groups through skill building and planning,
- Provide material/technical support for Livelihoods/DRR small-scale mitigation measures.

This project includes visits between communities to foster sustainable networks and diffusion of results at the national level for up-scaling. The beneficiaries of this program are: Women (12,400), Female headed and Landless households (1,383 households), and the communities at large (catchment 25,900). In addition, daily laborers have found work opportunities.

Project General Objective

To reduce risk and increase capacity of women and landless across the 10 sea-bordering villages in Borobogi Union, Amtali Upazila, Barguna District, Bangladesh

Specific Objectives

1. To reduce community and household risk by establishing sustainable community risk management systems that link to Union government, other key bodies and neighbouring communities
2. To reduce risk and build capacity of female headed households and landless living outside the embankment and through small-scale mitigation and resilience building works
3. To reduce risk and foster sustainable social protection for women and girls through community based action and links to external systems

Results

1. Communities have a functional risk management body linked to external actors that prioritizes action for risk reduction, response and household awareness raising
2. Risk Reduction measures enhance disaster resilience of most at risk landless and FHH (Female Headed Families), for example through planting saline resistant trees; small retrofits for homes; protective measures for gardens, animals, water sources, productive assets etc.).
3. Livelihood Resilience and Diversification occurs for most at risk landless and FHH
4. Gender concerned risk is reduced for women and girls

Programme Activities

The following activities are described below:

- R1-1. Training of Sangram Staff
- R1-2. Consensus Building and Community Risk Management Committee Organized
- R1-3. Community Risk Planning and Risk Campaign
- R1-4. Exercise of Community Plan and Provision of Training or Tools
- R1-5. Planning Linkages and Diffusion
- R2-6. Beneficiary selection
- R2-7. Risk Reduction Measures at household level, Validation and Implementation
- R3-8. Livelihood Measures at household level, Validation and Implementation
- R4-9. Women's Committee is Formed and Training and Action Planning Commences
- R4-10. Gender concerned surveys Pre and Post Action
- R4-11. Linkages
- R4-12. Technical Training, Materials Provision and Awareness Campaign
- R4-13. Health Solutions Identification and Implementation

C HAPTER 2: Methodology

The evaluation was carried out by an external Team Leader, who had evaluated ACF's DRR project in Pakistan in December 2012, and a national DRR expert and a national gender expert. The main purpose of the final project evaluation is to examine whether the project reaches its intended objectives, finding out gaps if any, draw lessons, suggest recommendation for better implementation in the future. It could also contribute to capitalize on this program and draw lessons learnt to improve its implementation for another similar program. The first purpose of this independent, structured evaluation is to assess the appropriateness, relevance and impact of the CMDRR program in Barguna. Secondly, this evaluation also assesses the medium term outcome of the program and the sustainability of this intervention. Finally, the evaluation also provides key recommendations towards better program impacts on the most vulnerable population of the targeted area and necessary changes to be made on ACF approach on DRR.

1. Evaluation Criteria

The main evaluation criteria were as follows:

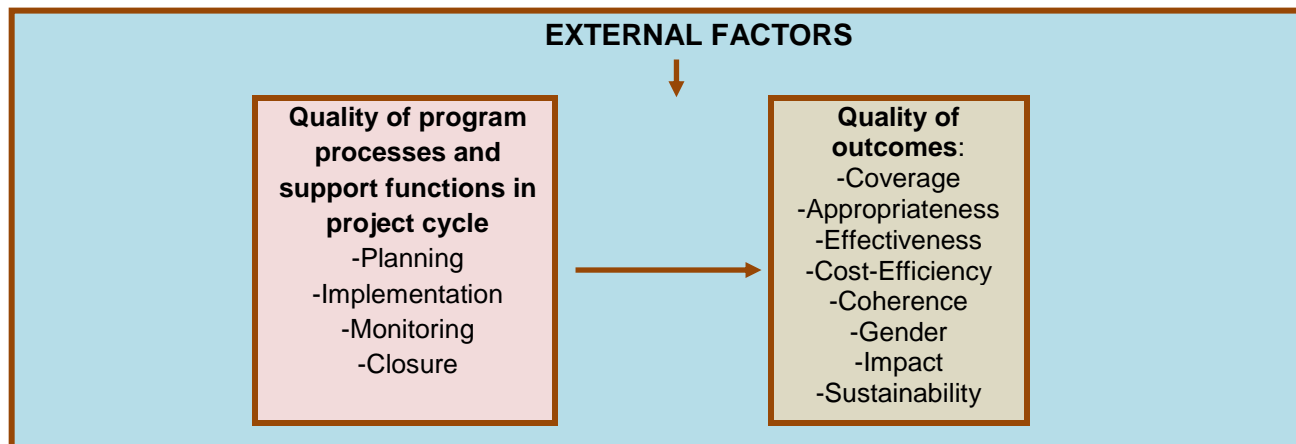
Coverage:	Were the most deserving community and persons targeted?
Appropriateness:	Were project activities relevant, participatory, timely, culturally-sensitive and enhance external linkages for communities
Effectiveness:	Did the project achieve its aims and objectives?
Cost-efficiency:	Were resources used efficiently?
Coherence:	Was the project well-coordinated internally and externally?
Gender:	To what extent were women's unique needs effectively addressed?
Impact:	What was the impact on people's lives?
Sustainability:	Will the impact sustain in the long-term?

These criteria are based on the DAC evaluation criteria. However, their exact definition within the TORs varied in some places from the standard DAC definitions as well with those of other ACF evaluation TORs that the evaluators have seen. These variations also led to some overlaps in the questions under each criterion and across criteria. In order to enhance comparison of evaluation results from project to project and to reduce overlaps within TORs criteria questions, the ACF-UK evaluation unit is advised to ensure that individual project evaluation TORs use similar definitions for various DAC criteria over time and develop TORs with less overlap and repetition of questions.

2. Evaluation Framework

The evaluation investigation was guided by the framework provided below. According to this framework, the quality of ACF Bangladesh's program and program support processes throughout the CMDRR project cycle determines the quality and final outcomes of the project. External factors also affect the quality and the success of the project.

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Thus, the evaluation started by reviewing the quality of ACF's project processes and functions throughout the project cycle, i.e., planning (e.g., assessment quality, resourcing etc.); implementation (e.g., activity scheduling, procurement etc.); monitoring (e.g., quality of monitoring framework, follow-up etc); and closure (e.g., hand-over and follow-up). This chain of analysis is based on the reality that project staff cannot directly improve the performance of the project on the final outcomes. They can only improve the quality of project cycle activities in the future. Then the team reviewed the community-level project outcomes using the criteria mentioned earlier. Based on the review of outcomes, external factors and program processes, the evaluation team related specific strengths and weaknesses in program outcomes to specific strengths and weaknesses in program processes as well as external challenges. Consequently, it gives suggestions for strengthening program processes in the future and overcoming external challenges.

Since it is the most crucial program process, the report also provides a framework to help analyse and improve program design. Under the framework, the starting point of program design is the identification of the main hazards in an area and the risks of physical, psychological, economic, environmental, political and cultural damage for communities that each carries through Participatory Community Vulnerability Analysis (PCVA). Agencies can then identify the most important risks that they would like to address through a range of possible DRR activities. As shown in the table below, DRR activities can be classified along a continuum consisting of five main categories with each higher category representing a more structural form of disaster risk reduction than those below it. Prevention activities include efforts to reduce the occurrence of destructive hazards, e.g., through reforestation and riverbed dredging. However, such activities are generally done by governments rather than NGOs. Given that even with high prevention efforts, there will still be some hazards, the next best option is mitigation, i.e., redirecting hazards away from communities through flood protection walls, drainage channels etc. Larger mitigation schemes are generally undertaken by governments but NGOs often do undertake smaller mitigation activities at the community level. Given that even with strong mitigation efforts some hazards will still threaten some communities, the next option is evacuation of communities before the hazard reaches them. The next option is rescue efforts for

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those who could not be evacuated in time. Finally, the provision of timely relief activities to both evacuated and rescued people reduces the risk of epidemics. In addition, building the capacities of communities, CSOs and governments is a cross-cutting activity that enhances community resilience as well as the efforts in the other five categories. Communities can introduce each dimension through their own programming or by advocating with governments and other agencies to undertake them. Finally, for each programming inputs, agencies must undertake a damage risk analysis under each local hazard and identify steps to overcome them. It is advised to introduce programming inputs when each has been disaster-proofed.

CLIMATE CHANGE				
Hazards	Community damage risks	Continuum of DRR Activities to reduce risks	Focus under each activity	Disaster Risk Analysis for Programming
Floods Cyclones Storms Etc.	Physical Psychological Economic Environmental Political Cultural	Prevention: To reduce the frequency of hazards	Programming Networking Advocacy	Technical and participatory analysis of damage risk for each program input from the main local hazards using resilience principles
		Mitigation: To build buffers between hazards and communities		
		Evacuation Prep: To help communities escape approaching hazards in time		
		Rescue Prep: To help rescue people caught by hazard		
		Relief Prep: To provide life-saving services to evacuated rescued people		
		Capacity-building of communities, partners and govt.--Cross-cutting -training -livelihoods support		

3. Evaluation Tools

The tools used to evaluate the performance on the evaluation criteria included:

Review of Relevant Documents

Prior to the field work, the evaluator reviewed the relevant documents, including those related to this project, ACF's general work in Bangladesh and DRR globally and documents related to DRR and emergencies in Bangladesh in order to gain a better understanding of the project and its context and to help develop the evaluation methodology and instruments.

Initial Briefing

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Prior to the field work, the evaluator participated in a teleconference with ACF Paris HQ with the FSL advisor¹ and DRM Advisor about their perceptions about the project and evaluation focus

Interviews with Key Stakeholders

Interviews were conducted with government authorities in Dhaka and Barguna; and project international and national staff in Dhaka and field; and partner staff in the field.

Field activities

Household interviews with community members and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with village committee members based on participatory evaluation methods were utilized. The four villages visited were selected randomly from lists provided by ACF while the community members for household interviews were selected based on convenience sampling. In each village, transect walks were also conducted to the source of disaster vulnerability of each village (e.g., rivers near the village) to get a better understanding of the disaster profile of the village and the manner in which ACF work addressed the source of vulnerability. During the transect walks, the hardware work constructed by ACF were also visited to get a better understanding of the manner in which ACF work addressed the source of vulnerability of the village.

Participants	Tools (number) per village	Focus of the discussion
Vulnerable Households-beneficiaries	HH visit and survey (30HHs) in three villages. FGDs with beneficiaries (6) in three villages—separately with men and women.	Impact, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability.
VDMC and Women Forum	VDMC (3) and Women Forum (3) in three villages.	impact, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability.
Transect walks/direct observation	In all selected villages and Unions	Review source of vulnerability for each village and any physical work undertaken by ACF.

A major evaluation constraint was the timing as the evaluation was conducted near the end of the project duration when ACF was focused on finishing project activities. The project is focused on a logistically challenging and isolated area. Additionally, the cyclone season had started, which made travel even more difficult and risky. Thus, the team only had about 4 hours of effective working time each day. Furthermore, ACF was also focused on launching an emergency response to Cyclone Mahasen in the project areas. However, despite all these constraints, the evaluator succeeded in collecting adequate amounts of quality information, mainly because of the strong background of the evaluators in conducting evaluations in Bangladesh and the flexibility and cooperation of the ACF team despite their multiple workloads.

¹ FSL: Food Security and Livelihoods

C **HAPTER 3: Findings and Discussion**

This chapter provides the findings of the evaluation along the DAC criteria included in the TORs. However, the sequence of the questions and their placement under the headings has been changed in some places to enhance the flow of the discussion and to reduce repetitiveness. The findings are based on triangulation of information from various sources of information mentioned in the last chapter.

1. External Factors

A number of factors beyond the immediate control of ACF have negatively affected program performance. These factors must be kept in mind while reviewing the results reported under different criteria. The main such factors are as follows:

- i. The project is located in one of the most isolated and disaster-prone regions of the country. The logistical and communication facilities are poor and in many regions, travel must occur across rivers navigable by launch, boats, motor-cycles and ferries. The region also experiences a very long rainy and cyclone season stretching from May until September. This reduces the working hours available in a day, especially during the long rainy season in the area as travel has to be planned according to the river flows and ferry schedules. ACF targeted this area as very few agencies work in this area for these reasons.
- ii. It is also a huge challenge to find experienced and high-capacity staff and partners in the area. Educational standards in the area are low, which means that local human resources are in short supply. Due to the harsh and isolated nature of the region, it is also difficult to attract people from the rest of the country to come and work in Barguna. It is especially difficult to find skilled female staff for this region, which was an important requirement for the project given its major focus on female beneficiaries.
- iii. Local government structures in the area, including in the areas of disaster management, are weak and the capacity of government departments inadequate. This was a major problem for the project since it emphasized heavily the development of strong linkages among communities and government departments.
- iv. Cultural practices also make it difficult to mobilize women within communities. Women generally have low status within community decision-making forums, inadequate access to economic opportunities and low educational standards. Thus, it proved difficult to initially link with women and this necessitated an overly long initial preparatory phase which also delayed the whole schedule of the project.
- v. Very few NGOs had previously undertaken community-based DRR work and related livelihoods activities in this region. Knowledge about resilient livelihoods activities for this region was also low within national research centres. Thus, ACF was left with having to engage in a high degree of experimentation in the area of livelihoods introduction.

2. Program Performance on the Evaluation Criteria

i. Coverage

Was the geographical coverage of the ACF programme appropriate? Did the project target the most at risk to hazards correctly and fairly? What efforts were made to ensure that particular populations, vulnerable groups and areas were not overlooked?

Highly accurate coverage of the most vulnerable was by far the strongest point of the project. As mentioned earlier, Barguna is an extremely isolated and disaster-prone part of the country. During the last ten years, the region has been hit by three medium to high level cyclones. Thus, the choice of the district was excellent. Within the district too, ACF was careful to select the most isolated and disaster-prone unions and villages even though such targeting significantly increased the logistical challenges faced by the agency. All the 10 villages are within less than 5 kilometres of the open sea and are thus the first to be hit by cyclones and are also affected by storm and wave surges and high tides regularly. Finally, within the villages ACF aimed to target households living beyond the embankments and close to the sea. Such households have much lower access to agricultural land than households living within the embankments in the same village and obviously are also more vulnerable to hazards being closer to the sea. Thus, 77% of the beneficiaries in the household survey reported being landless while two-thirds reported living beyond the embankments.

ii. Effectiveness

What was the level of beneficiary participation in project design and implementation? Does this project help to strengthen their decision-making within the community? How does the project support to give more rights to / empowers these people? Are people parts of the village disaster management committees (VDMC), or other social groups in the community? Did the project instigate a sense of ownership to enhance proper future operation and maintenance of the infrastructures?

The project was able to ensure a high degree of community participation in project activities by setting up community-based committees. National disaster management institutions in Bangladesh are organized from national to Union Parishad (UP) level, which is the lowest tier of administrative structure of the country. The standing order on disaster management² requires at least one committee at each administrative level with greatest focus on the workings of Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMC), which are comprised of elected local government officials and volunteer local individuals. Historically, UDMCs have played an important role in disaster management by disseminating early warning, undertaking search and rescue, evacuate people- and in many cases implementing Government of Bangladesh's (GOB) post-disaster response and recovery support. Despite their success and potential, these committees have often remained weak--although a lot of investment has been made by GOB and NGOs to boost up their capacity in recent years. The UDMCs are the backbone of the country's disaster

² Key disaster management instrument of the country that outlines roles and responsibilities of regular and disaster management institutions. This is popularly known as Bible of disaster management of Bangladesh, revised in 2010 to accommodate DRR aspects.

management system but their performance is arguably conditioned by many factors including the size of a union. Borobogi is one of the largest unions in Bangladesh but the UDMC was not adequately functional before the project. Before this evaluation, the Borobogi union was already divided into three unions. But, UDMCs were not formed for these newly created unions. The revised SOD now requires the formation of ward disaster management committee, which sits just below the UDMC, though they have yet to be formed.

In this context, the project adopted two approaches of institution building. First, it created village disaster management committees (VDMC) considering the size of the unions and the limited capacity of the UDMCs, so as to enhance capacity in disaster management in the area. It also developed separate women committees called as Women Forums in the piloted villages. The project aimed to ensure that these committees sustain beyond the project life by creating community ownership through equitable participation of all sections of the village in the committees. The evaluators found that these committees were formed in a reasonably democratic and transparent way which resulted in high ownership of villages over the committees and their decision-making and the selection of DRR and livelihoods activities. A number of approaches were adopted to ensure the ownership of the villages. First, the project announced the villagers about the formation of committees and then invited everyone in a community meeting where the committees were selected through either election or selection where there was no competitor. The community people interviewed expressed their satisfaction over the process. The evaluators believe the project did not consider the local power structures in its overall institution building approach. As a result, although many vulnerable people were included in the VDMCs but key positions were taken by the local influential people in some cases. Of course, even influential people have some common interests with others such as getting early warning on time. But in the long run, the structural causes of vulnerability such as land needs to be addressed--and a mixed group approach is least likely to produce results. So more focus on the most vulnerable people in committee formation through wealth ranking exercises is recommended,

Compared to the VDMCs, a higher percentage of vulnerable women were included in the Women Forum according to women respondents. Each committee is made up of several sub-committees with responsibility for early warning, evacuation and management of cyclone shelters. The project organized trainings for the committee members engaging reputed individuals from the cyclone preparedness program (CPP³) and Patuakhali University. The trainings were generally well conceived although they did not pay sufficient attention to some of the core areas such as local mobilization for advocacy. The trainings resulted in increased understanding and use of early warnings--and how to disseminate them. Evacuation, search and rescue trainings were found to be most useful by the participants.

³ CPP was created after the deadly cyclone of 1970 at the request of UN General Assembly, by Red Cross and GoB. This is made up of highly trained volunteers equipped with one of largest radio network of the world. Currently, managed by the GoB, CPP works almost all the districts of the cyclone-prone coast of Bangladesh.

Does this approach contribute to strengthen linkages within the community and between the community and external actors? Were results achieved in keeping with quality standards? What were the reasons for achievement or non-achievement of objectives? What can be done to make the interventions more effective?

The idea of VDMCs is strategic and credible given the UDMCs' limited capacity to cover an entire union when time is an important factor. However, the VDMC's work is more effective if they work in coordination with UDMCs where they exist. The project was not entirely successful in building and strengthening this relationship, mainly due to the weak capacity of UDMCs and their ability to develop close linkages with villages. A strategic alternative can be considered in similar projects in the future, though this will require active advocacy to convince the government to change its modalities⁴ (e.g. SoD) where the VDMCs can be treated as a voluntary wing of UDMCs and play a supportive role to UDMCs at the village level in early warning dissemination, evacuation and relief distribution. The key advantage of this approach is the higher likelihood of sustainability of village committees. VDMCs can also play a role (second option or a mixed option with first one) in amplifying the voice of the most vulnerable people to create effective local governance for DRR. But this would require a significant investment on capacity building of VDMC members in local mobilization and advocacy work. The evaluators believe that such local mobilization and advocacy was the missing link of this project. Secondly, there is also a need to ensure that committees arrange regular meetings for the larger community to keep them engaged as only 17% of the household survey respondents reported participating regularly in meetings with the committees. However, 60% of those who participated reported that their suggestions were incorporated by the committees. Similarly, almost all HHs visited or surveyed (91+) did not have any information about village disaster plans or UDMC plans—nor the general members of VDMC and Women Forum know whereabouts of the plan. The leaders of committee do have a copy of the typed plan—but were not sure about what they could do with the plan.

iii. Appropriateness

Were the actions and approach undertaken appropriate in the context of the needs of the target populations and situation? Was the support appropriate in relation to the customs and practices of the target populations? How effective and appropriate were these processes in ensuring relevant and timely project delivery in support of the most vulnerable?

Bangladesh is known for its continuous progress on disaster preparedness at various levels. Following the deadly cyclone in 1970 and 1991, the GOB and other national and international actors invested heavily on institutional preparedness at various levels. This process was further strengthened in the post-HFA era when GOB and its development partners made a shift towards more sustainable community based approach of risk reduction. However, risk reduction at household level received limited attention compared to the levels above. Often disaster

⁴ The SoD does not restrict any disaster management committee below Union or Ward, rather it asked these committees to build capacity of local institutions and volunteers. VDMC can be treated as volunteer group in this respect. Many agencies in the coast also form VDMCs in their DRR efforts and link them to UDMCs.

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preparedness investment followed the experience of past cyclones which resulted in gaps in the area that might not have been affected by disasters in the recent past. In Barguna district, although it was affected by several cyclones since 1965, the preparedness investment was not adequate. In this context the decision of ACF to invest in Barguna was highly strategic. It has adopted a number of approaches to advance disaster preparedness at community and household level in an appropriate level keeping in view the local ecology, customs, economy and politics and the attendant risks that they create. In fact, ACF followed a thorough and long-drawn initial process in trying to ensure that services fitted with local customs and culture, and to some extent, this long-drawn process resulted in overall project delays and lack of timely delivery of inputs. As discussed in the previous section, significant investments were made on the capacity building of the committees, which included understanding about and dissemination of early warning; training on search and rescue; public awareness; campaign and provision of essential equipment to the committees. The project also provided hardware support for house repair, livelihoods and WASH. Among these different forms of support, the livelihoods support and plinth-raising support emerged as the two most important forms of project support identified in the household survey.

While the project's investment in reduction of overall risk is well conceptualized and implemented, it was not able to systematically identify risk to the development assets of the community and household in some dimensions. For example, the protection of educational material of children was not identified in the action plan or in the project document. ACF can emphasize such protection without necessarily having educational expertise. Some of the household level risk reduction measures such as raising plinth by using mud were inappropriate for the households living outside the embankment. Although this approach was influenced by the limited budget and the desire to cover a large number of households, the evaluators believe that as a pilot project it could have experimented with cyclone resilient houses for a smaller number of households for creating evidence to change national discourse and policies on disaster management or advocate around this issue if government approval is not available

Thus, the evaluators would like to highlight a number of lessons for designing future DRR initiatives. First, ACF should utilize resilience principles to consider both experiences of past disasters and the likelihood of future disasters in the context of climate change. The project should learn from some of the good practices of designing resilient houses from CDMP, Chars Livelihood Program and ActionAid. Furthermore, maintaining usability of disaster preparedness equipment has been a major challenge well documented in many Bangladeshi studies. ACF may learn from CPP about specification of search equipment and the process to obtain them (suppliers may import) if they are not locally available. Contingency funds (through community contributions) could be created in future project to maintain the equipment and continuation of the workings of VDMCs the way some of the committees have already started creating such funds. The third lesson is related to asset protection. Again some good practices are already available but they are mostly limited for the protected areas. Protection of assets for the people living outside the embankment is a major knowledge gap in Bangladesh that ACF can invest further to meet.

iv. Gender

Was gender considered in ACF's assessment of the situation, and in the implementation of the programme? Did the programme include context relevant components for women and adolescent girls and if so, were these systematically monitored? How did the project achieve its objective of working with women and adolescent girls? Were external constraints (social, religious...) taken into account towards better inclusion of women groups?

Disaster mortality among women is generally high in Bangladesh relative to their counterpart males. They also experience special type of vulnerabilities due to the subservient societal role. These include violence, sexual harassment and limited access to recovery support. While women play the most important role in the recovery of a household, their role and capacity is often overlooked at community and national level although the situation is improving as a result of increasing investment on education and other social services. Yet, limited access to information, mobility, unfriendly cyclone shelters are additional vulnerabilities of women together with general vulnerabilities that men also experience. Over the last few decades there has been significant change in the context of women; there are more women entrepreneur, more women having independent livelihood, and many women groomed as community leaders. Despite these positive changes, a significant number of women still live through historical deprivation and limited food and nutritional intake, which limit women to reduce their vulnerability as an individual. The project adopted a number of effective strategies to address women risk:

- It organized Women's Forum as a key catalyst to raise and address women concerns;
- Through public awareness work, it created a share understanding about women vulnerability within communities
- By providing direct livelihood support to women and female headed households living outside the embankment, it helped improve their income and food security.
- Finally, it enhanced disaster preparedness for women by enhancing their capacities through local training and awareness-raising.

The WFs were formed through the process described earlier. This was a new experience for the women in the selected village and many of the members of the women forum never had an opportunity to participate in village meetings previously. The evaluators believe it was an important first step taken by the project but it should not end there. Some women were not able to play a meaningful role at community level meetings because of their historical deprivation and muted role and the limited project investment to groom women leadership in this context. The capacity building did help women to broaden their understanding about early warning, nutrition for pregnant and lactating women and reproductive health problem of adolescent girls. They also mentioned to the evaluation team that the trainings and the seminars organized by the project helped them to review their past learning from disasters. Their role during the TS Mahasen was also acknowledged and noticed by the wider community. However, the evaluators believe that the project did not adopt equality between VDMC and Women Forums in some spheres. For example, the cyclone equipment was only provided to the VDMC. Women forums thought they could have played much meaningful role had they received similar equipment.

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There is sufficient evidence to suggest that women forum could play equal important roles that VDMC did during the Mahasen. The forums even now helped extend the coverage of dissemination of early warning. Most women interviewed mentioned that they received early warning from women forum members. They also helped in the evacuation of elderly, children and pregnant women to the cyclone shelter/safe places. They reminded the households well in advance to keep their essentials safe from the impending cyclone. The evaluators noticed differential performance of the women committees within and across villages. It is clear that women with natural and known leadership skills played greater role than other women. Adequate investment in capacity building could have helped in reducing such differences. The greatest strength of the project in the area of gender lies in the identification of the most vulnerable women in the village. A large portion of them were female headed households or women living in extremely poor households which are highly exposed not only to high magnitude cyclones but also low intensity hazards such as high tide, salinity and winds. The female headed households face additional burdens when they get a cyclone early warning due to limited number of household members. Many women mentioned that additional help through social cohesion and solidarity could have been much more appropriated for the female headed households. The evaluators interviewed a lady who was not able to go to a cyclone shelter because she had five children. Thus, the VDMC trainings and orientation should invest much more on extending special support to those female-headed households requiring special assistance.

v. Impact:

WASH:

Since there was no technical WASH person on the evaluation team, the analysis of WASH activities undertaken as part of the evaluation was limited. The evaluators observed the construction quality visually for common construction problems in all villages and only minor, occasional problems were found. Secondly, the evaluators also checked with village committee members about the technical quality of work and they expressed a high degree of satisfaction. Thus, overall, the construction quality seems disaster-resilient. This project component comprised of the supply of ring slab hardware for constructing latrines supported with awareness-raising on hygiene issues through community sessions. Altogether, 251 households which did not have proper toilets earlier were provided with latrines, thereby reducing a significant public health risk following a cyclone. Women told the evaluators about the difficulties that they experienced earlier during a cyclone and even normal times without proper latrines and demonstrated the care they took to maintain their latrines as they were the ones who suffered the most due to the lack of such facilities. ACF provided support for the foundations while the superstructures of the latrines (wall and roof) were constructed through community contribution with each households building them based on their ability. TS Mahasen however destroyed most of the superstructures but people rebuilt them immediately as they were useable once water receded. For future projects, ACF is encouraged to have dialogues with WaterAid Bangladesh, which has been researching on different climate proof latrine technologies.

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FSL:

How does the support brought in livelihoods mitigate/compensate hazard? What % of successful income generating? Which activities following the project are likely to be implemented in the future. What direct and indirect evidence is available that the action taken contributed to the improvement of the food security and livelihood of the population? Does the project consider negative effects on livelihoods system of households?

The promotion and protection of livelihoods are important means to achieve resilience. But, such activities are highly risky in a chronic disaster context. ACF adopted both agro based and off farming strategy for nearly 1400 households. Many of these households are landless, having only homestead land given by the government. Their existing livelihoods are highly sensitive to changes in bio-physical environment. They also do not have settled livelihoods but do whatever they find during different seasons based on available natural resources. The livelihood approach of the project was influenced by the idea that additional support to households can increase income and food security. Although the project did consider disaster risks overall, it did not sufficiently consider the risks to its own programmatic inputs (the last column of the evaluation framework) in livelihoods given the recurrence of disasters. As a result, a large portion of the livelihoods support, ranging between 70 and 90% in different villages, such as goats and poultry did not sustain during the TS Mahasen. The project designed the livelihoods strategy with community participation but community members mentioned to the evaluation team that they themselves did not realize that the support could be affected by disaster. While ACF played an important technical role in providing high quality livelihoods support, e.g., in selection of types of goat and poultry and quarantine and vaccination, but it did not pay sufficient attention to the protection of these animals during and after the disaster.. So, the idea of trees was well conceived because it has both economic and DRR returns. For example, the timber can be sold to cover an incidental cause while they could also be used to construct or reconstruct houses after a disaster. Although options are limited ACF should have paid more attention in selection of species of trees as they could also cause mortality when they fall down during a storm. At least two of the selected species (rain tree) were the cause of accident during cyclone Sidr due to their weak roots and massive size. ACF could have explored other local varieties (e.g., palm and coconut) through research which can provide both economic returns and protection from disaster—and are readily useable as housing material after a disaster.

On the other hand, almost all of the non-agro livelihoods and some agro-based options did survive – and provided important outcome after the TS Mahasen. For example, the business grants helped people to continue their business immediately after the cyclone and some ducks laid eggs which were used to earn money by some households. In summary, the idea of livelihood was an essential component of ACF DRR program which should continue for similar programs in Bangladesh and beyond. But agro based livelihood in this context in highly difficult due to the chronic nature of climate change. Higher investment in building people's ability to grow more crops during the non-cyclone period through small-scale irrigation, rain water harvesting and deep tube wells construction can ensure diversification of livelihoods. Also, research on resilient livelihoods is essential in this context. ACF's per household investment was not adequate to achieve resilient livelihoods in this difficult context. The project should have

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piloted first with a limited number of households about various livelihood strategy that can withstand cyclone.

Impact of the FSL activities on the nutritional status of the beneficiaries: How do improvements in income generation and/or food production translate into a change in the food consumption pattern or health status?

To-date, the FSL activities have not resulted in many major changes in people's lives. This is due to two main reasons. Firstly, the livelihoods support distribution did not always match with the seasonality. For example, according to the staff survival of tree sapling could have been increased by distributing them in the rainy season, not earlier due to lack of sweet water. Similarly, goat could have been given before the cyclone season (e.g. March) but some were distributed in May. Secondly, many of the livelihoods activities inputs also got destroyed during Mahasen. Thus, 50% of household survey respondents said that they were yet to get any return from the livelihoods activities while 20% said that they had lost them during Mahasen.

DRR

Do the measures put in place helped to reduce the risk of these people targeted?

In overall terms, disaster preparedness was reasonably improved at both household and community level as a result of this investment. Almost 83% of the household survey respondents felt that they were better prepared to deal with Mahasen due to the project work. Early warning and disaster preparedness awareness-raising were seen as the two most important project inputs which helped in this better preparedness, according to household survey respondents. Thus, the communities are now better able to understand and make use of early warning. During TS Mahasen, early warning was disseminated real time together with the national system. The evaluators found evidence of the usefulness of the preparedness messages and their enforcement by the committees. The workings of the committees helped households to adopt various preparedness measures—and many of them undertook self-initiative to protect their life and livelihoods. Disseminating early warning and helping vulnerable people evacuate were mentioned as the two most important roles played by the committees according to the household survey respondents. Household survey respondents reported that the three most important preparations they undertook after the early warning were reinforcing house and shops, getting dry food and clean water ready and getting households and business items ready and packed. Materials provided by the ACF such as house reinforcement were very useful in protecting the small business establishment and houses. Thus, the evaluators are of the opinion that within the contextual constrain the DP investment was able to reduce mortality risk at a reasonable level. The preparedness was less useful where there were no cyclone shelters or strong houses for people to take shelter. The committee members were able to apply these trainings during the TS Mahasen and learned lesson about what worked and what did not. The evaluators believe that ACF should now organize lesson learning exercise at a village level with both the committees and consolidate their learning as an on-going process.

However, the project made some strategic and operational mistakes which reduced its appropriateness and its ability to reduce risks locally. The major one was the limited investment

on the capacity building of the VDMCs and Women Forums on advocacy and communication of the community risk reduction plans with the government authorities. The second operational mistakes included the weak quality of some equipment which could have been improved easily through better coordination with the CPP. The project invested good resource on raising public awareness on risk reduction using pictorial calendar for the households and illustrated disaster preparedness activities displayed in signboard. These IEC materials played varying role in disseminating the key messages across the population groups. Some of the materials are already tested as effective by others which ACF adopted. For example, ludo was very popular among the children and adults. People mentioned that the messages illustrated in the IEC material and subsequent short seminars by VDMC helped them to consolidate their learning from past cyclone. However, women's role as leaders was not portrait in any of the materials. The project also did not have a proper strategy to roll it out to the wider community for use beyond project life. For example, some of the materials could have been given to the VDMC and women forum for disseminating messages within the community. While knowledge dissemination is the right strategy in a context where disaster is a continuous and an everyday event for the people, a continuous knowledge building process is much more suitable. To advance such an approach a number of core activities can be considered: support and nurture community's own innovation, lesson learning, knowledge gained- and utilize them in revising IEC material on a regular basis. This should also include an effort to preserve social evidence of disasters to transmit disaster knowledge from one generation to the other. Despite these weaknesses, the evaluation team feels that the project has helped in reducing disaster risks for people in a locally appropriate manner. In comparing the project activities with the continuum of DRR activities provided in the evaluation framework, it can be seen that the project covered capacity-building, and evacuation, rescue and relief preparedness. Mitigation activities are not possible against cyclones. So, the missing link was mainly to supplement its own programme work by networking with other NGOs to provide services it cannot and to advocate along with other NGOs for government to provide the activities that NGOs cannot, for example increasing the number of cyclone shelters. Finally, the committees were not able to play significant role in the post-disaster relief and recovery phase, according to household survey respondents. This highlights the need for adoption of broad concept of DRR in future interventions.

vi. Sustainability:

How successful were the activities to strengthen the capacity of local communities, committees and individuals? How will the positive effects be maintained in the future, at the end of the program at community and institutional level?

Sustaining village committee with purpose is a far bigger challenge than forming them through a right process. VDMCs are now going through a 'honeymoon phase' within villages, which can be extended by providing incentives and rewards—and engaging them in regular activities of risk reduction. Some of the key priorities should include creation of succession plans, revision of roles and responsibilities in light of the experience of Mahasen and deepening capacity building for mobilization and advocacy. These activities will help in enhancing the sustainability of these committees once ACF withdraws from the villages. Already, 60% of the household survey respondents felt that the committees will sustain even after the project ends. This objective can be achieved even better through the following strategies:

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- Undertaking a smaller 6-9 months project which focuses solely on committee capacities.
- Linking the committees to other NGOs working in or interested in working in these areas
- Getting committees registered with government departments, e.g., Ministry of Social Welfare
- Getting the committees recognized as relevant partners by the UDMCs

3. Project Cycle Management Issues

Some project cycle management issues affected these program outcomes described in the preceding paragraphs under different evaluation criteria.

i. Planning and assessments

The ACF Bangladesh team follows a comprehensive 3-year country strategic planning process, which is laudable. Often, emergency agencies with short-term, project-based funding do not employ such processes, which help in creating a shared vision of the overall program among all team members and enhance coordination. Thus, in the opinion of the evaluation team, the ability of the DRR team to get timely support from the nutrition, livelihoods and WASH teams was probably improved by the existence of these strategic planning processes. ACF also undertook a thorough PCVA process by engaging the services of an expatriate consultant for several months. This helped in the comprehensive risk analysis that the project was based on. However, the missing link in this assessment process was the lack of thorough risk analysis for the program inputs being provided, which resulted in the loss of some of the livelihoods and other inputs provided during TS Mahasen.

ii. Resourcing

DRR is a new field for ACF in Bangladesh. Furthermore, none of the main staff members responsible for implementing this project in Dhaka or Barguna had previous DRR experience. This affected program quality in many instances. It would have been useful to arrange more training for staff on DRR and to hire an experienced national or expatriate DRR expert throughout the life of the project. . Gender expertise was another capacity gap within the team. ACF could also consider utilizing the services of national DRR and gender experts on short-term basis. Furthermore, the local partner also lacked DRR experience. Thus, it would have been better to recruit a more experienced partner. Furthermore, a month after signing the partnership contract, ACF discovered that the partner had been black-listed by ECHO for past corruption. Instead of terminating the contract due to the difficulty of finding a new partner once the project had already started, ACF decide to continue with the partner as ACF itself had not faced any financial problems with it. However, ACF managed all procurement itself and engaged in much more hands-on engagement with the partner field staff. While this reduced the risk of corruption, it still meant that for the length of the project, ACF was hobbled with a partner that it could not trust. This also deprived ACF of the local understanding that is crucial for successful work. It may have been better to terminate the partner immediately and hire some of its field staff (not all the staff so as to stay within budget limits(directly who were all reliable. Thus, stronger

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processes for identifying partners and taking immediate decisions once corruption is discovered are needed.

iii. Implementation

ACF had developed a detailed implementation schedule. Yet, there were considerable delays in launching the project once the final go-ahead from the donor was received in November 2011. The inception stage took much longer than expected and considerable time was lost during the 2012 monsoon season. Some of the delays were probably related to the lack of staff and partner experience in DRR as well as the immediate discovery about the partner's black-listing. Nevertheless, there is also a need for regular monitoring at the senior management level whether projects are slipping behind schedule and to take immediate remedial action. There were also delays in procurement as there was lack of understanding among program staff about procurement rules and requirements. Furthermore, due to earlier delays, a big percentage of the expenditure occurred during the last four months. Thus, greater focus on clarifying such expectations early on through a project procurement meeting would have been helpful.

iv. Coherence: Internal and External Coordination

As mentioned earlier, internal coordination and communication was good across different sectors, though there was some initial lack of clear communication between program and logistics teams which was later rectified. ACF also coordinated regularly with external actors, including the government and other NGOs to avoid duplication etc. However, there is a need to coordinate more closely with other DRR actors on good practices and specific implementation issues. ACF could have learnt more on appropriate evacuation and rescue equipment specifications from the Cyclone Preparedness Program (which is active) and the Red Crescent. It could have also gained insights on resilient housing and livelihoods work from agencies like UNDP and ActionAid. Unfortunately, there is no DRR coordination group in Bangladesh for NGOs. ACF could encourage the development of such a forum in coordination with others.

v. Monitoring

ACF staff is regularly monitoring field activities. However, it would be useful for ACF to develop a more strategic and outcome-oriented formal monitoring plan which clearly specifies the role for all relevant program and support staff, from field-level staff up to the Country Director, in the project's monitoring, including the frequency, modality, project dimension and indicators for each relevant ACF staff. More importantly, the plan should also specify how the information coming from the monitoring done by each staff will be analyzed and summarized (preferably through a software-based monitoring application) and then fed to progressively higher levels of the ACF team, terminating with the Senior Management Team and what decisions and follow-up each level would undertake to ensure that the project achieves its objectives on time. The team could also constantly monitor the progress on the common program dimensions (e.g., effectiveness, efficiency etc) that eventually will be part of the project evaluation TORs and take remedial timely action to ensure high project quality.

vi. Cost-efficiency

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With a budget of around Euro 200,000 only, the project was able to enhance the resilience of nearly 30,000 people, which reflects high cost-efficiency. However, given the pilot nature of the project, it may have been better to pilot the livelihoods and house repair activities with a smaller number of families given their uncharted nature in Barguna's harsh environment. This would have reduced the losses incurred with some such activities during TS Mahasen.

vii. Closure

The closure of the project became highly compressed due to earlier delays and a large proportion of the expenditure and activities occurred during the last four months. However, still all activities did get complete although quality did suffer on capacity-building activities due to the rush. So, better scheduling is essential. It would be advisable to inform communities well in advance of project closure and follow-up plans.

C **HAPTER 4: Conclusions and Recommendations**

A dedicated project piloting a DRR approach for landless residing outside the embankments is significantly relevant for the coastal belt of Bangladesh. The project lessons carry high strategic value given that a significant number of people have no means other than living in such unprotected areas. Besides this project, there have been a few experimentations in the past by other NGOs in such areas. For example, during the 1980s ActionAid initiated a program called self-sustainable embankment project. Taken together all these approaches have the potential to create a coherent DRR approach for such groups of people. The main lessons from this project can be summarized as follows:

1. Lessons Learnt

- The investment in committees has paid off greatly as the committees played a major role in helping people get early information, making cyclone preparations at the household level and in evacuating to cyclone shelters.
- Around 241,000 euro for 18 months is far less than what is needed to enable people to become resilient to disasters in such contexts. Clearly, the coverage of the project exceeded the available financial capacity. This lesson is important for ACF, donors and other players in Bangladesh. Building resilience requires adequate investment. Clearly, one agency cannot address all the structural and non-structural factors causing people to be vulnerable to climate change. It requires a well-coordinated and synergistic approach by multiple actors. ACF can highlight needs for such national level coordinated planning.
- The creation of institutions at the village level is clearly effective in terms of its ability to reduce disaster mortality risk. But its effectiveness is conditioned by the existence of the foundation of national preparedness system which may include effective government institutions, existence of cyclone shelter and strong houses and embankments. The project lessons suggest that not all community institutions perform equally nor all the members of the institutions are active equally. Clearly, participation is more likely with individuals with natural leadership but such leadership can also be groomed through continuous capacity building. A short term project could address this challenge by linking such village structures with existing government and other structures. The village committees have the potential to play a complementary role with UDMCs to extend their coverage and performance.
- Women forum should be an essential component of national risk reduction efforts, which should promote their leadership in DRR. ACF should invest more on the capacity building of these women organizations than male ones because women generally do not play community leadership roles because of their subservient role in the society.

- Poor people often cannot invest on DRR measures because of low surplus income. Improved livelihoods opportunities can enable vulnerable communities to be resilient. But the project lessons suggest that agro based livelihood in unprotected context can be unproductive unless a resilience approach is used. The project design should therefore create provision for additional resource for resilient livelihoods.
- Globally, a self-reliant DRR initiative is a popular approach. ACF's approach of ensuring high community participation is crucial for a self-managed DRR initiative at a village level. In order to sustain these initiatives in a chronic disaster context, community ownership over the DRR process is necessary. Furthermore, since every disaster is unique and numerous social, political, and economic factors influence vulnerabilities and risks, investment in communities' ability to research and innovate individually and collectively are important. Community participation alone cannot guarantee high quality programs given the limited understanding within communities about future risks. ACF's role should include bringing in big picture analysis and technical knowledge to make sure that the community led planning processes and outcomes are duly informed by technical considerations.

2. Recommendations

Coverage

- Document the highly successful targeting and coverage approach and disseminate it among relevant external stakeholders as a good practice

Community capacity-building

- Document the highly successful committee capacity-building approach and disseminate it among relevant external stakeholders as a good practice
- Be more aware about power relations, through wealth ranking exercises to further reduce the chances of local influential people monopolizing the committees.
- Encourage and empower communities to play a more significant role in the post-disaster relief and recovery phase.
- Actively advocate and convince the government to change its modalities where VDMCs can be treated as a wing of UDMC and play a supportive role to UDMC at the village level in early warning dissemination, evacuation and relief distribution. VDMCs can also play a role in amplifying the voice of vulnerable people to create effective local governance for DRR.
- Ensure that committees arrange regular meetings for the larger community to keep them engaged in project activities and inform them about village and union disaster plans.

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- Invest more in the capacity of women to be able to participate actively within Women forum and the ability of Women forum to influence village decision-making
- Enhance the sustainability of committees by undertaking a smaller 6-9 months project which focuses solely on the software work of increasing committee capacities; linking the committees to other NGOs working in or interested in working in these areas; and getting the committees registered with relevant government departments, e.g., the Ministry of Social Welfare. Some of the key priorities should include creation of succession plans, revision of roles and responsibilities in light of the experience of Mahasen and deepening capacity building for mobilization and advocacy.
- The committee members were able to apply their trainings during the TS Mahasen and learned lesson about what worked. ACF should now organize lesson learning exercise at a village level with both the committees and consolidate their learning as an on-going process.

Livelihoods, housing and other programme inputs

- Experiment with cyclone resilient houses for a smaller number of households but with larger per household investment and use the ensuing success for creating evidence to change national discourse and policies.
- Utilize resilience principles to consider both experiences of past disasters and the likelihood of future disasters in the context of climate change. The project should contact directly and obtain some of the good practices of designing resilient houses from CDMP, CHARS livelihood program and ActionAid.
- Learn from CPP about specification of search equipment and import them if they are not locally available. Contingency funds could also be created to maintain the equipment and continuation of the workings of VDMCs the way some of the committees have already started creating funds.
- Protection of assets for the people living outside the embankment is a major knowledge gap in Bangladesh that ACF can invest further to meet through practice, research and documentation.
- Provide cyclone equipment to both male and female committees
- For future projects, ACF is encouraged to have dialogues with WaterAid Bangladesh, which has been researching on different climate proof latrine technologies.
- Ensure that VDMC trainings and orientation invest much more on extending special support to those female-headed households requiring special assistance.

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- Invest greater effort in identifying the risks to program inputs being provided, for example house repair and livelihoods support
- Focus on more resilient forms of livelihoods support, for example off-season cultivation through provision of rain water harvesting and deep-wells
- Explore local tree varieties which can provide both economic returns and protection from disaster—and are readily useable as housing material after a disaster.
- Pilot first with a limited number of households about various livelihoods strategies that can withstand cyclone, preferably with a higher per household investment.
- For goats, consider the possibility of also providing mound-shaped protection structures for them built traditionally in villages in Bangladesh. This suggestion may not be applicable in all areas due to land shortages and government non-authorization. Also give greater attention to delivering locally appropriate varieties well before cyclone season to allow acclimatization.
- Village action plan and awareness raising materials should consider all types of risks: live, livelihood and development such as education materials. Identify clearly the protection of children's educational materials in village action plans and IEC materials.

Coordination, advocacy, learning and networking

- Focus more on networking with other NGOs on DRR and even consider encouraging NGOs to form a DRR forum on the lines formed in Pakistan where ACF participates actively.
- Focus more on networking with other NGOs to have them provide services in these areas which ACF cannot.
- Focus more on undertaking advocacy with government for enhancing the linkages of UDMCs with villages and for providing more cyclone shelters.
- Women's role as leaders must be portrayed in IEC materials. The project also must have a proper strategy to roll out IEC material to the wider community for use beyond project life. For example, some of the materials could be given to the VDMC and women forum for disseminating messages within the community.
- While knowledge dissemination is important in a context of frequent disasters, a continuous knowledge building process is much more suitable. To advance such an approach, support and nurture community's own innovation, lesson learning, knowledge gained- and utilize them in revising IEC material on a regular basis.
- Document and communicate project learning in a strategic manner.

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Management issues

- Undertake more thorough risk analysis for the program inputs being provided to disaster-proof them as part of the PCVA process.
- Arrange more training for staff on DRR and hire an experienced national or expatriate DRR expert right from the start of future projects.
- Consider utilizing the services of national DRR and gender experts on short-term basis and to engage more experienced partner NGOs.
- Stronger processes for identifying partners and for taking immediate termination decisions once corruption is discovered are needed while looking at the possibility of hiring some of the field staff directly to the extent allowed by the project budget.
- More regular monitoring at the senior management level of whether projects are slipping behind schedule and to take immediate remedial action if needed.
- Greater focus on clarifying procurement rules and requirements for program staff early on through a project procurement meeting would be helpful.
- Modify the monitoring plan so that it clearly specifies the role for all relevant program and support staff in the project's monitoring, including the frequency, modality, project dimension and indicators for each relevant ACF staff. More importantly, the plan should also specify how this information will be analyzed and summarized (preferably through a software-based monitoring application) and then fed to progressively higher levels of the ACF team, terminating with the Senior Management Team and what decisions and follow-up each level would undertake to ensure that the project achieves its objectives on time. The team could also constantly monitor the progress on the common program dimensions (e.g., effectiveness, efficiency etc) that eventually will be part of the project evaluation TORs.
- Given the pilot nature of the project, it may have been better to pilot the livelihoods and house repair activities with a smaller number of families given their uncharted nature in the context of Berguna's harsh environment. This would have reduced the losses incurred with some such activities during TS Mahasen.
- Inform communities well in advance of project closure and follow-up plans.
- ACF-UK is advised to ensure that individual project evaluation TORs use similar definitions for various DAC criteria over time and develop TORs with less overlap and repetition.
- ACF's global DRR policies should adopt resilience principles and build their staff capacity and organisational processes to implement it.

APPENDIX

1. DAC Scoring Matrix

Criteria	Rating (1 low, 5 high)	Rationale
Impact	3	The software activities have had a significant and strategic impact in enhancing the ability of communities to collectively deal with disasters. Some of the hardware inputs, such as non-agricultural activities, have been successful. However, the agro-based livelihoods activities and house repairs need to be more resilient.
Sustainability	3	The committees set up are the main mechanism for ensuring project sustainability. However, there is scope to improve sustainability further by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • linking communities with other agencies, government departments and with each other and • through further training of the committees on CBO management issues
Coherence	3.5	Internal coordination was good, except initially between logistics and program staff. External coordination could be made more goal-oriented by focusing on obtaining good practices from more experienced DRR agencies. The program cohered with and benefitted from a comprehensive country strategy process and largely supported and supplemented government disaster plans.
Coverage	4.5	The selection of Barguna is excellent as it is highly disaster-prone and very isolated region. More than 70% of the beneficiaries within villages lived beyond embankments and were landless. However, the number of beneficiaries for programme inputs was too high considering that this was a pilot project. Initially, experimentation of various inputs with smaller number of beneficiaries would have been better
Appropriateness	4.0	The selection of activities with its mix of software and hardware activities which cover most dimensions included in the evaluation framework is highly appropriate. The participation of beneficiaries in program design was high. More advocacy and linkages with other agencies and more resilient livelihoods activities are needed
Effectiveness	3.5	The project managed to achieve all its objectives and outputs. However, this achievement was achieved by cramping activities into the last four months which affected program quality of capacity-building activities. External factors, such as long cyclone season and highly isolated location of the project with weak human capacities affected effectiveness,

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Efficiency	3.5	Given the pilot nature of the project, 10 villages with a total catchment population of 30,000 people reflects good cost-efficiency. However, pilot activities should have been tried first with a smaller number of households to reduce the costs associated with failure of some new activities
Gender	3.5	The main focus on women is very good and the setting-up of women's groups has enhanced their organizational and leadership potential. Further training is needed to enhance their effectiveness

2. Acronyms

AECID	Spanish Government Development Agency
CMDRR	Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction
CPP	Cyclone preparedness program
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
PCVA	Participatory Community Vulnerability Analysis
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
UP	Union Parisad
VDMC	Village Disaster Management Committee

3. Best Practice Case Study

Village Committee Empowerment in ACF Bangladesh CMDRR Project

Innovative Features & Key Characteristics

The ACF Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction project in Barguna, Bangladesh aims to reduce disaster risks across 10 sea bordering villages by increasing the capacity of vulnerable women and landless people. To achieve this objective, ACF helped formed Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) and Women's Forum (WCs) in each village which are in charge of reducing risk, enhancing social cohesion, and empowering communities and groups through skill building and planning. The idea of establishing village committees is not new in Bangladesh. However, combining male and female committees in the same village is an

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innovative approach to manage risk at local level. While forming the committees, the project also introduced innovative democratic selection and decision-making processes. A number of steps were adopted to ensure people's ownership. For example, the project first shared the idea of VDMCs along with the rules and procedures with the whole community. Later, through a second community meeting, the VDMC members were elected. Finally, the Chairpersons of the VDMCs were elected by the VDMC members. Community people during the evaluation process expressed their high satisfaction with the transparent and accountable process that the project promoted. A similar process was followed in the process of formation of the WCs.

Each committee is made up of several sub-committees with responsibility for early warning, evacuation, and management of cyclone shelters. The committee members were trained through reputed individuals from the government Cyclone Preparedness Program and a local University. The trainings were generally well conceived although did not pay sufficient attention to local mobilization and advocacy. The trainings resulted in increased understanding about the use of early warnings and how to disseminate them. Evacuation, search and rescue trainings were found to be most useful by the participants. The committee members were able to apply these trainings during the TS Mahasen and learned lesson about what worked and what did not. The evaluators believe that ACF should organize lesson learning exercises at village levels with both the committees to consolidate their learning.

This is an innovative and useful exercise for the following reasons:

- It goes beyond the current focus on organizing and empowering people at Union levels within Bangladesh and takes the concept right down to the community level
- The focus on organizing women is very useful since women generally do not play leadership roles within Bangladeshi villages.
- The trainings provided to the committees provide highly relevant and empowering skills to people who were previously dealing with cyclones without any technical assistance

Practical/Specific Recommendations for Roll Out

In order to ensure that ACF programs around the world get the maximum out of this exercise, the following preparation and follow-up will be helpful

- Ensure that all sections of the community, particularly women and other highly vulnerable groups participate in the exercise
- Ensure that the community has been adequately briefed about basic DRM concepts so that it can participate more meaningfully in the committees
- Encourage local government officials to participate in some such exercises wherever feasible so that they develop a better understanding of local vulnerabilities and villagers develop closer linkages with them
- Provide greater capacity-building support for several months to ensure that the committees become strongly rooted, introduce them to other NGOs interested in working in the region and register them with relevant government departments.

4. List of Documents Reviewed

1. Project Proposal, ACF CMDRR, Barguna
2. No-cost extension rationale letter
3. Project financial report, May 2013
4. ACF Bangladesh Country Strategy, 2013-2015
5. Proforma TORs for Village Disaster Management Committees
6. Project IGA tools performas
7. Distribution plans for project inputs for livestock
8. Training contents and scheduling documents
9. National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015, Standing Order on Disasters, Bangladesh
10. Field Activity monitoring reports