

Chapter 4

Involving the Communities and Civil Society

Md. Bazlul Karim

It has been demonstrated in many parts of the world that development initiatives are more effective for poverty reduction when all stakeholders, especially citizens and marginalized communities are actively involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes. Moreover, effective development calls for the “ownership” of processes of change by those who will embody them in the future. In most cases, external interventions have negative implications at local level because they often lead to a lack of ownership on the part of local communities. To avoid such a situation, CDSP has adopted a multi-dimensional approach which requires an institutional basis at community level in order to promote a participatory process as well as to make the efforts sustainable (CDSP-IV PR 14, 2018). Since the beginning, CDSP has been involving the settlers with planning and implementation of project activities. In addition, from early on in the process (during the feasibility study phase) local government institutions are involved in the project to ensure their support and assistance in implementing different project activities. The following section describes how CDSP is involving and empowering the char communities in different ways to continue the development of their area.

Local Government Institutions

Union Parishad (UP) is the smallest of the rural administrative and Local Government Institutions (LGIs) in Bangladesh. Each UP consists of a chairman, nine general members, and three women members. UPs provide assistance through their representation as advisors to the concerned Water Management Organizations (WMOs) in respect of Participatory Water Management (PWM) at

the local level. This is done through the respective standing committees. These roles are specified in CDSP as below:

- a) UP provides assistance through representation as advisor of the concerned WMOs and FOs, and also through their respective standing committees.
- b) UP acts as a coordinating agency for linkage between WMO and the public-sector agencies.
- c) UP ensures the security of the water management infrastructure.
- d) WMOs are responsible for taking part in Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of medium hydraulic structures, replacement of fallboards, repair of minor flood damage work, medium erosion protection and painting gates of medium sized structures. UP provides supporting, facilitating and coordinating assistance to the WMOs in respect to PWM.
- e) UP provides institutional support to the WMOs, specifically to arrange volunteer labour inputs and financial contributions from beneficiaries on O&M.
- f) UP provides support to the WMOs for awareness raising and participation of people in the water management groups.
- g) UP monitors the activities of WMOs.
- h) UP representatives participate in the WMO meetings.
- i) UP provides support to WMOs with respect to raising funds for O&M.

A process has started to formalize the participation of LGI representatives in particular in Water Management Association and Farmers' Association meetings and subsequently WMO and FO representatives' participation in UP coordination meetings to deal with local issues. Specifically, water management issues require wider participation to be resolved jointly and to promote a process for developing partnerships at local level.

Non-Government Organizations

In every phase of CDSP there have been several NGOs involved as development partners for livelihood and social development activities. In the current phase, four NGOs are involved with CDSP-IV interventions and work simultaneously in several components to implement multidimensional programme interventions. The focus is on social and economic development of households in the five chars, especially women and children. The selected partner NGOs (PNGOs) and their working areas are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. PNGOs’ assigned areas.

No.	Name of NGO	Name of working chars
1	BRAC	Char Nangulia, Char Zia
2	Sagorika Samaj Unnayan Sangstha (SSUS)	Char Nangulia, Noler Char
3	Dwip Unnayan Sangstha (DUS)	Noler Char
4	Society for Development Initiatives (SDI)	Urir Char

Each PNGO has a programme coordinator to supervise its activities in the various branches and the TA team provides both technical and management support. A brief discussion of the PNGO activities is provided below.

Health and family planning

Being located in remote areas, char dwellers suffer from lack of proper and timely healthcare facilities. To address this problem, the project provided medical services like health and nutrition education, safe water and sanitation education, family planning, immunization, pregnancy related care and safe delivery and some basic curative facilities. These services were provided in the char areas through paramedics, shasthya shebikas (female health workers), and trained traditional birth attendants (TBA) (BRAC, 2011).

Micro-credit and capacity development

Access to credit is a key requirement for improved livelihoods and poverty reduction. When infrastructure development in the CDSP I, II and III areas was complete, Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) set up their operations and offered micro-finance services. However, it was realised in CDSP-IV that there is an immediate need for micro-finance that cannot wait until infrastructure is developed. Now, MFIs set up their operations mainly to encourage group savings and to generate income that makes people less dependent on donor funding and allows them to sustain operations after the end of the project. In addition, micro-finance groups meet regularly which is a good forum for providing technical training and social support. New technologies can be promoted through a combination of training and loans for investment.

Case profile of Zohura Khatun (Improved TBA service)

Zohura Khatun, aged 38 years, has been working in Hazi Idris Miah Bazar of Char Nangulia for a long time as a TBA. However, she has never received any formal training for this work. Before the CDSP-IV intervention, she occasionally faced difficult situations and didn't know what to do. Consequently, many vulnerable pregnant women died due to the lack of proper advice or diagnosis of the symptoms. Zohura was also not aware of the importance of colostrum (also known as first milk) which contains antibodies to protect the new-born against disease. Instead, she advised the lactating mothers to feed their babies 'honey' or some other liquid. As a result, most of the babies developed stomach sicknesses. Recently, Zohura got involved with CDSP-IV where a 15-day TBA orientation was organized by the health and family planning staff of the project. The TBA orientation programme covered all the critical situations related to delivery, and pre and anti-natal care. Since receiving the training, she has observed the dramatic qualitative change in her work. Nowadays, Zohura can identify the signs of a vulnerable and critical situation during pregnancy. Whenever she identifies a risky situation, Zohura advises them to go to the local hospital where a safe delivery can be performed with proper medical support for both the baby and the mother. She also now advises the new mothers to feed the first course of breast-milk (colostrum). Zohura thinks babies and mothers are much healthier nowadays than before the intervention of CDSP-IV. Thus, she is grateful to the project for the orientation she received for TBA work.

Case profile of Nahar Begum (Training in tailoring passed on to a young woman)

Nahar Begum, aged 19, lives in Char Ziauddin. She is the third child of five siblings. Her family used to live in Bhola but unfortunately, due to four episodes of erosion by the Meghna river, they lost everything, including their house and cultivable land. Through local people Nahar's father came to know that a new char had emerged in the river, called Char Ziauddin. Nahar's father migrated there with his full family in 2001. He took possession of an area of 0.4 ha of land in exchange for paying Tk.3,000 to a samaj (community) leader. After clearing the forest, Nahar's family started living in Char Ziauddin. At that time Nahar was a two-year-old child. Nahar had studied up to class five in Ziauddin char when, in 2014, aged only 15, she got married to Ruhul. However, Nahar returned to her parents after only six months of marriage as she could not cope with her husband. As she had left her husband, neither her husband's family nor her community supported this decision. Nahar's mother was, by then, a member of a CDSP-IV group, and heard that training in tailoring would be provided to women by this project. However, the training was limited to group members only, so Nahar did not qualify to receive this training. However, she was told that a woman from the neighbouring community had received the training. Nahar then asked the woman to train her, which the woman did, providing Nahar with tuition for three months. Now, she has become well-known as a tailor in her area. In November and

December, she earned Tk. 4,000 by making school uniforms for girls. She also earned Tk.2,000 by providing two girls with training in tailoring. Nahar now wants to become a trainer of tailoring for girls in an organization. Along with that, she will also continue her tailoring activities from her home.

Climate change and disaster management

Drought, excessive rainfall, floods, waterlogging, etc. are some of the most common disasters faced in the coastal chars. CDSP attempted to raise awareness about these disasters and ways to cope with them among both the members of the groups and the community in general (BRAC, 2011). During the regular group meetings, the partner NGOs arranged discussions on pre and post-disaster preparedness, the significance of different warning signals, communication and linkage with Red Crescent and local responsible people, locations of cyclone/emergency shelters, ways to protect assets, facilitating timely and effective rescue, relief and rehabilitation, community-based preparedness and management and so forth.

There is a Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) in every Union Parishad. To strengthen and involve UDMC, meetings are organized by PNGO's Disaster Coordinators with UDMC and other (e.g. Red Crescent) stakeholders where various issues related to disaster management and options for better cooperation among the stakeholders are discussed.

Water and sanitation

Char areas often lack safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities. Before the intervention of CDSP, latrine usage by the community was very poor, on average less than 4%, resulting in diarrhoeal diseases. The project aimed to ensure easy access to safe water supply and hygienic sanitation facilities among the char dwellers by providing Deep Tube Wells (DTW) and sanitary latrines from the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) (see Chapter 6) under the supervision and coordination of CDSP-IV. The PNGOs supported the DPHE by assisting in: the formation of tube well user groups (TUG) comprising one woman member per family, site selection for DTW installation, collection and depositing of contribution money to DPHE and ensuring capacity building support to the beneficiaries.

Legal and Human Rights (LHR)

CDSP-IV aims to make char dwellers, especially deprived women, aware of human rights and basic laws through better access to information. Volunteers received a one month training on this topic. Once trained, they organize meetings among the NGO group members to make people aware of legal and human rights and social issues. In addition, 20% of the beneficiaries received training on legal and human rights on seven basic laws. These are: 1) Muslim family marriage law, 2) Hindu family marriage law, 3) Muslim inheritance Law, 4) Hindu inheritance law, 5) Land law, 6) Criminal law, and 7) Bangladesh constitution law. These 20% of beneficiaries are members of the group management committee and act as a law implementation committee, disseminating the message and acting against any violation of human rights.

Homestead agriculture and value chain development

This programme aimed to reduce malnutrition and increase the income of households by engaging women in economic activities within their homestead. This involved technology transfer, training, demonstration plots, and other capacity building activities. The programme objectives are:

- to utilize maximum resources of the homestead for growing vegetables and fruit;
- to promote new technologies around homesteads;
- to enhance intake of vegetables and fruit to ensure family nutrition;
- to increase cash income and facilitate women's empowerment; and
- to contribute in improving the livelihood condition of char dwellers.

There is also a Value Chain Development (VCD) programme to increase the income of the farmers through linking them to different market actors. There is a value chain coordination committee headed by Project Director CDSP-IV (DAE part), PNGO representatives, the TA team to facilitate and ensure proper implementation of the value chain programme. In the project area, 520 growers and 120 market actors were selected for a comprehensive orientation and training on value chain development. After the training, the market actors and growers selected several products for value chain development. The selection was done through participatory methods considering market demand, growth potential and potential number of people engaged in production. Once the value chains are selected, the groups carry out in-depth analysis of different channels/segments, constraints, opportunities and remedial measures. Producers are linked with the buyers, suppliers, local technology providers and the government agricultural extension office which provided them with technology training. Some of the priority products selected for value chain development in CDSP-IV are: okra,

cucumber, country beans, country bean seeds, tomatoes, bitter gourd, sweet gourd, soybeans, green chillies, watermelons, methi and local bananas.

Fisheries

Bangladesh is one of the richest countries in the world in respect of water resources. The country has vast water bodies in the form of rivers, canals, estuaries, haor, beels, lakes and ponds. Fisheries play an important role in nutrition, employment generation, poverty alleviation and foreign exchange earnings.

Up until 2012, the Regional Fisheries and Livestock Development Component (RFLDC), a DANIDA funded project, was implemented in CDSP areas. In order to avoid duplication, fisheries and livestock development activities were not included in CDSP-IV. However, after the phasing out of RFLDC, project beneficiaries reported a lack of services from the government or non-government side and requested such assistance from CDSP-IV. Thus, fishery activities have been included in CDSP-IV since 2014 to improve the livelihood and socio-economic status of char dwellers by fish farming. Some of the objectives of the fisheries programme are to:

- cover maximum water bodies under improved fish culture;
- develop the knowledge of fish farmers and promote modern and sustainable technology by providing training;
- enhance protein consumption;
- ensure the availability of quality fish fry for fish farmers;
- reduce fish diseases in the project area; and
- ensure the overall sustainability of fish culture.

Case profile of Kuhinur Begum (The path from poverty to prosperity)

Kuhinur Begum, aged 35, lives in Char Ziauddin with her husband, one daughter and two sons. She migrated to Char Ziauddin in 2002 from Ramgati upazila of Noakhali district due to river erosion. Kuhinur's husband was a day labourer with very little income. In 2012 BRAC (PNGO of CDSP-IV) started its activities in Char Ziauddin. Kuhinur got herself involved with a cooperative run by BRAC in CDSP-IV and started depositing Tk. 10 every week in the cooperative. Along with support such as sanitary latrines, training in vegetable cultivation, vermi compost preparation and employment through the Labour Contracting Society (LCS), she received 2 days training on fish farming as a model farmer in 2013. Kuhinur received her first loan of Tk. 8,000 from BRAC in weekly instalments for fish culture. Kuhinur and her husband dug a pond with the help of the loan money and their own capital and started cultivating fish. At the beginning, Kuhinur failed to make a profit as they had little knowledge about proper fish cultivation. After receiving 2 days training on "Improved Fish Culture Management" as a model farmer in 2016, she established a fish farm in her 18-decimal pond with the help

of Tk. 25,000 from a Partner NGO of CDSP-IV. With this money, she released 1,000 different fingerlings (rui, katla, mrigal, silver carp etc.) in her fish farm as an input. She also received other technical support from the project. Kuhinur's production cost was Tk. 15,000 (dyke repair, fingerlings, lime, fertilizer and feed etc.). They produced 375 kg fish and sold the fish to local traders. She earned a total of Tk. 33,750 (Tk. 105/kg) from her farm after meeting her family needs. Kuhinur has expressed her interest in expanding her fish farm in future.



Fig. 4.1. Kuhinur with her husband collecting their fish catch.

Poultry and livestock programme

Poultry and livestock rearing is one of the important sources of livelihood for poor people in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Rearing of poultry (chickens, ducks and pigeons) and livestock (goats, cattle, and buffalo) is an important source of household economy and food, as well as social security. According to the 2014 baseline survey, the average number of birds for each household was 10 chickens and 5 ducks. However, rearing poultry and livestock using traditional methods frequently resulted in high mortality due to the lack of vaccination services. The poultry and livestock programme of CDSP worked to promote proper management and care of poultry and livestock among the participants, by providing proper training, inputs, and marketing services.

Field Level Institutions (FLIs)

Community-owned processes will only be transformative if they are driven and self-organized by internal forces and dynamics of change. In order to promote such a process in the CDSP areas, six implementing agencies and four PNGOs, with support from the Technical Assistance team, are working to strengthen capacity development of Field Level Institutions (FLIs). FLIs are established to involve local people in planning and implementation of project interventions such as infrastructure development for better water management, social forestry, agricultural extension and livelihood and in operation and maintenance after the project is completed (CDSP-IV PR 14, 2018).

These groups give shape to the concept of people's participation, an important element in the project's approach. The institutions formed in CDSP-IV are:

- Water Management Organizations (WMOs) to manage water control infrastructure. These WMOs operate at three levels: Water Management Groups (WMG) represent farmers within a geographically defined water management area; at polder level (i.e. one char with a surrounding embankment), a number of WMGs form a Water Management Association (WMA), with a Water Management Federation (WMF) at the district level. WMGs are registered as cooperatives by the BWDB in line with the rules promulgated by the Ministry of Water Resources.
- NGOs established groups to receive micro-credit and other services from NGOs, as well as Tube Well User Groups for proper maintenance of tube wells.
- DAE has established Farmers' Organizations (FO) as the focal point for the agricultural development activities. These FOs operate at three levels: Farmers Forum (FF) representing farmers within a village; at polder level (i.e. one char with a surrounding embankment) a number of FFs form a Farmers' Association (FA), with a Farmer's Federation (FF) at the district level.
- Social Forestry Groups (SFGs) are formed by the Forest Department to establish and maintain different types of tree plantation. The SFG members receive a percentage of profit gained from the social forestry activities (see Chapter 10).
- BWDB, LGED and DPHE form Labour Contracting Societies (LCS²) to undertake labour-intensive construction and maintenance works.

² A Labour Contracting Society (LCS) is an organized group of men and/or women who are contracted to carry out works for a government agency or project. Under public procurement rules they can be selected to implement works without going through a competitive procurement process – with the objective of providing employment for poor local people living in the vicinity of the works being carried out.

Membership of FLIs has empowered char dwellers to raise their voices in demanding their rights, increasing negotiation and bargaining power, and ensuring the participation of women in all spheres of life. Some of the benefits of joining FLIs mentioned by project beneficiaries in a recent impact assessment survey (2018) are recorded Table 4.2.

The FLIs established by CDSP-IV are not the end result of this endeavour; rather these are considered as effective means to promote a sustainable development process in the local areas. CDSP interventions will only be sustainable if the settlers actively participate in the process of planning and implementation of development activities. In addition, while forming these field level institutions, female participation is promoted. It is demonstrated that these institutions are instrumental in providing government services in remote areas where these services were not visible in the past. FLIs are now in the process of developing linkages with other market/social forces including their respective local government institutions as they have realised that they cannot address all the problems by themselves. Coordination among field level institutions is done by undertaking bilateral meetings among these institutions. The Water Management Groups (WMGs) coordinate with the Union Parishad and with LCSs through meetings. The WMGs have meetings with the UPs concerned and also, if required, meet the representatives of LGED and BWDB on operation and maintenance issues. The double membership of these groups provides an instrument of coordination.

Table 4.2. Direct and indirect benefits from FLI Membership.

Field Level Institution (FLI)	Direct and indirect benefits of participation in FLIs
NGO Group	NGO groups are created to improve the social and economic situation of the chars. NGO group members receive health & family planning counselling, micro-credit, and training on disaster management, legal and human rights issues, agriculture, fisheries and poultry/livestock rearing.
Water Management Organization (WMO)	The core task of WMOs is operation and maintenance of water management infrastructure. However, in reality the contributions of WMGs go far beyond that. WMGs have helped in selecting locations for water management infrastructure, and have dug small drains to channel water into khals. Much of the work of the WMGs has involved working with their communities – solving conflicts over waterlogging and issues that arise during project implementation. WMGs also contribute in the resolution of other social conflicts such as discouraging child marriage. WMGs also make an important contribution to disaster preparedness and warning of cyclones. A number of WMGs work alongside school management committees to maintain

Farmers Organization (FO)	cyclone shelters. WMGs also have a role in liaison with implementing agencies, help in getting access to support from the government and NGOs, and support the implementation of agriculture and forest activities. FO members have gained knowledge and skills on agricultural technologies through attending FF meetings. For example, they now know how to practise integrated pest management (IPM) and use pheromone traps. As FF members, they have easy access to DAE field officers as well as project directors.
Social Forestry Group (SFG)	SFG members have got the right to 55% of forestry products once the trees are mature. They are also using dry leaves, dead branches and twigs as fuel. Social forestry plantations are protecting the community from different natural disasters and changing climate.
Tube Well User Group (TUG)	CDSP-IV has established DTWs as a safe drinking water source. Each DTW has a care taker family (CTF) which is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the DTW. Thus, the community is establishing ownership of the DTWs.
Labour Contracting Society (LCS)	LCS members (both women and men) are benefiting from short term employment. LCS members are involved in road construction and maintenance, market development, single pit latrine preparation, re-excavation of canals, construction of water management shed etc. LCS members are investing their incomes in gainful on-farm income generating activities (IGAs) like goat and poultry rearing, and also in off-farm IGAs like door-to-door selling of ladies' garments.
Micro-credit Group	This group is the centre of the micro-finance programme as the entire loan proposal, realization, income generating activities of the micro-finance programme and related social awareness activities are implemented through these groups. While selecting group members, special emphasis is given to female-headed households and widows. Group members are trained in farm and non-farm IGAs. Once the members are trained, they invest their micro-credit loans in various IGAs.

One of the examples of how CDSP is building the capacity of the local population to adapt to changing conditions is demonstrated by the fact that Water Management Groups from earlier phases are still functioning. They meet every month to discuss problems and possible solutions, and are taking care of the operation and maintenance of (part of) the infrastructure built by CDSP. A striking example is a WMG in Char Majid (CDSP II), which by themselves constructed and funded a new cross-dam to prevent salinity intrusion. Next to that, discussions with representatives of WMGs revealed that organizations, especially the older

ones, have broadened their activities to provide other services to their communities. This included a vaccination programme for cattle, value chain development, and transportation services to markets.

However, several of the WMGs formed by earlier phases of CDSP are not active or traceable anymore. There are a range of explanations for this – significant parts of the CDSP II area have been lost to erosion, with some WMG areas disappearing altogether, and others losing protective embankments along with the sluice gates that they used to operate.