

SUSTAINABILITY: A MISSING ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

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Abstract: This study is an effort toward a theoretical understanding of ‘sustainability’ which follows analysis of field level realities of selected project interventions regarding sustainability. The NGO projects start with specific targets and are considered complete when those targets are achieved. However, the concern for sustainability of achieved consequences is usually never found among the objectives of a project. Reviewing relevant literature, this paper demonstrates the concern for sustainability. Sustainability when defined for development projects are considered to be those with beneficial impacts enduring beyond the original time frame of the project, and that may be diffused beyond the original spatial limits of the project. A variety of concerns for project sustainability could be identified through review of relevant literature. However, of the identified variables, previous studies recognise the absence of sufficient attention to any specific of the concerns for sustainability. Again, contradictory findings on the consequences and sustainability of consequences of the present time asset transfer projects also set the scene for necessary academic research. In this context, the issues of consequences they lead to and their sustainability remain either unresolved or superficially/unsatisfactorily addressed. Hence, the present study aims to reveal the consequences of selected asset transfer projects and their sustainability. On the basis of field level realities through the voices of project beneficiaries, the study also proposes necessary recommendations. Data is collected for particular ‘asset enhancement’ and ‘vulnerability reduction’ interventions of Chars Livelihoods Programme and River Basin Programme in a river char (RC) community named Pepulia, located in Fulchhari Union at Fulchhari Upazila in Gaibandha District. Likewise, in Char Wadel which is a river estuarine char (REC) community in Nazirpur Union at Bauphal Upazila of Patuakhali District, consequences and sustainability of consequences of interventions of Specially Targeted Ultra Poor (STUP) programme of BRAC and Disaster Preparedness and Rehabilitation Management (DPRM) project of SLOPB is studied. The respondents of the questionnaire survey were 156 beneficiaries- 34 from STUP, 42 from DPRM, 40 from CLP and 40 from RBP. They also participated in Household (HH) level interviews. focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with available beneficiaries. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted on selected government officials and respective NGO personnel. A reciprocal relationship between HH level components and community level components was found to exist. Thus, at the community context, as interventions come, the success of the intervention and sustainability depend on the interaction of the community and HH level realities. Further, ‘type, duration, topicality, intensity, and frequency of interventions in time and space’ were also found to be crucial in this context.

Keywords: Sustainable, sustainable development, sustainable livelihoods, sustainable livelihoods approach, sustainable livelihoods framework..

Introduction

The notion of ‘development’ or it is better to say ‘the notion of conscious development’ or ‘the idea that development can be fostered’ is relatively new. In the post World War II (WWII) context when plans for conscious development initiatives started to emerge. economic growth and poverty reduction in the ‘underdeveloped’ parts of the world became the international development agenda that followed US president Harry S. Truman’s 20 January 1949 speech (Sharmin, 2014). From then on, along with influence of different dimensions

like, women in development, participatory approach, human development, rights based approach, etc. the major development agenda worldwide continued to be economic growth. Concern about environment was not new. Environmentalists in the late 1960s and 1970s argued that exponential growth could not be sustained without seriously depleting the planet's resources and overloading its ability to deal with pollution and waste materials (Beder, 2005). The concept of sustainable development is found to be defined in the documents of *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)*, *World Wildlife Fund (WWF)* and UNEP in the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 onward (IUCN-UNEP-WWF, 1980). However, the Brundtland Report, 'Our Common Future' (United Nations, 1987), issued in April 1987, popularized the term sustainable development. Brundtland defined SD as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Sustainable development was the buzz word of the 1990s particularly in development literature and generally everywhere. Although the concept was first introduced in response to environmental concerns, it has been defined primarily by the mainstream tradition of economic analysis, which tends to marginalize the issue of ecological sustainability itself. Consequently, over the years, sustainability varied widely in meaning and broadened its scope. One option suggested by O'Connor (1994) to the dilemma of meanings was to change the use of words to sustainability. The other alternative was sustainable livelihoods (Giddings, Hopwood and O'Brien, 2002). As these alternatives came, the major concern for environment started getting diluted with focus on economy and long-term satisfaction of basic human needs (Attfield, Hattingh & Matshabaphala, 2004).

The institution most criticized for its neoliberal agenda and its role in environmental degradation is the World Bank. World Bank (1992) defined sustainable development as "development that lasts". With this understanding, the interventionists, mainly the NGOs, these days are expected to bring "development that lasts". Thus, the concept of sustainability has come to be regarded both as a goal in development programs and as an approach to policy and programming (Eckman, 1993).

Development assistance is often offered on a temporary basis and projects typically have finite timeframes. Yet, the impacts of the assistance and projects are intended to be lasting. As a result, a challenge for international development is to achieve longterm sustainability of projects. (Ostrom 2010)

Therefore, sustainability is a critical challenge for all international development agencies. It is not possible to claim lasting impact in terms of any development intervention without ensuring this aspect of development (IFAD, 2009). For Eckman (1993), sustainability when considered for development projects are those with beneficial impacts enduring beyond the original time frame of the project, and that may be diffused beyond the original spatial limits of the project. This paper also perceives such sustainability of NGO intervention to be essential for development. Such understanding of sustainability, however, is very recent and only a few agencies (European Commission, IFAD, OECD, Oxfam, etc.) are found to some extent to assert about and act for such long term sustainability of their projects.

Sustainability of rural development projects: Best practices and lessons learned by IFAD in Asia (IFAD, 2009) is an attempt to identifying the factors that affect the sustainability of investment projects. Along with providing guidance on sustainability, the study provides a series of case studies highlighting best practices, constraints and lessons learned in achieving sustainability in selected countries with ongoing IFAD operations. Among 1. institutional sustainability, 2. household and community resilience, 3. environmental sustainability and 4. structural change that are the essential dimensions to ensure project sustainability, only institutional sustainability is found to be considered to some extent in the IFAD programmes. The second dimension, household and community resilience, has reported not to received much attention in IFAD-funded projects. Nor has the establishment of environmentally sustainable production systems had sufficient attention. Even the fourth dimension of sustainability, addressing the structural dimensions of poverty that perpetuate social inequality, is found not to receive enough attention in practice. The study further considered integration to be essential: 'the sustainability of any particular project will depend on its overall impact on participating households and communities, rather than simply on the sum of the outcomes of individual activities' (IFAD, 2009).

Ostrom (2010) has developed a framework to increase long-term success of improved stove projects. The framework integrates sustainability factors into the project life-cycle. It is also useful as a guide during project planning for sustainability. He has adapted "Operation and Maintenance (McDade 2004)" as the final component of sustainability in a project lifecycle, and Post-Implementation Follow-up from McConville and Mihelcic (2007) in his metrix. Thus has placed greater emphasis on continued involvement with the project, beyond implementation. This is intended to increase sustainability by encouraging problems to be solved locally. It is an important concept.

However, in practice, he has found projects possibility of failure due to lack of capacity or resources in the community. Continued technical assistance is suggested to be required to address problems encountered after implementation (Winrock 2008) for sustainability.

Several studies reveal factors that affect the sustainability of development interventions. Zakaria (2011) has reported findings of several research indicating factors such as government policy, management capacity of NGOs, donor influence, and social factors to affect the sustainability of development interventions. OECD (1989) contends that government commitment to a program is one of the most commonly identified factors affecting sustainability. Turner and Hulme (1997) maintained that relationships between NGOs and government are affected by the specific contextual factors which may include; the nature of NGOs objectives and strategies, the area of operation by NGO, the behavior of the donor, and the nature and character of the regime. For many, participation of local populations becomes critical to sustainability (Zakaria, 2011). It is not only the fact that if donors pull their financial support, NGOs collapse (Lokorwe and Mpabanga, 2007) but also that lack of funds limits the quantity and quality of NGO work (Viravaidya and Hayssen 2001). The restrictions put by the donors even obstruct the choice of the most effective intervention strategies to achieve sustainable program goals (Zakaria, 2011). Sheehan (1998), studied organizational functioning and sustainable interventions and found respect for workers and beneficiaries to be important aspects in this regard. Again, Clark (1991) affirmed that for interventions to be effective, should be delivered by committed employees with specific and determined organizational principles. The employees must feel to be respected, and listened to in their work of delivering interventions. Sometimes projects are externally-imposed and are found to be top-down. Such projects are unfair being owned and dominated by the donor agency or development organization rather than being owned and possessed by the community (Bleckley, 2008). One-sided power maintenance of such projects, present the community with obstacle in decision making and acting on its own behalf. Such projects cannot be sustainable as those do not depend upon community action (Zakaria, 2011).

While Zakaria (2011) reported the many of the abovementioned studies and elaborated on the factors affecting sustainability. For him, the prevailing economic condition, donor conditionalities, and group formation were factors to affect the sustainability of interventions in the study area. The major post-implementation hindrance identified was rising economic cost that increase cost of adoption, maintenance and the running of interventions.

Through the reviewed studies, a variety of concerns for project sustainability could be identified through review of relevant literature. However, of the identified variables, previous studies recognise the absence of sufficient attention to any specific of the concerns for sustainability.

Of the present time, asset transfer projects are common among the NGO interventions in Bangladesh. In such projects the targets are the most disadvantaged households. These households are supported with direct asset transfers along with training to support the household to maintain the transferred asset for sustainable consequences. Different studies show contradictory results for sustainability of the consequences of such projects. Several report site that such a programme is beneficial but impacts cannot be sustained under the macro shock. On the other hand, for Rudolph (2011), beneficiary households seem to have a buffer of assets to sell in case of crisis in the short run. To him the crucial question appeared as to, whether they would as well be able to regain it without external support in case of loss which he felt was not directly answerable. He claimed that the sustainability of results after several years has to be proven and suggested to continue with the monitoring. Ahmed, Rabbani, Sulaiman and Das (2009) affirmed that after asset transfer, the process to enable the ultra poor to extract benefit from participating in the mainstream development programmes is not an automatic one. The mainstream programmes require some fine tuning to align the pathways out of ultra poverty to moderate poverty, and finally out of poverty.

However, per se, no academic study on the consequences of these projects in terms of sustainable consequences can be found. The relevant literature available includes mainly documents, reports produced by donor agencies, NGOs, independent reports contracted by these organizations, and discussions posted on web-sites. As a result, due to non-availability of academic research on this matter, the issues like, consequences they lead to and their sustainability remain either unresolved or superficially/unsatisfactorily addressed. The present study is thus an attempt to fill this gap the present study aims to reveal the consequences of selected asset transfer projects and their sustainability and thus to reveal issues of applied and academic importance.

Methods And Materials

Respondents and study tools

Beneficiaries of Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) and River Basin Programme (RBP) participated as respondents in Pepulia. In Char Wadel respondents were the beneficiaries of Specially Targeted Ultra Poor (STUP) Programme and Disaster Preparedness and Rehabilitation Management (DPRM) Project. To collect data on topicality, consequence and sustainability of consequences, the respondents participated in the questionnaire survey, household (HH) level interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). A total of 156 beneficiaries- 34 from STUP, 42 from DPRM, 40 from CLP and 40 from RBP participated. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted on selected government officials and respective NGO personnel.

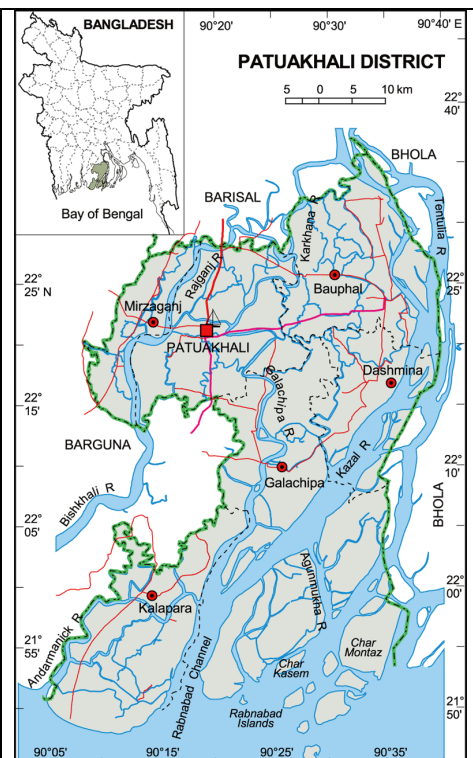
Study Areas

Data is collected for particular 'asset enhancement' and 'vulnerability reduction' interventions of Chars Livelihoods Programme and River Basin Programme in a river char (RC) community named Pepulia, located in Fulchhari Union at Fulchhari Upazila in Gaibandha District. Likewise, in Char Wadel which is a river estuarine char (REC) community in Nazirpur Union at Bauphal Upazila of Patuakhali District, consequences and sustainability of consequences of interventions of Specially Targeted Ultra Poor (STUP) programme of BRAC and Disaster Preparedness and Rehabilitation Management (DPRM) project of SLOPB is studied.



Map 1. Fulchhari Upazila in Gaibandha District

Source: Banglapedia



Map 2. Bauphal Upazila in Patuakhali Dist.

Source: Banglapedia

Studied programmes and project

Specialty targeted ultra poor (STUP) programme

STUP is a development program of BRAC (donor) which is implemented in 2 years and ended in December 2009 in *Char Wadel*. It gave 1 cow, 10 chickens, 3 pieces of Tin and some wood (to build shade for the cattle), 3 rings and 1 slab to most of its 46 members at *Char Wadel*.

The selected beneficiaries were also provided with training (25 people in a batch at a time for 4 to 6 days) necessary to maintain the assets before they were provided with the allotted asset package. The training covered issues such as, proper way of rearing cattle, poultry, way of gardening successfully etc. However, there was no training on disaster. However, the assets were transferred to those beneficiaries within 1 week after the training phase. There was a purchase committee to purchase the assets. Delivering money to the beneficiary instead of assets was not allowed. After handing over the assets, the beneficiaries were provided support of a subsistence allowance of around taka 15 per day in 2008 according to the asset package (enterprise specific) until income started from enterprise. The BRAC officer used to visit those 46 HHs throughout the month and aware them on 4 health and 6 social issues namely, Family planning, Prevention of Warm, Vitamin A campaign, Water borne diseases, Child marriage, Dowry, Divorce, Marriage registration and Village court.

The BRAC officer was also used to collect savings from these beneficiaries (5 taka to 50 taka per week) according to their ability. The savings were used later to buy another asset for the family according to the criteria set by BRAC. The target was to upgrade these beneficiaries into a certain level within 2 years that, they should have at least 3 income sources. He/ she should also have at least 4 fruit trees, 10 birds, vegetable garden, etc.

Disaster preparedness and rehabilitation management (DPRM) programme

The project activities were as follows:

- House: The project provided corrugated sheet roofed house for 20 families. These houses were strong against the high speed storm to survive.
- Power tiller: Four power tillers had been distributed to 4 farming groups composed of 5-6 farmers in each.
- Seedlings: Seedlings were distributed for the next crop season mainly for vegetables and cash crops among poor farmers so that they can cultivate 60-80 decimal lands. The project provided seedlings among the 200 farmer families for their income generation from the land.
- Fertilizer: The project provided fertilizer among the needy farmer who can not to buy them and ensured fertilizer use. The project provided fertilizer among the 200 farmer families.
- Goat: Many island farmers lost their goats during cyclone SIDR. The project provided 100 black Bengal goats (a developed variety of goat) among 100 inhabitants of the island.
- Chicken: The project provided about 100 chickens among 100 families with the aim to support them with a source of income.
- Duck: The project provided 200 ducklings among 100 families for their income generation.
- Net and Boat: Many fishermen in the *Char* area lost their only earning source the fishing net and boat in SIDR. The project provided net and boat among 25 fishermen to help them continue previous livelihood.
- Sanitary latrine: The project provided 200 sets of ring slab among two hundred families.
- Deep hand tubewell (DHTW): The number of DHTW in the islands is very negligible. The project provided 20 DHTW following SLOPB usual criterion in health and Watsan (water -sanitation) project.
- Training: This project provided training to aware the mass people of the island about preparation and management of disaster. The project provided training on disaster preparedness and its mitigation among different section of people of the community. The project provided training to 800 people of the islands for building confidence in them to face natural calamities and to stand upright afterwards.

Not all the interventions were completed by the end of one year and thus selected interventions of DPRM were studied in *Char Wadel*.

Chars livelihoods programme (CLP)

Asset Transfer Program (ATP) is one of the most important activities of CLP. ATP has three parts. They are,

- Transferring assets
- Transferring seed and fertilizers and
- Training

The value of the asset for ATP 4 was taka 17,000 per beneficiary. No one bought anything else but cattle (Bull or Cow) and the rest of the money (if any) was used to buy a lamb given to the beneficiary for building a shade for the cattle, or a manger, or chicken etc. Beneficiaries received training on 6 issues. The first training was conducted before transferring the asset (i.e. before buying). It was on, how to take care the cattle during transfer from the market to owners home and 5 trainings were conducted after the asset was transferred. Four of them were on agriculture, and one was on vaccination of cattle. Monthly cash transfers, asset maintenance and social development training and homestead garden support were also provided to the ATP 4 beneficiaries. Infrastructural support was also provided to the beneficiary HHs including a raised homestead plinth, provision of a sanitary latrine, access to a tube-well and other community wide improvements.

Table 1. Key characteristics of ATP4

ATP Phases	Beneficiaries	Activities
ATP-IV	627	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 times training on livestock and agriculture • Asset purchase, transportation • Seed and other inputs collection and distribution • Home garden establishment • Sapling distribution • Voucher distribution • Stipend distribution. • Monitoring • Linkage with <i>para-veterinary</i> workers

River basin programme (RBP) disaster risk reduction & vulnerable livelihoods (DRR & VLHs)

The major activities under the programme are done are as follows:

- Homestead raising, installation of sanitary latrine, installation of tube wells, rescue boat preparing/purchasing, repair of rescue boats, repair of flood shelters.
- Training on disaster management, skill development training for beneficiaries, Participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment at village level. Emergency stock at local level partners, training on 10 women and men as community health volunteers, refreshers course for community health volunteers, promotional billboards for better public health practice , national preparedness day observance, year planner publication.
- Beneficiaries training on early vegetable cultivation, seeds distribution for homestead garden, training on beneficiaries for agriculture, rickshaw van purchase, distribution of saplings for fruit tree plantation, cattle distribution, training on beneficiaries for livestock rearing, swallow tube wells purchase, goat distribution, solar panel installation, entrepreneurship training to female producer group members, cash capital support for small entrepreneurship, vaccination campaign, attending Upazila/district level agriculture fair, non formal Primary school.

Results

The NGO workers do not go back to the beneficiaries after completion of their programme or project. They are expected to implement certain activities and are passed if certain specific targets are achieved in terms of activity implementation. The after-intervention consequences or 'sustainability of consequences' is not the concerns for the donors for the studied programmes and project. The CLP employees reported to become busy with the activities of the next phase and documentation of the completed phase.

CLP provides the most valuable package for the beneficiaries. But, the social development activities seemed to me, to be insufficient to guide the beneficiaries to maintain their asset and improving life and livelihoods. After completing one phase, we become busy with the documentation and activities of the next phase. We can never manage any time to contact the previous beneficiaries. Long term programme and incorporation of follow up visits and activities is essential for improving livelihoods of these people. (The key informant wanted to remain anonymous)

Interestingly, during the follow up FGD in Pepulia, the CLP respondents started reporting their vulnerabilities.

We were very poor. With the cow and the stipend, our status improved. We were working hard with the hope of increased income. But, because of river erosion, we may need to sell our cow for survival. The situation is out of our hand and we are in deep crisis. (A CLP participant of the follow up FGD)

It is worth mentioning that a monthly household cash stipend was provided for 18 months to support the beneficiary HH's consumption and the cost of undertaking their income generating activity. For the first six months, the HHs received two cash stipends: a livelihood support grant of Tk. 250 and a HH support grant of Tk. 350. The household grant was continued for a further 12 months.

RBP is working in those areas for quite some time (Since 1997, the 4th Phase that started from 2007 and ended in 2010 was studied for the present research). With the realization that due to river erosion beneficiaries in the *char* areas essentially need to move to new places, they have adopted a system of including new beneficiaries after losing the old, subsequent to erosion. Including and excluding beneficiaries in this way, RBP is working with around 3500 beneficiaries in those *chars*. During the follow up FGD, the very few available participants (displaced due to river erosion) of RBP reported that the disaster management committee of RBP in different *chars* worked efficiently during displacement imposed by erosion.

In every nearby *char*, we found our RBP members of different women groups. With their support, taking shelter in a new place is easier. We did not receive any cow or other such asset. During erosion, we certainly lost some of the assets we had but all the members of different groups and committees of RBP worked together. Using our learning and training, we helped each other even those who are not our members. (A female RBP participant of follow up FGD)

The experience of RBP beneficiaries lead to the understanding that long term investment in social capital in relatively nearby *char* communities with flexible criteria for inclusion and exclusion lead to reduced sense of vulnerability. However, discontent among the RBP beneficiaries, in the absence of any cow or such valuable asset from the programme, was evident during different phases of the fieldwork.

In *Char* Wadel, the beneficiaries of DPRM were happy after receiving the supports such as seedlings, fertilizer, chicken duckling, etc. Reactions of a few DPRM beneficiaries are given in Box 1.

Box 1. Reactions of a few DPRM beneficiaries on receiving support

We have received sufficient seeds and fertilizer. Now we can improve our situation.
The chickens that SLOPB has given us are of good variety.
I have got two ducklings. What else is SLOPB going to give us? ... We all are happy. All our ducks and chicken were lost during SIDR. Now whatever we get free will help us to overcome the loss quickly. ... Yes, most of us have already bought ducks and chickens after SIDR, but these will also be of use.
I was very poor and the goat I have received can change my life. If I take good care of the goat, and if it stays alive, within a year, I will be able to sell the calves.
Source: Fieldwork (Quotes from FGD and HH level interviews)

The reactions expressed by the DPRM beneficiaries appeared to be mixed. While those received goats, houses, and deep hand tube wells were extremely happy; others who received poultry were in the hope of getting more support. Follow up FGD revealed that in many cases the chickens did not lay eggs or died due to diseases. DPRM did not arrange any vaccination or treatment service for the poultry. The 'consequences' of those interventions on the livelihood of most of those beneficiaries were negligible.

Sufficient seeds and fertilizer were provided but there was no provision for pesticides for the DPRM beneficiaries. Consequently, the follow up FGD revealed that for some of the beneficiaries, the vegetables and rice cultivation were hampered by pest attack. Though the cultivation of water melon was satisfactory, disaster (hail storm) resulted in bad luck for them. Those who invested a lot of money for growing water melon, reported to fall into debt.

It was very difficult to gather even a few STUP beneficiaries for the follow up FGD (5 out of 46 STUP beneficiary in *Char* Wadel could be gathered) as the beneficiaries were living in distant places. As no other BRAC programme was undertaken and the beneficiaries were somewhat detached. In *Char* Wadel, during the follow up FGD, the STUP beneficiaries reported to have improved their socio-economic status. They reported about a few STUP members who were doing well. They could also report about five of the beneficiaries who preferred to sell the cow

to invest in buying land or taking land on lease for farming. Community level practice, personal expertise, and mindset were the determinants for their decision and actions.

The newly settling dwellers come to the *char* from many different places. They come from different cultures and come with varieties of cultural practices. Moreover, along with those cultural practices as experiences, members of each HH also possess unique 'expertise' and the 'HH head's mindset' or way of thinking was again reported to be another important determinant. As revealed in the above discussion, all these determine how the HH would act, and what the decisions would be taken. Male dominance in decision making was also reported in Pepulia. Even for the female headed HHs, the male child, or close male kin present in the *char*, appeared to be the decision maker for the HH in many cases.

Improving social capital among the *char* dwellers is a big challenge in these river *chars*. The household head is vital and the way he perceives things and prioritise choices determine, to which way the household will lead. To establish good practices and to track them toward SL and development thus need long term investment mostly in terms of skill development and social network development and empowering them to uphold rights. Of course, certain level of material support enhances the process. (A Programme Associate, DRR & VLHs)

The above discussion on the 'consequences' of interventions led to a few specific understanding. The factors contributed to positive 'consequences' in terms of SL could be identified in the discussion. There were factors that could also be identified to be contributing negatively. The overview of the 'consequences' and the specific factors identified are summarised below.

The factors contributing to positive 'consequences' were:

- Long term programmes- of relatively longer duration (i.e. RBP);
- Interventions for social capital and human capital (i.e. RBP);
- Valuable material support (i.e. CLP, STUP, in a few interventions of DPRM: goat, house, etc.);
- Flexible criteria for beneficiary inclusion and exclusion (context specific); and
- Build a 'repertoire of different petty enterprises and activities' and diversification as is prevailing in the RCs.

All the above discussed issues allow the identification of certain challenges that lead to negative 'consequences' of the studied interventions.

- Disasters: mainly natural;
- Diseases: due to unhygienic sanitation practices and lack of health care awareness and almost no health services;
- Lack of social capital: lack of relationships of trust, lack of social network, lack of cooperation, uncertainty due to lack of social support, insecurity for lack of suggestion from reliable persons, lacking suggestion in making appropriate decision, lack of community feeling, etc.
- Lack of good practices, i.e. hygienic sanitation system and pure water consumption to avoid diseases, to do good for the HH and the community;
- Inappropriate NGO intervention practices: not considering the people's priorities, not providing necessary support services, not going back to the beneficiaries;
- Not considering HH level experience, expertise, mindset of the HH head that determines how the HH would behave to what intervention;
- HH level asset and vulnerability situation;
- Cultural practices: loan taking behaviour, expenditure behaviour, dowry, etc.
- Insecurity regarding land right and the ownership of land and accessibility to protected land (forest areas).

The findings point to the fact that the interventions were leading to mixed 'consequences' at the HH level, both positive and negative. The interventions were found to lead to temporary solutions to some of the problems for a very few.

In most of the cases, the STUP interventions were resulted in a means of living. However, cattle rearing were not the preferred occupation for at least some of them. As a result, they switched to investing in land selling the cow. Here the community level vulnerability (not having a *tilla* or high land for the shelter of the cattle) and preference for farming (that resulted from expertise and previous experience) were important. Again, it is worth remembering what several other researchers suggested (Lipton 1983, Chambers 1988, Bernstein, 1992, see Chapter 2). For them, the rural 'poor' are like other rural people only poorer. However, the 'ultra poor' experience different patterns of

poverty and behave differently. The STUP beneficiaries were the 'ultra poor' and thus their experience of poverty and reaction or behaviour to different patterns of poverty could be the other determinant of behaviour in different situation. For those, who recognised cattle rearing as a livelihood also reported that it is not a means of SL. Because, in the absence of any facility like a *tilla* or high land to protect the cattle during any severe disaster, the issue of coping with and recovering from stress and shocks and maintaining or enhancing HH capabilities and assets is out of question. Still the STUP beneficiaries were found to be optimistic to make at least a little progress before being devastated by a disaster.

The DPRM interventions of poultry were in most of the cases considered negligible as a means of livelihood. The seed and fertilizer support led to mixed 'consequences' due to disasters and pest attack. The other supports like goat, house, and tubewell were considered useful but were not the assets could be used as means of livelihood. Moreover, due to lack of awareness building activities, the good practices of using sanitary latrine or consumption of tubewell water was not in regular practice by all.

The CLP beneficiary selection criteria also reassured the ultra poor as their beneficiaries. The intervention package though is claimed to be the most valuable, was somewhat similar to that of STUP which was relatively less valuable. For the CLP beneficiaries, the package was found to provide means of livelihood but due to lack of orientation for after programme asset sustaining strategies, the beneficiaries seemed to feel helpless. They were confused about whether to sell the cow for survival or sustain it for livelihood. In such a situation, their experience and practice suggested them to adopt livelihood diversification. Chambers (1988) identified livelihood diversification to be the characteristic of some who build a 'repertoire of different petty enterprises and activities' and for whom diversification is the key motif of their livelihood strategy. The CLP HHs were living on varieties of occupations and as they became victims of river erosion, they had the prediction of getting further support, because, in their area, many NGOs work and support from them are almost certain after any disaster. Thus, at least some of them sold their cow and they got involved in diversified livelihood strategies.

The RBP beneficiaries were mostly those locked into one predominant source of livelihood such as the bonded labourers or sharecroppers. However, engaging in varieties of secondary occupations was also evident among them. The RBP interventions were targeted to mitigation, preparedness, livelihood, and advocacy. With mitigation and preparedness, improving livelihood options (diversification) was found to be relatively useful. Nevertheless, mainly flood disaster was taken into consideration by RBP that appeared to be somewhat insufficient. Different livelihood alternatives, such as homestead gardening, poultry rearing, fruit tree planting, etc. were least preferred by the RBP beneficiaries when CLP beneficiaries in the same community received a valuable cow and stipend and other supports from their programme. For the RBP beneficiaries, the long term interventions resulted in strong social capital, establishment, and maintenance of good practices and SL through practice of engaging in alternative livelihood strategies introduced by RBP. However, appropriate preparedness for the recently experienced severe erosions and other disasters was lacking. Still, the RBP interventions were found to be relatively successful in terms of sustainability.

Discussion And Conclusion

The factors identified to be key to determine 'consequences' of interventions and 'sustainability of consequences' included 'nature of interventions', 'cultural norms and practices', 'HH level considerations' and 'community level considerations', along with some intervention related factors. Accordingly, the following issues are proposed as vital for positive consequences and sustainability of NGO interventions.

1. Community level considerations: cultural norms and practices; opportunities for survival; vulnerabilities, etc.
2. Household level considerations: HH level assets; HH level vulnerabilities; experience expertise and mindset of the HH decision maker, etc.
3. Intervention related considerations: type; duration; frequency; intensity; topicality; sources (NGO, government, private, etc.) and nature of interventions (high, low, etc.)

A reciprocal relationship between HH level components and community level components was found to exist. Thus, at the community context, as interventions come, the success of the intervention and sustainability depend on the interaction of the community and HH level realities. Further, 'type, duration, topicality, intensity, and frequency of interventions in time and space' are also crucial in this context.

In the conclusion it is worth to summarize the empirical findings which lead to the following recommendations:

- consideration of HH level, community level and cultural factors for ensuring SL and SD;
- indepth participatory studies to identify required context specific topical interventions;
- accordingly, simultaneous interventions with necessary balance of support from different external sources- by the government, different NGOs and private sector; or interventions in partnership or collaboration to ensure the context specific topical interventions that also need to be implemented for relatively longer duration compared to those currently in practice;
- Interventions to enhance social capital and human capital along with valuable material support according to people's priority;
- Livelihood diversification;
- Interventions to resolve specific context specific vulnerabilities;
- Follow up (after intervention and after the completion of the programme or project) monitoring for further interventions to maintain the consequences and for identifying the gaps and accordingly responsive intervention to ensure SD and
- Flexible criteria for beneficiary inclusion and exclusion (context specific).

Successfully completing interventions simply does not mean achieving the targeted outcomes of the programme and project. Rather, consequences and their implications for sustainability must be understood at the HH level and community level cultural realities that interact to determine those.

The study has practical significance as it provides an indepth understanding of 'consequences' and 'sustainability of consequences' of selected NGO interventions in the *char* areas, and offers a key to better development practice.

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- University teacher with more than 15 years of undergraduate and postgraduate university lecturing experience in the fields of social sciences and development studies
- Research experience in the fields of sustainable development and livelihoods, rural and community development, urban/local governance, social/cultural dynamics of power relation, community based natural resource management, monitoring, evaluation, social/participatory research, indigenous people, ethnic minorities' rights, management/institutional development, climate change adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, and poverty reduction, etc.
- Extensive fieldwork/commissioned research activities for baseline, evaluation and strategic planning studies.
- Extensive personal individual research activities including participatory/rapid appraisals/different quantitative methods.
- Varied community outreach, training, capacity building, and volunteering activities.
- Team building, communication and interpersonal skills, training and activities.
- Workshop/seminars: Chaired, presented papers, participated as discussant and/ or participated as the facilitator/moderator in more than 10 countries in the world.
- Publications: 2 books and more than 25 journal articles, mostly in international peer- reviewed journals.

Project/Development Research and Consultancy

Baseline study, Evaluation, Monitoring, Social Research; Rural and Community Development, Environmental Impact, Local Governance, Governance Mapping, Vulnerable Communities; Sustainable Development and Sustainable Livelihoods; Indigenous People: Life, institutions, local knowledge systems, rights (anthropological accounts), Child Rights: Academia, child labour, child rights in curriculum, children in disaster, children of indigenous communities, children in institutions, i.e. shelter home, drop-in centres, socialization centres; Cooperation, cooperatives, and collective action; Poverty reduction, micro credit NGOs/CBOs; Gender dimensions; Disaster and development; Disability and development; Corporate social responsibility, Corporate community involvement; Education psychology and development; Developmental psychology and Social Development

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