

IMPACT EVALUATION REPORT FOR GCF FPo6g – ENHANCING ADAPTIVE CAPACITIES OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY WOMEN, TO COPE WITH CLIMATE CHANGE INDUCED SALINITY

The Independent Evaluation Unit's (IEU) Learning-Oriented Real-Time Impact Assessment Programme (LORTA) incorporates state-of-the-art approaches to measuring impact and raising awareness about the effectiveness and efficiency of GCF-funded projects. Between 2019-2023, LORTA conducted a long-term impact evaluation of the GCF approved and financed project, FPo6g "Enhancing adaptive capacities of coastal communities, especially women, to cope with climate change induced salinity," based in Bangladesh and managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This brief summarizes LORTA's impact evaluation of the project.

THE PROJECT

The project aims to (i) provide livelihood support for women for income generation, (ii) enhance agricultural adaptation to reduce the adverse impacts of rising ocean and increased salinity in the coastal areas, (iii) provide drinking water to families and communities, and (iv) strengthen institutional capacities, knowledge and learning. The LORTA evaluation specifically examines how effectively livelihood support enhances women's economic empowerment and food security.

METHODOLOGY

The impact evaluation employed a randomized control trial in which families were randomly allocated to the project or be in the comparison group that received the project at a later stage (the phasing-in approach). To explore the project's causal impact, the LORTA impact evaluation and project teams collected data from 3,120 families in two coastal areas, Khulna and Satkhira, in November 2021 and November 2022. The LORTA team completed the impact evaluation in December 2023.

KEY IMPACTS

- i. The key results of the impact evaluation indicate the livelihood support programme provided women with much-needed income support and positively impacted their families' food security in the short- to medium term. In particular, the project supported the engagement in at least



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one income-generating activity, with homestead gardening being the most popular. It also increased women's annual income by 14,000 Bangladeshi Taka (USD 165). Overall, the project improved their food security by 8 per cent, as measured by the consumption of food types important for well-being and health (from 55 to 60 out of 112 points measured by the Food Consumption Score). Family awareness of the importance of preparing for future climate-related shocks increased by four percentage points (from 91 to 95 per cent).

- ii. Despite the ability of women to diversify their income-generating activities, the project did not result in women gaining more autonomy over how to spend their generated income. This limitation can be attributed to the predominantly patriarchal culture in the southwestern provinces of Bangladesh, where males typically make decisions regarding family finances. Changing such deeply ingrained perceptions, lifestyles, and decision-making processes may require more time and sustained effort. Nevertheless, female empowerment remains a crucial objective of FPo69. Conducting long-term evaluations of the project could provide valuable insights into gender dynamics and potential avenues for transformation.

CAPACITY BUILDING

- i. The LORTA team implemented various capacity building activities to enhance the UNDP team's impact evaluation skills. After initially visiting Bangladesh in 2019, the LORTA team conducted monthly virtual meetings until the completion of the impact evaluation in 2023. This consistent engagement was critical to maintaining motivation and interest in impact evaluation among all involved parties.
- ii. The decision to randomize the intervention early in the LORTA engagement, along with the support from the project team and relevant stakeholders, enhanced the rigour of the evaluation. Implementing a randomized control trial – considered the gold standard in impact evaluation – ensured resources were fairly allocated among beneficiaries and allowed for the phased implementation of the intervention to the control group at a later stage.
- iii. The Bangladesh team had the opportunity to participate in the LORTA Data Workshop in Ethiopia in late 2022. This workshop provided valuable insights for effectively interpreting and using data for impact evaluation. As a result, the endline data collection in November 2022 was successful, and the key impacts were analysed and triangulated with the support of the LORTA team



in 2023. The project team also expressed interest in continued engagement with LORTA for future intervention rounds.

CHALLENGES

- i. The impact evaluation has provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of climate-related adaptation interventions in developing countries. However, this process had its own set of challenges and valuable lessons.
- ii. Implementing the evaluations faced major obstacles such as COVID-19 and natural disasters. These events delayed data collection and project implementation. In Bangladesh, where the pandemic was particularly harsh, extra health safety measures had to be implemented during data collection. Additionally, some team members fell ill, further disrupting data collection in certain communities. Cyclone Sitrang and its heavy rainfall in late 2022 also disrupted data collection.
- iii. Another challenge, more specific to the standard GCF project cycle rather than the impact evaluation design, was the difficulty in measuring the long-term sustainability of project impacts. The one year gap between baseline and endline data collection only covered one to two agricultural production cycles for women. This limited timeframe makes it challenging to determine if the positive impacts on women's livelihoods are sustained and whether they remain engaged in

their chosen activities. Therefore, financing for an endline survey, which could be conducted after six months, one year or a longer period following the project completion, would be beneficial in assessing the sustainability of impacts beyond the project duration.

- iv. Finally, collecting data from indigenous communities and minority ethnic groups posed another challenge. While the aim was to include diverse population groups to better understand the differential impacts, the sensitive issue of revealing ethnic identity made it impossible to specifically identify the impacts on a local indigenous group called Adivasi. Instead, the impacts on all ethnic groups that engaged with the project were analysed collectively. The information from the Annual Performance Reports of the projects submitted by the project teams does not adequately identify the impacts on the most vulnerable groups. More needs to be done to properly assess these impacts and determine which specific groups within the population engaged with the project.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following lessons for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) can be derived from the implementation of the impact evaluation:

- i. Flexibility in project timelines: The impact evaluation highlighted the importance of being



prepared for unforeseen events affecting data collection and project timelines, such as natural disasters and pandemics. The GCF should consider and plan for potential disruptions to project implementation and evaluation, ensuring flexibility in timelines to accommodate such obstacles. This is particularly relevant to the GCF Division of Portfolio Management (DPM) and Division of Mitigation and Adaptation (DMA), accredited entity project teams and local stakeholders involved in the project implementation.

- ii. Contextual adaptation: Adapting to the local context and conducting country visits can provide valuable insights into the project and the communities. This enables the development of more precise indicators and enhances impact measurement. Additionally, such visits can help identify and address the specific needs of vulnerable groups within the population. This is relevant for the LORTA team, the DPM and DMA.
- iii. Stakeholder and beneficiary engagement: Maintaining frequent communication with the project team and stakeholders involved in impact evaluation and project design is essential for sustained engagement. Regular in-person or virtual meetings facilitate ongoing collaboration, knowledge sharing, and learning throughout the evaluation process. This learning is especially critical for the LORTA team, relevant accredited entities and involved stakeholders.
- iv. Inclusive data collection: Efforts should be made to collect relevant data from indigenous communities and minority ethnic groups. Ensuring representation and inclusivity in the impact evaluation allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the differential impacts and helps identify the needs of these vulnerable groups. Further efforts are needed to obtain sufficient information on which groups benefit from the project. Good coordination and knowledge exchange between the GCF's Office of Sustainability and Inclusion, the LORTA team and the accredited entities' project team are key to ensuring that data on indigenous populations are available, relevant and up-to-date.

By incorporating these lessons into future projects and impact evaluations, the GCF can strengthen its ability to enhance the effectiveness of climate-related adaptation interventions in developing countries.



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