

The effectiveness of 'enrich ward committee'

And of 'enrich ward centre'

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Introduction

The 'Enhancing Resources and Increasing Capacities of Poor Households (ENRICH)' is dedicated to help improve the plight of the poor and stand by them as they work towards reclaiming their dignity and rights. Under this approach, the integrated action program includes the key components of education, skill training, technology, information, health services, food security and nutrition, awareness raising, asset creation, social capital formation, infrastructure, climate change adaptation, insurance services, market linkages.

The main thrust of ENRICH is to provide integrated support to each poor family to ensure the best possible utilization of their existing resources and capacities and also to appropriately enhance their resources and capacities. The ENRICH program has been uniquely designed to target issues such as

- Increasing the resources and human capabilities of existing households to ensure integrated household-based development.
- Ensuring freedom from all 'un-freedoms' and human dignity for all members of all households under ENRICH,
- Empowering the poor households so that they can pursue a pathway that would lead them towards the goal of human freedom and dignity.

In order to attain human dignity and freedom, ENRICH seeks to ensure the access of beneficiaries to assets and human capability enhancement programs. At the same time, it also wants to make sure that the program participants have freedom of choice, enhanced sustainable income and improved social & physical environment.

To make the development process more sustainable and fruitful by giving the responsibility to the local people, ENRICH ward committees and centres are established. A committee of 11 members is formed to oversee the activities conducted by the ENRICH, their social impact and monitor the outcomes of such programs as education centres, primary community health services and other activities. Ward-Committee was formed in each ward by elected public representatives', local elites, youth representatives, senior citizens and officials of the concerned POs. The committee is chaired by a particular ward member from the Union Parishad. One of the teacher from ENRICH education centre will act as member secretary of the committee. The health volunteer under ENRICH program working in that ward will also be a member of the committee. A Ward centre has been established in a convenient and populated place in every ward and it works as the meeting point for the society to discuss important issues including education,

health, social development, eradication of social and religious prejudice, moral & ethical values, product marketing, prevention of child and women abuse, hygiene, disaster management, social forestry and youth development and employment. The process increases the local accountability and will also create social capital. A total of 167 Ward centres in 21 unions, selected from the 1st phase of the ENRICH program have been established.

The term of the ENRICH Ward-Committee is two years. The committee arranges meeting in every month at a convenient time. Along with the ward committee meeting, a “Ward-coordination committee” meeting is being held in every 6 months in Union Parishad premises where the members from every ward committee remain present. This meeting is chaired by Union Parishad Chairman. This meeting reviews the progress of the decision taken in ward committee meeting.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of ENRICH ward centre and ENRICH ward committee under the ENRICH program. The specific objectives of this evaluation were to assess the effectiveness of the ward committee; the effectiveness of the activities that takes place under the enrich ward centre; and effectiveness of the process to ensure human dignity and to create social capital. To make the study representative a total of 7 out of 20 Union Parishads from the earlier 4 erstwhile administrative divisions were selected as primary sample units. In depth investigation was conducted in 3 wards of each of the selected Union.

Methodology

The study involves data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and report preparation with conclusions and suggestions. Details of the methodology used for the purpose of the study are discussed below:

Selection of UPs for this Study

There are many options for selecting study areas. To meet the objectives of the present study random sampling as well as purposive sampling techniques were used. The purpose was to reach the better and not so better performing Union Parishads.

Sampling, Study Area and FGD Participants

To make the study as comprehensive and representative as possible a total of 7 out of a total of 20 Union Parishads from the earlier 4 erstwhile administrative divisions were selected as primary sample units. In depth investigation was conducted in 3 wards of each of the selected Union.

No	District	Upazila	Union	Organization	No. of FGD Participants
1	Comilla	Daudkandi	Illiotgonj	CCDA	36
2	Dhaka	Dhamrai	Sombhag	Sojag	33
3	Chuadanga	Jibannagar	Shimanto	Wave foundation	34

4	Faridpur	Boalmari	Satoir	SDC	36
5	Gaibandha	Saghata	Saghata	SKS foundation	36
6	Joypurhat	Sadar	Dhalahar	JAKAS foundation	34
7	Sylhet	Dakkhin Surma	Tetly	TMSS	34

Table 2: Study Area and FGD Participants

The primary respondents of the study, from the selected sample units, were selected randomly from among the program participants particularly those belonging to the disadvantaged, marginalized, and other groups including women. They were invited to attend focus group discussion sessions in their respective unions.

During the FGDs, in depth discussions were held to dig out the relevant information.

The second respondents group included other community representatives, representatives of elected local government bodies, officials of different extension service providing departments at the local level and members of the local elite groups.

Data Collection Methods

The following table presents the data collection methods that were used with respondents of different categories.

Table 3: Data Collection Methods

Sl. No.	Research Tools	Respondent Category	Description includes respondents selection methods and areas (Dhaka/Division/District/Upa zila/Union)	Total Number
1	FGD	Beneficiaries of the ENRICH program that would include the poor, women and disadvantaged groups in the selected locations (1 in each UP ward).	Randomly selected members from the each of the respondent category.	21
2	Key Informant Interview (KII)	UP Chairs, members, secretaries, extension service providers, local civil society members etc.	Respondents were chosen to represent cross section of the stakeholders. .	28
3	Institutional Information	Institutions responsible for delivering services and entitlements especially to the poor, women, and the disadvantaged.	Relevant offices	28

Document Review

All relevant documents were studied to develop a comprehensive understanding about the program and the purpose of the study. The review of the documents provided a detailed scenario of the situations that are relevant to the context of the current study. A checklist was developed to collect relevant secondary information.

Important Findings

1. Regarding the formation and existence of a committee at the Ward level across all the Unions covered under the study the responses (90%) were positive.
2. Community level 95% respondents reported that the meetings were routinely held and meeting resolutions are also recorded.
3. Most of the respondents (93%) claimed that most members remain present in most meetings. Attendance registers were available to validate their claim.
4. The most common agenda in these meetings include awareness raising regarding health service, education program, availability of medicine, maternal and child health, community based development program, homestead vegetable cultivation, youth development and so on.
5. About 70% of the FGD respondents reported that Ward Member who is also the President of the Ward Committee generally presides over these *Salishes* concerning dissolution of marriage, various forms of domestic violence, dowry, maintenance, recovery of small loans, minor criminal matters, and many more.
6. About 88% of the FGD respondents reported that through Ward meeting, various problems faced by a community are identified which include: need for tube-wells and sanitary latrines at public places (schools, colleges, mosques, temples, library, etc.), problems relating to access to clean drinking water, need for small bridges and culverts for public use, etc.
7. In the afternoons ward centres are used as schools. About 92% of the respondents reported that with a certain degree of confidence that this program for the poor students enabling them to stay in school has contributed significantly in large reduction in the dropout rate.
8. About 60% of the respondents informed that through ward meeting beggars were identified and enlisted under beggar rehabilitation program of ENRICH.

9. Regarding the system of follow up of the meetings it was reported by the 70% of total respondents that the progresses are reviewed in the next meeting.
10. Contrary to the perceived notion that roles are unclear, most ward committee members and ward members have a reasonably clear understanding of what their roles are.

Recommendations

1. The ENRICH intervention should be replicated or extended to other Unions of the country.
2. It is recommended that Ward Committees should be formed at regular intervals with one thirds of the members retiring paving way for new members. This will ensure continuity of earlier initiatives.
3. The experiences of Ward Committees and Ward Centres should be shared at least with other UPs of the same Upazila for learning and motivation.
4. Specific monitoring, supervision and reporting tools, guidelines, checklist and formats should be developed for ward committees and centres.
5. Good practices need to be documented and disseminated for replication in other UPs that are not covered by the program.
6. Ward centres as an infrastructure have been observed to be not environment and purpose friendly. Certain modification is needed in the physical design of the centres.
7. Every program should address the question of sustainability of its various interventions after the end of the program time frame. The innovations of ward centres and word committees under the ENRICH are also no exception in this regard. To address the issue of sustainability the UP, Community, PNGOs and PKSf need to undertake concerted efforts.

Conclusion

Larger the number of people with developed awareness and capacity higher is the possibility of success in implementing projects like ENRICH. To increase such number of people, as such, Ward Committees should be formed at regular intervals with new members with one thirds of the members retiring paving way for new members. This will increase the number of change agents at the grassroots level which is critical to bring about qualitative change with respect to better service delivery and good governance at the local level.

In the long run, the concerned UP should shoulder the responsibility to continue with the arrangement of ward committees and ward centers as these ultimately serve the purpose of the Union Parishads in delivering various services to the local communities which elect them.