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Blue Gold Program

Report on the Rapid Assessment on Women's Workload

1. Background

The Blue Gold Programme (2013-2020) aims to reduce poverty in its project area, 22 polders in Patuakhali, Khulna and Satkhira, by increasing productivity in agricultural production, making use of enhanced opportunities because of improved water management. Integral to BGP's work is its contribution to increased gender equality and women's empowerment, focusing on women's economic empowerment and women's leadership, resulting in improved well-being of women and their families. Reduced violence against women and improved nutrition are examples of the latter.

The recent study on outcomes of Blue Gold interventions (Technical Report 25) found an increase in cropped areas and in cropping intensity as well as increased yields. This requires more labour input to which also women contribute. Various ways of women's increased participation in agricultural production¹ can be distinguished:

- New or increased production at the homestead, especially poultry, vegetables and/or livestock, especially by women who participated in the concerned FFS, or learnt about homestead production through field days or from neighbours;
- In part of the Blue Gold polders improved water management allows (more) rabi crops, which were previously not produced; women tend to contribute substantially to the labour in rabi crops;
- Improved water management and the introduction of new varieties also enhanced rice production (aman and boro) in terms of production area and yields, requiring more labour; women are found to contribute more labour in rice fields than they did before.
- Apart from an increase of women's participation as a farmer in family labour, the demand for wage labour in agriculture has increased. There are signs that especially the demand for women's labour increased because of women's lower daily wages², whereas their productivity is often equal to men's productivity.

Interviews with women beneficiaries of BGP tend to confirm that their involvement in agriculture increased after BGP interventions. This makes that women's total workload, consisting of reproductive (domestic and care work) and productive work, which was already high, increases when agricultural production increases. Sharing domestic and care work³ with husbands is currently not common, and often limited to occasions that women are away from home, e.g. attending FFS. Women and men used to see domestic work as the responsibility of women only. Women usually do not complain about their workload, because for them the increase in production and household

¹ Women do not form a homogeneous group and therefore these findings do not apply equally to all women in BGP's project area. For example, women in households with relatively large land holdings may not contribute themselves to agricultural work; also patterns for women from landless households may be different.

² There are some signs that the wage gap between men and women (women's wages used to be 60-65% of men's wages) may become somewhat smaller, e.g. in 2 Patuakhali polders women's wages were about 80% of men's wages due to the high demand for labour and/or the high rate of male (seasonal) labour migration.

³ Often abbreviated as "domestic work", "care work" or "unpaid care work (UCW)". OECD's definition: Unpaid care and domestic work refers to all non-market, unpaid activities carried out in households – including both direct care of persons, such as children or elderly, and indirect care, such as cooking, cleaning or fetching water.

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income for priority, extension they are asked to contribute to improved production, which also tends to increase their status and self-esteem. Because of labour and material cost women do not make that also male family members could do some work. But when discussing this, the women feel that if all family members were to participate in domestic work, they can more easily manage it productive work.

The total workload – and possible underworking – of women should not be overlooked for several reasons:

- The total workload of women can be their involvement in productive work. Reduction of domestic and care work can free up extra time for women to spend on income generating work outside the home (such as rice and fish).
- The role responsibility for domestic and care work can also limit women's empowerment, reducing opportunities for engaging in other segments of the value chain, such as in marketing, and in social and community activities.
- Food or security perceived a huge gap in total workload between men and women cannot be overlooked.
- Increasing women's workload above a certain level is also harmful for women, hence anything with this factor is to be avoided.

Reduction of women's total workload and care work is therefore a priority for intervention. The IR approach in common (3) recognition of domestic and care work, both of the amount and its importance; (4) reduction of domestic and care work (e.g. by time saving measures, and (5) sharing of domestic and care work by household members, including husband and sons. NB: The IR approach also aims at the gender role that a total cost in the gender and household development (IR) training and it gender role (IR) training.

4. About the assessment

In order to get more insight in the workload of women in the BGP project area, a rapid assessment of women's workload was conducted during the visit of the international gender expert of February 2019. Information was collected through (1) individual interviews with women and 3 focus group discussions:

- The individual interviews with 12 women collected detailed data on their time use on the full day before the interview (the "recall day"), for which a person in their home was designated, observing the entire day in the afternoon (between 4pm and 8pm). The collected data were analysed at an IR level.
- These IRs were held with women to discuss their work in agricultural production, including how to change after IRP.

The IRs on women's workload were conducted with the IRs on IRP training, hence the IRs participants were women who are IRP members participating in the new approach of IRP training. These IRs were held with women who were purposely selected for the individual time use data collection, being to include women of different socio-economic classes.

Data collection and processing

The IRs were held in a private setting during the activities in the visits of the women, i.e. not using a pre set list of standard activities. At the end of the day, the information is summarized.

*When possible IRs will be conducted during IRP.

Report on women's workload – 24 May 2019

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Blue Gold Program Wiki

The wiki version of the Lessons Learnt Report of the Blue Gold program, documents the experiences of a technical assistance (TA) team working in a development project implemented by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) over an eight+ year period from March 2013 to December 2021. The wiki lessons learnt report (LLR) is intended to complement the BWDB and DAE project completion reports (PCRs), with the aim of recording lessons learnt for use in the design and implementation of future interventions in the coastal zone.

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