

☐ Toggle menu
Blue Gold Program Wiki

Navigation

- [Main page](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Random page](#)
- [Help about MediaWiki](#)

Tools

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Page information](#)

Personal tools

- [Log in](#)

personal-extra

☐ Toggle search

Search

Random page

Views

- [View](#)
- [View source](#)
- [History](#)
- [PDF Export](#)

Actions

08 The Outcomes and Impact on the Livelihoods of Women

From Blue Gold Program Wiki

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The status of women has a bearing on the economic wellbeing of the households, and the importance

of the status of women in society has a positive impact on the overall status of a community. Gender inequality is recognized as a key constraint to pursuing secure livelihoods. To ensure the overall objectives of BGP are met, interventions of the Blue Gold Program (BGP) were designed and implemented in a way that both men and women benefited. BGP worked on women's empowerment in its coastal communities, thus women got more access to economic resources and they became able to more participate in and also influence decision-making. As a result, women of BGP areas now have an improved livelihood and better well-being compared to the pre-project situation. For more information on BGP's gender strategy, interventions and results, see [Chapter 24 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#). This chapter presents findings from the [endline survey of 2020](#) and the household survey of 2021. ^[Notes 1]

□

Contents

- [1 Women's role in economic activities](#)
- [2 Main Occupation of women](#)
- [3 Equality in food consumption](#)
- [4 Decision making regarding assets and land](#)
- [5 Mobility and participation](#)
- [6 Overall empowerment of women](#)
- [7 Notes](#)
- [8 See more](#)

Women's role in economic activities[\[edit\]](#) | [edit source](#)

Household survey 2021 data shows that almost all (over 99%) of the surveyed women are engaged in some type of income generating activities, mostly (over 90% of women) within the homestead for homestead cultivation and poultry rearing (Table 8.1). About three-quarters of women are involved in post-harvest activities (77%) and livestock rearing (74%), and half are engaged in aquaculture (50%).

Table 8.1: Women's economic participation

	Zone - Percent of HH			Land category - Percent of HH					Total
	Khulna	Patuakhali	Satkhira	landless	marginal	small	medium	Large	
Homestead agriculture	90.0%	91.8%	95.3%	77.4%	90.5%	96.3%	96.0%	95.7%	91.3%
Field crops	74.8%	9.9%	22.7%	36.4%	46.7%	47.2%	48.4%	43.9%	44.9%
Post-harvest work	77.1%	74.2%	81.3%	56.9%	81.0%	83.5%	83.6%	74.1%	76.6%
Poultry rearing	87.9%	93.1%	89.8%	83.6%	90.5%	94.0%	90.0%	92.1%	90.0%
Livestock rearing	80.2%	64.8%	77.3%	58.5%	75.7%	81.7%	78.0%	76.3%	74.3%
Aquaculture	68.5%	32.7%	25.0%	16.4%	46.7%	58.7%	67.2%	58.3%	50.1%
Non-farm activities	11.7%	1.6%	15.6%	13.3%	9.5%	7.8%	6.8%	5.0%	8.6%
Wages (farm, earthwork)	4.4%	2.7%	8.6%	16.4%	4.8%	0.5%	0.4%	0.0%	4.3%

Salaried employment	5.6%	3.6%	2.3%	2.1%	2.4%	2.8%	7.2%	8.6%	4.4%
Handicrafts	15.8%	3.3%	27.3%	13.3%	10.0%	15.6%	12.8%	11.5%	12.7%
Other IGA	5.6%	0.8%	32.8%	9.2%	5.2%	6.4%	5.6%	12.2%	7.3%
No economic activities	0.6%	1.1%	0.8%	3.6%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Sample size (n)	520	364	128	195	210	218	250	139	1012

Source: HH survey 2021

A significant percentage of the women are doing farm work (45%) with field crops. Only a few women do non-farm work (9%), work for wages on other farms (4.3%), or have salaried jobs (4.4%); and 13% are engaged in handicrafts. Women in BGP areas participate to a greater extent in different economic activities, and a very low proportion (less than 1%) has no economic role at all.

Compared with the 2017 baseline survey, there has been a decrease (4% to 0.8%) in the proportion of women with no economic activities and increase in the proportion involved in homestead cultivation (66% to over 91%), poultry rearing (81% to 90%), and livestock rearing (57% to 74%), reflecting both the increase in numbers of households that report these activities, and more especially, the increase of women's participation in this work. There has been a very significant increase (7% to 45%) in the proportion of households where women are involved in field crop production. There is considerable variation in women's economic participation between zones. Around three quarters of women in Khulna zone are doing farm work. A high proportion of women (68.5%) in Khulna are participating in aquaculture. Women in Satkhira are doing more non-farm activities, wage labour, handicrafts and other IGA activities compared to the other two zones.

Main Occupation of women[\[edit | edit source\]](#)

Although in the WMG household survey 2021 over 99% of women are economically active, the endline survey 2020 shows that in 81% of the households, the women's main occupation was stated to be housewife. This can be explained by the fact that most women tend to spend 6 to 8 hours per day on care and domestic activities, which is nearly always more hours than they spend on economic activities. [\[Notes 2\]](#)

Table 8.2: Main occupation of adult women*

	Percentage of households in each land ownership category					
	landless	marginal	small	medium	large	Total
Agricultural crops	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%
Livestock, poultry, fish	2.1%	1.9%	1.4%	2.2%	0.0%	1.8%
Agricultural wage labour	1.5%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
sub-total agriculture	3.7%	2.6%	1.5%	2.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Artisan/handicraft	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%
Business/trade	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Services	0.9%	0.8%	1.5%	1.9%	2.9%	1.2%
Non-agricultural labour	2.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Other	1.8%	0.8%	0.5%	1.2%	1.0%	0.9%
sub-total non-agriculture	5.2%	2.9%	2.5%	3.3%	3.8%	3.2%
Student	4.5%	5.8%	7.0%	9.0%	4.8%	6.2%

Housewife	80.0%	81.4%	81.8%	77.8%	81.9%	81.0%
Not working	6.5%	7.4%	7.3%	7.6%	9.5%	7.2%
sub-total - non-earning	91.0%	94.6%	96.1%	94.3%	96.2%	94.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*** women aged over 16 years, data from endline survey 2020**

Only in 2.4% of households is agriculture the main occupation for women, and only in 3.2% of households is a non-agricultural occupation the main occupation (Table 8.2). It is worth noting that the “not working” category increases with land ownership, despite evidence from the previous table that women in households with more land are more likely to have economic activities.

The informal interviews discussed how the role of women had changed over a longer timeframe since the start of BGP. In all zones women have greatly increased their involvement in agriculture and off-farm work. This has been driven by the improved education and literacy of women and changing attitudes of men. The Blue Gold interventions to enhance agricultural production, including the crop and homestead Farmer Field Schools, are also likely to have contributed to women’s increased involvement in agricultural production. However, women are still held back by social rules and discrimination, domestic work and child rearing, and women are often expected to stay at home and engage in homestead based economic activities.

In Khulna women seem to have more opportunities for non-farm work, including salaried jobs and work in factories. In Satkhira the work of women is still mostly limited to homestead farming. The position of women in Patuakhali appears to be in between those in Khulna and Satkhira, with some women working outside the home and having their own businesses. Increased participation in income generating work alongside their domestic tasks means women have had an increase in their overall workload. Men are reported to be doing some more domestic work, more so in Khulna and not really at all in Satkhira. Wages paid to women have increased substantially in all zones but are still significantly less than those paid to men – apart from some examples in Patuakhali.

Equality in food consumption[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

The gender division of meat, fish and eggs consumption is shown in Table 8.3. These foods can be divided between male and female household members in three ways: (i) only consumed by men and boys; (ii) consumed by all household members, but with a larger share going to men and boys; and (iii) divided equally between all household members irrespective of their gender.

Table 8.3: Gender equality of consumption of meat, fish and eggs

Zone	men and boys only	men and boys more	equally	Total	Sample no
Khulna	3.7%	21.5%	74.6%	100.0%	520
Patuakhali	1.1%	39.3%	59.6%	100.0%	364
Satkhira	0.0%	32.8%	67.2%	100.0%	128
Land ownership					
landless	2.1%	29.2%	68.2%	100.0%	195
marginal	0.5%	27.6%	71.9%	100.0%	210
small	3.2%	28.4%	68.3%	100.0%	218
medium	3.6%	29.6%	66.8%	100.0%	250
large	1.4%	33.1%	65.5%	100.0%	139

total 2.3% 29.3% 68.3% 100.0% 1012

Source: HH survey 2021

The data shows that in around two thirds (68%) of households, meat, fish and eggs are shared equally, and only in 2.3% of households is consumption of these foods restricted to men and boys. In nearly 30% households, men and boys consume more than women. There is equal sharing in a higher proportion (75%) of households in Khulna, but there are also more households (3.7%) where consumption is limited to men and boys. Around 40% households in Patuakhali reported men and boys consume more than women. There is no discernible relationship between the amount of land owned and food equality, although in the households (small and medium) a slightly higher proportion (more than 3%) limit consumption to men and boys

Decision making regarding assets and land[\[edit | edit source\]](#)

Women were asked to report regarding decision-making on the purchase and sale of assets and leasing of land. This is important as such decisions are related to access to economic resources and production. More than two-thirds (72.5%) of all households decide jointly while only in 1.2% of the households these decisions are made by men alone. There is a lower level of joint decision-making in Patuakhali (47%) and higher in Satkhira (93%). A slight variation regarding decision-making authority within the households is visible among the household categories based on land holding but it does not follow any trend. The highest percentage of women (over 3%) who take decisions on their own are from landless category households, and this may relate to the higher percentage of the female-headed households in this category.

Table 8.4: Decision making regarding assets and land by household members

Zone	only men	some role for women	concerning own prod*	joint decision	only women	Total	Sample no
Khulna	1.5%	10.8%	0.8%	85.4%	1.5%	100.0%	520
Patuakhali	0.3%	51.6%	1.1%	47.0%	0.0%	100.0%	364
Satkhira	2.3%	1.6%	0.8%	93.0%	2.3%	100.0%	128
Land category							
Landless	1.0%	21.0%	2.1%	72.8%	3.1%	100.0%	195
Marginal	0.5%	22.4%	0.5%	76.2%	0.5%	100.0%	210
Small	2.3%	22.9%	1.8%	72.0%	0.9%	100.0%	218
Medium	0.4%	29.6%	0.0%	69.6%	0.4%	100.0%	250
Large	2.2%	24.5%	0.0%	72.7%	0.7%	100.0%	139
Total	1.2%	24.3%	0.9%	72.5%	1.1%	100.0%	1012

Source: HH survey 2021

Mobility and participation[\[edit | edit source\]](#)

Women were asked about visiting places outside of their homes on their own - i.e. not accompanied by a male household member. This indicates their mobility and participation in various economic and social spaces (Table 8.5). More than 95% of the women can visit on their own a health clinic and hospital; also around 95% of the women can go to their children's school if necessary. Over 80% women can go to a Union Parishad office and local market. Around 66% women can attend national

festivals alone, while 64% can go to an office of an NGO or CBO. More than 40% women can go alone to Upazila level offices, while just over 30% women can go alone to a district level office.

Table 8.5: Places visited by women on their own by zone and land ownership category

Places visited	Zone - Percent of HH			Land category - Percent of HH					total
	Khulna	Patuakhali	Satkhira	landless	marginal	small	medium	Large	
Local market	98.5%	56.0%	92.2%	92.8%	82.4%	78.9%	80.0%	77.7%	82.4%
Health centre/clinic	99.8%	98.9%	96.9%	100.0%	100.0%	99.1%	98.8%	97.1%	99.1%
Hospital	99.4%	93.1%	92.2%	98.5%	94.8%	95.4%	96.4%	96.4%	96.2%
NGO/CBO office	90.6%	35.4%	51.6%	68.2%	70.0%	63.3%	64.8%	61.9%	65.8%
Attend national festival	89.4%	31.3%	53.1%	59.0%	61.0%	63.8%	67.2%	69.8%	63.9%
Upazila agriculture, fish. etc. office	69.2%	8.5%	30.5%	39.5%	40.5%	42.2%	47.2%	41.7%	42.5%
UP office	97.1%	63.5%	90.6%	90.8%	88.1%	78.0%	83.2%	80.6%	84.2%
District level offices	46.4%	11.8%	24.2%	25.6%	28.5%	27.1%	37.6%	37.4%	31.1%
Upazila social welfare office	62.5%	20.9%	33.6%	41.0%	44.8%	40.4%	47.2%	46.0%	43.9%
Schools	95.2%	92.6%	94.5%	92.8%	93.3%	95.0%	94.8%	95.0%	94.2%
Other place	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Do not go anywhere on their own	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Sample size (n)	520	364	128	195	210	218	250	139	1012

Source: HH survey 2021

Substantial changes have occurred in women mobility since the 2017 baseline survey. The data suggests a significant decline (9.4% to 0.2%) in the number of households where women do not go anywhere on their own, and there have been increases in the number of households where women go to markets (45% to 82.4%) and to NGO/CBO offices (36% to 66%). The number of households where women visit for health facilities has also increased 13% for health clinic and 24% for hospital. There are also significant changes in visiting schools (51% to 94%), UP offices (26% to 84%), national festivals (10% to 64%), Upazila offices of agriculture, fishery and livestock departments (0% to 42.4%), Upazila social welfare offices (2% to 43.3%), and district level offices (2% to 31%) - maybe as a result of getting to know these departments via Farmer Field Schools and through other BG activities.

There is considerable variation in mobility within the zones, with less women mobility in the Patuakhali zone compared to Khulna and Satkhira zone. There is no discernible relationship between the amount of land owned and women mobility. However, mobility varies with the places visited. Households owning less land tend to have greater female mobility to markets, health facilities (only slightly), UP and NGO/CBO offices; while households with more land will tend to have greater female mobility to festivals and schools. Women from all types of households appear to be mobile - with a very few households (0.2%) reporting that their women do not go out unaccompanied.

Overall empowerment of women[[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

The findings from the household survey questionnaire and informal interviews provide more insights into improvements into the position of women within the household. BGP organized women and ensured their participation in water management (33% women in executive committee of WMG and WMA), in Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and in other training activities. Half of the participants of crop FFS (1139 FFS) by DAE were women while 87.6% of the participants were women in TA FFS (1178 FFS) on homestead-based production (homestead vegetable production, poultry, livestock, fish pond and nutrition). BGP also provided training on water management, gender awareness and leadership, on market orientation and different social issues. All of these helped to improve the position of women within their households and the communities.

Findings show that the area of crops and homestead production have increased, and women are now working on farms and homesteads to a greater extent than previously. Women now have an income, not only from working within the homestead, but also from working in the crop fields and other outside income-generating activities. In Khulna and Satkhira, women may now be hired for almost all farm operations, including transplanting and weeding paddy, and preparation of fish ghers, and have, to some extent, replaced male labour. Around 75% women in Khulna report working in crop fields. However, this pattern varies between zones. In Patuakhali, women are still primarily hired for work in mung beans and other non-rice crops (but they may provide all the hired labour for these crops). Here women provide little or none of the hired labour for paddy - at most only doing some limited tasks, such as uprooting aman seedlings.

Compared with the 2017 baseline survey, there is an apparent increase in the number of households with women working in homestead agriculture and crop agriculture, including work in crop fields and post-harvest activities. When households are producing homestead vegetables, poultry, livestock, and aquaculture, it is the women who are mostly involved in such production. The role of women in many of these 'enterprises' has also grown, as households are keeping more chicken and ducks, have bigger or better stocked fish ponds, and are rearing more livestock.

Women now have more mobility and participate more in organizations within the community. They have access to and are more engaged with institutions beyond their community. They are doing small business (e. g. collection of basok leaves or drumstick) and salaried jobs (but with limited options). Women have now economic roles within the homestead and outside the home. The returns they receive from these activities reflect the relation with economic improvement for them and their households.

Informal interviews confirm that the return of women's income generating activities contribute the improved livelihood of women and their families. Economic contribution within the family and participation in social spaces and community activities support women to have a greater say in household decision making and higher social status within the community. They often do not need to lend their hand anymore for small amounts to their husband. They more often can earn money and spend according to their own and family needs.

Women are now having roles in the decision-making with their husbands regarding production, asset sale and family issues. While making a contribution to household income gives women a greater say in household decision making, income earning work on top of their existing domestic tasks can also lead to an excessive workload with very little leisure time. Informal interviews confirm that women are almost always paid less than men for the same work. Only in a few instances equal wages are paid, such as sometimes for tasks as weeding of paddy. In some cases, the differential between male and female has narrowed, at least in relative terms, with female wages doubling since the start

of BGP, while male wages have only gone up by 50%.

Notes[\[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

1. [↑](#) Section B Introduction and Summary provides an overview of the studies conducted through the Blue Gold Program, and the studies and reports which were the main sources of information for Section B.
2. [↑](#) This leads to the situation that a man who works 6 hours/day in agriculture is categorized as a farmer, whereas a woman who works 6 hours in agriculture and 7 hours in domestic tasks, is categorized as a housewife. It may also reflect established social norms – a male head of household is said to be a farmer even if most of his income comes from non-farm sources, with his wife being classified as a housewife even if she spends more time on income generating activities.

See more[\[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Previous chapter:

[Chapter 07: Inclusive Development Approach: Outcomes and Impacts from Homestead Based Production](#)

[Blue Gold Lessons Learnt Wiki](#)
[Section B: Development Outcomes](#)

Next chapter:

[Chapter 09: The Overall Outcomes and Impacts on the Livelihoods of Coastal Communities in Blue Gold Polders](#)

[Section B: Development Outcomes](#)

<u>Chapter 05: Outcomes and Impact from Participatory Water Management</u>	<u>Chapter 06: Outcomes and Impact from Agricultural Development</u>	<u>Chapter 07: Inclusive Development Approach: Outcomes and Impacts from Homestead Based Production</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Increased resilience against climatic variability: outcomes and impact of rehabilitation work on water management</u>2. <u>Organised coastal communities: outcomes and impact of institutional development</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Changes in crop agricultural production</u>2. <u>Change in cropping pattern and crop types</u>3. <u>Increase in Cropping intensity</u>4. <u>Increase in Crop yields</u>5. <u>Increase in employment through agricultural development</u>6. <u>Economic return of improved agriculture production</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Homestead vegetables production</u>2. <u>Homestead fruit production</u>3. <u>Commercial fruit production</u>4. <u>Poultry rearing</u>5. <u>Goats</u>6. <u>Cattle and buffalo</u>7. <u>Pond fisheries</u>8. <u>Feedback from FGDs on homestead production</u>9. <u>Problems of agricultural and homestead production</u>
Chapter 08: The Outcomes and Impact on the Livelihoods of Women	<u>Chapter 09: The Overall Outcomes and Impacts on the Livelihoods of Coastal Communities in Blue Gold Polders</u>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Women’s role in economic activities</u>2. <u>Main Occupation of women</u>3. <u>Equality in food consumption</u>4. <u>Decision making regarding assets and land</u>5. <u>Mobility and participation</u>6. <u>Overall empowerment of women</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>General features of coastal households</u>2. <u>Land ownership and land tenure</u>3. <u>Improvement in household income and asset</u>4. <u>Enterprise development</u>5. <u>Improvements in Living Standards</u>	
Blue Gold Wiki		

Executive summary: A Call for Action

<u>Section A: Background and context</u>	<u>Section B: Development Outcomes</u>	<u>Section C: Water Infrastructure</u>
<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 01: Overview, Purpose and Structure of Report • Chapter 02: Institutional Setting • Chapter 03: Social, Physical and Environmental Context • Chapter 04: Policy framework, history of interventions and project definition 	<p>Summary and Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 05: Outcomes and Impact from Participatory Water Management • Chapter 06: Outcomes and Impact from Agricultural Development • Chapter 07: Inclusive Development Approach: Outcomes and Impacts from Homestead Based Production • Chapter 08: The Outcomes and Impact on the Livelihoods of Women • Chapter 09: The Overall Outcomes and Impacts on the Livelihoods of Coastal Communities in Blue Gold Polders 	<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 10: Coastal Infrastructure • Chapter 11: Investments for Polder Safety and Water Management • Chapter 12: Survey, Design and Procurement • Chapter 13: Construction: Progress, Modalities and Lessons Learnt
<u>Section D: BGP Interventions: Participatory Water Management</u>	<u>Section E: Agricultural Development</u>	<u>Section F: Responsible Development: Inclusion and Sustainability</u>
<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 14: Consultation and participation in planning • Chapter 15: WMO capacity building • Chapter 16: Women's participation in Water Management • Chapter 17: In-polder water management • Chapter 18: Water Management Partnership • Chapter 19: Operationalisation of the PWM concept • Chapter 20: Way Forward 	<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 21: The Evolving Approach to the Commercialization of Agriculture • Chapter 22: Lessons for Agricultural Extension in the Coastal Zone • Chapter 23: Outreach and Outcomes of Commercialisation Interventions 	<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 24: Gender equality and women's empowerment • Chapter 25: Poverty Focus: development of homestead production • Chapter 26: Poverty focus: Labour Contracting Societies • Chapter 27: Sustainability
<u>Section G: Project Management</u>	<u>Section H: Innovation Fund</u>	<u>Files and others</u>
<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 28: Project Management Arrangements • Chapter 29: Technical Assistance: Context, Scope, Contractual Arrangements and External Service Contracts • Chapter 30: Evolution of TA Organisational Arrangements • Chapter 31: Capacity Building • Chapter 32: Agricultural Extension Methods and Communication • Chapter 33: Horizontal Learning • Chapter 34: Monitoring and evaluation • Chapter 35: Management Information System • Chapter 36: Environmental Due Diligence 	<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 37: Purpose, fund evolution and management • Chapter 38: Overview of BGIF Projects • Chapter 39: BGIF Lessons Learnt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File Library • Glossary and acronyms • Frequently Asked Questions

A livelihood is a way of making a living. It comprises capabilities, skills, assets (including material and social resources), and activities that households put together to produce food, meet basic needs, earn income, or establish a means of living in any other way.

Blue Gold Program

A defined set of temporary activities through which facilitators seek to effect change

empowerment is a process, enabling people to make choices and convert these into desired actions and results. In doing so, people take control of their own lives, improve their own position, set their own agenda, gain skills, develop self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-sufficiency. Empowerment leads to genuine participation of all actors as it is a process of gaining self-confidence for individual development as well as to contribute towards development of others.

A process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them.

Household

assumed in this report to operate up to 0.5 acres (0.2 ha)

Income Generating Activity

Water Management Group - The basic organizational unit in Blue Gold representing local stakeholders from a hydrological or social unit (para/village). Through Blue Gold, 511 WMGs have been formed and registered. The average WMG covers an area of around 230 ha has 365 households or a population of just over 1,500.

Farmer Field School - A group-based learning process through which farmers carry out experiential learning activities that help them to understand the ecology of their fields, based on simple experiments, regular field observations and group analysis. The knowledge gained from these activities enables participants to make their own locally specific decisions about crop management practices. This approach represents a radical departure from earlier agricultural extension programmes, in which farmers were expected to adopt generalized recommendations that are formulated by specialists from outside the community.

Refers to socially constructed and therefore learned roles and responsibilities ascribed to men and women, girls and boys based on their sex. Gender is not the same as sex, the physical and biological attributes that make someone female, male or both. Gender comprises the expectations, roles, attitudes and behaviours of women and men. Gender roles change over time and vary within and between cultures, societies and classes.

Union Parishad - Union Council chaired by an elected Union Chairman

Any formal or informal structure (not necessarily a physical place) in which buyers and sellers exchange goods, labour, or services for cash or other goods. The word 'market' can simply mean the place in which goods or services are exchanged. Essentially, markets are defined by forces of supply and demand, rather than geographical location

Non-Governmental Organisation

Union Parishad - Union Council chaired by an elected Union Chairman

Water Management Association - In Blue Gold, the polder-level representative of WMGs, and signatory to an O&M Agreement with BWDB

Farmer Field School - A group-based learning process through which farmers carry out experiential learning activities that help them to understand the ecology of their fields, based on simple experiments, regular field observations and group analysis. The knowledge gained from these activities enables participants to make their own locally specific decisions about crop management practices. This approach represents a radical departure from earlier agricultural extension programmes, in which farmers were expected to adopt generalized recommendations that are formulated by specialists from outside the community.

Department of Agricultural Extension, a department of the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for disseminating scientific research and new knowledge on agricultural practices through communication and learning activities for farmers in agriculture, agricultural marketing, nutrition and business studies.

Technical Assistance

human intervention in the capture, conveyance, utilisation and drainage of surface and/or ground water in a certain area: a process of social interaction between stakeholders around the issue of water control.

Within BGP this refers to enhancing insights of especially FFS participants in how markets work, how to collect market information, facilitating linkages with market actors and increasing negotiation capacities

An area enclosed by low embankments to store either freshwater or brackish water for the production of fish, shrimps or prawns.

a rice crop usually planted in March/April under dryland conditions, but in areas liable to deep flooding. Also known as deepwater rice. Harvested from October to December. All varieties are highly sensitive to daylength.

basok leaves are the leaves of a medicinal shrub found along road roadside, often used as fencing of

houses in our polders (especially in Satkhira and Khulna) that are dried and then sold to pharmaceutical companies for medicine preparation, in particular to prepare cough syrup.

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Namespaces

- [Page](#)
- [Discussion](#)

Variants

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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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