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Context

An important income-generating intervention under the Blue Gold Program has been through employment opportunities with Labour Contracting Societies (LCS). 50% of all earthwork for water management infrastructure under BGP was planned to be completed by LCS.

Members of these societies are individuals from landless families. The groups are contracted for a defined length and volume of earthworks within a given specific timeframe. They are paid in three instalments so that they can use a part of the sum to invest in productive resources or assets such as housing, land, and cattle to generate additional income. Once they had completed their work, members can continue to earn incomes through fattening and selling the animal or its offspring. This is a long-term strategy to reduce poverty.

Participation of women in LCS groups, through the establishment of new social networks, and by investing LCS incomes on productive resources, may also empower them.

LCS operations

LCS work is usually restricted to a volume of land that can be covered in one construction season. LCS work can take two forms:

- Khal re-excavation
- Re-sectioning of embankments

LCS groups are formed in October and November. Members are then provided initial information, details of the work, and the contract. The BWDB then issues the work order in February or March so that work can start with the intention to finish before the start of monsoon in June.

The groups are paid in three instalments. The last 10% is paid one year after completion of work.

Income = total payments to the LCS group / [number of total days worked * number of days worked by each LCS member]

Impact of LCS

- LCS work provides members with temporary sources of income
- This income allows poor landless individuals to meet pressing financial needs: food and household expenses, children's education, debt repayment, investing in household assets, and paying for home repairs
- LCS members also invest in productive resources that continue to add to their income when the LCS work had ended. Two-thirds of 367 LCS women surveyed used part of their LCS incomes to invest in productive resources such as poultry, homestead vegetables, and/or livestock. Many of them also participated in homestead Farmer Field Schools (FFS) for homestead level production
- New skills developed by LCS workers allow them to engage in other paid earthworks by local governments or the private sector

LCS members:

- Poor and landless
- Member of WMGs
- 50 or more members per group

From 2013 to 2019, BGP engaged 485 LCS groups, with 31,437 members. 10,766 of these members (34%) were women.

2013 – 2014: BGP LCS entered into direct contracts with the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB).

2014: Participatory Water Management Rules (PWMR) of 2014 introduced a formal role for Water Management Groups (WMGs). BWDB signed an agreement with WMGs, who in turn signed a second contract with LCS.

WMGs get a 5% service charge, reducing the contract value for LCS members.



Main challenges and lessons learnt

- LCS work is usually restricted to a volume of land that can be covered in one construction season. LCS work can take two forms:
 - Khal re-excavation
 - Re-sectioning of embankments
- LCS members are usually poor and landless individuals from landless families.
- LCS members are usually members of Water Management Groups (WMGs).
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Women's empowerment through LCS

- LCS work provides members with temporary sources of income
- This income allows poor landless individuals to meet pressing financial needs: food and household expenses, children's education, debt repayment, investing in household assets, and paying for home repairs
- LCS members also invest in productive resources that continue to add to their income when the LCS work had ended. Two-thirds of 367 LCS women surveyed used part of their LCS incomes to invest in productive resources such as poultry, homestead vegetables, and/or livestock. Many of them also participated in homestead Farmer Field Schools (FFS) for homestead level production
- New skills developed by LCS workers allow them to engage in other paid earthworks by local governments or the private sector

LCS work in practice

- LCS work is usually restricted to a volume of land that can be covered in one construction season. LCS work can take two forms:
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BGP case study LCS v5 9 October 2020

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Summary

Empowerment and poverty reduction through labour contracting societies

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Empowerment and
poverty reduction
through labour
contracting societies

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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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