

Report on Federated Famers' Organization Sharing Workshop

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Venue : Proshika HRDC Trust ,Manikgonj



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Background of the workshop

The Technical Assistance Component of the Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project aims to develop capacities of state and non-state (particularly farmer's organizations) actors in investment programming. In order to further understand the capacity needs of farmers' organizations (FOs), the project has been conducting a mapping and capacity assessment exercise over the past year. The findings are under finalization. One of the main findings was a relative lack of autonomous, federated FOs that are able to be involved in the investment programming cycle. Capacities in leadership, institutional development and networking are needed to address this constraint. With this in mind, the workshop aimed to bring together organizations that have made progress towards sustainability and federation, in order to facilitate further development.

Participants

A total of 21 representatives, including 5 women, of federated, autonomous farmers' organizations and IAPP Livelihood Field Schools participated in the workshop. The participating FOs were Adarsha Chashi Unnayan Samity, Bodorganj Upazila Service Provider Association, Burirchar Sammonito Matshya Chashi Samobay Samity Ltd, Common Interest Groups of the National Agriculture Technology Project, Gram Samitys of the Social Development Foundation, Idilpur Anarosh Chashi Unnayan Samity, Kendrio Krishok Moitree and Livelihood Field Schools of the Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project. Moreover, 6 FO facilitators participated from DANIDA's Regional Fisheries and Livestock Development Component (RFLDC), international Development Enterprises (iDE), Common Interest Groups (CIGs) of the National Agriculture Technology Project (NATP), the Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project (IAPP), the Social Development Foundation (SDF) and Action Aid Bangladesh.

Workshop Methodology

The overall approach of the workshop was interactive and participatory. There were presentations, group discussions, plenary discussions and question and answer sessions. Participants were actively engaged in group work as well as one to one discussions. To make the workshop more lively, prior to every session and in the evening, there were energizers and games focusing on teambuilding and group formation. These allowed participants opportunities to reflect on the value of teamwork and build relationships that were reinforced throughout the workshop.



Day One

During the first day a brief orientation on the IAPP technical assistance component, investment programming and capacity development was given. Participants learned the basics of project cycle

management. They jointly brainstormed principles, and services to be provided, to ensure sustainability of FOs. FO leaders also shared about their organizations and learned about others.



In addition to presentations there were plenary discussions and question & answer sessions. The presentations by FO leaders about their organizations were very interactive, as participants were keen to know about other organizations, how they operate, what services they provide, and what challenges they face. Summary findings of the different sessions from day 1 are included below. Further detail is provided in the annexes -1&2.

From the FO Sharing Session:

Main services provided by the different FOs:

- ❖ Distribution of agricultural inputs, such machinery;
- ❖ Credit distribution;
- ❖ Assistance in getting loans from other organizations;
- ❖ Assistance in transporting products to market;
- ❖ Coordinating with different government and non-government organization for technology and services;
- ❖ Seed distribution;
- ❖ Advice on agricultural issues and technologies, including environmentally sensitive production techniques, poultry rearing, fish cultivation, and pesticide and fertilizer use.

Main challenges faced by the different FOs:

- ❖ Lack of a cooperative attitude;
- ❖ Marketing of products;
- ❖ Political influence;
- ❖ Access to decision makers at the policy level;
- ❖ Ensuring transparency and accountability;
- ❖ Keeping farmers united;
- ❖ Proper implementation of income generating activities;
- ❖ Leadership selection and delivery;
- ❖ Targeting of ultra-poor members.

Main strengths of the different FOs:

- ❖ Economic support from facilitating agency
- ❖ Financial management;
- ❖ Strong Annual General Meetings;

- ❖ Decentralization of power;
- ❖ Technological skills;
- ❖ Financial strength;
- ❖ Organizational skills;
- ❖ Transparency and accountability;
- ❖ Unity among the members.

From the Participatory Brainstorming of Key Principles For Sustainable FOs

Brainstorming was organized into different categories, as follows.

Leadership: Leader should be elected and accepted by all members.

Organizational structure: Laws and by-laws must be understood by all members and enforced. *It was revealed in the discussions that according to the cooperative law, there are standards laws and by – laws but most of the members don't know them clearly. Women participants specifically mentioned that most of the women members are not aware of these.*

Governance: Finance and account-related documents need to be accessible by all members. Different committees have to be formed, with responsibility distributed accordingly.

Linkages: Linkages should be made with relevant service provision organizations to support production, access input services and support in marketing. Linkages should also be made among farmers' organizations.

Operating guidelines should be formulated in line with the Constitution and objectives of the organization.

Female participation: Women should participate actively and hold the important posts of the organization. Their equal rights as members must be ensured.

Empowerment: All members should have equal rights, equal access to information and equal opportunities for skill development.



'When I first became a member I couldn't talk in front of members because of fear but now I can talk in this forum and many other fora.' ---- Women farmer from SDF.

This is a unique example of women empowerment through FO activities.

Day Two:

The second day began with a recap of day one. There was further discussion on the project cycle and how farmers could be involved in project cycle management of government-initiated projects in their area. During the discussion on project cycle management the importance of leadership was raised:

"If central leaders are selected from the grassroots, following a chain of selection processes then it will be more effective," stated Jalal Uddin, President of the Krishak Bandhu Society in Bakerganj, Barisal.

This reflects understanding of the importance of leadership and democratic selection processes.

Brainstorming around services FOs should provide to their members in order to ensure sustainability took place (details in annex 3).

The services are divided into five categories.

Business services:

The main services are provision of loans and grants as well as assistance in accessing loans from other organizations. Other services are providing market information and linkages (inputs and outputs), storing, processing, value addition, assistance in developing business plans, and assistance in marketing of products through sales center.

Advocacy services:

The main services are assisting in coordination and building relations with different government and non-government organizations. These include BADC, to advocate at upazilla and union level to resolve water logging problems, and livestock departments, for treatment of livestock and poultry, They also cited legal assistance in getting loans and leasing land, as well as legal support for women and children.



Information services: The services are to inform members about the right to information, provide information on marketing and technical issues, as well as on the different services available through coordination with different government organizations.

Advice: The services are to provide advice on harvesting, business plan development and implementation, pesticide and insecticide use, seed, technical issues, developing group projects, opportunities for skill development and organizational development. Also organizations are to help solve the problems of members through discussion.

Other: This includes services on social issues, such as awareness raising on early marriage and violence against women, medical support for poor people, health, education, nutrition, and female empowerment.

Visioning

Participants brainstormed about how they want their organization to look in 3-5 years.

- The main dream expressed was to make their organization **sustainable** (i.e. continue when there will be no support from their facilitating organization) and thereby improve members' livelihoods and make them financially strong and stable;
- Some also want to see their organization as a **federated** one;
- They also want to introduce **income-generating activities** to increase the income of FO;
- They want to increase **production** through use of advanced technologies;
- They also want to increase **skills** of members on new technologies through coordinating their access and recognition in nongovernment and government organizations;
- Some of them also express a wish to resolve some **social issues** of their members, such as education for the children of the member and women empowerment.

Then participants assessed the skills they have now and what skills they require to reach their vision.

The **skills they have now** are grouped into four categories. (details in annex 4):

Financial Management: Most of the FOs mentioned that they have skills in financial, management, operating bank accounts, preparing of budget, savings management and keeping records.

Business skills: They mentioned that members have skills to prepare business plans, they can operate service centers and in some cases they have skills in some value addition technologies. Some also mentioned that they have capacity to write project proposals.

Training: Some of the organizations have members skilled in different technical areas (including crop production, fisheries and livestock) that are able to provide training. They also have logistic capacities and venues to organize trainings.

Organizational capacity: FOs have different strong sub committees. They have the capability to conduct regular monthly meetings, write resolutions, take decisions and implement them. They have skills to coordinate with different non-government and government organizations, as well operating collection/service centers.

A few participants also mentioned that they have monitoring skills.

Participants then brainstormed **skills required** to reach their visions. They are in the following areas:

- ❖ Networking and building linkages;
- ❖ Marketing, including business planning, market assessment and value addition;
- ❖ Organization strengthening include establishing proper accountability measures and ensuring good governance;
- ❖ Developing project proposals;
- ❖ Financial management;
- ❖ Savings management;
- ❖ Leadership skills;
- ❖ Enterprise development;
- ❖ Technical skills in crop, fisheries and livestock.

Action planning

At the end of the workshop participants developed an organizational action plan to implement their vision based on their capacity assessment and their new understanding gained from the workshop. Most of them stated that they will share their action plan and learning from the workshop with their executive committees. Action plans for each of the organizations can be found in annex 5.

Workshop Outcomes

All participants expressed their satisfaction and agreed that the workshop was beneficial in many aspects:

- ❖ They were able to build relationships with other FO leaders;
- ❖ They had a chance to look back at their activities in order to better understand the strengths and weakness of their organizations;
- ❖ It gave them an opportunity to learn about each other's activities and learn from each other;
- ❖ They understood the basic concepts, principles and processes of developing effective and sustainable FOs, as well as the value of networking and federating;
- ❖ They understood the importance of team building and team spirit to attain organizational objective through participating in different games and energizers;
- ❖ They developed a vision for strengthening their organization and action plans to implement that vision.

Lessons learned from the workshop

- ❖ This sort of workshop can be organized at district level to act as a forum/platform for sharing experiences of FOs.
- ❖ Limited time was a major challenge and we had to drop few sessions as a result.

Conclusion

The workshop created a positive, forward momentum among the participating organizations. It served as a forum where they could share their experiences, learn from each other, and raise their concerns. Feedback from one of the participants shows appreciation of the value of the event:

"We need a platform. In our country everybody is associated, even rickshaw puller have their association, but not the farmers. This type of event can facilitate linkage among the farmers organization all over the country. We hope to do something great in future by sharing our experience (in this event) and utilizing them" - Jalal Uddin, President, Krishak Bandhu Society, Bakerganj, Barisal.

The workshop also showed facilitators the strength and scope of the targeted FOs. This will allow us to provide them further support and facilitate so that they can become strong, sustainable organizations able to participate in the investment programming cycle.

Annex 1

Summary of Presentations From FOs On Their Organizations

Bodorganj Upozilla Service Provider Cooperative

Established: December 26, 2004

Membership: 40 (33 male, 7 female)

Goals of the organization:

- To build a sustainable job-based interdependent organization that will provide services to farmers according to their ability and establish effective linkages with different service providers.

Location: Bodorganj Upozilla

Type of services:

- Cultivation of vegetables
- Field Crops
- Livestock
- Raising poultry chickens
- Fisheries
- Medicinal plants
- Business Management

Bodorkhali Union Fish Farmers Welfare Cooperatives Ltd.

Established: December 2005

Registration Number: BD/14 April 2006, Department of Cooperatives

Location: All villages of Bodorkhali Union

Number Of Villages: 9

Number of Village Development Committees: 6

Executive Committee: 14 members, 6 male, 8 female

Services providing skilled manpower:

Advisory Committee: 1

Procurement Committee: 1

Audit Committee: 1

Technical Committee: 1

Implementation Committee: 1

Local Support: 2 persons

MMS Management Associate: 1 person

Community Agriculture Resource Person: 1 person

Community Poultry Worker: 1 person

Community Livestock Worker: 1 person

Contributing Organization: RFLDC, IDE, WFC DOF, DLS

Challenges:

- To keep free from political interference
- To keep farmers united
- To uphold transparency and accountability

Strengths:

- Unity
- Transparency and accountability
- Organizational efficiency
- Financial capability
- Technical Skills

Central Farmers' Alliance (KKM – Kendrio Krishok Moitree)

Established: April 2009

Membership: 20,360 (9,690 male & 10,670 female)

Goals of the organization:

- Assist to ensure food security
- Contribute to put together farmer-favorable National Agricultural Policy
- Assist to gain recognition of the dignity of women farmers
- Play role in composition of strengthened farmers organization and National Forum

Location: Almost 900 villages, 31 unions, 10 upazilas, 7 Districts

Services:

- Production increase training
- Assistance in marketing
- Assistance to develop organization

Contributing Organization: Action Aid Bangladesh, Asian Farmers Association

Challenges:

- Low-value agricultural products
- Yield Problems
 - Salinity
 - Natural disaster

Strengths:

- Unity
- Will

Common Interest Group (CIG)

Established: December 26, 2004

Membership: 20 people (each group), Separate women group

Goals of the organization:

- Develop leadership within farmers
- Associate with modern agricultural technology
- Assist production growth
- Develop savings attitude
- Support activities which increase income
- Support to get fair price of product
- Help to improve the quality of life

Location: Village, Upazilla

Services:

- Credit disbursement in simple terms
- Seed exchange activities
- Environmentally friendly crop production

- Solutions for agriculture based on discussion

Challenges:

- Lack of cooperative spirit

Strengths:

- Become self-reliant with the help of project

IAPP Livelihood Field School

Established: 2012

Membership: 25 (15 male, 10 female)

Goals of the organization:

- Agricultural productivity growth
- Increase capability, improve the quality of livelihood
- Build a sustainable organization
- Fulfilling nutritional needs
- Proper marketing
- Provide leadership in agriculture

Location: area of IAPP

Services:

- Advanced technology transfer (Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock and Irrigation Affairs)
- Skills Development
- Solution for agriculture-based problems

Contributing Organization: DAE, DLS, DoF, IAPP

Ideal Farmer Development Cooperative

Established: January 5, 2005

Goals of the organization:

- Form business oriented small group of farmers at root level
- Increase production using agricultural technology
- Assist in marketing

Location: Dip Zilla Vola, 21 unions of Chor Fashion Upazila

Services:

- Provide advice and supply of agricultural technology
- Ways to Identify better seeds, fertilizers
- Arrangement of packaging in marketing
- Advantage of getting agriculture loan from different agencies

Contributing Organization:

- iDE Bangladesh
- Section of Agriculture

Challenges:

- Recognition of farmers' organization

Strengths:

- Financial Management
- AGM
- Decentralization of power

Idilpur Pineapple Farmers Multipurpose Co-operative Ltd.

Established: June 13, 1977

Registration No.: 511

Membership: 136 (45 female 45, 32 ethnic)

Goals of the organization:

- Eliminating lack of self-financing
- Pineapple, jackfruit processing

Location: 4 unions of Modhupur, Tangail

Activities:

- Improved varieties of pineapple cultivation, marketing and processing
- Preparing Pineapple jam and jelly
- Banana cultivation
- Ginger and turmeric cultivation
- Poverty reduction
- Distribution of profits among the members
- Preventing Child Marriage
- Eliminate the dowry system
- Scholarship
- Assuring Nutrition and food safety
- Providing grants to poor students
- Provides medical services to the poor
- Sports celebration
- Rearing improved livestock breeds
- To provide benefit to its members family after death of the member

Krishok Bondhu Songothon (Farmers Friend Organization)

Established: February 2, 2011

Membership: 50 (33 male, 17 female)

Beneficiaries: Male-977

Female-690

Vision:

1. Build character
2. Improving quality of life of farmer

Geographic boundaries: Bakerganj Upozilla (Union 13)

Services:

1. Technology- seeds, irrigation (excavation of canal and control of sluice gate) , fertilizer, insecticides, soil test lab, USG (Urea Super Granular) Machine (other equipment)
2. Marketing plan
3. Transportation: van, boat, truck
4. Linkage with different financial institution
5. Convey counseling and learning from government and non-government organizations to field level

Contributing Organization: IDE – WMB

Porikahli Village Cooperative

Established: 2010

Member: 298 (230 poor 230, 68 needy)

Goals of the organization:

- Building a strong organization
- Develop quality of living through sustainable livelihood
- Lessen loss of life and property damage by reducing the risk of disasters

Location: Village: Porikhali, Union: M Baliyatoli, District: Borgula

Services:

- Organizational training, grants, increase skills, experience
- Self-reliant loan
- Infrastructure Development

Contributing Organization: SDF

Challenges:

- Poor and very poor selection
- Correct implementation of IGA
- Picking right leadership and lack of performing appropriate responsibility

Strengths:

- Unity
- Fund
- Skill

Annex 2

Group Brainstorming on Principles for Sustainable FOs

Group – 1

Leadership: Selection of leader should be on the basis of the opinion of all members

Good Governance:

- Follow laws and sub-laws
- Deliver authority

Organizational Structure:

- Democratic organizational structure
- Participation of all members

Linkages:

- To keep up with all members, equal pro-organization, government, non-government organizations
- To build strong network

Operational Guidelines: Mechanisms in writing, details of the action etc. consists of all members acceptance.

Participation of Women: One third of the executive committee should be women.

Increase empowerment among the members of FO: Giving importance to all members' views

Group – 2

Leadership: Universally accepted appropriate guidelines

Good Governance: Constructive governance

Organizational Structure: Defined

Linkages: Link between relevant institutions

Operational Guidelines: In light of principles

Participation of Women: Equal rights

Increase empowerment among the members of FO: All participating members should be informed.

Group – 3

Leadership: Democratic process to choose the right leader and create new leadership

Good Governance: Along with everyone's participation in all, ensure transparency and accountability

Organizational Structure:

1. Must be in accordance with mechanisms
2. Specify responsibility distribution within various levels

Linkages: Strong network (GO+NGO)

Operational Guidelines: Prepared on the basis of all members' opinion

Participation of Women: Ensure participation in all levels including leadership

Increase empowerment among the members of FO: All information must be known to all

Group – 4

Leadership: Democratic leader

Good Governance: Decision based on everyone's opinion

Organizational Structure:

1. Advisory Council
2. Executive Council

Linkages: Interconnection (GO, NGO)

Operational Guidelines:

- Memorandum
- Cash Book

Participation of Women: Equal rights of participation

Increase empowerment among the members of FO: Scope of skills development

Group – 5

Leadership: Leader is selected on the basis of the opinion of all members

Good Governance:

- Organization's legal and sub-legal matters should be known and followed
- Keep accounts and records open for all members

Organizational Structure: Along with MC, diverse defined sub-committee should form and distribute responsibilities

Linkages: Ensure services and information through effective communication with services provider institutions and create network

Operational Guidelines: Compiles operational guidelines which is compatibility with organizational goals

Participation of Women: Ensure women's active participation and rights in the important position of organization

Increase empowerment among the members of FO: Providing the opportunity to participate all in the program

Annex 3

Group Brainstorm on 'What Services the FOs should offer Members'

Group 1

- ❖ Business services
 - Maintain relations with different business organizations
- ❖ Advocacy services
 - Assist in making contact with different government and non-government organization
 - Provide opportunities for getting joint services
- ❖ Information services
 - Deliver necessary information to the members
- ❖ Advisory services
 - Solve the member's problem through discussion
- ❖ Other
 - Provide support for awareness raising

Groups 2 & 3

- ❖ Business services
 - Financial grants
 - Information on marketing
 - Sales centre
- ❖ Advocacy services
 - Contact with BADC and other agricultural institution
 - Legal support for women and children
- ❖ Information services
 - Organize fair for different technological issue
 - Information on marketing
- ❖ Advisory services
 - Regarding harvesting
 - Business plan
 - Pesticide
 - Seed
- ❖ Other
 - Medical support for poor people
 - Assist in getting loan from different organizations

Group 4

- ❖ Business services

- Vegetable sales centre
- Seed, fertilizer, insecticide
- Loan services
- ❖ Advocacy services
 - Advocate with upazila and union level for water logging
 - Coordination with livestock departments for treatment of livestock and poultry
- ❖ Information services
 - Inform the members about the right to information
 - Information on qualitative inputs of agriculture
 - Information on new technology
- ❖ Advisory services
 - Regarding harvesting
 - Business Plan
 - Suggestion for developing joint project
- ❖ Other
 - Participation in other social development

Group 5

- ❖ Business services
 - Assist for accumulating loan from other organizations
 - Assist in marketing production
 - Storing and processing
- ❖ Advocacy services
 - Legal assistance for loan and leasing of land .
- ❖ Information services
 - Different type of services through contacting different government organization
 - Technical
 - Legal
 - Business plan and loan
 - Publicity
- ❖ Advisory services
 - Production
 - Business Plan
 - Insecticide
- ❖ Other
 - Humanitarian

Group – Facilitators

- ❖ Business services
 - Business plan
 - Market linkage: output and input

- Financial/ loan services
- Management (Group)
- Value addition of product
- ❖ Advocacy services
 - Inform about different laws
 - Stakeholder analysis
 - Lobbying
 - Networking
- ❖ Information services
 - Marketing information
 - Technical information
- ❖ Advisory services
 - Technical suggestion
 - Suggestion on skill development
 - Suggestion on organizational development
 - Suggestion on Business implementation
 - Negotiation
- ❖ Other
 - Health
 - Education
 - Nutrition
 - Social
 - Women empowerment

Annex 4
Group Brainstorm
'Vision Development and Capacity Needs Assessment'

Adarsha Chasi Unnayan Samaty

Vision:

- ❖ Develop network in Bhola and other districts
- ❖ GO-NGO network Develop
- ❖ Develop network with seed company
- ❖ Ensure participation of famers and woman in social work
- ❖ Importance of woman in leadership
- ❖ Adopt agricultural friendly project
- ❖ National prize for Contribution in agriculture
- ❖ Upazila Zilla, division and centre based leadership develop

Skills the organization has:

- ❖ GO- NGO network
- ❖ Have skills member for adopting t agriculture friendly project
- ❖ Skills have for networking

Skills Required:

- ❖ Develop network
- ❖ Increase of woman member

Skills Required:

- ❖ Develop network
- ❖ Increase of woman member
- ❖ Finance require for adopting agriculture friendly project
- ❖ Coordination with Department of agriculture

To develop network of district organization finance and coordination of different organization are required

Badarganj Upazilla Dankari Samati Hsic

Vision:

- ❖ Provide different services to the farmers according to their demand and thereby increase financial condition.
- ❖ Provide service through establishing service centre.
- ❖ Increase skills of members and their acceptance through coordinating with nongovernment organization and government organization on different new technologies and strategies.

- ❖ Assist farmers for production based on the demand.
- ❖ To provide service with assistance of service provider in district level .