

Rethinking Development Approach: Evaluating Participatory C4d Strategies in The Swapno Anti-Poverty Initiative, Jamalpur, Bangladesh

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Abstract

This research explores the application of Communication for Development (C4D) strategies within the Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) project, a collaborative effort between the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aimed at alleviating extreme poverty among ultra-poor women in Bangladesh. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey with 15 beneficiaries from Jamalpur District to assess the influence of C4D strategies on awareness, participation, and long-term empowerment of these women. The findings reveal that participatory communication methods such as miking, union worker outreach, and mosque-based announcements were critical in ensuring effective communication with beneficiaries and building community trust. SWAPNO's C4D approach helped women acquire essential skills, which contributed to their increased income, self-reliance, and social empowerment. Additionally, the study highlights the critical role of local government actors in facilitating community acceptance and ensuring continued support for beneficiaries. The research suggests that the C4D-driven model used by SWAPNO provides a sustainable alternative to microfinance, which is often burdensome for ultra-poor women. Rather than relying on loans, SWAPNO emphasizes training, employment, and savings, offering debt-free paths out of poverty. Findings are drawn from a 15-participant sample in Jamalpur district and may not generalize to other districts which has a different geographical landscape. This paper recommends strengthening GO-NGO collaboration for future C4D-based initiatives and advocates for replicating SWAPNO's communication model to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of similar poverty alleviation projects across Bangladesh.

Keywords: Communication for Development (C4D), SWAPNO project, Poverty Alleviation, Ultra-poor women, Bangladesh, UNDP, Local government, GO-NGO collaboration

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Introduction

In recent years, Communication for Development (C4D) has become increasingly central to global development strategies, particularly in addressing complex socio-economic challenges in underprivileged communities. Unlike traditional one-way communication models that merely disseminate information, modern C4D embraces participatory and dialogical methods, where communities are engaged as active agents of change rather than passive recipients (Mefalopulos, 2008; Quebral, 1971). These evolving C4D strategies are essential for creating sustainable solutions in the development context of Bangladesh, where multidimensional poverty, gender inequality, and rural marginalization persist.

One such initiative that employs this approach is the Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) project, a collaborative effort between the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The SWAPNO project targets ultra-poor women, specifically those who are widowed, divorced, abandoned, or left with a disabled husband. These women are considered the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged segment of society (SWAPNO, 2020). The project provides them not only with temporary employment but also with life skills training, financial literacy, and social reintegration (UNDP, 2020). The term 'ultra-poor' as defined by the SWAPNO project refers to rural women facing severe socio-economic hardship, often living far below the national poverty line.

The use of C4D within SWAPNO is not merely a supplementary tool but a foundational component. The project's communication strategies involve community-centric methods such as local announcements (miking), door-to-door outreach by Union Parishad workers, and mobilization during Friday prayer gatherings, which demonstrate cultural sensitivity and improve accessibility for the target beneficiaries. These methods reflect the core elements of effective C4D: cultural alignment, the use of local language, trusted messengers, and sustained engagement (Doozie, 2024; Agunga, 2010).

Furthermore, C4D has been hailed by global institutions like the World Bank and FAO as a vital enabler of development—promoting transparency, participation, and ownership (World Bank, 2007; Agunga, 2010). However, many development programs fail because they neglect these human-dimension factors. Agunga (2010) argues that technical solutions alone are insufficient; programs must integrate

participatory communication, capacity-building, and community empowerment to create lasting change.

This paper aims to evaluate how effectively the SWAPNO project applies C4D principles in practice. Specifically, it explores how beneficiaries are identified and engaged, what communication tools are used, and whether these strategies result in long-term empowerment for ultra-poor women in Bangladesh. Using qualitative interviews, quantitative survey data, and participatory insights, this research will assess SWAPNO's communicative strategies and their impact on sustainable development.

Review of the Literature

❖ Evolution of C4D Theory

Communication for Development (C4D) has significantly evolved since its early conceptualization in the 1970s, where it was largely seen as a one-way communication tool focused on information dissemination. Over time, however, it has developed into a more participatory, two-way communication approach that emphasizes community engagement and local ownership. Today, C4D is recognized as an essential mechanism for empowering communities, encouraging local ownership, and facilitating behavioral change (Mefalopulos, 2008; Quebral, 1971).

The shift from one-way communication to a dialogical model has been particularly important in marginalized and underdeveloped regions, where top-down communication methods often fail to resonate. This transition is evident in the SWAPNO project, where C4D strategies center on community-led recruitment and training. For example, public announcements (miking) and collaboration with local leaders, such as Union Parishad members, have been integral to reaching beneficiaries. These participatory methods align with Mefalopulos' (2008) assertion that C4D strategies must prioritize participatory and community-based approaches to achieve sustainable development outcomes.

Mefalopulos (2008) emphasizes community ownership and engagement through dialogical communication. Similarly, Doozie (2024) contrasts this model with Amplio Ghana's Talking Book, which uses technology to reach rural communities. While both approaches focus on participation, SWAPNO relies heavily on local engagement (e.g., Union Parishads and religious leaders, community workers),

while Amplio Ghana uses technological tools for communication, highlighting a key difference in how technology and community infrastructure support communication.

❖ **Local Governance & Community Engagement**

Effective local governance is key to implementing successful C4D strategies. Local governments help translate national policies into actions that directly benefit local communities, as emphasized by Marta & Agustino (2020). In the case of SWAPNO, local authorities and community leaders are instrumental in recruiting beneficiaries, delivering training, and providing ongoing support. This ensures that the project's strategies resonate with local needs and cultural contexts, making it more effective at the community level.

SWAPNO highlights the importance of decentralized governance, where Union Parishads provide organizational infrastructure for communication and program implementation. The success of SWAPNO emphasizes the necessity of local governance to ensure the project is responsive to the needs of the community.

The Strengthening Local Governance Project (SLG) by BRAC also emphasizes local governance and community mobilization, demonstrating the importance of governance interventions to promote pro-poor policies (Panday, 2018). SLG focuses on capacity-building of local government officials, while SWAPNO relies on community-led methods, such as miking and engagement with religious figures. This distinction shows that while both projects rely on local governance, SWAPNO utilizes more culturally sensitive, community-based approaches, as opposed to SLG's focus on governance capacity and systemic reforms.

❖ **Gender-Sensitive Development Communication**

Servaes (2008) and Malikhao (2010) emphasize theoretical frameworks of participatory communication and cultural sensitivity. While they highlight the importance of local engagement and cultural adaptation, their focus remains largely conceptual and framework-driven, without a direct emphasis on economic empowerment. In contrast, the SWAPNO project takes these theoretical principles and applies them in a practical context, providing concrete solutions through skills development and economic independence, rather than merely focusing on theoretical aspects of cultural relevance or gender equality.

According to Waisbord (2015), development communication should prioritize gender equality alongside economic development, which aligns with the goals of SWAPNO. The SWAPNO project exemplifies the application of gender-sensitive communication by empowering ultra-poor women through practical skills training, job creation, and economic independence (UNDP, 2020). Unlike traditional, theory-based approaches, SWAPNO directly implements participatory communication, allowing women to become active participants in the development process. This approach fosters gender equality and empowerment through actionable steps, thereby ensuring sustainable outcomes in the long term.

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the impact of the SWAPNO project on ultra-poor women in Jamalpur District. The methodology involved both qualitative and quantitative data collection, which were analyzed using manual thematic coding and descriptive statistical methods.

❖ Data Collection Methods

The data for this research was collected using two primary methods:

Surveys: A survey with open-ended questions was conducted among the beneficiaries of the SWAPNO project. The survey will focus on gathering quantitative data regarding their experiences with the project, their income levels, training experiences, and the long-term effects of the project on their lives.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with project associates, local leaders, to gather qualitative data on the communication strategies used in SWAPNO. The interviews will focus on how C4D strategies were applied, challenges faced in reaching the beneficiaries, and the overall effectiveness of communication methods such as miking and community meetings.

❖ Qualitative Data Analysis

For the qualitative analysis, the interviews and open-ended survey responses were coded manually to identify emerging themes and patterns. The coding process followed the steps outlined below.

❖ Quantitative Data Analysis

For the quantitative analysis, the closed-ended survey responses were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics. Percentages were calculated for demographic characteristics, income levels, and training benefits.

❖ Population and Sampling

The population for this research consists of the beneficiaries of the SWAPNO project. Given the rural setting of the project, Jamalpur district was chosen due to the district's high poverty rate. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who are directly involved in the project and can provide meaningful insights. The sample size for the qualitative component includes 15 beneficiaries who were selected from Islampur and Melandaho sub-districts of Jamalpur District. The beneficiaries were chosen to represent a range of ages, backgrounds, and experiences to provide a diverse perspective on the impact of the SWAPNO project.

❖ Survey Data Presentation

To understand the aftereffects of the project's work, the researcher asked some close-ended and open-ended questions to the beneficiaries. 15 beneficiaries participated in the survey. The survey result is shown below.

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Beneficiaries (N=15)

The figure shows the distribution of beneficiaries across different age groups. The largest proportion of beneficiaries, 33.3%, falls within the 41-45 age group, followed by 26.7% in the 36-40 age group. Smaller percentages of beneficiaries are represented in the 46-50 and 31-35 age groups, each contributing 13.3% of the total. Lastly, the 20-30 age group also makes up 13.3% of the sample.

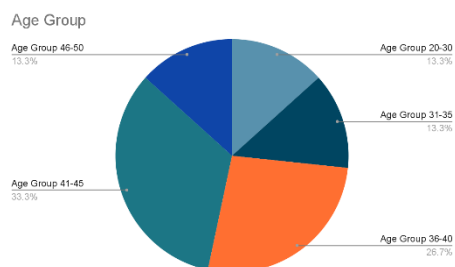


Figure 1 This distribution highlights that the majority of the participants are in the mid-age range, specifically between 41-45 years

Figure 2: Current profession of Beneficiaries (N=15)

They were trained with different skill sets in their training events with SWAPNO so that they could survive after the project ended. Current profession illustrates the distribution of beneficiaries' current professions after receiving training through the SWAPNO project. The largest group, 53.3%, is involved in Business/Shop keeping, indicating that the majority of beneficiaries have ventured into small-scale entrepreneurship. Cattle Farming follows as the second most common profession, with 26.7% of beneficiaries engaged in it. A smaller portion, 13.3%, is involved in Agriculture, while a smaller group of 6.7% remains Housemakers. These results highlight the impact of the project's training in providing diverse skills to empower the ultra-poor women economically and help them sustain themselves after the project's conclusion.

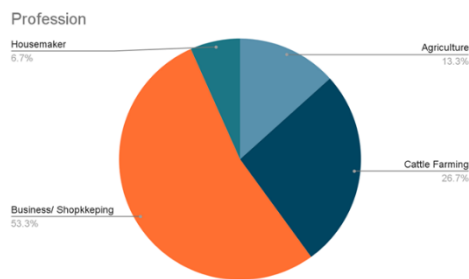


Figure 2 shows 93.3% of beneficiaries are engaged in some form of work, either in Business/Shop keeping, Cattle Farming, or Agriculture.

Figure 3: Marital / Husband's Status (N=15)

SWAPNO's beneficiaries are ultra-poor women who are widowed, divorced, or whose husband is disabled. It was important to know the statistics of their husband's status. It shows beneficiaries based on their marital status, specifically focusing on the status of their husbands. The majority, 66.7%, of the beneficiaries are widowed, which reflects the high proportion of women in the SWAPNO project who are living without a spouse. 20% are divorced, while 13.3% have disabled husbands. These statistics highlight the vulnerability of the beneficiaries in the SWAPNO project, as many are facing significant social and economic challenges due to the absence or disability of their spouses.

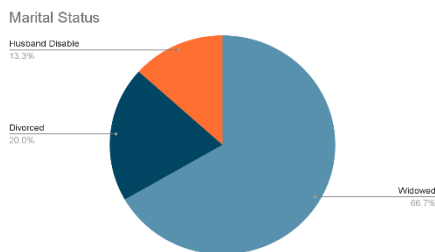


Figure 3 The majority, 66.7%, of the beneficiaries are widowed

Figure 4: Source of Information (N=15)

The survey shows that the beneficiaries were informed by three mediums. They are through Miking, through union workers of SWAPNO, and the members of the union parishad. The majority, 60%, learned about the project through miking, a common communication tool used to reach rural communities. 26.7% were informed by members of the union, and 13.3% learned about the project through Union Workers associated with SWAPNO. These findings demonstrate the varied communication channels employed by the project to ensure its reach across different segments of the population.

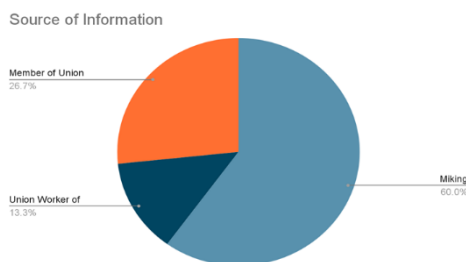


Figure 4 Shows Miking was most effective medium in reaching to beneficiaries

Figure 5: Did they face any obstacle (N=15)

This question was asked whether the beneficiaries face any kind of obstacles from family and society while working in this Project. The majority, 86.7%, reported that they did not face any obstacles, while a smaller portion, 13.3%, indicated that they did experience some challenges. This suggests that, for most beneficiaries, the project's implementation was smooth, though a minority faced issues during the process.

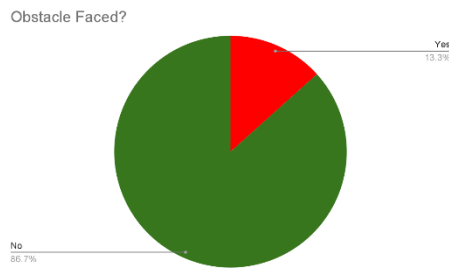


Figure 5 - 86.7%, reported that they did not face any obstacles

Figure 6: Most used life skill (N=15)

Figure 6 shows the usefulness of life skill training for beneficiaries after the end SWAPNO project. The most used training areas were Business Work and Cattle Farming, with 9 beneficiaries each. Agricultural Work followed with 6 beneficiaries, and Basic Education was considered useful by 7 beneficiaries. Health & Nutrition had the lowest number, with only 4 beneficiaries finding it useful.

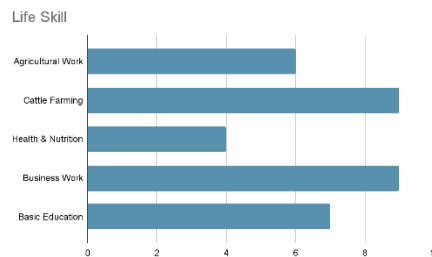


Figure 6 suggests that practical, income-generating skills were more widely applied in daily life

Figure 7: Present Monthly Income (N=15)

The researcher sought how much the beneficiaries are earning each month. The majority, 5 beneficiaries (33.3%), earn between 1000-2000 BDT per month. A notable number, 4 beneficiaries (26.7%), reported earning between 2000-3000 BDT. 3 beneficiaries (20%) earn 5000+ BDT, while 2 beneficiaries (13.3%) reported earnings below 1000 BDT. Interestingly, 2 beneficiaries (13.3%) were unable to specify their monthly income, labeled as Unclear income.

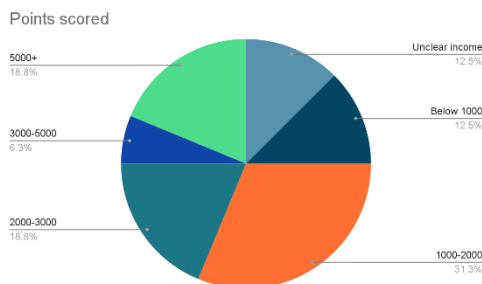


Figure 7 indicates a varied income range, with most beneficiaries falling in the lower-income brackets

Findings

The implementation of Communication for Development (C4D) strategies within the SWAPNO project has proven to be highly effective in empowering ultra-poor women, enabling them to transition progressively out of poverty. This success is consistent with Mefalopulos’s (2008) argument that sustained engagement fosters ownership and empowerment. By offering training in seven core life skills, SWAPNO has yielded significant improvements in beneficiaries’ livelihoods, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary for long-term economic stability.

❖ Life Skills Training and Economic Impact

The life skills training programs offered by SWAPNO—covering topics such as leadership development, gender equality, rights and entitlements, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, self-learning in basic accounting, health and nutrition, and small business management—have had a substantial impact on the daily lives of the 15 women included in this study. This supports Quebral’s (1971) theory that education and skill-building are central to development communication. Among these, training in basic accounting, health and nutrition, and small business management has been particularly effective. Eight beneficiaries have successfully established businesses, such as small shops and agricultural ventures, which has led to increased financial independence.

❖ Agricultural and Cattle Farming Training

The agricultural and cattle farming training provided by SWAPNO has also had positive results. Two beneficiaries have engaged in agricultural activities, while four

others have turned to cattle farming as a sustainable livelihood. These findings align with Servaes (2008), who emphasizes that diversified livelihood strategies enhance community resilience. Beneficiaries have reported using a portion of their wages and profits from SWAPNO-related initiatives to further invest in their businesses, demonstrating self-reliance.

❖ **Age Group and Economic Stability**

Notably, women in the 36-50 age group have demonstrated a greater level of financial stability, with some beneficiaries benefiting from contributions made by their children, further enhancing their economic resilience. This finding supports Mefalopulos's (2008) claim that contextual factors, such as age and family support, significantly influence the success of development programs.

❖ **Family and Social Support**

A significant finding from the study is the lack of opposition from family members of the SWAPNO beneficiaries. This indicates a positive shift in attitudes regarding women's participation in the labor force in Bangladesh. Several factors contribute to this change, including the nation's economic progress, increased educational attainment among women, and the growing recognition of women's rights in society. This supports Waisbord's (2015) argument that cultural shifts and policy changes play crucial roles in empowering marginalized groups, particularly women.

❖ **Communication Strategies and Cultural Sensitivity**

The success of SWAPNO's communication strategies can also be attributed to the involvement of union employees and members of the Union Parishad in helping beneficiaries participate in the project. The use of miking and union workers to disseminate information reflects a nuanced understanding of cultural and social norms within Bangladeshi society. This approach supports Agunga's (2010) assertion that context-specific communication strategies are essential for effective development communication. As Md. Zahidul Haque, a representative of the SWAPNO project, emphasizes, the comprehensive approach to beneficiary recruitment, which blends traditional and innovative communication methods, has ensured broad outreach, especially in rural areas where access to digital technology is limited.

❖ **Ongoing Support and Long-term Sustainability**

The ongoing support provided to beneficiaries is another key factor that distinguishes SWAPNO from many other projects. Unlike projects that conclude once initial objectives are achieved, SWAPNO continues to offer assistance through female ward members, who act as intermediaries between the beneficiaries and the project. This sustained engagement ensures that beneficiaries receive continued guidance and follow-up support, significantly enhancing the likelihood of their long-term success. This supports Mefalopulos's (2008) argument that sustained engagement is crucial for long-term impact and ownership.

❖ **Purposive Sampling and Thematic Saturation**

The sample size of 15 beneficiaries in this study is sufficient to achieve thematic saturation, as it covers a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, providing a comprehensive understanding of the project's impact. The purposive sampling method, though non-random, was carefully designed to include beneficiaries with varied characteristics (age, background, and type of livelihood) to ensure that the sample was representative of the broader SWAPNO population. Efforts were made to minimize selection bias by selecting beneficiaries from different income groups and training sectors, ensuring that the findings reflect the diverse experiences of women participating in the project.

❖ **Monthly Income and the Definition of Ultra-Poor**

The findings regarding monthly income reveal that while 3 beneficiaries (20%) report earning over 5000+ BDT, the remaining 80% of beneficiaries earn less than 5000 BDT. However, it is important to note that the income reported does not necessarily reflect the beneficiaries' extreme poverty status, as other family members often contribute to the household income. According to the PKSf (2020) definition, ultra-poor households in Bangladesh are those with a monthly income below the lower poverty line, typically under 5000 BDT. While a significant portion of beneficiaries earn below this threshold, the financial situation is often supported by other family members, indicating that their overall economic situation might be more stable than the income data alone suggests.

❖ **Collaboration between Government and NGOs**

Finally, the success of the SWAPNO project underscores the importance of collaboration between government agencies and NGOs. Zahidul Haque stresses that

the combination of NGO adaptability with the resources and authority of the government creates a synergistic effect that maximizes the impact of development initiatives. This supports Panday's (2018) argument that collaborative governance between local authorities and NGOs is essential for successful project implementation.

Conclusion

The findings from the SWAPNO project demonstrate the effectiveness of Communication for Development (C4D) strategies in empowering ultra-poor women in Jamalpur District, Bangladesh. The project's use of life skills training and community-based communication methods such as miking and union worker engagement led to improvements in beneficiaries' livelihoods, financial independence, and changes in societal attitudes toward women's labor force participation. These outcomes align with Mefalopulos's (2008) assertion that participatory communication fosters ownership and long-term impact. The success of SWAPNO emphasizes the importance of context-specific communication, supporting theories that advocate for local engagement and cultural sensitivity (Mefalopulos, 2008; Quebral, 1971). For policymakers and practitioners, the project offers a model for women's empowerment and poverty alleviation, highlighting the value of local communication channels and sustained follow-up through community leaders. Unlike microcredit systems that often lead to debt, SWAPNO emphasizes training, employment, and savings, offering debt-free paths out of poverty, making it a viable alternative to microcredit. Future research could include comparative case studies to explore the adaptability of SWAPNO's approach in other regions or countries, as well as longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of the project. Additionally, the mixed-methods approach used in this research provides a comprehensive model for future C4D evaluations, offering a holistic view of the impact of community-based communication strategies in similar settings worldwide.

Areas of further study

- Analyze How Efficient SWAPNO's Strategy to Reduce Poverty Really Is: Although the purpose of your research was to investigate the use of Communication for Development (C4D) in the SWAPNO project, further insights could be gained from doing an investigation into how successful the initiative has been in general at alleviating poverty. Performing an

analysis of the project's impact on the beneficiaries' income levels, asset ownership, and economic prospects is one possible step in this direction. The investigation of the long-term viability of the project's outcomes would also be beneficial to the recipients of this project.

- **Analyze How Beneficiaries in Various Districts Have Been Affected by the Project:** It would be interesting to compare the experiences of SWAPNO beneficiaries in Jamalpur district with those in a coastal district, taking into consideration the influence that natural disasters have on attempts to alleviate poverty. Jamalpur district is located inland from the shore. This comparison has the potential to shed light on the individual difficulties and opportunities that are faced by beneficiaries in various geographical contexts. The results could be used to inform the adaption of C4D techniques to satisfy the specific requirements of coastal communities.

Limitations

While conducting this research, several limitations were encountered:

Sample Size: The sample size of only 15 beneficiaries from one district was too small to fully understand the scope and impact of the project across a broader population. The experiences of these beneficiaries may not be representative of others from different districts.

Mitigation: Future studies could partner with local NGOs to increase the sample size to 50+ beneficiaries from multiple districts, ensuring more diverse perspectives and greater generalizability of results.

Time Constraints: Due to limited time, the researcher was unable to conduct thorough research on a larger population. This time limitation affected the depth of the research, restricting the ability to gather data from more beneficiaries.

Mitigation: Allowing for an extended research timeline would enable working with a larger sample size and conducting more detailed follow-ups, leading to more accurate and comprehensive findings.

Budget Limitations: The researcher faced budget constraints, as funding was not available to cover extensive travel or compensate a larger group of participants. This limited the researcher's ability to expand the sample size or visit additional districts.

Mitigation: In future research, securing external funding or partnering with organizations could help cover travel and logistical costs, allowing for broader data collection across multiple districts.

Data Accuracy: The beneficiaries' lack of formal education posed challenges in obtaining accurate data, particularly regarding age. Since many beneficiaries were unable to provide reliable age information, this hindered the researcher's ability to examine the impact of age on success rates.

Mitigation: Future studies could include training sessions to ensure that beneficiaries better understand the importance of providing accurate data

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Annexation 1.

Survey Questions for Beneficiaries (Questions to the beneficiaries was asked in Bangla)

1. নামঃ (Name)
2. বয়সঃ (Age)
3. আপনার পেশাঃ (Current Occupation)
4. ঠিকানাঃ (Address)
5. বৈবাহিক অবস্থাঃ (Marital Status)
6. কীভাবে স্বপ্ন প্রজেক্ট সম্পর্কে কার থেকে বা কোথা থেকে জানতে পারলেনঃ (Who informed you about SWAPNO project)
7. স্বপ্ন প্রজেক্ট থেকে কী কী শিখেছেনঃ (What did you learn from SWAPNO)
8. স্বপ্নের সাথে কাজ করতে গিয়ে পরিবার, সমাজ থেকে কোন ধরনের অসুবিধার শিকার হয়েছেন (Did you face any obstacles while working with SWAPNO project from family and society)
9. বর্তমানে আপনার মাসিক আয় কত টাকাঃ (What is your monthly income)
10. কর্মক্ষেত্রে স্বপ্নের ট্রেনিং কতটা কাজে লাগছেঃ (Is your SWAPNO's training benefiting you)

Annexation 2.

Interview Questions

Interview question of Md. Zahidul Haque, working as a Financial Monitoring Assistant in the SWAPNO project is also the District in Charge of the Jamalpur district of project SWPNO.

1. Question: Since when, did the project SWAPNO start working in the Jamalpur district?
2. Question: how did you reach your targeted audience? Which communication tool did you use?
3. Question: What's your selection process?
4. Question: Did you face any gender-based obstacles while approaching beneficiaries?
5. Question: How do you engage them in work?
6. Question: What is the salary structure?
7. Question: How do you ensure the beneficiaries will be self-reliant after your project ends?
8. Question: Apart from life skill training do you have any other initiatives?
9. Question: Who overlooks them or takes follow-ups when your project is done?

Interview question of Mr. Md Shafiu Alam, the Union parishad chairman of 5 no. Noyanagar Union Parishad, Melandaho Upazila, Jamalpur.

1. Question: How the Union Parishad is attached to the project?
2. Question: What contribution is the Union Parishad making here on the project?
3. Question: Did you face any gender-based obstacles while reaching out to the beneficiaries?
4. Question: Other NGOs are working in your union. But how is SWAPNO different than the others?

Annexation 3

In-depth Interview:

The researcher interviewed Md. Zahidul Haque working as a Financial Monitoring Assistant in the SWAPNO project is also the District in Charge of the Jamalpur district of project SWPNO.

Question: Since when, did the project SWAPNO start working in the Jamalpur district?

Answer: I joined here for one year. However, the project's work has been conducted here since 2019. We are working here in Jamalpur on 5 upazilas (sub-districts), 45 unions consisting of

1620 beneficiaries.

Question: how did you reach your targeted audience? Which communication tool did you use?

Answer: We took a very holistic approach to communication. Here in this region. Miking is very effective. So we do “miking” on those 45 unions from where we have our beneficiaries. Most of the beneficiaries came to us after hearing the announcement of the Miking, here in this region. Miking is very effective. So we did “miking” in those 45 unions from where we have our beneficiaries. Most of the beneficiaries came to us after hearing the announcement of the Miking. In addition to that, our union workers also conducted a survey from which we got information about the possible beneficiaries. The local administration for example, the union parishad helped us a lot to our cause as this is a joint project by UNDP and the government. The members of the union know almost every family’s situation. So they also reach out personally and encourage the ultra-poor women to apply to become a beneficiary. We also use the platform of Friday prayer gatherings. The Imam reads out the brochure and thus the message reaches people very well.

Question: What's your selection process?

Answer: There is a selection day when the applicants come to us with their NID card copies. We can pick only four beneficiaries from one Union parishad ward which means 36 beneficiaries from one Union parishad. So if there are more than four applicants from one union, we have to do a lottery. The winners from the lottery get selected as a beneficiary. If for some reason, one of the beneficiaries cannot continue, we pick one from that lottery who wasn't selected the first time.

Question: Did you face any gender-based obstacles while approaching beneficiaries?

Answer: Most of the beneficiaries’ husbands are dead. That makes them the head of the family. For those who are divorced or with disabled husbands, their fate is also the same. No such incident has happened where we had to deal with or persuade the beneficiary’s husband or family members to let them go to work.

Question: How do you engage them in work?

Answer: They are all engaged in the construction work of a government project for example: road construction, govt. school building, graveyard renovation, or any other work where the government is involved. We clear the instructions of how and what they will work on. They get divided into groups each consisting of 12 members.

Question: What is the salary structure?

Answer: It depends on the work hours and work criteria. Usually, it's not less than 200 a day. If the daily wage is 200 then 150 takas is given to the beneficiaries and 50 taka goes to the provident fund which is given back to them after 1 year.

Question: How do you ensure that the beneficiaries will be self-reliant after your project ends?

Answer: We provide them with Life Skills training in 7 different subjects. They are:

1. Leadership development
2. Gender and development
3. Rights and entitlement
4. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction
5. Self-learning- easy accounting
6. Health and nutrition

7. Basic principles of small business

Question: Apart from life skill training do you have any other initiatives?

Answer: We also train them how to properly utilize their lands for agriculture. Training in agriculture is mandatory for all. There is also training in cattle farming. These trainings are conducted by Upazila agriculture officers or freshly graduated agriculture background students.

Question: Who overlooks them or takes follow-ups when your project is done?

Answer: The female ward member does that on behalf of us and the government.

Annexation 4

The researcher also interviewed Mr Md Shafiu Alam, the Union parishad chairman of 5 no. Noyanagar Union Parishad, Melandaho Upazila, Jamalpur.

Question: How the Union Parishad is attached to the project?

Answer: SWAPNO is a project led by the government and facilitated by UNDP. Before starting it, we do a meeting to design the roadmap of our work and coin the plan strategically. UNDP selects the beneficiaries and takes them to work. Then from Union Parishad, we go to visit the construction projects where the beneficiaries are working. We take regular follow-ups of the beneficiaries and gather their information.

Question: What contribution is the Union Parishad making here on the project?

Answer: We look after anything they need. A few months back a big amount of salary money of the beneficiaries was digitally stolen. I filed a case under DSA to rescue the money of the beneficiaries and succeeded. After a few months, they received their salary money.

Question: Did you face any gender-based obstacles while reaching out to the beneficiaries?

Answer: look, most of the people here are living under the line of extreme poverty. And in this area in my union, people work regardless of their gender. So when an opportunity like this comes, nobody refuses it, thinking the women have to go out and have to physically work.

Question: Other NGOs are working in your union. But how is SWAPNO different than the others?

Answer: The government itself is involved in this project, and that makes this project special and apart from the other NGOs' work. People from UNDP come here to select, train the beneficiaries, and allocate them work. we as a part of the local government give them the venue for beneficiary selection, training, and environment, reach beneficiaries who are socio-economically vulnerable, and contact the imam of the mosque for an announcement in Jumma prayer. We also take follow-ups on the progress of the project, and the overall blackness of the beneficiaries' finances.

Appendices 1

Table 1

Age Group	Number of People
Age Group 20-30	2
Age Group 31-35	2
Age Group 36-40	4
Age Group 41-45	5
Age Group 46-50	2

Table 2

Profession	Number of people involved
Agriculture	2
Cattle Farming	4
Business/ Shopkeeping	8
Housemaker	1
Industrial worker	0

Table 3

Status of The Marriage	Number
Widowed	10
Divorced	3
Husband Disable	2

Table 4

Source of Information	Number of People Influenced
Miking	9
Union Worker of SWAPNO	2
Member of Union Parishad	4

Table 5

Adversaries	Number of Beneficiaries
Yes	2
No	13

Table 6

The usefulness of Training in Sectors	Number of Beneficiaries
Agricultural Work	6
Cattle Farming	9
Health & Nutrition	4
Business Work	9
Basic Education	7

Figure 7

Monthly Income	Number of Beneficiaries (15)
Unclear income	2
Below 1000	2
1000-2000	5
2000-3000	3
3000-5000	1
5000+	3

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