



End Line/Project Completion Report



Ecological & Local Solution for Stunting Prevention among Poor Children by Empowering Mothers in Hard to Reach High Barind Tracts of Bangladesh

Project Period: January 2018 to December 2020



Submission To:
Ashar Gan-Onlus, Italy.

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Submitted By:
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Executive Summary:

INTRODUCTION:

Ashar Gan Onlus funded a three year long project on *Ecological & Local Solution for Stunting Prevention among Poor Children by Empowering Mothers in Hard to Reach High Barind Tracts of Bangladesh*. SPACE started implementation of the project from January 2018 and ended implementation in December 2020. The main purpose of the project was *497 children, 840 adolescents, women and 813 men from 440 extremely poor households of 3 villages under Gobratola Union of Sadar Upazila of Chapainawabgonj district have come out from severe health risks causing massive fecal diseases and the effects malnutrition by December 2020*. The implementing organization has identified and implemented hardware and software mixed activities in achieving the purpose.

This end line/project completion report represents a comparative analysis, progress and changes among the target population during the project period. At the same time, this report also reflects the implemented activities along with the implementation strategies, addressing the cross-cutting issues, effects, major challenges & learning from the project.

MAJOR CHANGES INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT:

The project has contributed much in bringing about significant changes in the internal and external areas in the project areas. The major changes may be quoted as visible changes made in the communities; people are more aware about ecological sanitation, especially , the Ecological toilets, its needs for the environmental sanitation, behavioural change & practice have been increased, priority to the UDD (Urine Diversion & Dehydration Toilets, organic farming, nutrition & prevention of stunting growth among children, access to safe water through rainwater harvesting, hand washing practice in five critical issues and childcare services of safe motherhoods. Overall the environmental change has been started by the active community participation. The major significant results are the improvement of child health and decreasing trends of water & excreta born diseases have been reduced in a remarkable manner. The project has also further contributed in strengthening capacities of SPACE in result-based efficient working and combating various challenges including the Covid-19.

On the other hands, there was a significant changes found in the sanitation perception of the local administration and government counterpart. The government authorities commented the UDD toilets as the sustainable sanitation solution. They also shared the effects of UDD toilets and the major activities of the projects at the District Coordination Meeting where other organizations got the information about the project & its implementation approaches where other organizations got opportunities for new learning.

GENDER SENSITIVITY

Taking the gender sensitivity issues in active consideration, the project interventions dedicated In establishing the equal opportunities both for women and men in the project areas & resulted in creating an equitable & convenient environment. In purpose to do this, the project has implemented relevant activities for addressing the gender sensitivity aspects, such as, incorporating suitable massages, involvement of women representatives in the local committees so that women could participate in the

decision making process and could raise their collective voices; installation of UDD Toilets at close to the sleeping rooms & inside decorations are made women friendly. The other accesses for rainwater tanks, improved cooking stoves, hand washing devices etc. inside the households considering the privacy & security aspects of women & Children. Involvement of men & boys in cleaning the UDD Toilets, collecting drinking & domestic waters, which were the sole responsibilities of the women & girls.

POVERTY REDUCTION:

The project interventions mainly concentrated to the extremely poor people in case of providing the materialistic supports and only the materialistic supports were designed considering the contexts of poor households. To increase their access to the project interventions, the project created subsidized provisions ranging from 50% to 80% costs while the poor households had to pay only 20% to 50% costs for becoming the owners of the project components. The project has duly emphasized in income generating & Job-creation related activities through organic farming, homestead gardening, selling soil conditioners produced from disinfected faeces etc. The project disseminated required messages for all people through organizing various types of need-based and audience-friendly awareness & advocacy campaign related activities.

HEALTH & NUTRITION:

In purpose to contribute in improving women and children's health, the project interventions were always careful in producing nutritious foods through cultivating small size organic farming and gardening at homestead. Besides, the project duly focused to the prevention of stunting growth, de-worming, micronutrient, physical growth measurement etc. The project had done majority portions of these mentioned through maintaining collaboration with the Government community health workers.

HUMAN RIGHTS:

The project interventions always considered the human right issues, specially the child rights issues in line with the UN Child Rights Conventions. Integrating with the defined project interventions, the project staffs disseminated information related to primary school enrolment, child protection, healthy caring, prevention of child abuse, prevention of child labour, formation & orientation of children brigade at the project villages etc.

PROTECTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV):

The project interventions always followed the principles of PSEA (Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) imparting orientation to the project staffs and the community leaders to prevent the GBV. To prevent the GBV, the project constructed women & girl's friendly UDD Toilets at a place which duly maintains privacy of the women and the adolescent girls; set up other components, such as, improved cooking stoves, rainwater tanks, hand wash device and waste disposal units at the doorsteps of all targeted households.

STATUS OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

According to the project plan, the project included three major types of activities to achieve the project purpose and objectives. Based on the project nature, these activities were categorized into three phases: i) Preliminary activities; ii) Awareness & Training activities; iii) Construction/Installation related activities. According to the field findings, 100% of all the above-mentioned activities were executed duly maintaining the quantitative and qualitative aspects. All activities made a significant difference between the baseline and end line situations.

MAJOR CHALLENGES:

The Project interventions identified a bundle of challenges during implementation period. The challenges are:

- Unavailability of funds due to late approval of the project by the NGO Affairs Bureau;
- Managing emerged situations between higher demands and limited project resources;
- Male dominated community situations and less priorities of women's needs, security & privacy by the male counterparts;
- Restricted movements, organizing the awareness sessions and contacting target people due lock down;
- Heavy rainfall due to longer monsoon and other natural disasters;
- Organizing the target households in cost-sharing through cash & manual labor due to financial poverty of target households which was also the effects of Covid-19;
- Travelling to field by the project staffs due to lockdown could be mentioned as the major problems.
- Discontinuation of skilled construction masons due to seasonal harvesting, illness and other personal factors;
- Market price hike of construction materials;

MAJOR LEARNINGS:

SPACE has picked up few learning from the implementation as mentioned in below;

- i) Improved rapport building, respecting people; effective communication, committed & quality works contribute in enhancing people's trust upon the implementing & funding agencies;
- ii) Mobile phone is an effective communication with project communities & monitoring tool for project monitoring during Covid, risks and disaster periods;
- iii) Better works come from effective & practical learning from the community stakeholders;
- iv) Effective communication & collaboration with the Local Government Institutes (LGI) Local Elected Bodies (LEB) and Local administration along with the private sector operators contribute in risks management;
- v) Gender sensitive interventions with especial focus to safety & security of the children, adolescent girls & women lead in sustainability of project achievements;
- vi) Effective awareness leads in enhancing willingness to pay by the households for cost sharing to hardware supports contributes in enhancing ownership attitude of households that drives in sustainability;

Conclusion

Despite various challenges and obstacles during the reporting period, SPACE could efficiently manage its committed project staffs in quality implementation of the project activities. From its learning and experiences, SPACE would like to recommend Ashar Gan to continue the project supports with increased financial resources, project period and to strengthen capacities of target people to address targets of SDG.



The main Report

Introduction:

Bangladesh is located in the tropical MONSOON region and its climate is characterized by high temperature, heavy rainfall, often excessive humidity, and fairly marked seasonal variations. The most striking feature of its climate is the reversal of the wind circulation between summer and winter, which is an integral part of the circulation system of the South Asian subcontinent. The dry season begins first in the west-central part of the country by mid-December, where its duration is about four months, and it advances toward east and south, reaching the eastern and southern margins of the country by mid-March where its duration is about one month. The pre-monsoon hot season is characterized by high temperatures and the occurrence of **THUNDERSTORMS**. April is the hottest month when mean temperatures range from 27°C in the east and south to 31°C in the west-central part of the country. In the western part, summer temperature sometimes reaches up to 40°C.

Temperature January is the coldest month in Bangladesh. However, the cold winter air that moves into the country from the northwestern part of India loses much of its intensity by the time it reaches the northwestern corner of the country. Average temperatures in January vary from about 17°C in the northwestern and northeastern parts to 20°-21°C in the coastal areas. In late December and early January, minimum temperature in the extreme northwestern and northeastern parts of the country reaches within 4 to 7 degrees of freezing point. As the winter season progresses into the pre-monsoon hot season, temperature rises, reaching the maximum in April, which is the middle of the pre-monsoon hot season. Average temperatures in April vary from about 27°C in the northeast to 30°C in the extreme west central part of the country. In some places in greater Rajshahi and Kushtia districts the maximum temperature in summer season rises up to 40°C or more. A large part of the greater Rajshahi district is regarded as the Semi-Arid areas. Semi-arid zone of Bangladesh covers around 40% country lands is located in North-western part where drought is a natural phenomenon for eight-nine months in a year. Average temperature is 40°C- 42°C during extremely dry season. Annual rainfall is 1200mm-1500mm which is lower than national average. Effects of Climate Change cause irregular rainfall, which contribute in aggravating droughts. This area may be divided into three categories: i) Low-dry areas covered by mostly plain lands, dry season starts earlier and shallow-wells do not work; ii) Dry areas covered by contour lands and Deep-Set pumps do not work; iii) extremely dry areas covered by higher lands, dry season comes earlier and existing water pumps do not work.

In purpose to contribute in combating these environmental degraded situations, SPACE has implemented a three year long project named as ***Ecological & Local Solution for Stunting Prevention among Poor Children by Empowering Mothers in Hard to Reach High Barind Tracts of Bangladesh***. Ashar Gan Onlus, Italy has funded the project. The project has started from January 2018 and hopefully will be ended by December 2020. Goal of the project is to *empower poor women for actively participating in improved Family health and nutrition to stunting prevention and protection of poor children to achieve defined targets of SDG* while its purpose is *497 children, 840 adolescents, women and 813 men from 440 extremely*

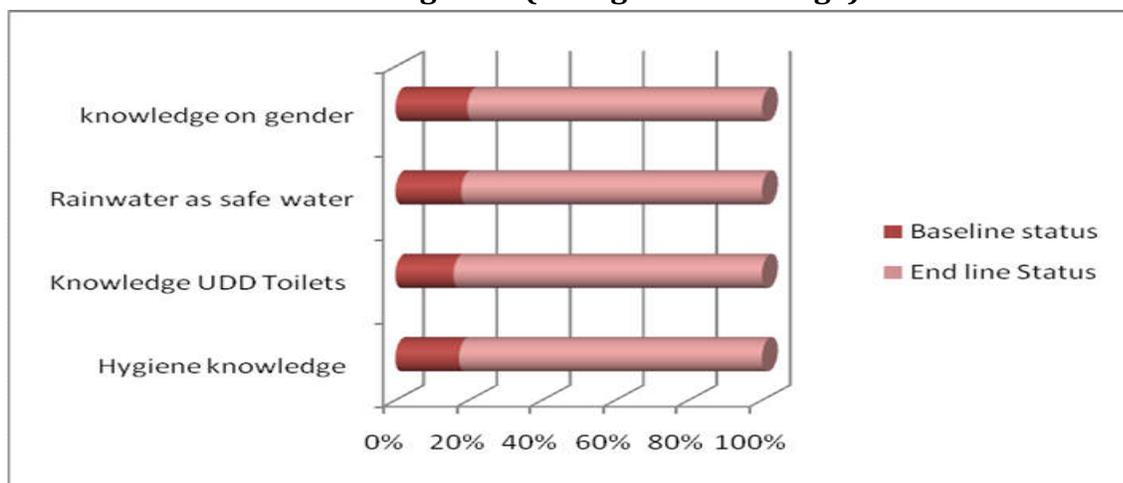
poor households of 3 villages under Gobratola Union of Sadar Upazila of Chapainawabgonj district have come out from severe health risks causing massive fecal diseases and the effects malnutrition by December 2020. Specific objectives of the project is to: a) enhance knowledge on women empowerment, family health, sustainable agriculture, nutrition, stunting prevention and child protection among the target communities; b) Increase access to gender sensitive, comfortable and environmental friendly affordable and sustainable WASH & organic farming & marketing facilities among targeted poor households and c) to strengthen capacities of target people on improved O&M, management, recycling, safe handling and reuse of treated human excreta in farming and economic activities. To achieve the purpose and objectives of the project SPACE undertook a group of relevant activities included *baseline & end line survey, formation of CBOs & mother's club, Training, awareness & hygiene promotion, Installation of Eco-toilets, Small farming and Homestead gardening, Develop market chain, Rainwater harvesting, Waste management and recycling, Installation of Improved Cooking Stoves (ICS), Micro-nutrient distribution, de-worming, ANC, Referral and PNC services, Child Birth Registration, Monitoring & reporting etc.*

During the reporting period, SPACE has implemented activities as describes in the following:

Awareness Raising Activity

To enhance people's knowledge on degraded environmental situations and their roles in combating the situations, SPACE organized & conducted 100% of the planned awareness rising activities in form of *Project launching Workshop, Community Leader's sensitization, Courtyard sessions, child to adult sessions, popular theaters, school sessions etc.* Through organizing these audience-focused sessions, SPACE covered around 10500 direct & indirect beneficiaries, which was much higher than the primary planning. It was happened because of the project's acceptance reached among the increasing number of primary & secondary stakeholders. Field findings indicated the following changes.

Figure-1 (Change of knowledge)



The figure No.1 indicates that during baseline period only 22% people could say the gender as the social factor, 18% people could say rainwater as the drinking water and 17% people could say about UDD Toilets while 21% people had knowledge on hygiene. After the project

interventions, there found a bigger change in the knowledge level. It is over 80% to 90% during the end line survey.

Figure-2

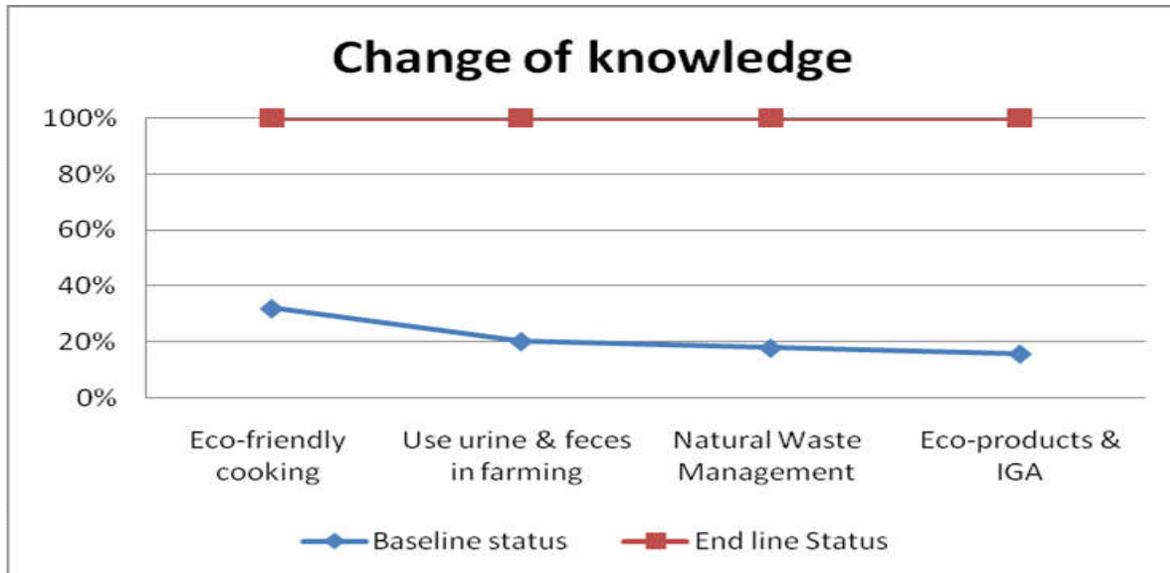


Figure No.2 shows that during baseline period 45% people could say about the benefits of ieco-friendly cooking; only 23% people could say about use of disinfected urine & feces in organic farming; 18% people could say natural waste management and 17% people could say about eco-products as an IGA (Income Generating Activities). Upon completion of the project, around 80% to 95% people could have clear knowledge on the above-mentioned issues during the end line survey.

Figure-3 (Changes in Practice level)

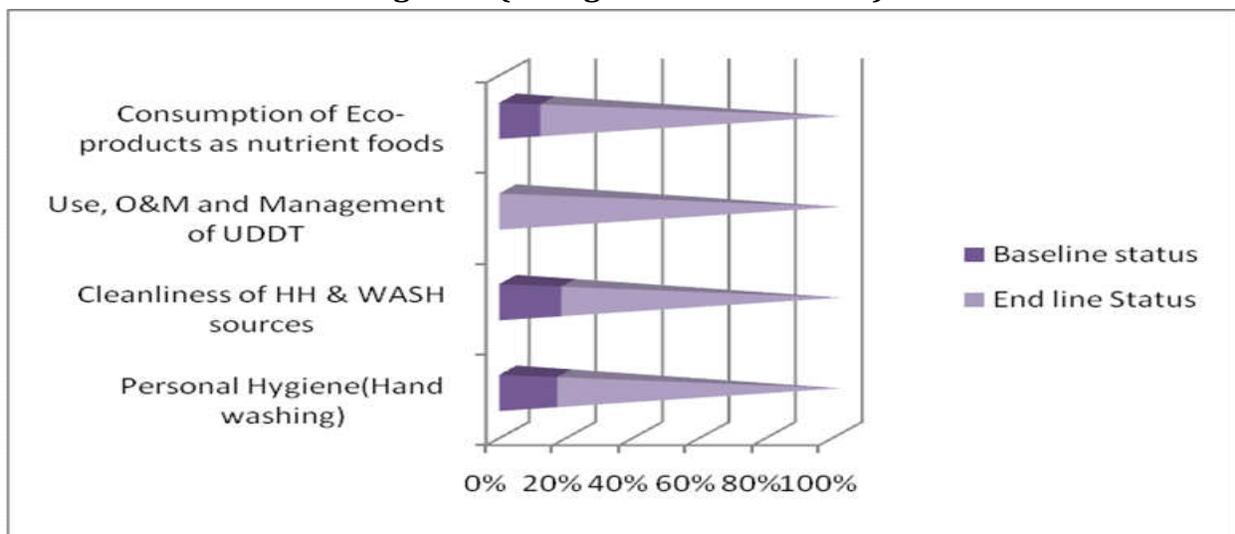


Figure No. 3 presents the changes in practice level of the target people. It further indicates that during baseline period, less than 20% people had personal hygiene practices; but it was not improved; but near to standardazized; around 19% people maintained cleanliness

at their households level; No UDD Toilet users found at the intervened villages while only 12% households consumed organic products without a balanced dietary knowledge and plan. During End line Survey, it was found that around 80% to 90% households efficiently practicing personal Hygiene, keeping their households neat & clean and consuming the organic foods produced from homestead gardens and small farming using disinfected urine and feces.

Figure-4

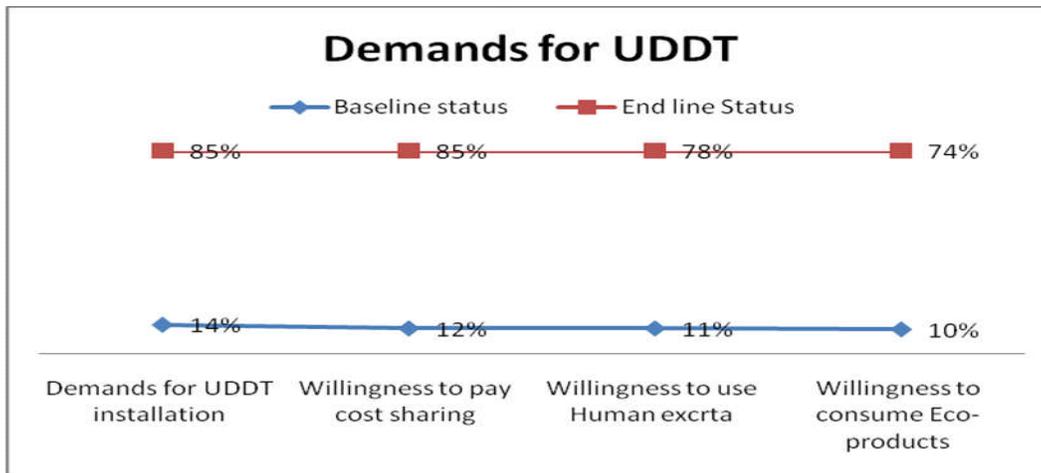


Figure No.4 interprets the demands variances of UDDT among the target households. It shows that during baseline period, less than 15% target households had demands on UDDT installation, willingness to pay cost sharing; use of human excreta in farming and consume eco-products. On the otherhands, the end line survey findings indicate that there were significant changes of perception & demands in installing the UDD Toilets among 74 to 85% households.

Training:

In purpose to strengthen capacities of the target households on use, O&M and management of UDD Toilet; management of human excreta for disinfecting & converting into organic manure, safe transporting application of those manures in farm field and to improve hygiene practices among the target households, SPACE organized and conducted 100% Training courses on UDD Toilet use, O&M and management and Hygiene Promotion under the project and ensured participation by 186 UDD toilet owners and leading women & men. Upon receiving training, the participants could manage UDD toilets and practiced hygiene efficiently. The following figure No. 5 shows the major behavioral changes among the target households.

Figure No.5

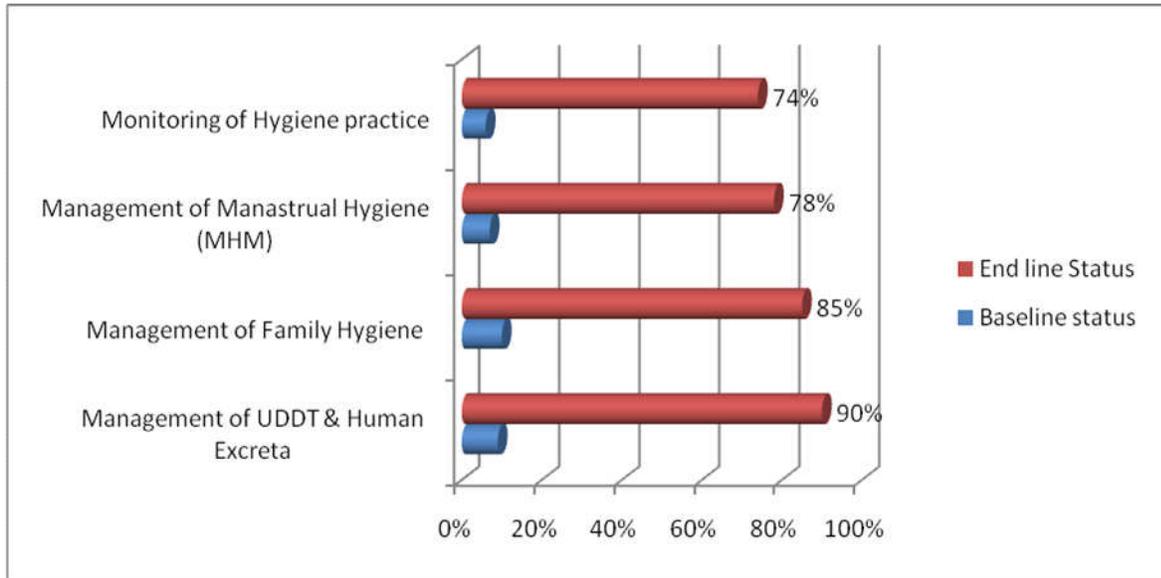


Figure No.5 shows that during baseline period, 10% & less than 10% participants could monitor hygiene practices of other people, management of menstrual hygiene & family hygiene; management of UDDT & human excreta to reuse as economic resources. Upon receiving training from the project. The End line Survey found observed their relevant capacities have been strengthened to 74% to 90% in the mentioned areas.

Installation & Construction of facilities:

In purpose to increase access to sustainable WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) facilities among the target households in the project areas, the project constructed 73 UDD Toilets in against of targeted 68; 150 low-cost Rainwater tanks, 150 hand wash units, 200 improved cooking stoves in against of targeted 150; and 150 waste disposal units. Although those are inadequate in number, have significantly contributed demonstrating a replicable model for the wider scaling up in the same and other areas of the country with the same geographical characteristics. In addition to those, SPACE has arranged 100% demonstration of organic farming plots for small farming and 100% of homestead gardens. The following figures show the changes as the effects of those facilities.

Figure-6

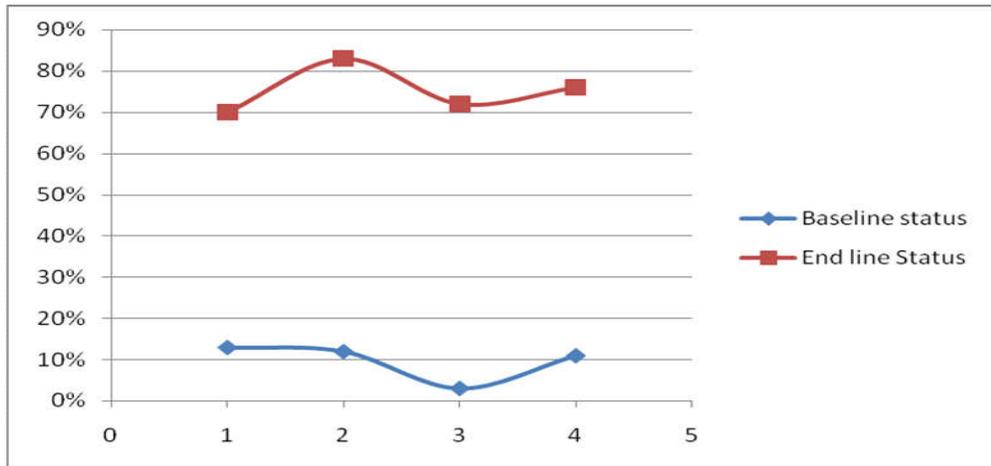


Figure No.6 reveals that during baseline period, 3% to 13% targeted households had access to eco-friendly WASH, cooking system, waste disposal and organic & nutritious foods. Upon the project interventions, the End line survey findings show that there were significant changes ranging from 70% to 83% in the same parameters.

Figure No. 7 (Socio-economic & health benefits)

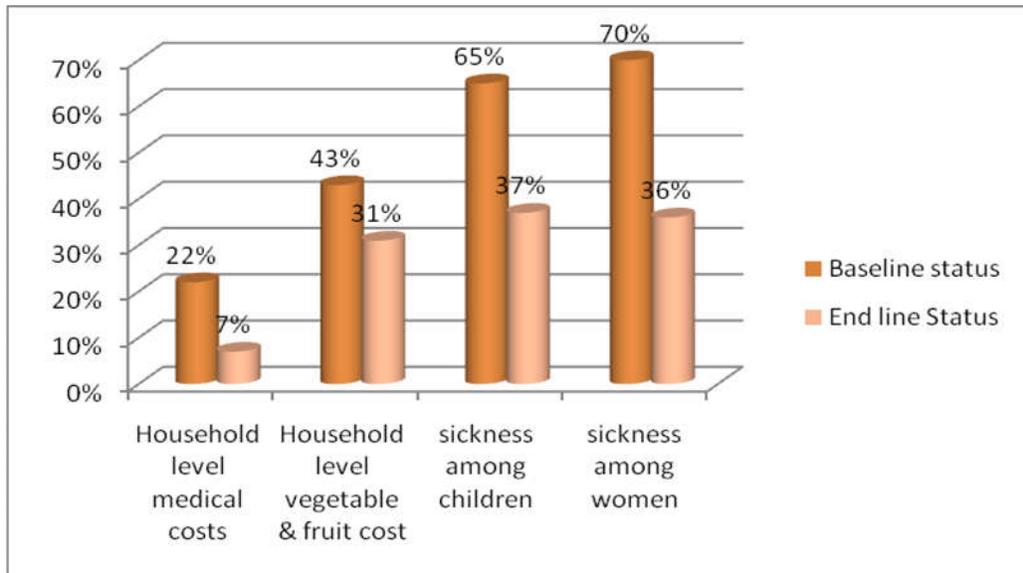


Figure No.7 represents that during baseline period, medical costs of each household was around 22% and vegetable & fruit costs were 43% of their total annual income. The baseline findings further appealed that around 65% found with any form sickness caused by feco-oral or diarrheal diseases while around 70% women & adolescent girls found with any form of women related diseases generated from diarrheal or oro-fecal diseases. End line survey findings show that household level medical costs decreased at 7%; vegetable & fruit cost decreased at 31% while child sickness reduced at 37% and sickness among the women & adolescent girls decreased at 36%. Synergistic results of project implementation

largely contributed in prevention of stunting growth among children and improving health status of the mother & children in the project areas.

Figure No. 8 (Level of People's acceptance)

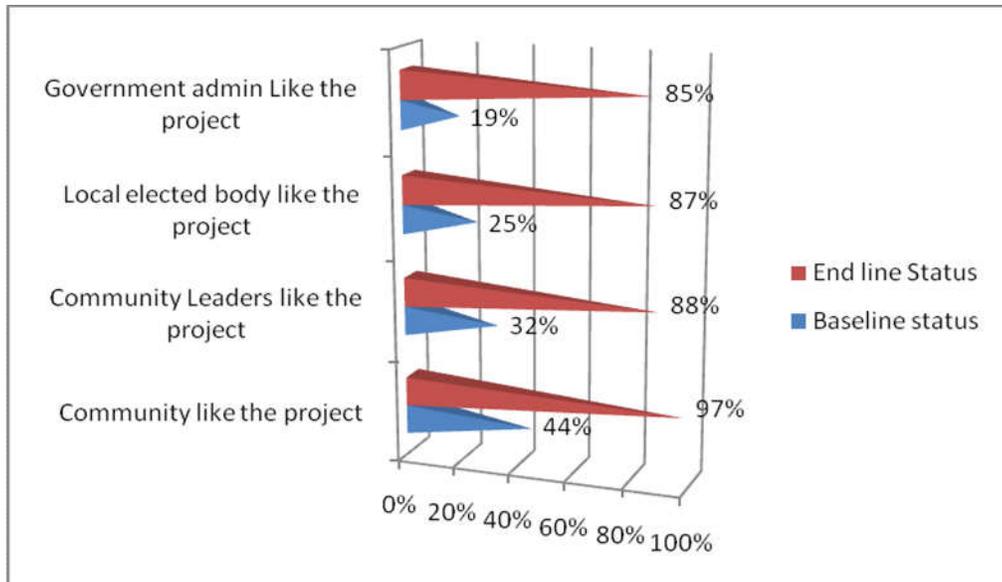


Figure No.8 presents the acceptance level of the primary and secondary stakeholders during baseline and Endline periods. The Baseline findings show 19% to 44% stakeholders liked the project and its eco-friendly components and approaches. On the other hands, the Endline survey findings show the same stakeholders significantly enhanced their level of acceptance observing the effective implementation and results of the project components at their doorsteps.

Major results:

In consequences of the project implementation the following effects have been identified;

- a) People's perception and knowledge on sustainable sanitation changed. About 80% stakeholders in the project areas including the government counterpart recommend the UDD toilets as one of the best means for sustainable sanitation in Bangladesh.
- b) Increased jobs for women & adolescent girls along with the young people created in the project areas due to small organic farming, recycling of human excreta into valuable soil conditioners or organic fertilizers;
- c) The project effectively contributed in women empowerment and enhancing gender sensitivities through constructing gender sensitive WASH facilities & eco-friendly improved cooking systems.

- d) Increased WASH & nutritious food facilities at the doorsteps of poor people's houses that contributed in reducing sanitation vulnerability and water fetching risks for the women & adolescent girls;
- e) Food & medical costs at each beneficiaries house decreased due to homestead gardening and reducing trends of diarrheal diseases;
- f) Almost all households found with neat & cleans due to their improved sanitation awareness and hygiene practices;
- g) Use of chemical fertilizers & synthetic pesticides in the project areas decreased and production costs of crops & food stuffs decreased.
- h) The Local Government Institutes (LGI) and the government administration at local level are aware of the project, implementing and the funding agencies;
- i) Improved cooperation, coordination & collaboration enhanced among implementing agency, local level stakeholders, private sector operators, LGIs and the government administration at locality;
- j) The project has also demonstrated a replicable model for sustainable sanitation and livelihood in the project areas.

MAJOR CHALLENGES:

The Project interventions identified a bundle of challenges during implementation period. The challenges are:

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- Managing emerged situations between higher demands and limited project resources;
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- Discontinuation of skilled construction masons due to seasonal harvesting, illness and other personal factors;
- Market price hike of construction materials;

Major learning:

SPACE has picked up few learning from the implementation as mentioned in below;

- a) Improved rapport building, respecting people; effective communication, committed & quality works contribute in enhancing people's trust upon the implementing & funding agencies;
- b) Mobile phone is an effective communication with project communities & monitoring tool for project monitoring during Covid-19, risks and disaster periods;
- c) Better works come from effective & practical learning from the community stakeholders;
- d) Effective communication & collaboration with the Local Government Institutes (LGI) Local Elected Bodies (LEB) and Local administration along with the private sector operators contribute in risks management;
- e) Gender sensitive interventions with especial focus to safety & security of the children, adolescent girls & women lead in sustainability of project achievements;
- f) Effective awareness leads in enhancing willingness to pay by the households for cost sharing to hardware supports contributes in enhancing ownership attitude of households that drives in sustainability;

Conclusion

Despite various challenges and obstacles during the project period, SPACE in cooperation with the local stakeholders including the committed project staffs could efficiently manage result-based quality implementation of project activities. In preparing this end line project completion report, SPACE managed collection & analysis required data from community stakeholders including the key-informants through interviewing, house to house visit, transect walk, Group Discussion, Focused Group Discussion etc. Suitable tools were used for data collection. For the accuracy of collected data, a team of senior staffs along with the LGI staffs cross-checked the sources. For validation of data, the collected data were also shared with the community counterparts.

Recommendations:

From its learning & experiences, SPACE would like to recommend the following issues for the further consideration of Ashar Gan management for review and reconsideration;

- i) To recognize the wider stakeholder's acceptance and increasing their involvement, Ashar Gan should share the project findings with the bilateral & institutional donors, such as, DFID/UKAID, European Union, Save the Children International, USAID, Bill Gates & Melinda Foundation, DANIDA, SDC, AFD and other institutional funding agencies;

- ii) Ashar Gan may strongly think to integrate its objectives with SDG targets and can contact the UN agencies for mobilizing SDG resources;
- iii) As an integral part of this, Ashar Gan should find out suitable International Networking organizations and becoming the member or partner of those international Networking Platforms;
- iv) As the project staffs including core staffs of the implementing organization play important roles in effective project implementation, there should be provisions in the project budget for strengthening their capacities through higher training inside and outside the country.
- v) The project concept should be converted into program concept and there should be a long-term MoU to be signed, at least for 10 years, in between Ashar Gan & SPACE for an integrated Development Project focusing to the strategic vision of AsharGan and the SPACE as well;
- vi) Ashar Gan, being a realistic and efficient funding agency in the development arena, and its major focus to implement development programs in Bangladesh, there should be a Bangladesh Country Strategy of Ashar Gan. Ashar Gan management can think over the issue and may develop it ensuring participation of Bangladeshi partners NGOs;
- vii) Ashar Gan can also plan for establishing a Bangladesh Country Office to ensure close monitoring of its country-level program. It could be done through registering with NGO Affairs Bureau.

SPACE feels grateful and happy for performing 100% of project activities under the project within the project period although there were number of challenges, problems and constraints. It was possible because of the active consideration & cooperation of Ashar Gan management in making the fund available in time. SPACE, on behalf of the relevant primary & secondary stakeholders conveys a big gratefulness to Ashar Gan and the funding agency, Chiesa Valdese.