entry points
for empowerment

a report by Andrew Bartlett
for CARE Bangladesh
June 2004

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Preface

"If I go alone, people will not hear me;
but if forty of us go together, they will
listen and respond"

Member of woman's group in Chakaria

This report was produced during a five-week visit to Bangladesh during May and June 2004. The visit was organized by CARE's Rural Livelihoods Programme (RLP), which is funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development. (DFID).

The issue of empowerment is of increasing relevance to CARE. During the last few years, the organization has been giving greater emphasis to right-based approaches that 'empower people to claim and exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities'. More recently, CARE-Bangladesh has started to plan a new programme for the North-West of the country that will address discrimination, exploitation and violence against women. This report aims to provide CARE staff with an analytical toolbox that will help them put these policies and plans into practice.

The toolbox includes conceptual models, evaluation indicators, and suggestions relating to strategy. Of central importance to the report is the idea of an *entry-points:* development activities that CARE staff can use to initiate or accelerate the empowerment process at the community level. Particular attention has been given to the Farmer Field School, a group-based approach that has been employed by a number of CARE projects during the last decade. An important question that is addressed in Section 3 of this report is: has the Farmer Field School been an effective entry point for empowerment in Bangladesh?

The report has been written for development practitioners, from field workers to project planners. This is a wide audience, and it is unlikely that any particular reader will find the entire report to be consistently interesting or useful. Individual readers may find that some parts of what follows are too general or too specific. But everybody should be able to find something in the report will help them analyse their work and develop more effective ways of helping those who are currently lack power - particularly women and the poor - to take greater control of their lives.

The content of this report owes a great deal to the staff of RLP's Social Development Unit who, under the able leadership of Brigitta Bode, were generous with both their time and their ideas during meetings and field trips. The description of the 'transformation model' in Section 1 and the 'key indicators' in Section 2 would not have been possible without the contribution made by the following members of the Unit: Murad Bin Aziz, Bipul Chandra

Dev, Anowarul Haq, Mukti Majumder, and Apurba Deb Roy. I am deeply grateful to all of you.

Many other CARE employees provided valuable information and support during my visit to Bangladesh. I am particularly thankful to field workers and management staff of: the Rural Livelihoods Programme at numerous locations in both the North-West and South-East of the country; the LIFE-NOPEST project in Mymensingh and Shepur; the LIFT Project in Naukhali and Feni.

I would also like to thank Kamal Kar and Alice Jay for their inspiration and thoughtful comments, and Russ Dilts and Kevin Kamp who responded to written questions about the early development of the Farmer Field School.

In place of a bibliography, the report has two sizeable Annexes that contain diverse readings about empowerment and the Farmer Field School. These readings have been taken from some of the documents that have influenced the author, but readers are encouraged to examine the Annexes and draw their own conclusions.

This report is not intended to be a comprehensive or definitive examination of empowerment as it relates to the activities of CARE Bangladesh. A lot of work – theoretical and practical - remains to be done. Like the strategies that it describes, this report should be seen as an *entry point.*

Andrew Bartlett
June 2004

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CARE B	CARE Bangladesh
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CLTS	Community Led Total Sanitation
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DFID	UK Government Department for International Development
DOL	Department of Livestock
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FT	Field Trainer
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GO-Interfish	Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice-Fish Production Systems (a CARE Project)
HH	Household
IGA	Income Generating Activity
INTRAC	The International Non-Governmental Organisation Training and Research Centre
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
LE	Local Entrepreneur
LIFE	Local Initiatives for Farmer Extension (a CARE project)
LIFT	Local Initiative for Farmer Training (a CARE project)
LMP	Livelihood Monitoring Project (a CARE project)
Logframe	Project Logical Framework
LRSP	Long Range Strategic Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NOPEST	New Options for Pest Management (a CARE project)
NW	Northwest
OD	Organisational Development
OPR	Output to Purpose Review
para	a village neighbourhood, a recognisable cluster of households
PC	Project Coordinator / Team Leader
PCM	Participant Capacity Matrix
PDO	Project Development Officer
PM	Project Manager
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PNGO	Partner NGOs
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSE	Participatory Self Evaluation
PO	Project Officer
RBA	Rights Based Approach *or* Rights Based Activity
RLP	Rural Livelihoods Programme (GO-Interfish, SHABGE and LMP)
SDC	Swiss Development Coorporation
SDU	Social Development Unit
SE	Southeast
SHABGE	Strengthening Household Access to Bari (homestead) Gardening Extension (CARE Project)
TCU	Technical Coordination Unit
Tk	Taka
TO	Technical Officer
UP	Union Parishad
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development

1.   Exploring the meaning of Empowerment

1.1   An example[1]

17th January, Parbotipur: To get to the village we walk between rice fields, children run behind and men look up from their gruelling work in the hot afternoon sun. The entrance to the village is in bloom - a SHABGE study plot surrounded by a group of smiling women. We sit on the UN blue plastic sheeting and one by one they tell us excitedly what they have learnt and show us their experiments. The field trainer sits by and lets us watch for ourselves through the shouting, laughing and enthusiasm, how important this project is for this group of women.

When we ask to see their homestead planting, one women jumps up and takes us by the hand insisting that we go with her first. Mosamut Hasna Katun tells us that she was pregnant throughout the first months of the FFS, but that did not stop her from setting up her plot. She shows us a map of what was there before and what new she has planted in the fallow land that she did not use before. She explains why she planted certain things on the east and the west and why she has planted trees along the small stream running from the water pump. She then takes us to her plot and proudly shows us her trellis, fruit trees and vegetables. When we get to the mahogany tree she explains that this is her most treasured tree because it is the most expensive. She says forcefully that she will not pay dowry because it is not right, but the money she will get from that tree when it is big and strong she will use for her children.

Mosamut explains her 'household space plan', including the locations of fruit and timber trees, and vegetable plots.

She says that the most important change in her life since the FFS began has been that she can earn money. She says 'women have been working for generations without getting paid - now I finally get some money'. Her son sells

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[1] This section was written by Alice Jay, Social Development Consultant, during the DFID Output to Purpose Review, January 2004. The information was collected during a field visit to an on-going SHABGE FFS in Uttorpara, Parbotipur Village, Pirgonj Upazilla.

the vegetables in the market because she cannot go. She says he is a good boy and brings her back all the money.

She has three daughters and two sons and her husband sells labour. We find out later from the field trainer that she is poorest women in the group. The field trainer says that she has watched the change in this women's life both within her family and within the group and it inspires her to go on. It is this exceptional young woman field trainer that should be credited. She has obviously understood that the goal of this project is to empower these women through encouraging them to learn by experience.

1.2   Empowerment and the goals of development

During the last two decades there has been considerable debate about the human dimension of development. The question that has been asked, again and again, is *who benefits?* Are development programmes really helping women and the poor, or are they sustaining the position of the rich and powerful? The concept of empowerment is at the center of this debate, because the issue of *who benefits* is closely related to the issue of *who decides.* When women and the poor start making their own decisions about the use of resources, when they gain greater control of the physical, social and economic environment in which they live, they are far more likely to achieve a sustained improvement in their well-being.

Increasingly, the term empowerment is becoming part of donor policy:

- Empowerment processes are of central importance to *rights based development*. For DFID, "A human rights approach to development means empowering people to make their own decisions, rather than be passive objects of choices made on their behalf." [2].

- The role of empowerment in the *elimination of poverty* has been widely examined. The World Bank has proposed that empowerment is one of three 'critical pillars' of poverty reduction[3]

- Empowerment is also a critical element in donor efforts to promote *gender equity,* and donors such as DFID see the empowerment of women "an essential precondition" for the elimination of poverty[4]

- The term empowerment has been used far less frequently in the literature on *Sustainable Livelihoods.* Nevertheless, a strong argument can be made that empowerment is closely related to the idea of increasing the assets of the poor and, in particular, building social capital. This link is made explicit in a number of documents that have

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[2] Susan Appleyard, 2002, 'A Rights-Based Approach to Development: What the policy documents of the UN, development cooperation and NGO agencies say'. OHCHR
[3] World Development Report, 2000/2001, World Bank
[4] DFID Strategy Paper, 2000, 'Poverty elimination and the empowerment of women'.

examined the relationship between rights based development and the livelihoods framework[5],[6]

• Finally, DFID's 'renewed enthusiasm' for agriculture, as a key to poverty reduction and the *elimination of hunger*, recognizes the importance of 'empowering poor people to realise their rights to assets, markets and services, particularly to land'[7].

As we can see, the debate among development researchers, donors, and policy-makers has generated a large number of 'approaches'. The differences between these approaches can create considerable confusion among development practitioners. It is useful, therefore, to develop a thorough understanding of *empowerment* since this concept is of central importance to many of these approaches. In the same way that a wide range of mechanical devices can all be powered by electricity, a wide range of development approaches depend on practitioners finding ways to support the empowerment of women and the poor. Empowerment is the driving force of people-centered development, and all of us – consultants, project managers and field workers – can do a better job if we recognize and foster the empowerment of the people we work with.

1.3   A definition

The term empowerment has been widely used in the last 10 years. There is a growing literature on the subject but no single definition has been widely accepted. Annex 1 provides selected readings on empowerment. The following three definitions have been taken from these readings because they represent a common understanding of the term that is relevant to the work of CARE's Rural Livelihoods Programme.

"Empowerment means that people, especially poorer people, are enabled to take more control over their lives, and secure a better livelihood with ownership and control of productive assets as one key element" (Chambers 1993).

"Empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercise choice, and to fulfil their potential as full and equal members of society" (DFID 2000).

"Empowerment … refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". (Kabeer 2001).

In brief*, empowerment is about people taking greater control of their lives.*

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[5] Moser, C & Norton A, 2001 'To Claim our Rights: livelihood security, human rights and sustainable development', ODI, London
[6] DFID, 2001, Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets, section 6.4
7 DFID, 2003, 'Agriculture and poverty reduction: unlocking the potential', and 'Better Livelihoods for Poor People – The Role of Agriculture'

1.4   A simple model

Empowerment involves a transformation: when people are empowered there is a profound and lasting change in the way people live their lives. We can gain a better understanding of the nature of empowerment if we distinguish between three elements of this transformation: means, process, and ends[8].

- The <u>means</u> of empowerment encompass a wide range of 'enabling factors', including rights, resources, capabilities and opportunities.

- The <u>process</u> of empowerment is often seen in terms of 'making choices', but that is a simplification. The process involves a number of steps: analysis, decision-making and action. And the process can be carried out by individuals or groups.

- The <u>ends</u>, as we have said above, is people taking greater control of their lives. In the case of rural development projects managed by CARE, this involves greater control of livelihoods assets by women and the poor, both in absolute and relative terms.

A transformation model of empowerment

Means	**Process** self-directed analysis, decision-making and action	**Ends**
rights, resources, capabilities and opportunities	*individuals* | *groups*	greater control of livelihood assets
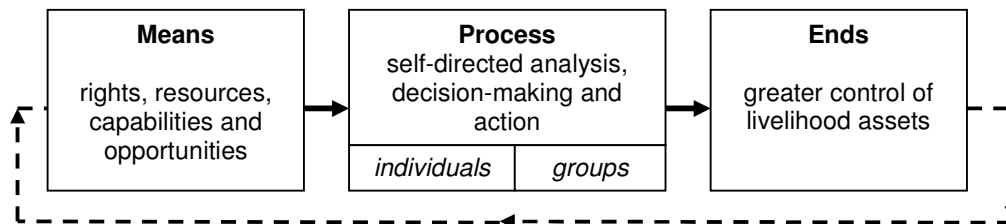
All three elements of the transformation are needed for empowerment to take place. A change of *means*, on its own, may produce certain benefits such as access to services; but without *process* those benefits are a form of patronage rather than empowerment. On the other hand, attempts to change process without the means being in place will result in frustration and failure.

Generally speaking, a change in *means* creates the potential for a change in *process*. A changes in *process* creates a potential for a change in *ends*. In many cases this transformation is cyclical, with a change in ends bringing about a further change in the means of empowerment.

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[8] This model draws on the work of a number of authors. Particular mention must be made of the work of Naila Kabeer, who has used the terms *resources*, *agency* and *achievement* to describe 'the three inter-related dimensions which make up choice'. See Kabeer, 2001, Discussing Women's Empowerment – Theory and Practice, SIDA.

1.5   The *means* of empowerment

The range of means for empowerment is extremely wide, from national legal and political systems, to the savings and skills of villagers themselves. All of these things can provide the potential for empowerment.

Giving training, creating links with service providers, setting up Community Based Organisations, these activities have been part of CARE's Rural Livelihoods Programme, and they have all contributed to changing the means for empowerment. But on their own, they do not amount to empowerment. The existence of the means is not enough; it is also necessary is consider what people do with those things, i.e. the process and the ends.

Lynn Bennet has gone a step further, and suggested that we should also consider *how* the means are acquired[9]. She makes a distinction between 'social inclusion', which involves a top-down approach whereby poor people are *given* resources, assets and opportunities, and 'empowerment', which involves a bottom-up approach whereby poor people *take* these things. In the context of CARE's work in Bangladesh, the term 'provision' may be more appropriate that 'inclusion'[10], but the idea remains that something is being given rather than taken. If a Field Trainer arranges for the Department of Livelihoods to visit a village to carry out poultry vaccinations, that would be an example of *provision*. But if farmers themselves go to the DOL and request the vaccinations, that would be an example of *empowerment*. In both cases, the farmers have acquired better access to services, but there is an important difference in who controls that access.

Undoubtedly there is a role for both provision and empowerment in the work carried out by CARE in Bangladesh. Access can be an important starting point for interactions between poor women and CARE field staff. But, if these women are to become empowered, CARE staff need to step back and let them take control of activities. This is something that can be done gradually during the course of a Farmer Field School (FFS).

1.6   The *process* of empowerment

At the heart of empowerment is a process that people undertake by themselves. Whether or not they are given the means for empowerment or they take it, the crucial consideration is what they do with it. Only when people are carrying out *their own* analysis, making *their own* decisions, and taking *their own* action… only then can we say that they are empowered.

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[9] Bennet, Lynn (2002), 'Using Empowerment and Social Inclusion For Pro-poor Growth: A Theory of Social Change', Background Paper for the World Bank Social Development Sector Strategy

[10] Given the prevalence of purdah in Bangladesh, the term *inclusion* could be interpreted as the opposite of *seclusion*. For Bennet, inclusion is the opposite of *exclusion*, which is a far broader concept. The term *provision* avoids this confusion, and places the emphasis on something that is given to people rather that acquired through their own agency.

This self-determination has been given the name 'agency' by some researchers such as Naila Kabeer. The term can be understood if we recognize that *empowerment involves poor people becoming the agents of their own development*. And if poor people are the agents of change, then 'agency' is the characteristic that allows them to be effective. The alternative is for people to become the objects of somebody else's development process; that may bring about benefits for the poor, but it does not empower them.

CARE's Rural Livelihood Programme aims to empower rural people. Consequently, field staff need to be attuned to the subtle difference between extension and empowerment. The difference rests in *who* is carrying out the analysis and making the decisions[11].

For example, if a woman is taught a particular method of preparing compost during a Farmer Field School, and she applies that method in her own homestead garden, then we can say that she has *adopted* a technology, and what has taken place is a case of *extension*. But if she learns the principles of making compost and goes on to experiment with different methods in her garden, then we can say that she is has *adapted* a technology, and what has taken place is *empowerment*. The difference rests in *who understands* that technology, and *who decides* how it should be applied: the trainer or the participant of the Field School.

The question of *who decides* can also help us to make a distinction between the empowerment of individuals and groups. In some cases, a group leader or a small committee is making all the decisions while other members are being told what to do. In other cases, all members are involved in the process of examining problems and options, and deciding what action to take. The first is an example of individual empowerment, while the second case involves both individual *and* collective empowerment.

1.7   The *ends* of empowerment

If empowerment involves a transformation, then the outcome of agency must be an increase in the influence that people have over something important in their lives. It is not enough for women and the poor to be making their own decisions; those decisions must also lead to a real difference in the conditions under which they are living. This raises the question: 'what is the *something* that is affected by agency?' 'what type of conditions are people trying to change when they become empowered?'. Here we will examine two possible answers.

Firstly, authors such as Karen Mason, Director of Gender and Development at the World Bank, have drawn attention to the relational nature of empowerment[12]. People are not empowered in isolation, but in relation to

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[11] See Paulo Friere, 1969, 'Education or Communication", in the selected readings.
[12] Mason, 2003, 'Measuring Empowerment: A Social Demographer's View', World Bank.

other people. We can apply this idea to three domains of human decision-making and action:

- In the household domain, women are empowered in relation to men;
- In the community domain, the poor are empowered in relation to the rich;
- In the broader social domain, civil society is empowered in relation to the state.

Based on this analysis, we would say that the *ends* of empowerment are changes in these relationships. A shift takes place in the balance of power. In other words, there is an increase in the influence of women, the poor and civil society, *comparative to the other parties in these relationships*.

On its own, the relational approach to empowerment has limited utility in the planning and management for CARE's rural development projects. This approach draws attention to the profound disparities that exist in society, things which CARE cannot address. CARE can do little to change the culture that puts women in a subordinate position to men. Similarly, CARE can do little to change the inequitable distribution of land and water that lies at the root of the differences between rich and poor. CARE can, however, make smaller yet more immediate differences to people's lives.

This brings us to the second answer to our questions about the ends of empowerment. In recent years, both CARE and DFID have been using a livelihoods framework as an aid to planning and evaluation. Based on this framework, we can argue that empowerment brings about increased control over livelihoods assets. Through their own analysis, decisions and action, rural people gain greater influence over one or more of the following five types of capital:

- Human Capital (e.g. knowledge, skills, health)
- Social Capital (e.g. groups and networks)
- Natural Capital (e.g. land and water)
- Physical Capital (e.g. houses, roads and sanitation)
- Financial Capital (e.g. savings, credit, wage rates)

The livelihoods framework is apolitical. The framework 'has been developed to help understand and analyse the livelihoods of the poor'[13], but it does not highlight the importance of class or gender, nor the issue of equity. While this might make livelihoods concepts acceptable to a wide audience, it can lead - in practice - to a focus on *things* rather than *people*, in contradiction to the intention of the original authors of the approach[14].

By combining the livelihoods framework with an understanding of the relational nature of empowerment, we can posit that the ends of the transformation is *greater control of livelihood assets by women and the poor,*

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[13] See, for example, DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets, 1999.
[14] Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway, 1992, 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st Century', IDS Discussion Paper #296.

both in absolute and relative terms. This formulation keeps the issue of power at the center of em<u>power</u>ment, while recognizing that rural development programmes are designed to produce tangible benefits in the foreseeable future[15].

What does this mean in practice? If we look at the example in Section 1 above, a woman by the name of Mosamut attended a Farmer Field School in Parbotipur village organised by CARE. The information and support received during the training was the means that allowed the transformation to start. Mosamut analysed her homestead resources, made decisions about what crops where suitable, and then went ahead and planted her vegetables and trees. This was the process that demonstrated agency on the part of Mosamut. Having sold the vegetables, Mosamut has money in her hand. In absolute terms, her financial assets have increased. Equally important, she has money in her hand *for the first time*, which means there has been a change in her relationship with her husband who previously had sole control of the household finances. So, there has also been a change in control of financial assets relative to her husband. Individual empowerment has clearly taken place in the case of Mosamut.

The author returned to Parbotipur village in May 2004 and found that group of landless women to which Mosamut belonged were keen to share a new story about their achievements. A destitute widow in the village, not a member of the group, had agreed to marry her 10 year old daughter to a disreputable man who had already had one or two other wives. The group talked to the mother, explained that this was cruel and illegal. The mother eventually changed her mind, but meanwhile the groom turned up, demanding his bride. The group chased him out of the village, threatening him with the law if he did not leave. The group also promised the mother that - when the time comes - they will help to find a suitable husband for the girl. Although the young girl is a beneficiary of these actions, this is actually a case of group empowerment. The women have accumulated social capital that enables them to resist oppressive practices such as early marriage.

1.8   Does the model 'work'?

The Transformation Model of empowerment that has been described above draws on the work of a number of researchers, but it has not been put forward for research purposes. Instead, it is hoped that the model will help practitioners to gain a more effective understanding of the work they are doing. By thinking about the components of the model, and discussing this with their colleagues, the staff of CARE's Rural Livelihoods Programme should be able to identify when empowerment is taking place, and distinguish

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[15] Interestingly, at the time Chambers and Conway were first proposing the livelihoods framework, John Friedmann was proposing a '(dis)empowerment model of poverty'. Friedman's focus on the household, and his eight 'bases of social power', have much in common with the approach adopted by DFID that focuses on five livelihood assets. A key difference between the two approaches is the language that is used, as indicated by the title of Friedman's book (1992) 'Empowerment: the politics of alternative development'.

between interventions that facilitate this type of development and those that do not.

To test and refine the model, staff of RLP's Social Development Unit (SDU) visited a number of locations where Farmer Field Schools were on-going or had been completed. In discussion with FFS members, the SDU identified a number of changes that had taken place in the community since the start of CARE's involvement. These changes were then examined, using the concepts that are included in the model.   The questions that were asked included:

- what were the 'means' that led to this change, and can they be attributed to the work of CARE?
- is there any evidence of 'agency', or does it appear that people have simply implemented the recommendations of CARE field staff?
- has the change resulted in an increase in control over livelihood assets, and - if so – what type of assets?
- if empowerment is taking place, exactly who has been empowered: individuals or groups, men or women, rich or poor?

A form was prepared to aid and summarise the discussion. This was modified during testing. A completed example, with observations from three locations, is shown at the end of this Section.

In the examples, we can see the following:

a)   The adoption of canal-side vegetable planting in Taragonj did not involve sufficient agency by the FFS members to considered as a case of empowerment. The right to plant on the side of the canal was negotiated by the Field Trainer, rather than by the members of the community.

b)   The demands made by two landless women for Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) cards in Lalthuthi village were a clear case of empowerment because they had presented their demands directly to the Union Parishad after learning about this right during the FFS.

c)   The introduction of highly profitable maize in Thakagoan Saddar showed evidence of agency, but was not a result of a CARE intervention. Farmers had adopted these crops after observing this technology in villages on the other side of the river.

d)   The development of a local design for latrines in Taragonj was an example of empowerment, because the details had been worked out by the villagers after learning the general principles during training. This was, however, probably a case of individual empowerment, because the design came from the agency of one man who had been very active in promoting latrines in the community.

e)   The operations of the women's savings group in Lalthuthi was a case of collective empowerment. Although the group had a strong, vocal leader, it

was clear that other members were contributing to decision-making and – unlike in some other locations – had control over the financial capital that was being generated (note: it was a landless women who had the role of cashier).

f)   In the case of the young woman who had been a member of the FFS group in Thakagoan, it seems that she was making a greater contribution to family decision-making (thus demonstrating agency) but she didn't have any greater control over the household resources. The father was using his daughters knowledge to increase his melon production, and was using her membership of the savings group to borrow money.

The field visits confirmed that the Transformation Model is a useful tool for examining empowerment in villages where CARE has been working. The exercise also generated some important observations about the difficulty of measuring empowerment. These observations will be addressed in the next Section of this report.

Example Worksheet

How is the RLP contributing to empowerment?

#	Reported change after FFS	Empowerment			Type of Capital	Who is empowered?		
		Means	Process	Ends		I / G?	M / W?	Landless?
a.	*adoption of canal-side vegetable planting (Taragonj)*	√	X	√				
b.	*two landless women demand and get Vulnerable Group VGD cards (Lalthuthi)*	√	√	√	social	I	W	yes
c.	*introduction of maize (Thakagoan Saddar)*	X	√	√				
d.	*development of a local design for latrines (Taragonj)*	√	√	√	human	I	M	no
e.	*regular meetings of women's savings group (Lalthuthi)*	√	√	√	financial	G	W	some
f.	*girl in FFS group gets greater respect from father (Thakagoan Saddar)*	√	√	X				

√ or X = this component was observed or not (all three components are required for empowerment)
I or G = Individual or Group
M or W = Men or Women

2. Evaluating Empowerment

2.1 Why is it difficult to evaluate empowerment?

Empowerment is like the taste of mango, or the scent of jasmine, or the sound of waves on the shore; almost everybody will recognize these things for what they are, but almost nobody can describe them. How can we measure the height of a person's confidence, or the weight of their laughter? How can we compare one person's suffering with that of another? How can we put a value on the strength that is required to stand up and challenge age-old customs?

Field visits carried out by the author with the Social Development Unit showed that although the Transformation Model is a useful aid to *identifying* empowerment, it cannot be used as a tool for *measuring* it. Apart from making the distinction between individual and group empowerment, the model does not make it possible to assess the relative value of difference cases.

The major difficulties in evaluating empowerment are summarized below:

- Empowerment involves qualitative changes. Precise numerical measurements of the kind that are used to capture changes in production, consumption and income, cannot be applied to the changes that take place as a result of empowerment. Empowerment involves *a process* that in undertaken by an individual or a group, leading to a change in the *degree of control* they have over certain assets, plus a change in the *relationship* they have with other people. We can certainly describe these things in ways that allow us to make comparisons over time and between different places. But the more we try to simplify and aggregate our observations, the less useful those observations are likely to be.

- Empowerment involves a process. Some transformations can take place within the space of a few hours, but other may take years. Although we can easily identify empowerment taking place in the case of the women who demand and receive a VGD card after learning about her entitlements, it is far less easy in the case of women who are gradually gaining respect from their fathers and husbands because of the knowledge they have acquired in an FFS. Although this second group of women are steadily making a greater contribution to household decision making, it could be a long time before the respect *given* by men translates into action *taken* by women.

- Empowerment is situation specific. What might be considered evidence of agency or increased control of assets in one situation, can be 'business as usual' in another place, or with a different social group, or at a different period of time. For example: it may be empowering for a land-owners wife to be able to visit the local market with cash in her hand, but

for her neighbour who is a landless labourer this kind of mobility is quite normal. Similarly, the change that takes place when a group of poor farmers in a remote area gain access to livestock vaccinations for the first time is very different from what happens when a livestock officer visits his regular clients close to town. Consequently, the simple fact that a person goes to market, or that a group has access to a service, is not an indicator of empowerment. A details examination of the context is needed before a conclusion can be reached

• <u>Empowerment is often subjective</u>. Although it is possible to observe the process of empowerment as it takes place, it is more likely that we will find ourselves assessing changes that have already occurred. Consequently we will often depend on the memory of people who were involved in – and possibly changed by – that process. For example: a Field Trainer organises an FFS while members of the group participate in different ways, and other members of the community observe what happens from a number of social viewpoints. Not surprisingly, there may be more than one version of events. In particular, it may not always be clear who the *agents* were when key decisions took place.

• <u>Empowerment is often 'out of bounds'</u>. If women's empowerment involves a shift of influence between husbands and their wives, much of that transformation will occur behind closed doors. If we reflect on our own households, and those of our colleagues and friends, we will appreciate that information about issues such as financial decision-making, child-rearing and domestic violence is usually a closely guarded secret. So why do we expect that other men and women, those who are the object of our studies, will provide accurate answers to strangers bearing questionnaires, notebooks and cameras?

2.2   Global efforts to evaluate empowerment

During the last five years there have been a number of studies, academic papers and international meetings that have examined the issue of evaluating empowerment. Three documents have been selected that are of particular relevance to the work being done by CARE in Bangladesh:

• In 2000, a conference was organized by the International Non-Governmental Organisation Training and Research Centre, (INTRAC). The book that was published in 2001 as a result of the conference includes a number of examples of how different experts and projects have developed empowerment indicators[16]. Table 1 at the end of this section has been taken from this book. It shows a set of indicators relating to group development.

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[16] Oakley (ed.) 2001 'Evaluating Empowerment: Reviewing the Concepts and Practice', INTRAC, London.

- In 2003, the World Bank held a workshop on "Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives"[17]. Among the papers presented at the workshop was one by Malhotra, Schuler and Boender in which the authors examine the indicators that have been used for women's empowerment in 45 studies carried out in different parts of the world[18]. Table 2 at the end of this section is taken from this paper.

- In 2004, FAO published a synthesis of 25 impact studies carried out as part of projects that used Farmer Field Schools to promote IPM[19]. While most of these studies focussed on technical impacts, the report also considers the social and political impacts that have resulted from FFS. Table 3 at the end of this section is taken from the FAO report

These three sources include a large number of empowerment indicators *and* information about methodology. Most of the studies reviewed by Malhotra, Schuler and Boender used *quantitative* methods; either some kind of survey or an analysis of secondary data. The authors acknowledge, however, that "The vast majority of empirical studies are not measuring the process element of empowerment". Evaluating process requires *qualitative* methods, and this is where we run into problems. As Oakley noted in the INTRAC document:

"This whole area of operationalisation of qualitative indicators has not progressed much in the past four or five years and, in general terms, most development agencies that promote empowerment and wish to understand the effect and impact of this work have not made any substantial breakthrough".

Of the 25 studies examined by Van den Berg, only three studies attempt to capture the empowerment that is triggered by the Farmer Field School approach. In the first example, in Indonesia, project field staff produced detailed case studies of communities in which they worked, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. As part of these cases, interviews were carried out with farmers to collect information about the 'social gains' they had made. In the second and third examples, in both Indonesia and Sri Lanka, farmers were given cameras and asked to produce photo albums that showed how conditions had changed in their community as a result of the FFS. All three examples include:

- details of context: physical, economic, and social
- self-evaluation by trainers and farmers
- an emphasis on words and pictures rather than numbers
- descriptions of process, not just outcomes
- information about how capabilities and relationships had changed

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[17] The papers presented at the workshop are available at this internet address: www.worldbank.org/poverty/empowerment/events/feb03/
[18] Malhotra, A; Schuler, S.R and Boender C, 2002, 'Measuring Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development', commissioned by the World Bank
[19] Henk van den Berg, 2004, 'IPM Farmer Field Schools: A synthesis of 25 impact evaluations', commissioned by the Global IPM Facility, FAO

The FFS case studies in Indonesia are particularly interesting because they were produced in each of 182 sub-districts, and took the form of thousands of pages of information consisting of maps, chronologies, quotations, photographs, economic analysis, and various types of tables. The trainers who wrote the individual cases attended methodological workshops and were provided with a rough outline of the issues to be covered in the cases. The process and the results were useful at three different levels: in the selected villages, where farmers were able to participate in self-evaluation; at the sub-district level, where teams of field staff were also involved in self-evaluation; and at the national level, where the cases were examined for patterns and exceptions. Van den Berg provides two examples of the meta-analysis based on the cases, firstly, the incidence of 63 types of spontaneous behaviour (i.e. technical and social innovations), and trends in pesticide sales. In both examples, quantitative data is being drawn from what are largely qualitative studies; in other words, context is being eliminated and the facts that are included in the cases are being reduced to a set of numbers. This approach stands in marked contrast to the typical survey, where much of the data reduction occurs at the point of collection rather at the point of final analysis.

Table 1: Empowerment indicators relating to group development
(Oakley / INTRAC, 2001)

Indicators of INTERNAL Empowerment	
Objective	**Indicators**
Self Management	• Membership growth and trends • Clear procedures and rules • Regular attendance at meetings • Maintaining proper financial records
Problem Solving	• Problem identification • Ability to analyse
Democratisation	• Free and fair selection of leaders • Role for weaker members in decision making • Transparency in information flow
Sustainability and self-reliance	• Conflict resolution • Actions initiated by group • Legal status • Intra-group support system

Indicators of EXTERNAL Empowerment	
Building Links with…	**Indicators**
Project implementing agency	• Influence at different stages of project • Representation on project administration • Degree of financial autonomy
State agencies	• Influence on state development funds • Influence on other state development initiatives in the area
Local and social political bodies	• Representation on these bodies • Lobbying with mainstream parties • Influence in local schools and health centers

Table 2: Commonly used dimensions of women's empowerment

(Malhotra, Schuler and Boender, 2002)

Dimension	Household	Community	Broader Arenas
Economic	Women's control over income; relative contribution to family support; access to and control of family resources	Women's access to employment; ownership of assets and land; access to credit; involvement /or representation in local trade associations; access to markets	Women's representation in high paying jobs; women CEO's; representation of women's economic interests in macro-economic policies, state and federal budgets
Socio -Cultural	Women's freedom of movement; lack of discrimination against daughters; commitment to educating daughters	Women's visibility in and access to social spaces; access to modern transportation; participation in extra-familial groups and social networks; shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference); representation of the female in myth and ritual	Women's literacy and access to a broad range of educational options; Positive media images of women, their roles and contributions
Familial/ Interpersonal	Participation in domestic decision-making; control over sexual relations; ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception, obtain abortion; control over spouse selection and marriage timing; freedom from violence	Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women (e.g. later marriages, self selection of spouses, reduction in the practice of dowry; acceptability of divorce); local campaigns against domestic violence	Regional/national trends in timing of marriage, options for divorce; political, legal, religious support for (or lack of active opposition to) such shifts; systems providing easy access to contraception, safe abortion, reproductive health services
Legal	Knowledge of legal rights; domestic support for exercising rights	Community mobilization for rights; campaigns for rights awareness; effective local enforcement of legal rights	Laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options; Advocacy for rights and legislation; use of judicial system to redress rights violations
Political	Knowledge of political system and means of access to it; domestic support for political engagement; exercising right to vote	Women's involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaigns; support for specific candidates or legislation; representation in local government	Women's representation in regional and national government; strength as a voting bloc; representation of women's interests in effective lobbies and interest groups
Psychological	Self-esteem; self-efficacy; psychological well-being	Collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization	Women's sense of inclusion and entitlement; systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion

Table 3: Examples of impacts of the IPM Farmer Field School

(Van den Berg, 2004)

Domain	Immediate impact	Developmental impact
Technical	- Knowledge about ecology - Experimentation skills - Improved crop management - Pesticide reduction - Yield increase - Profit increase - Risk reduction	- More sustainable production - Improved livelihoods - Ability to deal with risks, opportunities - Innovation - More cost-effective production - Reduced water contamination - Reduced frequency of farmer poisoning - Reduced public health risks - Improved biodiversity - Improved marketability of produce - Poverty reduction
Social	- Group building - Communication skills - Problem solving skills	- Collaboration between farmers - Farmer associations - Community agenda setting - Farmer study groups - Formation of networks - Farmer-to-farmer extension - Area-wide action
Political	- Farmer-extension linkage - Negotiating skills - Educational skills	- Stronger access to service providers - Improved leverage position - Awareness campaigns - Protests - Policy change

2.3 Key indicators for CARE Bangladesh

The Social Development Unit has produced a set of 'key indicators' that will help staff of the Rural Livelihoods Programme to evaluate the work they are carrying out. These indicators are based on observations of the types of empowerment that occurs among the participants of FFS and follow-up activities.

The following issues were taken into account when producing the list of key indicators:

• the indicators should be objectively verifiable. It should be possible for CARE staff to directly observe the transformation that has taken place, rather than depending on information that is either ex-post or coming from secondary sources;

• the indicators should be relevant to the work of CARE, to the goals that RLP has established and to the specific activities that are being carried out. There should be a clear link between interventions made by CARE and *the means* of empowerment;

• the indicators should involve specific behaviours that provide evidence of *agency* as opposed to adoption or provision. The process of acquiring benefits must by controlled, to a great extent, by women or the poor rather than by CARE staff, service providers or members of the local elite;

• the indicators should involve increased control of assets, i.e. concrete *ends* of empowerment, rather than less tangible improvements in respect, recognition, confidence.

With these points in mind, the recommended indicators are:

a) organizational behaviour: women in leadership roles, active participation in group decision-making, collective actions;

b) planning behaviour: a combination of setting goals, taking steps towards their achievement (e.g. savings), and self-monitoring.

c) entitlement behaviour: exercising rights, making claims as individuals or groups, engaging in advocacy;

d) economic behaviour: holding and using cash, making sales and purchases, making leases, negotiating wage rates;

e) learning behaviour: seeking information, and taking action to share knowledge with others;

f) experimental behaviour: testing and modifying technologies, rejection of a technology as a result of critical thinking;

Examples of the key indicators were collected during visits to two groups in the South-East of Bangladesh.

In Kashpara, Chakaria, a group of 28 women and 13 men have formed their own "Honest Multi-Dimensional Development Organization". Twenty of the women previously participated in a CARE Farmer Field School focusing on homestead horticulture, but the activities of the group have expanded considerably since the FFS came to an end more than a year ago. When the author visited, the women were eager to explain the details of their on-going scheme to make money from salt marketing. Using their savings, the group had purchased 100 maunds (4 tonne) from the local salt fields two months earlier when the price was 80 Taka per maund. Because salt production is highly seasonal, the price had already gone up to 100 Taka. They expected that the price would continue to rise through the rainy season, and they had already decided that they would sell the salt when the price reached 120 Taka. The scheme was something they had planned by themselves, based on their assessment of local income-generating opportunities. This was an example of <u>economic behaviour</u> that indicates empowerment is taking place.

The discussion of the salt marketing scheme led to a debate about how the group was making decisions and handling finances. The level of participation during the debate was remarkable, with a large number of women actively involved in offering opinions, asking questions, making corrections and attempting to summarise the views of the group.

Members of the *Honest Multi-Dimensional Development Organisation* in Kashpara, Chakaria, SE Bangladesh

The role of the cashier was a topic of particular interest. Unlike in some groups, it was clear that the cashier in Kashpara was working for the group, not vice-versa. He had been elected because "he does what we tell him and he shows us all the records". The fact that the group included three young women who were attending high school, all of them literate, relatively mobile and exceptionally confident in communicating with outsiders, may have helped to ensure that the interests of the female members were not being subordinated to those of the male members. In summary, the group demonstrated <u>organisational behaviour</u> that indicates empowerment.

The Kashpara group also spoke of other activities they were involved in. The women members had all participated in tailoring training conducted by the Youth Development Department. While the four-week course was

undoubtedly beneficial, we can consider this to be an example of *provision.* By contrast, an example of *empowerment* occurred in relation to the Health Department. The group explained that a few months earlier a child in the village was suffering from severe diarrhea and could not get treatment because there were no professional staff at the local health center. After the child died, representatives of the group went to the Health Department and demanded that they should be provided with proper health care. The Health Department have subsequently arranged for a doctor to be on duty at the health center every week. Here we have an example of <u>entitlement behaviour</u> that indicates empowerment of the group.

Another group in Rasterpara, closer to Cox's Bazaar, demonstrated weaker organizational behaviour because the group appeared to be dominated by three women who were associated with the local elite. Nevertheless, the poorer members were benefiting from a collective scheme that involved making wall panels and floor mats from local materials. These items were being sold to a Government organization and the proceeds distributed according to the amount of labour that had been contributed. Whether this scheme was a case of provision or empowerment was not clear from the discussion, but the activities carried out by the group in the area of *disaster preparedness* provided a more obvious cases of the latter. Twelve years earlier, the people of Rasterpara were badly hit by a terrible cyclone. Since that time, a number of international agencies and local NGOs have been involved in building cyclone shelters and establishing early warning schemes. Once the participants of the FFS had formed their own 'Samity', or Association, they gave priority to establishing a system that would protect their village from further disasters. In particular, they approached the Red Crescent and asked for training. This was an example of <u>learning behaviour</u> that indicates empowerment. As a result of the training, the group now takes responsibility for informing other members of the community when the cyclone warning is at different levels. At level 4 they tell all the households to stock dried food and secure their houses, and at level 7 – which had happened just two weeks prior to the author's visit - they make sure that everybody moves to the nearest cyclone shelter.

Another example of learning behaviour in Rasterpara is the literacy training that is about to be start. The educated women in the group are planning to organise weekly sessions for other members of the group, and they have contacted World Vision to get some support for this training. The Secretary of the Samity, who is herself a teacher at a local primary school, says that literacy is crucial to the development of human capability. She adds that family planning is another issue that the group wants to tackle. It is clear that the group has plans for the future and they are making steps towards achieving them. Unlike many savings groups, that make individual loans and have no vision of collective action, the group in Rasterpara have analysed their problems, set themselves some goals, and are working together to achieve them. In other words, there is evidence of <u>planning behaviour</u> that indicate empowerment.

Neither the group in Kashpara or Rasterpara demonstrated the type of
experimental behaviour that is included in the list of key indicators. Indeed,
this type of behaviour was not seen *at the group level* during all of the field
visits made by the author in May and June 2004. There were individual
examples of women who were taking ideas from the FFS and adapting them
to new circumstances (e.g. using different ingredients in their compost, or
transferring techniques such as hand pollination from one crop to another[20]),
but there were no cases of women working together to carry out experiments
of the kind that have been widely reported as an outcome of FFS in other
countries. The lack of this behaviour is understandable given the weaknesses
in the experiential leaning process that is part of the FFS organized by CARE.
This issue is explored in more detail in Section 3.

2.4   Using the indicators

 Any monitoring and evaluation system requires indicators, data collection
methods and a process for analyzing the data. A set of six indicators have
been identified that are consistent with both the Transformation Model of
empowerment and the work that is being carried out by CARE's Rural
Livelihoods Programme. RLP has been experimenting with two methodologies
that could incorporate these indicators.

Participatory Case Studies

Case studies make it possible to combine quantitative and qualitative
information, and take account of the context in which activities are carried out.
As mentioned earlier, case studies that were produced by field staff in
Indonesia generated information that could be analysed at three levels:
village, sub-district and national.

In 2002, the author proposed a system for producing case studies for one of
CARE's livelihood projects:[21]

"The purpose of these case studies is to engage farmers, field staff and
management in a process that allows them to assess their own progress,
understand the problems they are facing, and help them make plans for the
future. The preparation of the cases is a learning exercise, with the process
being more important that the final documentation. This process involves data
collection and analysis that is carried out by groups rather than individuals".

The proposed system was never adopted because of the increased workload
that it entailed. Nevertheless, the Rural Livelihood Programme has been
experimenting with various forms of self-assessment over the last two years,
and some case studies have been produced. The M&E Unit has promoted the
idea of discussing 'most significant changes' at the level of individual FFS and

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[20] See also the case of Afiza in Hatpara, in the preliminary materials from RLP's Agricultural
Knowledge Study.
[21] Andrew Bartlett, 2002, 'Impact Study on FFS Activities within SHABGE-DFID Project'.
CARE Bangladesh

in Seasonal Review Workshops, while the Technical Coordination Unit has compiled short cases written by field staff[22].

The author was unable to determine what the participants learnt during these experiments. What is clear, however, is that the material outputs are highly variable and lacking in depth. So, while the assessment activities may have been useful for FFS members and field staff, the resulting cases could not be used for meta-analysis that would yield information about empowerment that could be used by programme management or the donor.

Based on the lessons that have been learned from these experiments, it is possible to conceive of a system of case studies that could meet the needs of participants in the field *and* project management. A key step in establishing the system would be for *all* of the specialist units (M&E, TCU, SDU and LMP) to reach agreement on: a) the format for cases, b) responsibility for training field staff in how to prepare cases, and c) procedures for subsequent interpretation of the products. The agreed format should ensure that cases are comparable and that there is sufficient depth of information, but it should not be so detailed that the preparation of cases becomes a form-filling exercise. The six 'key indicators' should be attached as a checklist, and *not* be converted into a long list of leading questions. The idea is to promote critical thinking at all levels, while also collecting data that can be used for meta-analysis that will help to identify patterns, trends and exceptions.

Participant Capacity Matrix (PCM)

The Participant Capacity Matrix is a monitoring tool developed by the RLP. It uses Guttman scales to examine "attitudinal and behavioural changes among project participants in the areas of resource management, household decision-making, intra-household resource allocation, as well as their understanding of the types of services that are available"[23].

A considerable amount of work has been carried out to develop the PCM. The tool has been tested and revised a number of times, and a large amount of data has already been collected. The PCM is similar to the proposed case studies in that it promotes discussion among FFS members about how they have benefited from participating in project activities. There are, however, a number of significant differences: data is collected through household interviews, subjective responses are converted into numerical ratings, and contextual information is filtered out.

The PCM was not designed to collect information about empowerment, but the analysis of PCM data does yield potentially valuable information about the *means* of empowerment that are available at the household level, and how these means are affected by project activities. In its current form, however, the

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[22] For example: Go-Interfish, 2003, 'Some Case Studies', RLP Technical Coordination Unit, CARE Bangladesh
[23] AKM Abdul Wadud and Brigitta Bode, 2003, Innovations in Livelihoods Monitoring and Evaluation: Participants' Capacity Matrix', CARE Bangladesh

PCM does little to capture the *process* and *ends* of empowerment, particularly at the group level.

The PCM could be redesigned to give greater attention to the behaviours that are included in the list of key indicators, and it could be used with groups rather than individual households. But unless ways can be found to correlate all three elements of empowerment - means, process and ends – it will be difficult to use the quantitative outputs to make conclusions about the impact of the project on empowerment.

Further development of both methods, participatory case studies and the PCM, appears to be worthwhile. If the work is done in a coordinated manner, the two methods could complement each other, yielding different perspectives on how CARE's work is contributing to empowerment. Whatever approach CARE decides to adopt, the six key indicators for empowerment should become part of the analytical language and thought processes of all staff. Everybody from Field Trainers to the Country Director should be looking out for these behaviour patterns, asking themselves why they are occurring in some places and not in others, and - consequently - taking action that they believe will foster rather than stifle the process of empowerment.

3. The Practice of Empowerment

3.1 What we do and how we do it

For development professionals, the practice of empowerment involves both strategy and method, in other words: what we do and how we do it. The 'what' of empowerment relates to the technical, social and educational interventions that we plan and implement. The 'how' of empowerment relates to the way in which those plans are formulated and the manner of implementation.

Most of what follows is an examination of strategies not methods. But before proceeding, it is important to put these strategies into perspective. The 'how' of empowerment is just as important as the 'what', and it requires that we give attention to a number of related issues:

People. Empowerment involves the development of people not things. Although many of us were educated in technical disciplines like agriculture, we need to adjust our professional senses so that we are constantly aware of what is happening to human and social capital.

Power. We need to be especially sensitive to the issue of equity, asking ourselves who is benefiting from our activities – men or women? the rich or the poor?

Place. As noted in earlier sections of this report, empowerment is context specific; consequently we need to develop an understanding of the social and economic setting and – in particular - the local institutions that determine who has power and how it is used.

Participation: By *giving* the people we are working with a role in the planning and management of *our* activities (i.e. participation), we can help them move towards *taking* control of their *own* activities (i.e. empowerment).

Patience: Empowerment cannot be rushed. We are unlikely to succeed if we are dogmatic about our methods and insist on working according to a fixed timetable.

3.2 The Process Approach as a development strategy

3.2.1 What is the Process Approach?

A process approach to rural development involves an *evolving* pattern of interactions. This can be contrasted with a 'structural approach' that involves a *prescribed* pattern of activities. Most rural development programmes consist of a certain amount of structure *and* process, but there is a tendency

for projects and programmes to be dominated by one particular approach as illustrated in the following table[24]:

Attribute	Structural Project	Process Project
project goal	adoption of specific technologies or behaviours	achievement of self-determined objectives
typical activities	extension training, service provision, identical recipient groups	experiential learning, action research, diverse self-help groups
management style	target-setting	capacitation
field staff role	delivery	facilitation
accountability of staff	towards the logframe and senior management	towards the community and team members
performance appraisal	based on compliance	based on responsiveness and innovation

In its most extreme form, the structural approach takes the form of a *blueprint* that involves pre-determined activities from the beginning to the end or a project, with a precisely calculated set of outcomes. While this may be an appropriate approach for building roads and bridges, it is unlikely to succeed in addressing human and social problems that are complex, diverse and dynamic.

Human and social development projects have a range of goals, requiring a range of implementation strategies. In general, however, it can be argued that as the issue of empowerment is given more and more emphasis in the goals of a project, the implementation strategy should incorporate more and more process. Empowerment involves people making location-specific choices that cannot be predicted in advance; projects that aim to promote and support empowerment must be able to respond to those choices. This type of responsiveness is only possible when there is a combination of decentralized management, iterative planning and flexibility during implementation.

3.2.2 Implementing the Process Approach

The outcome of a process approach is inherently unpredictable. All projects have goals, and the goals of a process project can be expressed in terms of capabilities that will be developed or problems that will be addressed, but the precise results will depend on decisions made during the course of implementation. Unlike the structural approach, which focuses on the future, the process approach gives far more attention to the present, to the quality of current interactions rather than the quantity of prospective outputs. So, for CARE staff who want to use the process approach to promote empowerment

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[24] This comparison of the process and structural approach is based on section from the report of the RLP Output to Purpose Review, January 2004.

at the community level, the most important question is not 'where will the process end?, but 'how should it start?'

In the context of community-based development projects, there are two possible strategies that CARE can use to launch the empowerment process: the 'blank page' and the 'entry point'.

• The 'blank page' strategy does not involve any pre-determined activities other than PRA exercises that help the members of a community to identify their needs and decide what action to take. This strategy involves highly diverse content and methods in the initial stages, with unpredictable immediate results.

• The 'entry point' strategy involves a pre-determined set of interventions of limited duration that develop the capacity for subsequent self-determined activities. The immediate results are predictable, but the longer-term outcome is unknown.

The following table summarizes who makes the decisions under three different development strategies:

	Development Strategy		
	Blue Print	Process	Blank Page
Initial activities are planned and managed by…	*outsiders*	*outsiders*	*community*
Subsequent activities are planned and managed by…	*outsiders*	*community*	*community*

The distinction made between these three strategies is a simplification of the differences between real development projects and programmes. But it does provide a useful way a looking at how development activities can lead to empowerment.

The blueprint strategy has been widely used in rural development projects because it is relatively easy for donors and government agencies to implement on a large scale. Blueprint projects have been successful in bringing about the adoption of new technologies and providing various services, but they have not resulted in rural people taking greater control of development processes. The blueprint strategy, as exemplified by the Training and Visit system of agricultural extension, is simply not designed to empower people. By contrast, the blank page strategy is based entirely on the idea that the community should be making its own decisions and organizing its own actions. When implemented by skilled facilitators in certain situations, this strategy might result in high levels of empowerment, but there is a lack of evidence to suggest that this can be done on a large scale.

It is possible to see the entry point strategy as a compromise between the structural constraints of large scale development projects and the growing call

for greater involvement of poor people in decision-making about activities that affect their lives. But the entry point strategy is more than just a compromise, it is also based on an understanding of how empowerment occurs. In particular, it recognizes that certain *means* need to be in place before people are able to exercise greater control over their lives. And while some of the means for empowerment might be easy to pinpoint, like the availability of credit and legal rights, there are other means that are equally important but far less tangible, including psychological and sociological factors such as 'critical awareness' 'voice', 'space' and 'cohesion'. The entry point strategy aims to develop these means for empowerment and create opportunities for agency.

The entry point strategy is examined in greater depth in the next section, but before proceeding it may be useful to say something about the 'phased approach'. Is this the same as the process approach or not? The question is relevant in view of recommendations made by the author's in an earlier report regarding a 'phased Farmer Field School'[25]. The recommendations were aimed at improving the impact of activities that had a number of predetermined features; notably, it had already been decided that the duration of FFS would be 24 or 30 months. The purpose of breaking these FFS into phases was not to add variety to these activities, nor simply to improve experiential learning during one of the phases, but to give participants greater ownership of the entire learning process. This ownership would come about, it was hoped, through group decisions about the subject matter and individual decisions about whether or not to continue studying.

CARE is still piloting the phased FFS. If these pilots show that women have been exercising greater control over the design and management of the FFS, this can be considered an important step in the development of empowerment processes. If, however, the phased FFS has become a more elaborate blueprint, designed and managed by CARE staff, then it is example of the all-to-familiar structural approach.

3.2.3 What exactly is an entry point?

An 'entry point' is an action that starts a process. In this report, the term is used to describe a development activity that is organised by project staff in order to start a process that leads to the empowerment of community members.

An entry point consists of a pre-determined combination of technical, social and education interventions. These interventions are designed to generate predictable short-term benefits as a result of the adoption of new practices or because of access that is gained to new resources or services . In most cases the benefits are related to improvements in health, production or income. The purpose of the entry point, however, is not simply to generate these immediate benefits, but also to cultivate the human and social capital that will

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[25] Andrew Bartlett, 2002, Impact Study on FFS Activities within SHABGE-DFID Project. CARE Bangladesh

allow members of the community to become the agents of further change. Once the initial activities have been completed, the planning and management of subsequent activities is carried out by the community, using the capability that has been developed as a result of the entry point.
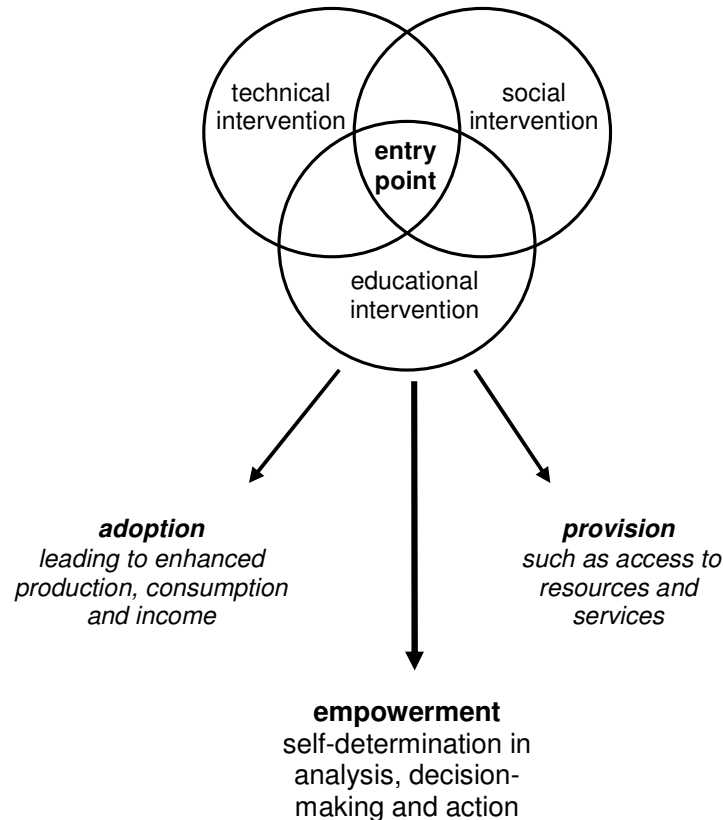
If we consider CARE's Farmer Field Schools (FFS) to be an entry point, they can be described in the following manner:

- technical interventions = rice-fish culture, vegetable production
- social intervention = formation of groups of 20-25 men or women
- educational intervention = fortnightly experiential learning sessions

As the diagram indicates, adoption and provision are often outcomes of the entry point. While these outcomes may be valuable in their own right, they are relevant to the current discussion because they help to create the means for empowerment. Interventions such as homestead horticulture, which appear to be old-fashioned extension activities, can – under the right conditions - be entry points for empowerment.

More specifically, the entry point strategy incorporates a number of tactical considerations:

- The subject matter of the entry point is usually chosen because it is non-threatening to the more powerful members of community, including local

elites and the husbands of women participants. A field worker will find it far easier to establish a vegetable training group compared to a 'women's rights educational group'. But rights can become an important subject for discussion among the participants of the vegetable group once a certain level of trust has been established.

- Lack of power affects the expectations and aspirations of women and the poor, and weakens their role in any community-based planning. They will be better equipped to express their needs and plan ways to address them once they have acquired new analytical skills and gained some experience of new ways of working together. Entry points are expected to break old patterns of thinking and organising, and then allow people to make their own decisions about how to move forward.

- It may be unrealistic or potentially dangerous to encourage oppressed people, like women in rural Bangladesh, to take urgent action that will give them greater control of their lives. The danger of a backlash from men and local elites cannot be ignored. An entry point can provide women with a number of things - access to services, group solidarity, and productive skills that buy them respect - all of which will help to protect and support them once they start to make their own decisions and take action for themselves.

- The entry point also gives field workers opportunities to observe how local institutions operate *and then* apply that knowledge while facilitating subsequent activities. This is in contrast to the situation that often occurs at present in CARE projects, where field staff make long-term commitments to a group of community members before they know much about them.

- CARE has an asymmetric relationship with the communities in which it works. Even though CARE is not providing material or financial inputs, it has a dominant position when it starts interacting with groups of poor villagers; CARE *gives* something that they *receive*. The entry point can be used to create trust, solidarity and ownership, so that subsequent interactions involve a bit less patronage an a bit more partnership.

The Farmer Field School is not the only entry point that could be used by CARE Bangladesh. Other possibilities are explored later in this report. But to be effective in promoting empowerment, rather than simply a vehicle for provision or adoption, an activity should have the following characteristics:

- it addresses a felt need and quickly produces a obvious benefit
- it demands critical thinking and develops problem-solving skills
- it promotes collective action among community members
- it provides an opportunity for experimentation and further innovation

A danger with the entry point strategy is that project staff will get stuck in 'delivery mode'. In other words, they focus on the pre-determined interventions, making sure that immediate benefits are achieved, while failing

to cultivate the human and social capital that is needed for empowerment to take place. This emphasis on delivery rather than empowerment is often a result of too much structure (e.g. numerical targets, upward accountability) and not enough process (e.g. flexibility and responsiveness). It can also be a result of overloading the entry point with too many technologies and stretching the duration beyond what is needed to achieve a quick impact. An entry point is - by definition – a relatively short term activity. It can have a duration of a few weeks or a few months, but to be effective there must be a transfer of power, from project staff to community members, before any kind of dependency is created.

3.3 The Farmer Field School as an entry point

3.3.1 Origins of the FFS

The Farmer Field School (FFS) is a group-based learning process. It was originally designed in 1989 by experts working for the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Indonesia. The purpose was not empowerment *per se*, but the promotion of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as an alternative to the indiscriminate use of pesticides. During the FAO Field Schools in Indonesia, farmers carried out *experiential learning* activities that helped them understand the ecology of their rice fields. These activities involved experiments, field observations and group analysis. The knowledge gained from these activities enabled the participants to make their own locally-specific decisions about crop management practices. This approach represented a radical departure from earlier extension programmes, in which farmers were expected to adopt generalized recommendations that had been formulated by specialists from outside the community.

The success of the Farmer Field School in Indonesia led to the rapid spread of the methodology to other countries. By the end of the 90's more than two million farmers across Asia had participated in IPM Field Schools.

Although the first Farmer Field Schools were designed to promote IPM, empowerment was an essential feature right from the beginning. The curriculum of the FFS was built on the assumption that farmers could only implement IPM once they had acquired the ability to carry out their own analysis, make their own decisions and organise their own activities. This characteristic of the FFS has been noted by a number of authors, including Niels Roling:

The basis for the training approach . . . is non-formal education, itself a 'learner-centred' discovery process. It seeks to empower people to solve 'living problems' actively by fostering participation, self-confidence, dialogue, joint decision-making and self-determination[26].

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[26] Roling, Niels. G. and Elske van de Fliert, 1998, "Introducing integrated pest management in rice in Indonesia: a pioneering attempt to facilitate large-scale change", in Facilitating Sustainable Agriculture, N.G.Roling, and M.A.E. Wagemakers editors, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Annex 2 provides a number of readings that explore the relationship between empowerment and the FFS. This includes previously unpublished work by Russ Dilts, an educational expert who was involved in the original design of the FFS, and Kevin Kamp, a former CARE Coordinator who played a key role in introducing the FFS to CARE's projects in Bangladesh.

The FFS has proven that it can been an effective entry point for empowerment at a number of levels.

• <u>individual empowerment</u>: farmers who have participated in FFS carry out careful observation and analysis to decide what practices to apply in their own fields.

• <u>group empowerment</u>: FFS members collectively plan and conduct experiments to learn about agro-ecology and test or adapt new practices.

• <u>community empowerment</u>: the FFS group organises activities that benefit other members of the community, including farmer-to-farmer training.

Each level of empowerment has occurred on a significant scale under a range of social and physical conditions: in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and China. This success notwithstanding, the FFS was never designed to be a universal entry point for the empowerment of rural people.

3.3.2   Limitations of the FFS

In most FFS programmes, access to land is a pre-requisite for participation. The first FFS were organised for rice farmers who were using high levels of pesticides. Although the curriculum has been adapted for other field crops, including maize, cotton and vegetables, the immediate benefits of the FFS continue to be closely linked to the use of inputs. Farmers who attend an FFS gain an understanding of agro-ecology and this knowledge allows them to optimise the use of pesticides, fertilizer, water and seed, leading to higher yields and/or lower costs. There may also be health benefits resulting from a reduction in the use of highly toxic pesticides. Clearly the FFS is not designed for rural families with no access to land, and there are fewer immediate benefits for poor farmers who have not been using high levels of purchased inputs.

Furthermore, the FFS was not designed to address the *relational nature* of empowerment at the household and community level. All participants of the FFS are expected to benefit equally in terms of greater control over both human capital (ownership of knowledge and the learning process) and natural capital (productivity and sustainability of land and water). The FFS also makes an important contribution to enhancing social capital (formation of groups and networks) and this has often given farmers a stronger voice vis-à-
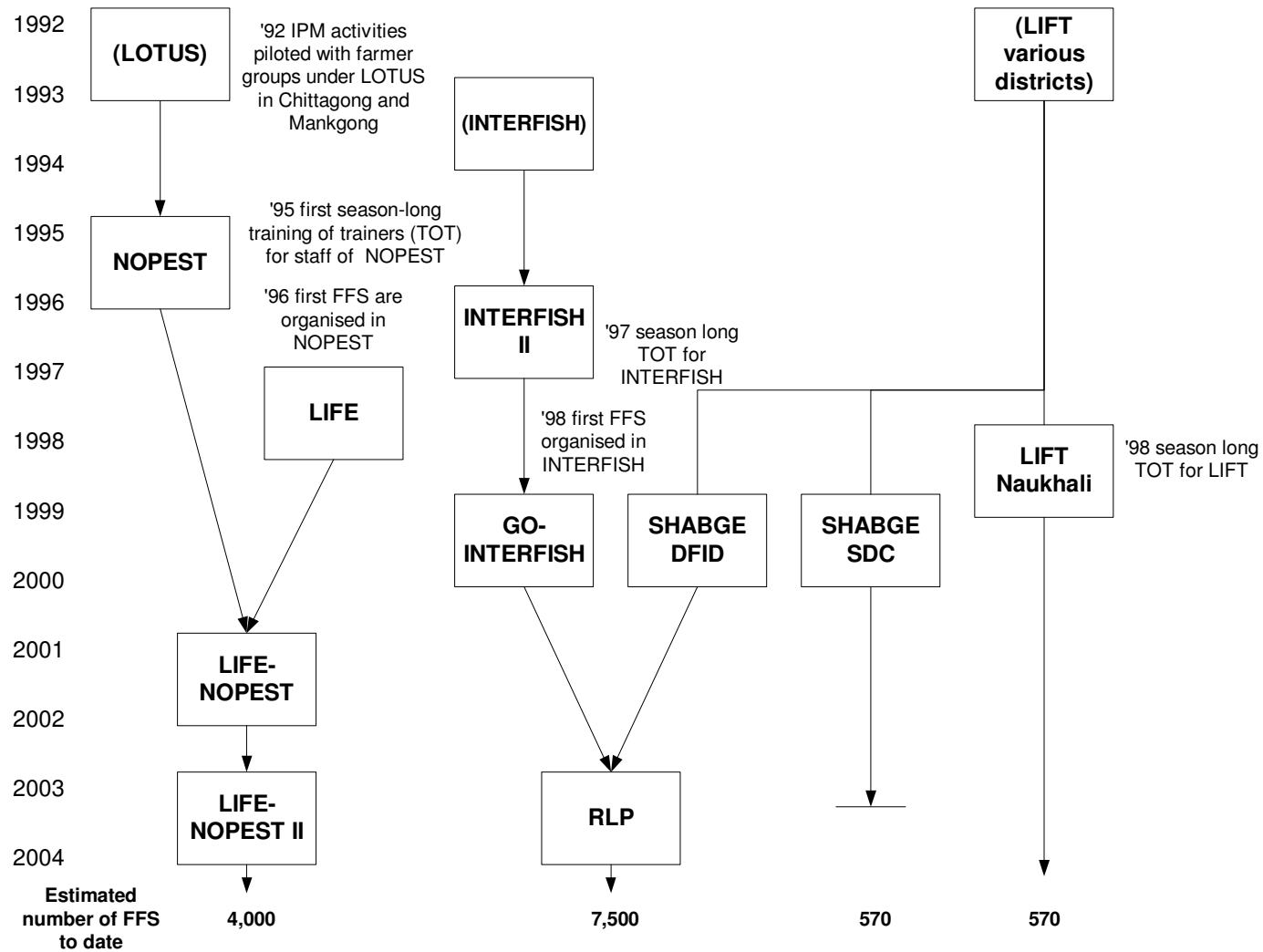
vis the state. But the FFS does not aim to raise the voice of women vis-à-vis men, or the poor vis-à-vis the rich.

Women have often been members of FFS. Indeed there are numerous examples of FFS being conducted by female trainers entirely for female participants. But the learning process does not address women's issues. Consequently, female participants of FFS are empowered because they are farmers, not because they are women. Similarly, poor farmers have often participated in FFS, and they learnt to become more productive as a result of their participation. But the FFS is not designed to help them to challenge the way in which resources such as land and water are distributed within the community.

Finally it must be noted that – outside of Bangladesh - most FFS have been conducted as part of projects and programmes that are: a) managed by a technical department of a Ministry of Agriculture, and b) assisted by an international technical agency such as FAO. Consequently, the 'soft' side of the FFS - the educational and social issues – has often played a secondary role to 'hard' issues such as pesticide application rates and the diversity of beneficial insects. So, although the goal of empowerment was in the minds of some FFS planners from the very beginning, and although the terminology of empowerment was openly used by some FAO experts from 1995 onward[27], this issue was rarely the 'key selling point' for implementing agencies. And because empowerment was not always prioritised in project documents, there have been many people – managers and field staff with a technical orientation - who simply didn't get the point.

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[27] See: Kenmore, P. E., Gallagher, K. D. & Ooi, P. A. C. 1995 *Empowering farmers: Experiences with Integrated Pest Management.* entwicklung + landlicher raum 1/95: 27-28., Also: Dilts, D.R.; Hate, S., 1995. *'IPM Farmer Field Schools: Changing Paradigms and Scaling-up to Make a Difference', published by ITDG.*

Timeline of CARE projects that used FFS methodology in Bangladesh

1992

(LOTUS)

'92 IPM activities piloted with farmer groups under LOTUS in Chittagong and Mankgong

(LIFT various districts)

1993

(INTERFISH)

1994

'95 first season-long training of trainers (TOT) for staff of NOPEST

1995

NOPEST

'96 first FFS are organised in NOPEST

INTERFISH II

1996

'97 season long TOT for INTERFISH

1997

LIFE

'98 first FFS organised in INTERFISH

'98 season long TOT for LIFT

LIFT Naukhali

1998

1999

GO-INTERFISH

SHABGE DFID

SHABGE SDC

2000

2001

LIFE-NOPEST

2002

2003

LIFE-NOPEST II

RLP

2004

Estimated number of FFS to date

| 4,000 | | 7,500 | 570 | 570 |

Boxes show names and starting dates of CARE projects. Names in parenthesis did not use FFS methodology but are part of the project lineage.

3.4   Experience with FFS in CARE Bangladesh

3.4.1   FFS Lineage

During the last ten years, CARE Bangladesh has organised more that 12,000 Farmer Field Schools (FFS) with approximately a quarter of a million participants. The timeline on the previous page shows the relationship between the ten projects that have used the FFS approach.

As was the case elsewhere in Asia, the original purpose of using the FFS was to train farmer in Integrated Pest Management and thereby reduce the use of pesticides that were both costly and dangerous. Following meetings with the FAO experts who had designed the FFS in Indonesia, CARE started piloting IPM training under the LOTUS project in 1992. The pilot activities allowed CARE to adapt the methodology to rice-fish systems, something that FAO had not done. In 1995, CARE organised a 4-month training course for field staff, with assistance from a team of Indonesian facilitators. This was followed in 1996 by the first activities to be called Farmer Field Schools.

Throughout the 1990's, DFID showed considerable interest in the training approach being used by CARE, not simply because of the production increases that the participants achieved, but – perhaps more importantly - because of the empowering effect of experiential learning. For DFID advisers, the effects of the pilot activities and subsequently FFS organized by CARE stood in stark contrast to what was being achieved under projects being implemented by Government agencies such as the Department of Agricultural Extension[28].

CARE's adaptation of the Farmer Field School went beyond rice-fish cultivation. It is not just the technology that was changed, a number of other major modifications were made:

•   The duration of the original FFS in South-East Asia is approximately 4 months, covering a single cropping season. This allows the participants to study all aspects of crop husbandry, from land preparation to harvest. In Bangladesh, CARE's FFS have a duration of at least 18 months and – in the case of the SHABGE project – have been as long as 30 months. This has allowed CARE to increased the number of technologies that are being studied or demonstrated. One interesting consequence of the extended duration is that the term 'Farmer Field School' has come to apply to the group of people who attend the meetings, rather than to the learning process. For CARE staff, the FFS is an organisation rather than an activity.

•   While the duration of the FFS has been increased by CARE, the intensity has been reduced. FFS sessions in South-East Asia take place every week, while in CARE projects they take place once every two

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[28] See Kevin Kamp, personal communication, in the Annex 'Empowerment as a goal of the Farmer Field School'.

weeks at the outset, extending to once every month in the second year. Also, the length of the CARE sessions is less than sessions conducted in other countries, with very little time being spent on experiential learning: i.e. on the process of making field observations and analysis of the data that has been collected[29].

- In recent years, CARE has added a number of other activities to the FFS, including marketing and organizational development. These issues are studied in sessions facilitated by CARE staff. While marketing initiatives and organizational development have been important outcomes of FFS in some other countries, these developments take place *after* farmers graduate from the FFS. There is an important difference in terms of who directs and manages the process.

As a result of these changes, some outside observers have questioned whether or not the term 'Farmer Field School' should be used to describe what CARE is doing. Whatever they are called, the activities being organized by CARE are clearly *not* an entry point of the kind that is described in previous sections of this report. The CARE Field School is not a starter for a development process that involves a transformation in the relationship between outsiders and members of the community. Instead, the CARE Field School is a complete development package - entrée, main course and dessert – delivered by CARE staff.

3.4.2 Have these FFS succeeded in fostering empowerment?

Given the changes that CARE has made to the Farmer Field School, it is not surprising that the results are rather different to those that have been achieved in other countries. In 2002, this author observed:

"The SHABGE project is resulting in the adoption of a wide-range of innovations that are undoubtedly beneficial, but [these innovations] do not generate an understanding of underlying scientific principles, nor are they fostering systematic experimentation among the targeted women. It is these things that have provided the basis for self-sustaining learning groups in some other countries: groups that organise and conduct field trials and training of other farmers, groups that negotiate services with government agencies and advocate their own issues and rights"

This was not the first time that comments of this kind hade been made. Four years earlier, the team that carried out the Technical Review of NOPEST observed that "the objectives of IPM in empowering farmers and improving their decision making are often replaced with the objectives of the project for physical outputs"[30].

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[29] A detailed examination of the learning activities conducted under one of the CARE projects is included in: Andrew Bartlett, 2002, Impact Study on FFS Activities within SHABGE-DFID Project.
[30] Longer quotes are given in the Annex 'Empowerment as a goal of the Farmer Field School'.

In both reports, in 1998 and 2002, the authors drew attention to weaknesses in the learning process: how study plots were managed, how sessions were facilitated, and how data was analysed by farmers as a basis for decision-making. The conclusion that both authors reached was that experiential learning was not taking place. This was considered a serious flaw because, as part of the FAO model, it was experiential learning that led to empowerment. The assumptions made by FAO, can be summarised like this:

experiential learning	→	critical thinking	→	self-reliant decision making	→	empowered farmers
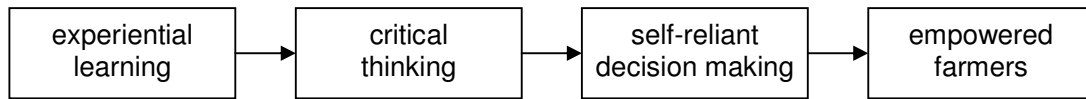
These connections can be called *the human capital route to empowerment.*

Despite the evident lack of these connections in CARE Field Schools there are signs that empowerment is taking place. Previous sections of this report include a number of examples of FFS participants making decisions and taking actions that give them greater control of livelihoods assets. Women are taking a greater role in household decision making, claiming entitlements from local government, collectively managing productive assets, and challenging oppressive practices such as early marriage. How did all of this happen if experiential leaning is not taking place? A close examination of a number of Field Schools indicates that they are generating empowerment through the accumulation of financial or social capital, rather than human capital.

The *social capital route* involves women gaining a voice as a result of the social space and solidarity that is provided by regular group meetings. As one review noted:

"many of the women who participate in FFS have never before participated in educational activities which bring them into contact with people from outside their community. They never went to school, they cannot read, they don't have radio sets, and they are often prohibited from travelling beyond the boundaries of their village. For these women, attending a Field School represents a profound change in their lives"[31].

Social capital consists of both vertical and horizontal connections. The behaviour of rural women is tightly controlled by patriarchal institutions that emphasise vertical connections. While there are very few opportunities for women to demonstrate agency through these institutions, there does appear to be considerable potential for strengthening horizontal connections that can mitigate against the more oppressive effects of patriarchy.

Observations made by the author and the Social Development Unit suggest that CARE's interventions often take the form of a patron-client relationship. As noted in RLP's recent study of social capital:

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[31] Bartlett and Eggan, 2002, Combined Output to Purpose Review of DFID-Bangladesh's Rural Livelihoods projects implemented by CARE-Bangladesh

'Patron client relations, as a type of vertical network, involve interpersonal exchange and reciprocal obligations, but the exchange is vertical and the obligations asymmetric. The vertical bonds of clientism work against horizontal group organisation, undermining potential solidarity between clients and, to a lesser extent, patrons too.'[32]

CARE's success in promoting empowerment appears to depends on the degree to which this patron-client relationship is used to promote horizontal connections rather than sustain the vertical. Evidence suggest that it can be done, but at the present time it is not being done in a widespread or systematic manner. There are a number of interrelated factors that appear to contribute to group solidarity and, thereby, to empowerment:

• a high degree of homogeneity among group members in terms of social status and interests
• prior experience of working together and/or early success within the FFS that has generated confidence
• diverse links with other organisations, rather than depending on CARE or another single source of support
• the ability of field staff in creating trust and then stepping back as the group progresses

At this point, it is necessary to note that 'organisational development', as it is understood by CARE field staff, is *not* the same thing as social capital formation. Farmer Field Schools can provide a means for developing 'mutual trust, respect and confidence' that leads to the spontaneous creation of semi-formal organisations[33]. A skilled facilitator may be able to nurture this process. But if too much emphasis is given to structures (constitutions, elected committees, bank accounts etc.), OD activities can undermine solidarity rather than strengthen it. In other words, the formation of horizontal social capital should – perhaps - be seen as a *cause* of organisational development not a *consequence*, and field staff might do better to focus on the former rather than the latter.

In view of the importance that CARE is beginning to attach to the issue of women's empowerment, it may be useful to carry out a more detailed study of the relationship between group-based activities, social capital formation and organizational development[34].

Finally, the *financial capital* route to empowerment appears to be less reliable than the social capital route. While some women who participated in a FFS

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[32] Brigitta Bode and Mick Howes, 2003, Social Capital in Rural Dinajpur, CARE Bangladesh
[33] Jonathan Otto and Laila Jasmin, 2001, Farmer Field Schools to Community Associations: Post-intervention evolution of local groups, CARE Bangladesh
[34] It would also be interesting to re-examine the experience of FAO to see precisely how the FFS has fostered group empowerment in other projects. How much of the success can be attributed to the problem-solving skills that are developed during experiential learning, and how much has actually been a result of the social capital that is accumulated as a result of a shared learning experience. Has 'communicative action' been just as important – perhaps more important – than 'critical thinking' by individuals?

now have cash in their hands and are making purchasing decision for the first time in their lives, there are many more who are producing vegetables and fish that are sold by male members of the family. Similarly, women are becoming members of post-FFS savings groups that are often controlled by men, or which are used by husbands as a source of credit. There are very few examples of post-FFS organisations making collective purchasing decisions, and the group empowerment that is taking place in these cases can partly – if not wholly – be attributed to the accumulation of social capital rather than the accumulation of financial capital.

The FFS and routes to Empowerment

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                            ┌─────────────┐
                            │  FFS group  │
                            │  formation  │
                            └─────────────┘

┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│ experiential │    │ agricultural │   │setting up    │    │   shared     │
│  learning    │    │  extension   │   │savings scheme│    │  experience  │
└──────────────┘    └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘    └──────────────┘
                            │                  │
                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │ adoption of  │
                    │ new practices│
                    └──────────────┘
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                    ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
                    │  improved    │──▶│   making     │
                    │ production   │   │   savings    │
                    └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
                            │                  │
                    ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
                    │ cash in hand │   │ taking loans │
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┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐
│critical      │        │  purchasing  │          │  collective  │
│thinking about│        │  decisions   │          │decision-making│
│practices     │        └──────────────┘          └──────────────┘
└──────────────┘

┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐
│ empowerment  │        │ empowerment  │          │ empowerment  │
└──────────────┘        └──────────────┘          └──────────────┘

  the human              the financial               the social
 capital route           capital route             capital route
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3.4.3 So what is the problem?

While there are hundreds of examples of individuals and groups who have gained some control over livelihoods assets as a result of participating in FFS conducted by CARE, it is clear that certain things are not happening on a significant scale:

- there are very few examples of spontaneous organizational development among people who participate in the FFS;
- there is little evidence of independent experimentation, innovation and adaptation of technology;
- there is very little in the way of farmer-to-farmer training, other than what has been organized by project staff;
- few individuals or groups are regularly making their own demands regarding access to resources and services.

Why have the FFS organized by CARE Bangladesh not produced the same levels of empowerment that have been seen in some other countries? A number of possibilities have been suggested by CARE staff, including:

- CARE's projects were never designed to promote empowerment;
- the FFS approach is not appropriate to conditions in Bangladesh;
- field staff do not have the skills required to facilitate the learning process;
- the organizational environment is not conducive to this kind of work.

The first explanation – that <u>CARE projects were never designed to promote empowerment</u> - has some historical truth to it. Throughout the 1990's, project documents emphasized technological issues and used adoption rates as indicators of success. But there were also plenty of references to experiential learning, critical thinking, and 'farmers as experts'. By 1998 the word 'empowerment' was creeping into CARE project proposals, evaluation reports and internal communication[35]. A year later, CARE signed two agreements with DFID. Although the Project Memorandum for GO-INTERISH focuses on livelihood security and the role of farmer leaders, the agreement for SHABGE makes it very clear that CARE and the donor were seeking 'the empowerment of the poor, vulnerable and isolated'. To understand what has happened – or not - in the five years since those documents was signed, other explanations are needed.

The second explanation – that <u>the FFS approach is not appropriate to conditions in Bangladesh</u> - deserves a more detailed examination. As already noted, the FFS conducted by CARE are very different to those conducted by other organizations in other countries. The question that needs to be asked is

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[35] Particularly interesting is the agenda of the ANR Advisors meeting at the end of 1998, when the topics included 'learning versus technology', women's empowerment, building local associations and the true meaning of partnerships. Answers have yet to be found to many of the questions that were raised at the meeting.

not whether the general idea of a Field School is appropriate, but whether the specific interventions made in the CARE Field School are appropriate.

The *technical interventions* that are part of the Field Schools conducted under NOPEST and GO-INTERFISH, i.e. fish ponds, rice-fish cultivation and dike cropping, were selected because they respond to natural resource constraints in Bangladesh. It made sense to teach small farmers how to use these technologies all the time that CARE and DFID were primarily interested in food security, but the rational for these interventions has become weaker now that both organizations are giving more attention to rights, equity and poverty reduction. The chosen interventions do not take account of the interests of the poorest members of the community. Clearly, rice-fish cultivation is unlikely to make a significant contribution to the livelihoods of the landless, and it is not very attractive to most women who have traditionally played a very limited role in aquaculture and the management of field crops. In the LIFT and SHABGE projects, which are designed specifically for women, CARE has decided to focus on homestead vegetable production. While this appears to take account of the traditional roles of women, the author has observed that the costs and benefits of these horticultural interventions vary greatly from place to place because of soil types and alternative employment opportunities. In contrast to homestead horticulture, there appears to be a unanimous interest among rural women in poultry and livestock husbandry, something that CARE has been unable to respond to.

The *social interventions* that are part of CARE's FFS, i.e. the creation of study groups of between 20 and 25 people, must also be questioned. Although some 'secondary adoption' is taking place, there appears to be a strong tendency for the members of FFS in Bangladesh to keep the benefits of attending learning sessions to themselves. Farmer-to-farmer activities are not taking place to the same extent as in countries such as Indonesia and Nepal. There is also some evidence to suggest that when an opportunity arises to make changes in the membership of the FFS, for example when a marketing or savings group is created, the control of the group shifts towards male relatives and richer members of the community. If the Farmer Field School is seen as an organisation, it is weak and vulnerable compared to the institutions that already control resources and political power in rural Bangladesh[36].

As noted in the 2004 Review of the Rural Livelihoods Programme, equity has not been an important consideration for CARE staff who are managing Field Schools, and benefits have often been captured by those who need them the least. But even when CARE has made special efforts to implement a rights based approach, such as the activities in the North-West aimed at securing access to water bodies, these efforts have been co-opted by the richer members of the community and have excluded women. A recent report from the Social Development Unit concluded that 'approaches entailing a fundamental re-configuration of existing social relationships or a serious

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[36] For a detailed discussion of the social context of the FFS, see: Laila Jasmin Banu and Brigitta Bode, 2002, CARE Bangladesh's FFS Approach: New Frontiers in Farmer Empowerment. An extract is included in Annex 2.

challenge to established power structures will normally fail and should generally be avoided'[37].

This experience does not mean that CARE should avoid working with groups. Instead it means that staff need to understand the social context and act with greater prudence. This might mean avoiding communities that have a 'primary elite'. It may also mean avoiding making long-term commitments to groups that have mixed membership in terms of wealth and/or gender. And if homogenous groups are created for the less influential members of the community, such as women and the landless, it may be wise to help them to quickly establish connections with diverse vertical institutions (e.g. local government, service providers, NGOs) rather than get locked into a dependency relationship with CARE and/or traditional power structures.

The third reason that has been suggested to explain why CARE Field Schools have not been more successful in generating empowerment is that field staff do not have the required facilitation skills. The author's initial reaction to this suggestion was that it cannot possibly be true. Compared to most other organizations that have used the FFS approach, CARE conducts far more training for field staff. Back in 1998, as a result of a number of exchanges between Bangladesh and Indonesia, CARE had a number of Training Officers and Project Development Officers with expertise in experiential methods. But much of this expertise has since been lost or dispersed. It is noticeable that

training conducted in recent years, such as the Foundation Courses for partner NGOs under SHABGE and GO-INTERFISH, does not provide field staff with the amount of practice or level of coaching that is required to develop skills in facilitating experiential learning. Rather than developing these skills and an appreciation of group dynamics, the training delivers a set of templates and recipes that field staff can use to conduct activities.

The performance of field trainers depends on their skills *and* the pressures that are put on them.

So, perhaps it is true that field staff lack the required skills. Perhaps CARE has been unable to implement the planned interventions in a way that helps women and the poor gain greater control over their lives. Weaknesses in the methods of empowerment may be undermining the chosen strategy.

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[37] Brigitta Bode and Mick Howes, 2004, Securing Access to Water Bodies, CARE Bangladesh

Observations of FFS sessions made by the author show that while plenty of participatory tools and techniques are being used, the interaction between trainers and group members is often quite patronizing. For many CARE staff, participation has become a set of rituals that do not challenge the relationships between themselves and the 'participants'. Field Trainers and supervisory staff demonstrate their power in dozens of small ways: body language, tone of voice, questioning techniques, management of sessions and association with 'influential persons'.

The distinction between participatory extension and empowerment is far more subtle than the difference between top-down extension and empowerment. It may be that CARE staff have found it harder to make the switch to a truly empowering learning process than government officers in some other countries for whom putting farmers in control was very obviously a different approach to the one they were used to. This may help to explain why, in 1997, one consultant for NOPEST was able to document how field staff understood that the FFS was different from other approaches, but a few months later another reviewer concluded that this understanding was not producing the desired results[38].

The fourth reason that has been put forward to explain the short-comings of the FFS is that the organizational environment is not conducive to this kind of work. The author has spoken to a number of CARE employees who have suggested that the organization needs to empower its own staff before it can do a better job of empowering the poor of Bangladesh; references are often made to the performance appraisal system, and the style of supervision within CARE. Others have pointed to the constraints that are imposed by the donor, particularly the quantitative targets that are included in project logframes and the recommendations made by review teams. Additionally, there is widespread recognition that the contractual nature of CARE's relationship with Partner NGOs has not been conducive to innovative and responsive implementation.

These are all examples of *upward accountability*. CARE staff and partners, whether in the field or in Dhaka, are constantly working to satisfy people above them in the hierarchy of funding, planning and management. Despite the commitment and concern that is demonstrated by many Field Trainers, they are primarily accountable to Project Officers and Managers, not to the members of the communities in which they are working. They have a job to do, and this involves making sure that 'x' number of people attend 'x' number of sessions. It also involves making sure that the visible indicators of success are in place before the next visit of their supervisor, including: carefully drawn outputs of the well-being analysis and homestead space planning, neatly laid out study plot and tree nurseries, and – more recently – shiny meeting huts with membership lists stuck to the wall. But how were all of these things created? Who made the decisions and undertook the actions? The exigencies of upward accountability sometimes result in field staff conducting an elaborate performance for the benefit of their bosses.

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[38] Compare the extracts from Dee Jupp and Peter Ooi in the Annex on the Goals of the FFS.

None of what has been written above should be interpreted as a criticism of the field staff. They have been given an impossible job: on the one hand they are expected to support the empowerment of farmers, something that requires a high degree of responsiveness and flexibility, and on the other hand they have been given highly detailed performance criteria that have little to do with empowerment[39].

The practice of empowerment requires reversals in the flow of accountability. Field Trainers should be responding to the interests and decisions of the poorer members of the communities in which they work. Project Officers and Managers should be responding to the needs of the Field Trainers. And so on up the system. The Senior Management of CARE Bangladesh has recognized the need for empowerment of staff at all levels, and the Long Range Strategic Plan gives considerable importance to changing the 'organizational culture' of CARE. More recently, a process has been started to revise job descriptions in certain projects "so as to allow staff to be more process oriented and to focus on facilitation"[40]. If this can be achieved, CARE will be better equipped to support the empowerment of rural communities, regardless of whether the process involves Farmer Field Schools or not.

3.4.4 A summary of key issues relating to FFS conducted by CARE

- CARE's use of the FFS approach is contributing to the empowerment of women and the poor, albeit in a rather limited and haphazard manner. Empowerment – when it occurs - appears to be a result of increased voice and solidarity that comes through the accumulation of horizontal social capital, rather than a result of the application of critical thinking through experiential learning.

- Three conditions appear to be required before the CARE's interventions succeed in promoting empowerment: a conducive social context, an entry point that is relevant to the needs and resources of the group members, and a field worker who is able to promote group development. CARE staff at all levels should be making sure that these three conditions are thoroughly understood and taken into account during planning, management and implementation.

- The FFS as it is currently being conducted in not an entry point, rather it is a complete development 'package' that is delivered by field staff. The technical content of this package does not closely match the interests of women and the landless. If CARE wants to promote greater empowerment of these groups, staff should consider experimenting with a wider range of shorter interventions. This does not necessarily mean that CARE's interaction with the community will be shorter, instead it

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[39] The contradictory instructions given to field staff are perfectly illustrated in the 'FFS Implementation Guidelines' produced by the Interfish project in 1998.
[40] CARE response to the 2004 Output to Purpose Review of the Rural Livelihoods Programme.

means that community members will play a greater role in planning and managing activities after the initial activities – the entry points - have been implemented.

- Life in rural Bangladesh is dominated by local elites who maintain control through institutions such as gushti, samaj and salish. These institutions provide an important part of the context in which the FFS is established and implemented, and they help to determine what happens after the withdrawal of CARE support. These institutions involve both vertical and horizontal connections. In general, locations where the vertical connections are strongest, which have been called primary elite paras, are the locations that are least conducive to the implementation of the FFS.

- The initial interactions between CARE field workers and a community are inevitably based on a vertical interaction. CARE is an outsider. CARE has to work with 'influential people' in the early stages of establishing an FFS. The FFS probably looks very different to poor farmers - who are viewing it from beneath – to the way it look to us – from above. What CARE is creating is a type of patron-client relationship.

- The success of the FFS depends very much on the ability of field staff to transform the vertical relationship they have with the group members into horizontal connections among members themselves, and between the group and other members of the community. This is not an easy task. Upward accountability is in very strong CARE Bangladesh, and this translates into continuing vertical pressure between field workers and the group. Some of the strategies that have been adopted by CARE as part of the FFS, such as the system of Local Entrepreneurs, enhance the patron-client relationship.

- CARE needs to ensure that organizational development activities are strengthening, rather than undermining or bypassing, the social capital that is being accumulated by women who attend FFS. Currently, CARE's OD activities often involve vertical pressure on groups that have a weak horizontal base.

- Whatever we call the organizations that are emerging from FFS – self-help groups, marketing groups, farmer associations and registered CBOs – these are all vulnerable to being captured by the vertical forces in rural society. Only if the groups have horizontal strength, and if they have also established diverse rather than dependent connections with vertical institutions, will they stand a chance of serving the interests of the poor or women on a sustained basis.

3.5   Alternative entry points

If empowerment of women and the poor is to become a major goal of CARE's programme in Bangladesh, the organization needs to develop strategies that are more effective than those currently being used in the Rural Livelihoods Programme. An important part of an improved strategy will be entry points that are more successful than the current Farmer Field School in fostering self-directed behaviour.

During the author's visit to Bangladesh, a number of alternative entry points were discussed. The notes that follow are an attempt to capture the salient points of this discussion. All of these entry points have strengths *and* weaknesses. While this is not an exhaustive list of the possibilities, it might be concluded that a future programme should make use of multiple entry points, with the precise mix being determined according to the location.

'Improved' FFS for women

Description: compared to current FFS, this would involve reducing the duration to one or two cropping seasons, having sessions every week, giving more attention to experiential learning and group dynamics, including educated girls as helpers, and using participatory M&E to help the group assess progress.

Strengths: by intensifying the learning process, it may be possible to achieve in 9 months the same level adoption, provision and empowerment that currently takes 2 or 3 years. This can then be used as a foundation for further activities that are planned and managed by the group.

Weaknesses: 9 months is still a long time for an entry point…long enough for the group to be captured by richer members or get locked into a patron-client relationship with CARE; rice-fish systems remain outside the normal responsibilities of most women and will not benefit landless households, while homestead vegetable production has highly variable returns; the similarity to previous FFS may make it difficult for CARE staff to 'do it differently'.

Community Led Total Sanitation

Description: PRA exercises are used to 'ignite' a community so that it takes rapid action to stop open defecation. Community members are encouraged to develop their own low-cost designs for latrines; no subsidy is provided for construction. Targets are set and monitored by the community, often with a system of sanctions against people who continue to defecate in the open. Members of sanitized communities also become 'consultants' who facilitate CLTS activities in neighbouring areas[41].

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[41] Kamal Kar, 2003 'Subsidy or Self-Respect? Participatory Total Community Sanitation in Bangladesh', IDS Working Paper No. 184

Strengths: CLTS has a quick impact on the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases, with particular benefits for the health and dignity of women; the methodology is inclusive, involving all members of community rather than benefiting a selected group; it can generate a high degree of ownership and enthusiasm for collective action

Weaknesses: success may sometimes depend on inducing shame, conformity and 'natural leadership', all of which have uncertain longer-term effects on the development of social capital; without a clearly defined target group, there are questions about who will take responsibility for - and control of - follow-up activities.

Poultry production

Description: to date, CARE's activities in this area have been limited to the training of village poultry vaccinators, which does not meet the conditions for an effective entry point (see section 3.2.3). It is possible, however, to imagine group-based or community-wide efforts to improve animal health and hygiene. Experiential learning could involve women and/or the landless in monitoring factors like animal weight, feed intake, incidence of disease, and egg production.

Strengths: the results of participatory needs assessment consistently show that this topic is the first or second priority of most women; this is a woman's activity that can be carried out close to the homestead, and is also possible for the landless; women can sell eggs locally and keep the proceeds; as an entry point, this could lead to further activities relating to human nutrition and marketing.

Weaknesses: CARE has limited experience in this area; there is no tested curriculum for group-based experiential learning in poultry; collaboration with DOL may be necessary, leading to an emphasis on livestock extension rather than women's empowerment.

Landless Farming

Description: in the last two years, RLP has had some success in facilitating access to road-side or canal-side land for tree planting or vegetable production. It may be possible to turn this experience into an entry-point, involving an entire community making a commitment to find fallow public land for landless households, and setting up a village committee that will negotiate with the relevant government agencies. The landless households would themselves have meetings to decide how to manage whatever land became available.

Strengths: As an entry point, this would combine community-wide decision-making *and* benefits that are targeted on poorer households *and* linkages with local institutions. In suitable locations, the returns could be quick (3-4 months) and highly visible.

Weaknesses: The landless are involved in selling their own labour, and the opportunity cost could make vegetable production unattractive; public land is often in exposed locations and – consequently - some women might unable to participate; there could be arguments over the allocation of whatever land becomes available, responsibilities for guarding the crop and distribution of the proceeds.

Child Welfare Monitoring

Description: by drawing on the experience of organizations like PLAN, it should be possible to develop a community-wide or group-based process that involves women in monitoring factors such as child height and weight, incidence of diarrhea, vaccinations, protein consumption, school attendance etc. Women could set their own targets, and meetings held at which data is compiled, discussed and decisions taken by individuals and groups.

Strengths: this entry point addresses one of the primary concerns of women, and provides plenty of opportunities for critical thinking about health, nutrition, sanitation and education, and could also lead to other issues relating to the rights of women and children. The activities do not require travel to fields or markets.

Weaknesses: it may take a long time before the monitoring system produces any measurable impact, and even then it will not produce any clear economic benefits [maybe this activity could be combined with savings activities that are child-related, i.e. for school materials and medicines]

Handicraft Production

The entry points described above are designed to be facilitated by CARE staff. A different approach would be to let Partner NGOs take the lead in facilitating the entry points, while CARE staff provide 'added social value'. For example, some NGOs have set up groups that are engaged in silk weaving or basket-making. These groups receive technical training and assistance with marketing. CARE could turn these IGAs into empowerment opportunities by conducting sessions that focus on the indicators described in section 2.3, including organizational behaviour, economic behaviour and entitlements behaviour.

Literacy and Numeracy

The secretary of one of the women's groups that were visited during the preparation of this report commented that that literacy was crucial to the development of human capability. The author shares this view; literacy and numeracy skills are among the most important means for empowerment. A comprehensive literacy programme is something quite different to the type of entry points that have been discussed in the section, but it may be possible - and very useful – for CARE to get involved in facilitating *functional literacy and numeracy* modules. For example, modules that help completely illiterate women to recognise and interpret different signs and labels that they

encounter in everyday life. Or modules aimed at young women with some education, that help them to learn basic book-keeping skills so they can keep accounts and manage cash for their groups.

3.6   Putting it all together – the Livelihoods Campus

3.6.1 Applying what we are learning

From the point of view of empowerment, there are three factors that are critical to the success of CARE's work with rural communities: a conducive setting, a relevant entry-point and a capable facilitator. Each of these factors should be the subject of analysis, decision-making and action by CARE staff. Some ideas that should to be considered are given below.

Conducive Setting

• Using the framework that has already been developed by SDU, field staff should select 'tertiary paras' i.e. locations which do not have a strong elite. It will be easier to foster horizontal connection in a setting that has weaker vertical connections. Success in these locations could, in the longer term, provide a foundation for work in neighbouring communities that have secondary or primary elites.

• As far as possible, groups should be formed from members of the community that have common interests and common social status. Homogeneity will help to strengthen solidarity, and reduce the possibility that opportunities and resources are captured by richer or more powerful members of the group.

• Field staff should make greater efforts to understand the power structures in the areas in which they are working. They should help the groups they work with to establish diverse links with supportive structures, to mitigate against the power of 'bad kings'.

Relevant Entry Points

• Make sure that interventions provide opportunities for critical thinking and collective action, not just adoption of technology or provision of services.

• Don't use the same entry points in all locations. Select entry points that take account of felt needs (their goals, not CARE's), natural resources (e.g. availability of land), and social constraints (e.g. purdah). No more blueprints!

• Use multiple learning processes. Select some interventions that involve the entire community, and others that are targeted at women and the poor.

Capability of Field Staff

- Training and coaching is needed to improve the facilitation skills of field staff. This should not focus on the tools and techniques of participatory extension – something that most CARE staff have already learned – but on an understanding of *relationships*, both among group members and between the group and the trainer. 'Group dynamics' should not be a synonym for warm-up games, instead it should be a continuous effort to build solidarity and organisational skills, and thereby reduce the need for a facilitator.

- If field staff are to become more responsive to the needs of the community, the pressures of upward accountability must be reduced. The only way to do this in a large organisation is by genuine decentralisation, with semi-autonomous teams operating in the field. The level at which autonomy in work planning and management is established should depend on the distribution of staff, but will most likely be at the District or Thana level. Teams are usually most effective when they have between 5 and 15 members; anything beyond 25 is unmanageable. The aim is to establish a peer group with strong horizontal relations and as little hierarchy as possible.

- Teams need a support system, and this is the job of other staff who currently see themselves as being 'higher up' in the organisation. A support system has many functions, but three are particularly important. Firstly, helping teams learn from each other, by providing opportunities for sharing experience. Secondly, providing specialist advice, by putting experts *into* the teams for an agreed period of time, rather than acting as outsiders. Thirdly, acting as an spokesperson for field workers whenever new demands are made by senior management and the donor.

### 3.6.2 The general idea of the Livelihoods Campus

The term 'Livelihood Campus' was first used in the report of the 2004 Output to Purpose Review as an example of how CARE could be 'doing things differently':

"Let us imagine that RLP's engagement with a community starts with a discussion about poverty and what can be done to reduce disparities. If community leaders agree, a para could be designated as a 'livelihoods campus' for a certain period of time, such as two years. The FFS then becomes the first of a number of learning activities carried out on the campus. The FFS might last for a single cropping season and focus on a narrow range of interventions (e.g. homestead horticulture), and would give equal attention to two things: an immediate impact on production, and an improvement in analytical skills. This FFS is a technical and social entry point, but the goal is a far broader impact on rural poverty. The members of the FFS would be expected to play a key role in planning and organising subsequent activities in the community; activities that would involve and benefit a larger number of

poorer people, including the landless and women who could not attend the FFS.

"Once the first FFS has been completed, other activities that could be carried out include community-wide schemes (e.g. sanitation, tree planting), skills training workshops (e.g. rickshaw repairs, nursery techniques), health and social studies groups (e.g. for women, for youth), and more field schools (e.g. fish ponds, soil improvement). These activities would be increasingly planned, monitored and organised by members of the community, keeping in mind the goal of reducing poverty and disparities".

The OPR report included two diagrams that illustrated the difference between the current strategy, involving a single Field School, and the Livelihood Campus that would involve a number of learning activities:
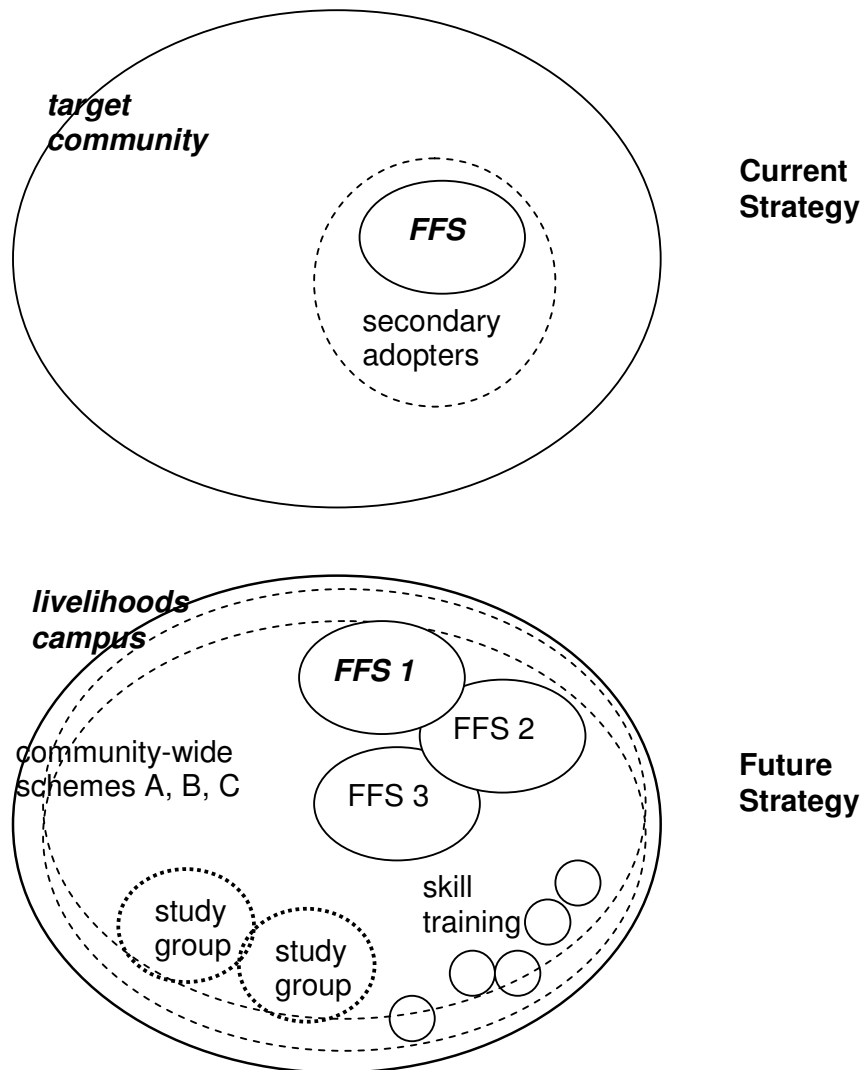
The key features of the Livelihood Campus are as follows:

• an explicit goal of empowerment (rather than targets for adoption of technologies)

• an entry point that consists a relatively short activity with a high impact (rather than a longer open-ended interaction)

• subsequent activities that are planned and manage by the group (instead of CARE staff making all of the decisions)

• multiple learning processes within the selected community (instead of a single process)

• a different mix of activities in each campus (instead of a blueprint)

• some activities that are designed for homogenous groups, particularly woman and the landless (instead of heterogeneous groups)

• some activities that are designed to engage the entire community (instead of focussing on a selected group throughout)

3.6.3 Making it happen, here and now

The Livelihood Campus was conceived as a strategy for working in new locations, places where CARE has not provided any previous assistance. More recently, it has been suggested that the same strategy could be used for follow-up activities in locations where the Rural Livelihoods Programme is already working. Can this be done, given that the RLP completion date is less that a year away?

On the negative side, many FFS are already 'fatally wounded' and there is little that can be done to save them in the next nine months. In some cases, FFS members have already decided that it is not worthwhile to continue meeting. In other cases, where they do want to meet, it may be because they see themselves as clients of CARE's patronage, and/or because relatively richer members are using the group to promote their own interests.

On the positive side, there are many other FFS where it is obvious that a lot more could be achieved. These are locations where there is a conducive setting and where strong horizontal links have starting to form, both internally and externally.

Overall, an opportunity exists to 'add value' to the Rural Livelihood Programme by immediately launching a campaign to upgrade selected FFS to Livelihood Campuses . If staff at all levels are willing and able to commit themselves to this campaign, the following could be achieved:

• enhanced impact of the on-going programme, particularly in terms of empowerment of women and the landless;

- testing of strategies and specific interventions that could become part of future programmes;

- improvements in the skills and experience of field staff, thereby improving their future value to CARE (or their employment opportunities elsewhere);

- steps towards the fulfilment of CARE's goal of building a new organisational culture that rewards teamwork and critical thinking.

This strategy, of upgrading existing FFS to become Livelihood Campuses, raises questions about entry points. What should CARE do in places where a group has already been meeting for two years or longer, where skills and relationships and expectations have already been created? The answer is that CARE needs to find 're-entry points', interventions that will build on what has been achieved, while also breaking out of the confines of the FFS.

The re-entry point should involve all the households in the para where the FFS has been conducted. The intervention should demonstrate the benefits of collective action. It should produce rapid results, so that the community can quickly move towards planning and organising follow-up activities that specifically benefit women and the landless.

It we look at the alternative entry points that are described in section 3.5, the most suitable candidate for a 're-entry point' appears to be Community Led Total Sanitation. In those places where 100% sanitation - or something close to that level – has already been achieved, field staff might want to consider an intervention relating to poultry production or child health. Let us not forget, however, that the strategy should not involve the same activity for the next nine months. Whatever the re-entry point, it is supposed to act as a springboard for multiple learning processes that are owned by the community.

None of the above should be interpreted as meaning that the members of the original FFS should be ignored or bypassed. Far from it. Field staff should encourage them to take a leading role in activities associated with the e-entry point. One type of follow-up activity that should be discussed with FFS members is learning sessions that *they* conduct in order to share what they have learned with other members of the community. In some places it may be possible to go a step further and organise community-managed FFS for women in a neighbouring para.

What can be done to initiate the campaign of work that will upgrade selected FFS to Livelihood Campuses in the on-going RLP? Four important steps need to be taken, and they need to be taken soon. Detailed suggestions have been made in a separate report but - in summary – the steps are as follows:[42]

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[42] A report by Kamal Kar includes detailed suggestions on organising livelihood campuses. See Kamal Kar, 2004 'Does the Farmer Field Schools run by RLP, CARE Bangladesh ensure participation of resource poor and empower them?', CARE Bangladesh

1. General discussion among RLP staff about the Livelihood Campus strategy, including implications for roles and workload of staff at different levels of the organisation.

2. Precise Agreement on how the strategy will be implemented, including composition of teams, criteria for selection of suitable locations and delegation of responsibilities.

3. Formation of teams, including workshops to strengthen values and norms, and develop key concepts and skills.

4. Planning sessions by teams, including selection of sites, short-listing of re-entry points, reaching agreement of performance criteria, and division of work.

This is an appropriate point at which to bring the main body of this report to a close. What is required to implement these ideas is more action, not more words.

Annex 1: Selected readings on empowerment

Appleyard, Susan, (2002), 'A Rights-Based Approach to Development: What the policy documents of the UN, development cooperation and NGO agencies say'. OHCHR, Asia Pacific

[For DFID] A human rights approach to development means empowering people to make their own decisions, rather than be passive objects of choices made on their behalf. It focuses on empowering all people to claim their right to opportunities and services made available through pro-poor development…

For CARE, a rights-based approach deliberately and explicitly focuses on people achieving the minimum conditions for living with dignity. It does so by exposing the roots of vulnerability and marginalization and expanding the range of responses. It empowers people to claim and exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities. A rights-based approach recognizes poor, displaced, and war-affected people as having inherent rights essential to livelihood security – rights that are validated by international law.

Bennet, Lynn (2002), 'Using Empowerment and Social Inclusion For Pro-poor Growth: A Theory of Social Change', Background Paper for the Social Development Sector Strategy Paper, World Bank

[E]mpowerment and social inclusion are conceived as complementary and mutually reinforcing approaches to changing the institutional environment in ways that foster pro-poor growth. *Empowerment* is used to characterize approaches based on *social mobilization*. A key element in most social mobilization approaches is helping poor and socially excluded individuals realize the power they gain from collective action. Often social mobilization approaches work "from below" to create voice and demand for change among diverse groups of poor and socially excluded citizens. But social mobilization can also stimulate the formation of *coalitions for change* between excluded groups and other better-off citizens who also want a more equitable society –or share other interests with the excluded.

Social Inclusion is used to describe the complementary approach which seeks to bring about system-level institutional reform and policy change to remove inequities in access to assets, capabilities and opportunity. While the social inclusion dimension of the social change process may be responding to pressure from below created through empowerment, it is often instigated from positions of relative power within the existing institutional framework.

Social inclusion is aimed at building the incentives and capacity within institutions that will enable these institutions *to respond effectively and equitably to the demand of **all** citizens – irregardless of social identity*

Chambers, Robert, (1993), 'Challenging the Professions: Frontiers for Rural Development', ITDG

The central thrusts of the [new] paradigm … are decentralization and empowerment. Decentralization means that resources and discretion are devolved, turning back the inward and upward flows of resources and people. Empowerment means that people, especially poorer people, are enabled to take more control over their lives, and secure a better livelihood with ownership and control of productive assets as one key element. Decentralization and empowerment enable local people to exploit the diverse complexities of their own conditions, and to adapt to rapid change.

DFID (2000), 'Poverty elimination and the empowerment of women', Strategy Paper, London.

There is a growing and compelling body of evidence that shows that not only do women bear the brunt of poverty, but also that women's empowerment is a central precondition for its elimination. Women's equality is an absolute necessity if the blight of poverty is to be removed and the nations of the world are to create a secure, sustainable and prosperous future…

Empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercise choice, and to fulfil their potential as full and equal members of society.

DFID (2001), 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets', section 6.4

There is a natural affinity between rights-based and SL approaches. Both are concerned with the fact that although all citizens have the same entitlements, access to rights and resources is not equal. Consequently, promoting empowerment, participation and accountability are essential components of both approaches – in rights-based approaches so that the poor can enjoy their rights, and in SL approaches so that they can formulate their livelihood strategies. Both approaches also emphasise the importance of understanding and influencing the policies, institutions and processes that govern people's access to entitlements and resources.

Freidmann, John (1992). 'Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development' Blackwell, UK

The empowerment approach, which is fundamental to an alternative development, places the emphasis on autonomy in the decision-making of territorially organized communities, local self-reliance (but not autarky), direct (participatory) democracy, and experiential social learning …

The (dis)empowerment model of poverty is a political variant of the basic-needs approach. It is centered on politics rather than planning as the principal process by which needs are identified and the means for their satisfaction pursued.

The starting point of the model is the assumption that poor households lack the social power to improve the condition of their member's lives. It places the household economy into the center of a field of social power in which its relative access to the bases of social power may be measured and compared. These critical terms require further explanation.

Social power is the power associated with civil society; it is limited by contrasting forms of state, economic and political power. Each form of power is based on a certain resource that can be accessed by a collective actor…

There are eight bases of social power, the principal means available to a household economy in the production of its life and livelihood:
- defensible life space,
- surplus time,
- knowledge and skills,
- appropriate information,
- social organization,
- social networks,
- instruments of work and livelihood,
- financial resources.

Freire, Paulo (1969), 'Extension y Communicacion', translated by Louise Bigwood & Margaret Marshall and re-printed in *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, 1976, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative

I am unable to see how persuasion to accept propaganda can be squared with education: for true education incarnates the permanent search of people together with others for their becoming more fully human in the world in which they exist. …"persuade and "propaganda" are terms which seem to share a basic connotation which semantically meet in the term "extension". For this reason, "extension" cannot be squared with "education", if the latter is considered to be "the practice of freedom." The task is not to persuade the peasants to accept propaganda. Whatever its content - commercial. ideological, or technical, propaganda is always used for domestication...

Agronomists are specialists who work with others on a situation, influencing them. However, from a truly humanistic point of view, it is not for them to extend, entrust, or dictate their technical capacities, nor is it for them to persuade their by using peasants as "blank pages" for their propaganda. In their role as educators, they must refuse to "domesticate" people. Their task is *communication*, not *extension*.

Knowing is the task of Subjects, not of objects. It is as a subject, and only as such, that a man or woman can really know. In the learning process the only person who really *learns* is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends and thereby re-invents that learning; s/he who is able to apply the appropriated learning to concrete existential situations. On the other hand, the person who is filled by another with "contents" whose meaning s/he is not aware of, which contradict his or her way of being in the world, cannot learn because s/he is not challenged. Thus, in a situation of knowing, teacher and student must take on the role of conscious Subjects, mediated by the knowable object that they seek to know. The concept of extension does not allow for this possibility.

If a social worker (in the broadest sense) supposes that s/he is "*the* agent of change", it is with difficulty that s/he will see the obvious fact that, if the task is to be really educational and liberating, those with whom s/he works cannot be the objects of her actions. Rather they too will be agents of change. If social workers cannot perceive this, they will succeed only in manipulating, steering and "domesticating."

Kabeer, Naila (2001), 'Discussing Women's Empowerment– Theory and Practice', SIDA Studies No. 3, Stockholm

Empowerment … refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.

Changes in the ability to exercise choice can be thought of in terms of changes in three inter-related dimensions which make up choice: resources, which form the conditions under which choices are made; agency which is at the heart of the process by which choices are made; and achievements, which are the outcomes of choices. These dimensions are inter-dependent because changes in each contributes to, and benefits from, changes in the others. Thus, the achievements of a particular moment are translated into enhanced resources or agency, and hence capacity for making choices, at a later moment in time.

Narayan, Deepa (2002), 'Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook', World Bank, Washington

Empowerment refers broadly to the expansion of freedom of choice and action. For poor people, that freedom is severely curtailed by their voicelessness and powerlessness in relation particularly to the state and markets. Since powerlessness is embedded in the nature of institutional relations, the book adopts an institutional definition of empowerment in the context of poverty reduction, as follows:

Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

Since poverty is multidimensional, poor people need a range of assets and capabilities at the individual level (such as health, education, and housing) and at the collective level (such as the ability to organize and mobilize to take collective action to solve their problems).

Empowering poor men and women requires the removal of formal and informal institutional barriers that prevent them from taking action to improve their wellbeing — individually or collectively—and limit their choices. The key formal institutions include the state, markets, civil society, and international agencies; informal institutions include norms of social exclusion, exploitative relations, and corruption.

Mason, Karen Oppenheim (2003) 'Measuring Empowerment : A Social Demographer's View'. Paper presented at the World Bank Workshop on Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives

Empowerment is about power. It is about the extent to which some categories of people are able to control their own destinies, even when their interests are opposed by those of the other people with whom they interact. … [T]he relational nature of empowerment is critical. People are not empowered or disempowered in a vacuum. Rather, they are empowered relative to other people or groups whose lives intersect with theirs and whose interests differ from theirs.

Mason, S; McNulty, J and Aubel, J (2001) 'Participation for Empowerment: A Manual for Development Agents', CARE

The sustainable impact we are seeking must go beyond a single project or activity. Individuals and community members must gain the skills necessary to identify and prioritize problems, seek solutions, work together for the common good, and mobilize resources within and outside of the community. They must know where and when to ask for assistance and how to approach representatives of government and institutions. They must include women and minorities and understand their rights as human beings and as citizens. Possessing these skills and this knowledge, they will be empowered, in control of their lives to a much greater degree, and able to address present and future needs.

Oakley (ed.) (2001) 'Evaluating Empowerment: Reviewing the Concepts and Practice'. INTRAC, London.

Since the early 1990's there has been an ever-expanding literature on empowerment. Van Eyken (1991), Friedmann (1992) Craig and Mayo (1995) and Rowlands (1997) have all examined the concept and focussed on the notion of 'power', its uses and its distribution as being central to any understanding of social transformation. However, the examination has not been uniform but has revealed contrasting views on the centrality of power in a development context:

- *Power* in the sense of bringing about *radical change* and the *confrontation* between the powerful and the powerless as the crucial dynamic of social change. This interpretation argues that it is only by a focus on change to existing patterns of power and its use that any meaningful change can be taken about.

- *Power* in the Frierian sense of increased awareness and the development of 'critical faculty' among the marginalized and oppressed. This power *'to do'*, *'to be able'* and of feeling more *capable* and in *control* of situations. It concerns recognizing the capacities of such groups to take action and to play an active role in development initiatives. It also implies the breaking down of passive acceptance and of strengthening the abilities of marginalized groups to engage as legitimate development actors. …

Empowerment became a major purpose of any social development interventions in the 1990's. Social development as *transformation* is predicated on a power analysis and on actions to empower groups that lack access to those resources and institutions that would enable them to compete more effectively in the struggle to sustain their livelihoods. As a evelopment objective empowerment has been operationalised into practical project methodologies and, in terms of its effects and impact, it is beginning to be translated into *observable and measurable act*ions. Concretely, people's empowerment can manifest itself in three broad areas:

- *Power* through greater confidence in one's ability to successfully undertake some form of action.
- *Power* in terms of increasing and effecting relations that powerless people establish with other organizations
- *Power* as a result of increasing access to economic resources, such as credit and inputs.

Sen, Amartya (1999), 'Development as Freedom'. Oxford. (original emphasis).

Development can be seen, it is argued here, as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Focusing on human freedoms contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product, or with the rise of personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advances, or with social modernization.

Development requires the removal of the major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systemic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity or repressive states…

What difference can a focal concentration on freedom make?

The difference arise from two rather distinct reasons, related respectively to the "process aspect" and the "opportunity aspect" of freedom. Firstly, since freedom is concerned with *processes of decision making* as well as *opportunities to achieve valued outcomes*, the domain of our interest cannot be confined only to the outcomes in the form of the promotion of high output or income, or the generation of high consumption (or other variables to which the concept of economic growth relates). Such processes as participation in political decisions and social choice cannot be seen as being – at best – among the *means* to development (through, say their contribution to economic growth), but have to be understood as constitutive parts of the *ends* of development themselves.

The second reason …relates to the contrasts within the *opportunity aspect itself*… In pursuing the view of development as freedom, we have to examine – in addition to the freedoms involved in political, social and economic processes – the extent to which people have the opportunity to achieve outcomes that they value and have reason to value. …income levels may often be inadequate guides to such important matters as the freedom to live long or the ability to avoid morbidity, or the opportunity to have worthwhile employment, or to live in peaceful and crime-free communities.

Strandburg, Nina (2001) "Conceptualising Empowerment as a Transformative Strategy for Poverty Eradication and the Implications for Measuring Progress" Presented at the UN-DAW Expert Group Meeting, New Delhi

Empowerment can overall be defined as all those processes where women take control and ownership of their lives. Control and ownership requires an array of opportunities to choose among and this understanding of empowerment overlaps with the concept of human development when defined as "a process of enlarging people's choices". Both concepts describe processes, but where human development entails enlarging choices, empowerment is the process of acquiring the ability to choose among these enlarged choices…

While human development does not determine any particular agent of change, it lies at the heart of the concept of empowerment that it cannot be given to someone by somebody else. Empowerment processes can be facilitated by outsiders but must be driven by women themselves. As such, it is also an approach to societal change that treats women as agents of change and constitutes a bottom-up perspective where women themselves identify the problem to be solved, how to solve it and act accordingly. If poverty reduction initiatives are to have a transformative impact in the long run, they must enable women to take ownership of the process itself. A

development initiative can provide resources such as land or micro credits to women in a community, but unless women are empowered the gendered power relations at individual, household and community level may restrain women's abilities to maximise their use of the outcomes of the initiative. E.g. an increase in women's personal assets through a micro credit scheme may result in the partner/husband feeling challenged in his role as provider for the family and attempt to control these resources.

UNIFEM (2000), 'Progress of the World's Women 2000', UNIFEM Biennial Report

UNIFEM's guidelines on women's empowerment include:

• acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and ways in which these relations may be changed;
• developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life;
• gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power;
• developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Achieving this requires both a process of self-empowerment, in which women claim time and space to re-examine their own lives critically and collectively; and the creation of an enabling environment for women's empowerment by other social actors, including other civil-society organizations, governments and international institutions.

This concept of women's empowerment goes well beyond women's participation in agendas set by others. It entails both the development of women's own agency and the removal of barriers to the exercise of this agency.

World Bank (2001), 'World Development Report' 2000/2001

Empowerment means enhancing the capacity of poor people to influence the state institutions that affect their lives, by strengthening their participation in political processes and local decisonmaking. And it means removing the barriers – political, legal, and social – that work against particular groups and building the assets of poor people to enable them to engage effectively in markets.

Annex 2: Empowerment and the Farmer Field School

In 1989, when staff of the FAO Regional Programme approached nonformal educators in Indonesia, their position was: "we know rice plants inside out, and understand the dynamics of insect populations … now we want to team up with other experts who know PEOPLE inside out, and understand the dynamics of human groups".

For the educators, IPM was an ideal subject for learning and organizing. Firstly, it was a complex, such that it would defy reductionist, message-based communication approaches that had failed in the past. IPM was also counter-intuitive, both for farmers as well as for agriculturalists ('more spray, more bugs'), such that it would require new learning by all parties. And IPM based on ecology is ferociously location-specific, again requiring that learning processes take place everywhere within the system at the field level, the opposite of 'diffusion' where a few would learn but most would follow.

Beyond this, for a rice farmer, his field is the core of both his/her livelihood and identity. Nothing would be as meaningful for a farmer as gaining control of his field through understanding, rather than living between hope and fear and fatalism. This is the essence of the most basic empowerment through the Farmer Field School.

Designers of the education program in Indonesia were nonformal educators and action research practitioners steeped in Paulo Friere's concept of *conscientization* and the theories of Jurgen Habermas. Particularly influential was Habermas's idea that there are three 'domains' of human existence, and that the purpose of learning is to gain greater control over those domains, as evidenced by certain type of action. In the 'work domain', the IPM training programme involved discovery learning that helped farmer's gain control of their fields and livelihood, which is a clear example of *instrumental action.* Also, from day one, the Programme dealt extensively with the 'domain of interaction', by providing training in interpersonal skills, group analytical methods, dialogue, consultation, group dynamics, all of which relate to Habermas's concept of *communicative action*.

But the IPM programme did not stop at instrumental and communicative action. Once individuals had gained some control of the technical aspects of their livelihoods, and once groups had gained some control over social interaction, a third level of activities became possible. Learning began to take place in the 'power domain', during which the 'meaning perspective' of farmers broadens to incorporate the social and political forces that shape their environment and impact upon their lives. The outcome of this learning is *emancipatory action.* From the inside, this action is characterised by self-reflection or 'critical thinking', but from the outside it is characterised by group and inter-group efforts that challenge the existing power structures. This didn't happen completely spontaneously, but was supported by training programs on participatory planning, social analysis, participatory research, organizing, and advocacy to prepare farmers for broader roles within society.

Even staid extensionists could see that something different was happening in the Indonesian IPM Programme, something that was variously described as 'beyond learning-by-doing', transformational learning or participatory action learning.

The design of the educational approach used in the IPM programme has been explained from many different angles to make it more comprehensible (and more palatable) to an array of outside groups. One description is of a hierarchy of 'heresies'. The first heresy is Farmers as Experts, then Farmers as Trainers, then Farmers as Scientists and Researchers, then Farmers as Planners and Organizers, and finally Farmers as Policy Advocates. If one thinks of concentric circles of human action, growing ever wider, these heresies involve a journey that farmers take as a result of learning, from instrumental action to emancipatory action, from work to power.

> **Pontius, J; Dilts, R, and Bartlett, A.** (2002) 'From Farmer Field School to Community IPM: Ten Years of IPM Training in Asia', FAO Asia Pacific

IPM Field Schools do not focus on insects alone, they provide farmers an opportunity to learn and achieve greater control over the conditions that they face everyday in their fields. Farmers are thus empowered by Field Schools. Empowerment is a fundamental element in a civil society and it is the principle that has influenced the design and implementation of Farmer Field Schools.

Why empowerment? Farmers live and work in a world where they face a variety of contending forces including those related to technology, politics, markets, and society. These forces can marginalize farmers if they are not pro-active. Farmers need to be able to make their voice heard now as sustainable ecological agriculture approaches a critical crossroads.

Contending technologies are presented to farmers. Most of these technologies are not developed with the goal of improved farmer welfare; the goal is increased aggregate national production and profits for those who promulgate the technologies. Farmers need to be able to select technologies that both benefit them and contribute to overall food production. A farmer must also be able to transform and evolve any chosen technology to fit the specific ecological and economic conditions confronted by that farmer.

Agriculture is often the focus of political activity. Whether at the national or village level there is frequent debate over issues that affect the livelihoods of farmers. The rights of farmers, access to land and water, decisions on cropping patterns, subsidies, and price supports are a few examples of the myriad issues that affect farmers. Those who would make decisions regarding these issues, although they might claim otherwise, do not always recognise or understand the interests of farmers. Farmers need to be able to understand the issues affecting their livelihoods and contend in the debates these issues generate to guarantee that their interests are served…

IPM Farmer Field Schools are not an end in themselves; they are a starting point for the development of a sustainable agricultural system in a given locality. The FFS provides farmers an initial experience in experimentation based on ecological principles, participatory training and non-formal education methods. Once this foundation has been laid, farmers are better able to act on their own initiatives, and to sharpen their observation, research and communication skills. The FFS sets in

motion a longer-term process, in which opportunities are created for local leadership to emerge and for new, locally devised strategies to be tested.

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Susianto, A; Didik, P and J. Pontius (1998) 'Social Gains' taken from - *Kaligondang: A Case History of an IPM Sub-District*, FAO Community IPM Programme.

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In analyzing social gains we are interested in determining how specific conditions have changed. An explicit goal of IPM training for farmers is for farmers to become IPM experts. As experts IPM farmers are aware of the conditions in which they live and can act to improve those conditions. As those conditions improve farmers will be able to realize their full potential both as IPM experts and as people. These conditions, which we have labelled as social gains, are: Access, Leverage, Choices, Status, Critical Reflection Capacity

Access. In the case of IPM farmers 'access' refers not only to access to inputs for farming, but access to resources to support IPM activities at the village level and, hence, access to those controlling those resources. Access is gained when the ability of IPM farmers' to obtain access is either newly establish or enhanced because of IPM activities and the activities of IPM farmers.

Leverage. Leverage refers to farmers bargaining strength to obtain the resources they need. When farmers can organize themselves to claim these resources, leverage can be said to be achieved… Organizing has taken two forms, achieving consensus within Farmers Groups to implement IPM activity plans and presenting those plans to local government, and organizing "farmers movements". In each case a solidarity has been achieved among all farmers and this common front has resulted in the ability to leverage funds not only from local government, but also from Farmers Groups, and farmers themselves.

A second type of leverage has also been achieved. Leverage over policy and the implementation of existing policy. The Sub-district Head has urged a new policy of villages supporting human resource development upon Village Heads. Farmers have organized to help Villages Heads to realize this policy and have been able to leverage funds at the village level to support IPM activities.

Choices. This includes increased options as well as the ability to take reasoned decisions among those options. Within the context of farming IPM farmers have increased their understanding of the ricefield agroecology and can analyze the options within that context... IPM farmer organizers have demonstrated that they can analyze problems and take reasoned decisions among options in their role as planners. The plan developed in Kaligondang village reveals a collective analytical and planning ability that will enable them to take advantage of their options.

Status. An enhanced status includes such qualities as an improved self-image, increased self-confidence, and a positive sense of identity. In achieving this, these qualities will be recognized not only by the farmers themselves, but by others as well. This enhanced status begins in farmers learning and creating their own knowledge by means of field studies. In Field Schools the learn the technical language of ecology and agriculture. They teach others this language, talk to officials from the Agriculture Extension System in this language, and talk to academics in this language. Learning breeds the above qualities related to status and farmer IPM experts exemplify them.

Critical Thinking Capacity. Critical thinking refers to the capacity to assess competing options or recommendations with reference to knowledge or experience or by testing those options by means of a well designed study or within the context of communicative action. Critical thinking implies that farmers are no longer dependent upon others for solving their problems. This capacity for critical thinking is encouraged in the Field School by the group discussions where analyses and decisions are tested by probing questions initially directed by the PHP to presenters, but later farmers learn how to probe. The "what is this?" dialogue forces the learner to examine his knowledge and learn from what data he can collect, it breaks the farmers from dependency on the facilitator through the probing question that the facilitator asks. Experiments and small studies in the Field School prove to farmers that they can learn and create their own knowledge. Their self-confidence is enhanced and they know how to learn. Thus they become able to test received knowledge and critically examine the conditions that they live in.

Jules Pretty (1995) 'Regenerating Agriculture', Earthscan Publications, London

The Key Principles of Farmer Field Schools:

1. What is relevant and meaningful is decided by the learner, and must be discovered by the learner. Learning flourishes in a situation in which teaching is seen as a facilitating process that assists people to explore and discover the personal meaning of events for them.

2. Learning is a consequence of experience. People become responsible when they have assumed responsibility and experienced success.

3. Co-operative approaches are enabling. As people invest in collaborative group approaches, they develop a better sense of their own worth.

4. Learning is an evolutionary process, and is characterised by free and open communication, confrontation, acceptance, respect and the right to make mistakes.

5. Each person's experience of reality is unique. As they become more aware of how they learn and solve problems, they can refine and modify their own styles of learning and action.

Kevin Kamp (2004) 'How the FFS came to CARE Bangladesh', personal communication

CARE began experimenting with FFS when the LOTUS Project was ending. That project had farmer groups buying expensive, loss-making tubewells and selling water to other rice farmers. It was thought to be a good project because sometimes the groups made money, but more importantly, the landless were empowered by taking over one of the most important inputs to rice cultivation: water. But the tubewell business in Bangladesh was bad and getting worse. Yet CARE had all these people who knew how to grow rice using a lot of chemical inputs; in other words they were pushing a lot of poisons. That worried me. We ran into Peter Kenmore and Russ Dilts

from FAO and, as a result, we began adapting and testing the FFS. It quickly became obvious that as a result of learning about integrated pest management (IPM) farmers could reduce inputs *and* increase profit. Farmers were also taking control of the learning process in a way that enabled them to make their own personal decisions.

These experiments attracted the interest of Neil MacPherson, who was working for DfID (then ODA) as a Fisheries Adviser. He was impressed, not by the reductions in inputs or increases in income, but by the sheer empowerment that FFS created. He was more into the social impacts than the financial ones. As a result of the interest shown by Advisers like Neil, CARE was able to get ODA funding for projects like NOPEST and INTERFISH.

That FFS were empowering farmers was no secret at the time. It should have become the main goal, but often that wasn't the case. The "logframe" was usually written with an emphasis on some financial or numerical outputs that would get the project approved. ODA even needed sophisticated cost/benefit ratios and internal rates of return. It was hard to put "empowerment" into that square box. But at the time we didn't have to worry about this. The DfID Advisers loved what we were doing because it was so empowering. Once the projects were approved we could get on with the job and largely forget about the rate of return.

But I would have to agree that the Field Trainers often had a hard time with this. Not because they couldn't do the job, but because CARE found it difficult to create an environment which supports innovation and independence. Perhaps it goes back to the days when the CARE was a relief organization. Whatever the cause, the organization is burdened by structures that are designed to control the delivery of goods and services. It's really hard to facilitate empowerment in that environment.

DFID-CARE (1999), 'Project Memorandum for SHABGE'

The programme will establish 1200 Farmer Field Schools (FFS). A FFS has 20 participants and is a field based concept where farmer groups gain a greater understanding of technologies and their own agricultural environment. Farmers and staff work together to develop a needs based curriculum for field schools. This allows farmers to set their own targets, which become part of the curriculum, and also allows for the monitoring of progress. It is based on experiential training and has proved to be particularly effective in increasing the confidence and capacity of rural women. The FFS meets every two weeks throughout the cropping season for two years; where possible both men, women and children are encouraged to participate together…

The Farmer Field School training approach of SHABGE in which farmers learn from and with each other has several distinct advantages: it provides and exchange of problems, ideas, experiences and solutions; it develops a critical mass from which improved household production can spread throughout the community; working through groups also promotes the development of social capital, that could lead to the formation of community based organisation (CBOs) with increased sustainability. CARE and its partners will regularly evaluate the impact of experiential learning. The focus of capacity building at this level will include leadership skills, organisational management, conflict resolution, legal regulations and financial management. The promotion and strengthening of local organisations and institutions is a key for the empowerment of the poor, vulnerable and isolated.

450 FFS will be directly initiated over five years with Farmer Leaders, supported by CARE, initiating a further 4,800 field schools. Focusing on areas of critical food insecurity, the project will deliver economic and human resource benefits to target communities, substantially enhancing livelihood security. The project will work with small rice farming households, improving management skills and decision-making ability. Sustainable improvements in livelihoods will be achieved by developing the productive capacity of resources through rice/fish and IPM, the human resources through improved management and analysis skills, and social capital through the establishment of networks, group membership and access to wider institutions.

FFS place the classroom in the rice field and allows farmers to learn from real experiences. The curriculum takes an integrated approach recognising that farmers become better farmers through experimenting with IPM and rice-fish culture over several seasons, setting up study plots, discussing successes and analysing failures. Over an eighteen-month period farmers gradually take control of the operation of the field school, developing the curriculum, identifying the topics and managing the study plots. The focus of the approach is enhancing the farmer's ability to understand and manage their environment…

Within the FFS, group members will be selected as Farmer Leaders, to act as trainers. Following skills development they will move out from the FFS becoming informal extension agents within the community. This process will be supported and monitored by the Field Trainers, who will continue to develop the skills of the farmer leaders and assist them to establish wider linkages. Links to the FFS will be maintained, and it will continue to serve as a focus for the farmer leader.

Dee Jupp and D'Arcy Davis-Case, (1997), 'NOPEST Farmer and Thana Team Review of Operational and Organizational Issues', CARE Bangladesh

Most field staff indicate that NOPEST is different because it focuses on farmers as experts and promotes their decision making skills. Other organizations 'push knowledge'. They employ technical experts to provide farmers with solutions. Such approaches maintain farmers' dependence on outside expertise. NOPEST promotes independence. Since outside help is unreliable, farmers need to be able to solve problems by themselves. NOPEST is also different because it does not provide inputs. Although this is difficult to explain to farmers initially (and there is often some drop out because of this), eventually farmers appreciate that what they are learning is better utilization of resources and self reliance.

NOPEST is also different because it is responsive to farmers needs. Every season, FTs conduct sessions to identify the special needs of their FFS. Thus, each FT is tailoring his/her own programme to meet those needs. FTs visit farmers when farmers ask them to; not when it suits the FT.

NOPEST is different because FTs develop a very close working relationship with the farmers over a long period of time. They work together in the field. They tackle problems together. They learn together by doing.

NOPEST is different because the problem solving and decision making skills that farmers acquire are not only used for agricultural issues. Farmers are able to cooperate in solving social conflicts, motivating others and assisting others.

NOPEST is different because the goal is really achieved. If farmers are faced with new problems, field staff have observed that they can organise themselves to solve them.

NOPEST is different because it has highly motivated staff who have actually cultivated rice, fish and dike crops for themselves. They know from experience what problems farmers face.

Peter Ooi et al., (1998), Technical Review of NOPEST, CARE Bangladesh

Discussions with field staff at the thana and project offices suggested that:

- Field staff tend to focus on project activities rather than educating farmers. For example, field trainers tend to rely on outputs of farmers as the main indicator of success and often neglect quality of education.
- As a result, the objectives of IPM in empowering farmers and improving their decision making are often replaced with the objectives of the project for physical outputs.
- Even field trials/experiments in FFSs appear to look like a well organised demonstration plot, which is a residue of technology transfer rather than increasing farmers' understanding.
- Field staff tend to be concerned about technical issues rather than implementing learning process.
- A clear vision of farmer education is missing at most levels of staff.
- Existing evaluation and monitoring system remains focused on physical outputs and realisation of project activities.

Andrew Bartlett (2002), Impact Study on FFS Activities within SHABGE-DFID Project, CARE Bangladesh

At the present time the project is conducting something called a Farmer Field School which - following adaptations in a number of other CARE projects - is quite different from the original 'FAO approach'. Critically, the learning process has been diluted to allow the curriculum to encompass a wide range of crops and technologies, and to satisfy the targets given in the project logframe. A compromise has been made between breadth and depth. Consequently, these so-called FFS cannot be expected to produce the same educational outcomes that have been experienced elsewhere.

The SHABGE project is resulting in the adoption of a wide-range of innovations that are undoubtedly beneficial, but they do not generate an understanding of underlying scientific principles, nor are they fostering systematic experimentation among the targeted women. It is these things that have provided the basis for self-sustaining learning groups in some other countries: groups that organise and conduct field trials and training of other farmers, groups that negotiate services with government agencies and advocate their own issues and rights. All this is possible when farmers become experts. In SHABGE, the women are becoming adopters. A large number of them appear to be productive, healthy and happy adopters, but – after attending a Field School for more than two years - they are not experts.

Laila Jasmin Banu and Brigitta Bode (2002), 'CARE Bangladesh's FFS Approach: New Frontiers in Farmer Empowerment', CARE

The situation of the groups that CARE is working with in Bangladesh is quite different from Indonesia. Not only are CARE Bangladesh's FFS members largely illiterate, but they also belonging to various economic groups engaging in highly diversified livelihood strategies…

The atomism that characterizes the economic strategies of households is further entrenched through the investment strategies to build forms of social capital. Household members foster relationships and alliances within their extended kin group and / or with wealthier households and NGOs (largely credit and savings schemes) to mitigate their marginalized economic and political position, the latter often preventing them from accessing state relief and development programs. The strong ties that are built with wealthier households also solidify the horizontal relationships and prevent vertical integration. Investing in forms of social capital are classic risk-aversion strategies of the poor.

This combination of diversified livelihood strategies and linkages with other actors leaves little time for participating in FFS sessions, beyond the learning of new technologies to improve yields and reduce input costs. In this context, individuals carefully calculate the opportunity cost of participating in FFS sessions that have little immediate economic returns, as opposed to earning income or securing income opportunities through strong networks and alliances.

The FFS approach is further complicated in the context of working with women. This is largely due to the highly gendered division of labor and the limited mobility that women from landholding households enjoy. Just as in other countries of South Asia, women perform the vast majority of reproductive tasks. …

As many studies of South Asian gender dynamics have shown, the greater the economic marginalization of the household, the greater the likelihood that women are engaged in productive activities (selling of labor for wages in cash or kind). Thus women from poor households have little time to participate in FFS sessions.…

In terms of women's FFSs, projects have to consider an additional dimension, besides the economic differentiation we have outlined. Class mediates women's position in society in shaping the extent of *purdah* (seclusion). For instance, the better the economic positions of households, the stricter the form of *purdah* that women practice. Thus while women from landless households sell their labor power and enjoy considerable mobility, women from landed households tend to adhere to greater forms of seclusion and may avoid contact with men with whom they have no direct kinship relation or simply avoid public places altogether. …

This discussion shows that if we are to deliver more than just technology transfer, the FFS approach in Bangladesh should try to build solidarity on common political issues – negotiating access to state development schemes, land, markets, village infrastructure, and participation in the democratic process. While women's marginalized position in the public sphere and thus their extremely limited participation in local democratic processes has to be addressed through specific initiatives.