

# Exploring Changes in the Lives of the Ultra Poor: An Exploratory Study on CFPR/TUP Members

Imran Matin  
Sarah Walker

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Shajedur Rahman

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**BRAC**

BRAC Centre, 75 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

E-mail : [research@brac.net](mailto:research@brac.net) Fax: 880-2-8823542, 8823614

Telephone : 9881265, 8824051, 8824180-87 Website: [www.brac.net](http://www.brac.net)

*and*

**Aga Khan Foundation Canada**

360 Albert Street, Suite 1220

Ottawa, ON K1R 7X7, Canada

Telephone: 613.237.AKFC (2532), Fax: 613.567.AKFC (2532)

Website: [www.akfc.ca](http://www.akfc.ca)

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## FOREWORD

Over a quarter of Bangladesh's people live in extreme poverty, not being able to meet even the barest of the basic needs. They spend most of their meagre, unreliable earnings on food and yet fail to fulfil the minimum calorie intake needed to stave off malnutrition. They are consequently in frequent poor health causing further drain on their meagre resources due to loss of income and health expenses. More often than not, the extreme poor are invisible even in their own communities, living on other peoples' land, having no one to speak up for them or assist them in ensuring their rights. Extreme poverty also has a clear gendered face – they are mostly women who are dispossessed widows, and abandoned.

The extreme poor are thus caught in a vicious trap and the story of denial and injustices tend to continue over generations for a large majority of them. Thus, a vast majority of the extreme poor in Bangladesh are chronically so. The constraints they face in escaping extreme poverty are interlocked in ways that are different from those who are moderately poor. This challenges us to rethink our existing development strategies and interventions for the extreme poor, and come up with better ones that work for them. This is the challenge that drove BRAC to initiate an experimental programme since 2002 called, 'Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: Targeting the Ultra Poor' programme. The idea to address the constraints that they face in asset building, in improving their health, in educating their children, in getting their voices heard, in a comprehensive manner so that they too can aspire, plan, and inch their way out of poverty.

The extreme poor have not only been bypassed by most development programmes, but also by mainstream development research. We need to know much more about their lives, struggles, and lived experiences. We need to understand better why such extreme poverty persists for so many of them for so long, often over generations. Without such knowledge, we cannot stand by their side and help in their struggles to overcome their state.

I am pleased that BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division has taken up the challenge of beginning to address some of these development knowledge gaps through serious research and reflection. In order to share the findings from research on extreme poverty, the 'CFPR/TUP Research Working Paper Series' has been initiated. This is being funded by CIDA through the 'BRAC-Aga Khan Foundation Canada Learning Partnership for CFPR/TUP' project. I thank CIDA and AKFC for supporting the dissemination of our research on extreme poverty.

I hope this working paper series will benefit development academics, researchers, and practitioners in not only gaining more knowledge but also in inspiring actions against extreme poverty in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

**Fazle Hasan Abed**  
**Chairperson, BRAC**



## **Exploring Changes in the Lives of the Ultra Poor: An Exploratory Study on CFPR/TUP Members**

### **ABSTRACT**

Since January 2002, BRAC has started a new experimental programme for the ultra poor called, ‘Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction/Targeting the Ultra Poor’ (CFPR/TUP). This programme targets the ultra poor who are either bypassed or fail to benefit and subsequently drop out from existing development programme. The programme uses an asset-based approach where physical assets are provided to the selected ultra poor women as grants. The intervention strategy also includes health and social development components. The overall idea of the programme is to strengthen the physical, social and human asset base of the ultra poor so that once the grant phase is over, they can attain the foundation for sustainable livelihoods, and participate and benefit from mainstream development programmes. This paper is based on an exploratory study that wanted to better understand the perceptions of change as defined by the programme members and the underlying factors that explain the changes perceived. The main finding is that initial conditions matter – households that owned homestead land, had other sources of income, had adult male labour power and did not suffer from recurrent health costs did better. The programme encouraged the members to save out of the income accrued from running the TUP enterprise, but the product was focussed on supporting the promotional needs rather than protectional needs. The circumstances of the ultra poor households differ and a sole focus on the savings for meeting the promotional needs may thus need reconsideration.

## INTRODUCTION

### Conceptual roots and a programme brief of CFPR/TUP

Within BRAC, the idea of a radically new programmatic approach to address the problems of the extreme poor started in 1999 with the development of a concept paper and a series of consultations leading to a first proposal to the BRAC Donor Consortium in June 2000. 'Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction/Targeting the Ultra Poor Programme' (CFPR/TUP) was approved in August 2001. Programme activities began in three poorest districts of Bangladesh in the north (Nilphamari, Rangpur, and Kurigram) in January 2002.

The Special Investment Programme (SIP) is a programme approach that the CFPR/TUP programme uses to build solid financial, social and human foundations for the Specially Targeted Ultra Poor (STUP). The main idea here is to provide a period of (18 months) intensive support on a comprehensive range of dimensions to a carefully selected group of the poorest (the STUP), so that after this period, they can participate and make good use of the services provided by mainstream development programmes, such as microfinance. During this period, the SIP provides the following:

- A range of enterprise options as grants along with all the support needed to run the enterprise;
- Enterprise specific training and refreshers;
- Intensive follow up, supervision, and monitoring. A range of programme orga-

nizers (PO) having technical knowledge on enterprises, social development, and health provide close support. Each PO serves 50 STUP members;

- Social development activities involving one-to-one sessions on a range of social development issues, and community mobilization through creating a village level support group for the ultra poor known as *Gram Shahayak Committee*; and
- A range of health services provided by BRAC but also linked up with the government health service system.

### Key research questions

The programme began in January 2002. However, the targeting and assetization of the STUP was completed in August 2002<sup>1</sup>. This study was thus carried out on small sample of the STUP members who have been with the programme for about 18 months. We were interested in understanding how the STUP members themselves perceived the changes that happened in their lives and what were the factors they felt contributed to or hindered positive change.

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<sup>1</sup> The STUP members are targeted using a mix of targeting methodologies (geographical, participatory and indicator based). The eligibility conditions include a set of inclusion and exclusion indicators. Please see CFPR/TUP working paper series no. 2 for details on targeting in CFPR/TUP. Once selected, the STUP members are provided with two or more enterprise options which are provided as grants along with various other support needed to ensure that the chosen enterprise yields the maximum return for the STUP member so that she can continue with the enterprise on her own once the support is withdrawn. The asset transfer phase is known as assetization.



## METHODOLOGY

The study is exploratory in nature. We combined participatory and comparative case study methods to address the research questions. First, we carried out a participatory group exercise in three locations with around 20 TUP members in each. The idea was to discuss change since joining the programme, categorize change into levels, and rank all those who participated in the group exercise. Four levels of change were obtained: a lot of change, some change, marginal change, and no change. The discussions that took place during these exercises were recorded. We also used this group session to collect some basic information on households through a short questionnaire. This was used for the

quantitative analysis. The final rankings and the discussion points were later reviewed with the TUP programme organizers to get their perspectives on change and what were the factors they felt determined it.

The second exercise was to select a small sample of TUP members from the ranking exercise for in-depth individual interviews. Twenty-four cases were selected. We wanted to have a mix of enterprises with a mix of rankings. The idea was to carry out a comparative case study between, for instance, high ranking poultry asseted TUP members and low ranking poultry asseted TUP members, and so on.

## FINDINGS

### Findings from ranking of change exercise

In the ranking exercise of change as perceived by the TUP members, a total of 69 TUP members participated. We tried to have a mix of enterprises that reflects the TUP enterprise diversity in the area. The mix of TUP enterprises by each ranking location is given below in Table 1.

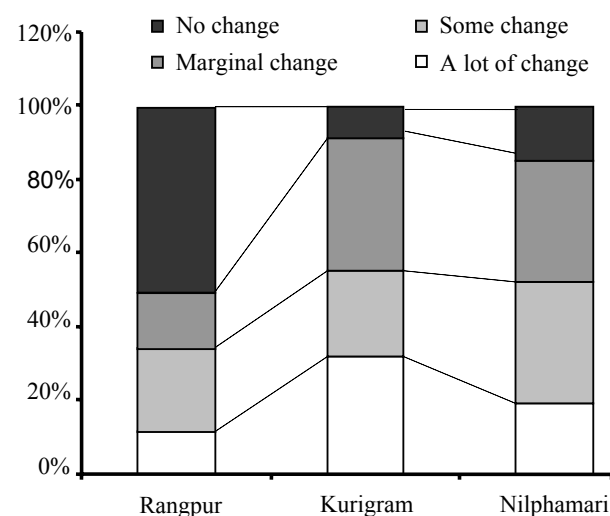
### Quantitative analysis

The average ranking we obtained for Kurigram is significantly higher than that for Rangpur. However, the average ranking we obtain for Nilphamari is not significantly different from that of Rangpur or Kurigram (Figure 1). The average ranking is not significantly different among the various major TUP enterprises (Figure 2).

The programme encourages savings during the period in which the TUP members receive direct inputs from the SIP so that they have adequate savings to invest towards their

enterprise once the SIP support is withdrawn. The volume and pattern of savings is linked to the TUP enterprises and can be a useful proxy for successful enterprise management. We obtain the following relationship between average savings per TUP member and the rankings (Figure 3).

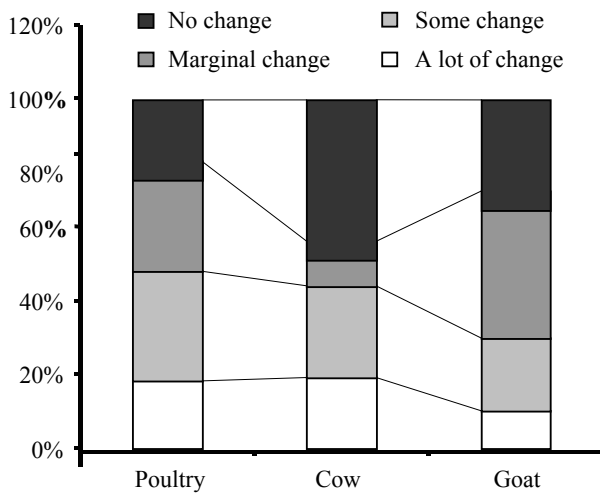
**Figure 1. Change perceptions by region**



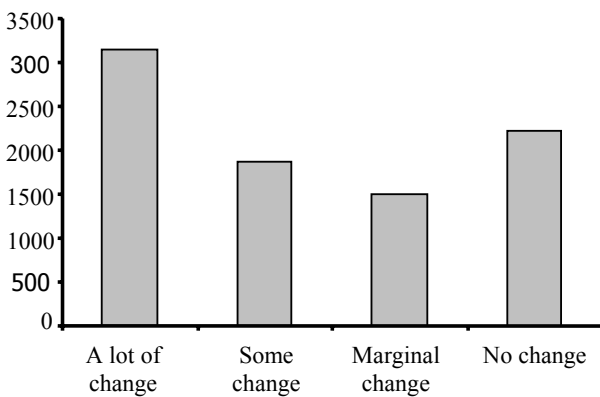
**Table 1. Distribution of study sample**

TUP enterprise type	Number of TUP members in ranking location			
	Rangpur	Kurigram	Nilphamari	Total
Poultry	12	10	5	27 (39%)
Cow	9	2	5	16 (23%)
Goat	3	0	7	10 (14%)
Vegetable	0	4	0	4 (6%)
Nursery	0	4	0	4 (6%)
Non-farm	2	2	4	8 (12%)
Total	26	22	21	69 (100%)

**Figure 2. Change perceptions by enterprise**



**Figure 3. Change perceptions by savings level**



Interestingly, though the average amount of savings per TUP member who were ranked as witnessing ‘a lot of change’ is significantly higher than those TUP members who were ranked as having ‘some change’ and ‘marginal change’ (Figure 3). It is not significantly different from those who were ranked as perceiving ‘no change’. The difference between average savings per TUP member who were ranked as witnessing ‘some change’ and ‘marginal change’ is also not statistically significant.

Ownership of homestead land can be an important determinant of change for two reasons. One, not owning a homestead

reflects severe forms of vulnerability and dependence. This can affect aspirations and adversely affect the extent of positive change that one perceives. Two, the enterprises provided do require some additional space and those not owning a homestead land may face more constraints in this respect. We obtain the following relationship between ranking and homestead land ownership status. The average rank we obtain by the TUP members who owned their homestead land is significantly higher than those that did not (Figure 4).

The physical ability of the household head to work regularly is also another variable that is expected to have an effect on change. This could work in two ways. Directly, where poor physical ability adversely affects time and energy that can be invested to run the TUP enterprise, and indirectly by redirecting any surplus gained towards bearing health costs rather than reinvestment towards the enterprise. Such redirection of investment can also have important adverse effects on aspiration and perception of change.

**Figure 4. Change perception and ownership of homestead land**

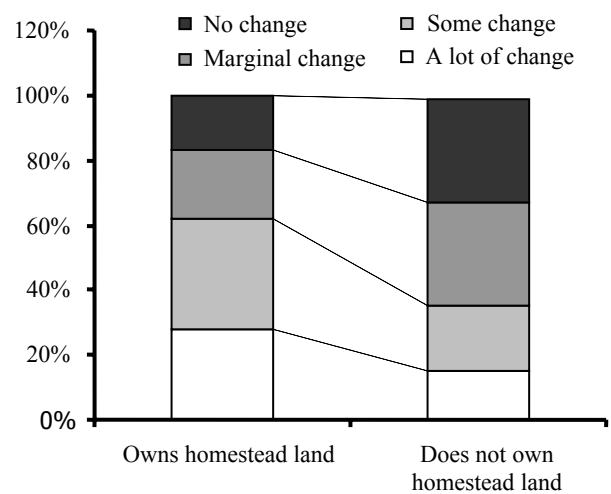


Figure 5 shows this relationship. The average rank we obtain for households where the household head reported to be physically

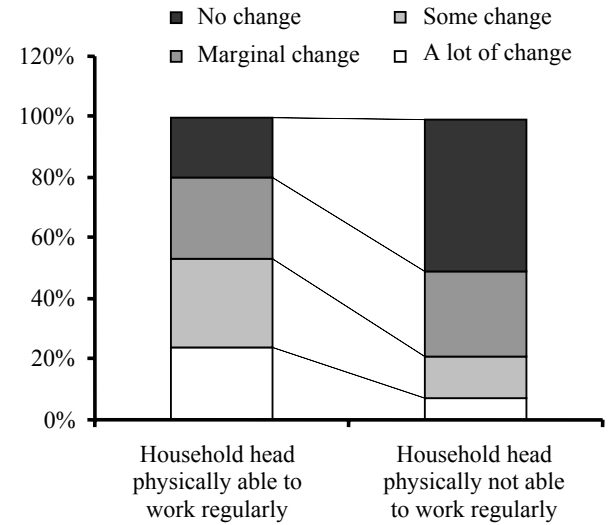
able to work regularly is significantly higher than that we obtain for the households where this is not the case.

To understand these relationships better we carried out a binary logistic regression by re-grouping the rankings where ‘a lot of change’ and ‘some change’ is combined into one and ‘marginal change’ and ‘no change’ is combined into another. The results of the exercise are given in Table 2 which corresponds very closely to the bi-variate relationships we discussed this far.

We can use the regression estimates to estimate how the probability that a TUP household is ranked as perceiving ‘a lot of change’ or some change’ changes as we change its profile. Figure 6 clearly shows how this probability decreases due to now owning

homestead land and household head not being physically able to work regularly.

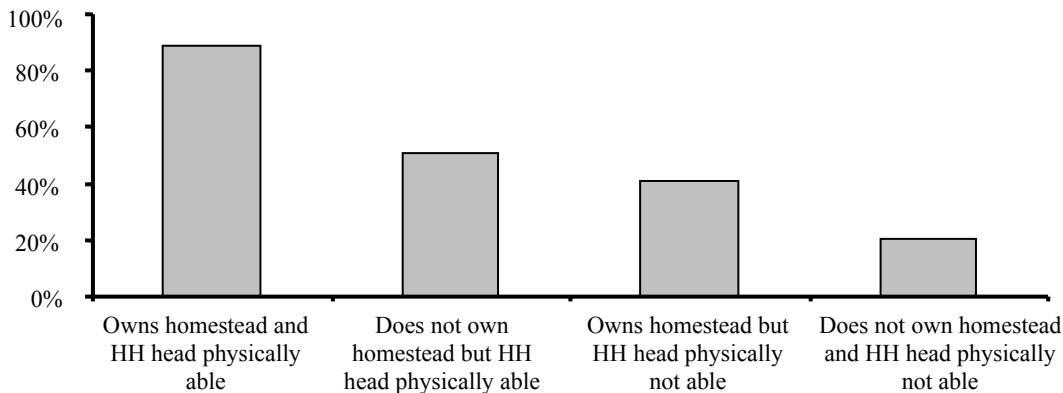
**Figure 5. Change perception and household head’s physical activity to work regularly**



**Table 2. Determinants of change perceptions: a logit analysis**

Variable	Description	Beta	Wald	Sig.
Kurigram dummy	1 if Kurigram, 0 otherwise	1.18	2.85	.091
Age	In years	-.101	.274	.601
Age squared		.002	.493	.483
Cow dummy	1 if cow as TUP enterprise, 0 otherwise	-.448	.396	.529
Marital status of TUP member dummy	1 if currently married, 0 otherwise	-.297	.183	.669
Homestead land ownership dummy	1 if owns homestead land, 0 otherwise	2.01	8.76	.003
Health status of household head dummy	1 if physically able to work regularly, 0 otherwise	2.41	6.25	.012
Constant		-1.9	.265	.607
% predicted correctly	78%			
Cox & Snell R squared	.30			

**Figure 6. Probability of positive change perception**



### ***Factors in ranking: notes from the session discussions***

Change is an ambiguous term, not necessarily quantifiable or absolute. During the ranking sessions, participants identified change in relative terms, according to how much the individual's life had changed since the programme began. As a result, discussion was focused more around comparisons over time for individuals, rather than differences between peers. This is an important methodological point – participatory ranking of change variables tend to be assessed over time at the individual level while participatory ranking of variable such as wealth tend to be assessed at a point in time over individuals.

One important variable that was associated with positive perceptions of change in the discussions was resource security. Increases in non-land assets such as housing, children's education and animals, and the purchase of land assets were frequently equated with greater change. The highest ranks were awarded for accumulating the most land, access to education, home improvements, animals, and sometimes savings, while the lower ranks had accrued slightly fewer and/or accrued to a lesser degree. The lowest ranked usually had the smallest increases in land and non-land assets, if any.

Before joining the TUP programme, participants were in vulnerable positions where income shocks were frequent and a sustainable living was uncertain. Thus, future security from potential future shocks was deemed important in the ranking. Sometimes savings increased financial independence and were included in this discussion as proxy variables for security, although generally, it was not a deciding factor.

Another important theme the participants discussed while deciding ranking was

the health status of the household. As the previous section shows, the household head's health status was important in determining rank. What it does not show, as we did not have data on this variable, is that the poor health condition of other members of the household was often an important negative determinant as well. Even in the cases where the head of the household was physically able, many of the lower ranked women were either unable to work as much as they desired because their individual health was poor or they had exorbitant health costs for another family member, and thus, spent most of their income on treatment. The amount one spends on a household's health needs can seriously inhibit the ability to provide basic resources such as food, shelter, and homestead, and thus affect the perceptions of change.

After we conducted the ranking discussions with the participants, we met with the programme organizers (PO) to cross-check the rankings and gather their insights on change. In all cases they agreed with the designated ranks. While all agreed that overall security was an important indicator, their attitudes towards the determinants of change varied. In Rangpur, the PO listed largely economic conditions as signals of change such as savings and the income generated by the asset. In Kurigram and Nilphamari, POs had a much more "needs-based" approach, listing increases in meals per day, provision of clothing, and meeting family expenditure needs – "first needs, then savings" – as the most important indicators of change. In Nilphamari, the field organizer felt that the increase or attempt to increase assets was the most important. He included savings in his definition of assets.

The differences in PO perceptions illustrate that there were often differences between regions in identifying change. While the discussions during the ranking sessions

provide general trends in change, there were some determinants that were specific to a particular region.

For instance, Kurigram is an area where men were reported to be notorious for estranging their wives, gambling, and failing to provide for their families. During the ranking session, many women mentioned the “laziness” and “unaccountability” of males in the region. Kurigram women are familiar with insecurity, and as we suspect from their responses, were trying to protect themselves against the financial instability. The group often mentioned higher savings, increased incomes, or payments on old loans as determinants of high change.

In Nilphamari, many women commented on the poor agricultural labour market in the region. As the men struggled to find agricultural labour, women were given second priority and half the pay. We suspect that in order to compensate for this market failure, Nilphamari women tried to accumulate their own agricultural land and gave this a lot of importance while assigning ranks. Women who were given higher ranks had increased their land assets the most.

### **Insights from case studies**

The quantitative analysis shows that neither enterprise type nor savings level significantly

correlates with the perceptions of change. Thus, in exploring changes through the case studies, we compare the highest and the lowest ranks for the same enterprises and for similar savings levels in and between regions to explore other determinants of change.

### ***Change within the same enterprises***

When we examined rank 1 and 4 of the same enterprise within the same region, we found that consistent with the quantitative data and ranking discussions, a noteworthy determinant of no change was poor health of household members. Significant expenditures on medical treatment for other members of the household were frequently cited as the main reason for lack of change. While the previous sections address the effect health expenditures have on the participant’s ability to work, reinvest into their enterprise, or purchase household resources, the case studies reveal that vast health expenditures also prevented participants from diversifying or expanding their assets – something that would prevent against future instability. The following comparison between poultry rearers from Kurigram shows this well. Note that while both participants have purchased many non-land assets, the first one has diversified into cow rearing. The second wants to increase her assets, but still has constraints.

### **Participant 3; Taraganj; Poultry; Rank 1**

Participant 3 is a 20 year-old poultry rearer who joined the TUP programme in June 2002. Her prior experience with chickens is the primary reason she chose poultry as her asset. She cannot remember how much she sold the first unit poultry birds for, but claims she sold eggs worth Tk. 10,000. With the money from the first-unit, she bought few goats and sold them for Tk. 1,700 buy a cow for Tk. 2,500 from which she plans to sell the milk. In addition, she takes care of another villager’s cow. When it gave its second calf, she kept it as payment for her efforts. With the rest of her funds, she has built a second tin-roofed house for Tk. 1,000, built a wooden box for Tk. 300 for storing clothes, and accumulated savings of Tk. 2,807. Currently, she along with her two daughters aged 4 and 1 years and her husband live on her father-in-law’s land. Participant 3 plans to buy agricultural land, and send her children to school. To do so, she will use her husband’s income and a BRAC loan, which she wants now.

**Participant 8; Taraganj; Poultry; Rank 4**

Participant 8 joined the TUP programme in June 2002. She is a 30 year-old widow with one daughter, age 15 or 16. Her household consists of herself, her daughter, daughter's husband, and infant grand daughter. With the income from the first unit (sale of eggs) she deposited Tk. 6,000 into her savings, spent Tk. 2,005 for her daughter's treatment, bought a trunk and frying pan at Tk. 80 each, built a new house for Tk. 1,200-1,300, and bought 2 bikes for her daughter and son-in-law at a cost of Tk. 2,000, only to have them stolen a week later. After withdrawing some money for feed, her savings stands at Tk. 3,425. In addition, she works as an agricultural labourer for Tk. 20 per day, while her daughter looks after the baby and poultry unit. Participant 8 must do this to cover the costs of her daughter's treatment. She understands the conditions of her TUP health card but her daughter is experiencing such severe bleeding from an early pregnancy, that her treatment is not covered by the TUP facilities. She says this is the main reason why she is ranked 4. In the future, she wants to expand her poultry assets, but the main inhibitor is her lack of land.

Having the support of an income-earning adult male can be helpful in both managing the tup asset and providing family resources. While the presence of an additional earner was sometimes another important determinant of change, it should be noted that in kurigram, the vast majority of the women in both the ranking and interview samples did not have this. When we compared rank 1 and 4 cow and poultry rearers from the same regions, we found that the women from rangpur and nilphamari who ranked 1 had an additional income earner who made financial household decisions jointly.

In some cases, not only did the tup member lack an additional income-earner in the household, but it was also suspected that other members of the extended family who were not

part of the participant's household were taking advantage of her tup asset, and thus, negatively affecting change. The following two case stories show both of the previous points through a comparison of cow rearers in nilphamari.

When we compared rank 1 and 4 of the same enterprise across regions, we found that regional factors played a role in determining change. In taraganj for instance, the goat and cow rearers who had ranked 4 expressed that their assets had not given any offspring or died, and thus there was no change. This, they claimed, was because the region was dry and it was difficult to find feed. In nilphamari, however, goat rearer's assets gave many offspring, citing this as one of the main reasons for high change.

**Participant 23; Kishoriganj; Cow; Rank 1**

Participant 23 is 30 years old with 3 daughters aged 10, 8, and 3 ½ years. She has been married for 11 years to an agricultural day labourer who earns Tk. 35 to Tk. 40 daily. Before joining TUP they struggled, not owning any land, sometimes going whole day without food, and leaving their children alone while they worked all the day outside. When her cow began giving milk 6 months ago, participant 23 started selling milk for Tk. 10 per litre. Along with her stipend, she has paid Tk. 6,000 land lease for 6 decimals of land. Together, she and her husband have sewn paddy and sold 40 kg of seedings for Tk. 150. They have grossed Tk. 3,000. She has used her husband's income to generate a savings of Tk. 3,250. Now they can eat thrice a day. Furthermore, she adds that she and her husband have a "joint" working relationship. They together run the household finances and enterprise. Often, she added, he takes care of the cow while she looks after the children. Together in the future, they hope to expand both the cow enterprise and new rice paddy business.

### Participant 21; Kishoriganj; Cow; Rank 4

Participant 21 is a 23 year-old divorcee. After the divorce, she moved in with her elder brother (with whom she still resides) and his family. He did not take care of her financially, as he is a poor rickshaw puller earning Tk. 50 to Tk. 60 per day. Instead, he only let her sleep in the house. She continued to be a maidservant during the day time for food and clothing only. Six months ago, her cow started giving milk, which she sold for Tk. 7-8 per half litre. Thus, she earned Tk. 3,000 to 4,000. She reported that she had given her brother Tk. 600 to 700 for land rent, invested Tk. 500 in a failed *pitha* (home-made cake) making business, spent Tk. 250 on blood pressure treatment, and “spent the rest on food.” Today her savings stand at Tk. 742. Now her brother let her eat with the family and has taken a new interest in her well-being. Her sister-in-law answered almost every question for her, while at one point participant 21 commented, “my family feels good about my participation in the TUP programme. Before my brother did not like me; now he does.” At the end of the interview, we had a minute alone with participant 21 and highly encouraged her to control her asset and finances independently, like she used to before TUP. She, however, was quiet and shy in her reply that she would.

#### *Change comparisons through savings levels*

First we examined change between participants of similar savings levels, and then we considered the cases of low savings rank 1 (less than Tk. 1,800) and high savings rank 4 (above Tk. 2,800). There is a broad relationship between level of savings and ranks assigned. We were interested in more closely examining the ‘unusual’ - low savings-high rank and high savings-low rank.

The comparison between low savings rank 1 and high savings rank 4 reveals that there are different ways in which members perceived savings which were related to unique circumstances of the household, such as health status or household demography for instance. Low savings rank 1 did not see savings as integral to their change. Instead, they had purchased many non-land assets and secured 3 meals a day. They had no significant expenditures other than food and shelter and were content in the new ability to provide these. In contrast, high savings rank 4 stressed the importance of savings, but claimed that they faced no change because of enormous household expenditures either due to a large family size or costly medical treatment.

Most low savings rank 1s owned their homesteads, though they did not cite this as a reason for high change. High savings rank 4s, on the other hand, were landless and had low health status which they felt they could not address with the existing health services being provided under the CFPR/TUP programme. They frequently claimed that it was one of the major factors in their low ranks. This is consistent with the quantitative analysis, showing the importance of perceived security in land ownership and health status as important rank determinants.

#### *Other factors of change*

In both the quantitative and qualitative analyses, age did not emerge as a determinant of change, largely because there were not many participants over 50 years of age in our study sample. However, the case studies reveal that the older participants often struggled for 3 meals, were in poor health, lacked additional earners, and complained of not being able to work optimally. In most instances, they were some of the most distressing cases we saw, irrespective of rank. The following two stories reveal this.



### Participant 14; Kurigram; Cow; Rank 1

Participant 14 is a 60 year-old, widowed, cow rearer. She is the head of her four-person household, which consists of her paralysed son and two grand daughters. To help relieve the financial burden, participant 14 married off her eldest grand daughter. But as she could not provide the dowry, the husband abandoned her. Before joining TUP programme, participant 14 was a beggar, earning Tk. 10 per day. Seven months ago, one of her cows gave a kid, and started giving milk. She sold milk for Tk. 10 per half litre. In addition, she sold the bull for Tk. 4,000 and bought a cow for Tk. 3,800. Currently, her savings stands at Tk. 1,800. Participant 14 worries deeply about the future. She is terrified what will happen to her grand daughters after she dies, and at one point tears came out of her eyes during the interview. She said that while they were at times her helping hands, they were also burden to her. They have no parents and if she dies, there is no one to look after them. She is too old and weak to do work outside the home, while her cows are not giving enough milk for the entire family. In addition, she suffers from a seemingly severe skin irritation and claims that the TUP health card will not cover her treatment. She appears to be in extreme pain, itching and scratching incessantly, and at one point stops the interview to take a rest.

### Participant 24; Kishoriganj; Rank 4

Participant 24 is a 60 year-old widow who lives with her 50 year-old sister and 80 year-old mother on her father's 7 decimals of land. When she joined the TUP programme in June 2002, she chose *pitha* (home-made cake) making as her enterprise because of her previous experience. Today, however, she is too sick and old to make it profitable. Her sister sews the paddy, but participant 24 does not help her because the field is too far away. Rather, she makes *pitha*, while her sister sells it. It was difficult to get clear answers, as during the interview participant 24 was extremely faint with what appeared to be a cold and fever. She said that she was sick often, but did not go to hospital, because her health card is at the BRAC office and she cannot afford to visit. We suspect she is thinking of her savings book, which had been collected by BRAC staff earlier that day, but nonetheless, she failed to understand the health facilities. Her younger brother, who runs a sweet shop with one of his four sons, was present at the interview. When asked why he did not help his sisters and mother, he replied that he had to look after his family, and thus did not have the resources. Something seems suspicious, however, as all of his sons are married. He claims that participant 24 and her sister sew their paddy on 58 decimals of her late husband's land. But if she is suffering so, still only having 1 or 2 meals a day, why would she not sell some of the land for food? Participant 24 claims she has no plan for the future and asked us to finish the interview quickly, as she was feeling ill and weak that day.

One major theme that emerged was food security. As the ranking discussions paid much attention to resource security through increases in non-land assets, the case studies revealed that improvements in meals per day were also equated with security in an important way. Rank 1s mentioned that they could manage three meals a day, even without work for a few days, while rank 4s stressed the inability to provide three meals at all. The mid range ranked ones could manage three meals a day but felt insecure regarding its

sustainability, especially if workdays were lost due to illness or unavailability of work.

Diversifying into another enterprise or engaging in activities beyond the TUP asset can be important determinants of change for two reasons. Firstly, having other forms of income generation beyond the TUP asset provides a safety net in case of income shocks, or cash flow seasonality pertaining to the nature of the main asset. Secondly, it can be a significant financial boost, thus enabling participants to consume more and/or accu-

multate resources, leading to a positive perception and foundation for change. It is thus not surprising that most rank 1s had either expanded into another business, such as selling flour, or had multiple jobs in field, selling *katha* (quilt) or cow dung, rolling *bidi*, and house work. Some rank 4s complained they did not have the ability to work to their optimal level or additional work was simply unavailable, thus contributing to their lack of change.

Many of the participants who ranked 1 were confident, poised, articulate, and seemed strong, while some cited the gain in independence and confidence as an indicator of their high change. In many of the rank 3 and 4 cases, answers were short, soft-spoken, and had to be solicited. Furthermore, the POs mentioned that when the assets were transferred, many participants were either scared or felt insecure about handling them.

As the quantitative and case study analyses show, health is a major factor in determining change in the TUP programme. In its design, CFPR/TUP tried to consider this by implementing the health card, which allows for free visits and some basic treatment

at government hospital. However, many participants did not understand how it worked, or did not use it because their conditions were not covered by it.

Some women reported that a few villagers were jealous of their participation in the CFPR/TUP programme. One woman said that other community members often asked if she had changed her religion – that was the only explanation for her newly found wealth. In other cases, women reported that the community was proud of participation in the TUP programme, now respecting her because they knew she could handle responsibility. It should be noted here, however, that frequently during the interviews the whole village would congregate to listen. It is possible that the participants, feeling immense social pressure, responded to please the listeners. While in the 2004 Mission Report it was found that there was no serious community jealousy towards the participants, some of our case studies indicated negative feelings among the rest of the community. For instance, one participant in Kurigram said that 80 kg of her potatoes were stolen on the day we interviewed her.

## CONCLUSION

The quantitative analysis, ranking discussions, and case stories uncover distinct trends in TUP participants' perceptions of change occurred in their lives since joining the programme. Most participants viewed change as the increased ability to handle future economic shocks. While savings levels were sometimes associated with this ability, the analysis shows that non-financial factors were more important in determining the ranks assigned. Rank 1s usually increased or improved their non-land and land assets the most, managed to attain the security of having three meals a day, owned their homestead land, and engaged in additional income earning activities, or diversified into other profitable forms of income generation. Rank 4s, however, expressed uncertainty as they often lack land assets, worked minimally beyond their TUP asset, and had significant household health expenditures.

The ranking exercises were participatory and based on the members' own descriptions of change. Largely, these were before and after perceptions, and thus, high ranks do not necessarily show a sustainable foundation for livelihoods. Many of these participants perceived change because they gained a sense of hope and independence. The SIP provided stable income, the asset transfer gave them tangible assets, and they could now earn independently. This is largely shown in the case stories of older participants, where they ranked as experiencing a lot of change, but their security is seriously threatened by poor health conditions, minimal land and non-land assets, virtually no asset or job diversification, and a continued struggle for meals.

This study has a couple of implications for the future strategies of the CFPR/TUP programme developments. The most obvious is health. In addition to the inhibiting health costs of rank 4s, many of the participants, irrespective of rank, did not understand how the health card worked. While many claimed that the health card and the *Gram Shahayak Committee* (GSC) was helpful in getting them to avail medical treatment, many participants either did not realize that the health card provided a free visit to a government hospital, cited they did not have the time or money for transportation, or suffered from conditions that were not covered by the TUP health facilities. The health card system and the role of the GSCs in facilitating health services need further exploration.

In its pilot phase, the TUP programme placed a large emphasis on enterprise reinvestment with the savings product<sup>2</sup>. If the participants withdrew savings, those were primarily for enterprise maintenance and investment. As many of the participants facing no change suffer from poor health and continue to struggle for food, CFPR/TUP programme may review the promotional (enterprise needs driven) focus of the savings product and to allow to use for protection, so that participants can use their savings for unmet basic needs. If participants cannot work due to poor health and nutrition, they are never likely to see significant change that is sustainable.

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<sup>2</sup> The first two years of the programme, 2002 and 2003 were pilot phases where 5,000 TUP women were selected.

### **CFPR-TUP Working Paper Series**

CFPR/TUP Research Team. Stories of targeting: process documentation of selecting the ultra poor for CFPR/TUP programme. Dhaka and Ottawa: BRAC and Aga Khan Foundation Canada, 2004. xii, 34p. (CFPR-TUP Working paper series no. 1)

Matin I and Halder SR. Combining methodologies for better targeting of the extreme poor: lessons from BRAC's CFPR/TUP programme. Dhaka and Ottawa: BRAC and Aga Khan Foundation Canada, 2004. vi, 19p. (CFPR-TUP Working paper series no. 2)

Hossain M and Matin I. Engaging elite support for the poorest? BRAC's experience with the ultra poor programme. Dhaka and Ottawa: BRAC and Aga Khan Foundation Canada, 2004. vi, 17p. (CFPR-TUP Working paper series no. 3)