

**ANNUAL REVIEW OF
*NIJERA KORI***

**SOCIAL MOBILISATION, VOICE AND
DEMOCRACY PROGRAM**

Prepared for:

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Dhaka
August 13, 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

This is a report on the annual review for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 on a seven-year program being implemented by *Nijera Kori*, a national level NGO of Bangladesh. The project titled Social Mobilization, Voice and Democracy Program is funded by DFID (Department for International Development), Christian Aid, The Swallows, EED, ICCO and *Inter pares*.

The supergoal of the program is to reduce poverty and inequality, and to promote human rights in Bangladesh. The goal of the program is to improve accountability and capacity of democratic processes and to create a more responsive, people-centred governance at local and higher levels. The immediate objective is to enable the *Nijera Kori* members and their allies to increase effective pressure on the Government, political and other elites in order to have better access to decision-making processes, resources and services for poor men and women.

Having being initiated in April 2001, the program has now stepped into its third year of operations. In April 2003, both DFID and *Nijera Kori* agreed that the annual review for the period of 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 should take place as a means to learn more about the program's impact and to identify ways to increase this impact.

2. INTRODUCTION OF NIJERA KORI

Established in 1980 in its present form, *Nijera Kori* is now a medium-size NGO, operating in 18 districts under 4 administrative divisions. *Nijera Kori*'s institutional objective is to raise voice of the grassroots poor through social mobilization. *Nijera Kori* maintains that participatory democracy is the core value of organisation and management functions here. Participatory democracy has been practiced in the organisation's internal management and in day-to-day affairs with the target landless groups as well. The overall management and coordination are guided by a three-tier structure where a council at each tier is elected from amongst the staff for a term of two years. The field level operations are spread over 4 administrative divisions through areas further divided into 52 sub-centres. A sub-centre is composed of a number of female and male staff who work closely with the landless group members. These staff stay in their residential office campuses both during and off the office hours.

The target landless groups are formed in a way that they can manage themselves with minimum support from the *Nijera Kori* staff maintaining their (group members') own preferences. Each landless group consists of 16-30 members. Male and female groups are formed separately. All committees of the landless are formed through landless groups' convention and the representatives in those committees get elected in the conventions. Representatives elected through landless groups convention form into a Village Committee. These committees are formed only when at least two-thirds of the target population in a particular village have been covered. As soon as two-thirds of the villages in a union have been covered, *Nijera Kori*'s landless groups form their Union Committee. Similarly, a Thana Committee is formed when at least two-thirds of the unions in a thana (sub-district) have been covered. Besides, Area Committees are formed as interim committees as and when required for coordination, in case the formal committees in a particular area cannot be constituted. The landless groups, in their

regular meetings, discuss the pertinent problems, try to find out remedial measures, and then formulate their next plans of action.

As of date, *Nijera Kori* has been operating in 1242 villages, 172 unions, 39 thanas, and 18 districts- covering 199,307 group members coming from 108,401 families having a total population of more than 585,000. The female : male ratio of memberships is 53: 47.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The overall objective of the review was to assess *Nijera Kori's* achievement of Year 2 (April 2002 - March 2003) and progress to date towards the overall project purpose. The specific objectives of the review, as agreed between DFID and *Nijera Kori*, were:

- a) To review *Nijera Kori's* progress against the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 plan, in terms of progress towards achieving outputs and the overall project purpose.
- b) To review the plan agreed for 2003-2004 to assess if it is a realistic forecast of achievable activities.
- c) To review the existing reporting and monitoring system/process to assess whether it is allowing *Nijera Kori* to see the results on progress and recommend any necessary steps for improvement.
- d) To review the logframe, in particular to revisit the indicators to develop and agree with *Nijera Kori* a set of appropriate indicators.
- e) To look at overall staff strength and capacity to deliver *Nijera Kori's* program and to assess *Nijera Kori's* support and development of staff including evaluating staff development plans, training, planning, monitoring and reporting.

4. METHODOLOGY FOLLOWED

The consultants completed the draft report on this review by way of the following efforts:

- Reviewing and analysing all relevant materials or documents, such as, the Joint *Nijera Kori*-DFID Program Document (2001-2008), Project LogFrame, Annual Reports for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, a number of plan documents, various relevant publications, and different monitoring forms and formats
- Joint discussion meetings with *Nijera Kori*
- Meetings with *Nijera Kori* staff (at Dhaka, Tangail and Comilla Districts) and EC members
- Meetings at the *Bhumiheen Shamiti* (landless group) level
- Discussion meetings with thana level staff
- Sharing with civil society at the thana level.

5. MAJOR CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

Geographical Expansion

Geographical expansion at village and union levels was relatively slow due to unforeseen constraints. Activities subsequent to group formation (e.g., group meetings, union committee meetings, area meetings, and union conventions) were also slow.

Activity-wise Progress

Nijera Kori, during the year 2001-2003, had made full achievements against 14 activity / sub-activity targets out of a total of 41. There were partial achievements against 27 targets. In terms of percentage achievements, there were <75% achievements against 10 particular targets and <66% achievements against 9 other particular targets. The 9 activity or sub-activity targets against which achievements were <66% were:

- Group Meetings (with Staff Attendance)
- Formation of Union Committees
- Formation of Thana Committees
- Formation of Area Committees
- Holding of Union Conventions
- Training to Landless Groups on Livestock Rearing
- Training to Landless Groups on Paralegal Issues
- Enhancement of Group Consciousness (Groups Graduation) from Primary Level to Secondary Level
- Enhancement of Group Consciousness (Groups Graduation) from Secondary Level to Final Level.

Targets for landless groups' savings activity and training to the landless groups were achieved well. Graduation of landless groups from Level 'A' to Level 'B' or from Level 'B' to Level 'C' required significant impetus.

Program LogFrame and Indicators

There were non-quantified targets against 4 activities, such as (a) Increase of Landless Groups' Savings with Banks, (b) Legal Aid Activity, (c) *Khas* Land and Waterbodies, (d) Recuperation of Properties of Landless and Marginal Farmers from Illegal Possessors.

Cautionary Notes with Outputs 1-5 needs relocation to other places of the Project Document. The OVIs against the Activities (for various Outputs) do not exist (Only brief mentioning of Activity-wise Inputs/Budgets are there). Various changes to the Indicators (OVIs) are necessary.

Achievement of the Target Landless Groups

The landless groups have been able, through *Nijera Kori's* facilitation and the local government's cooperation, to bring about positive changes among themselves.

Long-Term Vision of the Program

The long-term vision of the program, as perceived by the target landless groups and *Nijera Kori's* Executive Committee, are similar to the stated goals, purpose and outputs in the Project Document.

Attainability of Annual Plan 2003-2004

Annual Plan 2003-2004 is attainable if there are no major unforeseen constraints. This plan contains consideration of *Nijera Kori's* past lessons learnt. As per this plan, *Nijera Kori* will remain minimally involved in the groups' work. *Nijera Kori* will remain more deeply involved in committee formation during 2003-2004.

Reporting and Monitoring

The reporting and monitoring system in *Nijera Kori* is roundabout and supported by the existing staff capacities. Lack of access to certain resources has made the staff spend relatively more time in reporting and monitoring, such as lack of access to telephone facilities and computers and personnel specialising in reporting and monitoring at the area/*anchal* and divisional offices.

Staff Management and Staff Capacity

Staff recruitment in *Nijera Kori* has suffered relatively heavily due to the separation of a large number of staff in 2002-2003. *Nijera Kori's* notion is that the new-generation candidates for various positions are not class-conscious and have less exposure to the activities of *Nijera Kori* that are different from those of other NGOs. In the current context of manpower supply in the country, *Nijera Kori* is planning to wield a new recruitment system for finding out a larger number of candidates promising longer tenures with this organisation.

Nijera Kori's Performance in Networking

The pace of networking by *Nijera Kori* appears to need speeding up. This organisation has been quite careful in deciding on types of networking to be carried out, in order to cater to the needs and objectives of the project by way of networking.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are being made:

6.1 Recommendations for DFID/Other Donors

- i) Support to *Nijera Kori* for its operations during 2003-2004 should continue, because the Annual Plan 2003-2004 is attainable if there are no major unforeseen constraints.
- ii) DFID/other donors should immediately obtain copies of Annual Plan 2003-2004 and review and discuss the plan in meetings with *Nijera Kori* for a consensus on the plan.
- iii) While *Nijera Kori* follows up on recommendations to modify the LogFrame, DFID/other donors should attend all discussion sessions of *Nijera Kori* in order to identify the changes to be made to the LogFrame.

6.2 Recommendations for *Nijera Kori* (with monitoring of their implementation at the end of DFID/Other Donors)

A. General:

- i) The practice of disseminating each Annual Plan to DFID/other donors well ahead of the respective activity periods should be brought into *Nijera Kori's* regular practice.
- ii) In following up on the recommendations for possible changes to the LogFrame, *Nijera Kori* should keep DFID posted on the same by way of inviting them in various discussion sessions to modify the LogFrame.

B. Geographical Expansion:

- i) Geographical expansion at village and union levels should be expedited in keeping with the criteria set for this activity.

C. Activity-wise Progress:

- i) Significant planning and initiatives should be taken on to increase achievements especially against the following activities / sub-activities.
 - Group Meetings (with Staff Attendance)
 - Formation of Union Committees
 - Formation of Thana Committees
 - Formation of Area Committees
 - Holding of Union Conventions
 - Training to Landless Groups on Livestock Rearing
 - Training to Landless Groups on Paralegal Issues
 - Enhancement of Group Consciousness (Groups Graduation) from Primary Level to Secondary Level
 - Enhancement of Group Consciousness (Groups Graduation) from Secondary Level to Final Level.

D. Program LogFrame and Indicators:

- i) Quantification of Indicators should be made as much as possible against 4 particular activities, that is, (a) Increase of Landless Groups' Savings with Banks, (b) Legal Aid Activity, (c) *Khas* Land and Waterbodies, (d) Recuperation of Properties of Landless and Marginal Farmers from Illegal Possessors. A format including some changes of the Suggested LogFrame for *Nijera Kori* is presented in Section 5.2.2.
- ii) Cautionary Notes with Outputs 1-5 needs to be relocated to Footnotes and the Column of Risks and Assumptions, as detailed earlier.
- iii) The OVIs against the Activities should be mentioned, shifting the Activity-wise Inputs/Budgets to their own places.

E. Reporting and Monitoring:

- i) *Nijera Kori* should continue to maintain at least the present frequency of monitoring and reporting
- ii) Arrangements should be made for re-distribution of staff (and staff time) engaged in reporting and monitoring activities to carry out more precise analysis of findings from the field level to dwell on the qualitative aspects
- iii) Sub-centres should be relieved from receiving (and dealing with) reports from multiple tiers of landless group members' committees (They may be made responsible to receive reports from the thana committees only)
- iv) Respective staff at area/*anchal* and divisional offices should be relieved from filling in the monthly monitoring formats with cumulative data
- v) A staff should be recruited in each area and divisional office making her/him responsible for compiling monitoring information/data

- vi) Meaningful linkage between quantitative data and qualitative interpretations should be enhanced
- vii) Superfluous sections in the reports submitted by staff area/*anchal* offices should be excluded
- viii) Activity Plan 2003-2004 should be disseminated among concerned DFID personnel
- ix) Computers and phone facilities should be provided to the area and divisional offices
- x) Experiences of *Nijera Kori* in social mobilisation should be disseminated widely
- xi) Case stories, as published in the Annual Reports, should be re-structured; and the meaningful stories should continue, with stories on individuals being grouped under relevant activity dimensions.

F. Staff Management and Capacity:

- i) Full-fledged manuals (such as Human Resources Manual, Administrative Manual and Finance/Accounting Manual) should be prepared and put in place
- ii) A combination of formal wider publicity of job vacancies and headhunting should be introduced
- iii) Staff insurances should be arranged by way of coverage with the formal insurance companies of the country
- iv) Training to staff on legal issues, conflict management and advocacy/networking should be imparted on a priority basis
- v) A system of regular annual staff performance evaluation, matching the particular needs of the project, should be introduced
- vi) Changes of rules and policies proposed herein under “Staff Management and Capacity” should be included in a revised LogFrame.

G. Management of Networking Activities:

- i) *Nijera Kori* should get involved in networking (more strongly) in issues relevant to and effective for the project’s overall goals
- ii) Training (to staff and beneficiaries) on networking should be enhanced
- iii) Changes of rules and policies proposed herein under “Management of Networking Activities” should be included in a revised LogFrame.