

External Review of ActionAid Bangladesh's Country Strategy Paper-III

Prepared for



Prepared by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. BACKGROUND

This is the report on the Final External Review of Country Strategy Paper (CSP)-III of ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB), an international development organization with national accountability striving to establish a world free of poverty and injustice. AAB, from 1983 to 2009, has undergone three 'Country Strategy Papers' each of them aimed at transforming AAB with its own characteristics and focus taking it closer to people for better understanding of poverty, its causes and processes for overcoming it. **The overall purpose** of the review is to assess performance against country strategy and generate learning to improve future work and strategic direction. **The specific objectives** were two-fold, (a) looking at self, i.e., inside AAB, and (b) gauging the external factors. **The scope of work** for the Review included (a) Understanding the Impact of program and its effectiveness, (b) Understanding organizational Policy and Culture, (c) AAB's typical ALPS (Accountability, Learning and Planning System) and (d) Future Strategic Direction. Both secondary and primary sources of information were used for preparing this review report. Primary sources of information were particularly (meetings with AAB Country Office staff, meetings with AAB's partner NGO staff and beneficiaries, and FGDs with various civil society members.

2. MAJOR FINDINGS

2.1 OBSERVATIONS ON THE CSP-III DOCUMENT

The comparative advantages and expertise of other development operators in Bangladesh has not been separately reviewed which could otherwise reflect AAB's *raison d'être* (reason for existence) in particular areas. Many of the Themes against specific Goals are interlinked and are usually likely to overlap each other. While the AAB's institutional vision and goals clearly show its mandate, the CSP-III document does not consider objectively assessing its Goal(s) which could be both cumulative and broken down into separate annual goals.

2.2 PROGRAMMATIC PERFORMANCES DURING THE CSP-III PERIOD

2.2.1 Livelihood Security and Risk Reduction (Goal 1)

APPROACH: In terms of budget allocation and the number of projects, this is the largest sector within AAB. This sector focuses on the issues of livelihood promotion, risk reduction from disasters – both natural and man-made, an increase of access to natural resources etc.

DAs AND PARTNER NGOs

Under this Goal during the CSP-III period, AAB has worked with 20 partners in Dhaka, Faridpur, Jamalpur, Noakhali, Lalmonirhat, Patuakhali, Satkhira, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Sunamganj districts.

THEME 1: Sustainable Livelihood

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.1: To facilitate an enabling environment where poor and marginalised people are able to exercise their right to sustainable livelihood.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

There were 13 projects and 14 partners, having overlapping objectives. These efforts have enabled AAB to raise awareness of its participants by using the REFLECT Approach. Formation of “Self-help Groups”, opposed to the traditional micro-credit, also helped the target marginalized populations to attain their livelihood options. The Review Team is not convinced that AAB has been successful in ensuring poor peoples’ right to land by declaring 5,128 acre land as *khas* land. During our visit, we found that despite the AAB partner CB’s efforts, all those lands were effectively controlled by the alleged land-grabbers and hence the LP (Livelihood Promotion) theme’s claim that ‘poor peoples’ rights is protected’ seems not significantly acceptable. The LP Team reported on the establishment of a seed processing and preservation scheme with a 300-ton capacity which is an excellent replicable initiative.

At the level of policy audit and poly advocacy/research, which is a continual, cross-cutting function of AAB in its various programme clusters, AAB has lobbied significantly for the Government to ensure minimum 100-day wage-paid labour per year for the marginalized populations. AAB’s lobbying in this line is especially crucially important for the poor and marginalized populations in certain regions for whom the Government has not incurred substantial amounts of social overheads and where the people are perennially prone to the vagaries of Nature

THEME 2: Risk Reduction

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.2: To reduce vulnerability and risk to the livelihood of the poor and marginalised from disasters [both human-made and natural].

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

According to the list provided to the ERT, AAB undertook 43 projects through its partners under this theme. These projects vary widely in terms of scope, budget allocation, and duration. Massive cyclones during the CSP-III period explain sudden influx of short-term funds for the projects under this theme. AAB reported a number of achievements under its four Outcomes of the Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction (DRR) Theme. One activity or a series of activities that the ERT rates as the best practice is the DRR Team’s dealing with regard to the fire hazards especially in the garments factories. In the last few years, there have been a number of terrible fire incidents costing many lives. AAB has carried out simulation drills with the help of the Fire Service of Bangladesh. This initiative has been an example of a comprehensive approach to deal with an issue. AAB and its network members have lobbied with the Government quite successfully to enact an ordinance called “Disaster Management Act”. The Act is yet to receive the relevant Parliamentary Standing Committee’s nod.

THEME 3: Access to Natural Resources

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.3: To increase access and control over natural resources and public services by the poor and marginalised.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

In order to achieve 6 outcomes under this Theme, the CSP-III also indicates 4 strategies to achieve their goals. As a result of the ANR theme's initiatives, 1207 landless families were permanently settled of *khas* lands which were re-classified from wetlands. The team is not informed on the terms and conditions of these permanent settlement deeds. Though in a country like Bangladesh having a huge landless population, re-distribution of *khas* lands to the landless people is a highly expected activity- it is not possible to provide an informed judgment due to the lack of terms and conditions of the reported deeds on *khas* lands. Also relevant studies have shown a low-rate retention of *khas* land among poor peasants. The ANR Team also actively participated in a number of issues including the Tipai Mukh Dam issue, Draft Coal Policy, Energy Security, Right to Safe Drinking Water, participatory water governance etc. Specific goals set out in the CSP-III are un-achieved.

2.2.2 Women's Rights and Gender Equity (Goal 2)

THEME 1: Women's Rights

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.1: To promote women's right to self-determination and create an enabling environment for their effective participation in social, political, economic and environmental dimensions.

APPROACH: The Theme Team for Advancing Women's Rights has been working with the vulnerable women's groups to enhance their capacity for their socio-economic development, political empowerment and to ensure their participation at all levels of decision-making processes in both their families and their communities.

DAs AND PARTNER NGOS

There were 7 partner NGOs under the Theme at such districts as Gaibandha, Dhaka, Kushtia, Barisal, Rajshahi, Netrakona and Satkhira.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

There were 6 Outcomes in total, touching on such major issues as (a) women's greater control over their livelihoods, (b) women's access to livelihood resources, (c) women's rights-awareness, and (d) women's right to property and guardianship. Major activities undertaken were IGAs, women's participation in local market management committees, advocacy and lobbying on women's guardianship and right to property, and women's awareness about budget allocation for women. Analysis showed that project activities have created an opportunity for the women to participate in the development activities and to work outside their homes breaking the religious barriers, social constraints, and their traditional patriarchal culture- but the partner organizations could not monitor the program regularly.

THEME 2: Adolescents' Rights

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.2: To create an enabling environment for practice of egalitarian gender relations and active citizenship by adolescents.

APPROACH: The violation of human rights, especially violence against adolescents, has emerged as a concern for development of the future generation as the period of adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Thus, AAB's approach is to empower adolescents to cope with sound socialization process and reduce their vulnerability.

DAs Non-DA AND PARTNER NGOs of Goal 2 (SO 2)

The total number of partner NGOs of AAB under this Theme was 5 spread into the districts of Chittagong, Rajshahi, Kurigram and Chittagong.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

Major activities under the theme were aimed at: Prevention of marriage at early adolescence, Girls' enrolment and retention in schools are increased; Reduced Dropout of Girls Student; Attitudinal Change of Teachers; AFLE/sex education for adolescents including ethnic groups as an adolescent right; More sensitized adolescent boys to discrimination against girls; Facilitating adolescent boys and girls to serve their community and society as potential human resource; and State's recognition of adolescents as future citizens.

It was found that AAB has given special emphasis on the issues related to adolescents. MoWCA addressed the male adolescents up to the age of 15. MoYS work with the youth of aged 18-35 years only. As such, there is a lack of government interventions for the adolescents aged 15 to 18. School teachers have a wrong concept and taboos about adolescents' reproductive health. But, since they are involved with adolescents, they must have knowledge on ARH. As a result of such knowledge, they can provide guidance in case of adolescents' ARH-related problems.

THEME 3: Stop Violence against Women

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.3: To create a culture of zero tolerance for violence against women

APPROACH: Stop Violence against Women (SVAW) Theme Team has continued its work focusing on anti-violence campaign against women and girls like domestic violence, acid violence, sexual harassment, rape, eve teasing and prevention programme.

DAs, Non-DA AND PARTNER NGOs

AAB's partner NGOs during the CSP-III period under this Goal were WAVE Foundation, RACINE, ASEAB, SoDESH, SHARP and MBSK.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

AAB's WEGE Theme worked to ensure that: The community is aware that violence against women is wrong; Community is supportive towards survivors of acid violence and rape; Easier access to justice for victim of violence, especially family violence, acid violence, sexual harassment (i.e. rape, teasing, work place harassment, etc.); Rape and acid survivors are not stigmatized; Community is aware on sexual harassment and its constraining impact on women's mobility and job aspirations; and Adoption of policies against sexual harassment in public and private institution.

However, in 2007, an initiative was taken jointly by SVAW theme of AAB and SHOUHARDO Project of CARE Bangladesh to pull up all the voices in one platform and to raise a single voice to enact "**Domestic Violence Legislation**" in Bangladesh. All these networks jointly worked on the issues and finally developed a draft policy. A series of consultations on Draft DV Act and grassroots level sharing of the brief draft on DV Act were held at different levels with different stakeholders. The National Seminar, organized by AAB and CARE Bangladesh, was part of that process to comprehensively understand and review the entire draft and prepare recommendations for further development and immediate enactment of the Bill.

It was found that domestic violence was acknowledged as a social problem: At the community level, it has also made a remarkable impact. The people at large are now aware that violence against women is a problem. Furthermore, they have learnt that they can collectively address it for the sake of peace and progress in the society. However- in 2007, an initiative was taken jointly by SVAW theme of AAB and SHOUHARDO Project of CARE Bangladesh to pull up all the voices in one platform and to raise a single voice to enact "**Domestic Violence Legislation**" in Bangladesh.

2.2.3 Rights and Social Justice (GOAL 3)

APPROACH: AAB's drive to create an inclusive society and culture is at the core of the "democratic values"; which is nowadays quite well-talked, but hardly a few people understand the real meaning of the term. AAB concentrates on three themes to attain the goals under this sector.

DAs AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

During the CSP-III period, AAB worked with 24 NGOs under this Goal in different districts of the Country.

THEME 1: Diversity and Citizenship.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.1: To assert equal citizenship by those of diverse origins based on ethnicity, language and religion.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

At present, the theme team is working with four DAs, three non-DA partners and other event based partners, which work with different communities and issues of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Dinajpur, Satkhira, Joypurhat, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Chittagong, Tangail and Dhaka district. The main target audiences and institutions of the theme are *adibashi* people of both - hill and

plain- regions, Urdu speaking non-Bengalis, nomadic river gypsies, city cleaners and *dalits*. AAB partners have been successful in increasing enrolment and retention of students through multi-lingual education in the pre-schools and primary education. During our visit in Panchbibi, Joypurhat, we found that due to PUAMDO operated child development centres. Both enrolment and retention of *adibashis* have increased dramatically as the child development centres started teaching in their mother tongues. In 2009, PUAMDO assisted 366 people getting their VGF cards.

The Diversity and Citizenship Theme Team coordinates INGO alliance, which works for indigenous people rights and dignity issues. The continued sharing and meeting with the alliance member organizations, the diversity and citizenship issues have been adopted and are being addressed by the alliance member organizations.

PUAMDO has long been advocating with the local authority to resist land grabbing of the indigenous people. Due to its long term campaigning, any transfer of land from any indigenous people to others should have to be approved by PUAMDO before it can be registered in the government registry office. Our team considers rates this development very highly in terms of the protection of indigenous peoples' lands. In Joypurhat, *adibashi* children are attending pre-schools or the child development centres and enthusiastically participating in all the activities. We, however, were concerned about the absence of any government primary school or NGO run primary school within 3 kilometre radius of the pre-school we visited. Children who are currently attending those child development centres, may not continue further education in absence of a primary school.

THEME 2: Disability and Enabling Environment.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.2: To promote an inclusive and barrier free society where enabling environment and conditions prevail for the people with disabilities.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

During the period 2005-2009, this theme team worked with four DAs, nine Non-DA partners and several event-based partners located in Chittagong, Jhenaidah, Bogra, Faridpur, Narsingdi, Sylhet, Potuakhali, and Dhaka districts on both national and local issues.

The Disability and Enabling Environment Team reported a number of activities that fall under most of the outcomes set out in the CSP-III document. AAB has a long-term relationship with the National Forum of the Organisations Working with the Disabled – NFOWD including the CSP-III period. NFOWD is an umbrella organisation that champions the rights of the disabled people and has been hugely successful in motivating the Government to promulgate a number of policies and acts in order to support disable people. AAB can rightfully claim a part in NFOWD's successes as it is funding core activities of the organizations.

ActionAid and NFOWD started advocacy for inclusive education in the Primary Education Development Project (PEDP)-II under their RCB project from December 2008. Besides, NFOWD has formed 'Disability Rights Watch Group' in 2009 consisting of renowned civil society members. ActionAid Bangladesh and NFOWD jointly drafted a Human Rights-based Law for Persons with disabilities, which, has been submitted to the Government for adoption.

So far, a number of consultations have taken place. Newly formed parliamentarian caucus on disability has picked up the agenda as their first priority.

As a result of ABB's advocacy work, the media world in Bangladesh (especially in the TV Channel news) recently started using of sign language for their viewers. ActionAid Bangladesh also played a crucial role in achieving this. Action Aid Bangladesh and Society of the Deaf and Sign Language Users (SDSL) jointly organized a Training Camp "Bangla Sign Language Interpreting Training Camp".

Activities of the Disability Theme are not limited at the national level only. AAB partner YPSA mobilised and supported the formulation of a local group of disabled people, namely the Federation of Self-Help Organisations. However, unlike the national organisations, this local-level federation is still at its infancy and highly dependent on YPSA's support to day-to-day operation and more importantly for guidance.

This theme is quite focused and has achieved almost all the Outcomes set out in the CSP-III document. It should focus more on attaining inclusive development for the disabled peoples. However, tasks related to intellectual disability were largely invisible under this Theme.

THEME 3: Social Inclusion.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.3: To promote active processes for inclusion of the socially excluded.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

During CSP-III, the theme worked with 2 DA partners and 9 non-DA partners (Currently 4 non-DA partners are still working with the AAB). This theme primarily deals with the issues of sex workers, HIV/AIDS, trafficking and labour migration.

AAB has been supporting the sex worker's children through child care and development support that have resulted in a number of positive outcomes. Due to AAB partners' efforts sex workers' children are admitted to the government schools and can now participate in different social events – both of which had, even recently, been off limit to these children. AAB have mobilised peoples against trafficking and also organised awareness development initiatives among the law enforcing agencies and BDR, slum areas, schools, scooter, bus and truck stands. It also organised events to ensure the victims of trafficking are more easily integrated in society. Repatriation project of the AAB partner SAVIOUR was declared as the best by the Government of Bangladesh. AAB also undertook a number of initiatives to ease migration for the women workers. Due to its advocacy, overseas female workers' migration cost came down to BDT 10,000- the previous cost being 4 times of this amount.

This theme of AAB has created effective linkages and relationships with different governmental as well as non-governmental organizations in order to achieve its goals. The theme has covered most of the issues mentioned in the CSP-III document.

2.2.4 Social Development and Economic Justice (Goal 4)

THEME 1: Quality Education

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4.1: To promote the right to “quality education” for the poor and marginalized children.

APPROACH: AAB changed its global strategy from service delivery to a right based approach and its Education Theme chose its strategies that included local level budget tracking, legislative and local level advocacy’ prompting good practices, and policy analysis for addressing quality, equity, and relevance of education.

DAs AND PARTNER NGOS

The 6 partner NGOs of AAB under this Goal for the CSP-III period were South Asia Partnership (SAP), Village Education Resource Center (VERC), Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE), Esho Desh Gori (EDG), Mahideb Jubo Samaj Kollan Samity (MJSKS), and Solidarity- in 6 different districts. Besides, for policy advocacy, the Education Theme of AAB has four other networking partners/National Level partners.

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

Major activities under this theme were: Quality education claimed as a fundamental right by mass people (through , Legislative advocacy and Parliamentary Caucus on Education to ensure education as a fundamental right by the state); Children irrespective of sex, class and ethnicity have increased access to education; Increase the proportion of children, especially girls, completing primary education; Education service is demand-driven and responsive to the context specific educational needs of the students and the community; Disaster resilient education system at the grassroots level promoted (DA interventions + 2 projects); and Community-State interface enhanced through sustained people's alliance.

The consultants found out that civil society members wrote letters to the Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Director General of Directorate of Primary Education (DG-DPE). Education Minister, Law Minister requesting them to declare education as a basic right. Work on Parliament caucus was delayed due to the Emergency Period (during 2007-08) where there was no Parliament. Since the subsequent Parliamentary Elections at the later part of 2008, AAB has been planning to work further on this issue. A number of initiatives were undertaken to remove cultural barriers and promote the rights of children with disabilities to education. Inclusive education and special needs education were also emphasized. The resources necessary for such improvements are locally identified and thus, the communities are able to take stock of the local resources available for the improvement beyond resources allocated for the school.

One of the successes of AAB in this area has been the suggestion made to the Government for introduction of Flexi-Attendance System for students in in remote disaster-prone areas during disaster times.

THEME 2: Economic Justice

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4.2: To promote public accountability of the government, private sector, and international development agencies that secures economic justice for all

OUTCOME-WISE ACTIVITIES

Economic justice is an extremely important area and moreover an organisation can carry out many activities under the rights based approach quite easily. The way CSP-III outlined the outcomes of this theme had in fact narrowed down the scope of this theme.

Social Mobilization of Marginal Occupational Groups to Attain Economic Justice Project started operating from May 2006. Two Rajshahi-based NGOs – Sachetan and Barendra Unnayan Parishad – jointly work in partnership with AAB for this project. It is difficult to see why the case of mulberry farmers deserve special attention or in what way their struggle to get a just price is different than that of the struggles faced by other marginal agricultural producers. In Bangladesh, one of the biggest issues in the agricultural sector is the plight of the marginal farmers who always lose out in terms of price. They usually purchase seeds at the highest possible prices and had to sell their produces at the lowest possible prices. AAB also endeavours to tackle this issue in different DAs, though on a very limited scale and often without clear understanding. This is a serious problem and AAB should mobilise its resources heavily in this regard. This project has been justified by a market chain study, which has a ‘cost-benefit analysis’. Unfortunately it was just an accounting ‘cost-benefit analysis’, not an economic one and hence bears relatively little value in the real sense.

THEME 3: Quality Healthcare

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4.3: To promote the right to quality health care for the poor and marginalized.

OUTCOMES

The health theme sets out **the following outcomes** to achieve under the CSP-III:

- Accountability of health service providers to the community, especially the poor and marginalised is increased.
- Coercive practices in reproductive health care, particularly for contraceptive use and maternal health have reduced.
- Increased awareness on health and well-being for women and men.
- People’s monitoring of the health, nutrition and population sector programme (HNPS) is developed.
- Increased appropriate and accurate use of indigenous medicine and therapy.

DAs AND PARTNER NGOS

Currently, the Health theme manages 2 DAs (3 partners) and 2 non-DA partners as well as 6 irregular partners. The relationships with irregular partners are primarily cooperation based, no financial transaction is involved. However, AAB has introduced the system of “River Ambulance” for provision of healthcare services to marginalized populations in geographically remote areas like *chars/haors*. It is likely that the Government may soon attach a budget allocation to this service with their revenue.

OVERALL FINDINGS

This is one of the smallest themes of AAB both in terms of budget and the number of projects. Effectively it works only in two DAs and with 2 non-DA partners. The external review team is quite intrigued about the achievements of this theme. The team observes that the Health theme's assessment of achievements is way too liberal. Besides, AAB has terminated contracts with 1 DA partner- Sramajibi and Dustha Kallyan Sangstha (SDKS) and with 1 non-DA partner- Lustre – due to corruption. AAB has formed partnerships with SHARP and BOSS only in July, 2009 and they have now taken over the charge of the activities left out by SDKS. The theme is proud of their introduction of a 'River Ambulance' to carry vulnerable patients from the eco-vulnerable char areas to the health centres, hospitals to access better medical facilities. We were told the government of Bangladesh also accepted this idea of an easy-maintenance 'river ambulance'.

2.3 OVERALL PROGRAMME/PROJECT MANAGEMENT STYLE

2.3.1 Project Designing and Programme/Project Budgeting

It is appreciable to observe that AB is aimed at programme/project designing at par with their global and national level priorities. A part of these efforts is their compliance with the requirement to designing of five-year country strategy framing and subsequent project designing and implementation. In this regard, further compliance with existing country priorities could be ensured if there was the practice of designing annual country programme strategy along with allocation of financial resources.

2.3.2 Sponsorship

Child sponsorship has long been the backbone of the AAB's funding sources. It is a wonderful mechanism originally designed to provide direct relief to individual children in special circumstances. Eventually child sponsorships were also utilized to fund community development projects -- both tangible ones like digging wells, roads, etc and intangible projects like group organisation, empowerment of women, building rights awareness, etc. We also believe that AAB should be transparent to its sponsors it and should stick to the promises made to them. There is a danger as to how the sponsorship system is currently working in AAB. At the community end, it leads to a lack of transparency in terms of the amount of money, and the way in which it is raised. At the donor end, there are still expectations from the donors of benefits going to the individual child, which may not always be the case. In addition, it takes up a huge amount of staff time with hidden costs.

2.3.3 Observations on PNGO Management and Dropped PNGOs

It has been learnt that AAB is, on principle, opposed to provision of microcredit and its utilization. As an RBA organization, it has long continued to position itself against micro credit, despite its provision of grants as seed money to suitable REFLECT Groups. Though provision grants should be discouraged on ground of the need for proper rights-based programme approach, another choice that needs to be carefully made by AAB is whether it should go into partnership with those NGOs that practice microcredit to their stakeholders. AAB has the practice of DA/PNGO Appraisal prior to approval of a proposal for partnership. The existing comprehensiveness and precision level of partnership appraisal being given,

there have been many cases where the PNGOs have dropped out reportedly because of financial irregularities and deficiency in performance.

2.3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The CSP-II Review showed that measurement of achievements against CSP objectives was not fully possible. Therefore, AAB in its CSP-III document mentioned that it plans to develop and introduce a suitable M&E system to register changes in the lives of the poor and marginalised people. The proposed M&E system was to be applied at AAB and partner's level. The system would include development of effective and relevant indicators (both quantitative and qualitative) for all strategic (thematic) objectives and also devise a suitable monitoring framework to measure the CSP-III impacts. Besides, in principle, the M&E system head should not have any other responsibility beside M&E as his/her main role is to audit the organisation internally and impersonally in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest. An absence of clearly defined performance management could only breed uncertainty and tension among the staffs. This may be one of the reasons behind a very high staff turnover in AAB and its partners, to some extent.

2.4 ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCES DURING THE CSP-III PERIOD

GENERAL FINDING

- (a) SLAs (Service Level Agreements) among the Support/Operational Departments and the Programme Departments not yet in place. Proper SLAs, when and if introduced, would enable the management to set prior timeframes and quality level for provision of various services by the Support/Operational Departments. Occasional *ad-hocism* in submission of Requisitions to the Support Department has been reported.
- (b) The divisional title "Support Division" appears not to clearly reflect this division's actual responsibilities, which are- in fact- "Compliance" and/or "Operations".
- (c) AAB's SMT (Senior Management Team) sits in a meeting once a month, EMT (Extended Management Team) quarterly, and the Internal Audit Team quarterly
- (d) All-staff Meetings are, for now, being held relatively less frequently- but there signs of improvement in the frequency of such meetings.

2.4.1 Finance and Administration

There have been delays in approval of NGOAB Clearance for receipt of foreign funds against a number of projects/initiatives- causing sufferings to both project beneficiaries and the staff working with the partner NGOs. Requisitioning of procurement of goods and services had sometimes been slow, giving rise to tensions among the Support Division and the requisitioning department.

2.4.2 Information Technology and Human Resources

Recruitment processes being followed are apparently sound, but requiring a relatively higher level of speed (and precision) in short-listing of job applicants. Recruitment of interns,

generally aimed at contributing to Gender Balance in Staffing- among others- is a citable example in this regard. CD's span of supervision is longer than the usually expected. While staff turnover has been relatively more frequent during the last three years, it has been most serious at the relatively senior level management. Annual Staff Performance Format is difficult to be followed and may not always represent the actual performances by the staff in general. Organizational Structure may need a revision following the projected Sectoral Priorities and other initiatives under the upcoming CSP-IV.

2.4.3 IRM (Identity and Resource Mobilization)

Establishment of the Communications Unit in the IRM Section follows a welcome decision aimed at further streamlining AAB's fund-raising initiatives and others. Relatively much of IRM's efforts go for communication support (otherwise essential) rather than for "Branding" of AAB. IRM Section is apparently under-staffed, and vacancies need to be filled in at especially the Partnership Development Unit and the Communications Unit. Management of workload in this Section needs improvement, especially by way of communicating with other departments/sections about their (IRM's) actual responsibilities. The AAB Website is managed by a team of a number of staff. The Website is being updated relatively less frequently.

3. EXTERNAL FACTORS IN CONTEXT OF AAB's UPCOMING CSP-IV

As mentioned previously, the designing of AAB's upcoming CSP-IV should rest on an analysis of (a) Country Context and Poverty Scenario, (b) Potential Role of Other Development Partners, (c) Positioning AAB during CSP-IV Period, and (d) AAB's Potential Partnership Pattern. As for designing the CSP-IV, organizational positioning of AAB and assessing its (AAB's) relevant Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats are of utmost importance.

A contextual analysis now shows that rights-awareness coupled with a few demonstrated examples of direct access to socio-economic improvements in selected communities may work well at par with AAB's mandate- but the challenge would be the ability to differentiate between rights-awareness and promotion of service delivery. Provision of service delivery until it is complete or near-complete, rights-awareness is prone to being counter-productive, because the encouragement for struggle toward sustainable access to rights most often gets offset by immediate access to services. Besides, interventions in areas that would enabled AAB to enactments to facilitate access of marginalized populations to their rights would also be worthwhile.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) GOAL-WISE RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal 1:

- Focus on Access to Natural Resources has to be intensive and precise
- Livelihood Promotion Theme, if considered in future by AAB, needs to be improved by way of an overall analysis of "WHO GETS HOW MUCH AND WHY" and do designing re-designing of activities, as necessary, in all its projects

- Overlapping between various projects and project objectives needs to be avoided
- Choice of supporting and managing 'Self-help Groups' against the typical 'micro-credit operations' in the backdrop of AAB's RBA needs to be reviewed and acted accordingly.
- Real access of the poor to their own/*khas* lands needs to be practically accomplished immediately
- Countrywide syndicate of like-minded poor and marginalized wage-based workers and small/micro level entrepreneurs are necessary to ensure (a) fair price for products of the target producers, and (b) fair wages to the wage-based workers
- Initiatives for sustainable backward-and-forward linkages for the marginalized groups in the business sector needs to be undertaken shortly.

Goal 2:

- More initiatives should be taken to go for policy advocacy and campaigns against violence against women and girls, eve-teasing, early marriage, women's property rights etc.
- The themes under this goal need to be enriched with new ideas and integrated initiatives with other sectors.
- SVAW theme should incorporate women and child trafficking, HIV issues, and sex worker's issues as women's violence and vulnerability.
- Women should be treated as the 'agent of change', instead of 'beneficiaries' by the other programme sectors.
- New DAs should be included from regions that appear relatively more to need services of the WRGE Sector.

Goal 3:

- Support to NFOWD on its current course of action should be continued and enhanced
- Multi-variate implementation of the Bangla Sign Language, recently approved by the Prime Minister, should be facilitated
- Non-medical and policy-related support to assist the PWDs should be enhanced
- Pre-schooling model for the children with disabilities should be pretested
- Intervene into projects for intellectually disabled/retarded persons
- As per the given agenda, "the root causes of exclusion" should be addressed
- Redefine and reclassify the socially excluded as per (i) the level of types and degrees of deprivation, and (ii) other variables.

Goal 4:

- Result Based Monitoring (RBM) should be introduced for effective monitoring of the advocacy activities and identify the successes in the Education Sector.
- Community consensus building should include the awareness and consensus of the beneficiaries (parents/students);
- For the Education Sector, while it is important for the community to be informed on the goals and objectives of NPAs, it is equally important for them to comprehend the outcomes of such understanding (of the NPA);
- For the Education Sector, community participation in managing and eventual take-over of the centers should be the part of the plan and strategy;
- As an objective of having a national policy on ECCE, AAB's rigorous documentation, dissemination, and policy advocacy for the Child Centers should be a simultaneous and continuous process

- Monitoring the Birth Registration (as a right) should continue with its present structure
- Though it is important that children should be aware of the risks of HIV/AIDS; it is imperative that it should be a part of a wider health education for children. Along with other stakeholders, AAB can use this experience in introducing a comprehensive health education for the primary schools
- Cost-benefit analyses must be carried out in each economic project under this Goal in a truly precise way for projects being adopted/handled
- Actions to address “tax injustice” should be taken on.

(b) GENERAL PROGRAMME-RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

- A review of partnership with majority of less experienced NGOs must be made immediately
- Clarification and compliance with overall country needs and AAB’s efficiencies/resources need to be done in overall programme designing
- Allocation of financial and other resources to various sectors/sections/units must follow actual and relative needs
- Sponsorship management must be reviewed and re-strategized in order to (a) ensure full compliance with the mandated utilization pattern, and (b) streamlining sponsorship unit’s tasks for their better proven efficiency in line with the mandated funds utilization pattern
- More rigorous and precise selection and management of PNGOs must be ensured
- The M&E System and System at AAB, however they are, must be overhauled with recruitment of enough related staff at proper levels and locations, along with modifying the principles of M&E.

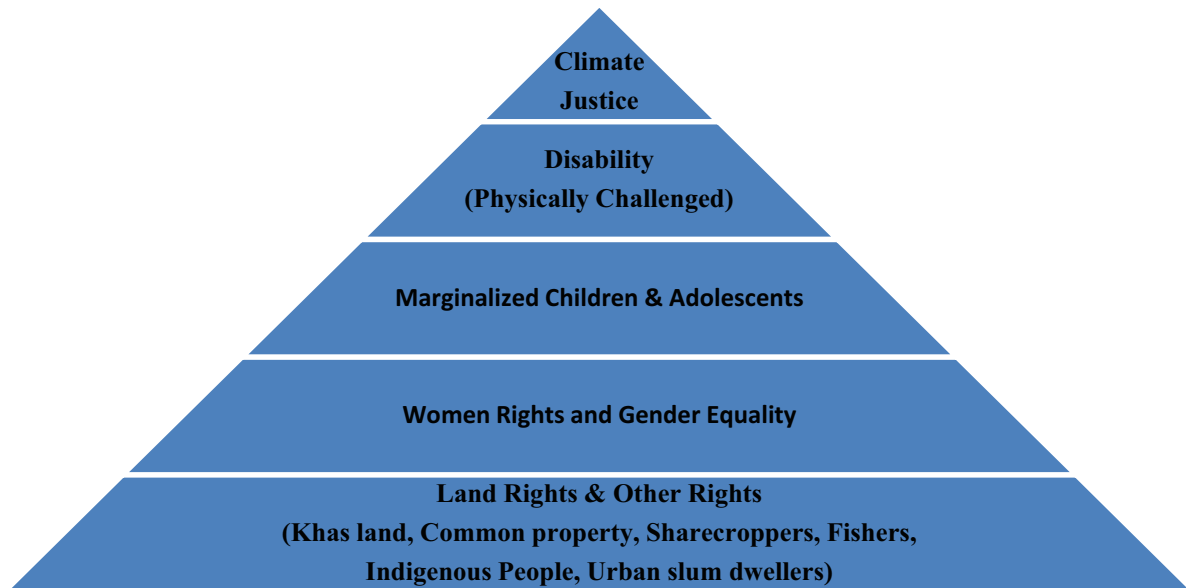
4.2 ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strategic re-positioning of AAB in the changed global scenario needs to be undertaken with special support of IRM
- Support Department should be re-named as Operations Department or Compliance Department
- SLAs (Service Level Agreements) need to be signed among the Support Department and the Programme Department
- Organization Structure needs revision during the CSP-IV Exercises
- CD’s span of supervision should be reviewed and improvements made during the CSP-IV Exercises
- Capacity-building of PNGOs should be re-activated
- Reasons for frequent staff turnover in AAB and its PNGOs need to be reviewed and addressed
- Staff recruitment, in IRM and other Departments/Sections need to be conducted timely
- The IRM needs an exercise for review of their (i) Job Descriptions, and (ii) Workloads.

4.3 FUTURE PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS

AAB is in the process of developing its CSP-IV for 2010 – 2015, prioritizing of issues should be tabled for discussion. Based on AAB's Right-Based Approach, its competitive advantage, and its Vision, Mission, and Goals- AAB, in the future, should concentrate on the following broad areas: This can be shown in a pyramid as:

Broad Operational Issues for Consideration in CSP-IV



At the base of the pyramid is rights related to land and other issues. Since AAB is already working on ‘Khas Lands’, ‘Common Property’, and ‘Land of Indigenous People’, the team felt that these should remain as the ongoing issues. However, the team further thinks that the rights of Sharecroppers, Fishers, and Urban slum dwellers also should be in AAB’s agenda while working on CSP-IV. These are the core issues related to rights; and AAB is expected to position itself as an upholder and advocate of these marginalized groups.

At the following steps of the pyramid are the ‘Women Rights and Gender Equality’, ‘Marginalized Children and Adolescents’, and ‘Disability (Physically Challenged)’, where AAB already has mileages and partner NGOs to facilitate the causes.

At the top (not as an apex or the main agenda) is the emerging issue of ‘Climate Justice’, especially when climate change is producing disproportionate burdens for countries like Bangladesh that are least equipped to adapt or mitigate. The Climate Justice issue is expected to deal with an equal sharing of common goods and bads- and those communities which got negatively impacted have the right to a fair compensation. This may also include issues like environmental refugees and human right to environment.

Though the issues related to Land Rights are crucial to poverty, the issue of Climate Justice should not be ignored altogether, as both these issues are critically interrelated to each other.