EEP/Shiree (Economic Empowerment of the Poorest project) is a targeted livelihood programme that aims to lift one million people out of extreme poverty. It is a partnership between the Government of Bangladesh, UKaid’s Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Shiree (the Bangla word for ‘steps’ - and an acronym for “Stimulating Household Improvements Resulting in Economic Empowerment”) reflects the project’s aim: to help households take enduring steps out of extreme poverty.

EEP/Shiree started in 2008 and ends in September 2016. The total budget is £83.53m. EEP/Shiree uses an asset transfer model. It fund international and local NGOs with projects that help households to escape extreme poverty.

EEP/Shiree is working with over one million extreme poor people living in 300,000 households. Based on EEP/Shiree criteria, 95% of beneficiaries have graduated from extreme poverty after working with EEP/Shiree which equates to 1.14 million people escaping from extreme poverty.

The EEP/Shiree model provides its beneficiary households (BHH) with income generating assets such as livestock, working capital or equipment to start or grow businesses. It also provides nutrition supplements and counselling, business and other forms of training, small-scale water and sanitation infrastructure and hygiene education.

This direct support is complemented by research and advocacy to change the way the needs of the extreme poor are viewed and addressed by government, donors, NGOs and the public.

Research findings from EEP/Shiree’s regular panel surveys show a marked improvement in the lives of the EEP/Shiree Extreme Poor beneficiaries.

**Key Findings of Changes in EEP Households between 2010 and 2015**

- Average income (per person per day) rose from 34 to 86 Taka in urban areas and from 21 to 67 Taka in rural areas;
- Numbers and worth of assets increased substantially as did the number of household belongings;
- Households with Cash savings increased from 35% to 96%;
- Average Total expenditure increased from 20 to 41 Taka with food expenditure accounting for about 70% all spending;
- Food diversity increased overall and consumption of eggs rose from 30% to 90% and poultry from 4% to 48%;
- Food coping strategies improved and eating less than 3 meals a day fell from 73% to 0%;
- Adult BMI increased but anaemia worsened in females while improving in males. Prevalence of stunting and anaemia both fell substantially in children but underweight and wasting worsened;
- Gender empowerment improved and women had greater influence on decision making in the household;
- Access to cultivable land rose from 20% to over 69%;
- School attendance increased to over 90% in school-aged children;
- Open defecation fell from 33% to 5%.
Methodology

The results presented here are from six of EEP/Shiree’s partner NGOs (PNGO). They are a representative sample of extreme poor households which have been surveyed ten times since 2010. Two PNGOs (CARE and PAB) work in the far north-west, NETZ in the north-west, DSK in two urban slums in Dhaka and SCF and UTTARAN in the south-west. A pre-tested, structured questionnaire was completed by the head of the household or, if he was absent, by his/her spouse. Adult nutritional status was measured based on Body Mass Index (weight/height²) and haemoglobin concentration and, in children, by height-for-age (stunting), weight-for-age (underweight), weight-for-height (wasting) and haemoglobin concentration.

Background

In March 2010, 64 households from each of the six PNGOs were randomly selected for regular follow-up. These households had completed their income generating activities (IGA) with EEP/Shiree. Surveys from 2013 (Survey 7) onwards reflect post-EEP/Shiree follow-ups. So far ten surveys (numbered 1 to 10) have been conducted (March, July, October 2010, March, July and November 2011, and, thereafter, in March each year from 2012 to 2015). Nutritional status was measured annually in March (i.e. Surveys 1, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10). 225 households have participated in all 10 surveys. Attrition is primarily due to temporary absence on the day of the survey and only about 7% of households had permanently moved away or the family members had died. There was no significant variation between households participating in all surveys, and households that did not participate in one or more surveys, suggesting the findings are representative of the initial sample.

Findings

1. Demographic profile
43.0% of the sample were female headed households (FHH) and mean family size increased from 3.32 in March 2010 to 3.60 in March 2015. FHH were smaller, on average, by 1.4 family members. FHH were primarily widowed or divorced while nearly all male heads (MHH) were married.

2. Chronic illness and morbidity
Chronic illness fell from 14% in March 2010 to under 1% in March 2015. Morbidity of family members improved with prevalence of diarrhoea, fever, cough, skin and eye infection and passing worms all falling between 2010 and 2015.

3. Schooling
The education level of household heads was low: less than 30% of MHH had attended school compared with only 17% of FHH. However there was improvement in their school-aged children. Attendance rose by 15% in MHH and 22% in FHH between 2010 and 2015. More children from MHH than FHH attended school but by March 2015 the difference had reduced to only 6% (95% vs 89% attendance, respectively).

4. Employment
Between 2010 and 2015, MHH saw increases in petty trade, service and shop keeping. Begging fell to zero. In FHH, begging reduced from 11% to 3% between 2010 and 2015 and housework increased substantially.

5. Land, housing, sanitation and electricity
Households with access to cultivable land increased from about 20% in March 2010 to 69% by March 2015. House size increased from 14 sqm, on average, in March 2010 to nearly 20 sqm, on average, by March 2015. MHH houses were on average 3 sqm larger than FHH. Use of grass for wall construction fell from 28% in 2010 to 12% in 2015. Use of tin sheet increased from 24% to 45%. A similar pattern was found for roof construction. House ownership rose from 77% to 85%.

Although there was some improvement in electrical supply in rural areas, 73% of households did not have a mains supply in 2015. There was increased usage of piped water over the surveys and a fall in use of pond water. By 2015 all urban households obtained their water from piped supply or a tube well while over 80% of rural households obtained their water from a tube well. Open defecation in rural areas fell from 33% in 2010 to 5% in 2015. 80% of households attained the sanitation Millennium Development Goal in March 2015 and 96% of households had soap/ash close to the water supply or latrine.

6. Cash savings
The percentage of households with cash savings increased from 35% in 2010 to about 80% by March 2011 and then further increased to 96% by March 2015. However there was a substantial decline in average savings in urban areas between 2014 and 2015.
7. Assets
Ownership of working equipment increased from 60% to 91%. There were marked increases in ownership of animals, work-related equipment and household belongings between 2010 and 2015. Animal ownership increased primarily due to greater ownership of cattle, calves, goats and poultry. Between 2010 and 2015, the number of household belongings increased from just over 3 (maximum 13) to over 6 by 2015. The value of assets (including shop) also rose sharply from 2,370 Taka in 2010 to nearly 38,000 Taka in 2015. However, by March 2015 MHH assets were worth about 16,000 Taka more than FHH.

8. Cash and in-kind income
Urban household mean cash income increased from about 30 Taka per person per day (pppd) in March 2010 to 79 Taka pppd by 2015. The equivalent rural values were 17 and 54 Taka pppd. MHH mean was slightly higher than FHH in both urban and rural areas but the differences were not significant. Mean in-kind income tended to increase over the ten surveys and was consistently higher in FHH by about 5 Taka pppd. Overall in-kind income contributed about 20% to total income. Total income increased from 34 to 86 Taka pppd in urban areas and from 21 to 67 Taka pppd in rural areas.

9. Expenditure
Total expenditure was broken down into spending on food, household goods and work-related costs. Expenditure on food was 16 to 18 Taka pppd between 2010 and 2013 before rising to 25 Taka pppd in 2014 and 2015. Spending on food was highest in March 2010 (80%) and then fell to about 70% thereafter. Spending on household items rose modestly from 5 Taka pppd in March 2010 to 12 Taka pppd by March 2015. Work-related expenditure remained low throughout. Total expenditure increased significantly from a low of 20 Taka pppd in Survey 2 to a high of 41 Taka pppd in March 2015. MHH and FHH had very similar expenditures but urban areas had the greatest mean expenditure in all surveys. And the gap between urban and rural households increased from about 20 Taka pppd in March 2010 to 35 Taka pppd by March 2015.

10. Difference between household income and expenditure
The difference between household income (cash and in-kind) and expenditure per month was calculated for each household. Households tended to move from debt in March 2010 to credit from Survey 2 onwards (Figure 1). MHH had greater net income than FHH from Survey 5 onwards with the gap increasing to over 2000 Taka per month in 2014 and 2015.

11. Household food intake
Households were asked how often family members had eaten 13 food items in the 7 days prior to the survey. Consumption of eggs, poultry and fish increased by 60%, 44% and 33%, respectively, between 2010 and 2015 (Figure 2). The mean number of different foods consumed in the last 7 days increased significantly from under 6 in March 2010 to over 9 by March 2015.

12. Household food coping strategies
Households were asked about 10 food coping strategies used as a result of financial hardship. There were significant improvements in all 10 strategies. For example households having to buy food on credit fell from 30% to 0% between 2010 and 2015, while eating smaller portions of food fell from 82% to under 1%. In March 2010 households, on average, were using between 3 and 4 strategies, but by March 2015 no households had to use them.

13. Social and gender empowerment
There were improvements in confidence about the future, awareness of government programmes designed for the poor and people outside the family who could be relied upon to help. Females were less frightened about moving alone outside their village (Figure 3).
There were significant changes in all areas of household decision making in March 2015 with males less likely and females more likely to be the main decision maker.

However, wasting (acute undernutrition) worsened from 21% to 45% as did underweight (acute and chronic undernutrition) from 52% to 66%.

14. Adult and child nutritional status
Mean adult BMI increased significantly by about 0.8 kgm-2 between 2010 and 2015 (Figure 4). In male adults there was a reduction in anaemia by 9% between 2010 and 2015 but a worsening in adult females by 12% and in 2015, 64% of adult females were anaemic. Adult females who were not household heads had better nutritional status than FHH, with higher average BMI (average +0.56 kgm-2) and 7% lower prevalence of anaemia. Part of these differences could be explained by the negative association of adult BMI and haemoglobin concentration with age, as FHH were 17 years older, on average, than female non-heads. In children the prevalence of stunting (chronic undernutrition) fell from about 45% in March 2010 to 24% by March 2015 and the prevalence of anaemia fell from 59% to 18% over the same period. However, wasting (acute undernutrition) worsened from 21% to 45% as did underweight (acute and chronic undernutrition) from 52% to 66%.

Fieldwork
The fieldwork for the surveys was carried out by trained staff supervised by Mr. Jufry Abdul Jabber and aided by Ms. Lucky Mahbuba Islam and Mr. Arafat Khaled Ahmed. The training, quality control, data analyses and report writing was undertaken by Professor Nick Mascie-Taylor and Dr. Rie Goto (both University of Cambridge, UK).

The full report ‘Change Monitoring System (CMS3)-Monitoring the changes in socio-economic & nutritional status of extreme poor households between March 2010 and March 2015: results from the ten panel surveys’ by Professor Mascie-Taylor and Dr. Rie Goto (September 2015) is available at:

EEP/Shiree
The Economic Empowerment of the Poorest programme (EEP/Shiree) is a partnership between the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), UKaid’s Department for International Development (DFID), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). EEP/Shiree is under the leadership of the Rural Development and Cooperative Division (RDCD) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD). The aim, by 2015, is to help 1 million people take enduring steps out of extreme poverty.