The 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). The project is often known as EEP/Shiree. ‘Shiree’ is the Bangla word for ‘steps’ - and used as an acronym for “Stimulating Household Improvements Resulting in Economic Empowerment” - which 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. It funds international and local NGOs to implement projects that help households escape extreme poverty using an asset transfer model.

EEP/Shiree is working with over one million extreme poor people living in some 300,000 households. Based on EEP/Shiree criteria, 97% of beneficiaries have graduated from extreme poverty after working with EEP/Shiree. This equates to 1.16 million people escaping from extreme poverty thanks to EEP/Shiree.

The EEP/Shiree model provides its beneficiary households (BHH) with income generating assets such as livestock, working capital or equipment to start or grow a business. 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 and continued improvement in the lives of the EEP/Shiree Extreme Poor beneficiaries.

**Key Changes in EEP Households between 2010 and 2016**

- Substantial increase in average income (per person per day) from 34 to 96 Taka in urban areas and from 21 to 80 Taka in rural areas;
- Sharp rise in numbers and worth of assets increased substantially as did the number of household belongings;
- Massive increase in households with cash savings from 35% to 98%;
- Doubling of Average Total Expenditure from 20 to 45 Taka; food expenditure accounted for about 70% of all spending;
- Increasing food diversity: eggs and poultry consumption rises from 30% to 90% and 4% to 66%, respectively;
- No households needed to use food coping strategies in 2016;
- Adult BMI increased but anaemia worsened. Prevalence of stunting and anaemia in children improved substantially but underweight and wasting worsened;
- Improved gender empowerment: women have greater influence on decision making in the household;
- Access to cultivable land rose from 20% to over 74%;
- Increasing school attendance to over 90% in school-aged children;
- Open defecation reduced from 32% to under 5%.

**Final Panel Survey indicates extreme poor socio-economic status improvements continue 3 years after IGA interventions end**

Extreme poor households continue to be better off with EEP/Shiree support. They are financially more secure, have increased assets, better health, living conditions, and food diversity and overall enhanced livelihoods improvements.

Introduction

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Methodology

The results presented here are from six of EEP/Shiree’s PNGOs. They are a representative sample of extreme poor households which have been surveyed 11 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 questionnaire was completed by the head of the households or, if s/he was absent, by his or her spouse. Adult nutritional status was measured based on Body Mass Index (weight/height$^2$) 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 (IGAs) with EEP/Shiree. Surveys from 2013 (Survey 7) onwards reflect post-EEP/Shiree follow-ups. So far eleven surveys (numbered 1 to 11) have been conducted (March, July, October 2010, March, July and November 2011, and, thereafter, in March each year from 2012 to 2016). Nutritional status was measured annually in March (i.e. Surveys 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11). 217 households have participated in all 11 surveys. Attrition is primarily due to permanent absence (11%) or death of family members (3%). 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
41% of the sample was female headed and mean family size increased from 3.2 in March 2010 to 3.5 in March 2016. Female headed households (FHH) were smaller by, on average, 1.4 family members. FHH were primarily widowed or divorced while nearly all male heads (MHH) were married.

2. Chronic illness and morbidity
Continued reduction in illness and morbidity: chronic illness fell from over 14% in March 2010 to 1% in March 2016. Morbidity of family members also improved with prevalences of diarrhea, fever, cough, skin and eye infections and passing worms all falling between 2010 and 2016.

3. Schooling
The education level of household heads remained low, but more children attended school from both MHH and FHH. In 2010, nearly 30% of MHH had attended school compared with only 15% of FHH. However there was improvement in their school-aged children with attendance rising by 15% in MHH and 18% in FHH between 2010 and 2016. More children from MHH than FHH attended school but by March 2016 the difference had reduced to only 6% (96% vs 90% attendance, respectively).

4. Employment
Increased self-employment as farmers and shopkeepers, less unemployment and less begging. Between 2010 and 2016 MHH unemployment fell, as did employment as an agricultural or day labourer. There were increases in farming as well as shop keeping, and begging fell to nearly zero. In FHH unemployment fell, as did employment as an agricultural day labourer or other labourer. The largest increase was in housework, up from 3.4% in 2010 to 34.1% in 2016.

5. Land, housing, sanitation and electricity
Increased access to land, improved sanitation and larger and better house construction. Households with access to cultivable land increased from about 20% in March 2010 to 74% by March 2016. House size increased from 14 sqm, on average, in March 2010 to over 20 sqm, on average, by March 2016. MHH houses were on average 4 sqm larger than FHH. Use of grass for wall construction fell from 28% in 2010 to 8% in 2016 while use of tin sheet increased from 24% to 51%. 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, 67% of households did not have a supply in 2016. There was increased usage of piped water over the surveys and a fall in use of pond water. By 2016 all urban households obtained their water from piped supply or a tubewell while over 80% of rural households obtained their water from a tubewell. Open defecation in rural areas fell from 32% in 2010 to under 5% in 2016. 80% of households attained the sanitation Millennium Development Goal in March 2016 and 96% of households had soap/ash close to the water supply or latrine.

6. Cash savings
Targeted savings schemes significantly increased the value of household savings. The percentage of households with cash savings increased from 36% in 2010 to about 80% by March 2011 and increased further to 98% by March 2016. Cash savings increased from less than 150 Taka per household in 2010 to over 13,000 Taka per household in 2016, with a rise of about 8,000 Taka between 2015 and 2016 (Figure 1) following the introduction of EEP facilitated savings schemes in 2014.
7. Assets
Sustained rise in productive and non-productive asset values. There was a sharp rise in the value of assets (including shops) from 2,370 Taka in 2010 to over 58,000 Taka in 2016. However, by March 2016 the value of MHH assets were worth about 40,000 Taka more than FHH. There were marked increases in ownership of work-related equipment and household belongings between 2010 and 2016. Animal ownership increased primarily due to greater ownership of cattle, calves, goats and poultry. Ownership of working equipment increased from 60% to 95% between 2010 and 2016. The average number of household belongings increased from just over 3 (maximum 13) to nearly 7 by 2016.

8. Cash and in-kind income
Household income increased well above the inflation rate. Urban household mean cash income increased from about 30 Taka per person per day (pppd) in March 2010 to 85 Taka pppd by 2016. The equivalent rural values were 17 and 66 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 11 surveys and was consistently higher in FHH by about 6 Taka pppd. Overall in-kind income contributed about 20% to total income. Total income increased from 34 to 96 Taka pppd in urban areas and from 21 to 80 Taka pppd in rural areas.

9. Expenditure
Household expenditure doubled between 2010 and 2016. Total expenditure was broken down into spending on food, household goods and work-related costs. Expenditure on food was 15 to 18 Taka pppd between 2010 and 2013 before rising to about 26 Taka pppd from 2014 onwards. Spending on household items rose modestly from 5 Taka pppd in March 2010 to 17 Taka pppd by March 2016. Work-related expenditure remained low throughout. Total expenditure increased significantly from 20 Taka pppd in survey 2 to a high of 44 Taka pppd in March 2016. MHH and FHH had very similar expenditures but the gap between urban and rural households increased from about 20 Taka pppd in March 2010 to 45 Taka pppd by March 2016.

10. Difference between household income and expenditure
Households rapidly moved into credit but the gap between MHH and FHH increased. Households tended to move from debt in March 2010 to credit from survey 2 onwards (Figure 2). MHH had greater net income than FHH from survey 5 onwards with the gap increasing to over 2,000 Taka per month from 2014 to 2016.

11. Household food intake
Increased consumption of animal derived proteins. Consumption of eggs, poultry and fish increased by 60%, 62% and 33%, respectively, between 2010 and 2016 (Figure 3). The mean number of different foods consumed in the 7 days prior the surveys increased significantly from under 6 in March 2010 to nearly 10 (maximum 13) by March 2016.
12. Household food coping strategies
No household had to use food coping strategies in 2016. Households were asked about 10 food coping strategies they had used as a result of financial hardship. In March 2010 households, on average, were using between 3 and 4 strategies. But by March 2016 no households had to use any of them. For example households having to buy food on credit fell from 30% to 0% between 2010 and 2016, while those eating smaller portions of food fell from 82% to 0%.

13. Social and gender empowerment
Greater awareness of government safety nets, and increased female involvement in decision making. There were improvements in beneficiary 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 of moving alone outside their village. There were significant changes in all areas of household decision making in March 2016 with males less likely and females more likely to be the main decision maker (Figure 4).

14. Adult and child nutritional status
Worsening of anaemia in adults, but improvement in anaemia in children. In male adults the prevalence of anaemia increased by 10% between 2010 and 2016, and in female adults by 20%: in 2016 over 70% of female heads of households were anaemic. Average adult BMI increased significantly by about 0.6 kg/m² between 2010 and 2016. Adult females who were not heads had better nutritional status than FHH, with higher average BMI (average +0.9 kg/m²) and 12% 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 14 years older, on average, than female non-heads. In children the prevalence of anaemia fell from 64% in March 2010 to 35% by March 2016, and the prevalence of stunting (chronic undernutrition) fell from about 48% to 28% over the same period. However wasting (acute undernutrition) worsened from 24% to 38% as did underweight (acute and chronic undernutrition) from 52% to 59% (Figure 5).

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. Saiadur Rahman. 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 2016; results from the eleven panel surveys’ by Professor Mascie-Taylor and Dr. Goto (August 2016) is available at http://www.shiree.org/ extreme-poverty-monitor/cms-3-socio-economic-anthropometric-surveys/