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NGO IDEAs Toolbox – A new Paradigm in Impact Monitoring
Experience with the Family Approach in Dipshikha, Bangladesh

Mahbubul Islam, Dipshikha, January 2012

Introduction

Dipshikha was initiated in 1978 by a group of social workers, teachers and youths in the village of Rudrapur, Dinajpur district, Bangladesh. Gradually, Dipshikha has expanded its activities to two northern districts of Bangladesh and is presently working with about 20,000 families. Since its inception, Dipshikha has been working with the disadvantaged rural poor to bring positive change to their lives through an Integrated Development Approach (IDA). From the experiences and deeper reflection in the field of rural development, Dipshikha has developed a new concept *"Integrated Family Development Approach (FDA)"* to make the IDA more intensive and scientific to improve the living conditions of the rural people. Here a family is considered to be the center of all development efforts. All the members of the family are brought as stakeholders of the FDA approach. Dipshikha is working through FDA since 2002.

As a learning organization, Dipshikha always tries to incorporate new ideas into its process of development. One of the main important aspects is to ensure people's participation in the development process. Dipshikha found that the NGO-IDEAs toolbox[1] offers the highest participation in all steps of the development process. So, Dipshikha joined in the process of development of the toolbox for impact monitoring which contributes to involve the families from the implementation process to impact monitoring. As agriculture is one of the main important components, Dipshikha chose to develop the toolbox in the agriculture sector.

Process of Integration of the Toolbox

A Family Development Workshop (FDW) is one of the important elements of the family development approach. It involves the people into the decision making process of implementation of the project. Dipshikha incorporates Participatory Wellbeing Ranking (PWbR) and Situation Analysis and Goal Establishment (SAGE, both described in the Impact Toolbox) into the process of FDW in April 2010 in a new project called BONIFaD (Bhobhanipur, Osmanpur, Nimgachi Integrated Family Development). Dipshikha developed a training module in Bangla language after getting a Training of Trainers from NGO-IDEAS. Dipshikha trained 40 Field Workers to facilitate the workshop and developed different pictorial materials to make the workshop more understandable for the families and to ensure the highest possible participation of the families.

Dipshikha selected 50 families from 3 villages according to the selection criteria of Dipshikha to test the toolbox. It was not possible for Dipshikha to introduce the toolbox at community level as Dipshikha is working through individual families. But we found that PWbR is very much useful for fine tuning of the selection of target families.

The whole process of FDW is described below to understand the incorporation of PWbR and SAGE into the implementation process.

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[1] www.ngo-ideas.net/impact_toolbox

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Family Development Workshop

Family Development Workshop is the first step to involve the families into the development process. Dipshikha arranged a two days long workshop for each and every family of the target beneficiaries in order to involve them into the development process. Generally 10 to 12 couples (mainly husband and wife) attend in one workshop. In case of widows and divorced families, their grown up son, daughter or any other member of the family who can contribute in decision making attend the workshop. The main objectives of the workshop are:

    a.   Identification of the poverty level of the participant families
    b.   Set the dream and goal of the families
    c.   Preparation of a 5-years development plan of the families

There are several steps to complete the workshop in a participatory way:

The introduction of participants is done through a game in the beginning of the workshop. It was very tough for the participants to understand the toolbox, impact monitoring and their involvement in development activities in the beginning of the workshop, but through the discussion and the process followed during the workshop, this makes it easy for them later on. The workshops were conducted in May 2010.

Step I: Identification of social elements (indicators)

The participants were asked how they can differentiate the poor and rich in the society in order to identify the elements of society. Different indicators like housing pattern, income, land ownership, type of agricultural equipments, educational qualification, number of cows owned by the family, food security etc. are identified by the participants.

Photo: Social Elements (Indicators)

Step II: Conduct PWbR

The participants were asked to identify the categories of families on the basis of rich and poor. Generally the categories coming out from the participants were:

(i) Poorest of the Poor (PP),

(ii) Poor (P),
(iii) Marginal Poor (MP),
(iv) Middle Class (M) and
(v) Rich (R).

The participants selected six or seven important and significant indicators among the identified indicators from the social element step. They also prepared the measuring tools for the categories of the families against each selected indicator and gave chronological numeric value 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 for PP, P, MP, M and R respectively. Then the participants were asked to fit them into the categories they belonged against each indicator. Afterwards they calculated their total marks to find out the main categories they belonged to.

Photos: PWbR

In many cases, we found a difference of opinion between husband and wife regarding some indicators while assessing the poverty status. Our facilitators asked them to come to a conclusion by discussion. In many cases other families assist them to make conclusion.

Group Discussion

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Step III: Identification of Causes

Then the participants were divided into groups according to the categories they belonged to. They found out the reasons, the cause-and-effect relationships of their current situation in order to identify the problems which they needed to address to overcome the situation. The main reasons coming out in group discussions were: low income, illiteracy, lack of skills, only one member of the family involved in income-generating activities, lack of awareness etc.

Step IV: Set the Dream of the Family

The families were asked to visualize their desired situation or how they wanted to see their family in future: What was their dream of their family? After 5 minutes meditation, the families were asked to draw their desirable situation on a piece of paper.


Dream of one family

Step V: Set Goal

On the basis of dream and problem analysis, each family set their individual family goal and wrote it down into a format. It was not easy to set the goal for the families. Co-facilitators from Dipshikha assisted each and every family to set their goal. As many families are illiterate, sometimes co-facilitators helped them to write it down on paper. The main topics that came out from the families are increased income, savings, start new income generating activities, distribution of work among the family members, education of children, women participation in income generating activities, abolishing dowry, stopping early marriage etc. We found that in many cases, the discussion was dominated by the husband. But the co-facilitator assisted the wife to bring out her opinion and put the subject in the discussion. The accumulation of all individual family goals is done afterwards by the field workers and a village-wise summary is prepared for the report.
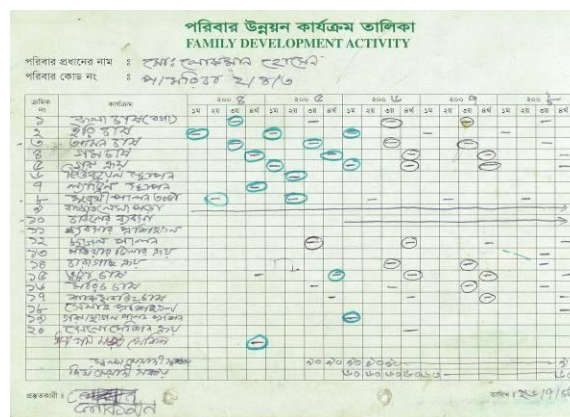
Step VI: Prepare 5 Years Activity Plan

The individual families prepared their five year development action plan and wrote it down in a format in order to achieve the set goal. It is very important to prepare a plan of action to achieve the set goal. The possibilities of achievement of a set goal are minimal without an action plan.

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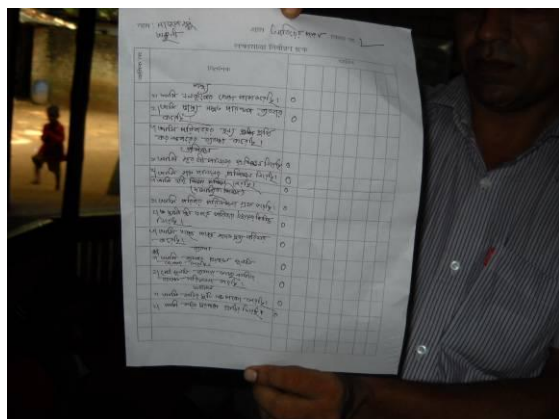
Goal

Action Plan

Step VII: Monitoring

At the end of the workshop the facilitator explained the importance and the process of monitoring of their development activities and goal. The families decided to monitor the goal after every six month in order to observe their achievements.

The whole workshop took two days. Each step took on an average one and a half hour. After that, the role of Dipshikha was to facilitate the families to achieve the set activities which lead them to achieve their goals. Most of the families started to implement the set activities which give a very positive indication of the self-motivation and responsibilities in order to achieve the goal.

SAGE II and III Assessment with PIAR

As the families decided to monitor their goal after every six months, the second and third assessments were done in October 2010 and May 2011 respectively. It was done in cluster discussion and in some cases by discussion in individual families. One Field Worker from Dipshikha attended the discussion as facilitator. It was done through the revisit of dream, goal and activities and put the mark by 'yes' and 'no' question. The discussion was with the families:

1. What influences to have success?
2. What are the hindering factors?
3. What needs to be changed in the action plan?

The participation level of the family members was very high and in some cases, the young boys and girls participated in the discussion. It was observed that the participation level of women gradually increased in the second and third assessment. On average, the discussion sessions took one hour.

The data were verified through cross checking with other family members, visit to families and in cluster discussions. The data was analysed by using SPSS and Excel programmes.

Result and Discussion

The exercise was done with 46 families. It was not easy to accumulate the data from the goal set by the families as the goals are very different from each family. We accumulate the data which are very common like saving money, start new IGA etc. and we made an individual family analysis from the data which are not matching each other. For discussion in this paper, we took six very common

goals which are achieved by the families. Other goals like rearing goats, sending children to school, purchasing or leasing land, women participation in IGA etc. are less or in some cases not achieved by the families.

Participatory Wellbeing Ranking (PWbR)

The exercise was done in three villages with 46 families. According to the analysis it was found that about 58% of the families belong to the category of poorest of the poor, about 39% of the families belong to the categories of poor and the rest of the families are under marginal poor categories.
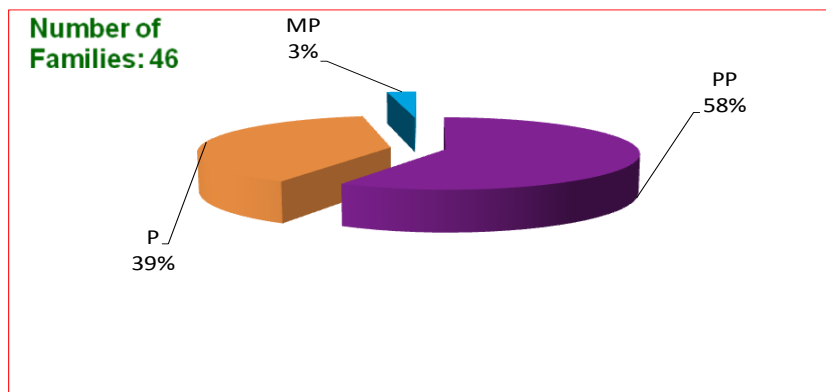

Fig: Categories of the families according to their poverty level

Goal Achievement

It was found that 100% of the families started to save money, while about 65% of the families started new income generating activities within one year. We can see the gradual improvement of achieving the goals from the following table 1.

Table 1: Rate of Goal Achievement over the period of one year from May 2010 to May 2011

Goal	SAGE – I		SAGE – II		SAGE – III	
Savings	0	0%	35	76%	46	100%
Started new IGA	0	0%	11	24%	30	65%
Cow rearing	0	0%	2	4%	18	39%
Vegetables cultivation	0	0%	4	9%	14	30%
Tree plantation	0	0%	12	26%	20	43%
Drink safe water from Tube-well	0	0%	6	13%	22	48%

It was found at SAGE III that about 30% of the families cultivate vegetables in their homestead where it was only 9% at SAGE II.

Goal Achievement and Poverty disaggregation

Poverty disaggregation was done by the data from SAGE III which is shown in Table 2.

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Table 2: Categories of the Families according to the Goal Achievement

Goal	Poorest of Poor (PP)		Poor (P)		Marginal Poor (MP)		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Savings	18	100%	26	100%	2	100%	46	100%
Started new IGA	11	61%	17	65%	2	100%	30	65%
Cow rearing	6	33%	10	38%	2	100%	18	39%
Vegetables cultivation	4	22%	8	31%	2	100%	14	30%
Tree plantation	6	33%	12	46%	2	100%	20	43%
Drink safe water from Tube-well	8	44%	12	46%	2	100%	22	48%

It was found that 100% of the marginal poor category achieved all the goals while less achievement has been done by the poorest of the poor. The reason is that the families in the poorest of the poor category have less resources and most of the families sell their labor for livelihood.

Savings and Poverty Disaggregation

As an example, poverty disaggregation has been done with the amount of savings. It was found (Table 3) that about 55% of the families saved more than 100 taka2. Table 3 shows that more than 50% of the families belonging to the "poorest of the poor" and "poor" categories saved more than the two families from the "marginal poor". This happened because the process created self motivation, confidence, responsibilities, self-initiatives and ownership of development.

Table 3: Poverty level according to the amount of Savings

Savings	Number of Families				
	PP	P	MP	Total	
				Number	%
Up to Tk. 50/-	3	4	0	7	15%
Tk. 51 to Tk. 100/-	4	8	2	14	30%
Tk. 101 to Tk. 150/-	8	7	0	15	33%
Above tk. 150/-	3	7	0	10	22%
Total	18	26	2	46	100%

Learning

1. The process empowers the families.
2. It creates self motivation, confidence, responsibility, self-initiative and ownership of development among the family members.
3. It creates participatory decision making in the family.
4. The NGO-IDEAs toolbox is not only for monitoring the impact of the project activities, but it guides also the process of project preparation and implementation.
5. PWbR can be used for fine tuning of the selection of the target beneficiaries.

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[2] 100 Taka is about 0.9 Euro. It is much more in Purchsing Power Parity.

6. It is a time consuming process but sustainable development needs time.
7. It caused some changes in the management of the project as well:
   - ❖ Changes in the procedure of the Family Development Workshop
   - ❖ Changes in the Daily Field Plan
   - ❖ The Impact level was added to the monitoring
   - ❖ A growing sense of responsibility among the field workers
   - ❖ It became easier to determine relevant areas of work for the field supervisor. That is: in which sectors like agriculture, health, awareness etc. was it most important to work?

Conclusion

The level of participation of the people has become very high in the decision making process of the project. The people create their project, their goal and their activities through their experiences and from their needs. We can say the NGO-IDEAs process makes the project to be "by the people and for the people."

Dipshikha is now implementing PWbR and SAGE in 4000 families under the BONIFaD project. As Dipshikha has incorporated it into the implementation process of FDA, we will continue it in future in our other projects as well.

Purposes of Impact Assessment

Rating is not on the tool itself. It is about the experience with the tool described in this example. It reflects the assessment of the NGO staff or advisers applying it. The four purposes of impact assessment on a range: 1 (very little use) to 5 (very useful)

Purpose	Level	Rating	Reason for rating
Learning from experience	Families, NGO	4 4	We learn their needs, their dreams which changes our mind towards development of our policies and actions.
Steering by NGO	NGO	2	Because people take a stronger role in steering the project, steering becomes easier for the NGO
Empowerment of beneficiaries	Families	5	The whole process makes the beneficiaries knowledgeable, experienced and active for development
Accountability	NGO	4	Accountability to donors has always been there. The NGO-IDEAs tools create an increased responsibility of the NGO towards the people.

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References:
The four purposes of impact assessment are drawn from VENRO, the German NGO Umbrella, position paper "Quality before Proof", http://www.venro.org/628.html