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SUMMARY REPORT OF THE EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF FOOD FOR ASSETS ON LIVELIHOOD RESILIENCE IN BANGLADESH (2008–2011)



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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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Should you have any questions regarding availability of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation assessed the outcomes and impacts of WFP's food-for-assets programming in Bangladesh and was part of a series of evaluations on the impact of WFP's cash/food-for-assets activities on livelihoods resilience. The evaluation emphasized learning by identifying lessons and changes for enhancing the impacts on resilience and aligning food-for-assets programming with WFP's recently adopted Food for Assets Guidance Manual (2011) and its disaster risk reduction policy.

The evaluation covered the food/cash-for-assets component of WFP's Bangladesh country programme 104100 (2007–2011). Participants received a combination of food and cash remuneration for two years, based on 90 to 95 days of labour over six months a year and training for five to six days a month in the remaining six months. Training topics included disaster risk reduction and preparedness planning, nutrition and hygiene, women's empowerment, income-generating activities and life skills.

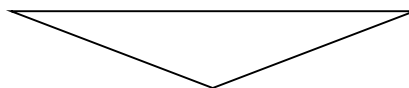
Although the incidence of poverty has declined and food security has improved in recent years, in 2012 Bangladesh ranked 68th of 79 countries in the 2012 global hunger index and 146th of 187 in the 2011 human development index. The country is severely disaster-prone and at high risk of negative impacts of climate change.

The evaluation found that WFP Bangladesh achieved significant positive impacts through its activities involving food and cash for assets. Assets constructed were well targeted for disaster risk reduction and highly relevant to the national context. Despite insufficient clarity on responsibilities and poor maintenance systems, most assets were operational and serving their intended purposes; those directly reducing disaster risk were better maintained than others. Impacts on the biophysical environment, agricultural productivity and economic/market access were confirmed.

Food and cash for assets and training provided immediate short-term food security benefits to 55,000 participants, 70 percent of whom were women. Targeting of the poorest individuals was effective, and participation was negatively associated with years of schooling and positively associated with status as a household headed by a woman. There was compelling qualitative evidence of social transformation and women's empowerment, and comparative analysis confirmed significant impacts on income and savings; however, the evidence suggested that food security was not sustained in the long term.

The evaluation team recommended that the lessons and challenges in Bangladesh be well documented to support future programming in Bangladesh and other WFP country offices and to contribute to the roll-out of WFP's food for assets programme guidance; that the network model be institutionalized to facilitate participants' access to complementary services; that asset management plans become an integral feature of WFP's approach; and that monitoring and evaluation systems be strengthened to enable measurement of intended outcomes.

DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of “Summary Report of the Evaluation of the Impact of Food for Assets on Livelihood Resilience in Bangladesh (2008–2011)” (WFP/EB.2/2013/6-A/Rev.1) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2013/6-A/Add.1, and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation Features

1. This evaluation assessed the impact of WFP's food and cash for assets (FCFA)¹ programmes within the enhancing resilience (ER) component of country programme 104100 (2007–2011), implemented in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh. As one of a series on the impact of food for assets (FFA), the evaluation's objectives were to assess the outcomes and impacts on livelihood resilience, identify the changes needed to increase these impacts, and generate lessons for improving the alignment of FFA programmes with the 2011 FFA Guidance Manual and the disaster risk reduction policy.² The evaluation addressed three common core questions:
 - What positive and negative impacts have FFA activities had on individuals within participating households and communities?
 - What factors were critical in affecting outcomes and impacts?
 - How could FFA activities be improved to address the findings from the first two questions?
2. The evaluation was designed to test a theory of change in which food or cash inputs are provided for work on constructing assets or time spent in training, with the aims of:
 - improving household food security in the short term;
 - improving the biophysical environment, agricultural production and livelihood options in the medium term; and
 - achieving sustained improvements in livelihoods resilience, including the ability to cope with crises in the longer term.
3. The associated factors considered necessary for achieving the intended changes/outcomes include:
 - appropriate situational analysis;
 - FFA activities and assets that meet quality standards;
 - technical assistance and other capacity;
 - availability of food and non-food items;
 - complementary inputs by WFP and other actors; and
 - community and/or local government ownership, with adequate arrangements for asset maintenance.
4. The mixed-method approach used in the evaluation included surveys of 1,500 women in three distinct groups: i) households participating in FCFA work; ii) non-participant, extremely poor households in intervention villages; and iii) extremely poor households in comparison villages. Participants and non-participants were compared with the comparison group to measure the direct and indirect/spillover effects of FCFA. Qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions with men and women, asset assessments,

¹ Food and cash for assets (FCFA) is the Bangladesh country office's preferred terminology and is used throughout this report instead of WFP's standard acronym of C/FFA.

² The programme evaluated was designed and implemented prior to the adoption of the guidance and policy, but its goals were broadly similar and the evaluation terms of reference emphasized learning.

key informant interviews and participatory rural appraisals. The evaluation was conducted by an independent team, with fieldwork during April and May 2013.

5. The limited baseline and endline data made impact measurement problematic. While recall methods helped build understanding of the impacts, they did not enable quantitative assessment of effects such as those on short-term household food security and nutrition levels, or the drawing of direct causal linkages between interventions and observed changes. Comparative cross-sectional analysis of participants, non-participants in intervention villages, and comparison households³ was therefore applied. Analysis of implementation and contextual factors drew on secondary sources, administrative records and qualitative data.

Context

6. The incidence of poverty in Bangladesh declined from 59 percent in 1991 to 31.5 percent in 2010/11,⁴ and significant progress has been made in national food security over the last two decades. However, the country ranks 68th of 79 in the 2012 global hunger index⁵ and 146th of 187 in the 2011 United Nations Development Programme's human development index.
7. Bangladesh is severely disaster-prone, ranking first among the 15 countries considered at extreme risk of experiencing natural disasters,⁶ and enduring 219 natural disasters between 1980 and 2008.⁷ Environmental degradation and uncertain climate patterns negatively affect livelihoods, food production, health and nutrition. The Government has been addressing climate change through the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009,⁸ which emphasizes disaster risk reduction through the development and reinforcement of infrastructure such as emergency shelters in vulnerable coastal areas.

Food/Cash for Assets Programme Description

8. WFP has implemented FCFA activities in Bangladesh since 1976, with objectives evolving to address the changing needs. During the evaluation reference period of 2008–2011,⁹ FCFA aimed to protect livelihoods and assets by providing short-term employment during the lean season, and to reduce vulnerable groups' risk of and exposure to shocks by building assets for income generation and disaster preparedness. Latterly, to increase their ownership of the assets created, communities were encouraged to identify their own needs and priorities and to select the activities for implementation.
9. WFP's estimated expenditure on the ER component was US\$60 million. ER was well aligned with government disaster management, safety net and climate change strategies, and co-funded by the Government. The main government partner was the Ministry of Local

³ Cross-sectional analysis uses data from a specific period, in this case post-intervention. It relies on the assumption that the comparison group is a close proxy for the situation of participants without the intervention. Analysis of panel data, both pre- and post-intervention, can take into account any baseline differences between the participant and the comparison groups, which is not possible in cross-sectional analysis.

⁴ <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=bg&v=69>

⁵ International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). 2012. Global Hunger Index. Washington, DC. This is a multidimensional index based on indicators of child mortality, child underweight and undernourishment.

⁶ Maplecroft. 2010. Natural Disasters Risk Index 2010. Bath, United Kingdom.

⁷ http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/projects_initiatives/Bangladesh-drr-casestudy-transformational-change/

⁸ Ministry of Environment and Forests. Dhaka: http://www.moef.gov.bd/climate_change_strategy2009.pdf

⁹ Although FCFA officially started in 2008, implementation started in 2009.

Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, through its Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

10. During the reference period, 471 FCFA projects were undertaken, involving 55,000 participants, 70 percent of whom were women, in 45 *upazilas* (sub-districts) of 13 districts. Flood/tidal surge protection accounted for 61 percent of assets, access infrastructure for 34 percent and water management for 5 percent.
11. To combine knowledge enhancement with work opportunities, participants received a combination of food and cash wages for two years, based on 90 to 95 days of labour for six months a year and training on five or six days a month in the remaining six months. Training included disaster risk reduction and preparedness planning, nutrition and hygiene, women's empowerment, income-generating activities and life skills.

FINDINGS

Asset Functionality

12. Six types of asset created through FCFA – homestead raising, ground raising, embankments, roads, ponds and canals – were assessed. Most assets were functional and serving the purpose for which they were designed, but some were never completed.
13. Table 1 presents findings related to asset maintenance and ownership, by asset type. Maintenance of the assets is critical to ensuring the continuation of benefits, but approximately 25 percent of respondents were not aware of the asset maintenance status, or of who was responsible for asset management and maintenance.

TABLE 1: OWNERSHIP AND MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS (FCFA PARTICIPANTS)				
Asset type	Ownership regime	Properly maintained	Not properly maintained	Unknown
Roads	Public	63	6	31
Embankments	Public	75	3	22
Ground raising	Club ¹⁰	52	7	41
Homestead raising	Private	74	1	25
Canals	Club	81	3	16
Ponds	Club	Not included		

¹⁰ “Club” goods fall between private and public goods, with a restricted set of users who can be specified; the users of purely public goods cannot be specified.

14. The maintenance status of assets was related to their ownership regime. Private goods such as homestead raising and club goods such as canals were better maintained than purely public goods such as roads. One explanation for these differences concerns the extents to which households had direct incentives and control, and community members could enforce shared responsibility. Communities sometimes did not consider themselves responsible for roads or embankments, or considered the maintenance costs to be more than they could invest.¹¹ Assets that directly reduced disaster risk were better maintained than those that did not, regardless of ownership.

Biophysical Effects

15. Each type of asset yielded several biophysical benefits, as indicated in Table 2. For example, roads constructed or renovated as access infrastructure also serve as embankments for flood protection. Embankments were considered to have the most biophysical outcomes, including reduced severity of flooding and reduced soil and riverbank erosion, increased vegetable production and increased agriculture productivity. Overall, an increase in trees was the most frequently reported biophysical outcome from the assets constructed, followed by increased vegetable production.

	Ground raising	Home-stead raising	Embankments	Roads	Canals	Average for all assets
Mean number of positive outcomes reported	3.07	3.73	6.11	4.72	4.93	4.33
Number of observations	102	372	76	339	152	1 047

16. Public and club goods – embankments, roads and canals – generated more positive biophysical outcomes than private assets did. Homestead raising was useful in improving small-scale vegetable cultivation and tree plantations; public and club assets opened up new opportunities for income generation and large-scale economic activities for whole communities and ensured physical security by providing protection from disasters. Public and club assets also served other purposes: canal improvements, for example, facilitated transport and water management.

Agricultural Productivity and Market Access

17. As shown in Table 3, embankments and canals helped to bring more land under cultivation. More than 80 percent of survey respondents found that embankments were also effective in enabling an additional crop cycle. About 90 percent reported that canals increased soil fertility through irrigation.

¹¹ The union *parishad* (council) is the lowest level of elected government in Bangladesh. Union *parishads* receive annual block grants and social protection projects that may be used to maintain local-level infrastructure. Grant size is based on the union's population, and varies from year to year, averaging US\$12,000–25,000.

http://www.lgd.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15&http://www.lgd.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15&

**TABLE 3: OUTCOMES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY
(FCFA RESPONDENTS)**

Land productivity outcome	Ground raising	Homestead raising	Embankments	Roads	Canals	Average for all assets
More land under cultivation	21	30	88	54	95	51
Additional crop cycle	1	4	82	33	51	26
Increased soil fertility	0	1	51	29	90	27
New crop cultivation	15	26	78	40	62	38
Lower production costs	0	1	73	82	47	39
Mean number of positive outcomes reported	0.36	0.61	3.53	2.31	3.25	1.75
Number of observations	102	372	76	339	152	

18. The most important impact of road construction was probably improved market access for agricultural products. Roads were reported to have reduced the time and costs of transporting farm produce to market, and enabled the development of new markets in previously underserved areas. More traders were reported to be entering these areas, giving farmers more bargaining power in price negotiations. Eighty-two percent of participant respondents reported that roads reduced the costs of agricultural production through easier access to inputs.

Livelihoods

19. Overall, the evaluation found a positive impact on the annual income of participant households, each of which earned about 5,200 taka (about US\$65) more than households in the comparison group during the year preceding the survey.¹² There was no statistically significant difference between the incomes of non-participants from intervention villages and those in the comparison group.

20. Training in income-generating activities was found to be one of the main mechanisms for fostering household income growth. On average, participants had 0.39 more income-generating activities than the comparison group. Diversifying income-generating activities is important, not only in increasing household income but also in reducing vulnerability among extremely poor households facing seasonal variations and shocks.

21. Cash savings are an important means of reducing vulnerability to shocks and strengthening coping ability; programme participation increased the probability of accumulating savings by 26 percentage points, and the average saving size by more than 1,000 taka (about US\$12). The effect is more prominent in coastal districts, where 98.5 percent of participants reported cash savings compared with 48 percent in non-participating communities.

22. Ownership of land – including cultivable land, homesteads and ponds – was about 10 percentage points¹³ higher for participants. Nine percent¹³ more participating households owned poultry or livestock compared with the comparison group. According to

¹² This was the reference period for income data, when most ER interventions had finished. The incomes reported therefore did not include direct transfers from FCFA.

¹³ Interpreted as 10 percentage points because 0.1 is on a scale of 0 and 1, with 0 = does not have land and 1 = has land.

cross-sectional analysis of survey responses, the total asset value of participants was approximately 11,000 taka (US\$140) higher than that of non-participants.

Food Security

23. Despite the relatively large average impacts on income and household assets, findings about longer-term food security were inconclusive. As shown in Table 4, after controlling for demographic variation, survey responses showed no difference between participant and comparison groups regarding the household's ability to provide three meals a day over the previous year. No significant impact on dietary diversity scores was found in survey response data. Some differences were seen between comparators and non-participants in intervention villages, but the existing data do not enable clear conclusions about spill over effects to be drawn.

TABLE 4: IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION		
	Food security last year	Dietary diversity
Participant	0.00	-0.01
Non-participant	0.07***	-0.09*

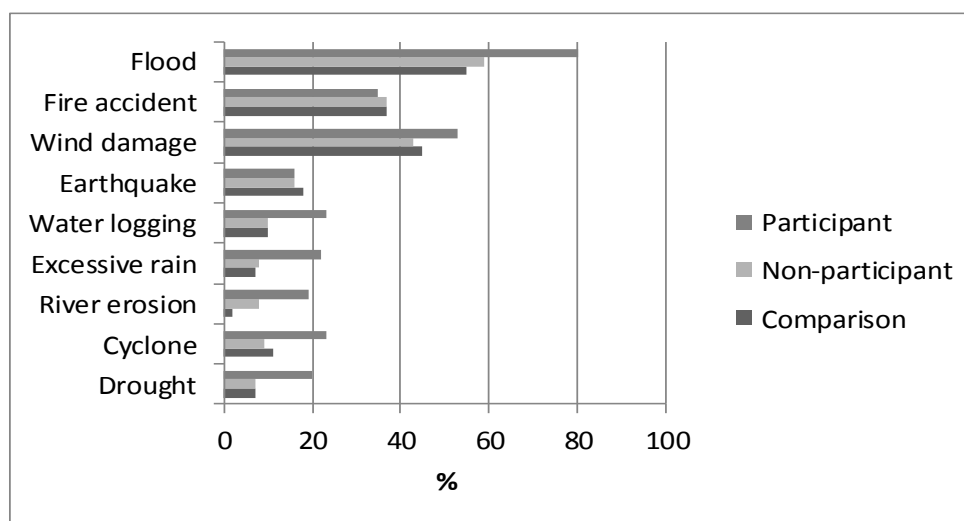
*** p < 0.01; * p < 0.1 (Robust t-statistics, interval of confidence)

24. There were no significant differences among the food consumption scores of FCFA participants, non-participants and comparators, with more than 90 percent of respondents from all groups reporting acceptable scores. Secondary data from monitoring reports documented significant increases in the percentages of participants within the “acceptable” range for the food consumption score.¹⁴ It is important to note that follow-up measurements for both the evaluation and the monitoring reports were taken during seasons of relatively high food availability, when acceptable scores would be more likely. But 80 percent of survey respondents reported that FCFA food distributions took place during periods of food scarcity, which suggests that the food provided filled a need at the time of distribution, even if the long-term evidence about consumption is not conclusive.
25. Focus groups and interview respondents claimed that homestead raising and training provided indirect benefits to food security and nutrition because they resulted in more home gardening and better nutrition. Survey data showed that knowledge of vegetable cooking and use of sanitary latrines was 16 to 17 percent higher among participants than other groups, which could have an indirect effect on food security through better health and nutrition. These topics were part of the life skills training component: 47 percent of respondents reported having received training in nutrition, and 43 percent in cleanliness and hygiene. This increased knowledge could thus plausibly be attributed to the FCFA programme.

Vulnerability and Coping in Crisis

26. Sixty-four percent of FCFA participants responding to the survey received training in disaster vulnerability reduction and disaster preparedness. FCFA participants were clearly more aware of preparedness techniques for almost all types of disasters than non-participants (see Figure 1). There was no significant difference, however, between the coping strategy indices of participants and the comparison group.

¹⁴ WFP Standard Project Reports, 2010 and 2011.

Figure 1: Awareness of Disaster Preparedness*

* Respondents reporting at least one means of disaster preparedness for the type of disaster.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

27. As the survey was completed by women, the impacts presented in earlier sections were those reported by women. But for almost all indicators in the survey, scores were worse for households headed by women than for those headed by men. Households headed by women are a particularly disadvantaged group of the poor, and appear to have benefited less from FCFA participation than other groups. However, the pro-poor nature of participant selection appears to have targeted this group effectively, as households headed by women were more likely to be FCFA participants than others (see paragraph 31).
28. In focus groups, many women respondents lauded the provision of childcare, sheds, access to drinking-water and sanitation. These gender-sensitive initiatives made the work environment more conducive to women's participation.
29. There were indications that women participants were overburdened, in that 23 percent of women respondents reported that FCFA activities created problems with their household workloads. Sharing of responsibilities was also often reported, and provision of childcare was reported to have reduced the workloads. About 63 percent of women participants reported that they could send another household member to carry out FCFA activities if necessary; 43 percent had sent such replacement workers because of illness, pregnancy or other commitments.
30. Between 2009 and 2011, approximately 75 percent of participants' committee members were women, up from 20 percent in 2007, when WFP successfully advocated with the Government for more women in leadership positions. Overall, large proportions of both participant and non-participant groups reported improvements in women's status. As shown in Table 5, more than 80 percent of participants and 61 percent of non-participants reported that FCFA work and training had helped increase women's participation in household decision-making. According to key informant interviews, ER facilitated social transformation of gender roles.

TABLE 5: PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF FCFA ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (% of survey respondents)		
Perceived effect on women	Participant	Non-participant
Improved status in society	85	82
Greater social contribution	75	51
Access to microfinance programmes	75	50
More household decision-making	83	61
More decision-making on household finances	37	11
More social decision-making	44	23
More decision-making on community asset management	14	2

Socio-Economic Distribution of Effects

31. Participant households appeared to be poorer than households in both the other groups. The probability of participating in FCFA decreased by a statistically significant 1.7 percentage points for every additional year of schooling attained by the household head. Households of FCFA participants were 20–26 percentage points more likely to be headed by a woman than by a man¹⁵. Larger household size was also positively associated with participation.
32. In intervention villages, both participant and non-participant respondents reported that the poor and extremely poor benefited most from all types of assets. Benefits from embankments and roads were more uniformly distributed across all groups; the building of homesteads, which are private assets, was reported to benefit mainly the poor and extremely poor.

FACTORS AFFECTING IMPACT

33. The *char* areas in northern Bangladesh are known for extreme poverty and are vulnerable to flooding, river erosion and other natural calamities. Two recent cyclones – Sidr and Aila – in the southern coastal districts destroyed the livelihoods of many households, leaving them extremely poor. This vulnerability to natural shocks combined with the geographical targeting of FCFA to reach the most vulnerable locations enhanced community support for FCFA activities among both participants and non-participants.
34. The local economic context played an important role in determining workforce availability. Where alternative and better-paid work options were available, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had difficulty finding enough eligible people willing to participate in FCFA activities. The low wage rate was reported to have been effective in ensuring the participation of only the poorest and in reducing the efforts of local elites to capture FCFA resources.
35. The availability of complementary services or benefits provided by other NGOs or development agencies affected the long-term sustainability of FCFA outcomes. Most ultra-poor women participants needed further support in utilizing their training to earn more income. Other NGO programmes in the intervention villages provided microfinance, asset transfer projects and other technical support. Thirty-eight percent of participants reported

¹⁵ Households of FCFA participants were 20 percent more likely to be headed by women compared with non-participants and 26 percent more likely compared with extremely poor households in comparison villages.

using NGO services, compared with 27 percent of non-participants in intervention villages and 26 percent in the comparison group. Ninety-one percent of participants reported using at least one service, compared with 90 percent of non-participants and 85 percent in the comparison group.

36. The establishment of an effective and efficiently managed network enabled collaboration built on the comparative advantages of partner organizations. Information on the main members of the network and their roles, collected through interviews and focus group discussions, is shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6: NETWORK FOR ER IMPLEMENTATION	
Actors	Role
LGED officials (engineers/assistant engineers)	Scheme selection, monitoring of asset development
Other government officials	Food distribution, coordination
Local-level elected representatives	Assistance in participant selection, overview and monitoring of implementation (informal), problem resolution, ensuring the sustainability of assets post-programme
NGO officials	Lead role in participant selection, facilitation of local-level planning, assistance in scheme selection, motivation of workers, monitoring of asset development, provision of training to beneficiaries
Participants' committees	Participation in local-level planning, assistance in scheme development and site selection, monitoring, wage and food distribution, maintenance of assets
WFP country office and sub-office	Overseeing of field-level operations, technical support to NGOs, monitoring and supervision, liaison with national-level government ministries

37. The multiple levels of accountability improved effectiveness and reduced leakage. Participants' committees improved transparency by acting as intermediaries between NGOs or LGED and participants. The NGOs and LGED retained an oversight role, while the committees assumed responsibility for the cash and food distributions; participants could therefore go directly to the committee in case of discrepancies. The committees also monitored attendance and supervised fieldwork.
38. This delegation of field-level supervision to the committees allowed the NGOs to focus on developing and maintaining partnerships with government agencies for participant selection, scheme design and asset development. The attitude of national government officials towards partnering with NGOs was a significant factor; at all but one site, officials acknowledged the role of NGOs and reported a positive working relationship with them. Most local government representatives were also supportive of the FCFA schemes and helped NGOs to implement them.
39. The requirement for LGED's technical assessment and approval of plans and completed work sometimes delayed project implementation and the distribution of food or cash. The evaluation found that the network had not addressed asset maintenance effectively, leaving network members confused about who was responsible for follow-up maintenance.
40. Flexible management by NGOs was also important. For example, participants who were unable to work because of illness or other reasons might be allowed to send an alternative worker from their household.

41. Food transportation required significant work from the participants' committee, and participants reported having to cover transport expenses in some instances, in spite of the allocation of 400 taka per mt of food to cover transport to distribution points.
42. Successful implementation requires appropriate policy alignment and budgetary support. Key actors at the national level included the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Disaster Management.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

43. During the evaluation reference period, WFP provided food or cash to more than 50,000 people – mostly women – as remuneration for participation in asset construction or training. Assets built were intended to provide protection from natural disasters, mainly flooding.
44. The food provided addressed food shortages and improved short-term food consumption. However, survey responses suggest that short-term food consumption impacts were not sustained over the longer term. Inadequate baseline and endline surveys hindered assessment of the linkages between immediate results and longer-term impacts on food security and nutrition.
45. Positive effects through medium-term impacts were found, including on the biophysical environment and agricultural productivity. Impacts were also evident in the increased number of income-generating activities among participants.
46. Indications of longer-term impacts on resilience included increased annual income and cash savings among participants, and greater knowledge of disaster preparedness and response. The construction of physical assets not only provided participants with direct protection from disasters, but also created significant spill-over effects for other members of intervention communities; for example, roads made schools and health facilities more accessible to all, including the poor, and embankments provided a refuge from floodwaters for all.
47. There was compelling evidence that WFP's efforts to promote the participation of women in both FCFA activities and participants' committees contributed to a social transformation in women's roles. Unlike previous experiences, women were not merely the sources of manual labour but also assumed supervisory and managerial positions in the committees.
48. WFP's significant efforts to increase women's participation in FCFA activities, with the long-term aim of empowering them, had impressive results. Women's role in preserving their families' livelihoods in the face of frequent natural disasters has been increasingly recognized in the intervention communities and in Bangladesh society more generally, in spite of traditional social barriers; the ER component made the best use of this opportunity.
49. Nonetheless, households headed by women, which are among the most vulnerable, appear not to be benefiting as much as other participants. Some women reported that the FCFA activities were physically demanding and created problems with household chores. Building on strong qualitative evidence derived from perceptions reported during the evaluation, quantitative and comparative evidence is needed to deepen understanding of the effects of FCFA on women's lives.

50. The establishment of a network clarified roles, built trust, enhanced transparency and facilitated the sharing of responsibilities for FCFA activities. However, the network has not been formalized and there is need to document it and to identify ways of developing synergies among its members to achieve short- and long-term objectives.
51. The evaluation confirmed the importance of associated factors, including appropriate targeting so that assets satisfy the needs of the poorest; government and community ownership; complementary activities; and market linkages through road construction.
52. While there were many positive outcomes, the intervention suffered from inefficiencies in implementation. The follow-up maintenance of assets such as roads and canals is another area of concern. Better planning and engagement is needed to ensure that assets remain functional and continue to deliver benefits over time.
53. The findings from the evaluation underscore the importance of having systematic and comparable monitoring data from before, during and after implementation to assess short-, medium- and long-term impacts and enhance understanding of FCFA activities' contribution, particularly to complex and lasting intended outcomes related to points in the theory of change or impact pathway.
54. Significant changes adopted in the ER Plus approach since early 2013 may improve the longer-term food security and reduce the poverty of ultra-poor women and their families. Following the two-year FCFA work and training period, in a third programme year the Government of Bangladesh and other donors are providing one-time cash grants and business development training to women from labourers' households, in addition to a monthly cash allowance. It is important to ensure that data are collected to enable eventual assessment of the impacts of this new approach, particularly on food security, livelihoods and empowerment.

Recommendations

55. **Recommendation 1: The office should continue to provide the Government with support in disaster risk reduction, building on the experience of the ER component in future programmes.** Lessons should be well documented and widely disseminated to guide the adoption of good practice and address continuing challenges. Given that the ER component is well aligned with WFP's disaster risk reduction policy and FFA guidelines, WFP Headquarters should also draw lessons to support replication in FFA programmes in other countries. (WFP country office).
56. **Recommendation 2: The office should work with its partners to elaborate and institutionalize the network management model for FCFA, refining it to facilitate synergies among different actors, to enhance access to the complementary services that lead to improved household income and food security for the ultra-poor.** (WFP country office).
57. **Recommendation 3: Feasible asset-management plans should become an integral feature of the FCFA approach.** An asset maintenance committee, comprising representatives of the local community, including opinion leaders, local government representatives and officials generally involved in decision-making regarding maintenance activities, should be established for each asset constructed. Participants' committees could function as social accountability mechanisms and advocates for access to appropriate local government funds. (WFP country office, its NGO/government partners and WFP worldwide).

58. **Recommendation 4: More robust monitoring systems should be developed to ensure that major intended outcomes can be measured.** These systems should include the collection of baseline and endline data, and specific analyses to deepen understanding of the contributing factors and processes by which impacts are achieved. In particular, additional data about the impacts of FCFA on women's health, nutrition and empowerment and on the sustainability of expected longer-term changes in food security should be collected and analysed. (WFP country office and NGOs).

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ER	enhancing resilience
FCFA	food/cash for assets
FFA	food for assets
LGED	local government engineering department
NGO	non-governmental organization