



The European Union's Food Security Project

A Collection of Success Stories

February 2015

"Cross-border Transfer of Agricultural Technologies, Institutional and Market Development"
Project for Bangladesh and India
(Ref: DCI-FOOD/2011/280-170)

Funded By



Implemented by



The European Union's Food Security Project



Touching Comments from Stakeholders

"The Collection Point for vegetables and eggs in Niz Rangamati village made us richer by Rs. 3700 per month.

Minuwara Begum, President, Niz Rangamati Collection Point, Darrang

"The project helped me in rediscovering myself as a vegetable grower from a stone crusher and now I make an income of Rs. 45, 000 per annum from vegetable cultivation"

Pabitra Borodloi, Beneficiary, Morigaon

"The project enabled me to gain and hone my skills in goat rearing activity from which I am deriving a supplementary income of Rs.15, 000 per annum"

Pratibha Baishya, Beneficiary, Nalbari

"After becoming a Local Service Provider, I have become very popular in my community and my annual income has increased from Rs. 60,000 to Rs. 1,20,000 annually.

Raghu Ram Nath, LSP cum Secretary, Brahmaputra LSP Association, Darrang

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Published in February 2015

Published by RGVN in collaboration with CUB

Implemented by



Funded By



Foreword

This booklet is a compilation of the experiences of only a fortunate few of farmers who have been bought under the scope of the "Cross-border Transfer of Agricultural Technologies, Institutional & Market Development Project" funded by The European Union and implemented by Concern Universal (Bangladesh), RGVN (India), Dhaka Ahsania Mission (Bangladesh) and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (Bangladesh) for the period from January 2012 to December 2014. These stories compiled and presented here depicts the impact of the various initiatives taken up under the sponsorship of the project and reflect the achievements of only a handful of farmers, their groups, Local Service Providers who came forward as flag bearers of change, innovation and enterprising spirit. There is however plentiful of other such experiences and achievements which may be comparable or even better than those findings mentioned in this collection. This booklet is the outcome of sincere endeavour to capture, document and publish project impacts in a lucid manner.

I am glad to share the experiences gathered from the field with all our stakeholders and hopeful that the publication would go a long way in garnering their support to make the initiatives more scalable and sustainable.

Lastly, I sincerely thank all the staff members of RGVN, especially the project team and also our friends from EU, CUB, HSI & DAM for making this project a great success.

Dr. Amiya Kumar Sharma
(Executive Director)
RGVN

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Collection Point of Niz Rangamati

Collection Point (CP) is a one-stop market place created by rural communities where farmer gather their produce and sell to buyers (mostly wholesalers) coming from different places. Such a point has been established in a remote village in Niz Rangamati with the help of the EU-supported Cross-Border Project in Darrang district of Assam

Chandramukhi, Jeuti, Elahi, Jannat and Pakeezah are five groups of women farmers formed under the Cross-border Project. These groups are located in Niz Rangamati village under Pub Mangaldoi block of Darrang District. Eighty nine (89) women producers are involved in the group activities. Deriving the economic benefit from their collective income generating activities the previous year from vegetable cultivation and poultry rearing, each group formed their individual MSEs for developing their vegetable and poultry enterprise.



They conducted meeting with both vegetable and egg traders facilitated by Market LSP. As per advice of the vegetable trader, the producers selected a particular set of vegetables for commercial production. Approximately, 6.5 acres of land were cultivated jointly in a synchronized pattern for vegetable production. Subsequently they organized procurement of vegetables seeds, organic fertilizers along with the support of market LSP. Simple and affordable technology like multilayer technique was used by the farmers for cultivating vegetables. Producers also used their home made compost in their vegetable gardens which they learned to produce by observing the field demonstrations given by LSP and a representative from Maple Company (organic chemicals manufacturer)

The producers gradually initiated a Collection Point (CP) with the suggestion of their market LSP to sell their surplus products. Project staff and LSP helped them to form a 5-member Collection Point Management Committee (CPMC) to ensure the smooth functioning of the CP. The CPMC comprises of a President, Secretary, Cashier and two members for handling the dealings and transactions of the CP. Initially they opened one collection point operating once in a week. During peak period collection reaches 32 quintals. Later for the convenience, two sub collection centers were opened. The sub collection points enabled the groups located at a distance from the main CP to manage their marketing operations without hampering their household affairs. The CP's are linked with 5 vegetable traders (2

distant and 3 local) and 1 poultry trader. All the CPs now operates thrice in a week as it created more demand for products from buyers.

Each sub centres, collection ranges from 12 to 15 quintals of vegetables. The members of the CP sell their products in bulk, which reduces their transportation costs, saves their expenditure for outside food and market cess. They can go for their daily wage earning work that consequently increases their income. The traders pay better price because of collection and volume, on an average Re 1 per kg more. The vegetables are weighed in front of the producers and money is being paid on the spot. In last three seasons 153 tonnes of fresh vegetables was sold through the CP. Each producer member is deriving a benefit of Rs. 3820 on an average per month for using the CP service. So far 30,000 (apprx) numbers of eggs and 360 (apprx) numbers of chicks have been sold to wholesalers combining all the CPs. In a week there is a transaction of Rs. 90,675 in the CP. Producers pays a commission of Rs.1200 per season to the CPMC.

The CP is becoming popular and unique for its users as a distinct one-stop selling point for vegetable and poultry products. The woman also now feels empowered financially as they can save more than earlier. They no more feel the pinches of money crisis for meeting the expenses p of their day to day household requirements.

Table 1: Computation of benefits derived from the CP in 3 seasons per producer member

Savings through daily wages	108 days x Rs. 200= Rs. 21,600
Tax	Rs. 10 x 108 days =Rs. 1080
Outside food	Rs. 50 x 108 days=Rs.5400
Transport	Rs.40 x 108 days= Rs. 4320
Total savings per member	Rs. 32,400. 00
Incremental profit from vegetables per member (89 producers)	Rs.1728.00 (Re 1 per kg)
Incremental profit from egg per member (60 producers)	Rs.500 (Re 1 per egg)
Incremental profit from birds per member (60 producers)	Rs. 60 (Rs. 10 per bird)
Total gain (vegetable +poultry product producer)	Rs. 34,688.00
Total gain (vegetable producer member)	Rs. 34,128.00
Avg per month per person gain	Rs. 34,408/9 months= Rs. 3823 (Say. Rs.3820)
Commission paid to Collection Point Committee from gain	Rs 1200 per vegetable season

"Milanjyoti" MSE Network- Indicating the Viability of Collective Action

'Milanjyoti' is a network of MSEs formed by forty one self-driven and enterprising pig producers of Darrang. They are residents of two villages- Saruthekerabari and Dariapar, located closely under Pub Mangaldoi Block. The network consists of 15 male and 26 female producers.



This group of producers are all indirect beneficiaries. Observing their interest, project supported them in many ways- like organizing themselves into groups (Bijulee, Meghali and Monalisa), identifying their potential income earning sources, improving their technical, marketing cum entrepreneurial skills by taking advantage of the easily accessible and affordable services now available in their community. Moreover, they derived the benefits of collective action just like their registered counterparts as individual MSE's. Further in August 2013,

these MSEs merged into a single network for upgrading into value chain. This network of MSEs now called themselves "Milanjyoti".

Milanjyoti formed their Business Management Committee (BMC) and Shri Kolindra Deka, a young and educated dynamic rural youth was chosen as President of the BMC. The members together developed their business profile, plan and marketing strategy with support of their technical cum market LSP, Shri Raghu Ram Nath. Members meet once in a month and they record all their proceedings in a book. Every member contributes some money to a common fund of the network for managing the day to day affairs of the BMC. The LSP provided them considerable support in exploring higher markets, locating input suppliers and potential buyers. He also kept them updated on price trends and there is almost a regular flow of market related information from him which helps them a lot. Now they are not in position to pay their chosen LSP, but will gradually pay for rendering his services as they grow financially stronger in the days to come.

A group of 4-5 producers of Milanjyoti collectively purchased piglets from market and shared the transportation cost equally. The BMC collects funds from its members and procured feed collectively from the main town market. BMC contacted two traders and negotiated with them to agree on one thing i.e to buy the pig on live weight basis (earlier prices were fixed by eye estimation for whole animal) as per prevailing rate in the higher

market. Initially the traders were reluctant; as such an agreement could potentially defeat their intention to exploit the producers. Several match making workshops were organized to explain them the economic benefit derived from the system arrangements (like steady, continuous, sufficient supply of pigs, lowering of transportation cost, etc). Eventually Milanjyoti producers and their LSP successfully convinced the traders and written contracts were signed.

Milanjyoti producers together adopted better pig management practices as taught by their technical LSP -such as vaccination, supplemental feeding, vitamin administration, clean drinking water provision, de-worming coupled with scientifically building low-cost pig sties with adequate attention on hygiene. A lady member of Milanjyoti, Smt Poly Basumatary mentioned that *"earlier our pigs were under fed attaining about 65 to 70 kgs weight in 15 months and now the same breed of pig attained 80-90 kgs weight in 8 to 9 months. I earned an additional profit of Rs. 1000 than last year by selling my pig through the network"*.

The producers also together earned an income up to Rs. 3, 28,000 with a net profit of Rs. 1,10,700 by selling 41 fattened pigs in 2014. The profit per animal increased from Rs.1700 to Rs.2700. Each producer member paid 10% commission to the BMC from the profit earned.

Specifically, as a result of the collective action approaches adopted, production cost of farmers declined by 25-30% since diseases were effectively controlled and feed prices were cheaper being bought in bulk, while selling price of pigs increased by 15-20% due to fattening. On the part of the pig buyers or collectors, their cost of collecting pigs decreased by about 20%. The group under the guidance of their vibrant leader is expecting to upgrade their enterprise by introducing exotic pig breeds with support of a big private company that shall enable them to reap in the benefits two times in a year with comparatively 40% less expenditure.

Computation of benefits derived from production and sale of 41 nos fattener pigs (avg wt=80 kgs) by 41 producers in 9 months due to synchronized production, improved practices and collective actions	
Criteria's	Benefit per animal per producer per annum
a. Gain from collective buying of inputs	
i. Carrying cost of piglets	Rs.50.00
ii. Concentrated feed (maize, rice bran and mustard)	20,000 kg x Rs.3 (Re. 1 less per type of conc feed) =Rs. 60,000.00/41=Rs.1463.00
iii. Medicine, Vaccines, Vitamins	Rs.50.00
b. Gains from collective selling (per kg)	3280 kg x Rs. 30 (incremental) = Rs. 6,56,00.00/41 =Rs.1600.00
Gain from adoption of better feeding practices (reduction of additional feed requirement for 6 months)	Rs. 3000.00
Total benefit	Rs. 6163.00

Availability & Accessibility of Various Services Makes all the Difference

Mrs. Pratibha Baishya, age 35 years, wife of Mr. Krishna Baishya of village Bartala, Barkhetri Block of Nalbari District is engaged in managing day to day domestic work of her family of five including her old mother. Her husband is a petty vegetable vendor and some time work as daily labourer, as in rural area opportunity of getting job on daily wage is very much limited. Mrs. Pratibha Baishya with her husband's meagre income is facing tremendous hardship in managing day to day family affairs. She is having two school going boys, often her children had to go to school without taking meal. Though, the family has small homestead but no land to cultivate. To supplement family income, in 2008 she had started to rear goats in a very low scale.



In the year 2012, Mrs Pratibha's village Bartala was adopted by RGVN under Cross- border Project and she was identified as one of the beneficiaries. As per project model groups were formed with all identified beneficiaries and each group is allotted with a core operational group (COG) activity. Accordingly the group where Mrs. Pratibha is the member has been allotted with livestock domain as a core occupational group activity. Project model has also made provision of delivery of extension & veterinary services through Local Service Providers (LSPs) who are trained by concerned Government line department/ Research Station/ Agricultural University. Under livestock domain Mrs. Pratibha along with her other group members used to receive training on Goat rearing and management from designated Live Stock LSPs. During the training she got the opportunity of close interaction with other group members and understood the benefit of working in groups and collective efforts. Other than training event the group members also meet once in a week, record their attendance and salient points of discussion in registers. The group members opened a thrift account which is managed by one of them.

Under the project intervention Mrs Pratibha along with other group members received 3 numbers of 2 months old Goats and Rs. 800 as working capital. Earlier she used to keep goat in one corner of her living room. Now from training she learnt among many things about the housing of goat and accordingly built a small proper house on a raised platform with locally available materials (locally called Chang Ghar). Her husband also contributed some labour for construction of goat housing. Designated LSP also time to



time visit her house and spend some time sharing many relevant matter associated with goat management. She closely watch the growth of each goat, any exception if notices, consult LSPs and provide de-worming medicine at regular interval. Although utility of Vaccination of goats against some fatal diseases is not new to her, but prior to joining to this project she never availed the facility thinking that the services may be expensive and she had to take her goat to veterinary dispensary which is at other corner of the village. Now she has learnt that vaccination to be carried out prior to the outbreak of diseases. Further she learnt services are now available on payment of small fees, since LSP Association in collaboration with local veterinary dispensary organizing vaccination camps at a pre announced date and time at their village itself. All these facilities motivated her towards goat rearing in a better way.

From LSPs now she learnt advantages of 'Artificial Insemination' on goats. She administered AI to her Goats with the help of Doctor of local Govt. Veterinary Dispensary and LSPs. Now she is very happy after seeing the lovely little kids becoming little bigger than usual size delivered by her Goat from AI service.

In recent year Mrs. Pratibha Baishya earns Rs 8000 from her goat rearing activity. She ploughed back some of her earning in her goatar activity, purchased 3 more kids for rearing and fattening. Earlier she used to get in a period of eight months a goat of about 8kg(live weight) which used to fetch about 1100, while in same duration now she gets an animal of 10 kg (live weight) which fetches Rs 1500. On top of this, kids as well as adult goats mortality rate has reduced significantly. Now the herd size she developed is expected give her a yearly income of Rs(INR) 13000-15000/-. Previously for selling of their animal her husband used to go to weekly market, now with initiative market LSPs they get market information regarding prices at village itself and traders comes to their group Collection Point at pre appointed date and collects goats.

The group Mrs. Pratibha belongs is named as "Lotus" which has 19 members and all are women and same is the story of other group members.

Goat Value Chain - New Hope for Young Entrepreneur

Bulen Bora, age 26 years, is a son of poor small farmer, residing in village Boththekerabari, near Aulachowk, of Darrang District. The family has one and half bigha (50 decimal) of paddy field to cultivate one crop in a year and has a small home stead of one katha (6decimal) where they have a small hut and a few fruit trees and grow some vegetables mainly for home consumption. Many time male family members (father & son) go in search of daily wage, the opportunity of which is also limited in a village like Borthekerabari and its neighbourhood.



Bulen in 2010 from his small earnings of daily wages bought one female Goat with big hope. Since there was no separate shed for keeping the goat, he used to keep the animal in one corner of their small living room. This is the practice followed in villages. Animal passes urine and excreta in the house with no proper drainage facilities. Since Goats are very susceptible to cold and dampness especially during change of season, at the end of 4th month of his accruing the animal it died. He also had experienced inadequacy of various animal healths related services during that period.

In 2012, the family has been identified and included as one of the beneficiaries under "Cross Border" project and Bolen became the participant under livestock domain. Two LSPs under livestock domain used to provide technical training to beneficiaries groups on Goat rearing. Bolen also received 3 goat kids (one male & 2 female) from project along with a small amount (Rs 800) as working capital. Since this time Bolen has got the opportunity of vaccinating all his goats against all probable diseases along with regular doses of medicines for de-worming from LSPs and local state Veterinary dispensary, his animal mortality rate so far becomes zero. His herd size also increased to from 3 to 9 (two male and seven female). Two male kids of his herd have also been castrated for fattening

and faster meat production purpose. Encouraged by technical knowledge and other animal management support received through LSPs, he has constructed a proper scientific goat house (as shown in the picture) from material available in his home stead like bamboo and woods. However, G.I. Sheets used as roofing material and consumable like nails etc are procured from local market on payment of small money, partly of which received as working capital from cross border project and partly from his savings from his daily wages. In total he has spent Rs 3600 for tin sheets and consumables, while notional cost of the goat house will be around Rs 12000 taking into consideration his own labour and materials used from home stead.

At present he is one of the active member of his group's BMC(Business Management Committee) taking part in discussion of selection and identification of trader and very keen in functioning of village Collection Point where all sale transaction will be on live weight basis at pre determined rate. So, that no producer's of his group gets affected from monopoly and non transparent rate fixation procedure on whole goat basis practiced by traders in general. However, Bolen himself is not keen to sell his animal in near future. He is keen to maintain his castrated male goat at least for a period of 20 months and desire to increase the size of herd with the help of 7 female goats which he has at the moment. He has a plan raise proper fodder for Goats on one small patch of land available in his home stead and construct another goat house near the existing one.

We see power of becoming individual MSE on Bolen and power of knowledge imparted by LSPs.

Story of a Tribal Vegetable Farmer

Pabitra Bordoloi, is the son of a tribal farmer of village Khulagaon, Mayong Block, Morigaon. He has got 2.5 bighas of cultivable land, while his father distributes his landed property among his sons. The piece of land inherited by Pabitra is on high land without any irrigation facility, so he was very upset. He knew only Paddy cultivation and the land was not suitable for Boro paddy cultivation. The rain fed Sali crop could



not be raised in that part of Morigaon as the land remains under flood water through out the monsoon season. So for livelihoods he went to work as labourer in a nearby stone quarry. Meanwhile, he got married and started facing hardship with meagre income from daily wages.

In 2012 when Cross Border Project adopted the village Khulagaon and identifying beneficiaries through various events like group meetings, Shri Pabitra became curious and succeeded in enlisting his name as participant in field crops and vegetable domain. Through various trainings and interaction with LSPs and input support from project he raised various winter vegetables in December 2012 adopting simple technology like multilayer vegetable cultivation. He irrigated his vegetable garden by borrowing water from neighbor's field on payment of Rs 500 for the season. However, cost of diesel and labour of his own. He earned Rs 30,000 in one season (Sep to June). After June the area remain as usual submerged under flood waters till the month of September. However, during monsoon of 2013, Pabitra took initiative and learnt the technique of raising vegetables through floating bed technology provided by the project. He became one of the very active members of BMC (Business Management Committee) of their 25 member farmers' group and the group

constructed 75 numbers of floating beds of water hyacinth. Through this activity the group earned a net income Rs 18000/- in 3 months (July- Sept). With this profit the group purchased 7 piglets which were distributed to interested members of the group for fattening and subsequent selling. Pabitra expressed interest and got one piglets for fattening. After rearing for 9 months the said piglet attained 107 kg weight and sold to markets at Rs 10,700. The half of the sale proceeds so received was retain by Pabitra while the other half gone to group's kitty fund.

On the other hand, Pabitra with the help of one LSP approached local banks for loans and succeeded in getting a KCC loan of Rs 25000 with that amount he bought a pump sets part of which is subsidized by Department of Agriculture and setup a bore well within the farm. Now, Pabitra cultivates winter vegetables (pesticide free) and sells 50 kg of vegetable daily. His total income from vegetables during this season is about Rs 45,000.

The cost of cultivation of 2 bigha (0.66 acres) vegetables (winter)

Particulars	Cost in Rs
Land Preparations	13500
Seeds	2485
Irrigation(diesel)	500
Cost of Making Bamboo Structures	6000
Compost	3200
Fertilizers	800
Organic Pest Control Measures	400
Total	26885
Say	27000
Yield	3600kg
Average selling Price per Kg	20
Total Return	72000
Net Return	45000

Ziarul Haque: An LSP Providing Embedded Service

Ziarul Hoque, as an LSP under the Cross-Border Project has set an example for many job-aspiring educated rural youths of Goroimari block in Kamrup District of Assam. This farmer-turned social entrepreneur started his journey as a service provider by imparting trainings on livestock and poultry rearing in his native village Hatipara. Gradually he expanded his area of service to the adjacent villages like Bihpara, Merganda, Jarpara, Majortop etc. reaching about 470 people. Along with training he provides several types of embedded services like selling of veterinary medicines, poultry birds, vitamins etc in small packets at an easily affordable price in his newly opened service centre. It is noteworthy that earlier the rural folk had to go to Goroimari Bazar which is about 7 K.M. away for purchasing such type of inputs. This enthusiastic youth took active part in training sessions in other domains like fruits and vegetables under the project as well. After obtaining training on asexual plant propagation techniques like cutting, grafting budding, air layering etc he started a lemon nursery and started selling lemon saplings in large numbers. Adding to that he supplied saplings to other beneficiaries of Kamrup (1055 nos) and Goalpara (1240 nos), two major districts within the purview of the project and earned Rs. 26,375 and Rs. 33,480 respectively in 2014.



A confident and poised Ziarul stated "*choosing to become an LSP had been the turning point in my life. The project provided me the platform to enhance my knowledge and skills by some eminent agricultural scientist and academicians. Gradually, with some of them I developed good personal rapport and they always welcome my queries even over phone. As an LSP, I started to train up the community farmers and offer advice for which they are ready to pay me something, either in cash or in kind. I became popular in my community as an advisory LSP for livestock and poultry. I also attended several trainings on market*

extension arranged by the project. Later I carried out several extension exercises with the producer groups and assisted them to identify their potential income generating activity, analyse those and develop their business and marketing strategy plans".

Ziarul played a pivotal role in availability of improved breed of birds in his community. Birds like Vanaraja and Khaki Campbell introduced by the project achieved a high success rate in terms of productivity increasing its popularity among community people. Poultry producers in the community now had a teacher to teach them modern aspects of poultry rearing but did not have access to suppliers of such type of birds. Thus a demand for the birds was created and Ziarul seized this opportunity and contacted one poultry supplier based in Guwahati for sourcing the birds from. So far he has supplied more than 1500 birds in his community alone. Non-availability of improved breed of birds is now just a bygone past in Hatipara village. He even started a demo poultry unit in his home and from that he earns not less than Rs.2000 per month. There has been 40% adoption of improved bird rearing practice in his locality due to his contribution.

Ziarul Hoque has also been successfully vaccinating cattle and goats in vaccination camps organised by Service Providers' Association, Kamrup in collaboration with Goroimari Dispensary.

His baseline income was about Rs. 8000 per month which has increased up to Rs. 15000 per month as recorded in an average. Besides, this exemplary fellow has organised groups to form Micro and Small Enterprise and imparted training to the groups on MSE, Business Plan and Business Profile. He is also trying to link these groups with value chain for which he has been paid by the groups.

Ziarul finally stated his unprecedented experience in the following terms: "my experience as an LSP is challenging as well as interesting. At first it was really hard to gain the faith and confidence of the people, but now they have accepted us as they are approaching us. The project has benefitted me in developing an insight in the light of which we are looking for new paths of higher income as farmers. "

Story of an Enterprising Tribal Farmer

Shri Srikant Keleng, 32 years, is a tribal farmer of village Hatiutha, Manaha Goan Panchayat of Mayang Block, Morigaon district. To-day, he is a happily married man with wife and two school going daughters.

His child hood was started as an agricultural labourer and he was residing in a house of a farmer of the same village. With the growing of age he realised that working as a servant has no future, so at age of 20, he came out from the bondage and started residing independently and working as a daily wage labourer in a stone quarry earning Rs200 per day. With the savings from his earnings since childhood, Srikanta took 10 bigha agricultural land on lease on payment of one time amount of Rs 25000 in the year 2007 from a farmer of his own village who was in distress cannot meet cultivation expenses.



The land, Srikanta, took on lease is not suitable for cultivation of Kharif season crops as it remains inundated during rainy season. However, raising rabi season crops on that piece of land are possible provided he can arrange for irrigation. In one corner of the said land Srikanta constructed his home stead after raising the height of the land to a certain level to protect from rain water inundation. In other corner of the land he set up a shallow tube well and a pump set with an investment of Rs 22000 (Rs 12000 well & Rs 10,000 pump set). With this arrangement he started cultivation of Boro Paddy in traditional method during rabi season and getting yield of about 720kg to 800kg per bigha. Since only one crop in a year is possible from the land he could have much marketable surplus and he also got married to Barasha during the time.

In 2012, Srikant came to know that their village has been identified for a project known as "Cross Border Transfer of Agricultural Technology Institutional & Market Development" and he participated in beneficiary selection event which was conducted in their village itself. Since he is a paddy grower, the project included him in paddy growing group. He and his wife were regular in attending group meetings and training programmes organised by Local Service Providers (LSP) of the project. Now he knows all LSPs of the area by their name and can approach them without any hesitation any time of the day. From such group meetings/ trainings he came to know about new method of paddy cultivation which is called as "SRI" Method. They were told that the yield of paddy can be increased many

times with adoption this method of cultivation. Accordingly, the farmers have been provided extensive training on SRI Method of paddy cultivation. After that Srikanta and Barsha decided to adopt the method from the boro paddy season of 2012-13. In the first year they decided to go for 1/3rd of bigha paddy cultivation, following SRI method.

In the beginning their journey towards adopting the new method of paddy cultivation was not very smooth, fellow farmers were making fun with him. But latter on when paddy seedlings reached to the tillering stage, nearby farmers started visiting his plot of SRI paddy cultivation. Each paddy seedling produced 90 numbers of tillers, while that of traditional method produce 30 numbers tillers. At the time of harvesting, it is observed that his plot has produced exactly one and half times of the production than what he gets through traditional method. Encouraged by the production in the year 2013-14, Srikant brought 3 bighas of land under SRI method of paddy cultivation and reduced the area of traditional method of paddy cultivation to 4 bigha. This year paddy seedlings raised under SRI method produced on an average 80 tillers, and produced 30 mounds (1200 kg) of paddy. The comparatives of SRI and traditional method of paddy cultivation of Srkanta's field as furnished as under:

Area = 1bigha (0.33 acre)

Particulars	Traditional Method (Rs)	SRI Method (Rs)
Cost of seed bed/ land preparation	900.00	1200.00
Cost of Seed	60.00	10.00
Cost of Transplanting	350.00	350.00
Cost of irrigation	1000.00	1000.00
Cost weeding	500.00	400.00
Fertilizer	415.00	70.00
Cost of Pesticides/Fungicides	0	70.00
Harvesting	1000.00	1000.00
Thrashing Total Cost	300.00	300.00
Total	4525.00	4400.00
Yield in Qtl	8	12
Price of Paddy/qtl	1000.00	1000.00
Income	8000.00	12000.00
Net Income	3475.00	7600.00
Increased (%)		218

Srikanta was also facilitated by LSPs to get access to Agricultural loans (KCC) from local banks and borrowed Rs 25000 at rate of 7% interest p.a. which he repays and renews since the year 2013. He has also taken another 5 bigha of land suitable for Kharif crop from a fellow farmer. The present cropping pattern followed by Srikant is as under:

Season	Crops			
Rabi	Paddy (SRI)	Paddy (Traditional)	Mustard	Coriander
Area (bigha)	3	4	2	2
Kharif		Sali Paddy		
Area (bigha)		5		

Paddy Cultivation Following SRI Method

Din Mohammad Ali and Sanbau Bibi are paddy farmers with long years of experience. At the age of 60, Din Mohammed discovered another approach to paddy cultivation. They owned 1.32 acres of arable land and for the first time this year they cultivated rice following the practices of System of Rice Intensification on part of their land. Din Mohammed said, *"I found paddy cultivation following the SRI method, systematic and profitable as it decreases production cost and increases yield compared to our traditional way of cultivation."*



In 2012, the Cross-border project came to their village Howlighat in Nalbari district in Assam, India, and Din Mohammed was selected as a beneficiary in field crops. Nabajit Medhi, a local service provider specialized in field crops and vegetables trained farmers in SRI. After the training, the couple received rice seed of a high yielding variety to cultivate paddy on 2.5 Bigha of their land and opened a bank account to receive some working capital to implement SRI in their own field. Last year the couple harvested 2000 kg of paddy from 2.5 Bigha of land. That year they were expecting from almost 3500 kg paddy.

Din Mohammed said, *"Now I have scope to meet new people. I can learn new things like how to keep records of expenditure and income, and general information regarding HIV/AIDS, family planning, etc. I have my own bank account, which is very helpful and safe for financial management. Apart from this, now I can contact Nabajit Medhi if I face any problem with our paddy. If I have success in paddy cultivation I will start a goat farm in future."*



According to Rabin Kr Sharma, Project Area Coordinator in Nalbari, *"Din Mohammad and Sanbau Bibi have adopted*

¹ SRI is a system of 6 interrelated practices using less external inputs, which offers small farmers a way to improve their rice production.

² 3 Bigha = 1 acre

SRI in their paddy field without any hesitation. Their faith in the knowledge of the local service provider and the project staffs made them more responsible and keen to achieve success". The field of Din Mohammed and Sanbau Bibi was very fascinating to their fellow farmers, as it appeared so green and healthy. After observing their paddy field many of their neighbours are interested to adopt SRI practices in the coming season in their own fields.

Din Mohammad obtained a yield of 1200 kgs per bigha (total production being 3000 kgs). Fifty percent of the production was consumed by his family and the surplus was sold in the market from which he derived an additional income of Rs.22, 800. After harvesting the boro paddy in 2012-13, he was involved in various farming activities like summer vegetable cultivation and hen rearing with technical support from LSPs. The success of paddy cultivation under SRI motivated him to cultivate Sali paddy in 3 bigha of land in this technique the next year. He is also an active member of Rajanigandha Core Occupational Group and his group has plans to take up poultry farming as their business activity.

Farmers Work Together in Khariapara

Farmers in Krishnai, part of Goalpara district in Assam, India are mostly smallholder farmers. They have limited access to information on new and improved cultivation practices and their daily farming activities are based on local knowledge and methods.

'SewaliAtmosahayak Gut' is a group of 12 ambitious farmers in Khariapara village residing 4 kilometer from Krishnai main town. They started working together in March 2013 under the Cross-border Project. Six members in the group did not own any land of their own nor did they have the financial capacity to secure any land on lease individually. Gaurishankar Rajbongshi, a Local Service Provider (LSP) in their village guided and



motivated the farmers to work together and start farming as a group using improved cultivation methods, while trying to increase their production and income.

The group decided to acquire 3.3 acres of community land on lease at an annual rent of Rs. 3,000 from the Village Development Committee of Khariapara. The members contributed investment money (Rs. 8,000) to fence the land with bamboo and, with the support of LSP Gaurishankar and to purchase quality seeds and fertilizer (Urea, Single Super Phosphate). They started cultivating vegetables and rice during the summer season on 2.97 acres and earned an income of Rs. 25,500. The following winter season, they invested another Rs. 5,300 and cultivated winter vegetables and harvested 800 kg of vegetables, which they sold for Rs. 20,200.

Members of the group distributed working hours and activities evenly among themselves and hold weekly meetings to discuss their work. They opened a joint savings account with a rural finance institution. Each member pays a monthly contribution of Rs. 50, so together they monthly save Rs. 600 in the account.

The LSP himself provided the toll free phone number of Kisan Call Centre (KCC) to the group so that in case of any urgency during his absence, the group has access to information of KCC. KCC is an agricultural information call center launched by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation (DAC), Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India to deliver agricultural extension services to the farmers throughout the country.

With the LSP, the group explored different markets and concluded that banana cultivation has potential. Gautam Rai, member of the group said: *"Banana cultivation is very favourable in this district and we have very near to us the Darrangiri banana market, the largest banana market in the North Eastern region of India. It attracts traders of different parts of the country who look for large sales of Malbhog and Cheni champa banana varieties"*. With the support of the LSP and a project contribution of 200 tissue cultured banana saplings, the group started raising banana saplings along the fence of their field.

SRI Enhances Rice Productivity

Pramila Chaliha is a skillful assamese women farmer in her early thirties. She has a family with her husband and two children in Borthekerabi village of Darrang district. The family owns 1.5 acres of land. They grow paddy which is exclusively used for consumption along with the Public Distribution System rice which is rice received govt at a subsidised rate. Besides, they also grow vegetables which fetch some cash income. Pratima takes lead in all agriculture activities. Her role in farming includes transplanting, weeding, harvesting and seed preservation. She was enrolled as a beneficiary of the Cross-border project under field crops core occupational group due to her experience in paddy cultivation. She participates in village meetings, as a member of a farmers group and attends trainings given by LSPs as she is very keen to learn and experiment new technologies in agriculture and organic practices.



Pramila was the first few women in her village to take a decision to experiment with SRI in half an acre land. She participated in farmers field day programmes organized by LSP Shri Raghu Ram Nath and was impressed to make an experiment herself. During first year project provided her seeds and working capital for demonstrating SRI and she was very successful and got good result. She could motivate her husband to help her in the field. The success was encouraging not only for Pramila, but also for other farmers of the village. Since last Kharif 2013, Pramila has motivated another four women in her group to adopt SRI and guided them in field operations like nursery raising, transplantation and weeding. She along with the other group members has established an organic compost unit where the women farmers prepared organic manures and applied in the SRI Fields. Her family have been able to enhance their food availability throughout the year from their own production.

The experiences of less seed, less labour, less investment and more yield has been the factors that has encouraged adoption by others who saw her. The average yield per acre has been 22 quintals where as in traditional method it was 12- 13 quintals. Costs of production per kg of grain are reduced by 60 percent with SRI management, from Rs. 34.00 to Rs. 13.50. Now Pramila proudly say that with increased harvest in SRI, they can manage without the PDS rice and can also sell some surplus. Pramila is not only a resource for the family, but she has also started disseminating her skills and knowledge to the other women and men in her village.

Pabitra Teron's Success with Duck Rearing Activity

Shri Pabitra Teron is a 5th standard passed, unemployed man from Hatiutha, a small village under Mayong block of Morigaon district, Assam. He is basically a traditional farmer engaged in animal husbandry and poultry rearing activity. However, he could not succeed due to lack of scientific knowledge. Pabitra first learned about the project through a meeting organised by RGVN in Mayong block of Morigaon District to map stakeholders in the indigenous poultry industry.



In 2013 he was involved in Cross-border project as beneficiary. Based on his interest and experience project provided him 16 numbers of Chara Chamelli ducks and a working capital of Rs. 1100/-to begin with in June 2013. He underwent several days of training on good poultry management practices from Local Service Providers who were easily available to him for technical advice as and when required. With the assets and working capital he started a small backyard poultry unit comprising of 16 birds with the technical help from LSP Ismail Deuri.

With suggestion from the LSP he constructed a proper shed for the birds using locally available bamboo and thatch grass. Ninety eight percent birds were survived during the period of six months of rearing. The birds attained an average weight 2.5 kgs at 16 weeks age due to proper feeding. Vitamins were also given to the birds which improved their health. During the first year he got more than 2000 eggs from seven female birds. His family consumed forty percent of the eggs and rests were sold at Rs. 5 per egg. He sold six males at Rs. 350 each and bought 30 local ducklings at Rs. 35 per bird. He also raised ducklings from his poultry unit which he is selling to neighbours. Pabitra realized that he should concentrate more on this activity and expand his farm. He with the suggestion from the LSP bought more birds which got multiplied the year after. Gradually, his bird size

increased from 16 to 65 birds in 2014. He got Rs. 7400 as profit after investing Rs. 6000.

Now he has more than 30 ducks in his unit and 21 ducklings. Pabitra's monthly income is now increased from Rs. 3000 to Rs.6000. Thus, duck rearing emerged as a viable source of income for Pabitra and he is very much thankful for the LSP for giving him the minimum scientific knowledge. Pabitra plans to expand his small unit into a semi-intensive poultry farm of 200-300 birds in future. His success has motivated other farmers for initiating backyard poultry farming with Chara Chamelli ducks birds which were bought by them from his unit.

ASHA, Sprinkling Hope and Splashing Success for the Down-trodden Women

There are many groups under various schemes in our and neighbouring villages. But the groups under the Cross-border project are different from other groups in many a ways. These groups are produce not only to produce collectively but also to sell collectively. These are linked to the traders by market LSPs (Local Service Providers) through the Marketing Extension Exercises. This is the translated version of Ms. Moziran Nessa, the secretary of Asha Krishi Got formed under



Cross-border transfer of agricultural technologies, institutional and market development project in Hatipara under Goroimari block in Kamrup Rural District.

The Collection point established at the doorstep helped the women folk to sell their poultry products like eggs and whole chickens and ducks to the traders easily and free of transportation cost. They collect products at one definite point from where traders purchase the products directly at a higher price. Before establishment of this Collection point, people of that area used to sell their products to their neighbours now and then. However, as soon as this centre is established a self-motivation generated amongst the women to take necessary steps to produce at a larger scale to earn a higher income.

The Collection point first started by the members of the AshaKrishi Got with the help of market LSP, Md. Faizur Raman, is now gradually getting a warmer response from other people of the community. On the market day (Thursday) of the week, women of Hatipara bring their poultry products to the Collection point. Ms Moziran Nessa, the secretary of Asha Krishi Got take a note of number of products bought by each woman in a register and also take their signature. After the collection is over the trader Md. Sorbat Ali purchases the same. At village level, women got only 5 INR per egg, but now Md. Ali is giving them 6 INR per egg. After this the Secretary of the group distributes the money to each seller against their product as noted in the register. Eliminating the broker from this chain, the Collection point creates a win-win situation for both the producers and sellers.

The centre proves to be beneficial for the trader because it lessens his burden of collecting products from house to house. In the same time, producers are embracing the concept of Collection point because now they have definite buyers who are giving them 1 INR more than earlier.

One of the positive sides of the Collection Point as Ms. Sobiya Khatun says is *"poultry are reared by women in our village. But for selling purpose we have to depend on the male members of the family. So, the money does not come to our hand. This Collection point provides the opportunity to the women to sell their products directly without the help of males. Hence, money is coming directly to their hand which they can spend for their children and some other household needs which are generally ignored by the male members of the family."*

From these words of Sobiya Khatun it can be inferred that this Collection point is a step towards economic upliftment of women. Regarding their future plan Md. Aizur Rahman says, *"Now our CP is concentrating only on poultry products. But we are planning to include products like vegetables as well and motivate other women within the vicinity to join us."*

Cage Fishery Brings Accolades and Pennies to Narayan Roy

Narayan Roy, a resident of Singimari Bhaganiya village under Goroimari block in Kamrup district has set an example for many poor farmers adopting the technology of cage fishing which is totally new to the region. He is one of those forward looking and progressive minded farmers who came forward to testify this technology in a circumstance when most of the farmers were sceptical and doubtful about the success of this technology.



Admiring the help and technological knowledge received from Local Service Providers Fazlul Hoque Ahmed (LSP-fishery), Radhagovinda Biswas and Bhuban Biswas, Narayan Roy says that adoption of this technology has earned him both honour and higher income. People both from his own village and neighbouring villages meets him to learn about cage fishery and to know the progress and prospect of this new technique. Having five members in his family; two sons, one daughter-in-law and his wife, it was quite hard for Narayan to meet the both ends as farming was the sole source of income and traditional

techniques and low quality inputs in cultivation resulted in low production. Though he has two adult sons, they seldom help him in the field and unfortunately they are not engaged in other activities also. As a result, the responsibility of running the family falls on the shoulder of Narayan. So, he was in search of another source of income.

The Cross border project, in Narayan's word opened a golden chance of having a new source of income. He embraced the cage fishery scheme to try his luck amidst a doubtful situation. He along with nine other members of Kalia Bhomora Group after receiving training in Cage Fishery from Fazlul Hoque Ahmed proceeded in preparing structures for cages in the month of June, 2013 in the river Kolohi that flows by their village. It costs 3810 INR to prepare one cage and Narayan released 4 kilos fish fingerlings of indigenous carps. In the month of October he sold 5.5 kilos of fish for Rs. 1000 and consumed 1 kilo fish. Then he harvested another 7 kilos of fish and sold for Rs. 1500. Before the Magh Bihu festival,



which is one of the biggest festival in Assam the price of fish hiked. During this time, i.e. in the midst of January he harvested once more and got 1100 INR.

Mr. Roy has also received 15 no. of fruit saplings from the project side. He has already started selling papayas (red lady variety). In addition to these, Narayan cultivated paddy following the SRI technique after receiving training and motivation from LSP Radhagovinda Biswas. He got 200 kg more paddy this time after following SRI technique. He

also adopted other types of technologies like multilayer vegetable cultivation, composting etc.

Though this farmer had a desire to cultivate profitable vegetables like chilly and bittergourd, he could not arrange capital to do the same. But after the cage fishery harvesting and selling the increased paddy and papayas, now he is cultivating chilly, coriander, mustard, bottle gourd, bittergourd (multi-layer cultivation). The monetary support he got from the Cross border project against fruit saplings, and fingerlings also helped him lot. He also says that he used improved variety seeds supplied by LSPs.

Mukunda Saikia-A Successful LSP

Sri Mukunda Saikia is a 44 years old farmer residing in Borthekerabari village under Paschim Mangaldoi Block in Darrang district. Due to his past involvement in several community based projects, he earned a reputation as a community worker and subsequently he was nominated by his community to be their Local Service Provider under the Cross-border Project.



Basically he comes from a farming background and he cultivated paddy and seasonal vegetables to support his family. However, he could not get an income as per his expectation.

Mukunda got series of training under his chosen domain -fruits and medicinal plants. Later seeing his dedication he was trained up in other domains such as field crops, vegetables and marketing as well, so that he could broaden his areas of technical expertise and earn a lucrative income from several spheres.



Mukunda started to provide services to his community people by conducting technical and demonstration sessions on updated agricultural practices like SRI, grafting and budding technique of fruit trees etc. He was the first LSP in the project to have successfully demonstrated floating vegetable bed technology in his small pond amidst countless criticism from his fellow farmers.

He became a role model for other farmers who approached him for adopting this new technique. In his demo bed he cultivated spinach but later he experimented with other types of vegetables such as okra, cucumber, yard long bean. When the monsoon was over and winter approached, he had an innovative

idea to construct a bamboo structure over his pond to grow gourds from the remaining decomposed matter of the beds. Officials from Krishi Vigyan Kendra also paid visit to his demo site and praised him for his success and innovation. Mukunda set up a small vegetable nursery unit utilizing the decomposed organic bio mass of the beds and earned some income from the unit as well.

In a day he has about four to five visitors coming to him for providing information about sowing and harvesting times, sources of good quality seeds, pest and disease management etc. He provided free advisory services in the beginning so that he could motivate the people. Gradually, he could build his trust and confidence among his people upon him and was generously paid for rendering his services. Earlier he sold his services to his community at nominal rate of Rs. 20 to Rs.30 per service but now his charges has gone up between Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 per service depending on service types. His income has increased from Rs. 5000 to Rs. 7500 per month.

Fulo Bibi- Cultivating Vegetables with a Renewed Vigour

Fulo Bibi of Sapkata village belongs to a peasant family. Basically she is a house wife and her husband Md. Akar Ali and her son Md. Afnur Ali are farmers. They had been cultivating all season vegetables in their own land. Despite growing all season vegetables, the production was low because of various diseases, lack of technical knowledge about vegetable cultivation and market knowledge. As they did not have sufficient knowledge about vegetables cultivation, their



vegetable plants were used to get infected by various diseases and some time vegetables were not completely developed due to poor quality seeds selection. At the same time they were not getting reasonable amount of profit by selling their vegetables as they do not have sufficient knowledge about market. Even though they were working hard, they found it very difficult to run their family smoothly. They used to face many problems due to low income and standard of living was very poor.



In the year 2012, CU project had been launched in Mukamua, Nalbari. Under this project, Fulo Bibi had been selected on the basis of "Below Poverty Line" criterion as a project beneficiary under vegetable domain. After the project intervention on behalf of Fulo Bibi her husband and son started receiving training on various domain like- Field crops & vegetables cultivation, poultry and livestock rearing etc

from concerned LSPs. During the training sessions they came to know about lots of things regarding seeds selection, seed purification, benefits of herbal pesticide and organic fertilizer etc. They have also understood the advantages of group activity and collective effort. At the same time they got the opportunity to enhance their market knowledge through market LSPs. After getting all these support from LSPs, they became very enthusiastic to start

their vegetables cultivation from a new beginning.

In the mean time they had received vegetables seeds as asset and Rs. 1330 as working capital from project. However they bought some other kind of vegetables seeds from Market LSP. They have taken 1 Bigha (0.33 Decimal) land on lease for Rs. 15000. After that they started vegetable cultivation following all the instructions of concern LSPs which resulted in high production and less diseases. This winter season they have been cultivating Knolkhol, Cabbage, Brinjal, spinach and Coriander in an area of 1 Bigha. They spent Rs. 10000 for seeds, fertilizer, ploughing and irrigation till 1st December, 2014. Their income from sales till November last was Rs. 12000 and they are expecting around Rs. 50000 from next 3 months. They are also cultivating mustard, lentil, onion, garlic and chili in 5 Bigha (165 Decimal) area land in a char area (river bed). This land belongs to them and they are expecting around Rs. 20000 after the sale of all these products.

After project Intervention, Fulo Bibi's family income has been significantly increased from Rs. 7000 to Rs 8500 per month. Her family became self dependent and cultivating all possible food crops on their own. Today, except kerosene oil and salt she does not need to buy anything else. Her husband and son made it possible to improve their standard of living. Now her family is much more financially stable then her past situation. They have been planning to purchase a water pump set and build a new house in next year. At last they are living their life quite comfortably after CU project intervention.

Jannmoni Chilli Cultivators Group

Jaanmoni is a vegetable core occupational group formed in Bartala village in the year 2013 under CU project. This group consists of 8 female members. Since many years these women have been cultivating vegetables in the backyard of their home solely for household consumption.

Before CU project intervention, the group members were just housewives doing only household work and did not take part much in farming activities. Neither did they imagine of making money from vegetable cultivation. Moreover due to lack of finance, technical knowledge on cultivation practices including marketing they could not think anything commercially to make their lives better.

After joining Cross-border project they formed their group and cultivated vegetables together. Project provided them some seeds and working capital to encourage them to come forward for collective activity. Each member earned a supplementary income of Rs. 5000 by cultivating vegetable as a group activity in winter 2013. The group members considered this to be a fruitful joint venture and it improved their confidence level significantly.

Later this group was graduated to an MSE in 2014. They became aware about profitability of chilli production through their concerned LSPs in group meetingd. LSPs made them understand about the business prospects of chilli using various tools like Business Profile, Business Plan etc. At the same time they acquired advance knowledge on chilli cultivation by attending several technical sessions given the service provider. They now improved upon their knowledge on seeds selection, seed treatment, organic manure production, herbal pesticides which resulted in low cost of production. With accompaniment support of their market LSP they explored high market looking for better inputs and contacted some prospective buyers.

Finally, after receiving these supports from the project they came forward to cultivate



chilli on commercial basis. They took 0.429 acres of land on lease from a known neighbour at an annual rent of Rs.1100 to cultivate chilli. With suggestion from LSP they are cultivating a hybrid variety of chilli (Suryamukhi) organically as demanded by traders. Side by side they are also cultivating some vegetables (cucumber, brinjal, bean, coriander) by making an investment of Rs.7000 so far. They are using the group's fund to meet these expenditures. They applied Bordeaux mixture for fungal disease control in their chilli nurseries and applied organic compost in place of inorganic chemicals. LSPs are providing them all possible assistance at an agreement to pay a nominal fee of Rs.50 as consultation charges for the whole season. Admiring their efforts their family members also started extending their support in their farming activity. Their crop has not matured till now but the plants appear healthy. They are expecting to harvest 25 quintals of green fruits and 6 quintals red dried fruits that would give them an income of Rs. 27,000.

As far as their future plans are concerned, they want to continue with the chilli production. If they get expected benefit they would increase the landholding size for next year chilli cultivation. Again, if possible they would purchase a water pump set for irrigation their field after selling this season's production. Increasing their personal savings is yet another main objective of this group of enterprising and ambitious women farmers.

On the other hand, this group has set up an example for other chilli farmers and has created a competitive environment amongst the other chilli MSE in the area.

Gofur, Directly Linking Producers to Market

Md. Gofur Ali, a resident of Hatipara in Goroimari Block under Kamrup District joined the Cross-border Project as LSP for Market Extension. He had undergone several batches of trainings arranged under the project not only in his area of expertise but other domains as well. He could acquire sound knowledge on market development processes from the project. In the very beginning he could not understand the objectives and outcomes of the project and was not supporting it in the back of his mind. He decided to drop out. Later after a couple of months he re-joined SPA with a new zeal and enthusiasm. He imparts training to his community especially on MEE, MSE and Value Chain, but he also developed sufficient knowledge to impart technical sessions in his community groups as well.



As a Market LSP he was able to achieve the summit of success when he founded a Collection Point (CP) for Jute in Hatipara in July 2013. As a Market LSP, he explored higher markets to link the small producers under the project to prospective buyers offering fair price for their products. In one such Market Extension Exercise, he met some big buyers of jute. Jute is an important crop providing livelihood to many poor farm families in the whole of Kamrup. From the market survey he realised that bulk selling is highly profitable. He spread this message among the community about this opportunity available provided they adopted a collective approach. He motivated the jute producers in his area to open a Collection Point with his support. A group of jute producers, about 40 direct and 60 indirect came forward. Finally the CP started functioning at Hatipara. Till now 40 tonnes of raw jute were sold through the CP with a transaction of Rs. 10,80,000 in two seasons. Every member obtained a profit of Rs. 200 per kg because the traders offered Rs.2700/- per quintal against previous rate of Rs.2500 because of bulk selling. As individual sellers earlier they could not get this advantage. Gofur earned a total commission of Rs.16000 in a season

for rendering his services at the CP and from the traders. Apart from profit derived per kg the CP also saved each member a substantial amount of money by reducing the transaction costs. The traders were also benefitted in the same way.

He thus became very popular in his community for his marketing services. Farmers also approach him for delivering sessions on technical topics as well like poultry rearing, goat rearing vegetable cultivation etc.

One of his satisfied clients stated the following "I have been cultivating chillies for some years. But due to several diseases, a considerable part of my crop goes damaged at seedling stage. This time I approached LSP Gofur Ali for a remedy. He taught me about Bordeaux mixture and I was benefitted from his advice."

Gofur was also successful in propagating vermi-composting technology in his own as well as adjacent villages. Under his able guidance 150 farm families adopted this low cost eco-friendly technology. He also supplied the earth-worm required for it and earned a handsome amount.

Of recent he is busy in rejuvenating the Collection Point for goats in Hatipara village along with his other regular duties and responsibilities as an LSP. He has also taken an active initiative in establishing a model vegetable nursery in the front yard of his home. Gofur's thirst for knowledge and self-interest to acquire new skills inspired him to learn the arts involved in vegetative propagation of plants from his fellow LSP Hafizur Kan. He employed these skills in his nursery and expects a good income out of it.

Due to his involvement in a number of services his baseline income has increased from Rs.5500 to Rs.10,700.

The Floating Vegetable Gardener

Mr Binod Konwar is one of the successful beneficiaries of "Cross Border Project" of Morigaon district living in a flood prone area. He was identified as a beneficiary under vegetable domain.

There are four members in his family including himself. His wife Purnima Konwar around 28 years, a villager woman, supports her husband in his farm activities both physically and mentally. In spite of toiling in his field, he could not get any fruitful result which affected his income level. In addition every year during the monsoons his agricultural field remains submerged under flood water adding to his woes and miseries.

He was capacitated through trainings given under the project which enhanced his skills and competencies in several areas like SRI, multilayer vegetable cultivation, floating bed, composting etc. Of all, he outstandingly demonstrated the floating garden vegetable technique in his community.

He received 5 days long training on floating vegetables cultivation organized by the project through LSP. He along with his group of farmers constructed 7 numbers of floating beds during July 2013. For establishing the beds a total of Rs. 2330 was provided as working capital to each beneficiary. He cultivated all types of leafy vegetable like spinach, coriander, red and green amaranthus etc in his beds. He got a profit of Rs. 3000 deducting all expenses. During the production period LSP provided every support (planting, intercultural operational advice, quality seed etc.). That year he did not have to sit idle during the monsoons. Floating vegetable production is the best seasonal income source during floods according to him.

Project capacitated him to increase his productivity level enabling him to be self-employed throughout the year. As a traditional farmer his income was limited, within the range of Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000 per month, but now it reached to Rs. 5000 to Rs. 6000 per month. Now his family is able to take three meals in a day. He has developed a positive attitude and wishes to apply scientific methods in vegetable production practices.



Help Beyond Self

As usual the women of Nayapara had no idea how to overcome poverty and to help their family improve their livelihood. Without much initiative and proper assistance from government sector they became habituated to poverty and apathy. Their attitude spoke of no positivity, their eyes informed of no dream. Geographically, Nayapara is a village located under Krishnai Block of Goalpara District.



The project supported them to organize themselves into a group called Nargis Atma Sahayak Gut. With extensive support from their chosen LSP, Sahadat Ali, they were involved in vegetable cultivation using better management practices. Since 2012 they have been cultivating vegetables as a joint activity and earning an additional income of Rs. 2000 per member per month. As a group they meet once in a month to discuss their problems and important issues. They also maintain several types of books for recording their resolution, production, income etc. Sahadat Ali is a highly skilled LSP in field crops and vegetables domain. He got training from project on multilayer farming technique for growing vegetables. Being a skilled farmer he mastered this technique. In 2014 he motivated the members of Nargish Atmashayak Group to start cultivating vegetables using this unique technique with his support. At that time the idea did not sound promising to them as they could not guess whether that venture would be successful or not. The group by then generated some fund from their previous activities and savings. To that they contributed some more money and invested Rs. 35000 to start a multilayer vegetable farm in a 66 decimal plot taken on lease from one of its members.

Tracking the most pragmatic way possible to increase their income they got hands on training from their LSP on Multilayer Vegetable Cultivation. They entered into contract with S.Ali at an agreed amount of Rs. 700 as labour charge for making multilayer bamboo structure and Rs. 1000 for providing advisory services during the cultivation period. They utilised the fund collected for fencing their plot, constructing bamboo structure and buying all the necessary inputs like seeds, fertilisers etc. They cultivated pumpkin, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, cucumber, ladies finger, radish, long yard bean, ridge gourd, coriander

etc in their multilayer garden thereby targeting to avail a higher profit. They established favourable linkages with 2 traders and sold 6000 kgs of vegetables worth Rs.1, 20,000 together in 2014. Each member earned an additional income of Rs. 12,142.

Their future plan is to expand their farm size to 99 decimals as well as to start a duck farm. The members are now confident and have to say all positive about their experience. Even other villagers too are equally inspired and appreciating their achievement.

A Window of Opportunity for Small Pig Farmers of Cross- Border Project

North East India has recently emerged as a hot spot for private sector investment in piggery enterprise- with 60% of the total pork meat produced in India being consumed in this region. Afro-Asian Development Consortium (AADC) is one such prospective, out-of-province investor, buyer cum commercial pig producer, signalling likelihood for long term collaboration with the string of small pig producers organized under the project.



Channelizing and strengthening their pig supply chain by integrating farmers equitably is one of their core areas of interest. As the goals and vision of the project and AADC matched each other, it could create a congenial environment for long term collaboration.

Cross-border project with its organized set of pig producers in Darrang, Morigaon and Goalpara district provided an ample scope for exploring such possibilities to AADC. Several round table meetings and field visits were organized to carry forward this partnership.

To take the partnership to the next level, AADC proposed to identify a handful of genuinely interested pig producers from among the project beneficiaries of Morigaon who would initially follow their model on experimental basis. AADC would provide them only the pigs (on payment basis), training support, time to time expert advice, and a strict set of instructions to follow. Based on the feasibility and success achieved through this collaboration with producers belonging to tribal community, AADC would be further interested to start fair-trade out grower schemes with sound buy back policies in future.

Accordingly, twenty one beneficiary HHs and one indirect beneficiary HH were selected after thorough scrutiny. The interventions of the cross-border project enabled these producers to meet all the necessary pre-requisites of AADC like scientific and hygienic sheds, updated knowledge and skills on pig management practices and willingness to set

an example for others to follow. Each HH were supplied with 3 to 5 number of exotic breed of piglets (Hampshire, Duroc, TND and Arsi) depending on their unit size. Producers have the freedom to sell their fattened pigs either to AADC or any other prospective buyer later.

Junu Bordoloi, one of the lucky recipients stated "It is my dream to establish a bigger pig farm with a capacity to accommodate 25 to 30 pigs. I want to be involved only in a single occupation which will generate sufficient income to meet the major expenses of my family while improving our living standards. Before I had limited access to affordable services, means, limited assets and unhealthy marketing environment to accomplish my vision, but, now I see a great deal of probability to turn my dream into reality by joining hands with the private agency."

The piglets were being sourced from AADCs commercial pig breeding farm located in Jharkhand. The animals were being immunized against all economically important diseases including swine flu and tagged for identification. Prior to distribution these pig were medically examined by a local veterinarian and health certificates were issued for every animal. AADC is shortly planning to engage a full time veterinarian in the community.

The organization has a very strong marketing network for pig supply throughout North East India. Therefore they are also interested to buy any significant number of locally reared fattened black pigs above 80 kgs. Moreover, AADC can also supply vaccines for swine flu in large quantity which is difficult to get.

This first step towards collaboration has indeed opened a plethora of opportunities - like supply of inputs, technology, scope for contract farming, marketing etc for the low income farmer groups of Morigaon. Same opportunity is coming up for piggery MSEs formed in Darrang and Goalpara.

In the immediate future AADC have plans to set up a state of the art hi-tech pig breeding farm along with several satellite breeding units in various pig rearing rural pockets in Assam.

Availability of Services and Result Demonstrations Make the Differences

Sardarpara, is a small village under Krishani Block of Goalpara District. The village inhabited by small & marginal farmers and there are 435 households. Rain fed paddy and vegetables are predominant crops of the village. In 2012 under Cross Border Project the village was adopted and about 20 farmers were identified and selected for Boro Paddy cultivation following SRI technique.



Farmers groups were formed and LSPs had trained the groups and some support in the form seed and working capital were provided from the project. But, unfortunately barring one all other farmers dropped out at the time of planting by showing one reason or other, though there were source of water (Shallow Tube Well) and water lifting devices in the field. The lone farmer who continued with SRI method of paddy cultivation is Shri Shadat Ali, aged 42 years. He cultivated less than half a bigha and harvested 360 kg (9 mounds) of paddy in Boro season. The project staff and LSPs were not disheartened due to poor response of the other farmers but kept on organizing Field Days in the field of Shadat Ali inviting other farmers of the neighbourhood.

In 2013 Boro Season as per project plan same efforts were initiated to motivate the farmers for taking up SRI method of paddy cultivation in the locality. Training and other project supports were provided. But response was little better than that of previous year. All together four farmers finally raised seed beds and prepared land and cultivate main paddy field following SRI paddy cultivation technique in a compact area erecting common bamboo fencing. Those four farmers all together cultivated 6 bighas and harvested 18 mounds (720 kgs) of paddy /bigha. Like previous year in similar fashion LSPs organized a number of farmers' field days by inviting neighbouring farmers.

Observing, consistency in paddy yield and reduction in cultivation expenses like less requirement of seeds and low expenses on fuel cost for running pumpset, during ensuing boro paddy season (2014-15) attracted 12 farmers to take up the venture in a compact

field under common fencing. All together they prepared 7.5 bighas (1 hectare) of land and started cultivation which is expected to be harvested in the month of April- May. Interesting matter is that out of 12 farmers who took the cultivation 7 are indirect beneficiaries who do not receive direct support from the project but were motivated by the past result and service support from the Local Service Providers. If the trend continues, days are not very far when entire pathar (paddy field) of Sardarpara village will be converted to green with paddy crop during boro season.

Vegetable Volumes Up at Ganakpara Collection Centre

Farmer-groups developed under the Cross-Border Project in Ganakpara, Barpeta have started supplying fresh vegetables and greens to a collection centre created by them. It is an outcome of the various initiatives taken under the Project to promote market driven rural commercialization.



Of very recent, twenty two spirited producer members belonging to four groups have joined their hands for adopting a collective approach for commercial production and marketing of vegetables. However, sixty of their counterparts, who were either not equally interested or enterprising or financially capable as them decided to be left out.

This new congregation of farmer producers formed during November 2014 were by then capacitated through the project in several ways. They received hands on training from Local Service Providers that helped them in improving upon the traditional practices, identifying their ideal income generating activities, understanding and exploring market to establish linkage with prospective input and output dealers. They worked out their MSE plan for vegetables with support of market LSP-Khagen Sarma for the ensuing winter season of 2014.

One marketing aggregator, on contract basis, was identified and assigned to procure the vegetables from the farmers through match making workshop facilitated by market LSP. With suggestion of trader they cultivated crops like cauliflower, cabbage, potato, knolkhol, chilli, brinjal, peas etc. They bought seeds by pooling their funds and took support of LSP to procure the seeds from market. All together an area totalling to one hectare was put

under vegetable cultivation with each farmer holding a minimum 0.11 acre (11 decimals). They grew their crop organically by using their own prepared bio-compost and applied only organic pesticides for pest control with suggestions received from their technical LSP Madhusudhan Sarkar. Due to application of organic inputs their cost of production was lowered by almost 30%. The secretary of CPMC, Shri Haradhan Das stated "This is the first time I am growing crops using only homemade organic compost and I have discovered that although the crop growth is slow, the crops are healthier, greener, tastier and stay fresh for longer period of time after harvest. If we can stock our produce properly we can even sell it one day after harvest."

When the crop started to mature and before they reached marketable size, the farmers initiated setting up of collection point at Ganakpara in January 2015. This collection point is located very near to the producer's field and well connected by a motorable road. With support of project staff they formed their Collection Point Management Committee (CPMC) comprising of a president, a secretary, a cashier and two members for managing the day to day affairs of the CP. They keep records of their production, meeting discussions and weekly business transactions. So far their CP has operated for the last 15 days and a quantity of 60-70 quintals was disposed off to the buyer. Production is still going on and the farmers are expecting that by next two weeks collection will reach 10 quintals per day. In last fifteen days there was a benefit of Rs.340 per member per day. Each member paid 10% commission to the CPMC for rendering their services.

Moreover, their produce being organic fetched higher price from buyers. Local consumers who tasted the products repeatedly come to buy and even willing to pay one rupees more if required.

Because of the CP the producers can now sell their produce at their door steps while avoiding all the hassles associated with marketing like transportation, outside food, market cess and loss of daily wage. In three seasons a benefit of Rs. 3000 per member per month is predicted from the CP facility.

This initiative of the farmers has triggered the interest of the farmers associated with them formerly and feels motivated to go back to their field. The CMPC has also started planning for the next season.

Computation of benefits derived from functioning of Ganakpara CP per member in 15 days and future prediction:

Savings through daily wages	Rs. 200 x 15 days= Rs. 3000.00
Tax	Rs. 10 x 15 days = Rs. 150.00
Outside food	Rs. 50 x 15 days= Rs. 750.00
Transport	Rs. 40 x 15 days= Rs. 600.00
Total savings per member	Rs. 4500. 00
Incremental profit from vegetables per member (22 producers)	Rs. 590.00 (Rs. 2 per kg)
Total gain	Rs. 5090.00
Avg per day per person gain	Rs. 339.00 (Say, Rs. 340)
Expected annual benefit per month per member covering 3 seasons	Rs.1633.00 (Say, Rs. 1630)

Mukut Hazarika, Providing Services on Demand

Shri Mukut Hazarika has become the most sought after Local Service Provider (for livestock and poultry) not only in his locality (Borthekerabari village in Darrang district under Paschim Mangaldoi block) but beyond that reaching to more than 500 HHs covering four additional villages.

In 2012, Mukut Hazarika was chosen by his community to be their Local Service Provider under the Cross-border Project. Before joining the project he



was a typical farmer cultivating paddy and vegetables in his own land covering 0.44 acres of land. Besides he cultivated mustard and black gram as a share cropper. His agricultural production met the food requirements of his household for only four months or so a year, with the family facing acute shortages of food over the other eight months of the year. In addition to farming, Mukut used to earn a small daily wage from labour work. He was associated with a local NGO as a community worker and he received training on livestock and poultry management. During that time he established good relation with local veterinary department and used to participate in vaccination camps organized by department and acquired the skill in vaccinating small ruminants like goat and poultry birds. However, in a month from all these activities he earned a petite income of Rs. 1500 to Rs. 1800 only.

After joining project Mukut was trained under the project on various aspect of livestock and poultry management to deliver services like advisory services, primary veterinary first-aid (services include mainly treatment using herbal and allopathic medicines of diarrhoea, FMD, bloating in goat, skin disease, and vaccinations) or any kind of embedded services he can offer to the community on demand. He was also equipped with extension skills like motivation, awareness creation, and community empowerment, with special focus on rural enterprise development and natural resource management. He is providing services both as an individual LSP as well as an active member of the Service Provider Association in Darrang.

He delivered technical sessions on livestock and poultry management in groups, provided door to door consultancy services, provided preventive and curative treatments and organized vaccination camps with involvement of local veterinary dispensary. Due to his services the community has been benefitted in many ways- improving upon their local knowledge in animal management, getting easy access to inputs like preventive and curative treatments (like vaccines and medicines, poultry feed) and advisory services at doorstep. In 2014 Mukut has vaccinated about 2200 goats and 1600 poultry birds.



Mukunda has played an important role in providing the first rung of animal care services to the farmers, thereby, preventing loss due to mortality, on account of common animal diseases. Earlier due to low economic output farmers attached low interest in developing their livestock and poultry flocks. Mukut's services have now enabled the poor farmers to increase the size of their animals and birds. The population size of goats and poultry like hen, duck in his operational area has increased significantly with each HH possessing about 5-6 goats (earlier 2-3) and 10-12 birds (7-8).

He provides all types of embedded services from his home. In a single day he has 4-5 visitors, still many others who are located far communicate with him by phone call. He has built up strong linkages with veterinary officials in his area as well as at central level in Guwahati. He has been able to get their support services in terms of consultancy and supply of medicines, vaccines. His present annual income has increased significantly from Rs. 30, 000 to Rs. 72,000 from all sources. Earlier he used to deliver services on foot now he has purchased a motorcycle from his income so that he can serve more people.

Computation of annual income of Mukut Hazarika from services (2014):

Type of service	Income in Rs
Medicine & Vitamins	20,000
Feed	16,000
Vaccination	7000
Training	2000
Advisory services	1000
Total	46000

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PROJECT INFORMATION

"Cross-border Transfer of Agricultural Technologies, Institutional & Market Development Project"

Overall Objectives:

Improving food security and nutrition for the poorest and most vulnerable in South Asia to contribute to MDG 1

Specific Objectives:

- *Food security and nutrition of 20,000 smallholder households in Bangladesh and India has improved*
- *An efficient and sustainable model of public-private cooperation to reduce poverty for the most vulnerable has been replicated and disseminated at regional level*

Expected Results :

- *Measurable improvements in food security and nutritional indicators due to productivity increases through use of low-cost, environmental friendly agricultural technologies.*
- *Measurable income increases through improved linkages to input/output markets, adequate market extension and value chain promotion*
- *Integrated and sustainable stakeholder institutions for local service provision developed for technology transfer, marketing linkages*
- *Model developed in Bangladesh and further improved by the action, has been adopted by Indian NGO and is more widely disseminated*



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