CARE’s SHOUHARDO III is a gender equitable food and nutrition security program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) along with a non-match contributory funding by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). The program achieved significant results and learning from communities throughout last three and a half years. Long term sustainability is the goal once the local communities are able to obtain services from markets and local systems on their own. Keeping focus on cross cutting issues (youth, governance and women’s empowerment) in all interventions - SHOUHARDO III is exploring and promoting service provision models by public, private, and community-based organizations and service providers; and mobilizing communities to engage with these service providers to ensure sustained benefits. In the whole process, the transparency and accountability mechanisms are core of the program to give the participants and stakeholders space to contribute and learn from this multi-sectoral approach to achieving food security.
Learning from Communities

SHOUHARDO III recognizes generating knowledge, capturing them and sharing the learning as crucial processes of a community-led program. As such, knowledge management and learning is central to SHOUHARDO III. It always find space to challenge current thinking and existing approaches. Within this process, SHOUHARDO III strives to build a sound, robust and secure evidence base of information; develop and preserve experience and expertise; and help people (CARE staff, partners, and communities) to apply information and knowledge in their daily work.

- **Village Grading**
  Village grading done by program participants themselves to identify areas where the program could create good results by addressing areas of improvement.

- **Longitudinal Study and Interaction**
  Using a longitudinal study to inform and make the adjustments in program strategy/operation.
  All senior staff travel to random communities to interact and listen to the participants.

- **Failing Forward**
  Pause and reflect. For example, facilitated discussions on embracing failures and learning from them for the program staff.

SHOUHARDO III has attained many remarkable results as told by program participants and based on some studies. As the saying goes, every good things must come to an end. The program has since the mid-term embarked on a process of restructuring its activities to focus on the inevitable exit. The vision behind this exit planning is to wean off participants from program engagement by identifying and connecting them with appropriate public and private sector actors that will continue to provide the services the program has. In many cases the connections exist largely supported by the program but making them more meaningful, addressing potential breakpoints when there is no program engagement is the main focus for the program.

These ambitious actions and goals can only be achieved when deep engagement with the communities is achieved, then the activities and focus is directed to the community priorities greater results are possible. This edition focusses on some of the results achieved in the program, our accountability mechanisms and shares some of the ways the results are being collected. As in the past, we thank our staff who effortlessly crisscross the program intervention areas to enable these results and most importantly the communities that continue to welcome us into their communities, homes and villages as we together work to achieve the goals.

We welcome any feedback from our readers on any topic you read about here or what you may want to see included. It's my sincere hope that you will enjoy reading this edition.
CARE Bangladesh, through the SHOUHARDO III program, as part of its commitment to establish partnership with the PEP people of Bangladesh, aims from the outset to systematically embed transparency and accountability mechanisms as a crosscutting function within its multi-sectoral approach to food security programming. TransAcct aims to improve the quality of SHOUHARDO III’s intervention by putting in place transparency and accountability mechanisms easily accessed, understood and utilized by program participants.

Objective 1: Information sharing

Share relevant information to the program participants – particularly the vulnerable groups – in a timely and clear manner – applies also in times of disaster where life-saving information are needed.

- "Program Information Sheets" to be displayed in public places where activities are implemented
- Banners/tarpsaulins containing basic information about CARE Bangladesh in local dialect to be displayed in villages where CARE Bangladesh operates
- SHOUHARDO III to inform communities before any implementation about its intervention and activities
- SHOUHARDO III shares information on current and planned activities with village, union and upazila authorities as relevant

Objective 2: Establishing feedback mechanism

Establish channels that are user-friendly and easily accessible through which the participants are able to raise concerns freely.

- Feedback mobile phone hotline is established and maintained where a dedicated staff will be assigned to take calls within a certain time of the day
- Feedback database is maintained. Staff will be assigned to proactively keep track of feedback received and addressed
- Complaints are accepted in person – either through a person visiting the field office or through group discussions in communities
- The program will also develop an automated community feedback response register for better and real time management

Objective 3: Participatory learning

Following the community-driven approach, ensure that voices of participants and partners are paramount throughout the program cycle, with clearly understood opportunities for them to express their views that drive programmatic decision making.

- Community members are at the center of assessments designed to identify their needs and priorities that drive the work we do with them
- Employ gender and diversity-inclusive methodologies for community engagement and beneficiary communications
- CARE commits to listen to the views of the people it serves and they take center stage when designing projects and adapting activities
- Ensure coordination on community-focused key messages and channels between CARE and its partners to ensure cohesive and clear messages
SHOUHARDO III has been conducting a panel data study, called Fostering Learning and Adaptation in Resilience Building (FLAIRb), of the program’s participants, where the main purpose is to deliver actual information about uptake of project activities and how these activities affect household resilient capacities and food security outcomes. Across the sample of 680 households, randomly chosen participants, this study aims to measure the rate of implementation of recommended practices by these participants and the resulting effects of these practices on food security status, resilience capacity and ability to overcome shocks and women empowerment. Since July 2017, the program collects data from these households every six months for three years.

The four rounds of data collection for this longitudinal study already took place. The FLAIRb study has two more rounds of data collection left that will identify changes effected by the remedial actions and point program staff to gap areas and progress that can be taken for scaling up within the program and beyond. After these four rounds, the program is now in a position to review its outcomes at the programmatic and individual household level. The quantitative data pieces are useful for assessing changes in resilience capacities and progress in other programmatic on indicators. The following section summarizes the overall program progress as reflected in the fourth round (data collected in December 2018) and compares this data with the previous rounds. The data shows the following comparisons:

### Income
The daily per capita HHs income increased to USD 0.84 from USD 0.59 in the baseline survey.

### Productive assets
HHs owning productive assets increased to 95.4% from 89.4% in the baseline survey.

### Hygiene practices
HHs using latrines for disposal of children’s feces and domestic animal waste increased to 68.9% from 21.3% in the baseline survey.

### Climate-smart agriculture
24% farmers adopted drought/flood resistant varieties compared to only 6.7% in the baseline survey.

### Infant and young child feeding practices
Children (0-5 months) that are exclusively breastfed increased to 93% from 68.7% in the baseline survey.

### Mobility of women
90.5% women and adolescent girls can go to local market alone compared to 46.3% in the baseline survey.

### Women’s decision making
94.1% women make decisions on their cash income compared to 28.3% in the baseline survey.

### Resilience capacities
Absorptive capacity has increased to 65.6% from 48.3% in the baseline survey (Adaptive capacity index increased to 87.1% from 57.8%; Transformative capacity index increased to 71.6% from 61.5%).

### Service provision
58.7% respondents were satisfied with overall services provided by the local government compared to 18.55% in the baseline survey.

### Exposure to shocks
HHs that experienced shocks have reduced to 45.1% compared to 88.5% in the baseline survey.
FLAIRb findings: Reflection on Salma’s life

FLAIRb study exhibits the changes in livelihood outcomes of Salma, a 29-year-old female participant from Madarer Char in Jamalpur district, from July 2017 to December 2018. It shows that the overall growth of her resilience capacity has remained largely stagnant since the second round of the study. Salma’s household has adopted the following improved practices:

**Improved production technologies and management practices:**
- Improved livestock variety, routine vaccination for livestock, deworming, homemade livestock feed, and use of services from community;

**Access to health and nutrition services:**
- Clinic/Hospital, Community Clinic (CC).

Salma’s family income steadily increased from the second round and will most likely keep increasing. She acknowledged that in case of any crisis or emergency, she could get financial help from her relatives and neighbors, which indicates her strong social capital.

Overall, there is a clear upward trend in her decision-making capacity and if her children fall sick, she takes them to the nearest health clinic by herself. Sometimes, Salma goes to the nearest market alone to purchase necessary items, such as cloths for children and groceries.

Similarly, there was a demonstrated increase in dietary diversity in Round 4 from minimal change between Round 2 and 3. It is anticipated that her current pregnancy may have an impact on the more recent increase in her reported household dietary diversity pattern. The graph also suggests an uprising trend for her handwashing behavior, which indicates that her handwashing practice has changed from a minimum of three critical times to six. When asked about her handwashing practices, she referred to washing hands before and after eating, before feeding her children, before cooking, after defecation, and after cleaning her child who has defecated. She also mentioned learning about these from the courtyard sessions.
National Char Alliance holds public hearing in Jamalpur

What would you say if you had the opportunity to directly ask your representative to the Parliament about an issue affecting you?

“Doctors do not go to the Poschimpara Hospital during flooding. Tube wells become unusable. I want the Honorable MP to pay attention to this matter”, demanded Lipi Begum of Belgacha, Islampur, Jamalpur. Lipi Begum, a SHOUHARDO III participant, was talking to Mr. Faridul Haque, MP during a public hearing in Ghutail School and College on 23 January 2019.

The public hearing was organized as a part of local level engagement of the National Char Alliance, a multi-stakeholder platform where CARE is a leading member. In addition to the local MP, the event was attended by Mr. Walter Mwasaa, Chief of Party for SHOUHARDO III, as a special guest, along with the Union Parishad Chairmen, journalists and community people. The three hour event facilitated a lively discourse between the local people, including SHOUHARDO III participants and the local duty bearers. Mr. Faridul Haque, MP took the demands of people to his account and committed to Ms. Lipi to address the issue saying, “I will coordinate among the five MPs in Jamalpur to take the doctor retention issue of Belgacha hospital, along other hospitals, to the Health Minister.”

Government high officials visits SHOUHARDO III areas in Sunamganj

“A team comprising of 17 members from different ministries and divisions of GoB, USAID and SHOUHARDO III visited the program operational area in Sunamganj from 17 to 20 January, 2019. The team comprised of senior officials including the Joint Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Director and Assistant Chief from various ministries including Ministry of Women & Children Affairs, Ministry of Youth & Sports, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Food, Fisheries & Livestock, the Local Government, the Rural Development & Cooperatives, the Economic Relations Division from Ministry of Finance and many more.

After sharing their words of appreciation for the program interventions, the visiting team shared their observations with suggestions for further improvement in the presence of Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Abdul Ahad and other district level officials of the respective visiting ministries and government organizations in Sunamganj.

“I am truly amazed to see the program activities. It is very apparent from the words of the community people that because of all the community groups formed by SHOUHARDO III, the livelihoods of these people have significantly improved.”

- Abeda Akter, Joint Secretary
  Ministry of Social Welfare
  Government of Bangladesh (GoB)
Community of Practice (CoP): A proactive learning platform within SHOUHARDO III

Knowledge management and learning team at SHOUHARDO III has been redefining the concept of learning and sharing through ‘Community of Practice’ (CoP). A CoP basically consists of a group of individuals with a common interest who interact often to learn from each other to advance their work. The CoP in SHOUHARDO III therefore, will start as informal forums and continue to evolve as the community members feed in their ideas and suggestions.

We are excited to let you know that as part of our initiative to kick start learning and sharing through CoP, we are introducing a new regular session for our SHOUHARDO family. Each region will initiate and organize their CoP on their own. These sessions will offer an open platform to discuss anything that will enable knowledge sharing among members in order to help each other to keep up the good work. While there are no agenda for these sessions, the participants can discuss and decide on their own modalities of learning sharing, communication tools, platforms, and functions of their own CoP etc. In other words, the participants design their own future sessions.

CARE is leading a social media campaign launched this year on the International Women’s Day (IWD) to raise awareness about the necessity of protection of women workers at both informal and formal workplaces. In coordination among more than ten Member of Parliaments (MPs), Minister of Labor & Employment and Minister of Industries, a national policy dialogue was held to support of the national government for an International Labor Organization Convention for harassment and violence free workplace, particularly for women workers. The convention, if adopted in ILC 2019 by nation states including Bangladesh, will ensure a global treaty for protection of women workers, including extreme rural poor women of Char and Haor regions.

Respecting this year’s theme “Think equal, Build smart, Innovate for change”, participants, staffs and stakeholders arranged rallies, discussion session, and essay competition on women’s empowerment issues among the high school students across the Char and Haor regions. Implementing local partners ensured local, regional and national coverage of the events in the print media to reach out to broader audiences and communities for greater awareness and impact.

As a result, the program activities were displayed and program participants expressed their opinion and rights to the broader forums. Women and girls also became familiar with audiences from whom they can get help and access the required support for continuing their movement when needed in the future.

Observing International Women’s Day and launching the campaign for female workers
Nothing is impossible: Story of Belal

When you are born and raised in a poor community, with not many opportunities for growth-Chances are high that you will be poor too. This was the case for Belal, and as if the environment was not being enabling at all, he was born with a disability. There are four people depending on him-his wife Bizli, and his two sons (13 and 10 years of age) and one daughter (3 years of age). They live in Paglar Darga village, Kurigram, next to the mighty Teesta River. Each year, it is like playing hit-and-miss with the waters, whether their house will be washed away or not when floods come in. It is common for the people in their village to lose whatever they have, when natural disasters strike. Without any other source of income, his family hardly could eat the right amount of food per day; more so, the children had to stop going to school. As years went on, Belal was engulfed by the reality that his children will be the ones to suffer most, if he continued to have only such sort of livelihood.

Eventually, he was engaged as an extremely poor participant of CARE’s SHOUHARDO III. Belal received training on small business trade including life skills, and received BDT 4,500 (USD 53) as the start-up capital. Being a street vendor for a long time, he already knew what would sell to the people. Therefore, he started a small sundry shop with a tea stall in a nearby local market. Through the support of the program’s Village Development Committee and the Union Parishad in his locality, he was enrolled at the government’s social safety net services as well, to receive additional support given his condition. Starting this year, he is receiving BDT 700 (USD 8) per month.

From his small shop, he started earning BDT 1,500 to BDT 2,000 (USD 18 to USD 24) per day. Per month, his net income increased with range from BDT 7,000 to BDT 8,000 (USD 83 to USD 95). Belal, similar to his dream of giving his children a better life, was unstoppable. As soon as his income stabilized, he leased a 25 decimal land that cost him BDT 90,000 (USD 1,065). To pay it upfront, he took out a loan from a micro-finance institution run by a local NGO worth BDT 70,000 (USD 830). Utilizing information received from the local representative of Department of Agricultural Extension and the technical knowledge on how to properly use insecticides, he cultivated an improved variety of rice in that piece of land. In the upcoming harvesting season, Belal expects to get approximately two metric tons of rice in return. He will use the earnings from this harvest to buy a computer for his son—which could also be a source of income for his family. He also allocates minimum BDT 500 (USD 6) as in savings at a local bank.

After years of hard work and taking every opportunity to grow his business, Belal is now proud. Especially, his children went back to school. ‘I will do anything for them not to leave school again, until they finish and can have options to live a better life—much better than I have’, Belal shared. The Union Parishad in his locality is also proud of Belal, “We are really happy to witness the enthusiastic attitude of Belal. His condition could not stop him from achieving what he dreams for his family.” Belal certainly did set an example not just for the program but also for his community as a whole.