

Department for International Development

Bangladesh: Output to Purpose Review Strengthening Household Access to Bari Gardening Extension (SHABGE)

DRAFT Report

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANR	Agriculture and Natural Resources (CARE-B)
BARI	Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute
CARE-B	CARE Bangladesh
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DD	Direct Delivery
DFIDB	Department for International Development – Bangladesh
EoP	End of Project
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FT	Field Trainer
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
LE	Local Entrepreneur
LEA	Local Entrepreneur Association
HRM	Human Resources Management
Logframe	Project Logical Framework
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTR	Mid-term Review
NGO	Non-government Organisation
OPR	Output to Purpose Review
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
PACE	Participatory Assessment and Continuous Extension
PAL	Participatory Action Learning
PC	Project Co-ordinator
PM	Project Memorandum
PMR	Project Monitoring Report
PDO	Project Development Officer
PNA	Participatory Needs Assessment
PNGOs	Partner NGOs (delivering FFS as part of SHABGE)
PO	Project Officer
PVS	Participatory Varietal Selection
R&D	Research and Dissemination
SDC	Swiss development Co-operation
SHABGE	Strengthening Household Access to Bari Gardening Extension
SLT	Season Long Training
TA	Technical Assistance
Tk	Taka
TL	Team Leader
ToRs	Terms of Reference
TO	Technical Officer

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Preparation of the overdue description of the SHABGE FFS extension approach and methodology should be completed as soon as possible. It can be based on the existing SHABGE/SDC version, and should be printed in Bangla as well as English.	14
CARE should prepare and implement a pragmatic strategy for innovation and technology development by early 2002, including improving the technology registry, commissioning appropriate research and technical consultative activities, and using a simplified practical on-farm testing and adoption strategy as proposed in this report.	16
Pre-service training plans for the new intake of PNGO field staff must be formulated in consultation with PNGOs to take account of the inherent problems in the current SLT model, while delivering training at least as good as, or preferably more thorough than, the SLT.	17
A rapid and pragmatic training needs analysis should be completed in the early 2002 to allow the establishment and implementation of a systematic programme of in-service training for all direct delivery and PNGO field staff.	17
SHABGE should ensure that routine in-service training addresses extension methodologies, innovations, and <i>ad hoc</i> technical needs for direct delivery and PNGO field staff.	17
In line with the secondary adoption strategy paper, SHABGE should develop, implement, and report against progress on a detailed programme of activities to promote secondary technology adoption.	18
As part of the definition of the SHABGE FFS methodology, a standard approach to participatory needs assessment should be clarified and documented in the proposed operational manual.	20
CARE should continue strengthening and implementing its strategy for LE and LEA formation with emphasis on sustainable linkages to private service providers.	21
The project should establish and implement action plans to monitor PNGO service delivery performance and impact on a basis substantively equivalent to the monitoring of direct delivery services.	24
The project should strengthen the training and technical support services being provided to PNGO staff in the same way as proposed for direct delivery staff.	24
The project should develop and implement a defined action plan, with suitable targets and indicators for activities and impacts, for improving PNGO institutional capacity to deliver homestead extension services, including strategic planning, proposal writing, financial and HRM management.	25
The project should commission an independent review and audit of the partnerships component as a matter of urgency. This is also an essential preparatory activity for the project Mid-term Review which should be undertaken in the second half of 2002.	25
The project should obtain specialist assistance for the review and reformulation of the SHABGE M&E framework to consolidate systems for collecting management information and for assessing impacts through routine sample surveys and case studies.	28
The project should immediately commission a series of external impact case studies on a limited sample of homestead gardening FFS sites from the LIFT project and SHABGE North and South. This should be viewed as an essential preparatory activity for the project Mid-term Review which should take place in the second half of 2002.	28
CARE-B should write to DFIDB formally identifying a single post with unique responsibility for delivery of the SHABGE Logframe outputs and purpose.	29
A formal Project Coordination Team should be established along the lines described in this report to ensure the coordination of activities across both SHABGE regions.	30
The Terms of Reference for the Management Adviser should be clarified and published as soon as possible in order to ensure that the post is used effectively to support, rather than substitute for, operational managerial resources.	30
Arrangements should be made at the earliest opportunity for the design and delivery of a tailor-made, action learning-based, practical management development and team building programme for the Project Coordination Team and other relevant managers.	30

A rapid training needs assessment and prioritisation exercise should be undertaken with a view to developing, and beginning implementation of, a training programme for staff within the next few months.	31
CARE should analyse client profiles for direct delivery and PNGO programmes to determine whether any adjustments are needed in processes of client selection.	31
CARE-B and the PNGOs, should develop a comprehensive plan for geographic programme coverage down to the para level and for the life-of-project.	32
There is room for continued experimentation with homestead production innovations, but CARE should not seek to expand SHABGE further into rights, governance, and education issues outside of the mandate for the project.	32

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Annex 1: Summary of Progress Towards Achieving Logframe Outputs

1 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 The Purpose of the Strengthening Household Access to Bari Gardening Extension (SHABGE) project is to improve the household food security of poor women and men in five districts of Bangladesh. The project is scheduled to run for six years from inception in July 1999, with DFID funding of £10.6m.
- 1.1.2 The project assists poor women and men farmers to improve household food security by increasing the productivity of their land that is normally devoted to vegetable and fruit tree production around the homestead. The target beneficiaries are more than 310,000 farmers (>75% women), with average total holdings of less than 1 acre. The majority of beneficiaries (250,000+) will be secondary adopters as a result of diffusion of technology.
- 1.1.3 CARE B staff are conducting Farmer Field Schools (FFS) directly with groups of farmers (Direct Delivery), and indirectly through PNGOs (Partner NGOs). Local Entrepreneurs (LE) are being trained to provide advice and improve input supply. The project is working with PNGOs, as part of its sustainability strategy, to build up the capacity of their own staff, and extend the coverage of project activities.

1.2 Terms of Reference and Methodology

- 1.2.1 This report sets out the conclusions and recommendations of a mission undertaken in November 2001 to review the progress of the project. The principal purpose was to assess progress towards achieving Logframe outputs, and also against the milestones agreed during the previous Output to Purpose Review (OPR) which took place in December 2000. The current review also identified issues remaining for attention during project implementation; and recommended actions to enhance the likelihood of achieving project purpose and of sustaining project benefits.
- 1.2.2 Field visits to build the northern and southern project areas were complemented by discussions and interviews with a wide range of CARE-B and PNGO project managers and staff. The conclusions of the review were discussed informally, and presented formally at a wrap-up meeting on 27 November 2001. Recommendations were discussed and agreed and milestones and deadlines confirmed before inclusion in this report.
- 1.2.3 In view of the fact that an extensive review of the project was conducted only 12 months ago, the approach adopted for this review mission was to focus on a limited number of key questions which were highlighted by the previous exercise as crucial to the achievement of project purpose. These were:
- The balance between technology transfer and adopting a 'livelihoods approach'.
 - The quality and effectiveness of FFS delivery by both CARE staff and PNGOs.
 - Expansion of the range of available appropriate technologies, and mechanisms for selecting technologies appropriate to livelihoods circumstances of beneficiaries.
 - Progress with, orientation of, and quality of partnership mechanisms.
 - Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) arrangements and effectiveness.
 - Overall project management arrangements and their relationship to CARE-B management arrangements in general.

- 1.2.4 Section 2 of this report assesses progress towards the achievement of the Logframe outputs and purpose, and Section 3 examines progress with implementation of the previous OPR recommendations. Sections 4, 5 and 6 examine specific aspects of each of the project output areas. Section 7, 8 and 9 examines the partnerships component, M&E arrangements and management issues in more detail. Finally section 10 summarises the key milestones which were agreed with the SHABGE team at the end of the review mission.

1.3 Overview of Progress and Future Prospects for SHABGE

- 1.3.1 Since the last OPR in December 2000, CARE-B has made substantial progress in project implementation and has fully or partially addressed many of the recommendations from the previous OPR report. Although good progress was made in addressing the OPR recommendations between December 2000 and a follow-up meeting held in April 2001, subsequent follow-through in implementing new strategies has been less strong. Although this mission has rated project progress towards achievement of outputs to be good (see Section 2 below), based on progress with field implementation, the need for better support to field activities remains important. The last OPR noted 'a significant gap between high-level thinking and operational reality in SHABGE' and this remains an obstacle to progress in addressing all recommendations from the last OPR.
- 1.3.2 The project is effectively targeting services to a priority group of very poor rural women and seems to be providing significant benefits to these participants. Based on the progress to-date, project implementation should proceed as planned, with emphasis on implementing the recommendations agreed during the last OPR and with consideration for additional recommendations contained in this report to strengthen the likelihood of full achievement of the project purpose.
- 1.3.3 As advised by the previous OPR, the current project plan assumes that the project will continue until June 2007, while the current SHABGE contract ends in June 2005. While the project extension should be confirmed as early as possible, it is too early to enter into a contractual commitment. Nevertheless, it is essential that a formal decision on the proposed extension is taken by June 2003 to allow orderly start up of the third batch of Partner NGO FFSs. That decision should be dependent on the outcome of the project Mid-term Review, which is scheduled for the second half of 2002

2 Progress Towards Achieving Project Outputs and Purpose

2.1 Assessment against Logframe

2.1.1 The Project Logframe for SHABGE was revised as part of the previous OPR mission recommendations. Annex 1 to this report sets out the assessment of progress to date against the revised Logframe in achieving project outputs, and the likelihood of achieving project purpose by the end of project (EoP). The conclusions can be summarised as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: overall assessment of progress against revised Logframe outputs and purpose

		Rating ¹	Rationale
Purpose	To improve the household food security of poor women and men farmers in 5 districts.	x/2	
Output 1	Capacity of poor women and men to innovatively manage their homestead resources improved.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFS member and secondary adoption targets (total beneficiaries, number of technologies) look very achievable. • Schools programme will achieve targets. • Number of technologies identified and tested, and addressing non fruit & vegetable food-related problems will require vigilant management.
Output 2	FFS groups have enhanced ability to access information, inputs and services for homestead production.	2/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to LEs and other ESPs will be achieved. • Transferable problem analysis and problem-solving skills can be achieved. • Farmer-led sub-groups addressing important issues may prove more difficult.
Output 3	Effective network of service providers established.	x/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LE and PNGO operations should be achievable as defined – but too early to rate. • PNGO relationship and strategies will remain a challenge.

2.1.2 As Table 1 indicates, although implementation is still at a relatively early stage, it is possible to be fairly confident that the outputs defined in the revised Logframe will be achieved by EoP, and that project purpose is therefore also likely to be achieved.

2.1.3 The assessment of Output 1 is largely based on the evidence already being assembled that primary and secondary adoption of the technologies is being achieved on the scale necessary to meet target numbers of beneficiaries (see Section 2.2 below). Beneficiary targeting remains appropriate, reaching poor and marginal female and male homestead producers. The FFS methodology and the schools programme appear to be effective and reliable. Provided the project pays

¹ Scoring system:

1 = likely to be completely achieved
 2 = likely to be largely achieved
 3 = likely to be partially achieved
 4 = only likely to be achieved to very limited extent
 5 = achievement unlikely to be realised
 X = too early to assess

close and continuous attention to the range of technologies which it can offer; the suitability of those technologies by the specific circumstances of each FFS group, and the quality of expertise which it brings to each, then there is no doubt that adoption will take place and that adopters will show improvements in their livelihoods.

- 2.1.4 Output 2 is concerned with the question of broader and deeper capacity building in FFS groups and their communities, and the balance between 'technology transfer' and 'livelihoods improvement'. In terms of developing problem analysis and problem solving skills, and creating linkages with extension service providers (including Local Entrepreneurs (LEs)), it is reasonable to assume that the project will deliver the planned benefits. It has now been accepted that the earlier, over-ambitious, scenario by which FFS groups would become the foundations for sustainable development activities in their communities is beyond the scope of the project. The development of farmer-led sub-groups capable of selecting and addressing important production-related livelihood issues is a more realistic aim, and the project has begun to identify ways of establishing these. Nevertheless, this may still prove more difficult.
- 2.1.5 Output 3 is concerned with aspects of institutional sustainability, particularly in relation to the activities of LEs and PNGOs beyond EoP. It is too early to determine with confidence whether or not this output will be fully achieved, although the project should be credited for making a good beginning, especially in relation to LE establishment. PNGO relationships and strategies remain a major challenge for the project and for CARE-B in general, and this is discussed in more detail in Section 7 below.

2.2 Preliminary Evidence of Project Impact

- 2.2.1 The project appears to be having significant impacts on its client group. Field visits reveal considerable vegetable, timber, and fruit production activities on homesteads and an increasing number of activities involving poultry and fish. Impact is most visible on the LE homesteads, but can be seen on homesteads of most participants and on those of neighbours where secondary adoption has taken place fairly rapidly.
- 2.2.2 Unfortunately, there is still no good data on project impact. Data available from PCS reports is summarised in Table 2 overleaf, but unfortunately was not analysed statistically and does not estimate impacts on family income. If this data is valid and differences are statistically significant, the 139% increase in homestead production (equivalent to perhaps an additional 80kg of nutritional food per year) is significant for families involved².
- 2.2.3 Interviews with farmers also confirm increases in production, consumption, and sales of homestead products. Based on the few interviews conducted and using very conservative estimates, the average family participating in an FFS may increase its total value of vegetable production by about Tk.1200. This speculative estimate should be taken no further, but is an indication of some impact. An equal or greater impact can be expected in a few years time when fruit and timber trees can be harvested, and other economic and non-economic benefits accrue from extension staff advice on other homestead and family matters.

² Estimates to be treated with extreme care.

Table 2: Summary PCS Survey Data on Production (kg. Per 15 days)

Survey	Average Production for FFS Participants	Average Production for Non-Participants	Difference	Percent Advantage for Participants
Vegetables: North (9/00-2/01)	20.9	6.6	14.3	217
Vegetables: North (3-5/01)	53.0	17.0	36.0	212
Vegetables: North (7-9/01)	68.7	24.0	44.7	186
Vegetables: South (2-4/01)	64.3	30.1	34.2	114
Vegetables: South (5-7/01)	35.9	20.4	15.9	78
Fruit: North (3-5/01)	11.7	5.2	6.5	125
Fruit: North (7-9/01)	46.8	27.3	19.5	71
Fruit: South (2-4/01)	11.7	6.4	5.3	83
Fruit: South (5-7/01)	46.6	20.7	19.9	96
Spices: North (7-9/01)	1.7	0.4	1.3	325
Coconuts (each)	11	9	2	22
Average Percent Difference				139

2.3 Overall Assessment

2.3.1 It would appear from the foregoing that the project is capable of achieving the Logframe outputs and purpose. This is a reflection of sound targeting, selection of technologies, and appropriate field school methodologies. Field practice is, by and large, admirable, especially for direct delivery FFSs, although questions remain in relation to PNGO FFSs (see Section 7 below). Important risks to the achievement of project purpose remain in the areas of sustainability of access to extension services and extension service provider networks; and in the sustainable transfer of problem identification and problem solving skills to FFS members and groups. These risks can be mitigated only through managerial action to translate the strategies which have been devised into action at the field level as soon as possible.

3 Previous OPR Recommendations and Issues

3.1 Progress with Implementation

3.1.1 The previous OPR mission made a large number of recommendations, which were condensed into 22 main action areas. Implementation plans to address each of these areas were formulated at a follow-up meeting which was conducted in April 2001. In preparation for the current review, the project team prepared a summary of progress against each of the action areas, and this was reviewed in detail by the OPR team. Significant progress was identifiable on half of the action areas, but much remains to be done in the outstanding areas. Table 3 below summarises the position in November 2001.

Table 3: Progress in Implementing Previous OPR Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Achieved?	Comment
1	Change project outputs	Yes	Revised Logframe adopted
2	Strengthen livelihoods approach	Yes	Improved problem identification and technologies selection
3	Standard SHABGE FFS methodology	No	No 'operating manual' for field staff
4	Gender focal point, teams & plan	Yes	Structures in place
5	In-service training system	No	Awaiting training needs analysis and 'master plan'
6	Technical support methodology	No	No implementation plan
7	Extended FFS & group development/sustainability	No	Strategy drafted but no guidance for changes to field practice
8	Life of project plan	Yes	Good progress, but more to do
9	Plans for secondary adoption	Yes	Strategy in place
10	Technical support to FTs	Yes	Structure and strategy in place
11	Revised PNGO strategy	Yes	Strategy document, but implementation issues
12	Continuous education for PNGO staff	No	Only <i>ad hoc</i> inclusion in CARE-B activities and contact with direct delivery staff
13	Plan for shared learning with PNGOs	No	One or two concepts in development
14	Revised M&E framework	No	Some work has been done, but this has in general had the effect of increasing complexity - see below
15	Data collection/independent impact assessment	No	
16	Control farmers	No	
17	Management team role confusion	No	Although efforts have been made, potential confusion remains
18	Roles & matrix management	Yes	Roles refined but CARE-B restructuring has raised new issues
19	New structure at PC & PM levels	Yes	In hand
20	Plans & milestones for major targets	Yes	Done
21	Action-learning based management development	No	Awaiting training needs analysis and 'master plan'
22	Gender sensitivity & awareness training	Partial	Plan in place, but implementation issues remain

3.1.2 As Table 3 indicates, good progress has been made in the areas of strategy development, role clarification, restructuring, and planning. Progress has been much less rapid in *implementation* of improvements designed to strengthen the

performance of direct delivery field staff and PNGOs; or in strengthening management skills and processes (as opposed to structures). The underlying impression is that an intensive period of strategising and planning followed the previous OPR mission and follow-up meeting, but that momentum was then lost for various reasons, including delays in filling management posts, and the impact of wider reforms within CARE-B itself.

- 3.1.3 In the light of this analysis, the present OPR recommendations are focused on a limited number of key areas where action should be taken to implement appropriate strategies without delay. The remainder of this report analyses each of these areas in more detail.

3.2 Technology Transfer, Livelihoods and Sustainability

- 3.2.1 In the course of the previous OPR mission, there was a great deal of discussion and confusion about the meaning of the term 'livelihoods approach' in the context of the SHABGE project. Opinions ranged from the radical view that in order to adopt a livelihoods approach SHABGE should embrace all aspects of livelihoods development for its target population; to a much more reasonable approach whereby SHABGE should improve its repertoire of technologies and network with other sources of expertise so that interventions could be more responsive to the specific livelihoods circumstances of participants - but should continue to restrict its sphere of activities to improving food security through homestead production of various kinds.
- 3.2.2 The previous OPR team endorsed the second perspective, and this remains the view of the present OPR team. It is not appropriate to attempt to 'transform' the project to a 'livelihoods project': in fact, it is difficult to think of any circumstances under which any single project could constitute a comprehensive livelihoods approach. In reality, a project such as SHABGE would probably not be designed today by DFIDB, nor would CARE-B choose to implement it in this precise form - but this does not imply that the project cannot deliver sustainable benefits to a large number of poor women and men. SHABGE has already demonstrated an appropriate transition to more responsive interventions and, in the view of the OPR team at this is far enough: to try for more ambitious 'livelihoods' outputs across the project would jeopardise the current effective balance. The SHABGE team should 'stick to the knitting' and concentrate on successfully delivering what is already demonstrably an impactful project. There may be scope for some small-scale pilot activities to explore the possibilities of adopting a more holistic approach, but these are certainly not a priority at the current stage of the project life cycle and should all be undertaken unless managers are confident that they can be properly planned and managed and will not jeopardise the agreed Logframe targets.
- 3.2.3 The question of sustainability has also been linked to the question of the balance between technology transfer and the livelihoods approach. However sustainability and 'livelihoods' are not synonymous. SHABGE can achieve sustainability in a number of ways without undergoing a transformation to a 'livelihoods approach'. Four aspects serve to illustrate this:
- **Technologies and innovations on homesteads** will be sustainable to the extent that they are relevant and beneficial to the FFS participants. This depends mainly on introduction of innovations that are profitable and affordable by the client.
 - **FFS groups provide an important form of social capital** for poor rural women. These groups, as they now operate, are not likely to be sustainable, but can result in improved social cohesion and interaction between group members.

- **Local Entrepreneurs and Local Entrepreneur Associations** are very important to sustainability of project impacts. Continued attention to improving the sustainability of these institutions, through increased profitability, technical competence, and appropriate linkages is essential. Private sector mechanisms should be emphasized.
- **PNGO** FFS programmes are not sustainable as they currently operate. However, increased experience with homestead programmes, increased technical competence within the PNGOs, and management systems and culture changes can improve the sustainability of their services to the SHABGE target group.

4 Farmer Capacity Building (Output 1)

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The project appears to be effectively influencing the ability of poor women and men farmers to improve management of their homestead resources. There have been important incremental improvements in project extension services, but much is yet to be done.

4.2 Extension Methodology

- 4.2.1 The Farmer Field School (FFS) methodology is appropriate to the client group and appears effective. There has been some limited progress in simplifying and standardising the methodology since the last OPR, especially in the North, but field staff still give significantly different descriptions of the frequency, phasing, and use of various 'tools' for FFS implementation, beyond what would be expected even with a flexible needs-based approach. It is important to make the approach and methodology clearer and more easily understood by outsiders (including donors and reviewers), partners (including PNGOs), and most especially by field trainers (FTs³) themselves. The additional year of implementation experience has helped staff explain the programme, but some widely varying explanations were found for some of the tools in use. Preparation of the overdue description of the SHABGE FFS extension approach and methodology should be completed as soon as possible and printed in Bangla as well as English.
- 4.2.2 Completing this description of the SHABGE FFS approach should not be held hostage to attempts to replicate the original 'FAO approach' to FFSs or to attempts to develop a standard 'CARE-B approach'. The FFS approach needs to be tailored to specific programme situations to account for special needs of individual target groups, thematic interventions, and programme objectives. Defining a standard SHABGE FFS approach should not imply lack of flexibility in modifying the programme to suit individual community needs. There is already a very good description of the FFS approach prepared for SHABGE/SDC, but of which CARE-B SHABGE/DFID staff were unaware. Presumably this would also meet the needs for SHABGE/DFID and can be modified (if need be) and translated into Bangla for field staff. This documentation of the SHABGE FFS approach includes illustrative Session Guides for the FFS. Project Officers (POs), Technical Officers (TOs), and consultants could develop additional Session Guides appropriate to all new technologies entered in the project Technology and Innovation Registry.

Recommendation:

Preparation of the overdue description of the SHABGE FFS extension approach and methodology should be completed as soon as possible. It can be based on the existing SHABGE/SDC version, and should be printed in Bangla as well as English.

- 4.2.3 The project has made some improvement to its participatory needs assessment methodology with new materials, staff training, and flexibility to consider a broader range of client needs. This is described in more detail in Section 5 below.
- 4.2.4 SHABGE, as all field extension programmes, probably mixes elements of three main extension approaches: technology transfer, advisory or consulting services, and

³ Although PNGOs have adopted different terminology for field extension staff, this report uses Field Trainer (FT) and Project Officer (PO) for FFS extension staff of both CARE and PNGOs.

facilitation. SHABGE is basically a technology transfer programme with project justification built on expected impacts from increased homestead horticultural production. Modifications to the FFS approach shift it towards an 'advisory' approach the second year and a 'facilitation' approach⁴ in the third year helping groups identify problems and make linkages to other sources of assistance. The SHABGE extension approach now in use is very appropriate to the target group of clients and there are no grounds for any major change in the methodology. Advisory service approaches are likely to be more costly and less suited to the SHABGE clients, while facilitation approaches have not yet been demonstrated to be effective in the context of the SHABGE FFS groups.

4.3 Extension Content - Technologies and Innovations

- 4.3.1 The technology base for the FFS is not wide, but does appear to offer significant benefits to clients. Even in the South, in an FFS group where the last OPR expressed reservations over the suitability of technical innovations being introduced, farmers have adopted and expanded use of those technologies (although at heavy cost to family labour). The range of homestead innovations available to the project is limited and field staff have limited agricultural training. FTs naturally tend to introduce to farmers the innovations they have learned in their pre-service training programmes and some of these innovations may be of questionable benefit (i.e., 'landscaping' around mature trees); while others might not be the most appropriate (i.e., raised beds in the dry season when flat or lower beds might be better for moisture retention)⁵. Direct delivery FTs seem never to recommend chemical fertilizer, even though the amount of high-quality organic fertilizer is limited⁶. On the other hand, PNGOs seem more disposed to recommend purchased inputs, even though these are obviously not appropriate in some homestead conditions.
- 4.3.2 There is need for continuing expansion of technical and innovation options for the homestead and a project of SHABGE's size should be a leader in this effort. Since the last OPR, there has been marginal progress in strengthening the base of innovation to support the FFSs. There are draft plans for a technical support mechanism to respond to field staff technical needs, and an action plan for technology testing and development of new innovation options. Strengthening the technical content of the FFS programme requires further attention to training (discussed in the next section), and identification and development of technology⁷ through:
- **Technology and Innovation Registry:** Technology registries are available for the different conditions in the North and the South. The initial draft registry for the North lists 20 technologies, as compared with 46 identified in various fugitive materials at the time of the last OPR (though there are probably qualitative differences between these lists). In the South, the technology registry has 55 innovations available to SHABGE FFSs compared to 22 at the time of the last OPR. It is not clear to what extent the PNGOs have access to these registries or have their own. With the expansion in range of homestead production activities with which the project deals (i.e., poultry and fish), there should be a wider range

⁴ A facilitation approach to extension services should not be equated with a 'livelihoods approach'.

⁵ These are impressions of the OPR team and need further assessment to determine whether the technologies are appropriate or not.

⁶ Of course cash is in even shorter supply and chemical fertilizer might only be suited to LEs who have higher levels of production and some cash income.

⁷ 'Technologies' should be taken to include 'hard' technologies embodied in inputs (such as crop varieties, fertilizers, trellises, etc) and 'soft' technologies (such as management and marketing innovations).

of 'standard' innovations available to the FTs. FFS session guides would be useful for the most common innovations.

- **Externally Commissioned Research:** It was expected that SHABGE would stop attempting to carry out research itself, but would identify and contract out priority homestead research studies to local or international research institutions. Such contract research work should have been started by now, but no studies have yet been contracted out to either local or international research institutions.
- **Technical Consultations:** Research should not be necessary for most homestead innovation options to be considered under SHABGE. There is not time to develop new technologies during the life-of-project and many state-of-the-art technologies are available from research institutions and private seed companies. This will require a pro-active search, probably outside of Bangladesh, and perhaps inviting horticultural researchers to assess homestead technology options. The South has identified 16 farmer problems for which SHABGE needs technical support through training and/or consultancy services. This is quite recent and the needs are not yet prioritised; nor is there a defined plan for procuring the required services.
- **Technology Testing and Adoption Strategy:** The Technology Development Strategy and the draft 'Technology Testing and Adoption by Farmers - A Five Step Strategy' emphasize a fairly complex process for participatory needs assessment and participatory research with a hierarchy of technology databases. This essentially encompasses the various elements of technology development listed above, but is very process-oriented. It is also slow; expects too much of farmers and field staff, and does not recognise the difficulties with on-farm research trials. SHABGE needs to prepare and implement a more pragmatic strategy for innovation and technology development. This might:
 - a) use on-going PNA to identify needs for innovation options (already done);
 - b) address these needs through externally commissioned research and consultants;
 - c) allow for some pro-active supply-side identification of homestead innovation options;
 - d) use farmer-managed, non-statistical trials to verify suitability of innovations; and,
 - e) record innovations proven to be successful in the SHABGE Technology and Innovation Registry.

4.3.3 Farmer testing is a normal part of the extension and innovation process and should be seen as an extension tool - and not made overly-complicated as formal on-farm research.

Recommendation:

CARE should prepare and implement a pragmatic strategy for innovation and technology development by early 2002, including improving the technology registry, commissioning appropriate research and technical consultative activities, and using a simplified practical on-farm testing and adoption strategy as proposed in this report.

4.4 Training and Technical Support

4.4.1 As noted in the last OPR, field staff are not technically well-qualified. In the South, only two of the 26 FTs have any educational background in agriculture, while three of ten officer-level staff have agricultural training. PNGO staff qualifications may be even lower. For two PNGOs in the South, none of the six FTs have agricultural education backgrounds, while their two supervisory staff have only agricultural diplomas. This is a weak base on which to build a technically-sound extension programme. (While making this observation, the OPR team notes that the high motivation, social skills,

resourcefulness, and commitment of the field staff are major assets for the programme and are the basis for its successes.)

Pre-Service Training

- 4.4.2 The Season Long Training (SLT) programme provides good practical training, but has caused PNGOs some problems. The long pre-service training orients staff towards CARE-B, not towards their employers. PNGOs also complain that the long training qualifies staff too well and enables them to seek other employment. Still, starting FFSs with staff that lack at least the equivalent of SLT is not an option. Recruitment of new PNGO staff is due to start soon and, although the issues have been recognised, there is as yet no firm plan to modify pre-service training. CARE will need to consult with PNGOs to develop and implement a practical pre-service training course substantially equivalent to, or, preferably, more thorough than, the SLT.

Recommendation:

Pre-service training plans for the new intake of PNGO field staff must be formulated in consultation with PNGOs to take account of the inherent problems in the current SLT model, while delivering training at least as good as, or preferably more thorough than, the SLT.

In-Service Training

- 4.4.3 SHABGE field staff have had some good *ad hoc* training in new technologies and innovation to help them address the somewhat broadened homestead agenda (fish and poultry) and there has been needed training in project procedures and extension methods. However, a robust system is not yet in place to provide necessary in-service training. A training needs assessment has been started, but the approach is neither standardised nor systematic. In the South, a self-assessment of training needs was undertaken, while in the North a technical examination of the field staff was used. These assessments have not been fully analysed, and no plan has yet been developed to systematically deliver needed training. Plans for an extended process of training needs analysis and training strategy development are overly-sophisticated. A rapid and pragmatic needs assessment to allow the development and prompt implementation of in-service training is required.

Recommendation:

A rapid and pragmatic training needs analysis should be completed in the early 2002 to allow the establishment and implementation of a systematic programme of in-service training for all direct delivery and PNGO field staff.

- 4.4.4 Within the in-service training agenda, technical training continues to be neglected. To illustrate the extent of this problem, the draft in-service training plans for next year in the North propose technical training for only 7 of 32 training events for direct delivery staff and 5 of 26 for PNGO staff. In the South, 3 of 14 for CARE staff and 3 of 15 for PNGO staff cover technical matters. Overall, only 21% of training events are dedicated to improving the *content* of support services for the FFS groups, while the rest are more process-oriented. The project must develop and implement routine in-service training on extension methodologies, innovations, and *ad hoc* technical needs for direct delivery and PNGO field staff.

Recommendation:

SHABGE should ensure that routine in-service training addresses extension methodologies, innovations, and *ad hoc* technical needs for direct delivery and PNGO field staff.

Technical Support Services

- 4.4.5 The project has made more progress in improving technical support services to help field staff resolve technical problems and respond to farmer needs using locally-available technologies. This technical backstopping is somewhat similar to the support needed for development of new innovation options (described above), but is essentially a routine function assisting field staff to address day-to-day problems. SHABGE has established agreements with the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and examples of on-going cooperation were observed in the field. Reorganisation of CARE-B staff structures and responsibilities has also improved the technical support for SHABGE staff. It is not clear to the OPR team whether or how well this technical support functions for PNGOs. SHABGE should monitor this carefully.

4.5 Secondary Adoption

- 4.5.1 SHABGE field staff continue to be somewhat concerned with recording secondary adoption, but the OPR team does not see this as a major issue. There is bound to be a time lag in technology spill-over, but, if technologies are 'right' - that is they are beneficial to clients - they will spread. Project management should give primary attention to ensuring introduction of technically and economically sound innovations. Nonetheless, the strategy to facilitate secondary spread of technology is appropriate.
- 4.5.2 The school gardening programme appears to be effective and the 'buddy' system is an interesting experiment in promoting secondary adoption. The 'Secondary Adoption Strategy Paper' presents a reasonable approach. It is now time to develop, implement, and report against a detailed programme of activities to promote technology diffusion, including fairs, radio, school gardens, etc..

Recommendation:

In line with the secondary adoption strategy paper, SHABGE should develop, implement, and report against progress on a detailed programme of activities to promote secondary technology adoption.

4.6 Strategies and Plans for Achieving Targets

- 4.6.1 CARE has developed a clear plan to deliver services to the target number of clients. Management information reports on the numbers of FFSs, FTs, and clients are readily available. It would be useful to have more information available on FFS functioning - attendance, satisfaction, achievement of group objectives, etc. - but there is need to be cautious in suggesting the development of any new information systems (see Section 8 below).

5 Strengthening Ability to Demand Services (Output 2)

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The most challenging output for SHABGE is that of strengthening demand for extension and information services within the client group of poor rural women and their households. Expectations must be modest. The project should be demand-driven to the extent possible, and it is doing well in this regard. Long-term sustainability of FFS groups is unlikely, but some progress has been made in developing systems to strengthen FFS members' ability to demand services during and after the project.

5.2 Participatory Needs Assessment

- 5.2.1 As discussed in the course of the previous OPR, more participatory needs assessment and responsive selection of technologies is the most important aspect of strengthening the livelihoods approach within SHABGE. Based on observations in two FFSs, there appears to have been some improvement in participatory needs assessment methodologies. This may be due to an additional year of experience by the FTs, or to training and changes in the tools and methods used. An obvious change is that of expanding the range of service options under discussion to include poultry and fish in addition to fruits and vegetables.
- 5.2.2 A new methodology for participatory needs assessment was piloted in a sample of FFSs in March 2001 to identify overall farmer interests in the project areas. This resulted in a ranking of farmer priorities as presented in Table 4 below, and served as the basis for a revised PNA methodology for the FFS.

Table 4: Summary of Farmer Needs for Innovation from a Sample of FFS Groups

Farmer Interest	North	South
Poultry	30	32
Vegetables	22	19
Fruit trees	19	11
Timber	16	7
Livestock	10	23
Fish	2	0
Bamboo	1	8
Total	100	100

- 5.2.3 The FFS programme - as described by one SHABGE staff member - now flows from this participatory needs assessment and planning exercise and involves a focus on 'core' homestead gardening technologies the first year (a fairly standard programme centred on vegetable and fruit tree innovations); a more tailored programme addressing specific group needs in the second year, and consolidation and linkages with other appropriate service providers that can provide support for special interests in the third year. This approach (if interpreted accurately) appears quite appropriate and enables the FTs, POs, and TOs to deliver some standard technologies of proven benefit the first year, while having time to source relevant innovations and technical support to respond to farmer individual needs in subsequent years. The approach should be documented in a description of the FFS approach and methodology.

- 5.2.4 The use of new PNA methodologies are still being phased in and there is some confusion as to whether 'PNA' has replaced 'PACE' or joined it in the pantheon of tools in the standard FFS. Other staff gave conflicting descriptions of participatory needs assessment methodologies, not all of which would necessarily lead to a useful prioritisation of community needs.
- 5.2.5 There might be some excessive enthusiasm for PNA that is resulting in too many different tools and PNA activities being used, taking up too much of the field staff and farmers' time. This can be checked with field staff and an appropriate level of PNA included in the programme. As part of the definition of the standard SHABGE FFS methodological approach, the project should clarify and document a standard approach to participatory needs assessment. SHABGE will need to monitor the PNA work to ensure quality, and perhaps to assess potential for routine reporting on the results. Quality of PNA work may be a particularly important issue for PNGOs.

Recommendation:

As part of the definition of the SHABGE FFS methodology, a standard approach to participatory needs assessment should be clarified and documented in the proposed operational manual.

5.3 FFS Group Development and Sustainability

- 5.3.1 The FFS groups serve well as extension service contact points and learning groups. Given the nature of the FFS membership and the current activities of the groups, there seems little likelihood of these surviving much beyond the end of the FFS as organised groups. However, CARE-B has identified and initiated studies on FFS groups from other projects that continued beyond completion of support for project FFSs, and lessons may be learned from these which can be applied to SHABGE. Within SHABGE, there are cases where sustainability is possible, as with an adolescent girls' group in the South that is planning to establish a more formal and permanent organisation. In general, a continuing loose association of members, exchanging seeds, planting materials, and information is more likely and the most that should be expected⁸. To the extent that SHABGE believes it necessary to promote greater FFS group cohesion, increased attention from a social development specialist and/or a farmer organisation specialist would be required to strengthen group formation activities.

⁸ The OPR team cannot judge the extent to which such behaviour and interactions between FFS group members in the future would differ from traditional relationships.

6 Strengthening Service Provider Networks (Output 3)

6.1 Local Entrepreneurs, LE Associations, and Service Provider Networks

- 6.1.1 Progress on strengthening service providers is mixed, with good progress in implementing the strategy for development of Local Entrepreneurs (LEs).
- 6.1.2 Many of the LEs visited appear to be developing as successful, small-scale businesses, providing important services to their communities and to FFS members. SHABGE has initiated a useful exercise of introducing LEs to the range of service providers active in the immediate area; has completed an evaluation of lessons learned from the Strengthening Effective Business Activities Initiative, and has begun thinking about broader networks of service providers in project areas.
- 6.1.3 The OPR team was not able to visit LE Associations (LEAs), but work with these appears to be on track and will have to intensify as initial FFSs mature. Incorporating PNGO LEs into LE Associations will be a challenge, as there might not be a critical mass of PNGO LEs to form separate associations; FFS locations for direct delivery and PNGOs are intermingled, and work with LEs requires a whole new set of skills and strategies with which the PNGOs have not yet had experience. Credit programmes of many PNGOs might support LE development, but should not drive the LE programme.
- 6.1.4 LE/LEA linkages with DAE are encouraging, but in general there is a need for greater emphasis on sustainable private sector linkages to seed and other input suppliers and private nurseries. Draft plans are in place to develop a strategy for establishing linkages between FFS groups and extension service providers. Contacts with Upazila Agricultural Extension Coordinating Committees (UAECCs) might be useful in identifying and building appropriate linkages, as well as in strengthening SHABGE's technical support base. As noted in the SHABGE report on a pilot initiative to establish extension service provider networks, the project will need to give greater management attention to developing and implementing strategies to improve LE Associations and service provider networks.

Recommendation:

CARE should continue strengthening and implementing its strategy for LE and LEA formation with emphasis on sustainable linkages to private service providers.

7 Partnerships

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Working through PNGOs is a core strategy for SHABGE. Theoretically, the immediate benefit of partnerships is large-scale cost-efficient delivery of FFSs to primary and secondary beneficiaries over a much larger area than could be addressed by direct delivery alone. Strategically, building relationships with, and strengthening local NGOs which would remain active in the area and with the target population through their other programmes, was also intended to provide an important channel for sustainability of benefits after the end of the project. The previous OPR discussed the issues surrounding this approach at length, including the question of whether partnership with local NGOs was, should be, or could be more than a sub-contracting arrangement. Concerns which were raised the time of the previous OPR, including the tension between lower-cost delivery and quality of PNGO FFS; human resources management (HRM) and morale issues, and the practicality of institutional strengthening for PNGO's, have proven well-founded based on the experience in the past year.

7.1.2 Today, the PNGO programme quality appears quite variable. Relations between CARE-B and the PNGOs are good, but an approach has developed which is described as partnership but is essentially sub-contracting. This hybrid approach is, in fact, sub-optimal for both service delivery and institutional capacity building. Good working relations between direct delivery and PNGO field staff have moved the programme forward, but will not in themselves fully overcome flaws in the model. Increased management attention to the partnership programme is needed to avoid serious problems in the future.

7.2 Service Delivery and Programme Quality

7.2.1 PNGO FFSs visited ranged from good to quite 'questionable'. Examples of the latter include plantings that had been done the day before the visit; non-functional study plots; field staff who appeared unable to explain the FFS methodology coherently; FFS members who appeared unable to recall the content of recent FFS sessions; blurred boundaries between pre-existing PNGO activities and SHABGE activities, and premature introduction of specialist sub-groups and appointment of LEs before FFSs themselves appeared to be fully established. While many of these specific examples may be 'explicable', and indeed are in many cases due to over-enthusiasm rather than any impropriety, there is a real danger of some SHABGE PNGOs delivering sub-standard extension services that do not benefit clients and might even damaged their existing livelihood basis.

7.2.2 There are legitimate reasons why quality of PNGO FFSs may appear less good. These PNGO FFSs have not been operating as long as the direct delivery FFSs and may be in more difficult working areas. PNGO field staff are less experienced and less technically qualified. PNGO field staff also lack CARE's massive support structure and inevitably must be involved with some of the other work of their employer. PNGOs lack core technical staff to backstop the SHABGE programme, maintain linkages with other technical institutions, and monitor extension activities, methods, and innovations.

7.2.3 The previous OPR report proposed a range of measures to facilitate oversight and quality assurance of PNGO operations, including direct linkages to direct delivery field staff, and joint FFS operations between direct delivery and PNGO staff.

SHABGE managers have made efforts to introduce these activities, but it is apparent that practical difficulties (distant locations, workloads etc.) constrain joint working to a minimum. Supervisors and managers with direct responsibility for partnerships make efforts to visit PNGO FFSs regularly, but the frequency is limited, and it is clear that it would be very difficult for mid-level CARE-B personnel to examine PNGO operations closely, or indeed to offer critical feedback or require performance changes of PNGO's.

7.3 Human Resources Management Issues

- 7.3.1 In the course of this review, a number of HRM issues were flagged up by PNGO directors and staff. The necessity for a more suitable pre-service training model, maintaining the strengths of the SLT but without the disadvantages; and the need for systematic in-service training for PNGO field staff as well as direct delivery staff has already been described in earlier sections of this report. The underlying issue remains: PNGO field staff are recruited with lower qualifications, and are paid less than their direct delivery counterparts. Under these circumstances both capacity and morale will inevitably be weaker - and higher quality management skills are needed to achieve good performance from these personnel. At the same time, PNGO SHABGE staff are, at least in some instances, better paid than their colleagues employed on other PNGO programmes - with the effect of creating barriers and damaging morale throughout the PNGO organisation as a whole. Since the situation is now established, it would be very difficult to alter the terms and conditions of service for PNGO SHABGE field staff. The PNGO's have neither the management expertise nor the resource base to devote to special management arrangements for these personnel, and so it may be seen that SHABGE has an obligation to assist PNGO directors to deal with and resolve HRM issues as they arise.

7.4 Capacity Building and Shared Learning and Development

- 7.4.1 The experience with building institutional capacity in PNGOs is mixed, but not overly encouraging. Partners are generally quite pleased with their participation in SHABGE and want to expand the relationship. Some report having improved their management procedures as a result of SHABGE and at least one credits the SHABGE contract for enabling his organisation to obtain funding for another substantial project (in another sector).
- 7.4.2 With benefit of experience, the 'SHABGE Partnering Approach' can now be seen as over-ambitious and optimistic. It expects partners to 'take project benefits further, deeper, and over a longer period' than direct delivery and is to 'expand outreach, learn best practices of PNGOs, better utilise organisational capacity of PNGOs and enhance participation at grassroots levels'. Little, if any, of this is yet evident.
- 7.4.3 SHABGE was to identify strengths and weaknesses of each PNGO and develop a plan of action to address these. Almost all PNGOs identified their priority needs one year ago as proposal writing, strategic planning, financial management systems and human resources management. During the current review, most PNGO's repeated the same priorities. (Only one PNGO was able to arrange its own annual audit for SHABGE.) Apart from this, no information was available on specific PNGO strengthening plans and little substantive progress was observed by the OPR team. At this stage it is difficult to see how SHABGE is building significant capacity in PNGOs.

- 7.4.4 An argument could be made that by imposing additional management burdens without providing for additional overhead costs⁹, CARE is potentially diverting attention from the PNGOs' core programmes and undermining rather than strengthening their capacity¹⁰.
- 7.4.5 The partnership concept called for (and the previous OPR mission endorsed) shared learning activities by which SHABGE and CARE-B would seek to learn from the PNGOs in areas where the latter had different or greater experience or skills. Apart from one or two planned joint 'pilot' activities, no strategy or mechanisms for shared learning have been put in place. Although this is unsurprising given the issues identified above, SHABGE should still give consideration to seeking opportunities for genuine exchange with its partners.

7.5 A Way Forward for Partnerships

- 7.5.1 There is no simple 'once-for-all' solution to the difficulties and risks inherent in the SHABGE partnership model. However, the project is now committed to working with PNGOs and should continue to seek ways of improving the effectiveness of the mechanism.
- 7.5.2 For the majority of PNGOs, SHABGE should accept that a 'sub-contracting' relationship is most likely to deliver success in terms of the project Logframe, and management effort should be devoted to:
- mentoring and development of PNGO managers and staff;
 - development of *relevant* PNGO management and administration systems;
 - regular, formal and explicit monitoring of PNGO field-level activities;
 - systematic prompt identification of problems; and,
 - rapid intervention when necessary.
- 7.5.3 In the interest of SHABGE clients, PNGO development, and CARE-B's own reputation, SHABGE must establish and implement action plans to monitor PNGO service delivery performance and impact on a basis substantively equivalent to the monitoring of direct delivery services.

Recommendation:

The project should establish and implement action plans to monitor PNGO service delivery performance and impact on a basis substantively equivalent to the monitoring of direct delivery services.

- 7.5.4 Economies of scale make it impossible for each PNGO to have its own training programmes and technical support systems for SHABGE implementation and the project must therefore also strengthen the training and technical support services being provided to PNGO staff in the same way as for direct delivery staff as described above.

Recommendation:

The project should strengthen the training and technical support services being provided to PNGO staff in the same way as proposed for direct delivery staff.

⁹ CARE covers some overhead costs for PNGOs directly, providing a computer and paying honoraria for the PNGO Director and accountant as individuals.

¹⁰ Due to fungibility of resources, SHABGE is probably not actually eroding capacity of partners, but neither is it building capacity.

- 7.5.5 These actions will strengthen the sub-contracting relationship at the expense of a more equal partnership, but this is in fact the relationship already established. As responsible institutions, PNGOs should be, and in fact expect to be, held responsible and accountable for quality service delivery. PNGO directors voiced no objection to increased performance and impact monitoring by SHABGE, but should be consulted and involved in planning such monitoring.
- 7.5.6 There is a need for further management attention to the strategy and practice of PNGO capacity development under SHABGE. This should result in a defined action plan with suitable targets and indicators for activities and impacts on PNGO institutional capacity to deliver homestead services.

Recommendation:

The project should develop and implement a defined action plan, with suitable targets and indicators for activities and impacts, for improving PNGO institutional capacity to deliver homestead extension services, including strategic planning, proposal writing, financial and HRM management.

- 7.5.7 In view of the immediate concerns about PNGO performance at the field level which emerged in the course of this review, the project should, as a matter of urgency commission an independent review and audit of the partnerships component of SHABGE. This should be viewed as a preparatory mission for the Mid-term Review of the project which should be undertaken in the second half of 2002.

Recommendation:

The project should commission an independent review and audit of the partnerships component as a matter of urgency. This is also an essential preparatory activity for the project Mid-term Review which should be undertaken in the second half of 2002.

8 M&E Framework

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The previous OPR made several recommendations relating to SHABGE M&E systems. These were not fully addressed by the time of the April 2001 review meeting, but since then SHABGE has developed an M&E framework and added a number of activities to its already complex M&E system. The new M&E framework, which envisions 13 data collection systems, constitutes an excessive M&E burden for the project. Field staff dedicate a large amount of time to data collection, estimated at 250 hours/year. Efforts to streamline M&E reporting are expected to reduce this to 158 hours/year, but this is still a heavy workload. Furthermore, there is a lack of some basic information needed for project management and - particularly disappointing - no external impact studies of SHABGE and previous homestead gardening projects have yet been commissioned.¹¹

8.2 M&E System Components

8.2.1 The M&E effort is massive. The OPR team found references to the following components:

- ***The Livelihoods Monitoring Project (LMP)*** is expected to provide impact data on the SHABGE project. This project is focused on development of methodologies for livelihoods assessments and is involved with quite a complex data collection agenda. No LMP data on SHABGE impacts will be available until 2003 or 2004 and only then can it be determined how useful this will be to SHABGE. The LMP project should, however, produce information of considerable value to SHABGE for planning activities and perhaps for designing future impact studies.
- ***Production-Consumption-Sales (PCS) Surveys*** are a major monthly data collection effort to track impact. These surveys have produced some interesting reports and have sensitised field staff to impact issues, but there are some serious weaknesses and controversies over the PCS surveys. First, the M&E data collection takes about ten percent of field staff time and - to the extent all project benefits are dependant on field staff work - this would therefore represent 10% of the cost of the total project. FTs, POs, and TOs are not necessarily experienced in such data collection techniques, and the surveys may not adequately cover PNGO FFS programmes. Furthermore, collection of data by the FTs on their own project runs the risk of introducing intentional or unintentional bias. Finally, large field surveys of this type are always prone to generating more information than can be managed and to running into problems with data quality.

Despite all the effort in collecting PCS data, reports do not include statistical analyses of data or estimates of income impacts.¹² CARE-B questioned some of the initial results of the PCS surveys and undertook field verifications that supported survey findings. However, the OPR team is sceptical of the PCS and the consistent differences between FFS participants and non-participants, mainly because there would not seem to have been enough time since FFS start-up to

¹¹ The 1998 McCullaugh report is the basis for expected impacts of SHABGE, but that report noted the need for more comprehensive studies of programme impacts.

¹² One response was that statistical analyses are not necessary, as field staff do not understand them. This would mean that it is acceptable for field staff to believe there are significant differences between groups even when there are not.

account for differences in fruit production.¹³ If there have been no project impacts on fruit production, production differences reported in PCS surveys would have to be either statistically insignificant, due to bias in data collection, or due to sampling error with SHABGE participants having more land and fruit trees than non-participants.

- **Negotiated indicators** are still in the lexicon of activities for the FFS methodologies. This might be a very appropriate tool for participatory planning and examples observed seemed quite reasonable, although they were apparently always framed in terms of quantity of production. Accepting these as only a simple tool for use by the FFSs and farmers would be appropriate, but information on such indicators should be of interest to project management to track how successful FFS groups are in meeting their own targets.
- **Negotiated indicators for PNGOs** are proposed but not yet in place to monitor the partnership programme. It is not clear whether these are to monitor field activities and impacts or to monitor changes in PNGO capacities. Negotiated indicators might be quite appropriate for both uses, but the project will want to ensure that indicators and systems for monitoring PNGO field activities are substantively equivalent and comparable to those for direct delivery.
- **Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)** is referred to in many documents, but no reports are available and there is some confusion over what this implies. For some staff PME seems to equate with the PACE tool for FFSs. It seems PACE is used for establishing baselines, monitoring, and evaluation within groups, but there is no reporting on results of these exercises.
- **Evaluation teams** with members from all CARE-B projects in the sector are a new initiative to make routine field visits to SHABGE (and other CARE-B projects) and document qualitative changes in behaviours and to monitor quality of programme activities. No evaluation visits have yet been made to the SHABGE project.
- **The 'happiness factor'** was mentioned as a monitoring indicator, but this appears not to be used, unless as part of the PME.
- **Well-being analysis**, as used in Go-Interfish, is also referred to as a new tool for monitoring project impacts. This is more appropriate for targeting and would not appear particularly relevant to SHABGE.
- **Homestead Production Cost Monitoring** surveys involve all FTs in collecting cost data from a sample of FFS participants twice a year. No reports on this were available to the OPR team.
- **LE Business Monitoring** data is collected twice a year. No reports on this were available to the OPR team.
- **Technology adoption** monitoring is collected in group discussions twice a year. No reports on this were available to the OPR team.
- **School programme** monitoring is done twice a year. No reports on this were available to the OPR team.
- **Farmer access to inputs and services** monitoring is assessed twice a year in group discussions. No reports on this were available to the OPR team.
- **LE Association Tracking** is assessed twice a year. No reports on this were available to the OPR team.
- **Buddy system** monitoring of secondary adoption is assessed by census twice a year. This captures only a portion of secondary adoption (and, in fact, only a very controlled and contrived secondary adoption) and is not very useful for monitoring

¹³ SHABGE staff suggested that differential fruit production might be attributable to papaya production, 'tree management', or pruning. Reports suggest that the differential might be due to coconut, mango, or jackfruit. This is perhaps possible, but the OPR team has not seen field activities or research data that would convincingly support this.

impacts. Used on a small scale, it might be useful to test relevance of technical innovations.

- **Field staff rate FFS 'quality'** on the basis of 'A', 'B', and 'C'. This is useful information and, if subject to some verification or spot-checking, would be worth including in standardised management reports.

8.2.2 While this massive data collection system is in place, some quite important management information is not available, including information on client satisfaction with services, impact of services, FFS programme quality and attendance rates, and quality of PNGO programme implementation.

8.3 Way Forward for M&E

8.3.1 In order to simplify and streamline these systems, the project should seek assistance from a specialist in extension M&E and impact assessment¹⁴ to complete its review and reformulation of the SHABGE M&E framework. This should consolidate systems for collecting management information (from field staff reporting on activities and initial results) and for assessing impacts through routine (i.e., annual or semi-annual) sample surveys and case studies of a limited number of programme participants. The CARE-B M&E section advises the project, but SHABGE is responsible for its own M&E systems.

Recommendation:

The project should obtain specialist assistance for the review and reformulation of the SHABGE M&E framework to consolidate systems for collecting management information and for assessing impacts through routine sample surveys and case studies.

8.3.2 In addition, the project should immediately commission a series of external impact case studies on a limited sample of homestead gardening FFS sites from the LIFT and CHAP projects, and from SHABGE North and South. Based on findings and experience from these initial studies, further studies can be carried out on a routine, as-needed basis. Impact studies should attempt to quantify and value all project benefits before the project Mid-term Review which should take place in the second half of 2002. Impact studies on projects such as SHABGE will always be difficult and cannot and be expected to give 'the final answer' on impact. They should however provide some estimates of impacts and inform discussion on impacts strategies

Recommendation:

The project should immediately commission a series of external impact case studies on a limited sample of homestead gardening FFS sites from the LIFT project and SHABGE North and South. This should be viewed as an essential preparatory activity for the project Mid-term Review which should take place in the second half of 2002.

¹⁴ Such expertise might be available from AVRDC or other sources. Ideally, the specialist should have experience in the context of homestead gardening.

9 Project Management Issues

9.1 Introduction

- 9.1.1 The previous OPR mission made a number of recommendations for reform of management structures and processes to facilitate implementation of SHABGE. As described above, significant progress has been achieved in implementing some of these recommendations (notably those concerned with structure and roles, and development of project plans and strategy papers). On the other hand, important gaps remain - particularly in relation to management processes and skills, especially for communicating and implementing strategies in the field.

9.2 Structure and Roles

- 9.2.1 SHABGE has undertaken managerial restructuring as proposed by the previous OPR, notably the reorganisation of management responsibilities at PC level and below to integrate direct delivery and partnerships, and create clearer improved links to the technical support structure. However, the development of CARE-B's Long Range Strategic Plan, which proposes significant changes in management structures and processes, has significantly altered the institutional environment within which the project must operate. At the time of the last review, the proposed management structure was for a Dhaka-based SHABGE Programme Coordinator for overall project management, with implementation teams responsible to Project Coordinators in the North and South. Under the Long Range Strategic Plan CARE-B is now restructuring its operations along regional lines. This effectively splits responsibility for implementing SHABGE into two geographic areas.
- 9.2.2 While this will undoubtedly confer benefits in improved coherence of CARE-B's programme as a whole, it potentially creates difficulties from DFIDB's perspective. SHABGE was designed as a single major homestead development programme covering two distinct regions of Bangladesh. As such, it is expected to yield economies of scale to improve methodologies and identify and develop new technologies and innovations which have broad applicability in a range of agro-ecological and social environments. If the northern and southern activities are fragmented, valuable opportunities for experimentation and lesson learning will be lost. While it is for CARE-B to determine its internal organisation structure, it is essential that DFIDB can identify a single post with unique responsibility for delivery of the SHABGE Logframe.

Recommendation:

CARE-B should write to DFIDB formally identifying a single post with unique responsibility for delivery of the SHABGE Logframe outputs and purpose.

- 9.2.3 In management terms the establishment of northern and southern regional coordinators with responsibility for SHABGE among a portfolio of other projects will reintroduce a level of operational confusion and fragmentation which the recommendations of the previous OPR were designed to address. In order to avoid this risk, a formal Project Coordination Team should be established, the membership of which should include the regional Programme Coordinators, the SHABGE northern and southern Project Coordinators, and others as appropriate. The terms of reference for this team should include:
- The development and implementation of project strategies.
 - Guidance and advice for Project Coordinators.

- Accountability for performance at the project level.

9.2.4 The team should meet relatively frequently (monthly or quarterly) and should maintain formal records of its activities and decisions.

Recommendation:

A formal Project Coordination Team should be established along the lines described in this report to ensure the coordination of activities across both SHABGE regions.

9.2.5 As part of the restructuring undertaken to implement the recommendations of the previous OPR, a Management Adviser was appointed to support the Project Coordinator in the northern region. Rather than the relatively short-term developmental and advisory role which the OPR team expected, this post appears to have been established as a relatively long-term senior position with rather poorly-defined terms of reference, which include the development of a Training Master Plan for the project; aspects of PNGO institutional capacity building, and 'creation of a livelihoods focus'. It must be stressed that no criticism whatsoever of the incumbent is intended in these comments - the issue is rather that the project must determine precisely what role is to be played by the Management Adviser post to ensure that the resource is used effectively in support of, rather than as substitution for, formal managerial responsibilities.

Recommendation:

The Terms of Reference for the Management Adviser should be clarified and published as soon as possible in order to ensure that the post is used effectively to support, rather than substitute for, operational managerial resources.

9.3 Management Development and Training

9.3.1 The previous OPR recommended a purpose-designed practical management development and team building programme, with a series of short workshops interspersed with implementation activities 'on-the-job'. It was proposed that the programme should primarily be action learning-focussed, with management knowledge and skills introduced in the context of key management tasks which needed to be undertaken. At the time of the current OPR this recommendation had not been implemented, partly because of difficulties in filling vacant management positions, and partly due to the desire to coordinate management development within the proposed Training Master Plan. In view of the limitations in translating strategy into operational action identified elsewhere in this report, and in the light of the new regional structure, it is the view of the OPR team that this recommendation is now even more important.

Recommendation:

Arrangements should be made at the earliest opportunity for the design and delivery of a tailor-made, action learning-based, practical management development and team building programme for the Project Coordination Team and other relevant managers.

9.3.2 This report contains a number of references to training and development activities of all kinds for staff at all levels. Project managers intended to conduct a training needs analysis in preparation for formulating a training plan and programme for the project. The OPR team had expected that this activity would have been completed by the time of this review. The delay appears at least partly due the formulation of over complex plans for the training needs analysis, to be undertaken by external consultants under the supervision of the Management Adviser. Rather than a complex analytical exercise, a rapid needs assessment and prioritisation exercise

can be undertaken: since it is clear that the vast majority of field level staff will have the same training needs, it will be possible to formulate a general training programme designed to address these rather than devote extensive time and resources to the development of individually-responsive needs assessment and planning mechanisms. As described above, the training needs are urgent. The project cannot afford to lose a further six months before directly addressing issues of field competence and quality of service delivery.

Recommendation:

A rapid training needs assessment and prioritisation exercise should be undertaken with a view to developing, and beginning implementation of, a training programme for staff within the next few months.

9.4 Gender and Social Issues

- 9.4.1 The 11 activities contained within the Gender Action Plan have been partly implemented in that gender focal points and gender teams are in place. However, the OPR team detected little evidence that these were operating effectively to address strategic gender needs, and continuing management attention to gender issues is required. For example, SHABGE staff and reports mentioned 'gender-related task lists' and the 'gender assessment matrix', but specific examples of their purpose and impact were not given, nor did staff seem very clear on their use.
- 9.4.2 SHABGE targeting is good in that the over-whelming number of clients are women and from families with less than five decimals (0.5 acres) of land. Targeting is less clear in PNGO programmes, due perhaps to lack of experience; incorporation of pre-existing client groups, and/or targeting of groups likely to utilize credit facilities (i.e., for poultry, cattle, etc.). Although this is not a matter of serious concern, SHABGE should analyse and compare client profiles for direct delivery and PNGO programmes to determine whether any adjustments are needed in processes of client selection.

Recommendation:

CARE should analyse client profiles for direct delivery and PNGO programmes to determine whether any adjustments are needed in processes of client selection.

9.5 Future Plans

- 9.5.1 The life-of-project work plan which has been developed since the previous OPR is well presented and appears adequate to implement the project as defined by the revised Logframe. Further development and implementation of strategies for various aspects of the project are still necessary and will facilitate implementation of the work plan. Some of the most important of these are discussed below.

Project Area Expansion

- 9.5.2 Consideration is being given to expanding the SHABGE catchment into two new districts in the North (Joypurhat and Gaibandha) and into the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the South. New FFS groups are to be started from the end of 2002. Since many of these will be run by PNGOs a fairly long lead-time is needed to make necessary contractual arrangements, recruit and train field staff, select communities, and launch the FFS programme. This is best done with a clear understanding of the geographic areas for programme expansion.
- 9.5.3 Some good initial planning and diagnostic work has been started to assess options for area expansion in the North. The OPR team did not encounter specific problems with the current geographic focus of the project, but notes there have been questions

on area allocation between direct delivery (which started first) and PNGO operations, which followed. Issues to be considered in the geographic expansion include:

- **The density of FFS coverage** will affect the scope for secondary adoption and the overall project impact. Should there be more than one FFS per Union? Or per Para? Some communities will of course not be interested in the programme, but there should be a standard for siting FFSs and planning should provide full coverage for target areas.
- **Intermingling direct delivery and PNGO programmes** has advantages and disadvantages. It may facilitate oversight, sharing of experience, and comparison of results. But it can also lead to conflicts, inefficiency in travel and FFS support, and duplication of efforts. It might be especially problematic in forming LEAs and future ESP linkages. Planning allocation of geographic areas for PNGO programmes must take a project-long perspective to avoid allocating PNGOs FFSs in widely dispersed locations from year to year.
- **Coordination with other projects** is important to avoid duplication. SHABGE/DFID can easily coordinate with SHABGE/SDC and the current LIFT project, but must rely on institutional memory to avoid overlap with the earlier LIFT and CHAP projects¹⁵ and must know of other homestead production projects to avoid overlap. There would seem to be no reason not to establish FFSs in communities where other projects are targeting other client groups or providing other services not related to homestead gardening.

9.5.4 In considering the above, CARE-B and the PNGOs should develop a comprehensive plan for programme coverage down to the Para level and for the life-of-project. A good start has been made with this in the terms of reference for the work in the North. Skipping areas or 'cherry-picking' of favourable areas in which to work might be justifiable, but should be done with full understanding of reasons and implications. This analysis and planning might also identify potential implementation problems that require new approaches.

Recommendation:

CARE-B and the PNGOs, should develop a comprehensive plan for geographic programme coverage down to the para level and for the life-of-project.

Project Thematic Expansion

9.5.5 SHABGE has expanded its mandate from 'fruits-and vegetables' to include a broader array of homestead production activities, basically defined by 'fish and poultry', but somewhat broader. Field staff have apparently handled this thematic expansion quite well, but it will undoubtedly take some time for technical competence to catch up fully. There is room for continued experimentation with homestead production innovations, but the project should not seek to expand further into rights, governance, and education issues outside of the mandate for the project.

Recommendation:

There is room for continued experimentation with homestead production innovations, but CARE should not seek to expand SHABGE further into rights, governance, and education issues outside of the mandate for the project.

¹⁵ There may be a case for providing SHABGE services in areas formerly served by CHAP or LIFT, but, if so, this should be done knowingly.

10 Key Milestones

10.1.1 As described above, the approach adopted for this OPR was to focus on a limited number of key issues which needed to be addressed if a project was to succeed in delivering the agreed Logframe outputs and purpose. While a number of detailed recommendations are made in the foregoing sections, a small number of these should be considered as important milestones for re-examination at the Mid-term Review of the project which should be scheduled for the second half of 2002. Table 5 below summarises these milestones, and identifies activities and responsibilities as determined by ANR and SHABGE managers at the debrief meeting of 27 November 2001.

Table 5: Key Milestones and Action Plan

Key Milestone	Details	Responsibility	Due date
Formal designation of an accountable manager for Logframe delivery	Letter providing designation to be sent to DFIDB	ANR Sector Coordinator	27 November 2001
Creation of and development of TORs for a Project Coordination Team	Tasks include PMR formats, Training Master Plan. MTR should see evidence of activity (e.g. minutes)	Programme Coordinator South*	12 December 2001
Completion and implementation of a Training Master Plan	In-house	Management Adviser /Project Coordination Team	1 March 2002
Implementation of a plan to increase technology and innovation options available to FFSs	Revised plan: 1/2/02 Research priorities: 1/4/02 Update tech. registries: 15/5/02 1 st research contract let: 1/6/02	Programme Coordinator South /Project Coordination Team	1 June 2002
Independent review and audit of Partnership NGO work prior to the MTR	ToRs: 1/12/01 Consultant recruited by: 1/1/02 Final report: 1/5/02	Programme Coordinator North /Project Coordination Team	1 May 2002
Externally sourced review and streamlining of the project M&E system prior to the MTR	ToRs: 31/12/01 Consultant recruited by: 31/1/02 Work commences: 1/3/02 Final report: 1/5/02	ANR Sector Coordinator /Project Coordination Team	1 May 2002
Externally-contracted impact studies on homestead gardening activities of SHABGE and prior project prior to the MTR	ToRs: 31/12/01 Contracts issued: 15/2/02 Final reports: 1/5/02 Areas: LIFT, CHAP, FFS North & South (production, income & capacity changes)	Programme Coordinator South /Project Coordinators /Project Coordination Team	15 May 2002
Complete plan for life-of-project geographic expansion of project activities	Expansion strategy: 9/12/01 Surveys begin: 1/1/02 Draft plans: 15/3/02 Agreed plan: 31/3/02	Project Coordination Team /Project Coordinators	31 March 2002

* Formally designated as accountable for SHABGE Logframe delivery

Annex 1: Summary of Progress Towards Achieving Logframe Outputs

Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Comments/Recommendations	Score
Goal: To improve the livelihoods of poor and marginal female and male homestead producers in Bangladesh	Increased production Increased income Improved nutritional status		
Purpose: To improve the household food security of poor women and men farmers in 5 districts	56,000 households receiving Direct Delivery Extension increase the value of homestead production by 50% by EoP 280,000 secondary beneficiaries increase homestead production by 10% by EoP	Purpose level OVIs are optimistic but should not be changed at present on the assumption that an extension to the timescale for the project from 6 to 8 years will be agreed. The transfer of technology is working and the technology base is expanding.	x/2
Output 1: Capacity of poor women and men to manage their homestead resources improved.	1. Conversion to SL approach (including Participatory Needs Assessment) designed, tested and implemented by EoYr3 2. 25,000 households adopt 2 new practices/technologies by EoYr4 and 56,000 by EoP 3. Plan to encourage secondary adoption in place by EoYr2 4. 280,000 secondary beneficiaries adopt 1 new technology by EoP+2 5. Technical support and research inputs identified and services contracted by EoM30 6. 20 technologies identified and tested by EoYr4, 40 by EoP (8 years) and 10 adopted by EoP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFS member and secondary adoption targets (total beneficiaries, number of technologies) look very achievable. Schools programme will achieve targets. Number of technologies identified and tested, and addressing non fruit & vegetable food-related problems will require vigilant management. 	2
Output 2: Poor households have enhanced ability to access information, inputs and services for homestead production	1. FTs and PNGOs are facilitating group development by EoYr3 2. 2000 FFS groups able to analyse problems and test solutions by EoP 3. 1000 FFSs groups continue to demand services for up to 5 years post formation 4. 1000 FFSs have 2 links with LEs and/or public or private sector service providers by EoP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to LEs and other ESPs will be achieved. Transferable problem analysis and problem-solving skills can be achieved. Farmer-led sub-groups addressing important issues may prove more difficult. 	2/3
Output 3: Effective network of service providers established	1. 800 LEs established and functioning as effective businesses by EoYr4 and 2000 by EoP 2. Mechanism devised for linking LEs and FFSs with other technical service providers designed and tested by EoYr3 and implemented by EoY4 3. 600 of established LEs collaborate with public and private sector organisations and PNGOs by EoYr4 and 1500 by EoP 4. 70% of PNGOs continue to offer extension services beyond EoP 5. 30% of PNGOs integrate homestead development support into their own programmes by EoYr4 and 60% by EoP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LE and PNGO operations should be achievable as defined – but too early to rate. PNGO relationship and strategies will remain a challenge. 	x/2

