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Report on Graduation Assessment of NOBO JATRA

Abul Barkat
Rabeya Yasmin
Muhammad S. H. Siddiquee
Faisal M Ahamed

Human Development Research Centre
humane development through research and action

Abbreviations

BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
DFSA	Development Food Security Activity
FANTA	Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
FFP	Food for Peace
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
HH	Household
IGA	Income Generating Activity
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
PSF	Pond Sand Filters
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
USAID	United Nations, America International Development
WVB	World Vision Bangladesh

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NOBO JATRA graduation component enabled 92.7 percent of the targeted ultra-poor households to move out of poverty over 24 months against a target of 21,000.

World Vision Bangladesh has been implementing the Ultra Poor Graduation Component in the NOBO JATRA Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) funded by the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP). To address the chronic poverty across four sub-districts in Khulna division, the World Vision led NOBO JATRA project modified BRAC's graduation model to deliver a sequence of targeted interventions that aim to graduate 21,000 extremely poor households from fragile income sources to sustainable, diverse livelihoods. The direct participants of the Graduation Component in the NOBO JATRA DFSA were female. Human Development Research Centre (HDRC) as an independent research organization conducted the NOBO JATRA- ultra-poor graduation component baseline study for the Ultra Poor Graduation activity comprising both treatment and control areas and as per design of the NOBO JATRA project implementation and assessment, nearing the end of program implementation for Cohort I (after end of 24 months' cycle), this graduation assessment covered areas under Cohort I of the Graduation Component of NOBO JATRA DFSA except for the control areas. The overall objective of this study is to assess graduation status based on a set of graduation criteria designed for Graduation component of NOBO JATRA DFSA.

The Graduation component of NOBO JATRA DFSA identified a total of 10 graduation criteria for the program assessment purpose. However, some graduation criteria were ***conditional (optional***) to selected households only. The graduation assessment criteria were divided into two categories: ***essential*** and ***optional/conditional*** considering such limitation. Out of 10 graduation criteria, 7 were essential, and 3 were optional or conditional. The benchmark for graduation was set at achieving 80 percent or above of the essential criteria suggested by WVB. Therefore, a household is termed as "Graduated" if it satisfies 6 of the 7 essential graduation criteria.

Successful graduation assessment required applying both quantitative and qualitative methods (i.e., a mixed method of QUANT-QUAL). A household survey using a structured questionnaire was conducted to collect quantitative data. Qualitative information was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

The quantitative survey was planned as a panel survey (i.e., repeated cross-sections where same households at the baseline were surveyed repeatedly) comprising only treatment households of Cohort I. The baseline survey covered 408 participant households from 34 literacy centers. So, the sample size for this graduation assessment in Cohort I was also assumed 408. Finally, this study considered 387 participant households after considering the attrition rate. Focus group discussions were conducted with beneficiaries in the treatment area. Key informant interviews included interviews with program officials at head office, experts, local leaders and field facilitators of the program.

Quantitative data analysis techniques included univariate analysis, bivariate analysis. Comparative analysis between baseline and graduation assessment (hypothesis testing) took place to assess the achievements of the program. Qualitative information was analyzed through content analysis. The qualitative information and quantitative data analysis were performed separately, and their findings were synthesized.

The assessment suggests that the average number of income sources among the participating households is 3.2. Also, a noticeable critical fact is that the proportion of females reporting homemaking as a primary occupation has reduced significantly to 3.5 percent compared to 33.6 percent in the baseline. The average gross monthly income in the participating sample households stands at 7,959 BDT (US$ 94.2)[1] during graduation assessment, whereas it was 6,948 BDT (US$ 82.2) at the baseline. 96.6 percent of sample participant households had 2 main meals a day for the past one year, and 81.7 percent of households did not report any food shortage, whereas this was only 14.9 percent in the baseline.

Of the participating households, 14 percent reported their access to agricultural land, and this was only 3.9 percent at the baseline. The access to water bodies among the sample households reached to 10.9 percent in the graduation assessment from 3.9 percent in the baseline, implying a significant improvement in the access to water bodies by the marginalized segment of the population. The average number of productive assets in the participant households from the graduation assessment was 14.8. This is more than a two-fold increase as compared to baseline. The aggregated average market value of productive assets increased by 39.1 percent compared to baseline. Overall, 83.7 percent of participants of Graduation component of NOBO JATRA DFSA practice homestead gardening. Almost all participant households (99.1%) having vegetable garden consumed vegetables produced in their homestead garden. About half of them sold their produced vegetables in the market, implying a strong linkage with the market.

Almost all the target households (99.5%) reported having some cash savings, whereas it was only 36.5 percent in the baseline. 88.1 percent of target households have access to formal financial services. During baseline, such access was only 15.9 per cent. Nearly half (45.2%) of the participant households are not only practicing saving but also applying their savings to further enhancing income, leading towards their livelihood improvements.

A large majority of households (85.2%) have access to improved sanitary latrines, and thus, 14.8 percent are currently using an unimproved latrine. At the baseline, 74.5 percent of households had access to improved sanitary latrines. Therefore, NOBO JATRA's contribution regarding significantly improving access to sanitary latrines is evident in this study. Moreover, most of the households have access to safe drinking water.

At the graduation assessment, it is found that almost all the beneficiaries have knowledge about the actions which should be undertaken at the time of natural disaster and they are well prepared for actions if any disaster might occur.

A majority of the beneficiaries (86.3%) have the correct knowledge about the minimum legal age of marriage for boys and girls, which is 21 and 18 years consecutively. The prevalence of early marriage has dramatically been reduced in the treatment area. It is evident that cases of early marriage during the graduation assessment reduced to 2 from 10 during baseline. More than 94 percent of the eligible school-going children were attending school. Among the eligible couples, 74.8 percent were using modern contraceptive methods.

The NOBO JATRA graduation component enabled 92.7 percent of the targeted ultra-poor households to move out of poverty over 24 months against a target of 21,000 ultra-poor households. The percentage distribution of households by different essential graduation criteria by Upazila is presented in the table below.

[1] 1 US$ = 84.5 BDT (yearly average January-December 2019). Retrieved from: https://www.bb.org.bd/econdata/exchangerate.php (accessed on 15 December 2019)

Graduation Criteria (essential)	Upazila				Overall
	Dacope	Koyra	Kaliganj	Shyamnagar	
Criteria 1: Minimum of 2 sources of income	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.0	**99.5**
Criteria 2: Had 2 full meals in a day in the last year	77.1	73.4	91.4	83.1	**81.7**
Criteria 3: Household increased productive assets 2 times	94.3	98.4	96.6	92.8	**94.6**
Criteria 4: Households have kitchen gardens	98.6	90.6	94.8	85.6	**90.2**
Criteria 5: Cash savings (includes formal as well as informal saving)	100.0	98.4	100.0	99.5	**99.5**
Criteria 6: Use of a sanitary latrine and safe drinking water	80.0	92.2	89.7	80.0	**83.5**
Criteria 7: Practicing knowledge in the disaster preparedness activities	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	**100.0**
Overall Program Graduation	92.9	93.3	96.1	91.4	**92.7**
Qualified on at least 6 graduation criteria	**91.5**	**92.2**	**96.6**	**89.7**	**91.5**
Qualified on all graduation criteria	**58.6**	**62.5**	**77.6**	**52.8**	**59.2**
N	**70**	**64**	**58**	**195**	**387**

The NOBO JATRA DFSA included a number of intercorrelated interventions to lift the participating ultra-poor households from the abyss of poverty. Literacy training enabled them to learn and realize the possibility of upliftment from the vicious circle of poverty. The savings and credit group and kitchen garden are likely to sustain, contributing to resilience, household income, nutrition, and food security. Mobile financial services will ensure the participant's access to financial services.