

Quarterly Report

2010

January - March



Economic Empowerment of the Poorest Challenge Fund



stimulating household improvements resulting in economic empowerment (SHREE)

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## Overview

This report covers the period from 1 January - 31 March 2010 and completes the second full year of the Implementation Phase of the Economic Empowerment of the Poorest (EEP) programme. Following an overview section, progress in each of the four outputs is reported. The report concludes with sections on management and a financial summary of forecasted expenditure in the quarter under report and for the remainder of the year.

During the quarter under review, the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr Azim Manji, resigned with effect from 28 February. As a consequence some reorganisation amongst the management team has taken place to guide the programme through a transition period, with the Interim CEO's role now being carried out by John Woolner, Chairman of Harewelle International; this will be discussed further in the management section below. It is however, important that Mr Manji's contribution to the development of the EEP into the programme that it is today be formally acknowledged. Notwithstanding these changes, the EEP now enters a critical period where it must deliver. Furthermore, with specific reference to the Output to Purpose (OPR) review undertaken in November 2009 by DFID-B, the EEP is catalytically crucial to the over-arching goal of policy change initiatives and in strengthening the relationships between development partners.

While the EEP has achieved much progress on fund disbursement and transactional processes, yet ultimately the programme will be judged by its impact and sustainability which will be based upon trusted relations between various stakeholders that requires time.

This quarter has seen the initiation of two independent audits of EEP activities, notwithstanding considerable progress has continued to be made as the programme prepares to deliver its impact by 2015. These are highlighted as bullet points and discussed further in section 3.

- Commencement of remaining initiatives under the Innovation Challenge Fund Round 2;
- Start of EEP activities on launching Innovation Round 3 with identification of innovation platforms focused on a section of the marginalised population groups;
- Considerable integration of programme activities to ensure all initiatives are well communicated and lessons are shared to allow for meaningful synergies across the DFID-B portfolio and EEP network;
- Growing awareness of the catalytic role the EEP will play in the coming months in support of both outputs 3 and 4 particularly in regard to linkages with the 'All Party Parliamentarians Group' (APPG) on extreme poverty and their role in advising future policy.

Furthermore, it is expected that Harewelle will commission an independent Mid-Term Review. The next quarter also sees the launching of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Innovation Fund and the initiation for the newly recruited CEO Mr. Colin Risner.



## 1. Progress against Outputs

### **1.1. OUTPUT 1 - Proven approaches to improving the livelihoods of the extreme poor taken to scale**

The Scale Challenge Fund (SCF) has six projects commissioned; this portfolio covers the potential economic empowerment of around 60,000 households by 2011. These include indigenous peoples, religious minorities, dispersed rural communities, and semi-developed urban slum communities so learning opportunities are of great interest.

The projects have now completed their first year of operation and some have already experienced some difficulties as a result of an unseasonal cold wave late in 2009. Despite these challenges, EEP actively engaged with some projects in providing support to project participants in dealing with the cold weather and getting project activities back on track. We are already seeing greater project ownership by the participants and exciting results are expected to be reported from these activities.

In the quarter under report, the partner NGOs refined their 2<sup>nd</sup> year work plans and budgets with the assistance of the EEP team. Meetings have taken place at EEP offices to finalise 2<sup>nd</sup> year budgets, together with official presentations of project progress over the 1<sup>st</sup> year.

Some budget revisions and contract amendments were requested to support the cost of providing humanitarian support, adding further staff and activities for lessons learning and advocacy, a lesson that must be emphasised in the development of full proposals for the Innovation Round 3 Fund rather than being seen as an “add-on”.

Whilst the majority of the EEP partner activities focus upon income generation, activities also cover communal mobilisation and support for resilience against shocks. On the latter,

representatives of the partner NGOs, members of the local government attended the programme learning workshop in Rangpur, which though coordinated by EEP, was hosted by CARE and Practical Action for the demonstration of their project activities targeted towards social inclusion and shock resilient livelihoods. The EEP will coordinate these workshops on a quarterly basis and the findings will feed directly into lessons learning across the EEP network.

### **1.1.1. Annual Nutrition & Socio-economic Impact Survey**

EEP has undertaken the annual nutrition and socio-economic impact survey for all scale-fund beneficiaries with the first survey acting as a baseline for future quarterly and annual surveys. Socio-economic data and anthropometric measurements were collected for 384 households, which will be analysed by Professor Nicholas Mascie-Taylor, University of Cambridge. The initial analysis of the data will be made available to the team at EEP in second quarter of 2010.

The survey was conducted between 1 March and 3 April and included the training of enumerators and data collection & anthropometric measurements. A total of 64 representative households were selected from each scale fund NGOs through random sampling. The survey questionnaire included socio-economic status and anthropometric measurements of the households. The survey data and analysis will be provided by Prof Mascie-Taylor with full presentation at the EEP office on 22 April 2010.

## **1.2. OUTPUT 2 - Innovative approaches to improve the livelihoods of the extreme poor tested, evaluated and successes ready for scaling up**

The focus this quarter has been on consolidating operations and enhancing the EEP's service role within the active innovation round 1 & 2 partner NGOs. The management interns for supporting the operations of two innovations round NGO partners were recruited and are now based at their respective NGOs. The EEP operations team, M&E advisor and MIS team have supported the development of a core household profile. Discussions on project sites started in January and currently underway to strengthen the shared understanding on the M&E approach and reinforced the collective responsibility within the NGO teams for the M&E and learning function which has at its core the measurement and interpretation of the changes arising from interventions at the field level and tracking the evolution of the innovation for discourse across the EEP network.

The Output 2 team meetings held during the quarter took stock of the approach taken and progress to date. Discussions were guided by a sharper picture of the 2011 end point that we were all working to, in terms of conclusions to be drawn on innovation, impact, understanding and lessons learned for development practice, arising from the experiences gathered through the programme interventions, partner case studies and other experiences.

The Innovation round partner NGOs all submitted their first quarter reports, which were reviewed over the quarter and the scope of the work clarified. The next SILPA (Simultaneous Impact Learning and Process Audit) is due at the end of April and TORs have been sent to the consultant conducting the audit. The SILPA will provide a review on the basis of which, if found necessary, the process elements of the project cycle will be modified.

In this quarter a total of 6,064 BHHs have been selected with a number of programmes working with local government for leasing khas land, technical support from agriculture and livestock specialists. The inception period for a number of programmes ended in this quarter which included recruitment of programme staff, selection of BHH, agriculture and livestock inputs, BHHs exposure visits.

In 2009 the MA was able to sign contracts with 11 NGOs with one outstanding, PUAMDO, which required support in rectifying weaknesses within the programme document; the MA signed the contract with PUAMDO February of 2010.

### **1.2.1. Innovation fund round 3 - *marginalised group fund***

The third round will focus on a section of marginalised groups amongst the extreme poor targeted by EEP. The highlighted groups include: physically challenged; elderly people; ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups; culturally bound occupational groups; street dwellers; and working children and adolescents.

The first and second round focused on spatial disparities that led to economic marginalisation and extreme poverty across a cross-section of the population. The third round took stock of the stakeholder analysis undertaken by EEP at the inception of the programme, beneficiary selection for scale-fund NGOs and key stakeholder analysis during background research for the third round. The household selection for the SCF revealed EEP has, so far, failed to reach a certain section of marginalised groups and in consultation with key stakeholders, it has emerged that such groups constitute the bottom five percent of the extreme poor. The innovation fund is the ideal vehicle for NGOs to better understand the dynamics of the poverty of the focussed group and try to devise interventions which challenge their particular social circumstances of discrimination.

The third round will invite NGOs to develop social protection mechanisms along with the intervention which attempts to tackle the intergenerational transference of poverty. The outcome of this round will include mainstreaming the identified groups while the outputs will include improved income, nutrition and ability to cope with shocks. The emphasis of this round remains on households but NGOs will be encouraged to think 'outside of the box' and focus on community based approach while graduating the household.

The team developed a concept note which was discussed initially, with consortium members, and later, civil society, NGO, and research organisations. A modified concept note was followed with a Focus Group Discussion involving both consortium members and development stakeholders. A final concept paper has been circulated amongst consortium members, incorporating feedback with the aim of finalising the EOI. A set of detailed discussions have been undertaken with Prof Geoff Wood and Dr Joe Devine from the University of Bath in order to ensure a robust approach in the conceptual design of the innovation fund. A set of road shows are in the pipeline to widely disseminate the details of the concept paper to NGOs throughout Bangladesh.

### **1.3. OUTPUT 3 - Increasing consistency in the understanding, sharing and application of approaches to addressing extreme poverty**

Activities this quarter have focused on further consolidating synergies and integration across programme activities as well as on continuing to deepen strategic partnerships with external actors with similar aims and objectives to EEP. During the quarter, meetings amongst the EEP consortium partners led to a proposal that a joint review on the efficacy of the current

ALLMOT structure within EEP was necessary. This has been followed up with discussions amongst the EEP network and other DFID-B programmes and the identification of common platforms for future sharing of EEP evidence and lessons. Contact has also continued to be maintained with advocacy partners at Unnayan Shamanay and University of Bath which led to increased participation from their staff, alongside EEP participants in determining output 3 activities.

Great effort has been made this quarter to better integrate the communications and advocacy components across the EEP network and as such, a common draft M&E framework for Output 3 has now been developed in collaboration with EEP and DFID.

The Young Professionals have been tasked with suggesting areas of research potentially suitable for documenting the spatial disparities of poverty and its effects on poverty dynamics amongst the extreme poor. Suggestions have been submitted to Dr Joe Devine of the University of Bath (the interim Chief Knowledge & Advocacy Officer) to review. The aim is to produce policy briefs on extreme poverty that will supplement the lessons learned from implementing the SCF programmes.

#### **1.4. OUTPUT 4 - Policy and practice at local and national levels shows increasing recognition of the needs of the extreme poor**

While EEP network wide activities have been focusing on enabling platforms, processes and supporting activities for their respective policy goals, the EEP advisory, communications and M&E team have identified and where necessary strengthened their initiatives.

Collaborative work with the APPG on extreme poverty undertaking an orientation of over a 100 members of parliament and fostering review of the policies towards the extreme poor has been led by the EEP team.

Initiative series of workshops aimed at the MPs is also helping to strengthen their understanding of tools to monitor and evaluate policy impact, development pathways as sharing of wider EEP lessons across a bi-partisan APPG. For ease of reporting, activities undertaken this quarter are summarised as bullet points under these audience groups.

##### **1.4.1. Communications**

The Communications team coordinated several meetings with the 'communications and advocacy' units from the respective SCF NGOs in an effort to kick-start the ALLMOT process at EEP. This included two workshops which support an on-going process to identify the relevant policy areas that require additional stimuli to focus upon the extreme poor. A communication strategy workshop was organised to devise the necessary tools to deliver the message of extreme poverty to the relevant stakeholders. This is an on-going process and requires significant negotiation with SCF partners and other relevant stakeholders beyond the remit of the project.

The Communications team disseminated EEP activities at the 'Second Ministerial meeting on Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific' hosted by Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Dhaka. This event provided an opportunity for EEP to showcase the grantee projects across the country to the relevant development practitioners and policy makers from within and outside of Bangladesh. An adviser from EEP

also spoke to the Minister for LGRDC highlighting the dynamics of the extreme poor in the relevant working area as well as the interventions supported by EEP.

The documentary 'On a thread' was produced for the purposes of showcasing the specific circumstances of the EEP extreme poor at the international conference held on 18 October 2009 in reflection of the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This documentary has been translated into Bengali and efforts have been made to air this documentary on national television as part of the overall communications tool for advocacy at EEP.

## 2. Management and Finance

The quarter under report has seen the start of a review of the scale fund partners as EEP seeks to assess their progress to-date and to indicate adjustments that maybe needed for project year two. The consultant will submit a final report on each SCF NGO in April 2010.

The catalytic role for the EEP in support of DFID Bangladesh Country Assistance Plan continues to be developed along with furthering the linkages between the four main DFID extreme poverty programmes. It is hoped that significant progress will be made on both these issues early in the next quarter.

The incoming CEO will be joining in Mid-May and will undertake a series of field visits and meetings to further integrate the programme activities. These meetings will include the opportunity for the CEO to engage with the EEP participant households for first-hand progress updates.

### 2.1. EEP staff and management

A new Communication Manager (Shumon Alam) was appointed to support communication and knowledge management activities across EEP through mentoring and other capacity strengthening approaches. Chris Tomlinson (Young Professional) attended an 'innovations in development' workshop at Harvard University. Chris will be active in helping to support the launching of innovation fund round 3 and applying lessons learnt into practice. A number of volunteers from the University of Durham visited EEP to improve their understanding of extreme poor in Bangladesh and in so, visited existing contracted NGOs under both scale and innovations fund.

### 2.2. Finance

The finance team has disbursed GBP 1,322,063 and 282,263 to six scale fund and 12 innovation fund NGOs respectively for this quarter. A fixed asset register has been reconciled for all 18 grantee NGOs. Internal audits have been conducted for both selected NGOs from across all challenge fund programmes including Practical Action, CARE and Save the Children UK under scale fund projects, Intercooperation (rounds I & II), SKS Foundation, MJSKS and Aid Comilla, Green Hill and CNRS from the innovation fund, and People's Empowerment Trust (PET) under the lesson learning fund. Further meetings have taken place with PET to reconcile the total fund adjustments and disburse grants.

The MA team has conducted workshops with all 12 innovation fund NGOs based on finance, contracts and programme. The team also coordinated and processed the vehicle transfer to all scale-fund NGOs. The MA has initiated a process of developing the second year

budget for the scale-fund NGOs with two budgets approved in the first quarter with the remaining four to be completed in the second quarter of 2010.

### **2.3. Management Information System**

During quarter the MIS team undertook the orientation of the scale fund NGOs on the MIS database. The tasks included the introduction of all EEP related MIS documents (i) BHH profile-final version (ii) EEP MIS code book (iii) EEP MIS software user's manual (iv) general guidelines on using GEO tagging camera for managing beneficiary household photographs management (v) national geo code and APPG requirements to meet the overall objective of EEP MIS development process.

The team has also addressed IT infrastructure and connectivity issues encountered by EEP and the NGO project offices. The international MIS mentor Mr Ash Meghji visited to provide technical support on developing the MIS system and enhance capacity of the EEP MIS team in IT infrastructure maintenance.

#### **2.3.1. MIS database updates on BHH Records**

It is planned that EEP MIS unit will develop a computerised database management system that allow partner NGO to enter records on household base data including and field base activities and outputs – such as number of extreme poor households covered by different NGOs, number of HH member has given skill training, number of HH getting access to productive assets, markets or other initiative services (depending on the design of the initiatives). All that information would be analysed and reported relative to agreed targets and work plans at different level. A common household profile has been agreed upon. In addition, the essential database schema based on the common household has been developed. A breakdown and progress on updating BHH database for this quarter:

- 42,406 BHH primary list uploaded to central database;
- 14,364 BHH profile completed by scale fund NGOs;
- 6,342 BHH profile information updated into the central database of EEP server;
- 6,702 BHHs covered in terms of cash and asset transfer that includes sewing machine, rickshaw, van, trade, boat, cattle, supply inorganic fertilizers, pumpkin seeds, khasland etc;
- 23,432 BHHs received blanket and sweeter as part of cold wave response of scale fund NGOs.

