

# Launching Ceremony of Chars Livelihoods Programme

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Implementation: Rural Development and Co-operative Division, M/O. Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives; Assistance : DFID



### Message

I welcome the initiative for implementation of the 'Chars Livelihoods Programme' intended for the deprived poor char people living in and around the rivers Brahmaputra and Jamuna.

About eighty percent people living in the basins of the rivers of Bangladesh and coastal belts of the sea are in acute poverty. The 'Chars Livelihoods Programme' (CLP) is an important step in the Government's efforts to reduce poverty. I would like to thank the government of the United Kingdom for supporting the programme.

Alleviation of poverty is a high priority of the Government. The implementation of the Chars Livelihoods Programme is one such action of the government. I believe that the implementation of the programme will contribute substantially to the improvement of the living conditions of the char people specially the most vulnerable 2 million hardcore poor living alongside the Jamuna and Brahmaputra rivers of the districts of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur and Sirajganj.

I wish the 'Chars Livelihoods Programme' every success.

Allah Hafez, Bangladesh Zindabad.

Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed



### Message

I am happy to learn that the Chars Livelihoods Programme is going to be launched today. The launching of the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia reflects a sincere effort on the part of the Government of develop meaningful strategies to reduce rural poverty. Reduction of poverty is the topmost priority programme of the present Government. Government has taken different poverty reduction projects / programmes through different ministries. Though we have not yet been able to reduce poverty at a desired level even though by this time, we have considerable achievements in increasing income of the poor which reduces poverty.

In this context I like to mention that our constitutional obligation is to emancipate the toiling masses, the peasants and workers & backward sections of the people from all forms of exploitation. Since the chars are vulnerable to erosion and flood every year there is a prime need to help the Char dwellers.

I believe the design of Chars Livelihood Programme will meet its important goal of reducing poverty in the five Char districts : Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur and Sirajganj. I sincerely wish that the Chars Livelihoods Programme will become a new model in the field of rural development. I am proud that the Chars Livelihoods Programme is being implemented under my Ministry.

I would also like to extend thanks to the British Government and DFID for their support in the Chars Livelihoods Programme. Our Ministry will do everything possible to ensure proper utilization of resources and extend necessary assistance for successful implementation of the Programme.

(Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan)



### British High Commissioner's Message

Today is a momentous day for the UK/Bangladesh partnership in tackling poverty. It sees the official inauguration of one of the largest bilateral development projects.

The Chars Livelihoods programme is a first of its kind. It aims to bring socio-economic development to this often forgotten area and offers a wide range of services for the rural poor. Its main goal is simple, which is to halve extreme poverty in the riverine areas of Bangladesh and to improve livelihood security for poor and vulnerable women, men and children. The United Kingdom through our Department for International Development is providing 50 million pounds (Tk 550 Crore) for implementation of the Chars Livelihoods Programme.

This initiative is a high priority programme for both the Government of Bangladesh and the United Kingdom. It aims to make a difference to the lives of 6.5 million people. We believe the programme has potential to become a new model in rural development and we hope that the Chars initiative will become something that we all can be proud of. But that will require a long-term commitment from all concerned.

The United Kingdom has contributed over 500 million pounds since 1996 to support a wide range of development and poverty alleviation initiatives across Bangladesh. Bangladesh has made much economic and social progress but there is much to do and some challenges to overcome. The UK stands ready to assist.

The Government of the UK extends its best wishes to the Chars Livelihoods Programme, its organisers and above all to the people of Bangladesh who live in the Chars.

Anwar Choudhury

## Article

By Abdus Sabur  
Programme Director

Let me introduce the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) that will be implemented jointly by the GOB and DFID in the Brahmaputra Basin/Jamuna areas.

Although there were some activities initiated in the Chars by Government and some NGOs, no significant programme was undertaken previously targeting the ultra poor people of the Chars. In the past, Char areas have been neglected. The Government acknowledged the gravity of the situation and thus the Char Livelihoods Programme was developed which is a milestone programme. The CLP is jointly funded by the GOB and the UK Government through DFID.

Char means a strip of sandy land arising out of the riverbed or sea which is inhabited by people. River erosion, floods and drought are the regular natural phenomenon of these riverine areas. 5% of the people of Bangladesh are living in Chars under very difficult conditions and 80% of these people are extreme poor. This programme will focus on the main Chars areas - along the Brahmaputra River covering Kurigram, Jamalpur, Gaibandha, Bogra and Sirajganj. The programme will directly target 2 million people in the Chars of 28 Upazillas in the 149 Union Parishads which include Chars and unprotected embankments alongside the Brahmaputra. Another 4.1 million people in the surrounding areas will also be benefited from this programme.

The physical, social, economical and political vulnerabilities suffered by the Char dwellers cause chronic and persistent poverty. Livelihood strategies are, by necessity, mobile to cope with regular erosion. Traditional development approaches are rarely successful in the Chars and this programme will develop new approaches and institutional arrangements for reducing poverty in the region.

The programme has strong support from the Government of Bangladesh. The Chars are identified as areas for specific targeting under the PRSP and National Rural Development Policy. The Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) introduces new approaches and challenges against existing practices, which are needed for any large impact on reducing extreme poverty. The programme is challenging with large potential benefits. This programme will generate important lessons on reaching the extreme poor that will be disseminated to other GOB and DFID work and that of the wider development community.

The goal is to halve extreme poverty of the population living in the Char's programme areas of 5 northern districts of Bangladesh by 2015. The programme purpose is 'Improved Livelihood security for poor and vulnerable women, men and children living in these areas.'

This will be achieved through three interlinked outputs:

**Output 1:** Reduced vulnerability of Char dwellers through targeted provision of infrastructure and services, will ensure that Chars Union Parishads and Upazilas are better able to respond to local needs and demands; will deliver improved services (particularly social) and infrastructure at both local and Chars-wide levels. Activities are: Development and maintenance of roads of permanent Chars, primary health service, development of ferry ghats, free medical services for extreme poor, Develop methodologies for education, flood center, micro-credit for housing development.

**Output 2:** Poor Char dwellers able to effectively sustain their livelihoods and engage in the local and national economy by broadening economic opportunities and strengthening productive livelihood strategies (including targeting vulnerable groups female headed households and adolescent girls). This will reduce food insecurity; increase employment opportunities and income and permit people to accumulate assets, which will improve their ability to cope with future shocks to their livelihoods without falling deeper into poverty. Activities are: Impart training for Char people on handicrafts and small trade and businesses, Agriculture extension training for small and landless farmers and link them with micro-credit providers, supply of seeds and fertilizers, medical facilities for animals and training, develop marketing system and Business Development Services(BDS)

**Output 3:** Poor Char dwellers effectively influence local and national policy and service provision as citizens, addresses the issues of voice (including effective participation in local level planning and accountability mechanisms for government services), and the development of a platform for evidence-based influence to ensure national policies and structures reflect the needs of poor and vulnerable Chars dwellers. Activities are: Participatory planning for UPs and Upazilas, Provide UP responsive fund for implementation of plans, formation of citizen forum, awareness building programmes.

The current weak state of policy implementation and accountable local government acts as a significant barrier to the improved livelihood security of poor Char dwellers. Hence, the key concepts underlying the CLP are a) building the effective voice of poor Char dwellers, as citizens, to demand services; b) building accountable and responsive institutions in the public, private and civil sectors to supply pro-poor services and infrastructure; c) providing Char dwellers with choice in service provision and diversified channels for access to services. In addition the CLP nurtures pluralism by fostering an environment that encourages partnerships between private, public and non-government sectors.

The programme has been designed to actively engage and not bypass government, working with those agencies that have a clear mandate and role in rural development. Their strengths and weaknesses are clearly acknowledged and by working with them, this programme builds their capacity to carry out their responsibilities, at the same time recognizing the boundaries of what government should and should not do. The roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders are clearly identified and appropriate forums for dialogue are established.

The CLP will be overseen by a representative national steering committee under the auspices of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives Chaired by the Secretary RDCD, and supported by District-level co-ordination sub-committees and Upazila development coordination committees. The Government has already appointed a Programme Director. In addition DFID has appointed Management Agency in consultation with the GOB to support the implementation of programme activities. Overall co-ordination of programme implementation will be the responsibility of a CLP Secretariat with support from DFID. The programme will be implemented in two phases with an estimated cost of Taka 500 crore (50 Million Pounds). Programme activities will be intensively evaluated at the end of Year 4 (First Phase). Following the evaluation with government's approval, a suitable mechanism to coordinate future development in Chars (MCFDC) will be finalized. The purpose of such a mechanism is to maintain improved services and infrastructure, and coordinate further development in the Chars.

The programme will sustain impact through: improving the capacity of public institutions to respond to local demands; raising poor and vulnerable citizens' participation in the local level decision-making and increasing Char dwellers capacity for enhanced production and income earning activities.

It is our sincere hope that this innovative programme will substantially contribute towards the improvement of living conditions of the vulnerable people living in and around the Char areas.



### বাণী

কুড়িগ্রাম, গাইবান্ধা, বগুড়া, সিরাজগঞ্জ ও জামালপুর জেলার চরবাসীদের জীবনযাত্রার মানোন্নয়নে "চর জীবিকায়ন কর্মসূচী" একটি বাস্তবমুখী পদক্ষেপ। এই কর্মসূচী আমাদের সরকারের দারিদ্র নিরসন প্রয়াসকে আরো জোরালো করবে বলে আমি মনে করি।

চর এলাকায় দরিদ্র জনগণের বাস। বছরের বিরাট সময় জুড়ে সেখানে কাজের সুযোগ কম থাকে। তাই চর এলাকার দারিদ্রপীড়িত জনগোষ্ঠীর জীবনমান উন্নয়নে আমরা এই বিশেষ কর্মসূচী গ্রহণ করেছি। সাম্প্রতিক বন্যা-উত্তর পুনর্বাসন কার্যক্রমেও এই কর্মসূচী অবদান রাখবে বলে আমার বিশ্বাস।

এই কর্মসূচীতে সহায়তা দেয়ার জন্য আমি ব্রিটিশ সরকার ও ডিএফআইডিকে আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ জানাই।

আমি "চর জীবিকায়ন কর্মসূচী"র সর্বাঙ্গীন সাফল্য কামনা করি।

আব্বাস হাফেজ, বাংলাদেশ জিন্দাবাদ

খালেদা জিয়া



### Message

I have the pleasure to know that the long awaited Chars Livelihoods Programme is going to be launched today by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. The Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP) is expected to introduce new approaches, which are required for any significant impact on reducing extreme poverty. This programme will cover the extreme poor of the 5 Char districts such as Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur and Sirajganj.

The programme will contribute towards improved livelihood security for the poor and vulnerable families residing within the riverine areas (Chars) of the Programme. I am also pleased that one of the priority areas of the programme will include the strengthening of local government so that they are better able to respond to local needs and demands. Through public and private partnerships at both the local and Chars-wide level the CPL will contribute towards reducing the vulnerability of the people living in the Chars. One of the priorities will be to strengthen the capacity of the Union Parishads and Upazilas and to become more accountable to the people and improve service delivery.

I hope that the Rural Development & Co-operative Division along with DFID will be actively involved in the implementation of the Chars Livelihoods Programme.

I wish the CLP every success.

(Ziaul Haque Zia)



### Message

Management and development of Char lands in Bangladesh is a critical issue and we have been thinking about what to be done for this very important and contemporary problem. Eventually, with the cooperation of DFID our effort has made this come true through the implementation of the Chars Livelihoods programme.

Life in Char means moving to an uncertain destiny. Thousands struggle to survive. Destitute people try again and again to stand against the odds. Every moment of their floating lives is full of threat. There is not enough work in the Chars and most of Char people moves toward cities for work. Disasters hit their lives one after another. Constantly, they are lagging behind in education, health and hygiene. To resolve this situation Chars Livelihoods programme is a milestone in the government's effort to alleviate poverty in rural Bangladesh. This is a newly evolved integrated programme especially developed for the total improvement of the Char areas of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur and Sirajganj districts.

Chars Livelihoods programme has received special attention from the government of Bangladesh. Through the implementation of this programme, a commitment of the government of Hon'ble Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia about the development activities of Bangladesh is going to be executed. Besides, Government put emphasis on Char development under the IPSP and National Rural Development Policy. In this regard execution of Chars Livelihoods Programme is very important.

To achieve the goal towards poverty alleviation in the Char areas, there should be new ideologies, ideas and technologies. I strongly believe that the methodologies and ideas for implementation of this challenging programme contains a different dimension for opening up new windows for poverty alleviation in Chars and backward areas of the country.

I wish Chars Livelihoods Programme and its associates a success.

(Md. Hedayetul Islam Chowdhury)

দারিদ্রের প্রকাশ নানাবিধ, মাত্রা বহুবিধ এবং প্রকৃত পক্ষে উৎসও বহুবিধ।  
এ প্রেক্ষাপটে বর্তমান সরকারের দারিদ্র্য বিমোচন কৌশল হলঃ  
All routes matter for the poverty reduction.