

## **Resilience through Economic Empowerment, Climate Adaptation, Leadership and Learning (REE-CALL)**

The Resilience through Economic Empowerment, Climate Adaptation, Leadership and Learning (REE-CALL) program of Oxfam in Bangladesh has been an innovative response to the needs of climate-vulnerable communities in *char*, *haor* and coastal areas, with emphasis on economic empowerment, gender and women's leadership, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and rights and entitlements. It is being implemented through over 800 community-based organizations (CBOs) under 65 unions in 24 upazilas/sub-districts of 14 districts from October 2010 to June 2017, supporting around 75,000 households or 225,000 women and men in Bangladesh. In 2016, REE-CALL was selected as one of Oxfam GB's 14 Flagship Programs around the world, reflecting its firm foundation in program quality and good practice in program learning. A second phase of the program, REE-CALL 2021 (Bangladesh would celebrate 50 years of her independence in 2021) would continue till 2021 with new and innovative approaches including the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in program design, implementation and monitoring.

In the first phase of REE-CALL, Oxfam worked with partners to take ICT use to communities vulnerable to climate change through a participatory action research project with Monash University called PROTIC (Participatory Research and Ownership with Technology, information and Change). The project used a network of community-based organizations in two selected villages to equip marginalized female farmers with mobile technology, providing them with information related to agriculture, early warning system, weather forecasting, etc., building their capacity and linking them with the local government, NGOs and the market.

While the rural-urban digital divide in Bangladesh reproduces economic and social inequalities, depriving rural communities of opportunities to expand knowledge and skills, access to information for essential services and develop leadership capacity, REE-CALL 2021 proposes to address these problems through an ICT based approach that empowers hard-to-reach communities with knowledge, skills and information, developing their leadership capacity and resilience and creating linkages among citizens, the local and national government, and the market. Using a distance learning model, the program will capacitate and connect members of different CBOs for learning and joint action, building their capacity on ICT-based social change initiatives, enabling rural communities to increase their income, access social security services of the government and participate in decision-making processes through influencing key public and private sector actors. The program will be able to reach and include a large number of people from remote areas, reducing the costs and time associated with traditional, in-person training and information dissemination. The learning of PROTIC project would be used in this regard to embed ICT use in program design, implementation and monitoring.

The actors involved in these ICT-based future interventions of REE-CALL program will be CBO members, whose capacity will be built, local resource persons who will lead the ICT-based trainings and local Government representatives, policymakers at the national level and market actors at the local, regional and national levels, who will be linked with CBO members. The ICT-based interventions will at first be piloted in select areas and then gradually scaled up once the model proves to be viable. REE-CALL 2021 will work in close partnership with the Government of Bangladesh from its onset, with the aim that its activities will be continued and sustained through the established network of Union Digital Centers (UDCs) at the local level. Linkages with the UDCs and various Government institutes will be leveraged to scale the project nationally while dissemination through Oxfam's global network will provide scope for scaling up internationally.

See also: <http://wee.oxfam.org/page/holistic-approach-to-wee-ree-call-programme-in-bangladesh>. In a series of short videos, M. B. Akhter, Programme Director, presents REE-CALL's holistic approach to women's economic empowerment.