



## Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Upon request from the Government of Bangladesh, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will provide technical assistance for the following Project:

<b>Project Title:</b>	Accelerating Economic and Social Inclusion of Smallholder Farmers through Strong Producers' Organizations (ACCESS)
<b>Project Symbol:</b>	GCP/BGD/086/GAF

Upon signature of this project document by duly authorized representatives of both parties, the project will be implemented in accordance with the provisions of the *Exchange of Letters between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and FAO* signed between the Government of Bangladesh and FAO on 22 November 1976 and/or, as applicable: the UNDAF/UNDSCF signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations on 21 November 2021; and/or, as applicable: the *Revised Standard Agreement on Technical Assistance between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and a number of UN organizations, including FAO* between the Government of Bangladesh and a number of UN organizations, including FAO, signed on 31 July 1972 as well as the project description and management arrangements described herein.

On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh	On behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Name:	Name:
Title:	Title:
Date:	Date:

## FAO STANDARD PROJECT DOCUMENT

<b>Project Title:</b>	Accelerating Economic and Social Inclusion of Smallholder Farmers through Strong Producers' Organizations (ACCESS)		
<b>Project symbol:</b>	GCP/BGD/086/GAF		
<b>Recipient Country:</b>	Bangladesh		
<b>Government counterpart:</b>	Ministry of Agriculture		
<b>Expected EOD (Starting Date):</b>	01 January 2023		
<b>Expected NTE (End Date):</b>	31 December 2026		
<b>Contribution to FAO's Strategic Framework:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPA: Better Production 4, Small-Scale Producers' Equitable Access to Resources; Better Production 5: Digital Agriculture; Better Life 1: Gender equality and rural women's empowerment; Better Life 7: Scaling up investment</li> <li>• Country Outcome: # 1. By 2026, more people in Bangladesh, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized from all gender and social groups and those from lagging districts, benefit from sustainable livelihood and decent work opportunities resulting from responsible, inclusive, sustainable, green, and equitable economic development.</li> <li>• Country Programming Framework Output: 1.2. Equitable access to productive resources, efficient services, and markets for resilient food systems.</li> </ul>		
<b>Environmental and Social Risk Classification</b>	low risk <input type="checkbox"/>	moderate risk <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	high risk <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender Marker</b>	GM 0 <input type="checkbox"/>	GM 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	GM 2 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Total Budget:</b>	USD 3 260 000		
<b>Executive Summary</b>			
<p>Financed by a grant from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP)'s producers' organization (PO)-led funding window, ACCESS adopts the innovative approach of having a PO itself taking a leading role in project implementation. The Sara Bangla Krishak Society (SBKS), a national apex of producers' organizations in Bangladesh, will therefore be the main collaborative partner for the project, with full backstopping support from FAO and guidance from the Ministry of Agriculture.</p> <p>The overall objective of the project is to improve livelihoods of smallholder farmers in climatic hotspots in Bangladesh so that they are more resilient to external shocks and crises.</p> <p>ACCESS will scale up and build on the successful experience of the GAFSP pilot Missing Middle Initiative in Bangladesh (MMI-BD) to strengthen producers' organizations and ensure their access to markets, technology, information and finance. The project will broaden the farming community SBKS engages with in regions of Bangladesh that face severe climate-related challenges but also have emerging agri-business clusters—the southern coastal region and the north-western Barind/drought-</p>			

prone region. It will empower smallholder farmers to establish producers' organizations that are well positioned to become commercially viable actors in their respective value chains. Recognizing the strength and importance of women leaders within the current SBKS network, it will implement a series of mechanisms in the new communities to ensure that women have opportunities for genuine leadership and empowerment. The project will also be an opportunity for SBKS to continue building its capacity to serve smallholder farmers in Bangladesh, in partnership with the private sector and government. The project will build on lessons learned under MMI-BD so that it can effectively partner with and empower more farmers throughout the country.

1. To start, the project will support the development of 60 new producers' organizations including building their institutional capacity and governance processes (Output 1).
2. With a solid institutional foundation, the project will develop the business skills and technical knowledge of the POs and ensure their access to markets and better integration into their local value chains (Output 2).
3. The project will also support the POs to access community-based financing through the development of revolving loan funds, as well as linkages with external financial service providers to crowd in additional finance to be able to invest in their value chains (Output 3).

Like this, the POs will enable their members to make investments to uplift their families and communities, helping to recover from shocks brought about by the pandemic and current food price hike, and to be more resilient to potential future shocks. The project aims to reach 6,000 farmers as members of the new POs, for a total of 24,600 beneficiaries. It is expected that 80% of new POs (48 out of 60) will be able to successfully implement their business plans, establish common facility centres, and access markets and financing. It is further expected that through the value chain and financial services these POs provide to their members, the monthly household income of their members will increase by 20%.

A joint implementation support unit (ISU) will be established by FAO and SBKS. In addition, two regional implementation support units (RISUs) will be established, one in each region. A significant amount of the funds will be used to contract SBKS through Letters of Agreement (LoAs) to implement project activities. General oversight will be provided by the FAO budget holder's office as well as by the project steering committee. In addition, the project will be advised on technical matters by the project advisory committee.

The project is consistent with the government's Eighth Five Year Plan, the Bangladesh Delta Plan – 2100 and the Agricultural and Rural Credit Policy, among other policies. The project will directly contribute to the FAO Country Programming Framework Output 2.1 *Equitable access to productive resources, efficient services and markets for resilient food systems*.

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## ACRONYMS

ACCESS	Accelerating Economic and Social Inclusion of Smallholder Farmers through Producers' Organizations
AFA	Asian Farmers' Association
BACT	Barrier crop technology
BADC	Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation
BDT	Bangladeshi taka
BSRM	Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills Ltd.
CFI	FAO Investment Centre
CPF	Country Programming Framework
CRR	Covid-19 recovery revolving fund
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DLS	Department of Livestock Services
DOC	Department of Cooperatives
ESP	FAO Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBF	Farmer business facilitator
FPMIS	FAO Field Programme Information Management System
GAAP	Governance and accountability action plan
GAFSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
GAP	Good agricultural practices
IAPP	Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project
ICT	Information and communication technology
ISU	Implementation support unit
LOA	Letter of agreement
LTO	Lead technical officer
LTU	Lead technical unit
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MMI	Missing Middle Initiative
MMI-BD	Missing Middle Initiative pilot project in Bangladesh, <i>'Increasing Access to Finance for Farmer Organizations in Bangladesh'</i>
PAC	Project advisory committee
PENT	Pest exclusion net technology
PO	Producers' organization
PPA	Programme Priority Area
PTF	Project task force
RAP	FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
RISU	Regional implementation support unit
RLF	Revolving loan fund
SAC	Social audit committee
SBKS	Sara Bangla Krishak Society
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	Supervising entity
TA	Technical assistance
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USD	United States dollar
VCC	Virtual call centre
8FYP	Government of Bangladesh's Eighth Five Year Plan

## SECTION 1 – RELEVANCE

### 1.1 Alignment and Strategic Fit

#### *1.1.1 Alignment to FAO's Strategic Framework*

The project will contribute to the following Programme Priority Areas (PPAs):

#### BETTER PRODUCTION

BP4: Small-Scale Producers' Equitable Access to Resources

BP5: Digital Agriculture

#### BETTER LIFE

BL1: Gender equality and rural women's empowerment

BL7: Scaling up investment

The project will contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goals:

1. No poverty, especially 1.4 - equal rights to economic resources and basic services;
2. Zero hunger, especially 2.3 - agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers;
5. Gender equality: 5.a - women equal rights to economic resources, [...] financial services, and natural resources;
8. Decent work and economic growth: 8.3 [...] encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services;
10. Reduced inequalities, 10.1: By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.

#### *1.1.2 Alignment to Country Programming Framework*

FAO's Country Programming Framework (CPF) for Bangladesh for the period 2022 – 2026 supports the Government's priority to transform its agri-food system, including through digital agriculture, One Health approaches and climate smart agriculture. Robust rural institutions are the key drivers of this transformation. The CPF is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Bangladesh 2022-2026.

##### *1.1.2.1 Contribution to Country Outcome*

The project approach is closely aligned with many of the government's priorities, as follows:

The project themes are consistent with the government's **Eighth Five Year Plan (8FYP)**: July 2020 – June 2025 which puts COVID-19-induced livelihood restoration and resilience to disaster and climate change as its top priority. The plan also focuses on the productive participation of women in agricultural employment and will seek to address the following issues: (1) wage differences between men and women in agriculture; (2) socio-economic backwardness and constraints that women endure in a male dominated society; (3) women's access to institutions and facilities including extension and credit services; and (4) women's access to markets and high value-added agriculture.

The project has selected two climate hotspots in accordance with the recommendation of the **Bangladesh Delta Plan – 2100** and will contribute towards its investment plan for institutionalization, women empowerment, and climate resilient livelihoods. The project is aligned with the Bangladesh

**Climate-Smart Agriculture Investment Plan 2019** for creating climate-resilient agri-livelihood development in the selected climatic hotspots.

The project is consistent with the **Agricultural Extension Policy - 2020, Good Agricultural Practice Policy - 2020, Seed Policy - 2018** and **Agricultural Policy - 2018** in regard to forming and strengthening farmers groups, empowering women, climate induced risk mitigation, value chain development and e-agriculture.

The project will continue to advocate for implementation of the **Agricultural and Rural Credit Policy**, which is updated on an annual basis, and advises commercial banks to work with POs for providing credit to smallholders. As a result of MMI-BD's advocacy over the last 3 years, the policy now declares that banks should give priority to farmers working in agribusiness clusters (i.e. area approach loans). The policy also gives access to finance for smallholder contract farmers through the exporter or processor with whom they work. It also delineates a specialized loan product for women entrepreneur farmers at 5-9% interest.

The **E-Government Master Plan for Digital Bangladesh 2019** specifies that information and communication technology (ICT) services will be extended to the union level. The project will build on this to bring digital services to the village level.

The project is also aligned with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Bangladesh 2022-2026**, specifically:

Strategic Priority 1: Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Development

Strategic Priority 3: Sustainable, Healthy and Resilient Environment

Strategic Priority 5: Gender Equality

#### **1.1.2.2 Contribution to CPF Outputs**

ACCESS contributes mainly to FAO Country Outcome 1: *By 2026, more people in Bangladesh, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized from all gender and social groups, and those from lagging districts benefit from sustainable livelihood and decent work opportunities resulting from responsible, inclusive, sustainable, green, and equitable economic development.*

Through its support to strengthening producers' organization ability to provide services to their smallholder member farmers and increasing access to finance, the project will mainly contribute to **CPF Output 1.2: Equitable access to productive resources, efficient services, and markets for resilient food systems.**

#### **1.1.3 Expected Results**

##### **1.1.3.1 Impact**

The project's long-term development goal at the impact level is:

**Livelihoods of smallholder farmers in climatic hotspots are more resilient to external shocks and crises.**

##### **1.1.3.2 Outcome**

The project builds on the experience of the current GAFSP-funded Missing Middle Initiative project, *'Increasing Access to Finance for Farmer Organizations in Bangladesh'* (MMI-BD). This experience

shows that when smallholders are members of institutionally sound, financially viable, sustainable POs, they are able to invest in their respective value chain, thereby increasing their incomes and making their livelihoods more resilient to external shocks and crises—including those of a public health nature, an economic nature such as fuel price hikes, as well as those that are climate induced<sup>1</sup>.

The project's expected outcome therefore is:

**Strong producers' organizations provide business skills, technical knowledge, market access and access to finance to their members.**

### ***1.1.3.3 Outputs***

#### **Output 1. Producers' organizations have good governance**

Under this output, the project will work with commodity-based clusters of farmers to mobilize producers' organizations, develop their organizational capacity, and strengthen the leadership capacity of women in these organizations. Specific output targets are as follows:

Output 1.1: 60 new POs registered and supported, each of which with at least 50% are women members;

Output 1.2: 6,000 PO members (50% women) completed the organizational strengthening training curriculum;

Output 1.3: 300 women completed women's leadership training.

#### **Output 2. Producers' organizations have the business skills, technical knowledge and market access needed to thrive in their value chain**

Under this output, the project will work to ensure that POs are equipped to be effective actors in their respective value chains. This will be through a combination of capacity development in business planning, including FAO's own RuralInvest software, climate resilient production, One Health and family nutrition approaches, as well as the establishment of common facility centres, virtual call centres and digital village service centres. Specific output targets are as follows:

Output 2.1: 60 POs completed their business plan, including a marketing plan and financial feasibility study;

Output 2.2.: 4,800 smallholder farmers (50% women) receiving climate-resilient productivity enhancement support;

Output 2.3: 4,800 smallholders (50% women) received extension support on One Health and family nutrition farming;

Output 2.4.1: 48 processing, storage, and market facilities constructed and/or rehabilitated, and operational;

Output 2.4.2: 4,800 farmers that are supported in accessing improved marketing opportunities.

#### **Output 3. Producers' organizations have access to finance**

Under this output, producers' organizations that have passed through the rigorous capacity development and organizational growth process—resulting in a solid institutional foundation and

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of this project, external shocks and crises can be defined as unexpected or unpredictable events (shocks) or longer-term conditions (crises) that occur outside the control of the farmers, but can have a dramatic effect on the performance or profitability of their farm enterprises and livelihoods.



strong women leaders, as well as the business skills, technical knowledge and market access needed to thrive in their value chain—will be supported to gain access to finance. This will be both through the establishment of revolving loan funds within the POs, as well as partnerships with banks and non-bank financial institutions for accessing ‘external’ credit as well. Specific output targets are as follows:

Output 3.1.1: 3,000 borrowers (70% women) using community-based revolving loan funds to invest in their agribusiness plans;

Output 3.1.2: USD 3,500 increase in community-based revolving loan fund per PO;

Output 3.2: 24 POs partnering with financial institutions for additional finance.

#### 1.1.3.4 Activities

Funded by the GAFSP PO-led window, the project will be jointly implemented by FAO and its partner, Sara Bangla Krishak Society (SBKS), an apex organization of grassroot POs. The project will focus on two climate-affected areas: (1) the Barind and drought-prone north-western region; and (2) the southern coastal region. The target population is 6,000 smallholder farmer households in these areas that are involved in a semi-commercial venture in their local commodity cluster and that are interested to form POs and integrate into a value chain.

### COMPONENT 1 – PRODUCERS’ ORGANIZATIONS WITH GOOD GOVERNANCE

SBKS will work closely with smallholder communities in target areas, sharing information about the possibility of forming a PO and providing the training and support needed for interested communities. When discussing with the communities, emphasis will be put on the importance of creating opportunities for women to be empowered through the PO, with follow up training and mentorship available for women interested in becoming strong leaders in their communities.

#### Activity 1.1 Participatory cluster mapping, identification and development of cluster-based producers’ organizations

During the MMI project, SBKS conducted a participatory survey of agribusiness clusters in the two ACCESS project areas in order to guide project interventions. A large amount of data about communities, their commodity clusters and markets was collected. The initial findings have guided the project design team to select the following districts and clusters to be starting points for project interventions. Note that the project approach to PO mobilization, as with MMI and the GAFSP-funded Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project (IAPP) before it, will be organic and flexible, ensuring that no communities feel forced to start a PO. Rather they will be informed about the benefits and what steps would be needed if they themselves do wish to start an organization. Like this, the chance for sustainable organizations is much higher. This therefore means that the list below is only indicative and may change during the first phase of project implementation.

Coastal Region			Northwestern region (Barind and other drought prone areas)		
Division	District	Commodity Cluster	Division	District	Commodity Cluster
Dhaka	Gopalganj	Riverine, fresh fish	Rangpur	Dinajpur	Aromatic rice, tomato
Barisal	Patuakhali	Watermelon, mung bean, ground nut, dried fish		Thakurgaon	Potato, wheat
	Pirojpur	Hog plum, guava	Rajshahi	Bogura	Vegetables, small fish
Khulna	Bagerhat	Vegetables		Joypurhat	Stolon of taro, Sonali chicken
	Jashore	Flowers, vegetables		Natore	Garlic, medicinal plants
	Narail	Coriander, honey		Serajganj	Milk, processed milk, honey

	Satkhira	Crab, eel	<b>Khulna</b>	Kushtia*	Onion, black cumin, sesame
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\*Kushtia is just south of the Padma River, and while administratively it is not part of the northwestern region, agro-ecologically it shares the same characteristics.

SBKS has developed a cohort of farmer business facilitators (FBFs)—farmer leaders from within the SBKS network, equipped to mobilize and strengthen POs. FBFs will visit each cluster and identify communities that are genuinely interested to establish POs and open to create opportunities for women in their community to become leaders. Once identified, the FBFs will work closely with smallholders in these communities to establish POs (min. 50% women members). With the help of the community, FBFs will use participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools, such as transect walk, social mapping, timelines of adopting modern agricultural innovations/technologies and constraints matrix, to understand the community, its institutions, agricultural practices and constraints. FBFs will then use the ‘wealth ranking’ tool to identify smallholder and marginalized/tenant farmer households and, if they are interested, work with them to establish commodity-based producers’ organizations. Following this, the FBFs will work with organization members to conduct needs identification, support group development, registration and opening of bank accounts, establish group savings collection and identify services needed by the community. The FBFs will conduct a baseline survey to gather primary data for a more detailed understanding of the initial membership base of these nascent POs, which will inform the PO business planning exercise and also form a basis for project results monitoring and impact evaluation.

### **Activity 1.2 Organizational strengthening**

The project will support the newly-formed POs through a variety of capacity development tools. It will adapt and expand on the successful training curriculum provided under MMI-BD. Support will reinforce the work done during the PO development phase to ensure a solid organizational foundation, solid governance and strong farmer business leaders, before proceeding with other project activities. It is important to emphasize here that the process of capacity development will be rigorous with significant hand holding, mentoring and monitoring along the way. The topics to be covered include: (1) group dynamics, social inclusion and governance; (2) confidence building and negotiation; (3) small grant management; (4) financial management, accounting and bookkeeping; and (5) risk management and participatory monitoring and evaluation. This capacity development will take place through an innovative approach whereby new PO leaders will spend some time ‘interning’ with already established SBKS member POs. It will be a hands-on learning approach with the added benefit of developing bonds between new and established members of the SBKS network.

Each PO will select and appoint 2 PO facilitators with proper terms of reference. SBKS experienced FBFs will coach the new PO facilitators. As with the MMI, each PO will receive a small learning grant with which to initially reimburse their PO facilitators’ expenses and pay for training refreshments.

In addition to the organizational strengthening of the newly formed POs, the project will also give significant focus to the capacity development of SBKS’ own team. This is a critical part of the process of SBKS continuing to strengthen in its autonomy and capacity to serve its members. In addition to ongoing on-the-job training, the project will have a specific set of more formal capacity development activities.

This will begin with a participatory assessment of human resource capacity needs, both for the elected leadership and employed staff. Based on this assessment, TORs for positions and minimum criteria for eligibility will be reviewed and/or developed where needed. This will be compared with current leadership and staff expertise and skills, followed by the development of a capacity building programme to bridge any gaps between current skills and required capacity of the TORs. In addition,

the project will update and implement an apex business plan that would generate enough income to hire additional staff as needed to provide expected services to member POs.

### **Activity 1.3 Women's leadership development**

In addition to the activities to support the growth of POs already mentioned, the project will conduct a separate women's leadership development initiative to ensure that women have the skills and confidence needed to become genuine leaders in their communities. Topics will include leadership, confidence building, communication skills, development of women entrepreneurs as well as extra digital and financial literacy training and awareness raising of government services available for women. It will include training sessions, exchange visits and women leaders will be paired with mentors from the existing SBKS network. The timing and length of all training sessions will aim to accommodate the needs and realities of women smallholders. MMI-BD has seen the empowerment and development of many young female leaders. This project will also give them the opportunity to continue to grow in their strength and leadership, serving as mentors for the new women PO members.

Exchanges will also take place with male leaders to raise awareness of the importance of women's empowerment and address any potential challenges or strained gender dynamics that could be triggered.

## **COMPONENT 2 – BUSINESS SKILLS, TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND MARKET ACCESS**

Building on the solid institutional foundation, component 2 provides business skills, technical knowledge and market access to improve PO member capacity to profitably operate in their priority value chain.

### **Activity 2.1 Capacity development for participatory business planning**

POs will be trained to develop bankable business proposals using RuralInvest. RuralInvest is a tool developed by the FAO Investment Centre to enable rural stakeholders to design individual and collective/PO investment projects. It was successfully introduced in Bangladesh through the MMI-BD project. The business plans will be informed by the baseline survey, which will generate useful insights into the members' production capacity in their prioritized value chains. SBKS and newly formed POs will conduct a market intelligence survey in each cluster, gaining insights into product specifications, quality-price relationships, minimum volumes and terms of delivery demanded by buyers. This will provide the information necessary to plan investments needed for the PO to become an attractive business partner in the value chain. Business plans will be evaluated by the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to determine whether they are eligible for project investments in a common facility center under activity 2.4.

### **Activity 2.2 Promotion of innovative climate resilient technologies**

In order to develop medium and long-term business plans that are sustainable in climatically fragile areas, PO members need access to and an understanding of climate resilient technologies. The project will be investing in research in the different agricultural clusters to discover and share diversified cropping patterns and livestock and aquaculture practices that meet the climatic demands of the area.

To this end, two 'Innovation Hubs' will be established, one in each region. The hubs will also showcase and share climate-related innovations tested by MMI-BD and other projects in Bangladesh, namely:

- (1) seed villages;
- (2) biodiversity restoration mechanisms (e.g. preserving flora-fauna for coastal wetlands, commercial bee keeping, local germplasm centres);

- (3) resilient cropping patterns, pastoral and aquaculture practices and local adaptive species;
- (4) a soil health innovation lab to tackle salinity and drought and;
- (5) appropriate scale machinery (conservation engineering, e.g. surface water irrigation, bed planters and seeders, and cool and dry chain solutions).

Smallholder women & men, youth farmers, herders, pastoralists and fishers can learn from these hubs and replicate innovations in their own POs. The project will engage private sector actors to invest in and promote these technologies.

### **Activity 2.3 One Health approach for responsible investment**

Recognizing the links between human, animal and environmental health, the project will develop and raise awareness on One Health sanitary and phyto-sanitary protocols for: (1) livestock farming from farm to market level; (2) aquaculture and; (3) crop cultivation and processing. The project will adopt best practices of the Upazila to Community (U2C) initiative of FAO's Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) and the government's Department of Livestock Services (DLS) on disease surveillance, prevention and outbreak control. Training will be provided to farmers as well as other relevant actors along the value chain, including wholesalers. Innovation hubs (as described above) will also showcase Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), including sanitary and phytosanitary standards and bio-security, worker health safety and welfare, farmer health and personal hygiene, and ergonomics. The Innovation Hubs' soil health innovation lab will also analyze soil samples to develop specific GAP 'soil amendment' protocols. SBKS will support entrepreneurial member farmers to produce and sell bio-fertilizer and bio-pesticides for wider adoption by its membership – current and new POs. Training will also focus on nutrition awareness, including how to establish a small family homestead nutrition farm. The guidelines for these family nutrition farms are informed by the healthy food plate (Nutri-plate) shared by SBKS during MMI-BD. This Nutri-plate has been developed in accordance with the government's 2020 National Dietary Guideline and builds on years of nutrition research.

### **Activity 2.4 Market access and digitization**

The project will support POs to start **Virtual Call Centres (VCCs)**, central points of contact and coordination for day-to-day farming business needs. These evolved under the MMI-BD project as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The VCCs have established linkages with input suppliers and buyers. Instead of going to the market in person to sell goods or purchase supplies, such as fertilizer or seeds, farmers call their VCC to request what they need. The VCCs have a rickshaw van driver who can safely pick up and deliver items to farmers' homes. The VCCs are also a way for farmers to get information, share advice and stay connected. The VCCs ensure the community reduces its risk of contracting COVID-19 while conducting their daily activities, and as a byproduct have resulted in stronger negotiating power at the market, leading to lower production costs and increased farmer incomes.

POs will establish **common facility centres** in their communities, providing services related to the focus commodity of the agribusiness cluster. These centres enable smallholders to access farm machineries at a competitive rate. Further, critical inputs (e.g. seeds, fodder) are produced directly by the POs at these centres. These are particularly important in the context of the increase in input prices as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war. They also provide a range of production logistics varying from sorting, grading, packing to storage, transportation and training to retail services. They also include cluster aggregation points with sanitary measures to ensure all produce going to market is safe for consumption. These centres allow PO members to reduce production costs and become more competitive market actors. They also help to insulate farmers from external shocks (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, Russia-Ukraine war, import/export bans) by ensuring that, as much as possible, their production and marketing needs can be fulfilled locally.

The project will also facilitate **partnerships between POs, the private sector and the government** for joint ventures. These will include the development of an 'e-Arat', an online marketplace to connect cluster farmers with wholesalers, as well as partnerships with exporters, processors, large traders and government certification agencies to connect POs with larger markets. Additionally, the project will partner with Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills Ltd. (BSRM), who have committed USD 100,000 in co-financing for the development of small-scale grain storage facilities and fruit and vegetable collection points.

Under the **FAO Digital Village Initiative** the ACCESS project will provide digital literacy training and ICT devices to communities. This will include training and access to FAO's digital services— .Collect Mobile, RuralInvest and MBWin. Farmers will also have access to digital climate advisory services (BAMIS, BMD mobile app, community radio), online market services, rural banking software, the government farmers' window app with agricultural, land and meteorological information. POs will be provided with IT equipment to make services available to all villagers.

In order to ensure the quality of products going to the market, the project will establish an **internal control system for adherence to Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) standards**, using digital tools for traceability. Each PO will have a trained GAP manager who will train member farmers. An internal control committee will visit each farmer's field once during cropping season and once during harvest. They will check whether farmers are using bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers, and are adhering to other GAP standards. Data will be entered on a tablet using the project's .Collect Mobile monitoring system allowing for traceability of product quality.

### **COMPONENT 3 – ACCESS TO FINANCE**

Under component 3 the project will facilitate access to finance through the establishment of revolving loan funds as well as partnerships with financial institutions. This will ensure that each PO member can bring their investment plans to life and strengthen their livelihoods.

#### **Activity 3.1 Establish community-based revolving loan funds**

A keystone to the project approach, PO-led revolving loan funds (RLFs) are community-owned finance mechanisms that have been successfully piloted under MMI-BD. The fund is owned by the PO and is made of a combination of member savings and a grant from the project. It will be a highly competitive fund, whereby in order to be eligible for a grant from the project, POs must go through a rigorous series of capacity development activities outlined in the activities above and score high in terms of institutional maturity, financial management capacity and value chain readiness with a solid business plan, made using the RuralInvest toolkit. They must also have demonstrated sound management of the project funds received to implement activities under component 1 and 2 and their common facility centre must be operational before they will be eligible to receive grants from the project to establish their RLFs. To support implementation, the project will customize the FAO banking app, MBWin, so that POs can manage funds digitally.

The RLFs will have independent loan and social audit committees ensuring accountability. Under the new project, these committees will be led by women, as under MMI-BD, women-led RLFs have performed better. This will also ensure an opportunity for women to have positions of responsibility in their PO. SBKS will provide hands-on technical support throughout the process to make investments successful.

To qualify for a loan, POs must have a viable business plan. Priority will be given to investments that are adaptive to climatic and non-climatic risks. To ensure nutrition security, the project will require

loan applicants to have a family homestead nutrition farm to qualify for a loan. This was already piloted during MMI project with good results. Loan disbursement will be seasonal, and repayment only required after harvest, with repayment calendars tailored to different value chains. Interest accrued from the fund remains with the PO so the fund grows and finance can be made available to other members.

### **Activity 3.2 Partnership with financial institutions and policy advocacy to crowd in additional finance**

The project will conduct a separate initiative to ensure POs have access to external finance as well. It will strengthen partnerships between POs and national commercial banks, state-run banks and non-bank financial institutions. Under the MMI-BD project many strong relationships have developed between POs and financial institutions. For example, 11 banks now provide collateral-free agribusiness loans to members of 33 POs, based on the trust between the bank and the PO. The banks are confident that these POs have enough social capital to guarantee loan repayment for their members. This confidence has resulted in the crowding in of USD 45 cents per USD 1 of project revolving loan funds. The project has a written commitment from National Bank Ltd. to provide USD 355,000 in the form of agricultural credit to new POs. The project has verbal commitments from other banks as well. These banks will offer agricultural credit at lower interest rates than microfinance institutions, in accordance with government rules.

Additionally, there are several policies in place that enable access to finance for smallholders, however implementation remains a challenge. For example, the Bangladesh Bank Agriculture and Rural Credit Policy 2021/2022 states that banks with a shortage of branches in rural areas may partner with strong POs to make finance available (agent banking). However, most branch managers are not aware of this policy. The project will support POs to advocate for implementation of this and other relevant policies.

## **1.2 Comparative Advantages**

### ***1.2.1 Mandate to Act***

FAO has a global mandate to improve food security, nutrition, agricultural productivity and reduce rural poverty. FAO is expected to serve as an advisor and technical expert, especially for developing and transition countries. In this project, FAO will provide technical support to SBKS and its member POs so that they can then provide services to their smallholder members to improve sustainable production, increase income, access financial resources and improve resilience. The project will also contribute to the implementation of the SDG indicators that are under the custodian of FAO, as referenced in section 1.1.1.

### ***1.2.2 Capacity to Act***

FAO has worked in rural Bangladesh with farmers' organizations since Bangladesh joined FAO in 1973. More specifically, since 2011 FAO has demonstrated its capacity in supporting the federation of grassroots farmers' organization into the apex body that eventually became SBKS.

Other recent relevant experience of FAO in Bangladesh includes:

- Technical assistance to the IFAD-funded Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project implemented in the coastal region of Bangladesh;
- Strategic support for Development of Investment Strategies and Action Plans for the Agro-processing Sector;
- Establishment of farmers' markets in Dhaka City to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis;
- Community-based climate resilient fisheries and aquaculture development;

- Technical assistance for the mapping of livestock POs and for the development of livestock extension material; and
- Implementation of the Integrated Agricultural Development for Nutrition Improvement project in the northwest region of Bangladesh.

The project will be able to draw on training materials and lessons learned. Further, as some of these projects are expected to be still ongoing at the start of this project, synergies can be developed.

Thanks to FAO's global presence and longstanding experience working with POs and micro-finance institutions (MFIs) in Bangladesh and other countries, it can draw on its specialized staff, training material and software tools for tailored support in all project thematic areas.

### ***1.2.3 Position to Act***

FAO is recognised by GAFSP as one of a handful of international organizations qualified to function as a supervising entity for work undertaken with its resources. The GAFSP has awarded financing for this project on the strength of the proposal that was jointly prepared and submitted by FAO and SBKS.

FAO is a long-term partner of SBKS as it evolved through GAFSP and FAO's joint investment in POs in Bangladesh since 2011. This took place under the technical assistance component of the Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project (IAPP). FAO continued to support SBKS in the period 2018 – 2022, under the GAFSP Missing Middle Initiative, which saw SBKS emerge as a leading apex body providing services including business support and access to finance to its member farmers.

The project will be supported by agribusiness and rural finance experts in the regional office as well as FAO headquarters, who have also already been involved in the MMI-Bangladesh project and know SBKS well. FAO will also make use of its unique RuralInvest and MBWin software, which are especially well adapted and appropriate for business planning and revolving fund management by producers' organizations.

## **1.3 Context Analysis**

The project will focus on two climate-affected areas: (1) the Barind and drought-prone north-western region; and (2) the southern coastal region. These areas were selected based on their climatic challenges, reflecting the project's intention to support climate-affected communities in the country. In addition, their proximity to areas where SBKS is already present will facilitate knowledge exchange between new and experienced POs.

The north-western region of Bangladesh is the area north of the Padma River (Ganges) and west of the Bramaputra-Jamuna River system and comprises Rangpur and Rajshahi Divisions. Within this region, the Barind is a comparatively high, undulating region, with reddish and yellowish clay soils. It is cut by ravines and is divided into separate sections by the Atrai River and one of its tributaries to the east. Agricultural plots are commonly irrigated and stand between stretches of wasteland and scrub. The Barind tract covers Dinajpur and Rangpur districts of Rangpur Division and five districts of Rajshahi Division. The north-western region is severely drought prone because of the high variability in rainfall (Shahid and Behrawan, 2008).

The coast of Bangladesh is about 700 km long and is characterized by an evolving flat delta subject to very high tides and frequent cyclones coming from the Bay of Bengal. The coast can be broadly divided into three regions: the deltaic eastern region (Pacific type), the deltaic central region, and the stable deltaic western region (Atlantic type) with the Sundarbans mangrove forests. It is also divided between "exposed coast" and "interior coast". The selected districts are in Barisal division (central delta) and

Khulna division (western delta), and Gopalganj district in Dhaka division, and cover both exposed and interior coast.

Farmers in these areas face significant economic and social challenges. Farm sizes are extremely small, with an average of 0.9 ha per family, often fragmented into even smaller plots. Inputs purchased in small volumes are more expensive and low production volumes give rise to relatively high transport costs and other transaction costs in marketing. Large buyers are not interested to buy small volumes. Furthermore, because farmers do not have significant land or sometimes even lack legal land title, they have limited access to finance. By organizing in an association, farmers can improve their bargaining power by collectively purchasing inputs and selling produce and improve access to mechanization and financial services. Producers' organizations also form an easier entry point for extension services. While the extension service employs a large number of extension agents, there is still only one extension agent per approximately 1,100 smallholder households.

Not surprisingly given the small farm size, agriculture is the primary source of income for only 51% of households, and non-farm income sources play an important part in the rural economy. Even if farm sizes are small, farming systems are diversified, with most farmers combining crop and livestock production. Thirty percent of smallholders are rural youth, and the demographic dividend should continue until 2030. Youth are key to transition to a more innovative and productive agriculture sector, while this is also necessary to make agriculture attractive for youth. Therefore, SBKS has established a Youth Forum.

The target population for the project is smallholders in these areas that are interested to form POs and integrate into the value chain. Through the POs, non-PO community members will also have access to services. There is strong social cohesion in rural communities, therefore the process of organizing farmers can work well; it is easy to build trust. However, the process of registering a producers' organization with the Department of Cooperatives (DoC) is often tedious. Many DoC officers are not actively implementing the policy which endorses the registration of POs through the DoC, and some are not even aware of this policy. However, without this registration, it is impossible for farmers to open a PO bank account. Even with registration it is a challenge, as government bank managers are also not aware that government policies enable POs to open bank accounts. In this context, the role of SBKS is key as they are conversant with the relevant policies and can advocate for their implementation on behalf of their members.

A gender analysis was conducted by SBKS and the FAO team in April and May 2022. Details are provided in section 3.4.

### ***1.3.1 Stakeholder Engagement***

#### ***1.3.1.1 Stakeholder Engagement***

Intensive participatory consultation is at the core of this project. As soon as the request for proposals was published by GAFSP, FAO informed SBKS and member POs and discussions began right away - almost on a daily basis thanks to the relations established under MMI-BD. Formal consultation sessions were also organized. See the stakeholder engagement matrix in Annex II for more details. All project design decisions were taken jointly with SBKS with extensive consultation with PO members.

During the full project preparation phase, three separate consultation meetings were held with farmer stakeholders. The first took place from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2022, with all general members of SBKS. The second on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 was with prospective farmer partners in the coastal region. And the third on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 was with prospective farmer partners in the Barind tract region.



Consultations also took place with private sector partners, including exporters associations and national commercial banks.

Many of the central design elements came through the consultation process, namely: (1) the decision to scale-up the MMI-BD approach, including repeating the training curriculum with some adjustments and establishing partnerships with banks and private sector actors for access to finance and access to markets; (2) the focus on women's empowerment and leadership development; (3) the geographic focus on climatically fragile hotspots and preliminary selection of potential clusters; (4) increased focus on health awareness (One Health approach); and (5) internship approach for hands-on training. Throughout implementation, the project will continue to ensure that stakeholder voices are heard, particularly PO members, with SBKS holding regular meetings to discuss project process.

Regarding the area selection, initially three climatically fragile hotspot were selected during concept note development: (1) the Barind and drought-prone north-western region; (2) the southern coastal region; and (3) the Hoar region in north-eastern Bangladesh. These areas were selected based on their climatic challenges in accordance with the recommendation of the Bangladesh Delta Plan – 2100, and reflecting the SBKS's intention to support climate-affected communities in the country. In order to accommodate the considerably reduced budget granted by the GAFSP Steering Committee (as compared to the amount requested in the proposal), and in line with the recommendation of the GAFSP Technical Advisory Committee, the number of project areas was reduced to two. SBKS decided to prioritize the Barind and coastal region because of their proximity to areas where SBKS is already present. This will facilitate knowledge exchange between new and experienced POs and will reduce project staff travel time and logistics costs.

Within these broad regions, a preliminary selection of districts and potential agribusiness clusters was made based on a cluster mapping survey conducted by SBKS. The survey was conducted by following the supply chain in reverse order, from wholesale markets through intermediary traders to supply areas. After reaching a specific commodity cluster, FBFs then consulted with government extension agents to identify villages where the majority of the villagers are engaged in farming of a specific commodity. Subsequently, SBKS' FBFs conducted interviews and focus group discussions with smallholders and marginal farmers in the communities to better understand their farming system, the problems they face and their level of interest in working with SBKS. Community opinion leaders were also invited to the stakeholder consultation workshop in April 2022 (see the Stakeholder Engagement Matrix in Annex II). It should be stressed that such consultations and assessment of opportunities for collective action and of the interest to become part of SBKS in these clusters is an ongoing, dynamic process. Therefore, the districts and clusters presented on page 10 are a preliminary selection only and are still potentially subject to change. Even after final cluster and community mobilization at the start of the project, the communities in the cluster may decide to invest in a different value chain if the business plan analysis using RurallInvest will reveal that to be more profitable (as happened during MMI-implementation). Flexibility and responsiveness to real-time scenarios are a cornerstone of the project's approach.

#### ***1.3.1.2 Grievance Mechanism***

The FAO Representation in Bangladesh is in the process of establishing a call centre dedicated to grievance redress. It will be a place to gather feedback and complaints from stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries. The call centre will have a particular focal point to receive feedback and follow up on issues as they arise. Parties may call a designated phone number to give feedback. The details are provided in Annex 2.

Project partners and beneficiaries will be informed about this mechanism during implementation as part of project activity 1.1: identification and development of cluster-based producers' organizations.

A more local-level grievance mechanism has also been included in the project design for the purpose of resolving the concerns of any intended beneficiaries or project stakeholders regarding alleged or potential violations of FAO's social and environmental commitments. As an inclusive mechanism, all POs under the project will prepare a Governance, Accountability and Action Plan (GAAP) during inception phase. This GAAP is a participatory exercise where all PO members will participate to identify: (i) potential risks associated with project implementation; (ii) impact of identified risks that may turn into grievances among any members; (iii) intensity of risks; (iv) protective measures; and (v) responsible person(s)/committee for grievance management. This will be exercised quarterly at each PO, initially with the facilitation of the farmer business facilitators (FBFs).

A GAAP will reduce causes of grievance during implementation of the project. Furthermore, a Social Audit Committee (SAC) will be formed within each PO consisting of three members that are not associated with the Executive Committee or have any financial dealings with the PO. Within the PO this SAC will be the first grievance handler. If any grievance cannot be mitigated by the SAC then the PO would seek guidance of their respective FBF to resolve it. The FBF him/herself will try to resolve or may raise any unresolved issue to the SBKS Independent Social Audit Committee and/or the project Implementation Support Unit. Concerns can also be raised through the grievance mechanism described in the table in Annex II. The working of this mechanism will be communicated verbally during the project launch and initial start-up activities at the PO level. It will also be posted in Bangla in the project offices in the project area for reference throughout the project implementation period. Procedures, in line with those from the Office of the FAO Inspector General, to register grievances with respect to fraud and corruption will be posted in English and Bangla on a project website and the FAO Bangladesh country website, <http://www.fao.org/bangladesh/en>.

#### ***1.3.1.3 Disclosure***

The project is classified as medium risk, due to the triggering of ESS 5—use of pesticides. The reason for triggering is because it is possible that farmers may purchase pesticides with funds from the revolving loan fund, in the same way that they could, in theory, purchase pesticides with any other funds they have. The project design team actually considers the risk low. Nevertheless, the project has several risk mitigation measures in place (details in section 2.5.2) which were discussed during the consultation process as this potential risk of harm from pesticide use was disclosed.

The topic of Good Agricultural Practices was one of the main discussion points throughout the stakeholder consultation process. Three separate meetings were held—the first with current SBKS members, the second with prospective partner farmers in the coastal region and the third with prospective partner farmers in the Barind in the north. Participants were made familiar with the risks of pesticide usage and the many alternatives they have in order to ensure that no health or environmental risks come as a result of project interventions.

Additionally, during the consultation process, the project's criteria for eligibility for revolving loan fund finance were shared—this includes following the good agricultural practices and not using chemical pesticides. Participants were asked if they agreed with these or not—and they agreed. The consultations also included a mapping of current practices, and participants were particularly interested in topsoil amendment practices.

#### ***1.3.2 Problems to be addressed***

The main problem to be addressed is lack of access to finance, markets, information and technology of smallholder farmers, particularly women. The project targets smallholders for several reasons. Though they represent over 85% of the farming community, they are often not able to participate in

organized value chains. As explained above, they face higher transaction costs for input purchases and output marketing and lack bargaining power. As price takers they face high price uncertainty and with limited cash reserves, are vulnerable to external shocks.

While micro-finance institutions in Bangladesh are famous for reaching the poor, their focus is on short-duration small loans with interest rates that are too high for agriculture production and longer-term investments. Commercial banks have less outreach in rural areas due to high transaction costs. They also have strict collateral demands, making it hard for smallholders to qualify for loans. However, MMI-BD has demonstrated that when smallholders work together through a PO, they become competitive through better access to information, markets, technology and finance the PO enables.

In the new project areas, commercial ventures, markets and access to resources are male-dominated, with little room for women to be leaders, access finance and have their contributions to the food system properly recognized. As a result of pandemic-related movement restrictions, women have struggled even more. As such, the project has chosen to build in specific measures for women to become leaders in the new POs. The project is enthusiastic about this approach also because during the MMI pilot phase, women-led POs were more successful.

FAO Bangladesh conducted a rapid assessment study of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security right after the first lockdown in May-July 2020. It recommended for financial inclusion for the poorest, investing in digital marketing, cool chains, mechanization, transportation and import substitution for critical inputs. The project's activities are in line with these recommendations.

Another problem is climate related disasters. Bangladesh is one of the top ten countries that has faced extreme climate events over the last two decades<sup>2</sup>. This is particularly true of the two selected climatic hotspots. The northwest region is prone to both flooding and drought. The southern coastal region regularly suffers from tidal surges resulting in flooding, which leads to increased salinity in agricultural lands. Smallholders in these regions are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change. Therefore, resilience to the impact of climate change is another important project goal.

The project areas also face significant health risks and nutrition challenges. Occupational health hazards in farming include exposure to chemical substances, unhygienic disposal of livestock and poultry waste and poor ergonomics of farm machinery. These are often ignored by the farming community even though standard operating procedures and safety protocols do exist. Unfortunately, farmers are either unaware of them or reluctant to take on the burden of following them, as the hazardous consequences of not following them are not well understood. The health challenges are further exacerbated by undernutrition challenges especially amongst farming women. The project areas are considered pockets of undernutrition due to the lack of income of smallholder farmers. During the MMI project, FAO and SBKS found that per capita food energy intake in Rangpur and Barishal was less than the recommended quantity. As the ACCESS project areas on average are poorer, this problem is expected to be more severe under the new members. The project thus intends to mitigate these health risks and nutrition challenges by raising awareness of the One Health approach, best ergonomic practices and building up dietary diversity through increased income and nutrition awareness.

### **1.3.3 Partnerships**

The main partnership that the project will pursue is with Sara Bangla Krishak Society (SBKS). As the project is funded through the GAFSP PO-led window, SBKS, as an apex producers' organization, is

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<sup>2</sup> According to the [Global Climate Risk Index-2021](#) (p. 13)

required to be the main implementing partner. The funding has been granted on account of SBKS' involvement.

SBKS emerged as a registered apex of producers' organizations that was strengthened by the FAO Technical Assistance component of the Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project, financed by GAFSP from 2011 to 2016, and implemented by FAO. The subsequent GAFSP-funded MMI-BD project was implemented jointly by FAO and SBKS with 55 member POs from 2018 to 2022.

Over these years of collaboration, FAO and SBKS have developed an effective approach to build and strengthen POs to support smallholders to access finance, technology, information and value chains. Over the last four years, FAO has signed 3 funding agreements with each PO in the SBKS network for learning grants (USD 2,000), revolving loan funds (RLF) (USD 20,000) and COVID-19 Recovery Revolving funds (CRR) (USD 8,000-24,000). SBKS is the custodian of both the RLF and CRR. This means that it provides robust support to member POs on managing their funds, updating accounts and report preparation, with a total portfolio size of USD 1,386,000. Recognizing the maturity of SBKS and its capacity to implement activities, in June 2020 the MMI-BD technical evaluation committee moved to providing funding directly to SBKS to implement project activities. This was done through a letter of agreement in the amount of USD 15,914 to support COVID-19 response. The project has been very satisfied with SBKS' work here.

The new project will also be an opportunity for SBKS to continue building its capacity to serve smallholder farmers in Bangladesh. FAO will provide part of the project funds directly to SBKS for project implementation following FAO's procedures. More details in the implementation arrangements section.

One of the services SBKS POs expect to provide their member farmers is the facilitation of access to government extension services as well as rural finance. Therefore, the project will seek to further improve its relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture and with Bangladesh Bank. The Ministry of Agriculture will be invited to again establish and chair the project steering committee and the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Department of Livestock Services (DLS), Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) and Bangladesh Bank (the country's central bank) will be invited to continue to provide technical backstopping through their project focal persons. More details in the implementation arrangements section.

The project will also expand SBKS' ongoing partnerships with commercial banks. As of December 2021, 33 of the MMI-BD supported SBKS member POs have crowded-in an additional USD 953,000 in loans from 11 private banks. Due to the relationships built by the project, the banks are confident that these POs have enough social capital to guarantee loan repayment for their members. Moreover, Bangladesh Bank has two policy instruments to support financing for smallholders and their POs—the Agricultural and Rural Credit Policy and the Agent Banking Guideline. The project will work closely with the Agricultural Credit Division of Bangladesh Bank to ensure the policies are implemented at field level.

The project will also build on the productive alliance, established under MMI-BD, between POs and exporters, processors, traders and their associations. MMI-BD has successfully partnered private sector actors with POs producing vegetables, potato, milk, ghee and pulses following Good Agricultural Practices. MMI-BD POs have sold more than 3,000 metric ton of potato to exporters, with support from the Bangladesh Potato Exporters Association. During the pandemic to date, MMI-BD POs have sold milk to processors; vegetables and cereal and other crops to large traders; and have purchased inputs in bulk from reputed input companies through their Virtual Call Centers. Seeing COVID-19 as a wake-up call to ensure food safety from farm to table, these exporters, processors, retail chain shops and wholesalers agreed to work with commodity-based POs. During the consultation process, all expressed their interest to achieve a win-win solution for producing safe food, with National Bank

Limited and Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills Limited submitting written pledges for co-financing to POs for USD 355,000 and USD 100,000 respectively.

### ***1.3.4 Knowledge Management and Communication***

#### ***1.3.4.1 Knowledge Sharing***

FAO's work with SBKS to date has put emphasis on knowledge sharing. Several videos about the project approach have been produced to date and shared among stakeholders, including through publication on FAO's official Youtube channel. The new project will build on this momentum to share the good practices and learnings from the project among producers' organizations and development partners alike.

Technical knowledge products such as training manuals and videos, operational guidelines and standard operation practices to be followed by SBKS and its member POs will be developed in a participatory manner with SBKS in Bengali. They will be appropriately stored in the FAO and SBKS project archives and non-confidential materials will be disseminated on SBKS and FAO-BGD web pages.

Lessons learned materials—for example on the project approach—intended for wider knowledge sharing will be produced in English or in both languages, and such materials will also be shared with the GAFSP and with the Asian Farmers Association. FAO logo use and publication rules will be followed. Additionally, SBKS is exploring the possibility of training some of its youth members in basic filming and video editing skills so that more stories and lessons from the field can be captured and disseminated among members.

The project will work closely with the FAO Country Office to find further opportunities for knowledge sharing, both among other FAO projects and with our Government counterparts.

#### ***1.3.4.2 Lessons Learned***

The lessons learned during the implementation of the MMI-BGD project have greatly influenced the design of this project. The MMI approach has worked well because it focused first on strengthening the organizational capacity of the PO. The approach also began with the selection of the value chain for business development, so that it was clear from early on that the project would lead to tangible benefits for PO members. With this solid foundation, the project developed the capacity of POs to be informed and empowered actors in their respective value chains. The 'MMI training curriculum' built capacity in the areas of financial, business and digital literacy, including a solid analysis and understanding of the value chain. Finance was then provided to the PO to start investing in common facility centres that serve the needs of farmer members. Examples here include seed villages, milk chilling centres and machinery rental centres.

With a strong organizational foundation and value chain readiness in place, the project then established PO-led community revolving loan funds. These funds have allowed individual farmer members to invest in their priority value chain, resulting in more successful businesses and increased incomes for their families. The funds are then repaid to the PO, with interest, and so the amount of finance available to the community grows. With the legitimacy of the PO evident, government and private sector actors, including financial institutions, have been inspired to partner with POs, leading to increased access to finance, markets and information.

SBKS also found that the women-led organizations in its network are performing better, particularly with regards to institutional maturity and the management of revolving loan funds. However, in the new areas into which this project will expand, commercial ventures are male dominated, with little

room for women to be leaders and access finance. Therefore, this project will provide specific women leadership skills development. Additionally, POs' revolving loan fund and audit committees will be required to be women-led as a pre-condition for receiving project funds.

FAO has also learned from the IAPP, MMI and projects in other countries with producers' organizations that organizations do well when they have close collaborative ties to government and to financial institutions, as opposed to adversarial ones. Inviting key government officials to serve as project focal points for technical backstopping has helped to build relationships for future work. Dialogue with decision makers in financial institutions has also been useful in overcoming initial barriers of communication and mistrust that small farmers are unable to address as individuals.

Lessons on One Health: Experience from the MMI project shows that a one-off One Health training and video are not enough for a permanent change in routines. Often measures are time consuming or unpleasant (e.g. wearing masks or plastic gloves in the hot humid weather), and unless there is some tangible reward such as higher prices for a better quality product, it is difficult to keep the discipline to continue these practices. Thus, ACCESS will continue awareness raising and will try to demonstrate longer-term health benefits and to facilitate linkages to value chains that reward better hygiene. Moreover, the project will benefit from the experience of the Upazila to Community (U2C) initiative of the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), supported by the FAO-Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Disease (ECTAD). U2C is a flagship One Health program in Bangladesh for the livestock sector, supporting communities not only in the area of increased productivity, but also in the development of community facilitators, especially rural youth women, on disease surveillance, prevention and outbreak control. This community facilitator approach is very much in line with the way SBKS works to share knowledge with their members and will be of great inspiration for the project.

Lessons on nutrition: through the course of MMI-BD, the project gained insight and experience about nutrition challenges in rural Bangladesh. From the Ministry of Food and FAO-implemented 'Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge' (MUCH) project, SBKS was introduced to the Nutri-plate concept. The Nutri-plate serves as a strong basis for educating rural communities on what the composition of a nutritious meal should be. SBKS then took this understanding and came up with the 'rural diversified food basket' – an important tool to measure the cost of providing a nutritious meal for a household. Empowered with this knowledge, they are now regularly monitoring food prices and are able to advocate with the government for continued economic stimuli and social safety nets during times of crisis.

In addition, for the COVID-19 recovery loan fund, the MMI-BD piloted the approach that applicants had to have or establish a family homestead nutrition farm (vegetables and/or backyard poultry) for their own consumption, in order to qualify for a loan. The approach has been working well and will be continued under ACCESS. As mentioned under the description for Activity 2.3, the guidelines for these family nutrition farms are informed by the Nutri-plate, which has been developed in accordance with the government's 2020 National Dietary Guideline and builds on years of nutrition research.

Lessons learned from other (country-led) projects in Bangladesh: The Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project (SACP) financed by IFAD and implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture has spent significant time researching and promoting different agricultural technologies—some of which will be relevant for ACCESS. The SACP, in collaboration with the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), has been promoting newly released varieties (e.g. BARI black cumin, BAU Garlic-3, BARI, Lentil-7) as well as technologies for post-harvest loss reduction, agro-food processing and adaptation to climate change. The new commodity-based POs of ACCESS may adopt some of the best technology packages of SACP. Additionally, the project may also benefit from technology packages of community-based livestock rearing practice from the Livestock and Dairy Development Project (LDDP) as well as fisheries technology packages from the Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project

(SCMFP) financed by the World Bank and Government of Bangladesh. In addition to lessons on technology learned from the three aforementioned large investment projects, MMI-BD and SBKS have also been sharing lessons with them on building strong producers' organizations (POs). Under ACCESS, this ongoing exchange of ideas, inspiration and lessons will continue under the stewardship of the FAO Bangladesh country office.

Moving forward, this project's lesson learning strategy is based on a solid participatory monitoring system (see section 2.6). While the lessons from the project approach have already been well documented and shared during the MMI phase, this project expects to draw further lessons on: (i) scaling up and related PO governance and RLF monitoring challenges; (ii) climate resilient farming systems; (iii) integrating the One Health approach; (iv) appropriate digital tools for producers' organizations; and (v) the gradual hand-over of project implementation responsibility to the apex PO. Through SBKS, the project will ensure knowledge and lesson sharing between its member POs through social media, regular online and physical meetings and exchange visits.

#### ***1.3.4.3 Communication***

To ensure project **visibility**, the project will engage the services of the international communications specialist in the FAO-Bangladesh office to ensure major project events are covered by Bangladesh media outlets (television and print). Furthermore, the project will collaborate with the GAFSP communication unit and RAP and Investment Centre communication officers and with AFA for international visibility, such as FAO and GAFSP website articles and twitter feeds. SBKS is exploring the possibility of having a trained cohort of youth PO leaders that can also document and communicate about the project. These products may be more informal but still a powerful way to tell stories from the field. SBKS is exploring the possibility of its own Youtube channel as a platform to share these stories.

In terms of **communication with project beneficiaries**, the communication strategy is based on SBKS' internal lines of communication. To start with, this involved extensive consultations among its PO membership for activity planning, and technical backstopping through its network of farmer business facilitators. To support training and capacity building activities, the project plans to produce several illustrative videos, featuring examples from well-performing POs or using the format of an animation video, for which the project will hire the services of a national video and graphic designer.

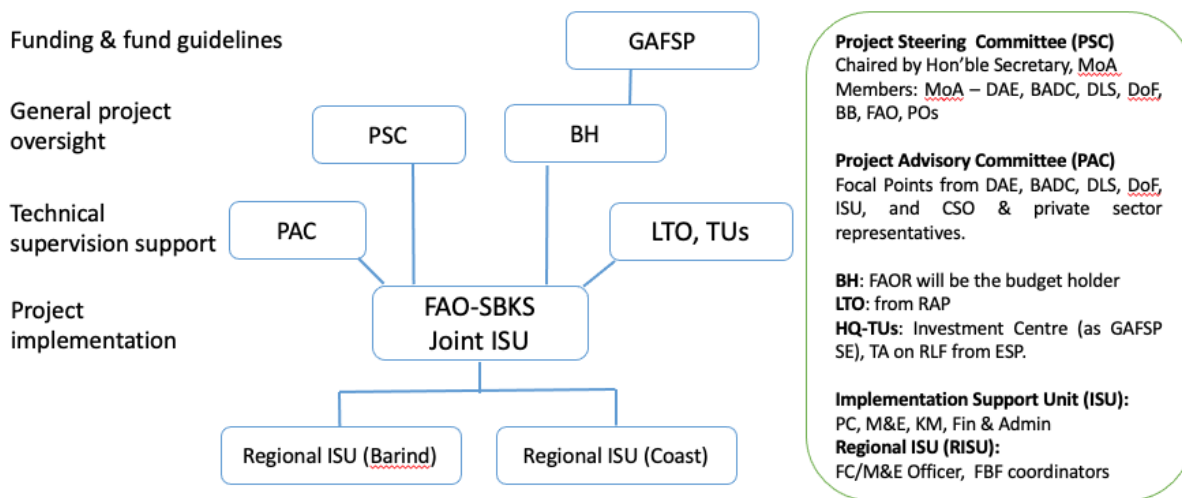
## **SECTION 2 – FEASIBILITY**

### **2.1 Implementation Arrangements**

#### ***2.1.1 Institutional Framework and Coordination***

The vision for implementation arrangements is for SBKS to benefit from continuous on-the-job capacity development while assuming an increase in responsibilities over the life of the project. To this end, a joint implementation support unit (ISU) will be established by FAO and SBKS. In addition, two regional implementation support units (RISUs) will be established, one in each region. General oversight will be provided by the FAO budget holder's office as well as by the Project Steering Committee. In addition, the project will be advised on technical matters by the Project Advisory Committee. See the organogram below and details on roles and responsibilities in section 2.1.6.

**Project organogram:**



**2.1.2 Government Inputs**

No financial government inputs to the project are required. According to government standard procedures, FAO and SBKS will request the Ministry of Agriculture to establish and lead the Project Steering Committee. The PSC will be chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and will include members from government line agencies, FAO and SBKS.

FAO and SBKS will also request four of the government’s line agencies: the Department of Agriculture Extension, Department of Livestock Services, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation and Bangladesh Bank to appoint focal persons to provide technical backstopping to SBKS and its member organizations. This has already been taking place with good results under the MMI-BD. The support has been highly appreciated and instrumental to the success of the project. The focal persons will be members of the Project Advisory Committee.

**2.1.3 Resource Partner Inputs**

The project will be financed mainly by the GAFSP, with a total contribution of USD 3,260,000. From the GAFSP funding, FAO will hire national and field project coordinators as well as subject matter specialists in the areas of producers’ organizations, M&E and rural finance (see ToRs in Annex VII). These specialists will provide support to SBKS in the implementation of the project, providing on-the-job training for SBKS leadership and staff. Given the well-qualified pool of specialists in Bangladesh, the project will work mainly with national consultants, endeavouring also to capitalize on the experience gained from the successful MMI project. Additional experts will be hired on an as-needed basis, either on short-term or part-time contracts, including international consultants for international communication products and English language editing. Some funding will also be used for necessary administrative, operations and financial management support (see details in 2.1.6).

Equipment and supplies to be procured directly by the project are limited to those required for basic offices and local transport, and security services.

A significant amount of the funds will be used to contract SBKS through Letters of Agreement to implement project activities. A component-wise estimate of funding for SBKS includes: (i) learning grant—USD 120,000; (ii) strengthening value chain skills of POs—USD 381,000; (iii) community-based revolving loan fund (RLF) grant—USD 447,000; (iv) project management, monitoring costs—USD 312,000. The main rationale for contracting SBKS for such a large part of the project budget is that the



GAFSP PO-led modality is expressly intended to increase funding for producers' organizations and—as the name implies—for the project to be led by a producers' organization. However, FAO will be directly responsible for the bulk of the procurement, as per administrative rules this cannot be performed by organizations under a Letter of Agreement. It is foreseen that the Letters of Agreement will be negotiated and signed between FAO and SBKS on a yearly basis, in accordance with the project work plan for that year.

SBKS will be directly responsible for community mobilization, training of Farmer Business Facilitators of new POs in the areas of organizational development, business planning, value chain development and technical production aspects and conducting the internship programmes for them on organizational development, women's leadership development, and value chain development. SBKS will also conduct market intelligence surveys, support cluster level business plan preparation using RuralInvest, establish digital village service centres/virtual call centres, develop the e-arat and establish the innovation hubs for climate resilient technologies, organize exchange visits and a community awareness campaign on One Health.

SBKS will devolve a large amount of the funds to their new POs in the project areas as PO learning grants, for investment in PO common facility centres and for the PO revolving loan fund. This will be done in a similar contracting process as FAO used with individual member POs during the MMI phase. Thus, POs will have to meet minimum criteria to receive the learning grant. Subsequently, POs must have a minimum performance rating, demonstrated good use of the initial learning grant and an approved business plan before receiving the funds for the investment in the common facility centre. Finally, the POs have to meet a higher performance rating still, have an operational common facility centre and have put revolving loan fund management structures in place before being eligible for the capitalization of the RLF.

In addition, SBKS will fund part of its own staff inputs and expenses to carry out the activities. SBKS has also pledged USD 100,000 to go directly towards the revolving loan fund for POs. With the increase in responsibility under this new project, SBKS' capacity will grow and its ability to serve smallholders with it. It is expected that by the end of the project SBKS will be well positioned to continue as a major player in the upliftment of the farming community in Bangladesh.

During the course of the project, FAO will continuously seek opportunities for additional funding through other FAO projects to provide additional inputs to ACCESS, likely in the areas of digital agriculture, women's leadership development and value addition technology. This is planned to total USD 350,000.

An FAO regional project will provide technical support to deploy digitization programs in food and rural sectors and facilitate digital village pilots in support of rural transformation and achievement of SDG 1 and 2. The project will be implemented in four countries, including Bangladesh, and SBKS member POs will be eligible for support.

Furthermore, the project will leverage financing from banks and non-bank financial institutes for SBKS and individual PO revolving funds. A pledge for such co-financing through the provision of credit has already been received from the National Bank for USD 355,000. This funding will go directly to the POs. Similarly, Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills Ltd. (BSRM) will invest USD 100,000 directly with SBKS for small-scale storage facilities with dry and cool chain solutions under project activity 2.4.

#### **2.1.4 Strategy/Methodology**

SBKS, in collaboration with FAO, intends to scale up and build on the successful experience of the GAFSP Missing Middle Initiative in Bangladesh (MMI-BD) to strengthen producers' organizations and

ensure their access to markets, technology, information and finance. The new project will broaden the farming community SBKS engages with two regions of Bangladesh that face severe climate-related challenges but also have emerging agri-business clusters<sup>3</sup>. The new project will empower smallholder farmers to establish producers' organizations (POs) that are well positioned to become commercially viable actors in their respective value chains. It is envisioned that under the ACCESS project, SBKS will facilitate the formation of 60 new POs that will, upon reaching institutional maturity, become members of the SBKS network. Recognizing the strength of women leaders within the current SBKS network and the need for women's empowerment in the new project areas, ACCESS will implement a series of mechanisms to ensure that women have opportunities for genuine leadership in their communities (see section 3.4 for details).

ACCESS will also be an opportunity for SBKS to continue building its capacity to serve smallholder farmers in Bangladesh, in partnership with the private sector and government. The project will build on lessons learned under MMI-BD (detailed in section 1.3) and support further strengthening of SBKS at the apex level so that it can effectively partner with and empower more farmers throughout the country, to not only respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but to potential future shocks, particularly related to climate change and public health. In addition to the opportunities to come for the SBKS apex to grow in strength and experience, the role of many of the existing 55 SBKS member POs will evolve as well. They will transition from being recipients of capacity development under MMI-BD to serving as host organizations for the development of capacity of new POs through ACCESS' innovative internship programme. It is anticipated that this will strengthen the capacity of the existing SBKS member POs to serve their member farmers, as well as provide an inspiration to ensure the continued success of their own organizations. Further, these 55 existing SBKS POs will continue to benefit from the support of their increasingly experienced and empowered apex body.

The project theory of change is presented in the diagram below.

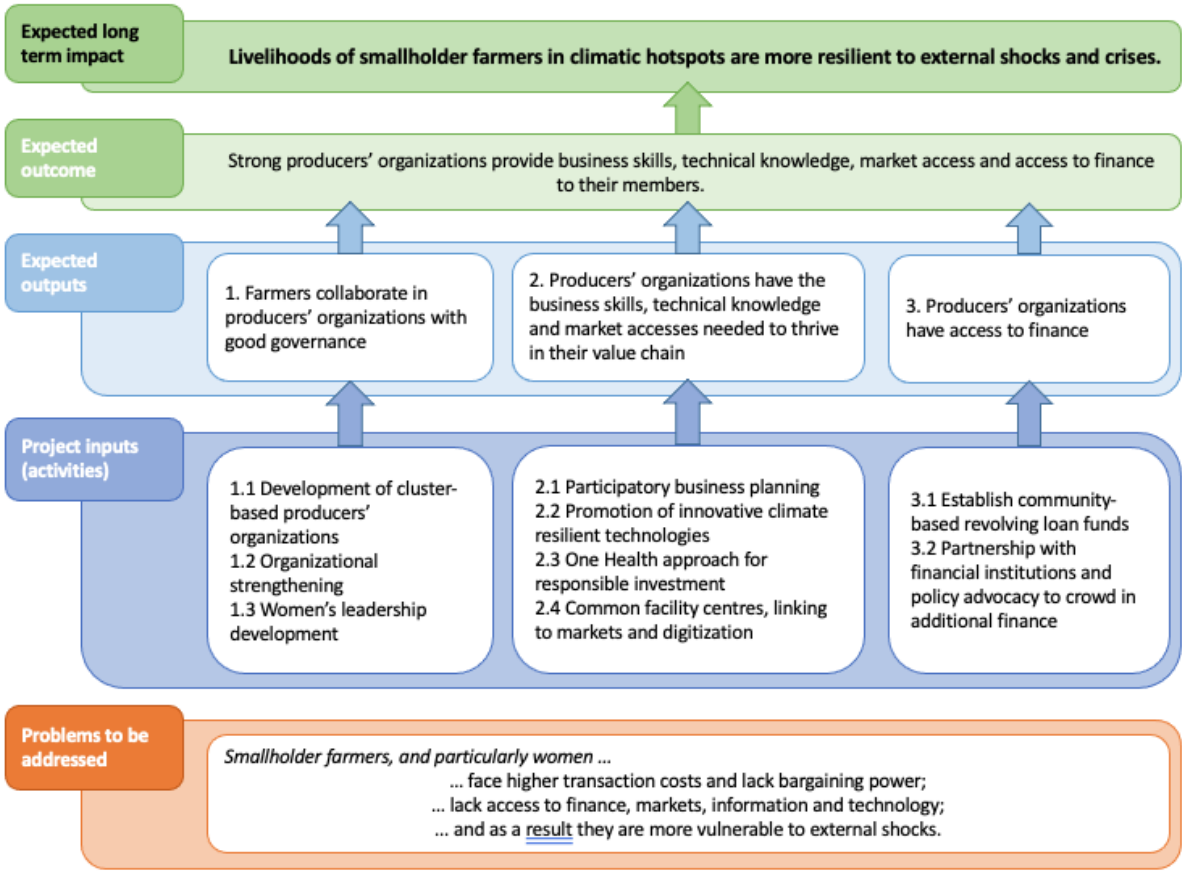
1. To start, the project will support the development of 60 new producers' organizations including building their institutional capacity and governance processes.
2. With a solid institutional foundation, the project will build the business skills and technical knowledge of the POs to better integrate into their local value chains.
3. The project will support the POs to access community-based financing through the development of revolving loan funds, as well as linkages with external financial providers to crowd in additional finance.

Like this, the POs will be able to make investments to uplift their families and communities, helping to recover from shocks brought about by the pandemic, and to be more resilient to potential future shocks. As the approach is highly participatory, it is also flexible to respond to farmer needs as they occur. The approach empowers grassroots producers' organizations to identify their own priorities and develop—and if needed, change—their own business plans.

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<sup>3</sup> Agribusiness clusters are informally integrated groups of enterprises focused on a particular commodity within a specific geographic location. For example, a cluster of year-round high value crops in Ishurdi or a cucumber cluster in Charfasson. Smallholder farmers in agribusiness clusters face many similar challenges—lack of access to information, markets, appropriate scale technologies and finance, as well as climatic risks. See section 1.3.1.1 on the selection of project areas and clusters.

**Project Theory of Change**



**2.1.5 Technical Oversight and Support Arrangements**

Support in the technical areas of project implementation will be provided by FAO experts in the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) and Headquarters. The project's Lead Technical Officer (LTO), based in RAP, will review terms of reference, progress reports, annual work plans and project training materials and is responsible for technical clearances.

The FAO Investment Centre (CFI) will be the project Lead Technical Unit (LTU) in HQ and perform oversight functions and assist with complying with GAFSP M&E and reporting requirements. As the Supervising Entity, FAO is responsible for GAFSP funds being used for the project. CFI will also provide technical support on the use of RurallInvest for business planning. This includes annual supervision missions (physical or virtual, depending on the COVID-19 situation), in which the LTO will also participate as much as possible.

In addition, technical support will be provided by subject matter specialists on specific topics. In particular, technical advice from ESP on revolving fund management, including technical clearance of LoAs through which funds are to be disbursed for the RLF. Furthermore, support will be provided by the MBWin team in RAP on the use of their software, and by experts on digitization and the One Health approach, among other specialized topics.

GAFSP is also expected to continue to provide guidance on their M&E framework and to organize knowledge sharing among its portfolio of projects.

### **2.1.6 Management and Operational Support Arrangements**

SBKS will devolve the funds for project activities to its new member POs through a step-by-step process. They will establish intermediary performance goals and minimum organizational maturity scores to be reached before the next funding tranche, as tested under the MMI-BD pilot. There will be three tiers of reporting systems for both physical and financial progress: (i) individual PO to SBKS; (ii) SBKS to FAO; and (iii) FAO to GAFSP.

Program coordination costs include consultants, office set up and maintenance costs, furniture/equipment and travel costs. Since this proposed project is considered as a second phase of the MMI-BD pilot, very minimal costs for vehicles and equipment have been projected. All consultants of FAO as well SBKS will be remunerated as per established payment scales and will be recruited following established HR rules and procedures. The budget includes a standard 7% indirect support cost, and the direct support costs as per FAO cost recovery policy and budgeting rules, which amount to 5% of total project cost.

The FAO Representative in Bangladesh will be the project budget holder and an operations officer will support the administrative oversight of the project. The project budget includes the salary of an operations assistant to be responsible for day-to-day administrative procedures. While the amount of LoAs to handle will significantly reduce compared to the MMI phase (as LoAs with individual member POs are no longer needed), work will shift to support and supervision of SBKS to implement part of the project and devolve and ensure proper use of funds by its member POs. Therefore, the project's national operations and finance officer will not only be responsible for day-to-day management of FAO project financial procedures but will also be coaching and supervising SBKS in managing the project funds and the RLF.

The Implementation Support Unit team will be led jointly by an FAO National Project Coordinator and an SBKS National Project Coordinator, who will work closely and make decisions together. Project implementation will largely be the responsibility of SBKS, however, the ultimate responsibility for management of project resources will sit with FAO. The ISU will be based in Dhaka and will also include additional FAO staff to provide both managerial and technical support in a variety of areas, including M&E, finance, accounts, communication, RLF management, partnership development, value chain improvement, One Health and digital app development. SBKS will also have an accountant and office assistant within the ISU in Dhaka.

Each of the two regional ISUs will be coordinated by an SBKS Regional Project Coordinator supported by one SBKS field facilitator and a cohort of 10 farmer business facilitators (FBFs), who will be the main field-level team of the project. FAO will also provide coaching, monitoring and accounting support at the regional level through FAO Field Coordinators/M&E Officers and FAO Field Facilitators (one of each in each region). This team will be responsible for day-to-day backstopping support to SBKS, FBFs and member POs—ensuring successful monitoring and accounts keeping every step of the way.

Each PO will nominate two members to become PO facilitators. They will receive training from the FBFs and existing SBKS POs and then train their own POs in what they have learned, as well as provide general support to the ongoing development of their organization. The FBFs and PO facilitators will be critical resources for the successful implementation of the project. Both the ISU and RISUs will backstop the FBFs and PO facilitators.

In addition to the official project team, current SBKS POs will play an important role in training and mentoring PO facilitators. Through the project's 'internship' program, PO facilitators will spend 3 periods of 10 days each with already established SBKS POs to receive hands-on training in a variety of areas. This approach will ensure that current SBKS POs have the opportunity to bond with new POs

and continue to strengthen themselves through this process. A similar internship approach will be taken with new women PO leaders spending time with, learning from and being mentored by established SBKS women leaders.

The Project Steering Committee will review the annual work plan and provide policy-related support. The Project Advisory Committee will have a more practical technical support role. Among other tasks, the PAC will review PO business plans for endorsement of grant funding for the common facility centres and the PO revolving loan fund. The PAC will consist of focal persons from government line agencies, SBKS, FAO, the private sector, CSOs, development partners and the Asian Farmers Association (AFA) representative in Bangladesh.

### ***Synergies with the GAFSP-funded country-led project***

Bangladesh was also awarded a grant under the GAFSP country-led funding window. Bangladesh's country-led project will be implemented directly by the government, with IFAD as the Supervising Entity and with technical assistance from FAO. In the award letters for both the PO-led ACCESS and country-led projects, GAFSP requested the two projects to find synergies and ways to support each other during implementation.

The ACCESS project and SBKS will share expertise and resources on PO mobilization using the MMI-BD approach. This will include sharing of training modules on organizational strengthening, financial management and accounting, leadership and confidence building, as well as the RuralInvest module translated in Bangla. There is a possibility for some training of trainers by SBKS PO leaders as well. Additionally, resources and materials from the ACCESS women's leadership development initiative will be shared with the country-led project. Further, in the areas where both projects will be present, ACCESS POs will be invited to join demonstrations of climate-resilient varieties and technologies to be shared under the country-led project, including visits to demonstration plots.

Further, the project steering committees of the two projects will share some members and will be responsible to ensure that the two projects will make use of opportunities for further collaboration that may present themselves during implementation. The IAPP and MMI projects have demonstrated the impact and value of all of these ways of learning and sharing knowledge, and this round of GAFSP-funded projects can benefit as well.

## **2.2 Operational Modalities**

Direct implementation by FAO was chosen as the most appropriate modality, using FAO consultants and contracting services from non-profit organizations under manual Section 507 (LoAs). This is most appropriate as SBKS is a non-profit organization, and part of the funds are to be used to establish the revolving loan funds of its new member POs, for which the applicable modality at the time of project design is an LoA with technical clearance from the rural finance unit in ESP. The role of SBKS in project implementation is described in section 2.1.3.

## **2.3 Statistics**

The project's data collection will involve mainly data for its M&E system: (i) baseline information of target beneficiaries and control group; (ii) data on SBKS and its member POs: governance score card, revolving loan fund data; and (iii) data on outreach and training events.

The data will be collected through a participatory approach by the POs' farmer business facilitators. For the baseline and final evaluation household survey data collection and analysis, the project will hire a specialized service provider to perform the statistical analysis. These data will be disaggregated by gender. See paragraph 2.6 for details on the M&E system.

In addition, data will be collected on targeted clusters. At the start of the project, SBKS will collect detailed information to deepen their knowledge about the selected clusters and inform the final target community selection. Later, the new SBKS member POs will collect technical and market information in their business planning process. These will be more of a qualitative nature.

No capacity building on statistical methods and standards is foreseen.

## **2.4 Information Technology**

Under the FAO Digital Village Initiative the project will provide information services to farmers in the community. This includes developing digital literacy, and training and access to FAO's digital services— .Collect Mobile, RuralInvest and MBWin. Farmers will also have access to digital climate advisory services (BAMIS, BMD mobile app, community radio), online market services, rural banking software and the government farmers' window app with agricultural, land and meteorological information. POs will be provided with IT equipment to make services available to all villagers. The project will also facilitate the development of an 'e-Arat', an online marketplace to connect cluster farmers with wholesalers, as well as partnerships with exporters, processors, large traders and government certification agencies to connect POs with larger markets.

Microbanker (MBWin) will be used to manage the RLF. Microbanker-generated data will be owned by SBKS and will not be shared outside SBKS membership and FAO implementers. RuralInvest will result in PO business plans that are intended to be shared with potential credit providers. As such, these data are not of a confidential nature. The individual POs will own their business plans and control to whom they will share their business plans. Upon agreement by the POs, some sample business plans may be shared by FAO with GAFSP as the project resource provider on a confidential basis. Part of the M&E data collected through .Collect Mobile will be publicly shared on the project dashboard. SBKS decides which of the data to share and how, i.e. whether as aggregate numbers or as data linked to individual member POs. Throughout the MMI project, awareness has been raised with the SBKS team about the importance of data protection and confidentiality, particularly around financial and personal data.

At the start of the project, the SBKS website and dashboard will be presented to the SBKS General Assembly for membership consent and buy-in. This will take place each time there is a substantial update to the website with new features added. Further clarity and guidance on data protection measures of the project will be shared at this time as well. Additionally, the project will be sure to get membership buy-in when partnerships are established with potential e-commerce and/or ICT providers.

## **2.5 Risk Management**

### ***2.5.1 Potential risks to the project***

The identified risks to the project are presented in Annex V Part A. The most important risk in terms of likelihood and potential consequences is the commercial risk linked to value chain development (e.g., market demand crashes, buyers do not honour contracts), which would create problems for farmers to sell their products and repay their loans. The project will therefore invest in market intelligence and the facilitation of linkages with reliable buyers.

Additionally, the FAO TA team will continue coaching and building the capacity of SBKS leaders and staff to ensure that SBKS has sufficient institutional capacity to take on increased responsibility for the implementation of the project. This will take place at every step of the project to ensure success. A full

audit of SBKS' accounts will take place prior to disbursement of project funds, with annual audits to follow.

For risks related to gender, see section 3.4.

### **2.5.2 Environmental and social risks from the project**

ES5.1 on pesticide use was the only environmental and social risk identified to potentially emanate from the project. The project team analysed the risk and came up with the following findings: The project will not procure pesticides directly, however, project funds will be used for a PO revolving fund, which will be used to provide loans to farmers with which they buy inputs. In theory, these inputs could include pesticides, however this will be discouraged, with safer alternatives made clear. Additionally, the project preparation team found that during the preceding MMI project, no pesticides were purchased through the VCCs, already giving confidence that the MMI approach of sharing the importance of applying Good Agricultural Practices has worked.

With several mechanisms in place to ensure this risk is mitigated, the risk was classified as low to moderate. As such, no external consultants or firms were hired to perform a further risk assessment.

Details on the mechanisms to deter chemical pesticide use are as follows:

1. The project provides training on good agricultural practices, which cover a wide variety of methods to ensure healthy and safe products. With regards to pesticides, these practices ensure familiarity with and an understanding of the importance of using non-chemical pest prevention techniques. These include two MMI-BD-tested models of safe vegetable production: (i) Pest Exclusion Net Technology (PENT); and (ii) Barrier Crop Technology (BACT), e.g. sweet corn and colourful flowers. These protect against pest attacks. Farmers will also be encouraged to use Neem oil (nimbicidine), yellow sticky/glue sticker, and sex-pheromone traps for biological control of pests.
2. One of the conditions to be eligible to revolving loan funds, as well as linkages with exporters and high-end local markets, is that farmers must follow Good Agricultural Practices, including not using any synthetic pesticides in their production.

The project will establish an internal control system for adherence to Good Agricultural Practice standards, using digital tools for traceability. Each PO will have a trained GAP manager who will train member farmers. An internal control committee will visit each farmer's field once during cropping season and once during harvest. They will check whether farmers are using bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers and are adhering to other GAP standards. Data will be entered on a tablet using the project's .Collect Mobile monitoring system allowing for traceability of product quality.

Risks were also discussed extensively during the project stakeholder consultation process organized by SBKS with its member farmers and in project target communities. Specific sessions were conducted on the importance of applying Good Agricultural Practices, which include PENT and BACT techniques to cut the need for pesticides. Stakeholders clearly understood the importance of not using chemical pesticides, as well as the organic, healthy and safe alternatives, as a result of these discussions.

With the combination of this awareness-raising and the mitigation measures in place, the project is confident that farmers will not only minimize the use of agrochemicals, but actually contribute to the overall reduction of pesticide use in the project area, therefore mitigating health and environmental risks.

## **2.6 Monitoring, Performance Assessment and Reporting**

### **2.6.1 Monitoring Arrangements**

The project's monitoring and performance assessment activities have three purposes:

- i) lessons learning and ongoing improvement and refining of the project approach;
- ii) safeguarding that project funds will be devolved to SBKS and the planned budget for revolving loan funds will be devolved to member POs only when they are ready to manage them;
- iii) accountability to the donor and SBKS members.

Information on progress towards indicator targets will be collected by farmer business facilitators (FBFs) using .Collect Mobile and MBWin software on a monthly and quarterly basis. Data from the virtual call centres will also be collected daily and feed into the project's M&E dashboard. As with the MMI project, one of the first trainings the FBFs of the new POs will receive will be on the use of tablets, the questionnaires and the methods of data collection. For the first two quarters, they will be accompanied by experienced FBFs during the data collection. SBKS will hire two M&E officers, one for the north and one for the south who will be trained by the MMI M&E officers (starting already under the MMI project) and who will be responsible for the organization of the data collection and data cleaning, tabulation and analysis. The FAO TA team will continue to play a support and supervisory role to ensure accurate reporting.

#### **Arrangements**

Key elements of the project M&E system will be:

- (i) a practical M&E manual detailing clear objectives, scope, reporting structure, staffing, capacity building plan, roles and responsibilities, budget and M&E-related activities with a timeframe;
- (ii) annual M&E plans;
- (iii) a management information system with dashboard;
- (iv) monthly and quarterly data collection by FBFs using .Collect Mobile and MBWin software.
- (v) annual and semi-annual GAFSP reports with an update on the achievements of each indicator in the logical framework;
- (vi) household surveys with control group for baseline and final evaluation;
- (vii) regular field visits by the staff of the joint FAO-SBKS implementation support units and annual supervision missions (virtual or physical) by the LTO and LTU focal person. The second LTO-LTU mission will serve as mid-term review mission and is intended to be a physical mission;
- (viii) Semi-annual meetings of the project advisory committee and annual joint implementation reviews with the project steering committee;
- (ix) additional research and thematic studies as needed.

For the safeguarding purpose, the project will update and use the PO governance performance scorecard developed under the MMI project. The project will also annually review the assumptions and reflect whether these need to be updated. The project will also review whether the mitigation actions in the risk log are successfully mitigating the risks or if additional mitigation actions need to be undertaken.



The environmental risk will be monitored through the project's M&E system, with regular data gathering by FBFs. As described in Annex V, data will be gathered on the following:

- Number of member farmers trained in GAP;
- SBKS member POs working in crop clusters that have a trained GAP manager;
- Number of trainings provided by GAP manager to member farmers;
- Internal control system established in each PO.

Additionally, data from the VCCs will be collected daily and fed into the M&E dashboard and this will reveal in case any pesticides are purchased—allowing for immediate monitoring of input purchases.

As FAO is the GAFSP supervising entity (SE) of this project, in addition to being the direct implementing agency, it will itself monitor the project as SE. To this end, the Investment Centre (LTU) project focal person will participate in the selection of the FAO technical assistance (TA) team, review annual project work plans, provide quality assurance for important Terms of Reference (e.g. the LoAs with SBKS) and for the progress reports. They will also participate in the supervision missions.

### **2.6.2 Performance Assessment**

The project will assess results performance at three levels:

**SBKS:** Their institutional capacity development in implementing the project, but also in providing services to their member POs. This will be monitored by the FAO team by monitoring the implementation of the LoAs the project will sign with SBKS, but also in day-to-day coaching activities and through regular field visits.

**SBKS member POs:** The PO governance performance scorecard developed under the MMI project will be the main tool to monitor the progress of the POs in their governance, organization management and value chain development activities. Monitoring of the PO progress will be the responsibility of SBKS, with assistance and quality assurance provided by the FAO team. In addition, the operation of the PO revolving loan fund will be monitored on a monthly and quarterly basis, following the loan cycles.

**Impact at farmer household level:** This will be measured through the household surveys providing the baseline and final evaluation data.

For accountability purposes, the project will track physical and financial progress against the annual work plan and budget. It will monitor its results by tracking the indicators identified in the logical framework, including mandatory and selected optional GAFSP indicators.

For the learning purpose, the M&E system will be largely participatory, building on good practices from the MMI project. FBFs will double as baseline enumerators and will also be responsible for monitoring at least 2 POs each. Such a participatory approach will ensure learning by the SBKS leadership and cross-learning among the POs. FBFs will collect data using the .Collect Mobile application on tablets provided by the project. Data collected by the FBFs will be cleaned and analysed by the project M&E staff and used for preparing the project reports. A selected dataset will be used for the project's M&E dashboard. FAO will hold the ultimate responsibility for project M&E analysis, especially in light of the fact that the systems and databases are complex and require quite some IT capacity to operate them. That said, as SBKS' team grows in M&E skill and experience, FAO will delegate as much M&E responsibility as possible, recognising, however, that the lack of English language capacity will be a barrier to taking full responsibility.

It will be the joint responsibility of the project Budget Holder and the LTU (as SE) to coordinate the preparation of progress reports, mid-term assessments and terminal reports for submission to GAFSP. It is the responsibility of the Lead Technical Officer to ensure technical validity of the reports as well as to ensure inputs from other Technical Officers from within the Project Task Force (PTF) and from other partners as needed.

After approximately two years of implementation, a mid-term review mission will be organized by the LTO and LTU's project focal person. If possible and useful, other subject-matter specialists from the PTF may be invited, as well as a representative from the GAFSP Coordination Unit, or possibly an AFA representative.

In addition, for lesson learning purposes, specific research and thematic studies may be conducted by the ISU, the FAO TA team or be outsourced to subject-matter specialists. At the end of the project, the SBKS leadership and FAO team will jointly conduct an internal evaluation, based on the data collected throughout the project life. This will include an analytical reflection to draw lessons on factors contributing to achievements or lack thereof, with a focus on outcome indicators. The results of this internal evaluation will be presented in a lesson-learning workshop.

### **2.6.3 Reporting**

The following reports will be prepared:

- After six months, a project inception report will be prepared;
- Furthermore, within the first year, a project baseline report will be produced, based on a household survey organized during the first six months of the project;
- The inception report will be followed by semi-annual project progress reports following the GAFSP reporting template with an update on the achievements of each indicator in the logical framework;
- The fourth progress report will inform the mid-term review mission by the LTO-LTU. The mission members will prepare a mid-term review report as an annex to their back-to-office / assignment summary report;
- An internal lesson-learning evaluation report at the end of the project;
- An evaluation report based on a) the evaluation household survey in comparison with the results of the baseline survey; b) the monitoring data collected throughout the life of the project; and c) the results of the final lesson learning workshop with SBKS members.

Except for the baseline and evaluation survey reports, all reports will be prepared by the joint FAO-SBKS implementation support unit. For the baseline and evaluation survey report, a service provider will be hired.

Reports to be submitted to GAFSP will be technically cleared by the LTO and reviewed by the Investment Centre in its capacity as SE before submission to GAFSP. Such reports will also be archived in the FAO Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS). Technical reports that may be of interest to a wider audience and do not contain confidential (financial, private or commercial) information will be posted on the SBKS website.

Financial reports will be prepared on an annual basis, in line with the GAFSP's reporting schedule and deadlines.

## **2.7 Evaluation Provisions**

The project budget contains provisions for the hiring of a service provider to conduct the household surveys for the baseline report and final evaluation survey. The FAO team will prepare their terms of reference and provide inputs to the survey design and questionnaire, based on experience from the MMI project and the logframe indicators. The household surveys will include a control group of households in villages close to the target communities to be able to measure the impact of the project against the control group.

For the final evaluation, the impact at household level will be analysed in combination with the other data collected throughout the life of the project by the monitoring system and presented and discussed in a participatory lesson learning workshop, for which budget provisions have also been made. SBKS members' opinions on the quality of the project inputs and qualitative perceptions about the project's impact expressed during the workshop will then be added to the final evaluation report.

## **SECTION 3 - SUSTAINABILITY**

### **3.1 Capacity Development**

#### **Enabling environment**

This project will contribute to an enabling environment for smallholders and their organizations in Bangladesh in a variety of ways. See section 1.3.3 'Partnerships' for details on various important ways the project facilitates the dialogue and access to changemakers needed to ensure smallholders are empowered to contribute to an enabling environment. Additional details are provided here below.

#### ***Access to finance***

The project will continue to foster relationships and dialogue between POs and financial institutions to ensure favourable conditions for access to finance, including implementation of the government's Agricultural and Rural Credit Policy, which has advantageous terms for loans to smallholder farmers. As compared to the credit offered by microfinance institutions, government-issued loans have lower interest rates and more favourable repayment terms. Proper implementation of this policy will therefore mean that smallholders will be able to access these loans from government banks throughout the country. Additionally, the project will continue to advocate for implementation of the Agent Banking guidelines which stipulate that in rural areas where a bank doesn't have any branches, producers' organizations themselves can serve as bank agents and provide credit to their members.

Through networking events organized in preparation for ACCESS, bank managers and representatives themselves have already pledged to be of direct support to POs, some offering their private numbers for smallholders to call if they face problems with any of the bank branches.

Further, under MMI-BD a successful collaboration took place between SBKS, Bangladesh Bank (the government's central bank), private banks as well as PKSF and FAO's Rural Finance Unit to develop Standard Operating Procedures for the MMI-BD revolving loan funds. These SOPs have proven a great support to the successful management of these funds. Further, this concrete, tangible outcome of partnership has strengthened the trust and bond between these parties. Under ACCESS, this will be further leveraged to ensure continued, evolving and growing support to smallholder access to finance. Networking events will be organized between banks and POs. Members of POs in new communities will be educated about the details of these policies and how to advocate for their enactment.

### ***Producers' organizations as partners***

Ongoing knowledge sharing and exchange visits between government extension staff and POs in the SBKS network are envisioned as a way to continue strengthening the enabling environment for smallholder producers' organizations in Bangladesh. The project will work to ensure that the rich experience of FAO's work with POs, both under MMI and the previously implemented IAPP, will be shared and taken up by other development partners in the country, as well as the government. During the course of the MMI project, government counterparts have requested, on various occasions, to mainstream the MMI approach to PO mobilization throughout the country. In response to this request, synergies between the PO-led and country-led projects are envisioned, including the provision of technical advice and inputs from ACCESS.

Finally, as referenced in section 2.1.1 'Institutional Framework and Coordination', the presence of government focal points in the steering committee and advisory committee of the project continues to be a great way for government collaboration to grow.

### **Existing capacity within SBKS**

SBKS emerged organically as a registered apex of producers' organizations that was strengthened by the FAO-TA component of the Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project, financed by GAFSP from 2011 to 2016. The previous MMI-BD project was implemented jointly by FAO and SBKS with 55 member POs. FAO and SBKS have developed an effective approach to build and strengthen POs to support smallholders to access to finance, technology, information and value chains.

SBKS has the following experience managing funds from FAO and others: Over the last three and a half years, FAO has signed 3 funding agreements with each PO in the SBKS network, as well as SBKS itself, for learning grants (USD 2,000), revolving loan funds (RLF) (USD 20,000) and COVID-19 Recovery Revolving funds (CRR) (USD 8,000-24,000). SBKS is the custodian of both the RLF and CRR. This means that it provides robust support to member POs on managing their funds, updating accounts and report preparation, with a total portfolio size of USD 1,386,000—receiving a 2% service fee for this support. Recognizing the maturity of SBKS and its capacity to implement activities, in June 2020 the MMI-BD technical evaluation committee moved to providing funding directly to SBKS to implement project activities. This was done through a letter of agreement in the amount of USD 15,914 to support COVID-19 response, both through disbursement of some CRR funds to POs as well as COVID-19-induced health risk mitigation activities. FAO has been very satisfied with SBKS' work here.

Since registration in 2017, SBKS has been building its network, management capacity, governance and financial sustainability. In addition to activities conducted under MMI-BD, SBKS has been implementing its own independent activities, as follows:

- When the COVID-19 pandemic began, SBKS member POs reached out to SBKS leadership for support. Together, the network decided to establish virtual call centres to ensure farmers could fulfill their day-to-day farming business needs. SBKS supports the regional coordination of the call centres;
- SBKS established a large vermi-compost plant '*Mahilata*' at its own cost in the northern region. The vermi-compost plant has generated USD 25,000 in revenue so far;
- SBKS provides services to 11 member POs that have seed villages. SBKS has the legitimacy and relationships needed to get foundation seeds from the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation and private companies to give to POs in order to produce certified seeds. These are then sold back through SBKS. POs can access quality foundation seeds and earn a profit selling the seeds back, and SBKS earns a service fee for their support in ensuring seed security for their members;

- SBKS is also managing 2 regional input shops (one in Rangpur, one in Barisal) as well as transport and agricultural machinery rental services for network members;
- Other partnerships:
  - o SBKS has been working with the USAID-supported Appropriate Scale Machineries Innovation Hub for promoting mechanization in the southern region;
  - o SBKS has a memorandum of understanding with the Climate Resilient Water Management component of the IFAD-financed Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project in the southern coastal region. SBKS nominated 12 farmer business facilitators from their network to mobilize 789 water user groups and 30 seed villages under the project.

### **Existing capacity with the FAO TA team**

In addition, the FAO-Bangladesh office has gained a lot of experience in supporting SBKS as it evolved as a result of GAFSP and FAO's joint investment in POs in Bangladesh since 2011 (see section 1.2.2). The project hopes to be able to engage some of the same project staff to be able to ensure institutional memory and benefit from their in-depth knowledge of SBKS. The project will be supported by agribusiness and rural finance experts in the regional office as well as FAO HQ, who have also already been involved in the MMI-Bangladesh project and know SBKS well. FAO will also make use of its unique RurallInvest and Microbanker (MBWin) software, which is especially well adapted and appropriate for business planning and the revolving fund management by farmer organizations.

### **Exit strategy**

The exit strategy is built into the very objective of the project to strengthen the capacity of SBKS and its member POs to provide services to their member farmers. The project has been developed building on the three basic steps of MMI-BD for building sustainable POs: (i) ensure governance and institutional maturity; (ii) develop business skills, technical knowledge and market access to ensure value chain preparedness; and (iii) ensure access to finance.

To ensure sustainability, the project invests significantly in capacity development, both of newly formed POs and SBKS' own team. The ongoing capacity development of SBKS is key to the sustainability of project outcomes. With the backstopping support of MMI-BD, extension agencies and the private sector over the last five years, SBKS is now able to mobilize resources for its activities. They have developed standard operating procedures for revolving fund operation and established an M&E system for revolving fund monitoring using the .Collect Mobile app.

During the course of the project, SBKS will be supported to recruit and manage Farmer Business Facilitators, PO facilitators and technical staff to undertake proposed project activities and eventually ensure that SBKS becomes autonomous. During the project, FAO will progressively transfer required knowledge and resources to SBKS through on-the-job capacity development. Further integration within the Asian Farmers Association (AFA), will also provide the opportunity to learn from other apex organizations in Asia.

In terms of financial sustainability, the project will provide three types of grants to POs: (i) learning grants to cover the cost of trainings; (ii) matching grants for establishing common facility centers and VCCs; and (iii) revolving loan fund grants. The matching grant will be provided to all POs as capital investment for establishing VCCs and common facility centers. POs will generate revenue from these facilities by providing rental services or production support or inputs. POs will also generate interest through their revolving loan funds. Additionally, members are required to regularly contribute savings to the PO. The revenue generated by POs will be used to cover recurrent costs such as repair and maintenance of machinery as well as staff salaries. Experience under MMI-BD already demonstrates that SBKS has the funds to compensate FBFs for their services, and that individual POs are able to

recruit paid farmer accountants, as well as pay VCC operators, rickshaw drivers and common facility centre operators all from VCC and common facility centre service fees and interest from RLFs.

Additionally, SBKS will be the custodian of the revolving loan fund for all POs, ensuring that it will continue to function well after project closure. Further, the RLF capital remains with the PO, accessible to members for the years to come. As PO members will have continued access to finance and backstopping support from SBKS after project closure, the project is confident they will continue to thrive.

### **3.2 Decent Rural Employment**

Decent rural employment is mainly addressed through pillar 1 and 4 of the Decent Work Agenda.

**Pillar 1 Employment creation and enterprise development:** Through developing PO business plans and value chain linkages for specific commodity clusters and providing SBKS member farmers access to finance to invest in the production of these commodities. Through the bulk purchase of inputs and collective marketing activities, the POs will be able to lower production costs and increase prices received by their members, thereby increasing the financial return on farmers' labour inputs. This was demonstrated by the results of the VCCs under the MMI project. These activities do also create some part-time rural jobs, in the form of VCC operators, operators of common facility centers, rickshaw drivers and PO accountants.

**Pillar 4 Governance and social dialogue. Specifically:** Through the development of strong producers' organizations and a strong apex body such as SBKS, farmers gain a voice as interlocutors of policy makers and are better able to access public and private services such as extension services and financial services. The MMI project has demonstrated this, in that SBKS has had success in lobbying for a policy that will make it possible for producers' organization to act as banking agents. In addition, many member POs have successfully attracted financing from banks and non-bank financial institutes for their PO-level business activities as well as in the form of loans for their individual members.

In addition:

**Pillar 2 on social protection** is addressed through the project's One Health approach: providing capacity building on occupational safety and health measures with regards to zoonotic diseases and COVID-19 protection measures.

**Pillar 3 on standards and rights at work** is addressed through the project's focus on women's empowerment to reduce gaps in women's access to information, capacity building and finance, and their representation in decision making positions within their communities.

### **3.3 Environmental Sustainability**

Population density in Bangladesh is very high, even in rural areas, and therefore land is scarce. This has given rise to very intensive but diversified smallholder farming systems that use the land very efficiently. MMI-BD has already gathered good experience in this area and the ACCESS project will build on these to promote the sustainable use of this precious land in a variety of ways.

Training on Good Agricultural Practices will be an important element of capacity development for PO members. These practices include:

- the promotion of non-chemical fertilizers: vermi-compost and manure; biologically active organic fertilizer (BAOFER); kitchen waste compost; water hyacinth/straw-based municipal

waste compost; BARI indigenous micro-organism (IMO) 1; BARI IMO 2; and liquid fertilizers; bio slurry-based co-composted fertilizers;

- mulching (live, straw, plastic);
- biological pest control technologies, as explained in section 2.5.2

Additionally, farmers will be encouraged to keep their topsoil, rather than selling it to brick fields, thereby ensuring improved soil health.

In the area of livestock, the project will promote Good Animal Husbandry Practices, which include forage-based livestock rearing and the use of moringa in feed, to avoid depletion of organic matter and contamination of soil and water. For livestock, poultry and aquaculture, the project will promote the One Health approach including steroid-free, growth hormone/promoter-free and antibiotic-free feed.

The project will continue to research and showcase local climate-resilient approaches and technologies and share them among member POs through innovation hubs, as outlined under activity 2.2.

### **3.4 Gender Equality**

The importance of the empowerment of women is infused throughout the design and approach of the project and SBKS' work more broadly. It is at the crux of SBKS' service charter and is central to the successful empowerment of smallholders throughout Bangladesh regardless of their gender.

At every stage of preparation, considerations of the best way to empower women have been made and these discussions have resulted in a broad range of mechanisms to ensure this empowerment takes place. Details are included in the 'project strategy on gender and empowerment of women' section below. Through these varied activities FAO and SBKS expect that the project will have a positive impact on all 4 of the gender policy's objectives, however there will be more specific focus on objectives 1 and 3:

**Objective 1** - Women and men have equal voice and decision-making power in rural institutions and organizations to shape relevant legal frameworks, policies and programmes.

**Objective 3** - Women and men have equal rights and access to services, markets and decent work and equal control over the resulting income and benefits.

#### **Roles, capacities and needs of women and men**

Recognizing the challenges faced by women, FAO Bangladesh conducted a country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector in the country. This assessment as well as SBKS' direct experience with women's empowerment in agriculture, and gender consultations with project stakeholders are the basis for the gender analysis and considerations here below.

The driver of agriculture in Bangladesh is smallholder family farming. The ratio of men to women involved in farming is almost 1:1. However, the engagement of women and girls in agri-economic activities is often impeded due to mind-sets, prejudices, myths and other social customs. Often men are more involved in the finance, marketing and technology aspects of agriculture while women are more involved in 'backbreaking work', pre-processing and animal grooming. Rural women are silent workers and fundamental contributors to the rural economy, as women are a vital part of agricultural activities. Additionally, women also provide care for all household members, especially children. Thus, the role of women is vital for household food security and resilient livelihoods.

One of the main challenges for women in agriculture is the lack of proper recognition of their critical contribution to the sector. As such their access to relevant information, technology, markets and finance is significantly lower than their male counterparts. At the market, many consumers have a bias against purchasing from women. In terms of technology there are also mindsets that women cannot drive a power tiller. In general, the technologies and machinery are biased towards men. Women also have less access to extension services than men. Female farmers are very often less mobile than male farmers. Therefore, for maintaining contact with female farmers, extension workers need to visit them, which requires high mobility capacity, but the mobility capacity of extension workers is limited.

A summary of current gender roles in rural Bangladesh:

<b>Agricultural production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women are involved in tilling the fields, post-harvest activities, growing vegetables, and kitchen gardens, rearing ducks and other poultry, milking cows, and farming sheep and goats.</li> <li>• Men are involved in mechanized activities such as ploughing. Productive land is owned mostly by men.</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the market, many consumers have a bias against buying from women.</li> <li>• Men are more involved in decisions for marketing of the major field crops.</li> <li>• Women may sell goods they have produced themselves at the farm gate if the amount involved is tiny. However, men are involved if quantities are larger, and usually keep the proceeds.</li> </ul>
<b>Credit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smallholder and landless women have access to micro-credit.</li> <li>• Men have more access to institutional sources of credit, which often have more favourable terms.</li> </ul>
<b>Technology use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women tend to work on low-technology activities whereas men undertake high technology activities. There are strongly held beliefs that women cannot operate machinery. This argument is prevalent even though female wage labourers frequently use such machines. Men tend to own all machinery.</li> </ul>
<b>Access to information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men have access to more sources of information, and they are better reached by the extension services.</li> <li>• Women have limited access to extension services.</li> </ul>
<b>Agricultural Decision making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men make decisions regarding agriculture and fish production.</li> <li>• Women have the space to make more significant decisions in selling poultry, eggs and vegetables grown by them.</li> <li>• Sometimes the involvement of women in local groups depends on the decision of husbands or male members of the family.</li> <li>• Men typically decide how to use micro-credit, even if procured by women.</li> <li>• In small farms and landless households men tend to decide whether women can take up work as daily labourers, and define the terms of their engagement.</li> <li>• Overall, women have very limited access to the decision-making process at community level.</li> <li>• Regardless of the topic, for the most part, even if women are consulted, men take the final decision.</li> </ul>

SBKS' experience empowering women through the Missing Middle Initiative project has shown that with the right capacity development and empowerment opportunities (particularly in the areas of leadership, financial management, digital literacy and business planning), women farmers quickly grow into leaders that set an example for all in their community. This is one of the great learnings of the Missing Middle Initiative project in Bangladesh. In fact, 7 POs out of the 55 in SBKS' network are women-only and are actually performing better in terms of revolving loan fund management. ACCESS



will ensure that potential new women leaders have the opportunity to visit, learn from and be inspired and empowered by these examples.

### **Gender Dynamics**

During the country gender assessment, both men and women shared that domestic violence has significantly reduced. Society has a negative attitude about violence against women, and particularly in village communities it is less of an issue as activities are more transparent.

The main concern in terms of gender-based power dynamics is related to the fact that most women in rural households cannot travel without the consent of their father or husband. This is a fairly common cultural practice which the MMI-BD project also had to address. During stakeholder consultations with prospective new farmer partners for the ACCESS project, 90% of women shared that they needed their husband/father's permission to travel. Approximately 70% of male participants shared that they would be comfortable with their wife or daughter traveling to another village for 10 days for training. Around 30% of male participants were not comfortable with this. Through the MMI-BD experience, SBKS has several years of experience in how to build the necessary trust and design activities in a way that ensures that new women PO members and their fathers/husbands will be comfortable and reassured in a way that women can safely and easily benefit from project capacity development activities.

### **Project strategy on gender and empowerment of women**

In the project consultation, women and men have been accorded equal rights in expressing their views and recommendations. During stakeholder consultation workshops with potential farmer partners, a specific session was held on the topic of gender. SBKS leaders outlined their approach to women's empowerment and leadership development, as shared below. During the project concept note stage, SBKS advocated for a dedicated women empowerment component in the project. They also noted that under the MMI project, women led RLFs have performed better. Therefore, gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the objectives of the project and gender is integrated (mainstreamed) in all relevant dimensions of the project (GM1).

The project has several mechanisms to support women's empowerment:

**Awareness** - During mobilization, significant time will be spent to raise awareness on the importance of women's empowerment. The project intends to take a gender approach that empowers both genders, building mutual trust, understanding, support and respect. Mobilization techniques will take into account gender dynamics in communities and FBFs will build trust, understanding and awareness among both male and female members. The idea is for FBFs to work in pairs (one female, one male) to ensure that gender dynamics can be respected. In addition, the organizational strengthening under activity 1.2 will include opportunities for men's leadership development and reflection on gender dynamics.

**Women's leadership development** - A specific women's leadership development initiative will build capacities and confidence of new women PO leaders. MMI-BD has seen the empowerment and development of many young female leaders. This project will also give them the opportunity to continue to grow in their strength and leadership, serving as mentors for the new women PO members. The timing and length of all training sessions will respect the needs and realities of women smallholders. As much as possible, internships will take place in organizations close to new POs, and hosting arrangements will ensure the comfort of women participants.

**Financial empowerment** - Revolving loan fund management and audit committees will be women-led. Further, the project has a requirement that women have their own bank accounts in order to be

eligible for RLF finance. Additionally, the project MBWIN software allows for general accounts and loan tracking. Through this software, women PO members can have an overview of what is happening with the PO's funds and can ensure accountability of the organization.

**Membership criteria** - a minimum 50% women executive committee membership criteria and a minimum 50% women general membership criteria.

Target outcomes related to gender are as follows:

- *Three smallholder women actively participate in the higher-level decision-making body of the project;*
- *Eighty percent of POs with performance rating of 75 or higher<sup>4</sup>;*
- *60 new POs registered with at least 50% women members;*
- *300 women completed women's leadership training.*

With respect to monitoring and evaluation of progress, gender-disaggregated data will be collected, starting with the membership base and the composition of POs' executive committees.

### **Gender related risks to and from the project**

Gender related risks are included in the risk matrix in Annex V. Restrictions on women's mobility by social customs, especially in remote coastal areas may be a risk to achieve the project objective of gender-balanced decision-making power with POs and the project to benefit both men and women. To mitigate this risk, SBKS FBFs will work closely with community members to persuade them of the value of women's empowerment and training will be conducted as close as possible to women's homes. Local government and community gatekeepers (e.g. school headmasters, opinion leaders, religious leaders) will be requested to support women's mobility.

There is a risk that the project's activities for the empowerment of women may create strained gender dynamics within households and communities. To mitigate this risk, the PO development approach will be gender sensitive, raising awareness among both men and women of the value of strong women leaders. Leadership training will also include opportunities for men's leadership development and reflection on gender dynamics.

### **Gender-related human and financial resources and stakeholders during implementation**

Strong women-led POs from SBKS' network will play an important role in women's empowerment throughout the life of the project. They will host and train new women PO leaders and serve as mentors. Strong women leaders from mixed-gender POs from SBKS will also be called on to support new women leaders as mentors. This peer-to-peer training and empowerment around gender seems most appropriate considering the many cultural nuances around the topic.

The TORs of FAO's team also include various gender-related responsibilities, from training in gender-sensitivity to ensuring gender-disaggregated data collection.

In terms of financial resources, the project has budgeted approximately 33,000 USD specifically for women's leadership training. Further, as all other project activities are intended for at least 50% women's participation, it leads to a total budget for women's livelihood strengthening and empowerment of USD 1.63 million.

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<sup>4</sup> *The organization performance scorecard includes a question about the gender balance of the PO's executive committee, including office bearer positions. Therefore this indicator can also be considered a measure of women's empowerment.*

### **3.5 Indigenous Peoples**

At the time of drafting of the project document, it is not foreseen that the project would work in areas where natural resources belonging to indigenous people would be affected. In case for some reason the project geographic scope will change during implementation to include such areas, the project will fully respect the right of any indigenous people in project areas or organizations participating in the project, following Full Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) procedures.

## Annex I: Logical Framework Matrix

Results Chain	Indicators				Assumptions
	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Means of Verification	
<b>IMPACT</b>	<b>LIVELIHOODS OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN CLIMATIC HOTSPOTS ARE MORE RESILIENT TO EXTERNAL SHOCKS AND CRISES</b>				
	The proportion of project household members experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity* (GAFSP goals and targets Tier 1 indicator)	TBD**	0% of project household members experience severe food insecurity  20% decrease in moderate food insecurity	Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) during start-up and project completion	Food price stable in both domestic and global market
	Minimum Dietary Diversity-Woman (MDD-W): % of women in project households who consumed at least five out of ten defined food groups the previous day or night* (GAFSP goals and targets Tier 1 indicator)	TBD**	15% increase	Dietary diversity score card during start-up and project completion	Women apply what they learnt from project's nutrition-related activities  Increased income results in consumption of nutritious food/balance diet
	Change in monthly household (HH) income for project households*(GAFSP goals and targets Tier 1 indicator)	TBD**	20% increase in 4,800 households	Profiling of POs and members at time of start-up and project completion (baseline/evaluation instruments using .Collect Mobile app)	Growth of domestic economy remains steady or improves
	Change in monthly household expenditure on non-food items for project households	TBD**	20% increase	Profiling of PO and members at time of start-up and project completion (baseline/evaluation instruments using .Collect Mobile app) SBKS e-dashboard	Increases in income result in increased non-food expenditure.
	Increased productivity of selected commodities of PO members (disaggregated by commodities)* (GAFSP goals and targets Tier 1 indicator)	TBD**	20% increase	Baseline, MTR and final evaluation (quantitative data collection instruments using .Collect Mobile app and KII/qualitative checklist)	Production of selected commodities is not adversely affected by climate and non-climate induced stress (e.g. Covid-19 pandemic)  Producers apply climate smart technologies learned from capacity building activities of PO
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>STRONG PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE BUSINESS SKILLS, TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE, MARKET ACCESS AND ACCESS TO FINANCE TO THEIR MEMBERS</b>				
	Percent of POs with performance rating of 75 (out of 100) or higher	0	80%	Performance Assessment Scorecard Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	POs understand and apply governance, financial, accounting, business and digital literacy learned from various capacity building interventions

\* Indicators marked with an asterisk are also GAFSP core indicators

\*\* Baseline value will be determined through baseline survey when farmers have been mobilized under activity 1.1

Results Chain	Indicators			Assumptions	
	Indicators	Baseline	Target		Means of Verification
	Percent of PO office bearer positions held by women	0	50%	Performance Assessment Scorecard Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	Fathers/husbands of women do not block their participation in PO.
	Number of new PO members actively participate in the Project Steering Committee (gender disaggregated)	0	4 in Project Steering Committee (PSC) (2 SBKS leaders, 2 women PO members)	Ministry's approval and meeting minutes of PSC (highest level committee chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture); Participatory monitoring of project activities by ISU & SBKS; Project progress report	Project Steering Committee (PSC) of Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) endorses 4 members of POs including 2 women  Non-PO PSC members are genuinely open to the contribution of PO representatives on the steering committee.
	Number of smallholder farmer households adopted new technologies (i.e. # of adoptees), disaggregated by climate-resilient, One Health-related and nutrition-related* (GAFSP Tier 2 indicator 15)	0	4,800 HHs	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	Producers understand the value of the promoted technologies—that they are profitable, climate smart and environmentally and nutrition-friendly
	% of members satisfied with PO services for input purchase and marketing	0	70%	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	PO members can reduce production and transport costs and save time through using PO input purchase and marketing services
	Proportion of finance crowded-in for smallholder POs leveraged from non-project sources (ratio)	0	1:0.25 (USD 800,000)	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	No major changes in banking regulations or policies  Bank managers are familiar with the PO-friendly policies that already exist and implement them.
<b>OUTPUT 1 – PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS HAVE GOOD GOVERNANCE</b>					
	Output 1.1: Number of producer-based organizations supported (organization).* (GAFSP Tier 2 indicator 4)	0	60	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app POs registered with competent/relevant government registration department PO membership registers.	Capacity of the PO facilitator developed to meet the needs of the POs.  Registration authority supportive to get PO registration.
	Output 1.2: Number of PO members completed the organizational strengthening training curriculum (disaggregated by gender).	0	6,000 (3,000 women)	Training participant lists Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	Each PO to have an average of 100 members  POs implement training calendar efficiently.  2 PO facilitators that receive TOT from SBKS train all their fellow PO members.

Results Chain	Indicators			Assumptions	
	Indicators	Baseline	Target		Means of Verification
					Travel is not restricted by government lockdowns and political unrest.
	Output 1.3: Number of women completed women's leadership training.	0	300	Training participant lists Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	Male community members (e.g. husbands, fathers) don't block women traveling for training.  Travel is not restricted by government lockdowns and political unrest.
<b>OUTPUT 2 – PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS HAVE THE BUSINESS SKILLS, TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND MARKET ACCESS NEEDED TO THRIVE IN THEIR VALUE CHAIN</b>					
	Output 2.1: Number of POs completed business plan, including a marketing plan and financial feasibility study	0	60	The business plans Six-monthly project progress report RuralInvest business plans	Capacity of the PO facilitator enhanced to prepare business plan at PO level using RuralInvest toolkit.
	Output 2.2.: [Climate resilient indicator] Number of farmers receiving inputs or service on climate resilient or sustainable agriculture practices (farmer) ++ Disaggregation: Of which, female farmers Disaggregation: Of which, number of farmers adopting technologies or practices received. * (GAFSP Tier 2 Indicator # 13)	0	4,800 smallholders (50% women) 3840 smallholder farmers adopting technologies or practices received	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	POs provided with sufficient capacity building to support their members
	Output 2.3: People receiving improved nutrition services and products (including One health and family nutrition training) (person disaggregated by gender) * (GAFSP Tier 2 indicator 12)	0	4,800 (50% women)	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	Project facilitated capacity building enables PO to provide extension support on family nutrition farming. This support will be linked with local extension authorities.
	Output 2.4.1: Number of processing, storage, and market facilities constructed and/or rehabilitated (facility). * (GAFSP Tier 2 indicator 7)	0	48	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	As funding for these will be disbursed only after rigorous review of business plans, PO business plan to be well prepared, approved by project and then funds to be disbursed smoothly.
	Output 2.4.2: Number of farmers that are supported in accessing improved marketing opportunities (person disaggregated by gender). * (GAFSP Tier 2 Indicator 8)	0	4,800 (50% women)	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	PO equipped with digital devices and run virtual call centre smoothly.
<b>OUTPUT 3 – PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ACCESS TO FINANCE</b>					
	Output 3.1.1 Persons supported by project in rural areas accessing financial services (person disaggregated by gender) * (GAFSP Tier 2 indicator 5)	0	3,000 borrowers (70% women)	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app; Microbank report	POs maximize the opportunities of revolving loan fund according to government and organizational policy

Results Chain	Indicators			Assumptions	
	Indicators	Baseline	Target		Means of Verification
	Output 3.1.2: Increase in community-based revolving loan fund <sup>††</sup>	0	USD 3,500 (per PO)	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app; Microbank report	POs mobilize income from CFC, savings, and RLF efficiently
	Output 3.2.1: Number of POs partnering with financial institutions for additional finance	0	24 POs	Six-monthly project progress report .Collect Mobile app	PO proposals are bankable. Financial institutions are open to work with POs.
<b>OVERALL PROJECT OUTREACH</b>					
	Number of farmer households reached	0	6,000	Six-monthly project progress report	100 HHs per PO; 60 POs
	Number of people receiving direct benefits (person disaggregated by gender)* (GAFSP Tier 2 indicator 1)	0	24,600 (50% women)	Six-monthly project progress report	Average rural household size of 4.1
	Persons receiving capacity development support (person disaggregated by gender). * (GAFSP Tier 2 indicator 10)	0	6,000 (3,000 women)	Training participants lists, no double counting of individuals	Persons receiving training under output 1.3 and component 2 also receive training under output 1.2. Thus, number of persons trained under output 1.2 is equal to total.

<sup>††</sup> Based on the MMI-BD experience, interest generated by the RLF goes back into the fund. Also, a portion of the profits generated by the PO's virtual call centres, common facility centres and other services are invested into the RLF. Therefore this indicator is a good measure of the financial success of the PO.

## Annex II: Stakeholder Engagement Matrix

### 1) Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder consultation is at the core of this project. The project will be implemented jointly with the Sara Bangla Krishak Society. This partnership will go beyond even consultation to regularly working hand-in-hand. This ensures that the vision and perspective of smallholder farmers will be at the core of the project. In addition, there will be ongoing informal consultation with the many private sector, banking and development partners of SBKS and the project.

Further, here below is the plan for ongoing formal consultations for the duration of the project:

Stakeholder Name	Stakeholder Type	Stakeholder profile	Consultation Methodology	Timing
<b>Sara Bangla Krishak Society General Assembly</b>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Civil Society Organization</i>	General Assembly meeting for all smallholder farmers members. During the meeting, updates on project results will be shared with all participants	Annually
<b>Project Steering Committee</b>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Ministry of Agriculture, DAE, BADC, DLS, DOF, Bangladesh Bank, FAO, SBKS</i>	Committee meeting whereby project updates will be shared and advice and insights will be received from committee members.	Annually
<b>Project Advisory Committee</b>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Focal points from government agencies: DAE, BADC, DLS, DOF; civil society organizations and private sector representatives</i>	Committee meeting whereby project updates will be shared and advice and insights will be received from committee members. In addition to the regular six-monthly PAC meetings, ad hoc meetings can be called for the review of PO business proposals.	Six-monthly and as necessary to evaluate PO business proposals

### Stakeholder consultations to date

Stakeholder Name	Stakeholder Type	Stakeholder profile	Consultation Methodology	Consultation Findings	Comments
<b>Sara Bangla Krishak Society (SBKS)</b>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Civil Society Organization</i>	A. 2021: Joint concept note development through frequent consultation with SBKS leadership, 3 virtual town hall meetings with member POs (July), presentation of final concept note to PO members and private sector actors (August).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scale up MMI approach.</li> <li>- Prioritize climate hotspots.</li> <li>- Because of better performance of women-led FOs, RLFs to be managed by women.</li> <li>- Focus more on One Health approach.</li> </ul>	55 participants [Female-21]  Between July-August 2021



Stakeholder Name	Stakeholder Type	Stakeholder profile	Consultation Methodology	Consultation Findings	Comments
			<p>B. 2022: Full project design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- nomination of SBKS members for ACCESS project document drafting team</li> <li>- decision on selection of project regions based on GAFSP Technical Advisory Committee recommendation</li> <li>- participatory roadmap and visioning exercise with general members based on lessons learned from MMI</li> <li>- proposed activities, outputs and outcome presented at Annual General Assembly on January 18-19, 2022</li> <li>- discussion of risks associated with project implementation and mitigation measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prioritized <i>Barind</i> and southern coastal zone over <i>Haor</i> areas.</li> <li>- SBKS nominated its President and Secretary for FAO prodoc preparation.</li> <li>- Lesson learned: highlighted several key features of the MMI approach—governance strengthening as well as financial, digital and business literacy development and the business ecosystem development. ACCESS should make use of these to build strong POs moving forward.</li> <li>- Unanimously agreed to replicate MMI model at potential high value agribusiness clusters in selected two regions.</li> <li>- SBKS General Assembly approved activities, output and outcome for ACCESS.</li> <li>- Agreed to use internship approach for capacity development.</li> </ul>	<p>49 participants [Female-15]</p> <p>18-19 January 2022</p>
<b>Smallholder cluster farmers of 16 commodity clusters in the coastal area</b>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Local community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized consultation with target producers from commodity clusters of the coastal region (new communities) on 11 April 2022</li> <li>- MMI approach and ACCESS project outline were presented by both SBKS and FAO</li> <li>- Participatory exercise on preparing a Governance and Accountability Action Plan (identified risks, intensity, mitigation measures, responsible person/sub-committee)</li> <li>- Group work on status of women and girls' involvement, individual survey on gender assessment using .Collect Mobile.</li> <li>- Awareness raising on Good Agricultural Practices including the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preliminarily identified 16 commodity clusters spread over 7 districts of south central and south-western areas of coastal region.</li> <li>- Participatory identification of constraints associated with commodity clusters in access to technology, market, information, finance and value chains.</li> <li>- Recognition that mobilization of a strong commodity-based producers' organization in each cluster is a promising way for communities to thrive and hence the MMI approach is critically important to provide holistic services to smallholder farmers in commodity clusters.</li> <li>- Non-cooperation of the registration authority was identified as one of the top ranked governance risks for ACCESS. Without registration, a PO may not be eligible for membership of SBKS, may not be able to open a bank account which will eventually delay project activities. Based on MMI experience, a two-fold mitigation measure was recommended: Ministry of Agriculture will discuss with Registrar of Department of Cooperatives while</li> </ul>	<p>40 Participants [Female-17]</p> <p>11 April 2022</p>

Stakeholder Name	Stakeholder Type	Stakeholder profile	Consultation Methodology	Consultation Findings	Comments
			risks of chemical pesticides and non-chemical pest prevention techniques	SBKS will also advocate with DoC for registration at national, regional and local level. - ACCESS has the potential to engage women and girls in different project activities. All unanimously agreed to have at least 30 percent women in Executive Committee, appointment of one female cluster facilitator in each PO, at least one women leader as signatory of bank account of the PO. - Some women participants were accompanied by a male partner, who were also invited to join the consultation and be familiarized with the project approach, including gender aspects.	
<b>Smallholder cluster farmers of 17 commodity clusters in Barind Tract and Drought Prone Areas</b>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Local community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized consultation with target producers from commodity clusters of <i>Barind</i> Tract (new communities) on 18 April 2022</li> <li>- The MMI approach and ACCESS project outline were presented by both SBKS and FAO</li> <li>- Participatory exercise on preparing a Governance and Accountability Action Plan (identified risks, intensity, mitigation measures, responsible person/sub-committee)</li> <li>- Group work on status of women and girls' involvement, individual survey on gender assessment using .Collect Mobile.</li> <li>- Awareness raising on Good Agricultural Practices including the risks of chemical pesticides and non-chemical pest prevention techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preliminarily identified 17 commodity clusters spread over 10 districts of <i>Barind</i> and drought prone region.</li> <li>- Participatory identification of constraints associated with commodity clusters in access to technology, market, information, finance and value chains.</li> <li>- Recognition that mobilization of a strong commodity-based producers' organization in each cluster is a promising way for communities to thrive and hence the MMI approach is critically important to provide holistic services to smallholder farmers in commodity clusters.</li> <li>- Inclusion of elite members in POs was identified as one of the top ranked governance risks. This will be mitigated by setting criteria for membership of PO, identify genuinely eligible households for PO using participatory tools including transect walk, social mapping, socio-metric analysis, as well as conducting a community consultation before finalization of list of smallholders as PO members.</li> <li>- ACCESS has the potential to engage women and girls in different project activities. All unanimously agreed to have at least 30 percent women in Executive Committee, appointment of one female PO facilitator in each PO, and at least one women leader as signatory of bank account of the PO.</li> </ul>	<p>40 cluster farmers [Female-18]</p> <p>18 April 2022</p>
<b>Private Sector Exporters Associations and</b>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Other</i>	- Participatory mapping of potential areas where exporters/retail chains collect high value commodities	- Cool chain transport is a barrier for farmers in remote hotspot areas to access more central markets. Perishable items need to reach their destination market within 24 hours and current	<i>17 participants</i>

Stakeholder Name	Stakeholder Type	Stakeholder profile	Consultation Methodology	Consultation Findings	Comments
<b>Organized Retail Chain</b>  <b>Bangladesh Vegetables, Fruits and Allied Products Exporters Association, Bangladesh Potato Exporters Association, SWAPNO, Agora</b>			- Group discussion	<p>cool chain options make this very difficult/expensive. As a result, exporters/retail chain actors collect perishable commodities from the area near Dhaka. But the soil and water in this area are contaminated with heavy metals which makes them less likely to be eligible for export from Bangladesh in the future.</p> <p>- Government is going to enforce Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) as a mandatory requirement for getting SPS (Sanitary, phyto-Sanitary) certificate to export and even for retail chain shops. A productive alliance between exporter/retail chain actors and commodity-based POs would be a timely solution for supplying quality products following GAP. The ACCESS project can facilitate this alliance.</p> <p>- Participants proposed a variety of areas where investment is needed for innovative business models to expedite export such as pack houses and digital technologies for traceability.</p> <p>- To ensure good quality packaging materials, the participants highlighted a need for tax waivers for these supplies. The current tax rates are so high that it makes it very difficult for both smallholders and exporters to afford the materials needed to be able to prepare their produce well for export.</p>	<p><i>over two meetings:</i></p> <p><i>28 April 2022 &amp; 8 May 2022</i></p>
<b>Commercial and State Banks</b>  <b>Bangladesh Bank, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, National Bank Limited, Bank Asia, Agrani Bank, Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank, Mutual Trust Bank</b>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Resource Partner/Donor</i>	Interview and group discussion	<p>- The Agricultural Credit Division (ACD) of Bangladesh Bank will continue its support to SBKS for implementing ACCESS project through enacting policy and advising National Commercial Banks (NCBs) to provide collateral-free agricultural loans to smallholder farmers through their POs.</p> <p>- NCBs such as Bangladesh Krishi Bank, National Bank Limited, Bank Asia, Agrani Bank, Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank, Mutual Trust Bank will extend their loan support in new clusters through local branches and POs.</p>	<p>7 participants [1 female]</p> <p>27 April 2022</p>
<b>Asian Farmers Association, Bangladesh Organic Agriculture Network</b>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Civil Society Organization</i>	Individual interview	- Capacity of SBKS should be enhanced in the area of advocacy and networking with other fora.	17 April 2022

Stakeholder Name	Stakeholder Type	Stakeholder profile	Consultation Methodology	Consultation Findings	Comments
<b>Rokeya Akhter</b>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>FAO Bangladesh Gender Specialist</i>	Individual interview	Women's leadership development initiative to include digital literacy training as well as awareness raising of government services to empower and support women.	4 April 2022
<b>Esther Penunia, General Secretary, Asian Farmers Association</b>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>Civil Society Organization</i>	Individual interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthening of SBKS as an apex is a very important part of the project.</li> <li>- Important for SBKS to register with the NGO Affairs Bureau</li> <li>- Recommendation to have a women's forum at national level</li> <li>- AFA will share an FO growth monitoring tool</li> <li>- Validating the importance of climate change focus</li> </ul>	30 June 2022

## 2) Grievance Mechanism

<b>Focal Point Information</b>	<p>The general philosophy of the project is one of inclusion and valuing all voices. Women's empowerment is also a core tenet of the project approach. Both FAO and SBKS have a zero-tolerance policy for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). Project stakeholders will be informed about this and a clear path for grievance redress will be outlined based on the details provided below. Raising awareness of the grievance redress mechanisms is an important way of ensuring that all involved feel comfortable to share their thoughts and/or concerns—whether related to SEA or other issues that may arise during project implementation. SBKS and the FAO team are committed to this process.</p> <p>FAO Bangladesh is in the process of recruiting a dedicated call centre operator for grievance and feedback for all FAO Bangladesh projects. This will likely be completed by the time the project begins. In the absence of the call centre operator, the focal point for grievance redress is Imtiaz Ahmad from the FAO Bangladesh Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team.</p> <p>A more local-level grievance mechanism has also been included in the project design for the purpose of resolving the concerns of any intended beneficiaries or project stakeholders regarding alleged or potential violations of FAO's social and environmental commitments. During quarterly FBF monitoring of POs, any grievances that come in will be reviewed and reported to SBKS (names of individuals involved can be anonymized for privacy reasons). This list will also not be published but kept on file for overview purposes. As an inclusive mechanism, all POs under the project will prepare a Governance, Accountability and Action Plan (GAAP) during inception phase. This GAAP is a participatory exercise where all PO members will participate to identify: (i) potential risks associated with project implementation; (ii) impact of identified risks that may turn into grievance among any members; (iii) intensity of risks; (iv) protective measures; and (v) responsible person(s)/committee for grievance management.</p>
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	<p>This will be done on a quarterly basis at each PO, initially with the facilitation of the FBFs. These GAAPs will reduce causes of grievance during implementation of the project.</p> <p>Furthermore, a Social Audit Committee (SAC) will be formed within each PO consisting of three members, that are not associated with the Executive Committee or have any financial dealings with POs. Within the PO this SAC will be the first grievance handler. If any grievance cannot be mitigated by the SAC then the PO would seek guidance of the respective FBFs to resolve it. The FBF him/herself will try to resolve or may raise any unresolved issue to the SBKS Independent Social Audit Committee and/or the project Implementation Support Unit (ISU). Concerns can also be raised through the call centre grievance mechanism described above. The working of this mechanism will be communicated verbally during the project launch and initial start-up activities at the PO level. It will also be posted in Bangla in the project offices in the project area for reference throughout the project implementation period. Procedures, in line with those of the FAO Office of the Inspector General, to register grievances with respect to fraud and corruption will be posted in English and Bangla on a project website and the FAO Bangladesh country website, <a href="http://www.fao.org/bangladesh/en">http://www.fao.org/bangladesh/en</a>.</p>
<b>Contact Details</b>	<a href="mailto:Ahmad.lmtiazahmad@fao.org">Ahmad.lmtiazahmad@fao.org</a>
<b>Explain how the grievance mechanism has been communicated to stakeholders</b>	As soon as the call centre details are available, they will be shared with SBKS members and new stakeholders who participated in the consultation process. This will be done by text message/phone. The mechanism will also be shared during the project launching meeting. Then during community mobilization, this information will also be shared with prospective PO members.

### 3) Disclosure

<b>Disclosure Means</b>	ACCESS stakeholder consultation – SBKS Annual General Assembly Meeting	
<b>Disclosure information/document shared</b>	Presentation on Good Agricultural Practices, including outlining the importance of using bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers rather than chemical options. The presentation ensured that participants understood the risks of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and clarified that the project approach is to use organic/bio options instead.	
<b>Disclosure dates</b>	From: 1/18/2022	To: 1/19/2022
<b>Location</b>	Rural Development Academy in Bogra	
<b>Language</b>	Bengali	
<b>Other Info</b>	Participants fully grasped the risks and options, stating how appreciative they were to receive this information.	
<b>Disclosure Means</b>	ACCESS stakeholder consultation – Coastal region	

<b>Disclosure information/document shared</b>	Presentation on Good Agricultural Practices, including outlining the importance of using bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers rather than chemical options. The presentation ensured that participants understood the risks of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and clarified that the project approach is to use organic/bio options instead.	
<b>Disclosure dates</b>	From: 4/11/2022	To: 4/11/2022
<b>Location</b>	BRAC Learning Centre, Barisal	
<b>Language</b>	Bengali	
<b>Other Info</b>	Participants were very interested in the discussion and came away with clarity on the risk of pesticide use and what their healthy, safer options are.	

<b>Disclosure Means</b>	ACCESS stakeholder consultation – Barind and drought-prone region	
<b>Disclosure information/document shared</b>	Presentation on Good Agricultural Practices, including outlining the importance of using bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers rather than chemical options. The presentation ensured that participants understood the risks of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and clarified that the project approach is to use organic/bio options instead.	
<b>Disclosure dates</b>	From: 4/18/2022	To: 4/18/2022
<b>Location</b>	BRAC Learning Centre, Rangpur	
<b>Language</b>	Bengali	
<b>Other Info</b>	Participants were very interested in the discussion and came away with clarity on the risk of pesticide use and what their healthy, safer options are.	

## Annex III: Work plan

Activity	Responsible	Timeline: year and quarter															
		2023				2024				2025				2026			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>OUTPUT 1: PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS HAVE GOOD GOVERNANCE</b>																	
<b>Activity 1.1 Participatory cluster mapping, identification and development of cluster-based producers' organizations</b>																	
1.1.1 Launching Workshop at national level	ISU & PO																
1.1.2 Community Mobilization Refreshers Training to the FBFs for Cluster PO formation (5 days)	ISU																
1.1.3 Cluster mapping, identification of potential cluster, targeting of HHs and baseline survey in the selected cluster by the FBFs and mobilization of POs	PO & ISU																
1.1.4 Follow up of activities over the phone with POs by FBFs	PO																
<b>Activity 1.2 Organizational strengthening</b>																	
1.2.1 Design and development of PO facilitator training curriculum (based on MMI experience) through series of consultation/validation workshops (curriculum has 6 modules)	ISU																
1.2.2 ToT for FBF Training Curriculum for Farmer Business Facilitators of SBKS	ISU																
1.2.3 Internship of PO facilitators on organization strengthening with selected MMI supported POs	PO																
1.2.4 PO facilitators conduct training in their respective PO	PO																
1.2.5 Refresher for PO facilitators	PO																
<b>Activity 1.3 Women's leadership development</b>																	
1.3.1 Module design for women's leadership development initiative	ISU and PO																

Activity	Responsible	Timeline: year and quarter															
		2023				2024				2025				2026			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.3.2 TOT for new and old women FBFs	PO																
1.3.3 TOT and internship for PO facilitators	PO																
1.3.4 Mentor visit per PO each year	PO																
<b>OUTPUT 2: PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS HAVE THE BUSINESS SKILLS, TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND MARKET ACCESSES NEEDED TO THRIVE IN THEIR VALUE CHAIN.</b>																	
<b>Activity 2.1 Capacity development for participatory business planning</b>																	
2.1.1 Design and development of PO facilitator training curriculum (based on MMI experience) through series of consultation/validation workshops (curriculum has 6 modules)	ISU																
2.1.2 ToT FBF Training Curriculum for Farmer Business Facilitators of SBKS	ISU																
2.1.3 Cluster level business plan preparation with PO Facilitators using RuralInvest	PO																
2.1.4 Participatory business planning using RuralInvest at PO level	PO																
<b>Activity 2.2 Promotion of innovative climate resilient technologies</b>																	
2.2.1 Innovation Hub (learned from MMI innovations basket) in each selected climatic hotspot/regions	PO																
2.2.2 Exchange visits to regional innovation hubs	PO																
<b>Activity 2.3 One Health approach for responsible investment</b>																	
2.3.1 Productive alliance of Public-Private-POs for investing in the One Health approach for food safety and COVID concern and enabling competitiveness in clusters	ISU & PO																
2.3.2 Market intelligence survey in each cluster by PO Facilitator	PO																
2.3.3 Community awareness campaign on One-health approach	PO																



Activity	Responsible	Timeline: year and quarter															
		2023				2024				2025				2026			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Activity 2.4 Market access and digitization</b>																	
2.4.1 Establish Virtual Call Centres (equipped with IT equipment in each PO)	PO																
2.4.2 Establish common facility centres	PO																
2.4.3 Establish cluster aggregation points with sanitary and phyto-sanitary and hygiene measures	PO																
2.4.4 Introduce Digital village Initiative (DVI) to provide information services to all producers/villagers	PO																
2.4.5 Consultative workshop with public, POs and private sector actors (e.g. Meet the Exporter/processors/other buyers)	ISU & PO																
2.4.6 E-arat – online marketplace which connects cluster farmers with wholesalers	PO & ISU																
<b>Output 3: PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ACCESS TO FINANCE</b>																	
<b>Activity 3.1 Establish community-based revolving loan funds</b>																	
3.1.1 Introduce PO-led Revolving Loan Fund for smallholders	PO/ISU																
3.1.2 Introduce innovative financial products (e.g. dry and cool chain credit schemes)	PO																
<b>Activity 3.2 Partnership with financial institutions and policy advocacy to crowd in additional finance</b>																	
3.2.1 Promote producers and their POs to the National Commercial Banks (NCBs) and other Financial Institutes through field level workshops	ISU																
3.2.2 Advocacy with Bangladesh Bank, Ministry of Agriculture, Financial Inclusion Division of the Ministry of Finance and other financial institutions for enacting Agriculture and Rural Credit Policy	ISU																

## Annex IV: Budget

### i. Budget by Cost Category

Budget Code	Budget line description	Base Costs (USD)				
		PY1	PY2	PY3	PY4	Total
5013	Consultants	269,122	269,122	269,121	215,846	1,023,211
5014	Contracts	283,395	789,755	123,935	105,100	1,302,185
5021	Travel	36,320	34,732	42,842	37,755	151,649
5023	Training	18,230	23,840	24,057	25,597	91,724
5024	Expendable Procurement	40,182	89,398	7,169	7,168	143,917
5025	Non Expendable	8,496	-	-	-	8,496
5027	Technical Support Services	17,798	17,798	17,798	50,348	103,742
5028	General Operating	24,257	24,170	24,170	23,870	96,467
5050	GOE Common Services- (Other Central Support Services)	60,183	22,765	22,765	19,625	125,338
	<b>Sub-total</b>	757,983	1,271,580	531,857	485,309	3,046,729
5029	Indirect support costs	53,058	89,011	37,230	33,972	213,271
	<b>Grand Total</b>	811,041	1,360,591	569,087	519,281	3,260,000

### ii. Budget by Component

	PY1	PY2	PY3	PY4	Total (USD)
<b>Component 1 – Strengthening Smallholder Producers’ Organizations</b>	148,978	77,134	71,570	11,637	309,319
<b>Component 2 – Business Skills, Technical Knowledge and Market Access</b>	76,597	371,756	41,957	31,683	521,993
<b>Component 3 – Access to Finance</b>	352,768	659,060	244,090	237,786	1,493,704
<b>Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	179,640	163,630	174,240	204,203	721,713
<b>Sub-total</b>	757,983	1,271,580	531,857	485,309	3,046,729
<b>Indirect Support Costs @7%</b>	53,058	89,011	37,230	33,972	213,271
<b>Grand total</b>	811,041	1,360,591	569,087	519,281	3,260,000

## Annex V: Risk Management

### Section A: Risks to the project

Risk description	Worst case consequence for the project	Risk Score		Mitigating action	Action owner
		Impact	Likelihood		
Institutional capacity – SBKS does not have sufficient capacity to take on increased responsibility for the implementation of the project.	Ineffective use of project funds, project targets will not be met.	M	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FAO will continue coaching and capacity building of SBKS leaders and staff at every step of the project.</li> <li>- A full audit of SBKS' accounts will take place prior to disbursement of project funds, with annual audits to follow.</li> </ul>	FAO team
Restrictions on women's mobility by social customs, especially in remote coastal areas.	The women's leadership development initiative will not be implemented as planned, delaying establishment of revolving loan fund.	M	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SBKS FBFs will work closely with community members to make them aware of the value of women's empowerment.</li> <li>- Local government and community gatekeepers (e.g. school headmasters, opinion leaders, religious leaders) will be requested to support women's mobility.</li> <li>- Capacity building will be conducted as close as possible to women's homes.</li> </ul>	SBKS
Commercial risk linked to value chain development (e.g. market demand crashes, buyers do not honour contracts)	Farmers cannot sell their products and repay their loans.	H	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SBKS and newly formed POs will conduct a market intelligence survey in each cluster to decide in which value chains to invest.</li> <li>- POs to develop a business plan, including a marketing plan, as a prerequisite to accessing the revolving loan fund.</li> <li>- The project will also facilitate partnerships between POs, the private sector and the government for joint ventures. These will include 'e-Arat', an online marketplace to connect cluster farmers with wholesalers, as well as partnerships with exporters, processors, large traders and government certification agencies to connect POs with larger markets.</li> </ul>	SBKS and FAO team

Risk description	Worst case consequence for the project	Risk Score		Mitigating action	Action owner
		Impact	Likelihood		
Price hike of inputs – Due to external factors, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, certain inputs needed by farmers may become significantly more expensive.	Production costs for farmers significantly increase such that the investment made by the project is not enough to compensate and help increase their income.	H	M	The project will put significant focus on the establishment of common facility centres which help farmers produce their needed inputs locally, helping to insulate against this type of shock. Additionally, if further funding becomes available, it will be channelled here as a priority.	FAO and SBKS team
Lack of cooperation from Department of Cooperatives officers to register POs.	Newly formed POs are not able to get registration and therefore face challenges to open bank accounts.	H	L	The project will take advantage of its good relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture to request the Secretary to issue a directive ensuring that project partner POs can be registered.	FAO team
Elite capture of new POs	Elite community members capture the benefits of the project's investment, taking away the opportunities for growth from genuine smallholder, poor farmers	M	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PO membership criteria to only include smallholder farmers.</li> <li>- Identify genuinely eligible households for PO using participatory tools including transact walk, social mapping and socio-metric analysis.</li> <li>- Conduct a community consultation before finalization of list of smallholders as PO members.</li> </ul>	SBKS team

## Section B: Environmental and Social risks from the project

Risk identified	Risk Classification	Risk Description in the project	Mitigation Actions	Indicators	Progress on mitigation action
ES5.1	Low-Moderate	The project will not procure pesticides directly, however, project funds will be used for a PO revolving fund, which will be used to provide loans to farmers with which they buy inputs. In theory, farmers <i>could</i> purchase pesticides with this money, however the project spends significant time to train farmers in Good Agricultural Practices which	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project will provide training on Good Agricultural Practices.</li> <li>- In each PO, a GAP manager will be trained who will organize seasonal training for all member farmers. In addition, the project will assist POs to establish an internal control system for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of member farmers trained in GAP</li> <li>- SBKS member POs working in crop clusters have a trained GAP manager</li> </ul>	During stakeholder consultations, good agricultural practices were shared and the risks of pesticide use were explained, along with organic alternatives.

Risk identified	Risk Classification	Risk Description in the project	Mitigation Actions	Indicators	Progress on mitigation action
		highlight the use of organic pesticides. Therefore the amount of pesticide use is expected to be low, with low environmental risks, based on prior project experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adherence to GAP norms, including safe pesticide use.</li> <li>In order to be eligible for RLF finance, farmers must adhere to GAP protocols, including not using chemical pesticides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of trainings provided by GAP manager to member farmers</li> <li>Internal control system established in each PO</li> </ul>	
Social risk	Low	Empowerment of women may create strained gender dynamics within households and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PO development approach will be gender sensitive, raising awareness among both men and women of the value of strong women leaders.</li> <li>Leadership training will also include opportunities for men's leadership development and reflection on gender dynamics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of men involved in awareness raising events on gender</li> <li>Gender disaggregated number of participants in leadership development training</li> </ul>	Awareness about the importance of women's empowerment was raised among both male and female stakeholder participants. The value of strong women leaders was made explicit, and participants were made familiar with the project approach to women's empowerment. They were happy with this approach and on board to implement it moving forward.

## **Annex VI - Terms of Reference for FAO TA staff**

### **ISU Technical Assistance Coordinator**

**Duration:** Four years

**Duty Station:** Dhaka, Bangladesh

#### **Organizational setting and main purpose**

Under the supervision of the FAO Representative in Bangladesh and the project's Lead Technical Officer, the incumbent will coordinate all project activities jointly with the SBKS national coordinator.

#### **Tasks and responsibilities**

- Plan, organize, manage and provide technical guidance to the FAO and SBKS project team for the implementation of the project.
- Prepare terms of reference, identify candidates and arrange for recruitment of other FAO project staff and subject matter specialists. Assist the SBKS project coordinator in the recruitment of SBKS staff.
- Given the importance of gender and women's empowerment in the project, endeavour to recruit a gender-balanced team and ensure that recruited staff have sufficient experience and/or are trained to mainstream gender in all project activities.
- Draft and negotiate Letters of Agreement with SBKS and other service providers.
- Provide coaching to SBKS on all aspects of project implementation; jointly review and update the performance monitoring system of member POs as well as procedures for disbursement of GAFSP grants for the development of common facility centres and revolving loan funds of new member POs.
- In collaboration with the M&E officers, supervise and ensure satisfactory standards of implementation of LoAs, contracts and technical assistance inputs to the project. Conduct site visits for monitoring, technical support and facilitation of activities.
- Ensure regular coordination and exchange of lessons learned with the national, regional and local authorities, specifically with the country-led GAFSP project, and actively contribute to policy discussions that take place at the national level in the sphere of the project areas.
- Ensure regular coordination and exchange of experience with financial service providers and other partner organizations involved with the project, including the private sector, other relevant development organizations and the Asian Farmers' Association.
- With SBKS and the M&E officers, organize regular thematic lesson learning workshops and mid-term and end-of-project evaluation workshops.
- Lead the project strategy development:
  - reflect on outcomes achieved and capacities gained within SBKS and its member organizations;
  - keep abreast with developments in the rural economy, policy context and new capacity development tools, and;
  - analyse the two in conjunction to each other and make suggestions for further development steps and for adaptation to a changing context as needed.
- Serve as the Secretary of the Project Advisory Committee, prepare agenda, discussion materials and minutes of meetings.
- In close collaboration with the FAO Representative, supervise on behalf of the executing agency all project financial and administrative matters. Produce project progress reports in line with FAO and donor requirements, technical reports and other relevant documentation as required by FAO. This includes the project's mid-term review and terminal report.

**Qualifications:**

- Advanced university degree in agriculture, agriculture economics, rural development or related subject.
- Minimum of ten years of progressively responsible professional experience, including in project management in the field of agricultural development.
- Experience in working in genuine partnership with farmers' organizations and small agribusinesses.
- Experience in working with rural microfinance service providers or related institutions working in the financial services sector for rural areas.
- Experience in working with international organizations.
- Experience with gender mainstreaming in agricultural development projects.

**FAO core competencies**

- Results focus
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Building effective relationships
- Knowledge sharing and continuous improvement

**Technical/functional skills**

- Excellent writing, presentation, communication and interpersonal skills.
- Fluency in English and Bengali.
- Familiarity with the administrative and financial procedures of FAO, as well familiarity with the FAO tools MBWin, Rural Invest and .Collect Mobile.

## **Administrative and Finance Officer**

**Duration:** Four years

**Duty station:** Dhaka, Bangladesh

### **Organizational setting and main purpose**

Under the supervision of the FAO representative in Bangladesh and the Lead Technical Officer and in close collaboration with the ISU coordinator, the incumbent will be responsible for a) the financial and operational management of the project as well as b) technical assistance to SBKS on financial and operational project management and on the management of the revolving fund with the objective of gradual increased autonomy by SBKS.

### **Tasks and responsibilities**

#### **A. Management of project operations**

Ensure smooth functioning of project operations and consistent service delivery, specifically:

- Act as a focal person for all matters related to the daily operation of the project;
- Manage the project budget and prepare financial reports and budget revisions as required;
- Initiate and follow-up on all project contracting, procurement and travel processes;
- Ensure the quality of project data and documentation in the Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS);
- Participate in the preparation of project work plans, monitor progress and where necessary, identify corrective measures to overcome operational constraints.

#### **B. Technical assistance to SBKS**

Provide capacity building to SBKS to manage the project activities and the revolving loan fund, with the objective of gradual increased autonomy by SBKS, specifically:

- Training and coaching of the SBKS National Coordinator, accountant and other operational staff on project operations procedures and financial reporting standards. Develop supporting training material as needed;
- Training and coaching of SBKS on the financial management of their organization and of common assets, such as common facility centers. Develop and update training material and support SBKS staff in training its member POs;
- Training and coaching of SBKS on revolving loan fund operations: Regularly review jointly with responsible SBKS staff the performance of the Revolving Loan Fund operations. Based on these results, provide (refresher) training to SBKS staff and support SBKS in its training of RLF committees of its member POs. If needed, make suggestions for changes to the RLF standard operating procedures based on PKSF, FAO MBWin and other guidance;
- Develop and update briefing and training materials and deliver training to SBKS and its member POs on banking policies and on options for accessing external financing whether as a PO or for individual PO members and on the management of borrowed resources.

### **Qualifications**

- MBA or master's degree in finance, accounting, agricultural economics, agribusiness development or related subject.
- Minimum of ten years professional experience in rural finance, preferably related to agriculture.
- Experience working with commercial banks, micro-credit organizations, farmer organizations and the private sector.



**FAO core competencies**

- Results focus
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Building effective relationships
- Knowledge sharing and continuous improvement

**Technical/Functional skills**

- Excellent interpersonal and facilitation skills.
- Working knowledge of English and Bengali.
- Familiarity with the administrative and financial procedures of FAO, as well familiarity with the FAO tools, MBWin, Rural Invest and .Collect Mobile.

## Field coordinator and M&E officers (2)

**Duration:** Four years

**Duty Station:** 1 in Rangpur, 1 in Barisal

### Organizational setting and main purpose

Under the overall supervision of the FAOR and direct supervision of the ISU coordinator in Dhaka, the incumbents will train and coach the SBKS regional office staff on their facilitation role for the establishment of new POs and to better serve SBKS member POs in the region and on their monitoring functions. The field officers will also have a direct project M&E role for M&E activities that cannot be delegated to SBKS.

### Tasks and responsibilities

#### A. Capacity building of regional SBKS staff

- Train and coach the regional SBKS staff in their role to facilitate POs in the new project areas, focusing on: participatory approaches; PO governance and gender issues; value chain selection processes; and revolving loan fund management.
- Train selected SBKS staff in the facilitation of POs to develop business plans and in the use of RuralInvest software for the financial analysis of these plans. Provide quality assurance to business plans developed during the project.
- Assist SBKS with the participatory selection of new Farmer Business Facilitators (FBFs) and provide back-up support to the training and coaching by experienced FBFs.
- Help the SBKS regional office to organize business meetings between member POs and the private sector, such as input providers and buyers, to identify common upgrading priorities in their business relationship. Support the organization of trade fairs.
- Help the SBKS office to build a good relationship with local government units and for its POs to access government technical services, such as extension and veterinary services.
- Train and coach SBKS staff on the project's monitoring requirements and on the management of the participatory M&E system set up under the MMI project. With SBKS, discuss and develop ways to use the same M&E system to provide data for lesson learning that will allow SBKS to improve its services to its member POs and member farmers.

#### B. Project M&E

- Provide background information to the service provider hired for the baseline and final evaluation survey analyses, facilitate meetings between the service provider and SBKS, provide inputs to the survey questionnaires, assist with training of SBKS FBFs as survey enumerators and provide feedback on the reports submitted by the service provider. Ensure gender disaggregated data collection methodologies are used.
- Review project monitoring data collected by SBKS to assure their accuracy and completeness before forwarding to the ISU in Dhaka.
- Contribute to lesson-learning exercises and workshops on various technical areas and assist the ISU coordinator with project strategy development: provide information on outcomes achieved and capacities gained within the SBKS regional office and its member organizations, and make suggestions for further development steps and for adaptation to a changing context as needed.
- Conduct technical support and supervision field visits to new member POs, signal any problems to SBKS and the ISU in Dhaka and suggest ways to remediate. Also signal successes and positive developments that can serve as good examples for others.
- Assist with the organization of field visits by the ISU in Dhaka, government representatives, the LTO, LTU, AFA, the donor and other partner organizations involved in the project. Assist the communication officer in Dhaka in collecting material for communication products.

- Establish relationships with other relevant development assistance projects in the project area, including the country-led GAFSP-funded project, in order to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing between the POs and amongst projects on technical, production and other matters.

**Qualifications:**

- Tertiary qualification in rural development/social science, agriculture, agriculture economics or related subject.
- Minimum of five years of progressively responsible professional experience.
- Experience with field research and data collection, including collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data.
- Experience in working in a participatory manner with farmers' organizations.
- Experience with agricultural value chain and business development.
- Experience with training and coaching.

**FAO Core Competencies**

- Results Focus
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Building Effective Relationships
- Knowledge Sharing and Continuous Improvement

**Technical/functional skills**

- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Working knowledge of English and Bengali
- Familiarity with the FAO tools, MBWin, Rural Invest and .Collect Mobile