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## Submission Snapshot

### Date Submitted

14 Mar 2013

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### Reference No.

GPSA-5SO6

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### 1.1 Project Title

Transformation of Unions for Equality (TRUE)

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### 1.3 Project Overview

**Recipient/Executing organization name:** Uttaran

**Address of the recipient organization:** House # 32, Road # 10/A (1st Floor),

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Bangladesh

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Email: [uttaran.dhaka@gmail.com](mailto:uttaran.dhaka@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.uttaran.net/>

**Country in which applicant CSO is a legal entity:** Bangladesh

**Mentee(s) organization(s) name(s):** N/a

**Project Manager:** Mr. Shahidul Islam, Director, Uttaran

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**E-mail:** [uttaran.dhaka@gmail.com](mailto:uttaran.dhaka@gmail.com)

**Project start date:** 01-Aug-2013

**Project end date:** 31-Jul-2018

**Project geographic scope:** 20 Union Parishad areas of 2 Upazilas in Khulna District in the Southwest Bangladesh Region

**Total project cost:** USD 990,644

**Additional financing sources:** none

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## Section 2: Project Objectives

### 2.1 Project Objectives

The core strategic objective of the project is to enhance social accountability at UP level to promote transformative governance practices in 20 Union Parishad (UP) constituencies in 2 Upa-zila (UZ) of Khulna districts in the Southwest Bangladesh. The citizens where the project is planned to be implemented are mostly poor and vulnerable to natural calamity and climate change impact. According to the poverty map developed by the GoB and WHO the areas are one of the poverty pockets in Bangladesh. The intervention will increase citizen's voice and representation to demand accountability and transparency in financial planning and management of the UPs, which ultimately contribute in the "demand side" of the governance.

The expected outcomes of the project are:

Outcome 1: 20 UPs accelerate their open budget processes through citizen-led collective initiative. Constituent of the target UPs will increase engagement with the UP through improving their awareness about their rights, entitlements and also about the law and procedure of the UP workings. They (the citizen) will undertake advocacy at the upward for effective policy formulation & implementation to improve UP level financial planning & management which will reduce UPs limitations i.e. administrative and bureaucratic corruption, top-down planning, uncertainty in resource allocation etc.

Outcome 2: Poor and vulnerable women & men in target UPs increased their resiliency through greater access to livelihood information, entitlements to natural resources and safety nets. Under the framework of rights to information (RTI) Act, these will increase poor people access to govt. services i.e. social safety net programmes, health and education.

Outcome 3: UTTARAN developed effective knowledge management and learning system for continuous transformation of transparency and accountability in UP planning. The project also aimed to contribute in the knowledge and learnings in the area of Social Accountability (SAcc) through capacity building of local organization UTTARAN. This will contribute to the sustainability through continuation and replication of learnings and experience.

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### 2.2 Focus Area

Social accountability initiative or program; CSO Institutional strengthening

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### 2.3 GPSA Pillars of Governance

Transparency; Representation and voice; Accountability; Learning for improved results [required]

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### 2.4 Project Goals and CSO's Mission

UTTARAN started its campaign to uphold the cause of the poor and underprivileged in 1985. Throughout the years, UTTARAN was expanded its works with landless especially women, outcastes, untouchables and religio-ethnic minorities and extreme poor communities in the Southwest Bangladesh region. Currently, the organization is directly working with 59,000 households. 70% of UTTARAN's programme participants are women and 33% are outcaste, untouchables and religio-ethnic minorities.

From the onset, UTTARAN's philosophy and strategy was based on the holistic analysis of the causes of poverty, inequality and social injustice, and recognition of their deeply-entrenched nature. The core focus of UTTARAN programs are human rights, land rights and agrarian reform, community based river basin management, sustainable water management, adaptation to climate change, ecological agriculture and food security. The holistic approach that UTTARAN has adopted that the struggle to transform the underlying structures of inequality, injustice and exclusion must be conducted on a number of different levels, starting with the individual and extending to the national and even global levels.

The project strongly linked with UTTARAN's current Long Term Strategic Plan 2011-2015, stipulated organization's vision as "A society with gender, class & caste equality" with a mission toward "Equip the disadvantaged people with the tools needed to deal with their social, environmental, health, economic & cultural issues & concerns" focused to the longer term directions set as: (i) Integrated rural empowerment & development (ii) Human development (iii) Rights & social justice (iv) natural resources management & risk reduction (v) Good governance & democratization. Strategic approaches include conscious & serious involvement of women, children, religio-ethnic minorities, outcaste, untouchables, landless & PWDs directly in the whole development interventions & processes of UTTARAN. Holistic & integrated community development interventions that synergies both the rights & need based approaches.

The project also fits with the organizational values & believes. UTTARAN believes that the values and principles that inform its activities in the field must be also internalized within the organization. Consequently, its own internal structure and culture seeks as far as possible to replicate the principles of democracy, accountability, transparency and gender equity that it seeks to foster through its organization of the landless.

UTTARAN's project implementation experience includes strong and trusting relationship with 172 UP in the southwest Bangladesh. Number of projects both social mobilization and capacity building of UPs have been implementing by UTTARAN with collaboration and partnership of those UPs. Please see annex Annual Report 2010-11 for more details.

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## 2.5 Project's Beneficiaries

**2.5.1 Project's main direct beneficiaries:** Around half million women, children and men living in the proposed implementation UPs will be directly benefited by the project. Most of this population are more vulnerable than many other part of the country because of socio-economic & political context also includes high vulnerability to natural calamity and climate change impact. The project outcomes are particularly targeted to the most vulnerable section of the communities includes women, children, people with disability, elderly and schedule & low caste communities which is about 27% in the proposed areas. The project outcomes will reduce corruption, political favouritism, nepotism etc. in accessing the govt. services and entitlements come through UPs i.e. VGD, VGF, elderly allowances etc.

The most marginalised people will be included in the Citizens' Committees; their confidence will be built through awareness, training and information flow and most importantly building solidarity and constituency. Community Information Volunteers will particularly target the vulnerable households to extend their support under the RTI framework.

The intervention will attempt to forge more supportive relationships between men and women, while continuing to expand women's circle of influence. Special emphasis will be given to building the capacity of Ward Sava elected women advisors, they will receive training on roles and responsibilities; principles of good governance; leadership

skills; and chairing specific sub-committees, and others needed to respond and provide services to the most marginalised. The focus will be on increasing participation of community members in development activities and encouraging poor and extreme poor voice their opinions, especially women.

**2.5.2 Project's indirect beneficiaries:** In general, the project will contribute to improve the overall governance in Bangladesh. Knowledge products produced through the experience, lesson learnt and research activities of the project will be used by the Ministry of LG, RD&C to ensure transparent and responsive public finance management system at the local level. Thus pro-poor policy change will benefit all the poor and marginalized people in Bangladesh.

The knowledge products will also benefit the practitioners and academia of governance study and research. Journalists and media will have human interest stories and news.

## Section 3: Project Description

### 3.1 Sectors of Focus

#### Public sector – State Reform:

**Transparency/ Access to Information:** District/Local

**Budget Accountability:** District/Local

**Procurement:** District/Local

**Anti-corruption:** District/Local

#### Sector Reform:

**Education:** District/Local

**Health and nutrition:** District/Local

**Social protection:** District/Local

**Water and Sanitation:** District/Local

**Transport (roads/public transport):** District/Local

**Natural resources:** District/Local

### 3.2 Project Strategy

**3.2.1 Governance and/or development issues:** Although, UPs in Bangladesh are the key drivers to improve development results at the grassroots; plan, budget and financial management are few of the weakest areas of UP activities. Among several reasons behind the financial mis-governance, mis-represented participation is the key. The method for participation is not based on well-designed content and method but mostly an overcrowded public meeting has been substituted for participatory plan and budget meeting. Other reasons include: i) citizens' lack of confidence and awareness about law, rights and entitlements. ii) lack of collective voice and iii) lack of information.

The project will facilitate formation and function of Citizens' Committees at the UPs which will be federated upward for a greater voice and influencing. Alongside, awareness on Rights to Information (RTI) will be created within the communities. ICT will be promoted through Community Information Volunteers (CIVs) to demand information by the

most marginalized households.

For the purpose of sustainability and continuation through scale-up and replication, UTTARAN the project implementing organization will strengthen RTI compliance capacity within the organization and also develop strategic and technical knowhow to mainstream SAcc across the project/programme portfolio.

**3.2.2 Strategy for building multi-stakeholder support:** Building multi-stakeholder support is a key output of the project. Advice and Information Centres (AIC) at the UZ level will be established to provide information, training and advisory services on governance-related issues to CC and Apex Federations (AF); act as a conduit for information from the community/citizens groups to other stakeholders. Based on these AICs, multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration will be fostered by linking CCs & AFs with governments, academics, media and practitioners. The AICs will play a critical role in gathering information on the state of representation, transparency and accountability of UP and share with the stakeholders.

The project will have regular learning and experience sharing meetings with the stakeholders including private sectors, media, activists and practitioners. Media and journalists will take a key role in achieving the advocacy and influencing output of the project.

**3.2.3 Strategy of constructive engagement:** The proposed intervention is approached as multi-dimensional, which proposed SAcc tools and mechanisms are embedded within an underlying overarching purpose and a strategic plan coupled with the arenas of constructive engagement with the state; formal and informal channels. Key principle for this will be: #mutual exchange and dialogue, includes working actively to consult with stakeholders who interact in terms of interest, local business or authority, #constructive engagement will be supported via an over-arching strategy, creating a mechanism for review, best practice and communication.

At the onset of the project, in engagement with all stakeholders, the strategy will be detailed-out aiming constructive and mutual beneficial way to improve access to information and resources, exchange knowledge and learnings with others, and to engage on pro-poor agenda.

The project interventions will be using policy analysis methods that maximize objectivity, seeking opportunities to discuss policy recommendations with MoLG, RD&C to ensure transparent and responsive public finance management system at UPs; and proposing viable solutions to problems that have been identified. A win-win situation for the stakeholders will be facilitated to resolve mis-governance issues and ensure SAcc both at the local and central level through citizens' participation and negotiation focusing on process and dynamics of change that allows.

**3.2.4 Communications and outreach strategy:** The proposed project emphasizes the importance of communication and outreach (C&O) both within the project and to stakeholder audiences. At the project inception phase, a project level C&O strategy will be detailed out with the objective to support both national and international outreach needs and to communicate the mission and goals of the project. The strategy will strengthen the project's effectiveness by (i) raising understanding and support among key stakeholders/constituencies of the project's goal/objectives; and (ii) using communication as a tool in the delivery of the project's operational activities. Main elements of the C&O strategy proposed at this stage are:

# Building understanding and support for the project's goal and purpose

# Integration of C&O and project operations

# Increased impact of C&O tools.

# Rebalancing outreach efforts which is to outreach through focused interactions with legislators, civil society, and the academic and think tank community. Efforts will be devoted to interactions with the private sector and markets

It will identify fundamental principles that will continue to shape project outreach in the future and will be periodically revisited as needs and practices change so that it remains a relevant, flexible document.

**3.2.5 Social accountability mechanisms or tools:** Following SAcc tools and mechanisms will be employed to achieve the outcomes of the project:

#### 1. Transparency and Access to Information

1.1. Develop information and communications materials to make public information accessible to targeted audiences: IEC material will be developed to raise awareness of the community people which will contribute in achieving Outcome2 and IO2 (comp.1) and IO1 (comp2).

1.2. Submission of requests for access to public information: under the RTI framework CIVs will facilitate the mechanism that will contribute to Outcome1&2 and IO

1.3. Develop online database to display public information in accessible, understandable formats: web content and social networking will be facilitated by the CIVs. AICs will provide inputs on web-based based public information and mobilisations to contribute in achieving the Outcome1&2. IO2 (comp2) will be particularly realised by this tools

1.4. Independent budget analysis (national, state/provincial, municipal, sector): CCs, AFs will use this mechanism to help UPs budgeting procedure meet the needs of poor that achieve the Outcome1.

#### 2. Voice and Representation

2.1. Develop civic application to display public information and engage citizens or targeted audiences through the use of ICT tools (e.g. crowd-sourcing, SMS):mobile-based polling will be instrumental for SAcc that contribute Outcome1&2.

2.2. Capacity-building of CSOs, CSO networks and/or targeted citizen groups: Contribute to Outcome1&3. AIC, CC and UTTARAN's capacity building will ensure constructive engagement of citizen and CSOs in the local govt.

2.3. Use of formal citizen participation mechanisms (e.g., public hearings, participatory rulemaking processes, etc):open budgeting, citizens meeting will be contribute to Outcome1&2. Achievement of IO1&2 (comp1) and IO1 (comp2) will supplemented by this tools.

#### 3. Accountability

3.1. Develop web-based civic application to monitor (national, state, municipal, sector) public programs and institutions: AICs will develop and maintain this tool to broaden network and engagement of multi-stakeholders. This will contribute to Outcome1&2. IO2(comp1) will be added effectiveness by this tools.

3.2. Independent budget monitoring (including budget expenditures tracking, budget process monitoring): CCs and AF will use this mechanism/tools to contribute to Outcome1&2.

3.3. Design and implement community scorecards to assess service delivery (availability of inputs, service quality) Outcome2, IO2(comp1) and IO2(comp2) will add-up by this through the tools

3.4. Design and implement social audits of public policy/public program implementation, community-based monitoring of public works' execution: CCs, AFs through AIC and UTTARAN will facilitate the tools to contribute

Outcome1&2.

### 3.3 Social Accountability Tools

**Transparency and Access to Information:** Develop information and communications materials to make public information accessible to targeted audiences, Submission of requests for access to public information, Develop online database to display public information in accessible, understandable formats, Independent budget analysis (national, state/provincial, municipal, sectoral)

**Voice and Representation:** Develop civic application to display public information and engage citizens or targeted audiences through the use of ICT tools (e.g. crowd-sourcing, SMS), Capacity-building of CSOs, CSO networks and/or targeted citizen groups, Use of formal citizen participation mechanisms (e.g., public hearings, participatory rulemaking processes, etc)

**Accountability:** Develop web-based civic application to monitor (national, state, municipal, sectoral) public programs and institutions, Independent budget monitoring (including budget expenditures tracking, budget process monitoring), Design and implement community scorecards to assess service delivery (availability of inputs, service quality), Design and implement social audits of public policy/public program implementation, community-based monitoring of public works' execution

### 3.4 Summary of Project Components

**3.4.1 Project summary:** The intervention developed a comprehensive approach to deal with the complex socio-economic and political reality of southwest rural Bangladesh. Involving multi-stakeholder with multi-dimensional tool and mechanism of SAcc the proposed project embedded within an underlying overarching objective “to enhance social accountability at UP level to promote transformative governance practices”. This object is planned to be achieved through three major Outcomes further cascaded down to six Intermediate Outcomes (IOs). The project also included the fourth component Knowledge & Learning” involved two more IOs to achieve. Attached Result framework elaborated detailed of all the Outcomes, IOs and related activities. Each of the components of the project framed with specific objective which are:

**SAcc Mechanism (Component1):** Objective of this component is to facilitate citizens' constructive engagement with UP to improve transparency and accountability in financial planning and management of UPs. The component will leverage realisation of Local Government Act 2009 and the Union Parishad Operational Manual of August 2012 thus poor women, children and men will be able to get benefit from government resources and safety net programmes channelled through UPs. Facilitating formation of Citizen's Committee at UP level will be the key instrument for the component. Those CCs will be Federated (Apex Federation-AF) at the Upa-zila(UZ) to amplify their voice and effectiveness. Advice and Information Centres (AIC) are designed to be established at each of the intervention UZs to provide information, training and advisory services on governance-related issues to CC and AF; act as a conduit for information from the community/citizens groups to UTTARAN and vice versa; and provide information and advice to the public. AICs will also facilitate multi-stakeholders dialogue and collaboration by linking CCs & AFs with governments, academics, media and practitioners.

**Promote Citizens' RTI (Component2):** Bangladesh has recently enacted the Right to Information Act 2009. Component2 of the project designed to enable poor women, children and men to get benefit from the Act. The component aims to aware citizens about their rights to information and use this rights to attain entitlements and services provisioned for them. Through multi-mode communication, information and education(IEC) materials and

activities marginalised and poor people will be made aware about the RTI. Community Information Volunteers (CIVs) will be developed and equipped to facilitate poor and marginalised peoples' rights attainment through using ICT, which will also provide opportunity to access UP budget and accessible resources i.e. khas-land, VGD, VGF, EPI etc. by the citizens.

Knowledge & thematic capacity building of UTTARAN on SAcc (Component3): The component aims to build capacity of the local organisation UTTARAN, the implementing organisation the project. A learning-by-doing approach has been adapted in designing the activities of this component. The ultimate beneficiaries of the component will be 59,000 poor and marginalised households being supported by UTTARAN's various projects. Primary beneficiary includes staff of the organisation. Through the support UTTARAN will develop short and longer term plan and strategies to establish SAcc mechanism both at the org. and community level. A technology based information communication & sharing system will create quick and increased opportunity of learning sharing monitoring and direct interface with the beneficiaries.

**3.4.2 Summary of lessons learned:** UTTARAN has been working with the UP since its very inception, implemented number of project both capacity building and social mobilization for rights and entitlements. The lessons that have been learnt through this functional relationship are:

- i. UPs are the prime drivers of changes in improving development results in the rural Bangladesh.
- ii. rapport, reputation and relationship with UPs is leverage to work within a complex socio-economic and political context.
- iii. a socially identified common issue can help to mobilize public opinion and develop an effective UP-civil society alliance. NGOs can play a catalyst role in bringing them together.
- iv. the involvement of women in local government can improve the transparency and accountability that are essential to democratic governance because women are as yet not involved in or benefiting from existing networks of bad management and corruption.
- v. the scope for participation of the constituency in the local government is very limited beyond casting votes in its election. It is necessary to bring out all the cross-section of people e.g. elected representatives, public officials and political and policy actors from the local level to the national level in a platform for open discussion and dialogue for stronger and pro-people UPs.
- vi. the participation of citizens in local government, particularly that of women and the poor, is essential in promoting democratic governance. Men's acquiescence and support is crucial for women to be effective; therefore, gender sensitivity training and programme should be provided to male representatives of local government and government officers.

**3.4.3 Alternatives considered:** Alternative considered to this intervention was capacity building for the UP authorities such as Chairpersons, members and UP-Standing committee members which are strengthening the supply side-governance. During designing of this project, pros and cons of the alternatives have been analyzed and found that supply-side capacity building could do better if there is strong social and administrative monitoring exists, or elected representatives undertake their roles and responsibilities proactively. Although Govt. have been investing a lot in developing capacity of the UP, however it is found that only supply side intervention would not enough in ensuring a holistic good governance at the local govt level, because firstly, no authority ever took any responsibility or interest to oversee whether any UP at all prepared any plan or budget. Even those who prepared



budgets were never appreciated officially. Secondly, amount and quantity of resources are not at all predictable on the part of UP to formulate a plan and budget. UPs need stakeholders support and advocacy for a bottom-up planning approach. The analysis has been found that the local NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, local elites, general citizens have developed an informal relationship with the UPs through their interpersonal skills. However, because of the lack of mandate or job description of the UP officials, the relationship is not institutionalized which developed a huge gap in a systematic citizens' participation. Without a well defined institutionalized relationship both the sustainability of the relation as well as accountability of the UPs is difficult to achieve.

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## **Section 4: Project Implementation**

### **4.1 Capacity Building**

The project design has identified a specific outcome on knowledge & thematic capacity building of UTTARAN on SAcc. Although UTTARAN have a strong background experience of rights-based community mobilization and working with UPs, but two of project intervention issues such as RTI and ICT is emerging issues in Bangladesh and also new for the organization. UTTARAN's self-capacity assessment exercise during project design identified intermediate outcome (IO) to built capacity on RTI. As a statutory NGO, UTTARAN need to comply with the RTI Act; thus to develop approach, methods, technical and structural capacity assistance is needed. Through a methodological analysis of stakeholders need, organizational capacity and RTI compliance issues, technical assistance will be sought from expert organizations to develop these capacities of UTTARAN. UTTARAN will invest in developing technology based information communication & sharing system.

The other IO identified as capacity building need is mainstreaming SAcc across its project/programme portfolio of UTTARAN. To address these capacity building needs UTTARAN will develop short and longer term strategies to establish SAcc mechanism both at the organizational level and also for the communities the organization work for. Investment will be also made on staff capacity building to maintain and operationalizing the strategy and ICT capacity. The staff capacity building will include formal training, learning by doing and also building peer relationship with specialized organizations.

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### **4.2 Role of Partners**

The project does not develop or identified any formal partnership. However during the course of implementation technical and media partnership will be developed based on project needs for multi-stakeholder engagement, advocacy, influencing and capacity building. The project will explore innovative partnership with research and knowledge development activities. Long-term partnerships are forged with relevant actors who offer complementary approaches and are able to contribute effectively to programming and address the underlying issues of SAcc. The partnerships aim to develop mutually beneficial relationships to achieve common goals and visions, and jointly serve the interests of impact groups and shareholders.

Partnership with the private sector is a "win-win" endeavor. The private sector helps improve the SAcc of UPs by creating opportunities both for UPs and the communities, while finding new business opportunities for investment and innovation.

UTTARAN will be ultimately responsible for meeting all contractual obligations with the GPSA and Bank, as well as overall program implementation; management; producing expected results; and meeting the Program goal. Any other partnership will implement activities based on the Program Framework and the detailed implementation plan. UTTARAN will ensure development of learning and knowledge management systems for dissemination and

advocacy, and orientation during project inception to integrate lessons learned from other projects and this intervention.

### 4.3 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

**4.4.1 Monitoring:** The project monitoring system will be an essential tool to track project beneficiaries and progress at all levels, as well as an integral management tool. UTTARAN's organisational M&E system is evidence based, participatory and software automated, with learning and quality assurance at the centre. The proposed intervention will have fewer indicators to report on, but will continue to collect the same demographic information as UTTARAN's Organisational M&E framework, which will be available for analysis and evaluations. Project's population based baseline design will take into account UTTARAN's experience and studies, and determine if and how they can be used in the project. All project monitoring data and analysis will be gender segregated.

The project will employ a wide variety of methods and techniques for data generation, including Open budget index SAcc index, FGD, appreciated inquiry, household survey questionnaire and the management score sheet. To monitor progress and track outputs and impact, both quantitative data and qualitative information will be collected on the Result Framework indicators and Operational Plan (OP) - monthly, quarterly and annually (depending on the type of indicator), from a statistically significant sample in UZ. Monitoring data collection and reporting will emanate from the field and flow through to the field, UZ offices and finally to the head office.

To ensure information is produced and effectively used, the monitoring system must summarize the information to support staff to identify which components are going well and which components require attention. To achieve this level of sophistication, the monitoring system will funnel the datasets collected against the IOs/output indicators to higher level indicators, namely the three Outcomes. Grading sheets are tailored to the field level, UP and UZ level, and at an overall Project level, against the Outcomes, showing an amalgamated score for each indicator. This immediately highlights areas where the Project is lagging, and areas which are excelling. Using this information, the project staff will be able to strategize how best to overcome shortcomings, and what additional support is required. At the same time, areas performing strongly may require fewer resources, which permit resources to be shifted to more challenging areas.

Another strength of the monitoring system lies in its ability to contribute to the learning of program beneficiaries. Data collected and information generated will be shared with beneficiaries regularly, especially CCs, AFs. A 'prompting' approach will be used, where summary information at the lowest tier. The scores will be shared in the plenary meetings, prompting debate and discussions which will help community members understand what is "working well" and "not working well" for others, and why, and also to identify individual and collective issues which need to be addressed.

All collected information will be discussed in regular scheduled management meetings with management, technical and operational staff. Areas lagging behind will be discussed at length, pinpointing the indicators showing poor progress. Accordingly, resources will be adjusted to different needs ensuring optimum efficiency. The summary sheets produced will continue to be shared with the different tiers of government.

**4.4.2 Evaluation:** The results framework of the project will facilitate evaluations at different stages of implementation of the project. Impact evaluation geared to knowledge-generation of the intervention. This evaluations would be contracted out, may promote the use of rigorous methods such as randomized control trials (RCT) if possible, with explicit counterfactuals, and also other methods, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Adequate consideration would be given to the context and the processes followed, in order to allow

judgments concerning their generalizability and a deeper understanding of the causes leading to results, both positive and negative, so as to facilitate learning from success and from failure. This evaluation will be key inputs for an independent evaluation to take place at the end of the Project's second year of operation, allowing for learning and accountability as the project evolves.

To ensure data consistency and seasonality, the Baseline, Mid Term, and Final Evaluations will all take place in the same month of the year. Local institutions' and partner management capacity will also be collected.

The Baseline will take place within six months of the project start, followed by the Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) at the 36th month, and concluding with the Final Evaluation in 54th month. The MTE will be critical to assess the effectiveness in implementing activities and reaching output targets; whether IOs are appropriate to achieve desired changes; understand better which approaches, interventions and activities have proved most effective, as well as those which have not proved to be effective; and strength of partnerships. Recommendations from the MTE will be important to make necessary changes to achieve, maintain and sustain positive changes. The Final Evaluation will then measure and gauge the overall impact of the project has managed to achieve over its life. These will be essential findings for not only UTTARAN and GPSA, but for the development forum in general to better understand and inform how the intervention has fared to bring accountability and transparency, and what tools were adopted to achieve these results.

**4.4.3 Knowledge and Learning:** UTTARAN is committed to establishing a learning culture, where all its projects share experiences and strengthen UTTARAN's overall capacity. UTTARAN will ensure development of learning and knowledge management systems for dissemination and advocacy, and orientation during project inception to integrate lessons learned from other projects and this intervention.

The project M&E system is designed to promote and ensure reflective practices throughout the program implementation period. Knowledge management and learning approaches and techniques will ensure both upward and downward accountability and uptake of lessons learned. A concrete learning/knowledge sharing strategy will be developed following UTTARAN strategies and approaches to promote learning and demonstrate the impact of the intervention. Investments will be made to ensure staff capacity in implementation of the M&E and learning systems, including systematic documentation and packaging of materials for various stakeholders. In addition, quarterly learning, annual reflection, and dissemination and learning workshops will be organized at various levels.

The project M&E unit will be part of the project Knowledge Management Unit to maximize uptake and leverage lessons learned both internally and externally. It can improve its knowledge base, not only within the Project, but also for external audiences, should there be a unit focused on information management. UTTARAN's organisational M&E Unit will supplement this unit, providing strategic guidance and support for reflective and efficient M&E systems. The project will continuously document lessons learned on different critical issues, including intended and unintended impact on program beneficiaries, which will be shared with other stakeholders. There will be dedicated learning documentation teams and sharing forums to improve knowledge and decision-making and build the institutional memory of community development as a whole, especially in relation to food security and vulnerability management.

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#### 4.4 Sustainability

The project has built sustainability into the program design through processes of empowerment and capacity building for those who have been marginalized in the past, and those responsible for providing services to the vulnerable, together with safety nets and rights to information for individual citizens. All methods and models being

proposed have been tested and found to be effective and sustainable. The following are examples in some but not all important areas:

#Institutional and policy sustainability: CCs, AFs and Community Volunteerism are sustainable mechanisms for mobilizing community change. Capacity building will enhance access to government entitlements and safety nets, as well as participation of the marginal people in local development decision-making.

#Multi-stakeholders engagement and advocacy are additional strategies increasing sustainability.

The project exit strategy will be founded on creating confidence and experience among the citizens so that community initiatives and institutions can independently plan; access relevant information; implement group initiatives; and access entitlements from local government service providers. To do this, the intervention will place emphasis on capacity-building of CCs, AFs and community people, and their linkages to each other. There will be a gradual decrease in project-led activities over time in communities and benchmarks will be established to monitor capacity development. Plans will focus on assuring effective handover of responsibilities.