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ABSTRACT

This paper looks into the changing status of the villagers' knowledge, perception and attitude towards gender roles and gender relations over time. Data were collected from Eastern part of Bangladesh through survey and in-depth interview. Using Lickert scale attitude of the respondents was measured. Findings show that knowledge on discrimination, empowerment, violence against women and marital issues increased remarkably and attitude on those issues including general perception towards male and female changed positively but perception of them did not change much as expected. Traditional norms, values and culture including patriarchal societal structure still were recognised as barriers by the respondents to bring on gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'Gender' refers to roles and responsibilities of women and men that are socially determined (WHO 1998). Gender roles are highly variable and are determined by social, economic, political and cultural factors (DFID 2000). Like race and ethnicity, gender is a social construct. It defines and differentiates the roles, rights, responsibilities, and obligations of women and men. The innate biological differences between men and women form the basis of social norms that define appropriate behaviour for them and determine the difference in social, economic, and political power between the sexes. Although the specific nature and degree of these norms vary across societies and over time at the beginning of the twenty-first century but men and boys are still typically favoured, by giving them more access to the capabilities, resources, and opportunities to them than women and girls. It may be noted that these factors are important for the enjoyment of social, economic, and political power, and their well-being. This practice is dominant in the culture of Bangladesh since time immemorial. Within the household and outside men exercise control over women's labour, their sexuality, their choice of marriage partner, their access to labour and other markets and their income and assets through local decision-making and legal bodies (Baden, Green, Marie Goetz and Guhathakurta 1994). In other word, women's access to social, economic, political and legal institutions is mediated by men. They are dependent on men throughout their lives, from father through husband to son. State legislation and institutions underpin this gender subordination and dependence, in spite of constitutional affirmations of sex equality. The prevalent gender difference between men and women in terms of economic and social status as shown in Table 1 confirms the extent of inequity of them. Indisputably women are in very disadvantageous position compared to men, and their economic and social rights are hitherto unrecognized in this society.

How can the global community remove the gender disparities and thus achieve gender equality, and in turn empowerment of women? In fact, addressing this question is the concern of 3rd objective of Millennium Development Goals endorsed by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000.

BRAC along with government has taken initiatives to attain the goal. In 1994, BRAC initiated Gender Quality Action Learning (GQAL) programme for its staff to improve gender relations among its employees.

Table 1. Gender differentials in economic and social status in Bangladesh (%)

Status	Man	Woman
Economic status		
Income generating activity rate (excluding 'housework' ¹)	85.3	63.4
Share employment in agricultural activity ²	49.0	51.0
Share employment in non-agricultural activity ³	85.0	15.0
Proportion of paid workers earning >Tk.300/week ⁴	61.7	19.0
Average monthly income (taka) of HH by gender of Head ⁵	2909*	1892*
Share of unpaid family labour ⁶	25.6	74.4
Social status		
Literacy rate (11+ years) ⁷	47.6	37.6
Net enrolment rate at primary level (Boy and girl) ⁸	85.6	88.0
Share of enrolment at the secondary level ⁹	71.5	28.5
Child death rate (per 1000 population) ¹⁰	12.3	14.7
Average life expectancy ¹¹	55.9 yrs.**	54.4 yrs.**

* Taka, ** Years

This training programme was expanded for the members of its Village Organizations¹² (VO) on a pilot basis in 2001 with similar goals, but focused on fostering gender equality and equity among the villagers. Some of the key issues and concerns raised through training were identification of the villagers' knowledge about similarities and dissimilarities between men and women in the socioeconomic and cultural context such as unequal access of men and women in food intake, education, and health care. The programme also focused on decision-making power of women within the household, division of labour, and access to and control over resources. The main purpose of this programme is to create a positive attitude in rural areas for women's empowerment and for improving gender relations in the family, society and organization at the village level.

With the view of achieving the objectives the programme selected ten *upazilas* in two districts to implement the GQAL programme in 2005 and 2006. A total of 1,200 men and women were given GQAL training. They were selected from ultra poor, moderate poor, VO members, and *union parishad*¹³ members. The trainees worked as educators and conducted 7,200 *Uthan baithaks* (courtyard meetings) for educating community members. People living around educators participated in the courtyard meetings. Besides *Uthan baithak*, other learning devices like video on gender-based violence and discrimination, and popular theatre on gender equity were used to deliver message to the community members. The expected outcome was 1) increase in knowledge and awareness of the villagers about gender roles and relations, 2) better understanding of rationality of joint ownership of family resources by both the sexes 3)

¹ 1989, BBS (1992)

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Education watch, 2002

⁸ Education watch, 2005

⁹ 1990, GOB (1990)

¹⁰ UNICEF (1992). World Bank (1990a) gives 13 deaths per 1000 population for male children compared to 16 for woman children

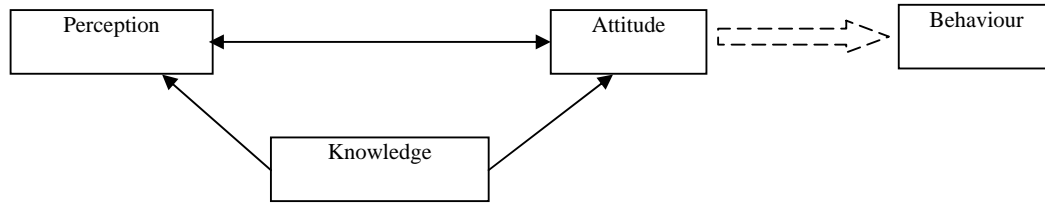
¹¹ UNICEF (1992). There is little reliable evidence on this and figures vary. World Bank contrast to 50 for women. In all sources, woman life expectancy is lower than that of men.

¹² The Village Organization (VO) is an association of poor, and landless people who come together with the help of BRAC to improve their socio-economic condition.

¹³ The lower administrative unit of the government of Bangladesh

increase of women’s participation in decision-making in the family, thus establishing gender equality both within the household and community.

Figure 1. Causal relationship of knowledge, perception, attitude and behaviour



The Figure 1 is a causal model of knowledge, perception, attitude and behaviour. It shows that knowledge influences both perception and attitude, but not necessarily gain in knowledge and change in perception and attitudes would bring change in behaviour. Despite this the possibility that change in knowledge, and perception and their attitude would eventually change one’s behaviour, provided there was not a factor intervening the causal process. Given this causal model it is anticipated that goals of GQAL programme might be achieved by improving knowledge, changing discriminatory perception and attitudes of the community members thus would lead to change in their behaviour.

This report looks into the changing status of the villagers’ knowledge, perception and attitude towards men and women in general, discrimination, empowerment and violence against women and marriage related issues after the intervention.

METHODOLOGY

The study has used three instruments: individual survey of household, attitudinal scale, and in-depth interview for better understanding of the gender roles and gender relations. The individual survey was directed towards collecting socio-demographic data that helped measuring knowledge, perception and attitude towards gender. Information was collected through structured questionnaire.

Table 2. Themes and issues related to gender roles and relations

Themes	Issues
General perception towards man and woman	Gender role within household, equality, division of labour
Discrimination	Inequality in nutrition, health, education, workload
Empowerment	Decision making within household, mobility outside home and social participation in <i>shalish</i>
Violence against women	Dowry, divorce, perception of violence
Marriage	Early marriage, forced marriage, polygamy

The study follows five themes (Table 2). For each theme five statements (Appendix 1) were selected, on which the respondents provided their attitudes. The statements reflected situations with which the respondents were asked to agree or disagree. Respondents’ attitude on each of the statements were captured in four point Likert scale –completely agreed, partially agreed, partially disagreed, and completely disagreed. Both positive and negative statements had been considered for getting balanced attitudes of the respondents. Each of the statements was given numerical weight – four to one – starting with four for completely agreeing with the statements and one for completely disagreeing. This agreeing and disagreeing in fact reflected

respondents' attitudes towards gender equality. This variation emerges depending on the nature of the statements. Higher score from a statement related to themes meant more favourable attitude and the opposite meant less favourable attitude towards gender roles and relations.

Total score for each respondent was computed by summing the responses against each statement. Cumulated score of the different themes represented respondents' attitude towards the theme. In the case of attitude towards gender roles and relations possible scores for a respondent ranged from 5 to 20 of each theme.

In-depth interview focused on the exploration of the respondents' attitude in further detail towards themes. The same statements, used in attitudinal scale, were also used in in-depth interview. The objective was to find out how respondents rationalized themselves in supporting or not supporting the statements with a special focus on interpreting their cognition and influence behind holding attitudes towards the statements.

SAMPLING

Data were collected in two phases: 1) baseline data were collected in May 2005, and after 16 months of intervention, 2) post-intervention information was collected in September 2006. Eight out of ten areas from two districts Netrokona and Kishoreganj were selected for data collection, as there was the intervention in those areas. Again from each area, one to three spots¹⁴ were selected in the survey because in some spots there was less number of interviewees than required.

Spots were considered as a unit of the survey in this study. From each spot respondents such as rich, middle, lower and ultra poor (TUP) categorized through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method were undertaken in the study. The study considered all the samples for the last two groups, 20% for middle and 10% from rich class in one spot. Male-female ratio was almost 50%. The numbers that are mentioned especially for middle and rich were randomly selected from the list in the PRA file.

The baseline survey was done on 803 samples. Of them, 120 respondents were randomly selected to collect the information on how they rationalized their attitudes towards different themes. In other words, the information was collected from a group who were interviewed in survey. Primarily man and woman were selected differently from each category. The respondents were chosen considering their age. Too older person was excluded from this part. The number was selected from different age group in order to see whether age had a bearing different attitude towards gender roles and gender relation. If man was selected from one household, woman was selected from other household. But this number sometimes varied from one to other spots, as the sufficient number of TUP members was not present in them. On the other hand, in the post-intervention the total number of sample reduced to 737 for survey and 96 for in-depth interview because of migration and deaths.

¹⁴ Among other steps for targeting ultra poor selecting village is bit final stage of this process. Once the villages are selected, several participatory wealth-ranking exercises are conducted to cover all possible locations of a village where extreme poor live. These sub-village level locations are known as spots, which typically constitute 100–150 households.

FINDINGS

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge of the respondents on selected issues under different themes relating to gender roles and relations were considered for intervention by the programme. This section shows the changing status in knowledge of the respondents between pre-post- interventions on those issues.

Two observations were made on knowledge: 1) whether respondents' knowledge changed, and 2) the extent of change. The former was measured by dividing the changes in knowledge of the respondents into three categories: increased, unchanged, and declined. Cumulative scores of the respondents of issues and average percentage of that measured the latter.

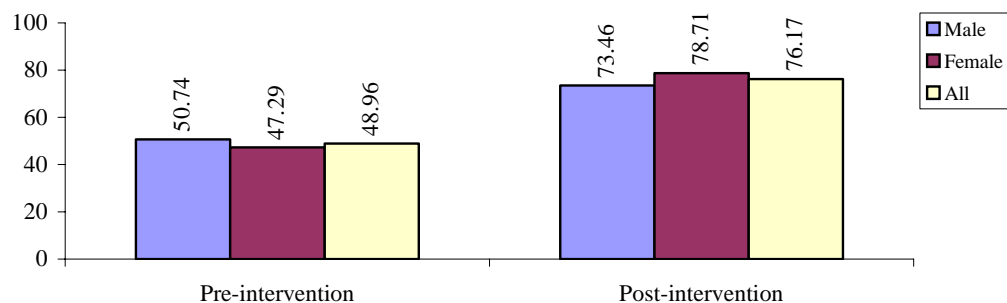
Table 3. Change in knowledge level on the issues of the respondents (n=554) (%)

Issues	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased
Compulsory education	47.3	48.4	4.3
Nutrition	18.1	78.5	3.4
Inheritance law of property	28.5	63.7	7.8
Voting age for Bangladesh	33.2	61.6	5.2
Punishment of giving/taking dowry	32.7	54.5	12.8
Correct divorce laws	26.5	64.6	8.8
Legal age of marriage of man	51.3	45.3	3.4
Legal age of marriage of woman	33.0	60.0	7.0

The knowledge of almost half of the respondents on compulsory education (47.3%) and legal age of marriage of man (51.3%) increased over time (Table 3). But a slight increase in respondents' knowledge took place on the rest of the issues. In general, knowledge of overwhelming number of respondents remained same while a small number of respondents' knowledge declined as well in post-intervention.

On the other hand, an increasing trend of the respondents' knowledge score was observed after the intervention (Figure 2). In general respondents' score increased by 27.2% points in post-intervention. The Figure also shows that the increase in the knowledge of woman was more than that of man.

Figure 2. Average percentage of knowledge score gained by respondents



Logistic regression was conducted to determine the increased knowledge in terms of several independent variables (Table 4). Findings show that after the intervention woman's knowledge on legal age of vote and punishment of dowry transactions increased two times more (OR 2.2, 95% CI) than man and 1 time more on the issue of legal conditions of marriage of man (Table 5). Knowledge of business and other occupational groups on correct divorce laws increased two times (OR 1.9, 95% CI) more than farmer. On the other hand knowledge of Hindus and Buddhists on the same issue increased lesser than Muslims. Besides with the increase in respondents' age knowledge on the requirements of nutrition for men and women increased.

Knowledge of respondents not affiliated with NGO on legal age of marriage of man increased two times more (OR 1.5, 95% CI) than NGO members. On the other hand middle class and rich people's knowledge on legal age of vote and punishment of dowry transaction increased less compared to poor. Finally the more education the respondents had more knowledge they had on compulsory education for boy and girl, the requirements of nutrition for men and women, inheritance law of property, legal age of vote, correct divorce laws and legal age of marriage of woman.

Table 4. Selected independent and dependent variables with its definition used in logistic regression analysis

Independent variables	Definition and description of the variables
Age	Age is used in years
Sex	Man=1 and Woman=0
Education	Education is used as continuous i.e., from illiterate to 12 years of schooling
Economic status	Poor=1 and non-poor=0 In the case of poor and non-poor, the respondents owning, according to BRAC, <0.5 acres of land and sold labour more than 100 days (yearly) considered as poor while middle, lower and rich as non-poor.
Religion	Muslim=1, Respondents who were Hindus and Buddhist considered as non-Muslim=0
Occupation	The respondents involving with cultivation defined as agriculture=1, and against this respondents engaging with business and other occupations considered as non-agriculture=2
NGO membership	Members who were affiliated with any NGO=1 and Who don't=0
Marital status	Marital status was categorized into currently married=1 versus unmarried, widow, and divorced=0
Dependent variable	The outcome variable is 'increased knowledge' considered as positive outcome coded '1'. If the knowledge declined or remained same in both pre and post interventions it was considered to be a negative outcome coded '0'.

Table 5. Odds ratios of increased knowledge on the issues by selected variables

Variables	Compulsory education		Nutrition		Property Inheritance law		Age of Vote		Punishment of Dowry transaction		Divorce laws		Age of marriage of man		Age of marriage of woman	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
1 Man	1	.6-2.1	1	.70-2	1	.77-2	1	1.4-3.5	1	1.0-2.3	1	.64-1.8	1	.99-2	1	.82-2
Woman	1.1		1.2		1.2		2.2***		1.5*		1.07		1.4*		1.2	
2 Agriculture	1	.73-2.2	1	.57-3	1	.80-3	1	.76-3.1	1	.9-3.1	1	1.03-3.6	1	.68-2	1	.46-2
Non-agriculture	1.3		1.2		1.5		1.5		1.7		1.9*		1.2		.89	
3 Age	1	.55-1.3	1*	.28-1	1	.54-1	1	.73-1.8	1	.77-.18	1	.49-1.4	1	.82-2	1	.73-2
4 Yes	1	.73-1.6	1	.88-2	1	.5-1	1	.84-1.9	1	.85-1.8	1	.49-1.3	1	1.0-2	1	.94-2
No	1.1		1.4		.76		1.2		1.2		.80		1.5*		1.4	
5 Muslim	1	.50-2.4	1	.09-2	1	.45-3	1	.14-1.4	1	.18-1.1	1	.04-.22	1	.39-2	1	.43-3
Non-Muslim	1.1		.39		1.1		.44		.45		.09***		.9		1.1	
6 Poor	1	.20-3.2	1	.37-1	1	.60-1	1	.35-.82	1	.41-.89	1	.39-1.03	1	.51-1	1	.46-1
Non-poor	.81		.62		.90		.54*		.60*		.64		.8		.72	
7 Married	1	.34-1.9	1	.18-2	1	.28-2	1	.17-1.1	1	.24-1.3	1	.53-3.5	1	.45-2	1	.67-9
Others	.80		.55		.71		.42		.57		1.3		1.1		2.4	
8	1*	.89-1.0	1*	.84-1	1**	.86-1	1***	.78-.9	1	.92-1	1**	.86-.98	1	.90-1	1***	.79-.9

* P<.05 **P<.01 ***P<.000

1=Sex, 2= Occupation, 3= Age (years), 4= NGO membership, 5= Religion, 6= Economic status, 7= Marital status, 8= Education (continuous)

PERCEPTION

What should be done and what should not be done by a man and woman both in family and outside determines the perception of the respondents on gender roles and relations. Respondents' perception on man and woman in general, discrimination, empowerment, violence against women and marriage related issues were considered in this section.

General perception towards man and woman

Man and woman in the family and the society perform different types of roles. By and large there is perception of people that woman should take care of household activity such as cooking food, managing household belongings, caring family members while man should deal with productive activities (possible to count by economist) outside home, shopping in the market, etc. The intervention tried to change this perception to bring gender equality. Table 6 describes selected activities in terms of respondents' perception on what woman should do and what they should not.

Findings show that a little change took place in perception of respondents on household work, shopping in the market, and bringing up child at home by women after the interventions. Similar to pre-intervention both man and woman respondents retained stereotype perception in post-intervention on the same issues.

Table 6. Activities of woman in family as perceived by respondents in pre-post interventions period (%)

Activities	Man			Woman		
	Pre	Post	% Difference	Pre	Post	% Difference
Earning activities	24	72	48	28	78	50
Cooking for family members	99	99	00	99	99	00
Teaching child at home	58	54	-04	63	57	-06
Household work	96	88	-08	97	91	-06
Shopping in the market	01	08	07	03	20	13
Childcare at home	90	95	05	93	96	03

Multiple responses considered

A positive change of the respondents' perception took place on who should teach child at home. But the perception of the respondents relating to who should participate in earning activities changed positively. There were a significant number of the respondents who believed that participation in earning activities should also be woman activity after the intervention. But the intervention did not have an effect on the perception of both man and woman towards cooking i.e., kept on believing that cooking was a job of woman only.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination between man and woman with regard to different issues is widely prevalent in family. Of them, discrimination in preference of sex as first child, access to education for boy and girl, nutrition for them, treatment, and rest precedence of husband and wife, and decisions on family planning by husband and wife is considered in this study.

Table 7. Respondents' perception on the expectation of the sex of first child to be born (%) (n=554)

Sex	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Difference	P value
Boy	72.4	31.4	-41.0	.000
Girl	10.5	8.7	-1.8	ns
Any one	17.1	59.9	+42.8	.000

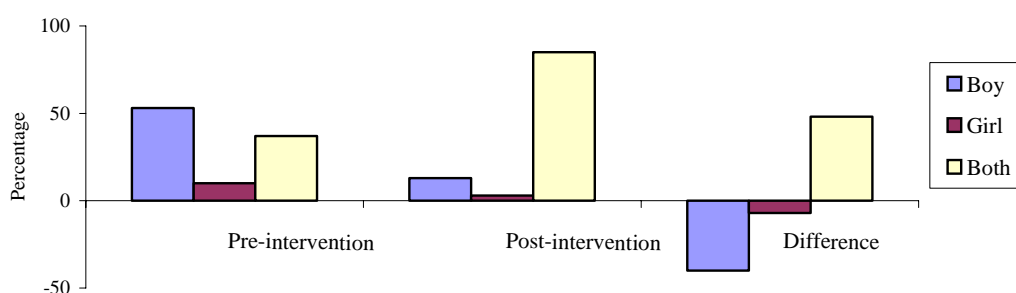
ns= not significant

Table 7 shows that the number of respondents with the expectation of boy as first child decreased in the post-intervention and at the same time preference for boy or girl increased. A minor change in the perception of the respondents towards girl was observed in the post-intervention. There were significant differences between pre-and post-interventions regarding the expectation of boy and child with any sexes as first issue.

Education is a must for all children but in our society there is a perception that only boys should be preferred in providing education. This perception of the respondents changed positively after the interventions (Figure 3). There was an increase in 50% of the respondents who emphasized for education of both boy and girl in the post-intervention, meaning that after the training these respondents did not discriminate between boy and girl in providing education.

The discrimination related to treatment of husband and wife was also considered. There is a norm that husband should run the family. So, he should remain fit. Thus, when both husband and wife become sick husband should be given treatment first instead of wife. With a view to changing this perception the intervention had done the job properly. Table 8 shows that significant (39%) number of respondents declined on the perception of the treatment of husband first while there was a better increase (42%) of the respondents on the perception of treatment of both husband and wife at the same time. A slight change was observed for wife at the end of the intervention.

Figure 3. Perception on the preference of education of boy and girl



A humble change took place in perception of the respondents on the necessity of rest for husband and wife (Table 9). A few respondents perceived that both husband and wife needed equal amount of rest.

Table 8. Perception on the preference of treatment of husband and wife by respondents (%) (n=554)

Preferences	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Difference	P value
Husband first	65.9	27.4	-38.5	.000
Wife first	16.1	12.8	-3.3	n.s.
Same time	18.1	59.7	+41.6	.000

n.s. = not significant

Table 9. Perception on the necessity of rest of husband and wife (%) (n=554)

Category	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Difference	P value
Husband	79.6	60.1	-19.5	.000
Wife	20.4	38.1	+17.7	.000
Both	00	1.8	+1.8	.002

Respondents' perception on food requirement for husband and wife including boy and girl also changed. Especially for amount of food to be provided to wife respondents changed their perception tremendously (58%) after the interventions (Table 10). Respondents showed inequity in their perception towards husband against wife and boy versus girl in the pre intervention but respondents changed their perception towards all members positively in the post intervention.

Who should be the decision maker in the choice of family planning? In reply respondents changed their perception and favored both husband and wife as a decision maker (Table 11). Thirty one percent more respondents from pre intervention perceived that both husband and wife should take decision together in the selection of family planning methods.

Table 10. Perception on the necessity of food of husband and wife or boy and girl (%)

Category	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	% Difference
Husband	81.6	89.2	7.6
Wife	25.1	83.2	58.1
Boy	74.5	82.8	8.3
Girl	52.2	81.2	29.0

Multiple answers considered

Table 11. Perception on the decision making of family planning of husband and wife by respondents (%) (n=554)

Decision maker	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	% Difference	P value
Husband	25.3	14.8	-10.5	.000
Wife	42.6	22.6	-20.0	.000
Both	31.9	62.6	+30.7	.000

Empowerment

Theoretically the term empowerment became popular in the field of development in mid 1980s. Gradually it started to integrate issues relating to women's emancipation and rights as form of empowering them. The process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power may be termed empowerment (Batliwala 1994:130). However, the centrality of the notion of this term is located in the dynamics of legitimate sharing, distribution and redistribution of power (ibid). Here in this study the term empowerment is understood on the basis of control over decision making on household goods, mobility, and participation in *shalish*.

Members of a household own different types of assets in family. The existing belief persists that man should have exclusive control over assets. Table 10 shows few types of assets and decision makers of those in 'buying', 'selling' and 'using sale proceeds'. It demonstrates the difference of the respondents' perception between pre-and post- interventions on who should decide selling, buying and using sale proceeds of those assets. Findings show that a modest change in perception of the respondents on buying and selling assets took place while the changes in perception on uses of sale proceeds remained almost unchanged after the intervention (Table 12). On the basis of assets the changes in perception of the respondents

varied. A little change (12%) in respondents' perception on both husband and wife should take decision in purchasing land was observed. But unpredictably a significant change (about 16%) in perception of the respondents on decision making in 'buying', 'selling' and 'using of the sale proceeds' by father-in-law was observed in the post intervention. On the other hand, the respondents' perception changed negatively on only husband or only wife should take decision in buying livestock and domestic goods.

Very small change (6%) in respondents' perception on who should take decision for selling land in family took place after the intervention. Similar change in perception of the respondents was observed in selling livestock and domestic goods compared to buying those assets. On the other hand the respondents' perception on both husband and wife should take decision of using sale proceeds of land in the post intervention changed negatively.

Table 12. Perception on the decision making of buying, selling and using sale proceeds of household assets by family members (%)

Decision on buying assets										
Assets	Pre-intervention					Post-intervention				
	H&W ¹	W ²	H ³	F/L ⁴	M/L ⁵	H&W ¹	W ²	H ³	F/L ⁴	M/L ⁵
Land	41	2	49	7	.5	53	3	21	23	00
Rickshaw	44	3	50	3	.1	62	2	19	17	00
Livestock	44	35	18	2	.3	57	19	10	13	2
D.Goods ⁶	34	55	9	1	.5	53	33	8	5	2
Decision on selling assets										
Land	51	.9	40	8	.5	57	1	18	23	.5
Rickshaw	54	1	42	3	.1	63	1	19	17	00
Livestock	54	21	23	3	.3	64	10	11	13	1
D. Goods	50	36	13	1	.4	62	20	12	5	2
Decision on using sale proceeds										
Land	60	1	32	6	.2	59	2	18	21	.2
Rickshaw	62	2	35	3	.2	62	2	20	16	00
Livestock	62	13	22	.2	.4	66	7	13	13	1
D. Goods	60	23	16	.9	.4	68	13	13	5	1

Multiple answers considered

1=Husband and wife, 2=wife, 3=Husband, 4= Father in law, 5= Mother in law, 6=Domestic goods

Participation of women in *shalish* is an indication of their empowerment. But in our society a well-established belief still prevails that only man should proceed over *shalish*. This perception of the respondents changed after the intervention. In the pre-intervention a small number of respondents believed that a woman should participate in *shalish* but after the intervention 54% of them changed their perception on this issue (Figure 4). While majority of the respondents (95.3%) in the pre-intervention period was of the opinion that women should not participate in *shalish* but their number reduced to 54 percentage points in the post-intervention period.

Mobility of women is also a part of empowerment. A traditional belief is prevalent in the society that women should be at home and do household work. She should not go alone anywhere and if necessary, she should take the permission from her husband or elderly member of the family. The interventions attempted to change the existing perceptions of the respondents on the mobility of a woman to certain places. But it had diminutive success in changing this perception of the respondents (Table 13). A modest change in perception of the respondents on mobility of a woman alone to selected places mentioned in the Table after the intervention but their perception remained unchanged regarding the permission to be taken to go those places. Table further shows that perception of the respondents on the need of

husband's permission to visit different places remained almost unchanged in the post-intervention period.

Figure 4. Change in perception of woman's participation in *shalish* (n=554)

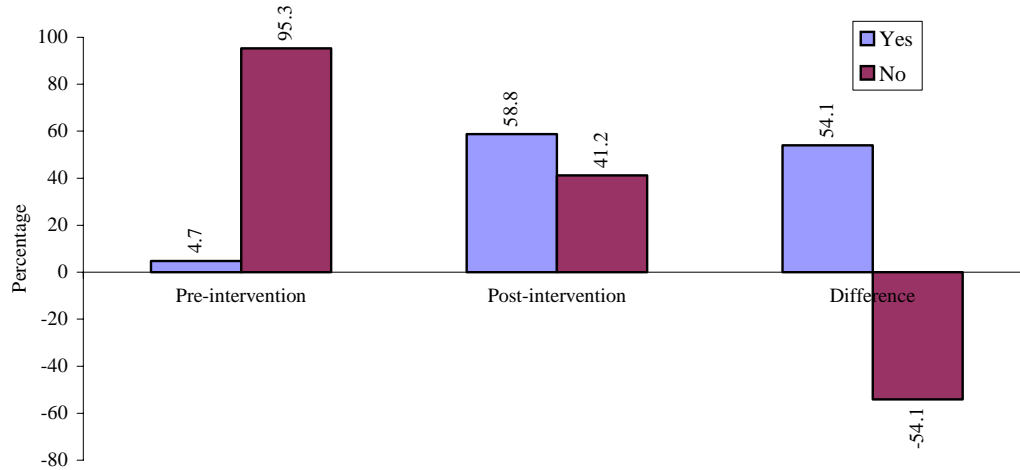


Table 13. Perception on the mobility of women outside household by respondents (%) (n=554)

Places	Pre-intervention			Post-intervention		
	Alone	Permission	Whose	Alone	Permission	Whose
	No	Yes	Permission Husband	No	Yes	Permission Husband
Father' home	98	100	90	69	98	82
Nearby town	98	100	97	69	98	88
Govt. office	96	100	96	66	99	91
Local bazar	98	99	96	65	96	84
Cinema hall	98	99	98	92	99	95
Hospital	93	99	97	59	96	90

Violence against women

Perception of the respondents in defining violence against women was explored in this study. The interventions considered some common types of violence such as beating, slang (colloquial speech), disgrace, mental torture, providing no food, prevent visiting father's home taken places in the village. Respondents' perception on these issues changed little in the post-intervention (Table 14). Their perception on 'beating', 'slang', 'mental torture' and 'providing no food to women' did not change much after the intervention. Rather respondents' perception changed negatively on 'disgrace' and 'prevent visiting father's home' in the post-intervention. It means that an insignificant number of respondents considered those as violence against women. The perception of man and woman on those issues was almost similar in the post-intervention.

Table 14. Perceived meaning of violence against women by sex (%)

Sex	Pre-intervention						Post-intervention					
	B ¹	S ²	D ³	MT ⁴	PF ⁵	NF ⁶	B ¹	S ²	D ³	MT ⁴	PF ⁵	NF ⁶
Man	97	87	54	41	72	45	100	90	27	46	65	21
Woman	96	86	52	44	82	51	98	90	29	55	70	29

Multiple answers considered

1=Beating, 2=Slang, 3=Disgrace, 4=Mental torture, 5=Providing no food, 6=Prevent visiting father's home

Marriage

Normally father and mother take decision on the girls' marriage. The opinion of a girl on their marriage is thought to be unimportant in our society. But the interventions managed to change the perception of the respondents modestly. Table 15 shows that a better change (34%), although not sufficient, in perception of respondents took place on the decision of girl's marriage by herself.

Table 15. Perception on the decision of girl's marriage by respondents (%) (n=554)

Decision maker	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Difference	P value
Daughter herself	6.5	40.6	+34.1	.000
Father	27.4	10.8	-16.6	.000
Mother	18.6	11.0	-7.6	ns
Father and mother	47.5	37.5	-10	.000

ns= not significant

On the other hand, the perception of respondents on the decision of girl's marriage by father and mother changed slightly after the intervention. The difference in perception of the respondents among daughter herself, father alone and both father and mother of girl's marriage was statistically significant.

ATTITUDE

Different people have different attitudes towards gender roles and gender relations. This section measures the changing status of the respondents' attitude on themes mentioned earlier related to gender roles and relations after the interventions. Respondents' attitude was measured through different approaches: firstly, the number of respondents whose score increased, unchanged and declined, and secondly the extent of difference in average attitude score of them. Besides, the attitude level of the respondents was also measured by categorizing them into three groups: less favourable, neutral, and more favourable attitudes towards the themes followed by the rationalization of the attitudes showed to support the survey findings.

Table 16. Change in attitude score of different themes of respondents in post- intervention (n=554) (%)

Themes	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased
General attitude towards man and woman	87.7	6.1	6.1
Discrimination	71.7	13.7	14.6
Empowerment	78.7	7.6	13.7
Violence against women	71.8	12.6	15.5
Marriage	69.9	15.2	15.0

Results show that majority of the respondents' attitude score increased, meaning that they showed positive attitudes towards the themes while a modest number of respondents' score declined, meaning that they showed negative attitudes in the post-intervention (Table 16). Specifically an overwhelming number of respondents' score increased towards man and woman in general. On the other, hand almost similar percentage of respondents' attitude score on discrimination, violence against women and marriage declined. The attitude score of almost similar percentage of the respondents towards violence against women, discrimination and marriage remained unchanged in post-intervention.

On the other hand, in the case of measuring the level of the change in attitude scores of the respondents findings show that a significant increase of respondents' average attitude score in different themes observed from pre-to post-interventions (Figure 5). The highest average

score increased in general attitudes towards man and woman. On the other hand, a little increase of average attitude scores was noted in discrimination and marriage related issues.

The magnitude of the increased and decreased in attitude score of respondents was further calculated. Table 17 shows that on an average 7 of the respondents' attitude score increased towards man and woman in general and empowerment. On the other hand, almost similar average score of the respondents declined in all themes.

Figure 5. Mean attitude score of the respondents on themes between pre and post intervention

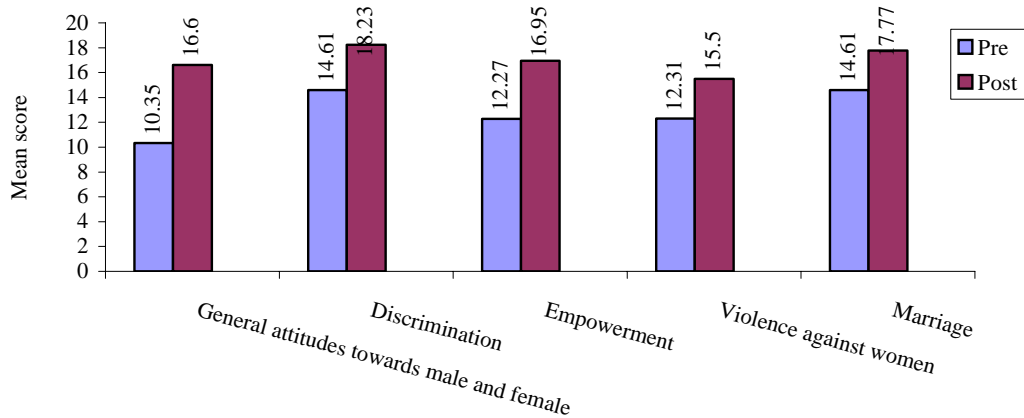
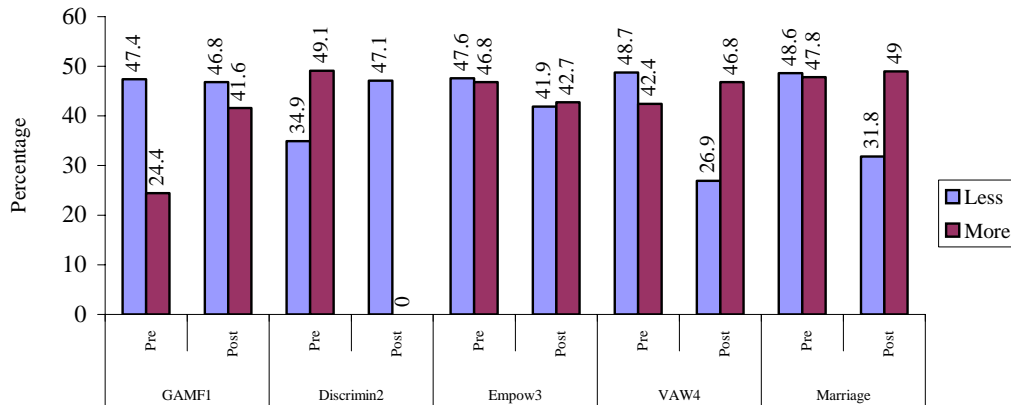


Table 17. The extent of changes in average attitude score of the respondents in different themes (n=554)

Themes	Average score increased	Average score declined
General attitudes towards man and woman	7.33	3.00
Discrimination	5.75	3.43
Empowerment	6.61	3.80
Violence against women	5.21	3.53
Marriage related issues	5.35	3.91

Again using median of respondents' attitude scores gained as standard the respondents were categorized into different groups (Figure 6). It means that the respondents who got less than median score belonged to first group i.e., showing less favourable attitudes towards themes while respondents getting the median score belonged the group of showing neutral attitudes. Finally, those who scored more than median belonged to the group showing more favourable attitudes towards the themes. Figure 6 shows that a notable increase (18%) in the number of respondents with more favourable attitudes towards man and woman in general was observed in the post-intervention while there was no change in less favourable attitudes between pre and post interventions with regard to this theme. It is also further noted that 12% of the respondents showed neutral attitude towards this theme in the post intervention.

Figure 6. Change in attitude level of the respondents on themes from pre-to post-interventions



1= General attitudes towards man and woman, 2= Discrimination, 3= Empowerment, 4= Violence against women

The attitude of the respondents towards discrimination changed remarkably. A small number (12%) of the respondents showed less favourable attitudes towards discrimination while no respondent showed more favourable attitudes at the end of the intervention. More than 50% of the respondents showed neither less nor more favourable attitudes towards discrimination. A minor decrease of number of the respondents (6%) with more favourable attitudes towards empowerment took place.

On the other hand, a better increase of the respondents (16%) showing less favourable attitude took place in the case of violence against women from pre-to post-intervention. A modest increase (5%) of the respondents with more favourable attitude towards violence against women was observed. A similar type of change took place in attitude towards marriage-related problems.

Attitudinal score of the respondents were regressed on different themes to determine the increase in score with the same set of independent variables used in Table 18. The outcome variable over here is increased attitude score. Table 18 shows that woman's attitude score on discrimination (OR 1.7, 95% CI), violence against women (OR 1.7, 95% CI) and marriage (OR 1.5, 95% CI) increased two times more than man. But the respondents involving with non-farm activities (business and other occupations) increased attitude scores on violence against women lesser than farmer and the attitude score of Hindus and Buddhists on discrimination increased lesser than Muslims. Similarly non-poor respondents' attitude score on all the themes increased lesser than poor. With the increase of age and years of schooling of the respondents the attitude score on general attitudes towards man and woman and marriage increased respectively.

Table 18. Odds ratio of increased attitude score of the respondents on themes by selected variables

Variables		General attitudes towards man and woman		Discrimination		Empowerment		Violence against women		Marriage	
		Odd Ratio	95% CI	Odd Ratio	95% CI	Odd Ratio	95% CI	Odd Ratio	95% CI	Odd Ratio	95% CI
Sex	Man	1	.88-2.7	1	1.2-2.6	1	.56-5.9	1	1.2-2.7	1	.99-2.3
	Woman	1.5		1.7**		1.8		1.7***		1.5*	
Occupation	Agriculture	1	.18-1.0	1	.32-1.1	1	.20-18.3	1	.28-.95	1	.31-1.1
	Non-agriculture	.44		.59		1.9		.52*		.57	
Age (In years)		1*	1.0-4.7	1	.61-1.6	1	.44-.09	1	.85-2.3	1	.76-1.9
NGO membership	Yes	1	.81-2.4	1	.86-1.9	1	.15-1.1	1	.96-2.2	1	1.2-2.7
	No	1.3		1.3		.40		1.4		1.8**	
Religion	Muslim	1	.47-4.6	1	.12-.58	1	.43-11.3	1	.54-2.8	1	.30-1.3
	Other	1.4		.26***		2.2		1.2		.64	
Economic Status	Poor	1	.28-.88	1	.34-.79	1	.55-4.7	1	.32-.73	1	.44-1.0
	Non-poor	.49**		.52***		1.6		.48***		.66*	
Marital Status	Married	1	.03-2.4	1	.19-1.3	1	.00-1.4	1	.44-2.7	1	.28-1.8
Status	Unmarried	.30		.52		1.33		1.1		.71	
Education (Continuous)		1	.87-1.0	1	.90-1.0	1	.80-1.1	1	.90-1.0	1***	.87-.98

*P<.05, **P<.01, ***P<.001

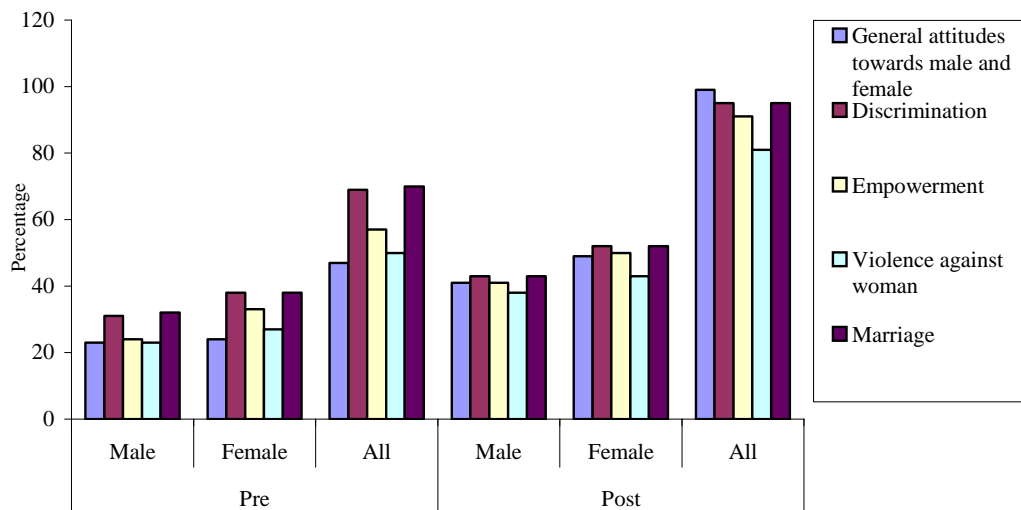
RATIONALIZATION OF THE RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDES REFLECTED

As a whole the percentage of the respondents in expressing their positive attitudes towards the themes increased from pre-to post-interventions (Figure 7). A significant number of respondents showed more positive attitude towards man and woman in general in the post-intervention. Almost similar type of increasing trend of respondents' positive attitude towards all themes was observed from pre to post interventions. Figure 7 also shows that there was difference of attitudes reflected between man and woman. Woman showed more positive attitudes than man both in pre-and post-interventions. The percentage of woman respondents reflecting attitudes on discrimination and marriage in pre-intervention was almost same and in the post-intervention their change was also identical. Respondents rationalized those attitudes reflected towards man and woman in general, discrimination, empowerment, violence against women and marriage is given below.

General attitudes towards man and woman

The attitude towards man and woman was denoted by society's norms, and values on division of labour in family and equality of man and woman. The traditional belief of man's domination over woman is produced and recognized by the society to gain extra advantages and besides, as an excuse of religion man exerted force on woman. Respondents who had the ingrained attitudes towards man and woman rationalized that man is superior to woman because man is more intelligent and takes decision in important matter. Besides, woman is physically weaker than man. A respondent (man) said, "According to Islam a man is equal to two women." Another respondent (woman) said, "The creator Himself creates woman as weaker being." Against those arguments the respondents commented that women should not be treated unequally because they have equal rights in every sphere of life. Moreover, women could contribute equally in income, help to build society, participate in leadership activities. "There is no law that man is superior to woman", a respondent said.

Figure 7. Attitude of male and female on themes reflected



There was almost embedded attitudes of the respondents towards the division of labour in the family including society that woman should do some assigned work and same as for man. If a man does a job that usually woman does at home he would be severely disparaged. One said, "The man who does woman's work will be ram/sheep (disgraceful)." On the contrary respondents also challenged those entrenched beliefs. They thought that if a man helped his

wife the job would be easier, and quicker. This would increase income, peace in the family, love, and would save time and thus would remove gender discrimination. Supporting this a respondent said, “Songsar sukker hoy ramonir gune, gunban poti thake jar ghare (A qualified wife can bring happiness for the family if a good husband is with her).”

Discrimination

There is an existing norm in the family that as the boy will be future bread earner he is given more priority in access to education, nutrition and so on than a girl. Against this attitude the respondents argued that as a child parents should not discriminate them. This might create several problems such as girl could be spoiled; she might disrespect parents and remain uneducated. Moreover, a girl could do job and take care of parents after education. A respondent said, “If a mother is educated her children will be educated and she will get an educated husband.” In terms of nutrition both boy and girl needed equal amount of nutrition otherwise this might hinder to grow effectively of a girl’s brain.

Empowerment

The existing belief of people shows that usually as man is the only earner of the family he will be decision maker for everything in the family. If this norm is violated there will have quarrel and thus brings upheaval in family. Few respondents held this attitude. But most of the respondents had the attitudes that both husband and wife must have equal responsibilities in the family. Besides, woman could alone also take the responsibility of the family. So her opinion in decision making of household matter should be equally heard. This would increase better relationship between husband and wife and bring economic improvement of the family. On the other hand joint ownership of the household assets reduced the violence against women and this would provide her security.

The respondents who showed negative attitudes towards participation of women in *shalish* argued that if a woman participated in *shalish* man’s prestige might go down and those who participate would be treated as bad woman. One respondent said, “Woman is prohibited to participate in *shalish* because they create chaos in that.” But the disagreement of such attitude of respondents was also found regarding this that women should participate in *shalish* for their own interest such as to get a real justice. Moreover, in few cases they had better knowledge to do *shalish*.

There is a traditional norm that mobility of woman without her husband is strongly discouraged. Few respondents agreed with this attitude. A respondent said, “After marriage a girl should sacrifice her life to give services to her husband and family members. She should follow husband whatever he orders to do.” But most of the respondents disagreed with this attitude. They thought that, if necessary, wife should go alone. It was her human right. If not allowed family peace would be destroyed and broken down the relationship of husband and wife.

Violence against women

Beating women is a very common violence in our society. Most of the respondents had positive attitudes regarding this and said that beating wife did not bring solution of the problem. There were many consequences of beating wife such as relationship of husband and wife might be broken; it might bring about economic loss; and even wife might commit suicide. A respondent said, “Beating wife is similar to beating cat.”

On the other hand, respondents had both positive and negative attitude towards giving and taking dowry. The respondents who supported dowry argued that dowry could help a

husband to run a business. It might increase the status of wife in father in law's home while the respondents who disagreed rationalized that wife's father might run into debt to manage dowry money. Giving dowry might encourage more dowries. It might bring about other consequences like if husband beat for dowry wife might commit suicide. A respondent said, "Giving dowry means that in broad day light things are robbed."

Marriage

Respondents had different attitudes towards girl's age of marriage, and opinion of marriage. The respondents who had negative attitudes towards the late marriage of a girl argued that girl should be married as early as possible otherwise they might make illicit sexual relationship with any boy in the community or run away involving love affairs with a boy. The young boys might annoy the girl on the way of her school and pass bad comments. Besides respondents argued that if age was over it would be difficult to get her married and heavy amount of dowry might have to be paid. If the girl was married quickly parents might get rid of tension.

On the other hand, respondents disagreed with the attitudes saying that early marriage might cause health problems of a girl; even she might die during her first issue. Besides, child marriage is illegal in our country. A respondent commented, "Life of a girl is more valuable than status." Girl could contribute to parents as well as husband's family if they were educated. Another respondent said, "If jackfruit is ripe the tree does not feel burden."

Opinion of a girl is important for her marriage. Respondents showed very positive attitudes towards this statement. They recognized that if marriage took place without the consent of a girl she would not behave well with husband and in the long run relationship might be broken down. There might have bad consequences if girls' opinion is ignored. Girl might commit suicide incidentally or she could come back to her father's home that would be a burden for parents. Family prestige might go down. A respondent said, "In Islam girl's opinion is necessary to get married." Another said, "To get a girl married by force is a kind of violence against her."

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study clearly revealed that the knowledge of the respondents increased profoundly and their attitudes of them changed remarkably. But change in perception of the respondents on certain issues still was not sufficient. Different factors such as traditional norms, values, and customs of the society and lack of all kinds of opportunities of women, and lack of proper training to the respondents might have considered as impediment to change the perception and attitude. Because of these factors GQAL programme most likely was unable to change the perception on division of work for man and woman in the family, decision making on the household assets, participation of women in social activities especially in *shalish*, violence against women as expected. It was also noticed that change in knowledge, perception and attitude of man did not take place much more compared to woman. It was probably because man did not have much time to participate in *Uthan baithak*. They usually had to go outside for work.

Findings also shows that 77% of the respondents' knowledge on 'nutrition', 53% on 'inheritance law of property' and 59% of the total respondents on 'correct divorce law' sustained in pre-and post-interventions. Small number of respondents (13%) had knowledge on 'punishment of taking and giving dowry' and 5% had on 'legal age of marriage of man' in pre-intervention, and this sustained in the post-intervention as well.

Although GQAL programme succeeded in improving the attitude of the respondents a significant number of the respondents still had neutral attitudes towards discrimination, violence against women, and marriage. Man showed relatively less positive attitudes towards gender roles and relations compared to woman. Few showed negative attitudes in the excuse of breaking purdah (women veil) and losing izzat (honor) and man's power. They blamed the dominant traditional cultures for shaping such type of attitudes.

However, in final comments I would say that the qualitative issues such as perception, attitudes of a human being to be changed takes much more longer time. But within a very short period of interventions the velocity of change in knowledge, perception and attitudes of the respondents towards gender roles and relations was incredible. Hopefully those changes would bring positive impact in respondent's behaviour even though the programme need to adopt certain intensive initiatives to triumph over the existing difficulties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to overcome the deficiency of the interventions mentioned above following few steps may be undertaken by the GQAL programme:

1. For sustainable achievement of GQAL the programme need to be continued until the desired changes take place;
2. If that is not possible for financial limitations the interventions on all issues may be continued through other programmes like Polli Shamaj, Human Rights Legal Services, Daridra Bimochon Committee, Popular theatre etc.;
3. Both man and woman are very important for this programme. So, participation of men along with women should be ensured effectively; and
4. Finally, a study on the same households may be conducted to see whether they have changed their behaviour.

Appendix 1. Statements

General perception towards man and woman

1. Society has created the man dominance over woman.
2. The job of women is to produce children and take care of them; men should earn money.
3. Women always have to be soft and patient; they will not protest. And men will be strong. They can say and do whatever they want.
4. Men are better than women, so they can never be equal.
5. As at present women are working outside home, so men should also help out in household chores like washing clothes, cooking appliances, etc.

Gender discrimination

1. Zarina and Jalil are brother and sister. When Jalil grows up, he will take the responsibility of the family. So Jalil should be treated better than Zarina.
2. Men and women should have equal amount of food.
3. Shafiq and Rahela are brother and sister. Both of them go to school. They are really poor. So their father should think about higher education only for Shafiq.
4. Both husband and wife should have opinion regarding birth control.
5. Rahim and Karimon work in the field. Because Karimon works less, she should be given fewer wages.

Empowerment

1. Since husband is the household head, he should run the family.
2. For selling properties, the husband's decision is final.
3. Both men and women work for making and maintaining properties. So both should have equal ownership.
4. Only men should participate and talk in *shalish*, not women.
5. The father of one woman lives in another village. Suddenly he becomes sick. In the meantime, the woman's husband or other senior relative are not in the house. In this situation, the woman should go to see his father with taking anyone's permission.

Violence against women

1. If there are needs in the family, it is natural for the husband to be angry. In this situation, its normal if the husband beats his wife.
2. Women belong to mother's descent, so they should not be beaten.
3. Say dowry was supposed to be given during marriage. Some dowry was paid after the marriage. So it is natural for the parents, relatives, to put pressure on the bride for the rest of the dowry.
4. Some people think that women's character may be at risk if they are not strictly controlled (beaten, not allowed to go outside, etc)
5. Even if the husband does not allow the wife to go her parents home forcibly, still the wife should obey the husband.

Marriage

1. Some say it has become so difficult to keep chastity of women that they should be married off at age of 14-15.

2. If girls do not get married quickly they become a burden of the family.
3. Men should take first wife's permission before marrying second time.
4. The status of wife is increased if dowry is given.
5. A father always wants the best for his daughter. So, he can force his daughter to get married without her consent.

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