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**SUSTAINABILITY FAILURE OF  
DONOR-SUPPORTED ORGANISATIONAL  
REFORMS IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION**

**A Bangladesh Case Study**

**Md. Mofakkarul Islam**

**2007**

# **Sustainability Failure of Donor-Supported Organisational Reforms in Agricultural Extension: A Bangladesh Case Study**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of

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## **Abstract**

For several decades, international donor agencies have provided considerable support for organisational reforms within the agricultural extension system in Bangladesh. This support has been provided through a series of short-term projects that have experimented with a variety of novel extension systems. These have ranged from the centralised training and visit model to decentralised sub-district based systems to an even more decentralised farmer-led extension system. They have also ranged from an extension system operated by a single government agency to systems run by a partnership between government and non-government organisations. The experimentation has also involved a country-wide or large-scale system to local or small-scale systems. Furthermore, the reforms have varied from a single organisation providing only advisory services to farmers to a constellation of organisations providing a combination of services. However, in virtually every case, when donor support was removed at the completion of a project, the extension reform was found to be unsustainable post-project. Despite the continued failure of donor sponsored extension reforms in Bangladesh, little is formally known as to why such reforms have been unsustainable. Such knowledge is critical if donor-assisted extension reforms in Bangladesh are to be effective and sustainable. Therefore, the overall aim of this study was to determine the reasons why a donor-supported extension reform becomes unsustainable in Bangladesh.

From a review of literature, a conceptual framework was developed outlining the conditions/factors under which organisational systems or innovations supported through donor projects do, or do not, become sustainable. Using a qualitative single case study approach, a poorly sustained extension reform supported through a donor project was investigated in depth in Bangladesh. From this investigation, a model that explains the non-sustainability of a donor supported extension reform in Bangladesh was developed.

Several theoretically important findings were identified in this study. The extension reform was poorly sustained because the principles underlying the reform lacked cultural legitimacy. This problem was compounded due to the presence of perverse institutional forces in the operational context, and because the extension agencies concerned lacked adequate human and financial resources. The sustainability of the extension reform was also compromised because of poor implementation performance, complex design, parallel modes of project implementation, a failure to develop recipient ownership, and poor capacity to learn and adapt the reform. The

mechanisms by which these factors influenced the non-sustainability of the reform are described in detail.

The results from this study suggest that the sustainability of donor-supported extension reforms cannot be achieved within the short time frame set out in most projects. Nor can such changes be sustainable unless they are aligned with the norms, values and traditions of extension agencies and rural people. In particular, sustainability will continue to be a serious challenge unless the perverse institutional incentives confronted by extension agencies and rural people are minimised. The donors concerned in Bangladesh should support a locally-owned and single reform idea rather than undertaking haphazard projects with varied ideas, improve inter-donor coordination and come up with a coordinated decision of not providing monetary incentives to extension agencies and rural people, support extension reforms according to the felt needs of recipients, and stop providing aid in the event of repeated failures.

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## Dedication

***This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Dr Almas Ara Gheyas.  
Without her sacrifice, constant encouragement and support,  
this work would not have been completed.***



## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>List of Boxes .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>List of Acronyms .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	 <b>1</b>
1.1 Research background	1
1.2 Statement of the research problem and aim and objectives of the research	10
1.3 Identity of the researcher	12
1.4 Structure of the thesis	14
 <b>CHAPTER 2: SUSTAINABILITY OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS: A LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	 <b>16</b>
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 Theoretical frameworks: A review	16
2.2.1 Institutionalism	17
2.2.1.1 Rational choice institutionalism and the IAD framework	18
2.2.1.2 Sociological institutionalism and the “three pillars of institutions” framework	25
2.2.2 The SCOPE framework	28
2.2.3 Comparison among the frameworks	34
2.3 Descriptive literature	37
2.3.1 Institutional contexts	38
2.3.2 Material resources	44
2.3.3 Project implementation performance	45
2.3.4 Organisational design and strategy	50
2.3.4.1 Organisational complexity	50
2.3.4.2 Integrated vs. parallel mode of project implementation	51
2.3.4.3 Stakeholder participation and ownership	53
2.3.4.4 Learning process	64
2.4 Outcome of the literature review: the conceptual framework	69
2.5 Conclusion	72

<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD</b>	<b>73</b>
3.1 Introduction	73
3.2 Research strategy	73
3.3 Characteristics of a case study	74
3.4 Study design: an overview	75
3.4.1 The case and the units of analysis	77
3.4.1.1 The FLE model: the reform principles	78
3.4.1.2 Organisational framework	80
3.4.1.3 Key events in the FLE project cycle and timeline	82
3.4.1.4 General profiles of the project implementation sites, rural communities and implementing agencies	83
3.4.2 Logic for selecting the FLE case	88
3.4.3 Data collection	90
3.4.3.1 Interviews	91
3.4.3.2 Focus group discussions (FGDs)	94
3.4.3.3 Document analysis	98
3.4.3.4 Personal observations	99
3.4.4 Data analysis	99
3.4.4.1 Describing	101
3.4.4.2 Classifying	101
3.4.4.3 Connecting	102
3.4.4.4 Subsequent analysis	103
3.4.4.5 Comparison with the existing literature	104
3.5 Ensuring quality of the research	104
3.5.1 Validity	104
3.5.2 Reliability	109
3.6 Summary	112
 <b>CHAPTER 4: CONTEXTUAL FACTORS</b>	 <b>113</b>
4.1 Introduction	113
4.2 Contextual factors and FLE non-sustainability: the DAE perspective	114
4.2.1 Institutional legitimacy of the FLE reforms	114
4.2.2 Institutional conditions, perverse incentives, and support for FLE	123
4.2.3 Material resources	132
4.3 Contextual factors and FLE non-sustainability: the NGO perspective	134
4.3.1 Institutional legitimacy of the FLE reforms	134
4.3.2 Institutional conditions, perverse incentives, and support for FLE	141

4.3.3 Material resources	143
4.4 Contextual factors and FLE non-sustainability: the rural community perspective	145
4.4.1 Community culture and FLE legitimacy	146
4.4.2 Community culture, perverse incentives and FLE non-sustainability	153
4.4.2.1 The legacy of dole-out	153
4.4.2.2 The legacy of perverse loan culture	154
4.5 Conclusion	157
<b>CHAPTER 5: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PERFORMANCE</b>	<b>159</b>
5.1 Introduction	159
5.2 Expected outputs and outcomes of the FLE project	159
5.3 Project implementation performance: perspectives of the implementing agencies	162
5.4 Project implementation performance: perspective of rural people	170
5.5 Conclusion	177
<b>CHAPTER 6: ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN AND STRATEGIES</b>	<b>179</b>
6.1 Introduction	179
6.2 Organisational complexity	179
6.2.1 Savings-credit tasks	181
6.2.2 Combination of technology transfer and micro-credit	182
6.2.3 Involvement of multiple agencies	183
6.3 Integrated versus parallel project implementation	184
6.3.1 Creation of new project implementation committees	185
6.3.2 Use of privileges in project implementation	186
6.3.3 Novel tasks or procedures	186
6.4 Stakeholder participation and ownership	188
6.4.1 Participation and ownership of implementing agencies	188
6.4.1.1 Initiation of the project or reform	188
6.4.1.2 Resource and cost-sharing	190
6.4.1.3 Project negotiation, power and control	191
6.4.2 Participation and ownership of rural people	199
6.4.2.1 Project initiation or enunciation of request	200
6.4.2.2 Power and control over project implementation processes and resources	201
6.5 Learning process	207

6.5.1 Monitoring	207
6.5.2 Implementation reviews and evaluation	211
6.5.3 Workshops and review meetings	215
6.6 Conclusion	221
<b>CHAPTER 7: COMPARISON OF THE RESULTS WITH THE LITERATURE AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>223</b>
7.1 Introduction	223
7.2 Classification of the case	223
7.3 Factors explaining FLE non-sustainability	225
7.4 Contextual factors	225
7.4.1 Institutional legitimacy of the FLE reforms	226
7.4.2 Institutional conditions, perverse incentives, and FLE	233
7.4.3 Material resources	237
7.5 Project implementation performance	238
7.6 Organisational design and strategies	242
7.6.1 Organisational complexity	243
7.6.2 Integrated versus parallel mode of implementation	247
7.6.2.1 New or parallel implementation structures	247
7.6.2.2 Use of privileges in project implementation	249
7.6.2.3 Parallel tasks	250
7.6.3 Stakeholder participation and ownership	251
7.6.3.1 Participation and ownership of the implementing agencies	251
7.6.3.2 Participation and ownership of rural people	259
7.6.4 Learning process	264
7.7 Conclusion	274
<b>CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>275</b>
8.1 Introduction	275
8.2 Research conclusions	276
8.3 Contribution of the study and implications	283
8.4 Evaluation of the methodology	289
8.5 Directions for further research	294
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: Data Collection Guide</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>A-1: Data Collection Guide for the Extension Agencies</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>A-2: Data Collection Guide for Rural People</b>	<b>313</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1.1	Key organisational reforms promoted by the Extension and Research Projects (ERPs) in Bangladesh under the Training and Visit (T&V) system	3
Table 1.2	Farm size structure and rural poverty in Bangladesh	5
Table 1.3	Key organisational reforms introduced through the Agricultural Support Services Project (ASSP) in Bangladesh	7
Table 1.4	Extension models introduced through the Agricultural Services Innovation and Reform Project (ASIRP) in Bangladesh	9
Table 2.1	Key analytical constructs in the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework	19
Table 2.2	Three pillars of institutions	27
Table 2.3	Comparison among the IAD, the three-pillar and the SCOPE frameworks	35
Table 2.4	A typology of beneficiary participation in rural development projects and programmes	59
Table 2.5	Salient contrasting features between a blueprint and a learning process approach in the management of development organisations	66
Table 3.1	Criteria to choose research strategy in social sciences	74
Table 3.2	Key implementation events and timeline in the ASIRP-FLE project	83
Table 3.3	List of the major government extension and rural development service providers in the FLE project sites	86
Table 3.4	Distribution of the interviewees according to their position in the case study project	93
Table 3.5	Criteria used in selecting village groups for FGDs	96
Table 3.6	Documents analysed in the case study and the information sought	98
Table 3.7	Techniques advocated in the literature to ensure face and construct validity of qualitative research and those applied in this case study	105
Table 3.8	Important threats to internal validity of qualitative research, tactics advocated in the literature to minimize threats, and tactics applied in this study	106
Table 3.9	Important threats to external validity, tactics advocated in the literature to minimise those threats, and tactics used in this study	108
Table 3.10	Tactics advocated in the literature to minimise threats to reliability in qualitative research and tactics applied in this study	110
Table 4.1	Sources and trend of funding in the DAE	132
Table 4.2	Sources of funding of the FLE-NGO	144
Table 5.1	Outputs and outcomes of FLE project as expected by stakeholders	160
Table 6.1	Beneficiary participation in the FLE project and its consequences	200

Table 6.2	Learning through the evaluation processes in the case study project	214
Table 6.2	Problems identified through workshops and review meetings and actions taken to correct errors	217
Table 7.1	Theoretically important characteristics of the case study	224

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1	The Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework	22
Figure 2.2	System strategies for translating capacity into performance	33
Figure 3.1	Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies	75
Figure 3.2	Simplified organisational framework of the FLE project	81
Figure 3.3	Qualitative data analysis as a circular process	100
Figure 4.1	Lack of institutional legitimacy of the FLE from DAE perspective and its sources	115
Figure 4.2	Dysfunctional institutional conditions, perverse incentives and their effect on DAE's support for FLE	126
Figure 4.3	Lack of institutional legitimacy of the FLE to the NGO and its sources	138
Figure 4.4	Community institutions affecting the legitimacy of the FLE to the rural people	147
Figure 4.5	Vicious cycle of perverse borrowing habit or loan culture among the poor villagers	156
Figure 5.1	Perspectives of the implementing agencies about the performance of the FLE groups, FPs and leaders and its impact on their willingness to continue supporting the groups	163
Figure 5.2	Perspective of group members about the outputs and/or outcome of FLE project and its effect on group performance and sustainability	172
Figure 6.1	Sources of complexity in FLE design and its effect on system performance and sustainability	180

## List of Boxes

Box 3.1	Socio-economic profiles of the FLE communities: some highlights	85
Box 5.1	Story of an FLE group widely perceived as "successful" by the DAE and the NGO stakeholders	168
Box 5.2	Story of a FP widely perceived as "successful" by the DAE and the NGO stakeholders	169
Box 5.3	Poor implementation performance of the FLE project: Conflicts in the male groups	175
Box 6.1	Consequences of cost and resource-sharing in the FLE project	205

## List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
AAO	Additional Agricultural Officer
ADAE	Additional Director of Agricultural Extension
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEO	Agricultural Extension Officer
ASA	Association for Social Advancement
ASSP	Agricultural Support Services Project
ASIRP	Agricultural Services Innovation and Reform Project
ATC	Agricultural Technical Committee
ATI	Agricultural Training Institute
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BADC	Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation
BARI	Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BRDB	Bangladesh Rural Development Board
BRII	Bangladesh Rice Research Institute
BS	Block Supervisor
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDB	Cotton Development Board
CF	Contact Farmer
CPR	Common Pool Resource
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DAEPC	District Agricultural Extension Planning Committee
DDAE	Deputy Director of Agricultural Extension
DFID	Department For International Development
DG	Director General
DLS	Department of Livestock Services
DOF	Department Of Fisheries
DPIF	District Partnership Initiative Fund
ERP	Extension and Research Project
ESC	Extension Service Centre
ESP	Extension Service Provider
FD	Forest Department
FFS	Farmer Field School
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FINA	Farmer Information Needs Assessment

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
FLE	Farmer Led Extension
FP	Farmer Promoter
FSW	Field Services Wing
GB	Grameen Bank
GO	Government Organisation
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HYV	High Yielding Variety
IAD	Institutional Analysis and Development
ICLARM	International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management
ICM	Integrated Coastal Management
IEA	Integrated Extension Approach
IGA	Income Generation Activities
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
LAFT	Local Area Facilitation Team
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAEP	New Agricultural Extension Policy
NCT	National Coordination Team
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIA	National Irrigation Administration
NPICC	National Policy Implementation Coordination Committee
PC	Problem Census
PD	Project Director
PIF	Partnership Initiative Fund
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RT	Resource Team
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SCOPE	Systems, Contingency and Political Economy theories
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
TAECC	<i>Thana</i> Agricultural Extension Coordination Committee
T&V	Training and Visit
TK	Taka
UAECC	<i>Upazilla</i> Agricultural Extension Coordination Committee
UAO	<i>Upazilla</i> Agricultural Officer
UPIF	<i>Upazilla</i> Partnership Initiative Fund