SOCIAL
LABS

A Practitioner's Handbook To Community- Driven Solutions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CB	Caritas Bangladesh
CDC	Community Development Committee
DOL	Department of Labour
DPH	Department of Public Health
DWA	Department of Woman Affairs
DYD	Department of Youth Development
DSS	Department of Social Services
RCC	Rajshahi City Corporation
KCC	Khulna City Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UMIMCC	Urban Management of Internal Migration due to Climate Change
UMML	Urban Management of Migration and Livelihoods

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, climate change is considered one of the greatest future risks for the sustainable development of the country. Forty (40) out of sixty four (64) districts are affected by the impacts of climate change. It is estimated that six million people have already migrated as a direct result of weather and climate change. The increasing number of people forced to move to other regions within the country could jeopardise social stability in the long term.

Migration is one of the key strategies used by poor and vulnerable households in Bangladesh to adapt to changing living conditions.

However, internal migration can reinforce acute vulnerability and further exacerbate conflicts if migrants receive little public support and are forced to live in urban slums with inadequate infrastructure and without access to basic services and income opportunities. While there are many reasons behind a decision to migrate, climate and weather-related stress factors can play a leading role in the decision-making process for migration.

Currently, there are not many interventions in place in Bangladesh that specifically aim to improve the livelihoods of internally displaced climate migrants. Against this background, the "Urban Management of Internal Migration due to Climate Change" (UMIMCC)/ "Urban Management of Migration and Livelihood" (UMML) project has taken the initiative to improve the living conditions of climate migrants and urban vulnerable poor in informal settlements in selected cities of Bangladesh. The political partner is the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW). The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is funding the project with 5.5 Million. EUR and the European Union (EU) is contributing 11 Million. EUR in the period from 2018 to 2023. Social labs are a key initiative of the project to promote community-driven solutions in informal settlements and thus mobilise local ideas, resources and knowledge to contribute to improving living conditions in informal settlements.

How should the Social Lab Practitioner's Handbook be used?

The Social Lab Practitioner's Handbook is a comprehensive guide to the effective preparation, implementation, and sustainable management of the acclaimed community Social Labs.

It is structured into three chapters: Firstly, the introductory chapter presents the concept of community empowerment and how Social Labs contribute to it.

Secondly, the instructive chapter provides step-by-step directions towards the creation and maintenance of Social Labs, aided by spotlight boxes that will summarise key information for the reader.

Thirdly, the success story chapter provides examples from the field illustrating how Social Labs have already contributed to community-driven solutions in informal settlements so called "slums" in Bangladesh. Info boxes summarise the overall positive impacts, which the Social Labs have achieved in the context of the respective success story.

And fourthly, the concluding chapter proposes a set key learnings and recommendations derived from the experiences of the UMIMCC/UMML project.

Furthermore, the Handbook features a complementary annexure section at the bottom of the guide, which contains a series of exclusive templates that may be adjusted according to the specific needs of the reader's own context and used to replicate the Social Lab Method (SLM).

Note:

The Handbook will refer to country-specific information, including specific national and local actors, required documents, or local challenges that may not correspond to other contexts. The proactive reader is encouraged to adapt the contents of this guide to their own country or community context to allow for effective replication of the SLM.

CHAPTER 1

The Role of Social Labs for Community Empowerment

1.1 What is Community Empowerment?

Community empowerment is considered a fundamental approach to promoting social justice, reducing inequalities, and achieving sustainable development goals. It aims to shift the balance of power and decision-making from external actors to the people directly affected by the policies and initiatives, ultimately enhancing their quality of life and well-being. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) strongly calls for inclusive and participatory decision-making at all levels (SDG 16) and recognises the role of empowered communities in building resilient and sustainable urban areas (SDG 11).

1.2 What is a Social Lab?

Social Labs are an innovative solution proposed to contribute to community empowerment by providing a collaborative and co-creating approach to addressing complex social challenges. They act as exchange platforms, where local key stakeholders come together to tackle the major challenges of a community by developing participatory plans for effective solutions. These plans are then implemented through local government institutions, INGOs, NGOs, private institutions, and individual partner support. Social Labs are specifically convened to address the complex socio-economic challenges faced by residents of informal settlements in urban areas of Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, urbanisation has been on a constant rise resulting in the overcrowding of informal urban settlements that lack access to sufficient basic facilities, such as clean drinking water or electricity. The disadvantaged communities living in these settlements face poor living conditions and daily challenges to access adequate infrastructure and basic social services. Most of them lack capacities and resources to identify and articulate the root causes to their challenges, let alone suitable solutions or to mobilise collectively for the purpose of improving their living conditions.

Against this backdrop, the Urban Management of Internal Migration due to Climate Change (UMIMCC) /Urban Management of Migration and Livelihoods (UMML) project found that without the involvement of different service providers and other stakeholders (e.g. different government departments, NGOs or the private sector), communities receive comparatively little support to solve their most pressing challenges.

The SLM was chosen to be the right apporach to minimise the identified gap. A Social Lab is formed by a core team that involves representatives of the concerned informal settlement community, stakeholders from different departments of local government agencies, INGOs/NGOs working in the specific areas, private organisations,

journalists, and influential individuals, and finally community volunteers that support the process. The core team and community volunteer team members meet periodically to first identify and discuss the communities' current problems. Following that they prioritise the most pressing of these problems and identify solutions. Finally, the Social Lab participants develop a strategic plan that is subsequently submitted in the form of a proposal to related GOs, INGOs, NGOs or individuals. Ideally these actors commit to implement the plan and help resolve the identified problems.

The community volunteers of the Social Labs also conduct advocacy & networking activities to increase visibility and awareness amongst residents and relevant agencies on pressing community issues. Advocacy and networking are fundamental features to build the capacities of Social Lab members, raise community issues on the political agendas, and accelerate processes to solve pressing community problems.

1.3 How do Social Labs Contribute to Community Empowerment?

Social Labs serve as dynamic platforms that empower communities by fostering collaboration, learning, innovation, and collective action across eight key impact dimensions:

Inclusive Participation: Social Labs are designed to be inclusive spaces where community members with diverse stakeholders, can actively participate in problem-solving and decision-making processes. This inclusivity ensures that the voices and perspectives of those directly affected by the issues are heard and considered.

Co-creation of Solutions: Social Labs promote co-creation, where community members, along with experts, government representatives, and other stakeholders, work together to develop innovative solutions to community challenges. This collaborative approach empowers communities by giving them a sense of ownership and agency in finding solutions.

Learning and Capacity-Building: Communities are not only involved in solving specific problems, but also gain valuable skills and knowledge that can be applied to future challenges. These include, for example, the understanding of bureaucratic processes and the drafting of concrete plans of actions and project proposals to local authorities. Improving these skills and knowledge increases communities' capacity for self-reliance.

System Thinking: Social Labs encourage participants to adopt a system thinking approach, which helps communities and especially collaborating partners to better understand the root causes and interconnected nature of complex issues. This allows to develop more holistic and sustainable solutions.

Experimentation and Adaptation: Social Labs provide a safe space for experimenting with new ideas and approaches. This culture of experimentation allows communities to take calculated risks, learn from failures, and adapt strategies based on the received feedbacks.

Resource Mobilisation: Social Labs can help mobilise resources, including financial support and technical expertise, to implement community-driven solutions through the identification of adequate donors and relevant experts. This access to resources not only empowers communities to take action on their ideas and initiatives, but also to build a network of partners, such as non-profit organisations, government agencies, businesses, individual sponsors, and other communities for consistent support.

Policy Influence: Successful Social Lab initiatives can influence policy changes at the local, regional, or even national levels. By engaging in policy advocacy and demonstrating the effectiveness of their solutions, communities can have a lasting impact on the policies that affect them.
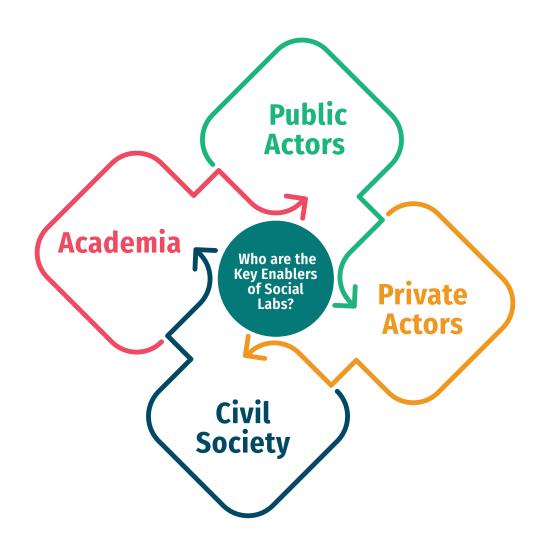
Community Ownership: Lastly, Social Labs promote a sense of ownership among community members. Empowered communities are more likely to sustain and build upon the changes initiated through Social Labs, leading to lasting impact.

1.4 Who are the Key Enablers of Social Labs?

Social Labs are fundamentally enabled by co-development actors from governments, civil society, the private sector, and academia, which all have a substantial impact on the level of implementation success as they foster knowledge, encourage innovation , and provide the financial means to transform ideas into practice.

◈ **Public Actors** are governmental departments or local entities, such as for example the Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Youth Development (DYD), Department of Woman Affairs (DWA), Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Labour (DOL), City Corporations who are active participants in the Social Lab dialogues of core team members and volunteers. They are invited as collaborators to contribute to solutions to the identified problems that relate to their departments. They are also the link between people and policymaking, if they can be mobilised to take the communities' concerns up on their agendas. Therefore, public actors are crucial for the broader impact of Social Labs.

◈ **Civil Society**, the community, Community Development Committee (CDC) leaders, and ward councillors are the entities representing the people and concerns on the ground. They create the conditions for Social Labs to become hubs for local innovation and creative solutions through active community participation. 'Civil society' may be considered any person who is motivated to assist to solve problems at community level. This may even be a person or company who volunteers to provide free medicine for a specific disease outbreak, or a medical company providing sanitary napkins to manage menstrual hygiene. The 'community' is then considered the totality of residents living in the respective informal settlement. 'CDC members' discuss the concerns through the Social Lab and together with the respective ward councillor represent the interests of the community. The 'ward councillor' also serves as the representative link at higher political decision-making levels, where they can bring forth specific community concerns.

◈ **Academia**, including universities, research institutions and entities, or think tanks can play an additional role in assessing the impact of Social Labs and creating visibility. It may contribute critical research expertise, data-driven insights, and inputs on how complex social challenges could be solved from a multidisciplinary perspective. Through potential partnerships with academic institutions, social labs can gain access to scholars and students who can contribute fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. Academia may also help inform decision-making processes and enhance communities' capacities to design and implement effective strategies for societal issues.

◈ **Private Actors**, whether individuals or organisations (e.g. NGOs, tech companies, etc.), are indispensable for the implementation of identified solutions. They help sustain the initiatives by contributing financial resources, subject-matter expertise, or innovative technologies and therefore function as sponsors or donors to the communities. Private actors receive the applications to implement a specific project that is proposed by the social lab members.

CHAPTER 2
Implementing and Sustaining Community Social Labs

2 What is the Social Lab Method

The existing conceptualisation of the Social Lab Method has been adapted and customized to the specific context and environment by Caritas BD in collaboration with GIZ. The method follows a structured process, which involves problem identification, stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, and lastly identifies stakeholders that can implement interventions that bring solutions to the previously prioritised problems. The SLM encourages open dialogue, iteration, and adaptation based on continuous feedback and learning. A core team leads the structured process by conducting several dialogues that are taking place to prioritise the problems of the community and together develop the solutions. In this way, the Social Lab approach with the core team and volunteers can solve community level problems in the targeted slum. Ultimately, the goal of a Social Lab is to tackle complex challenges in a collective and innovative way, moving beyond traditional top-down approaches to problem-solving and fostering more inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

2.1 The Social Lab Method: A step-by-step Guide

Based on the experiences of the UMIMCC/UMML's Community Social Labs project, a series of steps can be derived that can help lead to successfully solving specifically identified community problems. These steps are divided into three key phases: 1. the preparatory phase, 2. the implementation phase, and 3. the follow-up phase.

2.1.1 Preparatory Phase:

During the preparatory phase a Core Team and Community Volunteer Team are formed that build the Steering Structure of the Social Lab. For the selection of the

Formation of the Core Team and a Community Volunteer Team

STEP 1

A Core Team (CT) is formed consisting of 10-12 selected representatives from different government departments such as the Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Women Affairs (DWA), Department of Youth Development (DYD), the City Corporation or Municipality, or others, INGOs/NGOs working in the respective slum or community, local councillors, and a journalist. For specific problems, the core team may additionally invite representatives from other department(s) to participate in one or several relevant dialogue session(s) to leverage his/her expertise or for advocacy and planning purposes.

Functions and Tasks of the Core Team
- Conducting and coordinating the overall activities of the Social Lab
- Arranging and coordinating the dialogue sessions
- Facilitating fruitful discussions with the community representatives
- Proposing and inviting relevant experts for the specific dialogue sessions
- Elaborating, amending, and approving project proposals and funding applications
- Communicating with the different donor and implementation stakeholders and if needed follow up with them
- Ensuring the documentation, monitoring, and evaluation of Social Lab activities
- Giving directions to the community volunteer team regarding their tasks, especially regarding media communications, advocacy, and the elaboration of proposal
- Follow up of the submitted project proposal with concerned departments
- Communicate/meeting/ with the concerned department for getting approval

STEP 2

Formation of Community Volunteer Team
A Community Volunteer Team (VT) assists the CT in its regular and specific tasks. It may consist of 6-10 members, depending on the working area and community size. Volunteers must show their interest and at least 80% of them should be women (See a guidline for the selection of community volunteers at Annex I). The specific functions and tasks of the community volunteer team may include for example:

- Providing all types of technical assistance as may be required by the core team
- Coordinating the Social Lab dialogues where required
- Providing valuable inputs during the dialogue discussions in representation of the needs of the community
- Ensuring that the specific community concerns and needs take center-stage at inter-stakeholder discussions
- Assisting the core team in elaborating proposals and funding applications
- Collect specific field data for the elaboration of project proposals, including
  for example taking measures in accordance with the directions of the core team
- Communicate/Advocacy lobbying with concerned authority for approval of project proposal and social safety net programmes

The local ward councillor supervises the dialogues, while volunteers lead and coordinate them based on the agenda and availability of community representatives. They identify core problems and prioritize them through voting, with the problem that receives the highest number of votes becoming the top priority for the slum community.

2.1.2 Implementation Phase:

Social Labs (SL) are networking and problem-solving platforms that enable an exchange between the core team (CT)-members and volunteer team (VT)-members through a series of dialogues.

STEP 3

Problem or Challenge Identification (Dialogue 1 & 2)
During the first two dialogies the core team and communiy volunteers identify the key problems of the slum together with the community representatives. They prioritise the problems according to the urgency, importance, and feasibility to address the topic.

Example: Out of 16 problems that where identified in the Social Lab of Sirajganj Municipality addressing the road problem was prioritised by the members of SL.

STEP 4

Solution Identification (Dialogue 3)
After identifying and prioritising the key problems that the community is facing, the 3rd dialogue is dedicated to identifying an appropriate solution for the first problem.

Example: The construction of a new road for the slum was identified as a achievable solution.

STEP 5

Participatory planning (Dialogue 4 & 5)

During the 4th and 5th dialogues, a detailed plan is developed. For that purpose, the core team and volunteers prepare a budget indicating the estimated costs of the proposed solution to the selected problem. Subsequently, a proposal is prepared, in which the proposed project is explained and outlined in detail. A justification must be included to highlight the relevance of the proposed project considering the problem context.

Example: After measuring the insuffecuent road, a proposal for the road construction was prepared mentioning the needs and expected benfit for the slum residence after implementation.

STEP 6

Submission of the application (Dialogue 6)

During the 6th dialogue, the core team- members and volunteers conduct a quality-check of the plan or application. After final approval by the steering members, a list of core team-members and volunteer team-members' names shall be prepared to be submitted together with the application.

Example: The Project Proposal for the road construction was submitted to the Mayor of Sirajganj Municipality.

SPOTLIGHT INSIGHT:

In order to successfully submit a project proposal the following documents are key:

Project Proposal: with introduction, proposal explained in more detail, justification of the proposal, the area of the project where it will be implemented, how many people will benefit, the budget and how it will be financed, references to the dialogues (see Annex II, III and IV).

Forwarding letter: It is the cover letter that includes a short summary of the project proposal, where it must be implemented and how many people will benefit from it, and how much budget is needed. (see Annex III)

Recommendation Letter: from the local ward councilor, which will be collected through the core team (see Annex V)

2.1.3 Follow-up Phase:

Advocacy and Learning Lessons

STEP 7

Advocacy and Follow-up (Dialogue 7)

In the 7th dialogue, teams review the plan and make updates based on progress. They discuss advocacy measures for approval and implementation. Steering members consider submitting the plan to other departments or organizations and take necessary follow-up actions.

Example: Sirajganj Municipality held the 7th Dialogue to discuss the urgent need for road construction in Charamalsa Para Slum. The current infrastructure, consisting of a bamboo bridge and poorly maintained roads, hindered the movement of slum residents, especially children, disabled persons, pregnant women, and the elderly. After discussion, the mayor approved the project proposal and soil filling work was completed within weeks. Furthermore, the team also submitted an application to BRAC for a concrete road construction project.

Reviewing the completed process and sharing the learnings (Dialogue 8)

The 8th dialogue is a review of the entire process, where team members share challenges and discuss preventive measures. After completing the 8th dialogue for the 1st problem, the process restarts for the 2nd problem. Every 12 months, the team reviews and prioritises challenges. If a team member leaves or misses consecutive dialogues, they are replaced. As experience and capacity improve, team members may take on multiple problems at once and expand the social lab to include more communities.

2.1.4 Creating Impact Through Sustainable Social Labs

Building Capacities

Defining roles and responsibilities

Creating an environment for experimentation and replication

For long-term impacts in societies, there is a need to run social labs sustainably. Therefore, ownership is key. In the context of Social Labs and community development it is crucial to increase the political will, commitment, and ownership of the participating stakeholders, notably government departments, LGIs, INGO/NGOs, communities individually or ideally jointly. If this cannot be achieved, funding agencies or donors will stop their contributions.

To guarantee the ownership of participating stakeholders and the sustainability of Social Labs, the following lessons from the UMIMCC/UMML project experiences may be derived:

Building Capacities:

❯ Building capacities of the volunteer team and core team members regarding their facilitation skills, participatory planning, and advocacy and networking skills, are key.

Defining roles and responsibilities:

❯ Any government department like DSS/DWA/DYD can take over the Social Labs processes as a good approach to community participation and keep budget provisions to run Social Labs.

❯ In the current working areas, other INGOs/NGOs which are involved, may explicitly extend their support to continue running Social Labs.

❯ Volunteer team members are from local communities. If they are convinced by the approach, they may continue the Social Labs in collaboration with different government departments.

Creating an environment for experimentation and replication:

❯ Local councillors are very much involved with the Social Labs. Experience tells that if a councillor is very committed, it may be valuable for him or her to take ownership and continue the social labs in their own ward or community.

CHAPTER 3
Social Lab Success Stories

a) Khulna City Corporation, Social Lab-1

Details at a glance:
- ◆ Location: Rayer Mahal Slum, Ward-14, Khulna City Corporation (KCC)
- ◆ Period of completion: 06/09/2021 -31/01/2022
- ◆ Result: 60-meter road is constructed improving the connectivity of slum residence
- ◆ Key stakeholder: UNDP

Writing down the problems.

Sharing about activities.

During the 1st dialogue, held on 10/08/2021, eight problems were identified, including road problems, lack of sanitary toilets, lack of safe water, drainage problem, lack of streetlights, waterlogging, high youth unemployment, and malnutrition/lack of awareness about the needs of pregnant women.

The 2nd dialogue (28/08/2021) prioritised the problems, with road problems and lack of sanitary toilets identified as key issues. A site inspection revealed that the muddy road during the monsoon season was causing difficulties for residents, especially pregnant women and sick individuals.

Around 1500 slum residents used this road daily for commuting. The inspection team proposed constructing a 60m road in Ward no. 14.

On 06/09/2021, during the 3rd dialogue, a project proposal with a cost plan was prepared and submitted to the Khulna City Corporation (KCC), but it was declined due to budget constraints. The proposal was then submitted to the local UNDP Office, which had previous experience in slum construction projects.

Subsequent dialogues (4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th) involved reviewing the proposal, discussing next steps, and receiving updates from GIZ and Caritas Bangladesh.

After the 8th dialogue (11/11/2021), the finalized project proposal was submitted to the UNDP's Khulna City Manager, and approval was received on 21/11/2021. With the support of all SL members and the financial resources of UNDP, the construction began on 05/01/2022 and was completed within a few weeks. The road was filled with mortar and cement concrete, creating a mud-resistant road that improved the living standards of slum residents.

Key Take-Aways: Positive Impact for the communities

- Approximately 1500 people have benefited from the road, which has improved their socio-economic conditions.
- The road has made movement safer and smoother for children, students, elderly, disabled individuals, pregnant women, and the sick, allowing them to reach hospitals faster.
- Children can attend school regularly without concerns about safety during the rainy season.
- The improved road infrastructure has facilitated the transportation of goods for small traders and householders, reducing costs.
- Rickshaws, easy bikes, and vans can now move effortlessly on the road, enabling people to transport goods and materials.

  Overall, the construction of the road has significantly improved connectivity and living conditions for slum residents.

Road after constriction

Members of the core team visiting the constructed road.

The local people are walking on the road

Success Story 2: Managing Waste Collectively

b. Khulna City Corporation, Social Lab-2

Details at a glance:

- Location: Ward-31, Mollapara, Khulna City Corporation (KCC)
- Period of completion: 09/09 - 10/11/2021
- Result: The slum residents are aware about waste management and cooperate with the solid waste collector.
- Key Stakeholder: City Corporation, Core team, Community Volunteers and slum leaders.

In consultation with volunteer and core team members the problems are prioritised.

GIZ representatives view the result

Awarness raising at slum level for house hold waste management

During the 1st dialogue, 10 burning issues were identified, including unemployment, inadequate waste management, and lack of vocational skills.

After prioritising the problems through participatory methods, the main issues were identified as no widow allowance, inadequate waste management, and unemployment.

A visit to the Mollapara slum area revealed the challenges faced by residents, such as improper waste disposal and lack of garbage collection facilities. To address the waste management issue, the Social Lab conducted a household-based survey, which showed that residents were interested in a garbage collection service and willing to pay for it.

A project proposal was developed during the 6th dialogue, including the provision of two garbage vans, dustbins, and awareness sessions for residents. The waste management proposal was submitted to the mayor and key officers of KCC, and the mayor approved the provision of two garbage vans for the Mollapara area.

The project proposal was also shared with the Khulna Mukti Seba Sanstha, who decided to expand the household waste management awareness program to all wards of KCC. The 8th dialogue concluded with a waste collection campaign, where residents were educated on proper waste disposal and began dumping their garbage in the vans.

The regular collection of household waste started in November 2021, resulting in a pollution-free Mollapara area. Thanks to the awareness sessions, bacterial infections have decreased, and the drains are now clean.

Key Take-Aways: Positive Impact for the communities

▶ The improved waste management supports a cleaner and healthier environment.

▶ Clean drains and the reduced pollution lowers the risks for bacterial infections for the slum residence.

▶ Solving this problem participatory increased the community confidence to continue addressing future problems to improve their quality of life.

Submitting application to conservancy department for waste collecting van (vehicle)

Advocacy with Chief Planning Officer, KCC for house hold waste management

Success Story 3: Constructing a wooden bridge to cross the canal

c. Satkhira Municipality

Details at a glance:

◆ Location: Ward-7, Itagacha, Satkhira Municipality
◆ Period of completion: 08/09/ - 10/12/2021
◆ Result: The wooden bridge is visible and accessible by the slum people.
◆ Key stakeholder: Sathkira Municipality, Core team and volunteers, Local government departments, Community Development Committee (CDC), Slum residents.

Submitting proposal to Mayor, Satkhira Municipality for construction of bamboo bridge over the river

Prioritising problems by voting

During the first dialogue in September 2021, 10 problems were identified, including few safety net programme facilities, lack of skills for self-employment, few facilities to wash the dead persons of the slums. During the second dialogue, the lack of a bridge was prioritised and it was agreed to construct a wooden bridge. Previously, residents had to cross the canal on rafts, which was risky and costly.

Detailed discussions took place during the 3rd, 4th and 5th dialogues regarding the bridge construction and the authority responsible for building the bridge. It was decided that the municipality would be responsible for the construction, with recommendations from the mayor.

During the 6th dialogue, the mayor presented a solution plan and agreed to build a wooden bridge. A project proposal and budget were prepared and approved by the mayor. Construction of the bridge began on 06/11/2021 and was completed on 10/12/2021.

⟫ The bridge has had positive impacts, allowing children, disabled individuals, pregnant women, and the elderly to cross the canal safely.

⟫ Children can attend school regularly and residents can easily access medical treatment.

⟫ The bridge has also increased transportation of goods, contributing to the economic development of the slum residents.

Before the construction of bridge, children are crossing the river by taking risk

Wooden bridge is in under construction

Local people using wooden bridge

Representatives of Caritas Bangladesh and GIZ visit wooden bridge in Satkhira

Success Story 4: Establishing access to clean and safe drinking water

d. Rajshahi City Corporation

Details at a glance:

◆ Location: Ward-14, Bilsimla and Tultuli Para, Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC)

◆ Period of completion: 04/11/2021 - 25/05/2022

◆ Result: The submersible pump installation work completed, and the community has safe access to drinking water.

◆ Key stakeholder: private donor, ward councillor, Rajshahi City Corporation, Local Government Department, CDC, core team, volunteers and slum residents.

The core team and volunteers are participating in dialogue session for problem identification

An Application is being submitted to the Mayor of RCC to solve the waterlogging problem (road & drainage issues)

The Court Station Bilsimla slum faced challenges due to a lack of access to safe drinking water. The number of tube wells was insufficient and many were unusable. In the Court Station and Tultuli Para slums, the tube wells were often submerged in dirty water, making the water unsafe to drink. As a result, residents had to rely on tap water, which had a high leakage rate. This led to health issues and financial burdens for the residents.

After identifying the mayor challenges during the first three dialogues in the 4th dialogue session, potential solutions were proposed addressing the drinking water problem, involving the Department of Public Health Engineering and the Department of Community Development. The core team of the Social Lab, led by Ward Councillor, discussed the issue with the chief engineer of the Department of Public Health Engineering.

In the 5th dialogue, it was revealed that the City Corporation did not have the capacity to address the issue. However, a local philanthropist pledged to support the project. During the 6th dialogue, a plan was created to find a viable solution. The draft application for the waterlogging problem was shared.

In the 7th dialogue, and 8th dialogues attempts to submit the application plan were undertaken, but due to the mayor's absence related to Covid-19 it was unsuccessful. Continued lobbying and communication with the individual philanthropist led to progress. Materials for the pump were purchased and the installation started on 12th April 2022. The total cost of installation was BDT 70,000 (EUR 700). On 25th May 2022, the installation was completed, providing a reliable supply of clean water for the slum residents.

Key Take-Aways: Positive Impact for the communities

» Access to clean drinking water has improved the health and economic conditions of slum residents.
» Waterborne diseases and associated medical costs have been reduced thanks to the pump and water tank installation.

Community Socials Labs Kick-off Workshop at RCC

Volunteers are participating on Participatory Planning Training at RCC

With the financial support of a charitable person, the submersible pump is being installed for safe drinking water at Cour Station Slum, RCC

Slum People are Collecting Drinking Water from Submersible Pump at Court Station Slum, RCC

Success Story 5: Constructing a road to help improve living conditions

e. Sirajganj Municipality

Details at a glance:
◆ Location: Ward-14, Char Malshapara, Sirajganj Municipality
◆ Period of completion: 26/09/2021 - 19/05/2022
◆ Result: Road earth filling completed
◆ Key stakeholder: Sirajganj Municipality

Prioritising the identified problems through Matrix Ranking Method

The problem identification through dialogue at Sirajganj Municipality

During the initial dialogues, 18 problems faced by the slum residents were identified. Volunteers visited the slum areas and households to assess the identified problems and collected necessary data. Problem analysis reports were prepared, and the final priority problems included amongst others unemployment, damaged roads, broken houses, financial problems, rehabilitation, extreme poverty, and inadequate sanitation.

During the third dialogue, the road and housing challenges were prioritised to be tackled. The total number of families in the area was 795. A flood had washed away the local road, causing residents to be confined to their homes during floods. This affected access to education, medical appointments, and work. The construction of a new road was proposed and an application was submitted to the mayor, member of parliament, district commissioner, and the LGED office.

After submission, advocacy and lobbying efforts were made. The mayor approved the project proposal during the eighth dialogue and announced the inauguration of the road construction works. The task was entrusted to the ward councillor, and the 600-feet road was completed. BRAC provided additional support to elevate and add a cement layer to the road.

Earth filling work innagurated by the Mayor of Sirajganj Municipality

After earth filling, the road is visible

Use of flood-prone areas and bamboo Saco

Identifying solutions to problems in dialogue

CHAPTER 4

Key Learnings and Recommendations

Throughout the implementation of the Community Social Lab Project, the core teams, volunteer teams, and project staff gained valuable insights that will be beneficial to those interested in establishing Social Labs in their communities. Based on these learnings, the following recommendations are provided:

Define Roles and Responsibilities for Enhancing Ownership:

◆ Empower stakeholders to actively contribute to the co-creation process of Social Labs with a focus on promoting social equity and community engagement.

◆ The involvement of ward councillors is crucial in the success of Social Labs. Their role, motivation, and support in nurturing the Social Labs will serve as a continuous inspiration for the community volunteer team. Therefore, councillors should be involved from the outset of the Social Lab operations.

◆ Community dialogues should be led by members of the volunteer team in collaboration with the core team. This will foster leadership development among local community members and enable them to independently address their community challenges.

◆ The core team should include public institutional departments that are responsible for the different social safety net programmes and essential services, such as DSS, DWA, DYD, the Department of Birth Registration, City Corporations, and DOL. Additionally, the Core Team and Volunteer Team may invite experts from government departments to contribute to the planning process whenever it seemed necessary.

◆ To sustain the Social Lab dialogues, ownership and continuous nurturing of Social Lab activities should be taken up individually or jointly by government departments, INGOs/NGOs, and/or community representatives.

2. Mobilise Adequate Funding Mechanisms

◆ It is recommended that there be a sufficient budget allocated for the dialogues, including compensation for the core team- and volunteer team members in the form of travel allowances. This will encourage their regular participation.

◆ Explore various funding models, such as philanthropic contributions and public-private partnerships to support sustainable urban development.

3. Track Data and Measure Impact

◆ Regular reviewing sessions should be held to discuss community problems, share learnings, and address challenges.

◆ The creation of a community database is very important. With the assistance of motivated volunteers, a comprehensive database of the general community profile, including the basic information about the residents, facilities, and the faced challenges and progresses, should be developed and provided to departments such as DSS, DWA DYD, DOL, and City Corporations.

CONCLUSION:

Social Labs have proven to be a highly effective participatory approach to improve the living conditions of the most marginalised communities in Bangladesh. They serve as a valuable platform for addressing complex social challenges by engaging community and stakeholders. By following the three proposed phases - the Preparatory Phase, the Implementation Phase, and the Follow-up Phase - and committing to a sustainable and inclusive problem-solving cycle, communities can significantly enhance their abilities to shape their own destinies and exert influence over decisions that directly impact them.

This approach not only fosters strong relationships and connections between community members and representatives from various government departments and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), but it also generates a positive ripple effect on other neighbourhoods and communities. While establishing sustainable Social Labs is undoubtedly demanding, the combination of sincere efforts can ensure their continued existence and evolution, ultimately leading to meaningful and positive change.

ANNEXES I-V

Annex-1 :Guideline for Selecting Community Support Group / Community Volunteers for Social Labs.

Overall Objectives towards the Community Support Group (CSG)/Community Volunteers (CV):

The overall objective of the guideline is to select the appropriate persons from the selected hotpots through consultative process to facilitate the entire process in a sustainable way.

So, the specific objectives are:

To ensure the active involvement & participation of the community people and partners (LGIs, DSS, CDCs and ETC) as well to improve the living conditions of vulnerable slum residents.

2. Enhance the capacity of the community people to achieve assignment goal and ensure sustainability of it.

3. To address the problems at hotpots level & to increase their capacity to advocate with the respective authority for solving it through their active participation.

B. Scope of work of the Community Support Group (CSG)/Community Volunteer (CV):

1. Community Support Group/Community Volunteers will give efforts to increase the awareness level of the community people specially the climate migrants, poor and vulnerable of the community on social issues and their rights as well.

2. Community Support Group/ Community Volunteers will continuously give efforts to create a strong bridge among the stakeholders such as Municipalities and City Corporations, DSS, CDC, like-minded government department, development organisations and so on for addressing and solving their problems with positive manners.

3. Community Support Group/Community Volunteers will give strong efforts to identify the appropriate challenges and solution measures at hotpots level using proper tools and techniques.

4. Community Support Group/Community Volunteers will try to establish ownership and leadership of the community people for sustaining the assignment.

5. Community Support Group/ Community Volunteers will positively work on the issues raised from the community residents related to social services delivery system/process together with the Core Committee.

6. Community Support Group/ Community Volunteers will facilitate raising a collective voice of the climate migrants, poor and vulnerable people to solve their problems at hotspots level.

7. Community Support Group/ Community Volunteers will maintain effective liaison with LGIs, DSS, CDCs, community people, relevant stakeholders, and Core Committee for consulting the identified issues and finding a way to solve it.

C. Selection criteria for CSG/CV members:

1. Persons who have better social acceptance in the community especially who are involved with CDCs.

2. Persons who are interested in social works and voluntary work.

3. Persons who are vocal and have leadership capability.

4. Persons who are residing in the particular hotpots more than three years.

D. Instructions for Community Support Group/ Community Volunteers formation:

1. Community Support Group/ Community Volunteers is to be formed as a single body or several bodies based on the hotpot's areas.

2. Community Support Group/ Community Volunteers work as a "Community Platform or Collective voice" in favour of the community.

3. Community Support Group/ Community Volunteers will consist of six (06) members from the selected hotpots.

4. Each member of the group is to be selected positively as per given selection criteria.

5. The structure of the Community Support Group could be as follows:

Sl	Position	Number	Remarks
01	President	01	
02	Vice-President	01	
03	Secretary/Member Secretary	01	
04	Joint Secretary	01	
05	General Members	02	
Total		**06**	

6. After formation each member of the CSG/CV will be trained on the facilitation process of Social Lab.

7. All sorts of training, workshop and meeting will be conducted in a suitable venue maintaining health safety and security measures.

8. The training, workshop and meeting will be conducted with the support of Social Lab Project team.

9. Regular monthly meeting is to be conducted for the CSG/CV with specific agenda and maintain a binding register to record meeting minutes.

10. Before conducting any training or workshop check the venue for cleanliness, drinking water, sitting arrangement beforehand. The concern focal person of the assignment will be primarily responsible for this.

11. Ensure that each member of the CSG/CV knows about the notice for meeting, training or workshop at least 48 hours before the date.

12. Fix up the date and time of the training or workshop as per convenience of the team members.

13. Training Module developed for the community people is to be followed during the training session for the members of CSG/CV.

14. After each training feedback of the participants is to be taken and recorded in the same register being shared for monthly meeting and the feedbacks are to be compiled and send it to the respective focal.

15. Posters, stickers, leaflets etc. can be used as training and awareness materials.

16. For each training, workshop, dialogue, meeting and etc. an attendance sheet is to be maintained as per organisers template.

17. For each training, workshop, dialogue, meeting and etc. photographs are to be taken with the written consent of the participants.

18. The members of the Community Support Group/Community Volunteer could be provided with ID Cards, bag, umbrella, pad, pen & IEC materials.

19. If any special initiative is identified at hotpots level, it needs to be taken under consideration with priority.

Annex-II : Project proposal Template

Template of project proposal:
1.   Name of proposed project:
2.   Location of project submission:
3.   Address of approval authority:
4.   Objectives of project:
5.   Number of beneficiary cover:
6.   Budget of the project:
7.   Rational of project (Justification):
8.   Input/activities of project:
9.   Result of project:

Signature of Applicants/Residents of beneficiaries

Volunteers/Core team

Designation:

Address:

Annex-III: Application template

To   Date:.............
The Mayor
.... City Corporation

Subject: ....(Regarding Project Approval).

Sir/Madam,

Warm greetings from the residents of Ward 14, Ancharuddin, and Rayer Mahal areas under Khulna City Corporation. We hope this letter finds you well. We would like to bring to your attention the deteriorating condition of a road in our locality.

We would like to inform you that the road from ......house to ..... house in Ward 14, Rayer Mahal area, Khulna City Corporation, has been in a deplorable state for an extended period, with a length of 60 meters and a width of 1.50 meters. During the rainy season, the road becomes waterlogged, making it impassable for pedestrians. Approximately 1500 people, including students, elderly individuals, and residents, depend on this road for daily commutes. If the road is properly graded and paved, it would greatly benefit the community.

During the Social Lab Dialogue held on ..... the economic and livelihood challenges faced by the residents of this area were identified in search for solutions. A team consisting of volunteers from the local community, representatives from various government departments, and City Corporation officials has been formed. The team has already conducted .... discussions and identified a total of ....issues, with road construction being the primary concern, marked as issue number one. Based on the recent discussion, a project proposal has been prepared and attached to this letter for your reference (Attachment-1). Furthermore, we seek approval for the implementation of this project through UNDP's Livelihoods Improvement of Urban Poor Communities Project, in Khulna.

Therefore, we kindly request your support and approval for the road project, which will play a crucial role in the economic and overall development of the residents of Ward 14. We would like to express our gratitude for your past contributions to the development of our community. We trust that your approval and action will significantly benefit our community.

Sincerely,

Name: ....

Function............. (eg. Chairman of Social Lab Team),

Slum Name .... under Ward / City.

CC:
1. Mr. Abirul Jabbar (Chief Planning Officer), Khulna City Corporation, Khulna.
2. Town Manager, UNDP's Livelihoods Improvement of Urban Poor Communities Project, Khulna.

Annex-IV: Financial cost plan and/or budget template

Sl	Particular/Items of materials	Quantity	Unit	Unit cost	Total cost	Remarks

Annex-V: Recommendation template (optional)

07/11/2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to provide my full endorsement and recommendation for the approval and implementation of a crucial road project in Ward 14 of Rayer Mahal slum area, as detailed in the application dated 01/11/2021, submitted by XXX, Counselor of XXX of Khulna City Corporation (KCC).

The urgency of this matter became apparent to me after a series of seven comprehensive discussions involving both a Core Team and Volunteer Team. These discussions identified the dire condition of the road as a top priority issue that requires immediate attention. It is worth noting that this application emerged as a result of the Community Social Labs project, which empowers local communities to identify and address their most significant challenges.

Having carefully reviewed the application and considered the recommendations put forth, I strongly urge the relevant authorities to take prompt action to rectify the road issue in Ward 14, Rayer Mahal slum area. The successful execution of this road project is vital for the well-being and overall development of the residents in this area.

I wholeheartedly endorse the project proposal and budget, as provided in Attachment-1 of the application, and I recommend its approval and subsequent implementation through UNDP's "Community Development Project."

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the proactive efforts made by the local community through Community Social Lab Project. Their unwavering dedication to community development is truly commendable, and I am eager to witness the positive and transformative impact that this project will have on the lives of the community members.

Sincerely,

Name
Mayor
Khulna City Corporation