

# *Experiences in enhancing an existing monitoring system: The case of Samriddhi in Bangladesh*



**Humayun Kabir &  
Zenebe Uraguchi**

**HELVETAS Swiss  
Intercooperation**

# What is the case about?

- ❑ Review more than three years of **“experimenting”** with the Standard by the Samriddhi project in Bangladesh
- ❑ Present **good practices** and **challenges** in designing and implementing the Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM) system
- ❑ Describes and documents the **evolution** of the MRM system using the Standard
- ❑ **It is analytical and asks:**
- ❑ **It is also normative as it asks:**

**What factors have contributed to & inhibited the process of developing & managing the system?**

**What “should” be done for overcoming critical challenges in order to gradually comply, as practical as reasonable, with the Standard?**

## **Samriddhi (“prosperity” in Bangla) at a glance**

(August 2010 – June 2014)

### **Goal**

**To contribute to sustainable well-being and resilience of poor and extreme poor households through economic empowerment**

### **Approach**

**The Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) →** identifies systemic constraints of markets and addresses them through aligning market functions and actors according to their *incentives* and *capacities*.

### **Core interventions**

**Value chain development**  
**Private rural service market provision**  
**Rural enterprise development & expansion**  
**Advocacy in market systems development**

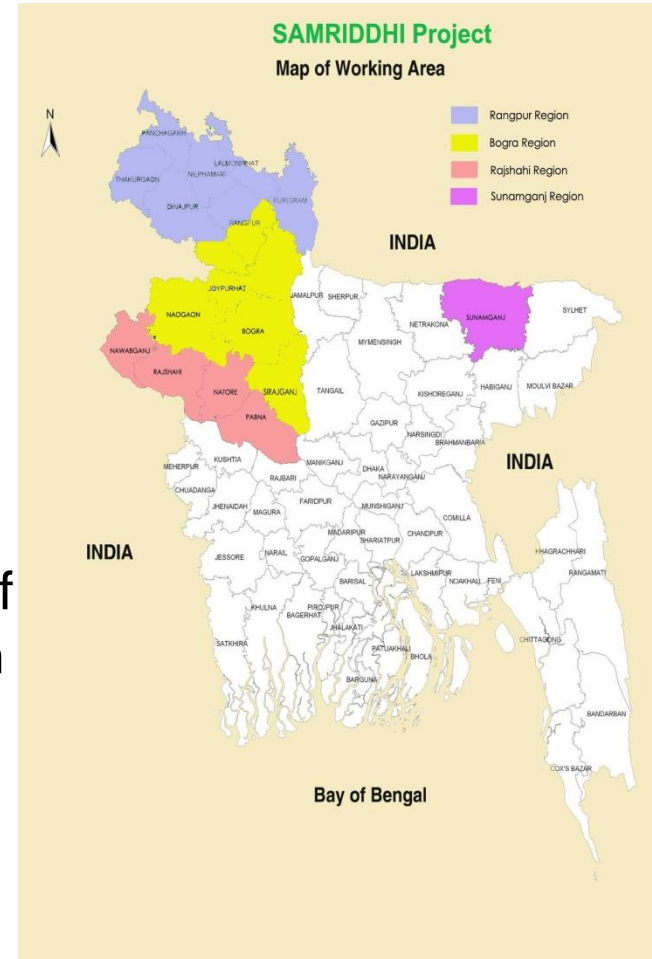
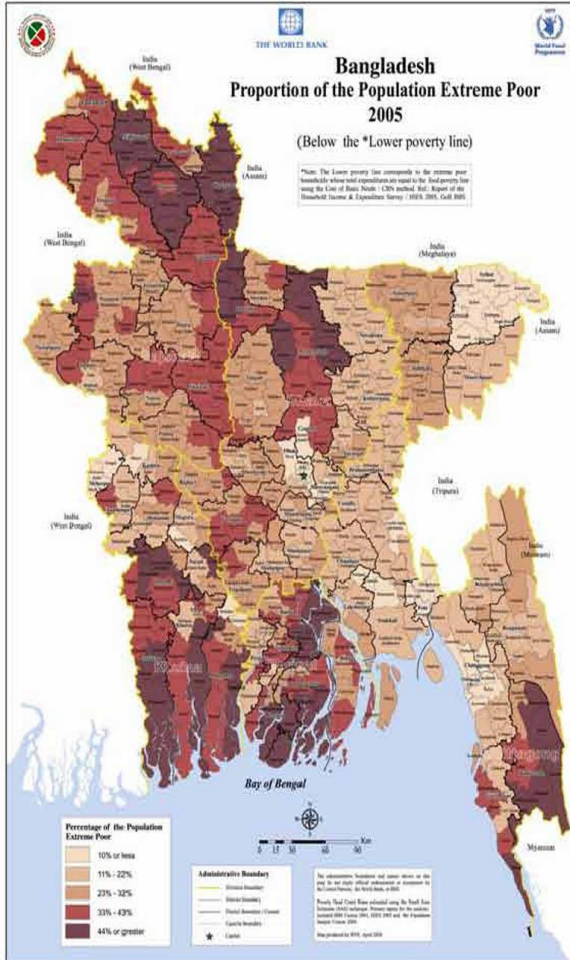
# Working areas

-Northern Bangladesh

-High prevalence of poverty

-High vulnerability

-Expanding coverage of areas due to replication / scaling up of good practices



# Impact logic

**The poor & extreme poor generate additional employment & income to overcome their poverty sustainably**



**The poor and extreme poor improve their enterprise performance by increasing production & productivity**



**The poor and extreme poor are aware & capacitated to access & use the services made available by local service providers**



**Affordable, accessible & quality private & public services are available for the poor and extreme poor through capable local service providers**



**Samridhhi facilitates Local Service Provision System for pro-poor market system change**



# Background

❑ The MRM system of Samriddhi was initially based on the systems of the two predecessor initiatives (LEAF and SAAKTI) which were mainly based on *livelihoods approach*.

❑ The system had two parallel components

monitoring of outputs, outcomes and goal as per the logical framework of the project, defined *before* any value chain assessment had been carried out

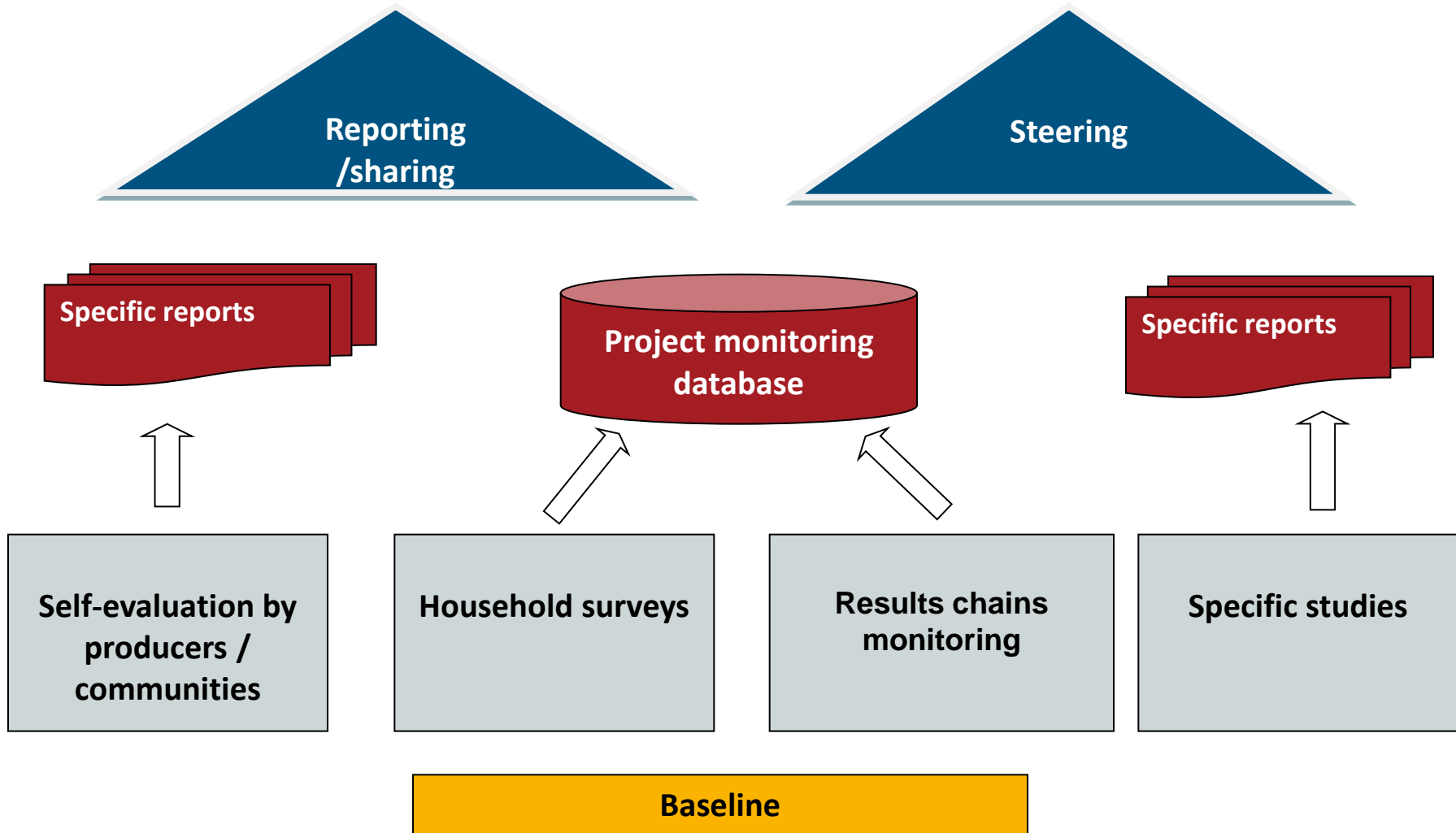
monitoring of the results chains at market trigger, market uptake, enterprise performance, sector growth and poverty reduction levels

❑ The results chains were developed *after* the value chain assessments.

## Background (2)

- ❑ Samriddhi made the decision to focus more on ***market systems development*** required adjusting or revising its monitoring system
- ❑ Several process and system-related changes ***could not fully be captured*** and reflected by the system
- ❑ Samriddhi decided and subsequently proposed to the donor (SDC) and HELVETAS Bangladesh to revise the logical framework to simplify and give structure to the monitoring system

## The monitoring system during the start of Samriddhi





# Rationale for adopting the DCED Standard

- ❑ First introduction to the DCED Standard → one week international training followed by a three-day workshop in Bangladesh at the beginning of Samriddhi in 2010
- ❑ Was useful → understanding more about the relevance of the results chains
- ❑ The project was in need of **vital information** about its performance to achieve more clarity on its priorities regarding:

what works and what does not?

how were impacts achieved?

why results did not unfold the way project facilitators had expected?



## Rationale (2)

- ❑ Senior management & field level staff were involved in ***regular exercises*** (***“learning by doing”***)
- ❑ Interest from the project → Not simply for measuring results, but also using it for ***day-to-day planning and project management***
- ❑ Initially priority → on the ***first three elements*** of the Standard
- ❑ However, the project staff were not sure about the following:



1) the added value in adopting a rigorous system based on the Standard

2) how to practically and reasonably adopt the Standard

3) the implications in terms of time and resources

# Experiences of using the Standard

- ❑ “Pre-audit review” of the system (in March 2013) → revealed Samriddhi has clearly made **considerable progress**
- ❑ Improved its MRM system by **gradually complying** with the Standard

provided more thrust to the process of adjusting the MRM system to comply with the Standard

“pre-audit review”

set the strategic direction on firm ground for improving the system

- ❑ structured and specific inputs regarding **what to prioritise**
- ❑ how to **coordinate the efforts** towards improving the system

- ❑ **better compliance** with the Standard
- ❑ **better management** of the project’s work in the future/next phase

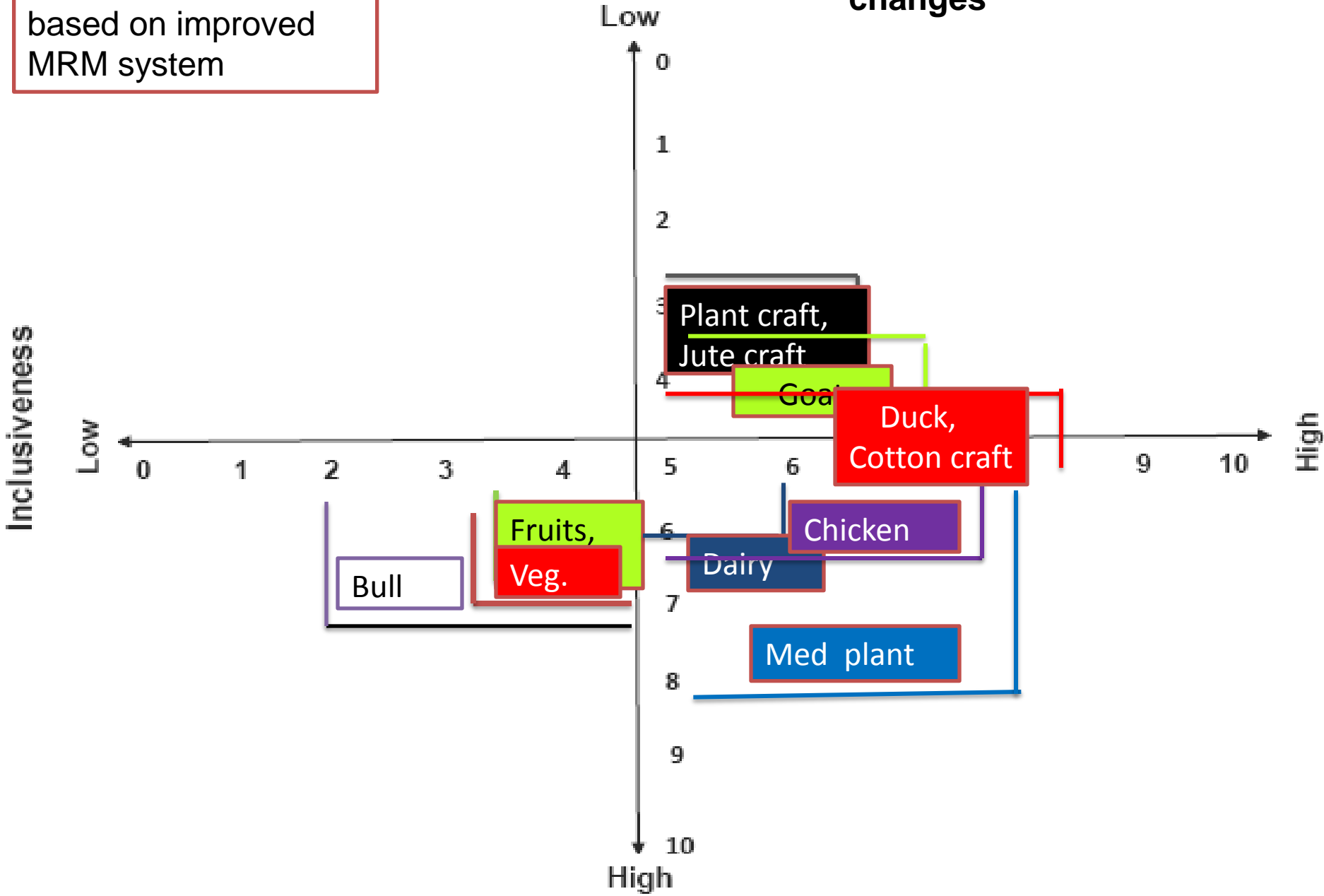
# Insights gained

- 1) **Flexibility from both the donor and the project to try out new ideas**
  - The importance of **organisational buy-in** / support from the start
  
- 2) **Setting up a well-functioning MRM working group**
  - Crucial in **decision making at all levels** with one one common objective
  
- 3) **Development of an integrated MRM manual**
  - promoting a **common understanding** and reliable practice
  - Good source of information for **strategic decision making** (e.g. phasing out three value chains in 2013)
  
- 4) **Making MRM part of everyone's job**
  - MRM responsibilities in **job descriptions** and annual staff performance review + coaching/capacity building
  - high importance to the capacity building of its staff through external consultants

Example of phasing out value chains based on improved MRM system

Growth + potential for deeper market system

changes



# Challenges in complying with the DECD Standard

## 1) Full compliance vs. “prioritising” elements of the Standard

- ❑ The **first four** elements of the Standard were found to be by far the most helpful: both for **day-to-day planning and project management & measuring results**
- ❑ This does not suggest **self-selection** but **“right-sizing”** the scale of the effort by prioritising elements critical in making the right decisions
- ❑ Prioritising elements of the standard (while downsizing others) → to keep costs of the MRM system at a reasonable level



## Challenges (2)

### 2) Estimating attributable changes

- ❑ The project has developed its attribution strategy → crucial in demonstrating the ***causal link between results & interventions***
- ❑ Estimating attributable changes → ***one of the most difficult challenges***
- ❑ ***Multiplicity of actors*** and ***complex partnerships*** make measuring attribution difficult and unreliable, if not impossible
- ❑ Highly seasonal agricultural production systems compounded by frequent threats from disaster affect production and prices
- ❑ What can be measured, what can be directly and indirectly attributed to the facilitation of the project became complex for the project staff

## Challenges (3)

### 3) Project experience vs. organisational ownership of the MRM system

- Samriddhi staff employed by HELVETAS Bangladesh as implementing organisation work 100% for the project.
- Projects are temporary, and when Samriddhi is phased-out, all the knowledge and experience will likely not stay with the organisation.
- Organisational ownership of the system → requires strong and consistent MRM “champions” to introduce the system to and sustain it.

# Key lessons

❑ Efficient and effective compliance requires capacity building that should:

- 1) *Start as early as possible*
- 2) *Not as a one-off event, but as a continuous process*

❑ Compliance requires ***adequate allocation of resources*** – both human and financial. The lack of resources may lead to “self-selection” and “partially compliance” irrespective of necessity

❑ Compliance is first and foremost for ***effective project management*** and ***strategic decision making***.

❑ Organisational buy-in from the start is highly crucial for smooth implementation

**Thank you**