

## Final Report

# Entrepreneurship Development Training & Coaching for Local Service Providers under SHOUHARDO III Plus Activity

Description of Services: Entrepreneurship Development Training for LSPs



Submitted to	Submitted by
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## **Acknowledgment**

We are thrilled to submit the final report on the Entrepreneurship Development Training Report to CARE Bangladesh. This report is a testament to the incredible journey of empowerment and transformation undertaken by the Local Service Providers, encapsulating their remarkable achievements, inspiring stories, and invaluable lessons learned throughout this groundbreaking initiative.

We sincerely thank CARE Bangladesh for their guidance and expertise in implementing the program effectively. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Marc Nosbach, Former CoP, and Abdul Mannan Mazumder, Acting COP, and of SHOUHARDO III Plus, for their overall leadership, strategic planning, and guidance. We also sincerely appreciate the support from Rafiqul Islam, Mahfuz Ashraf, Hedyatul Islam, Khaledul Ahsan, Syeda Ashrafiz Zaharia Prodhan, Zinat Ara Afroze, and Eyasin Ali Sarker in successfully implementing the program. Additionally, we extend special thanks to Sazzad Hossain, Ratan Debanth, Parvin Akhter, Zubaidur Rahman, and George Nokrek for their administrative and logistical support. We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Care Bangladesh and other Implementing Partners (ESDO, POPI, MJSKS, DAM, SKS) for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout the LSPs' journey.

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**Acronyms:**

AI	Artificial Insemination
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BNL	Business Network Leader
BSP	Blue Star Provider
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CoP	Chief of Party
DAM	Dhaka Ahsania Mission
DC	Dedicated Coach
DLO	District Livestock Officer
ESDO	Eco-Social Development Organisation
FF	Field Facilitator
FFBS	Farmer Field Business School
FFH	Fish Fry Hawker
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
GAP	Good Agricultural Practice
GSM	Group Mentorship Session
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IPs	Implementing Partners
LSD	Lumpy Skin Disease
LSPs	Local Service Providers
MBA	Master's in Business Administration
MFIs	Micro Finance Institutions
MJSKS	Mahideb Jubo Somaj Kallayan Somity
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PCSBA	Private Community Skilled Birth Attendants
PEP	Poor and Extreme Poor
PHHS	Post Harvesting & Handling Services
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
PM	Project Manager
PNGO	Partner Non-Governmental Organization
PO	Project Officer
POPI	People's Oriented Program Implementation
RDA	Rural Development Academy
SHOUHARDO	Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities
SKS	Samaj Kallyan Sangstha

SMC	Social Marketing Company
TM-SR	Technical Managers- Support & Retention
UAAO	Upazila Assistant Agriculture Officer
ULO's	Upazila Livestock Officers
UP	Union Parishad
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Table of Contents

1. Annexure I: Stories of Impact.....	v
2. Annexure II: BNL Meetings.....	v
3. Annexure III: Ecosystem Actor Meetup.....	v
1.0 Background .....	1
2.0 Executive Summary.....	1
2.1. Core Program Components .....	3
2.2. Demographic profile of LSPs.....	6
2.3. Implementation Structure.....	6
2.4. Notable Program Achievements .....	8
3.0 Program Components.....	11
3.1. Leadership Academy for Entrepreneurship Training .....	11
Group Mentorship Sessions Photos.....	13
3.2. Kuza Agribytes for Good Agricultural Practices .....	14
3.3. Kuza One Network for Digital record keeping .....	18
3.4. Setting up Business Networks .....	19
3.4.1. Insights on LSPs' portfolio.....	20
3.4.2 Discovery Workshop with a Business Network, Jamalpur .....	21
3.4.2. Key Findings .....	22
3.4.3. BNL Orientation across 8 districts .....	24
3.4.4. Business Network Formation and Meetings .....	25
3.5. Strengthening Business Ecosystem.....	26
3.5.1. Ecosystem Actor Meetups across 8 districts.....	26
3.6. Piloting Livestock Farmer Field & Business School.....	29
4.1. Key Learnings & Takeaways .....	30
4.2. Challenges.....	31
4.3 Program Recommendations .....	32
4.4. Program Sustainability.....	34
5.0 Conclusion .....	35

**Disclaimer:** The information in this report is based on the data and details provided by the LSPs to the Kuza Dedicated Coaches and reflects the progress observed during the SHO III Plus Leadership Academy program. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and reliability, the Care Bangladesh Field staff should promptly communicate any factual corrections or updates required. The report is intended for informational purposes only and should not be considered official or exhaustive without verifying the information with relevant stakeholders.

1. Annexure I: Stories of Impact
2. Annexure II: BNL Meetings
3. Annexure III: Ecosystem Actor Meetup

## 1.0 Background

Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities (SHOUHARDO) III Plus is a two-year program (2022-2024) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aimed at delivering improved gender-equitable food and nutrition security and resilience for 168,521 Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) households in the Char and Haor regions of northern Bangladesh. Building on the success of the predecessor program, SHOUHARDO III Plus has worked with participants to pursue diversified sources of income, support inclusive and sustainable agricultural-led growth, enhance access to markets, especially for women and girls, and improve access to financial services for PEP participants. The program also promotes increased consumption of nutritious foods and micro-nutrients for children under five, pregnant and lactating women, and adolescent girls. The program engages and links the program-facilitated Local Service Providers (LSP) with the public and private sectors to achieve its aim. SHOUHARDO III Plus integrates gender, governance, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), environment, and private sector as cross-cutting components to maximise the program's impacts

Kuza Biashara is a Kenyan social technology enterprise working with smallholder farmers, health workers, sanitation workers, youth and women groups, providing them with opportunities to Learn, Connect, & Grow. Kuza's digital platform offers an innovative bundled solution that provides personalised micro-learning, micro-distribution & micro-mentorship services to these communities on their own terms and at their own convenience. Over the past decade, Kuza has directly impacted over 6 million youth, women and micro-entrepreneurs - from urban slums, rural areas and refugee camps - across 10 African countries and India, providing incubation and business support services, mentoring and coaching and linking them to livelihood opportunities. Kuza's investment in creating a robust digital infrastructure, innovative capacity-building content, mentorship and coaching programs, and community engagement strategies has empowered users living in even the most challenging conditions. Kuza is fostering lasting change by supporting them in creating sustainable livelihood opportunities within their own communities.

Both SHOUHARDO III Plus and Kuza Biashara are mission-aligned in their commitment to improving livelihoods, fostering sustainable development, and empowering marginalised communities through innovative and inclusive approaches. This alignment in mission has led them to collaborate on the LSP entrepreneurial development skills. Further, the collaboration on the LSP entrepreneurial development skills stems from their shared objectives. SHOUHARDO III Plus seeks to improve access to diversified income sources and financial services, while Kuza provides innovative, personalised learning and mentorship platforms. Together, they have designed this program with an aim to strengthen the entrepreneurial skills of LSPs, enabling them to serve their communities better and enhance sustainable development outcomes. This partnership leverages SHOUHARDO III Plus's on-the-ground experience and Kuza's digital solutions to create a comprehensive support system for local service providers, ultimately fostering resilient and empowered communities.

## 2.0 Executive Summary

The program's primary objective has been to empower and strengthen the **450 LSPs** across **Char & Haor regions** and **08 districts** through targeted coaching and mentorship, fostering sustainable entrepreneurship Development. This was accomplished by:

1. Delivering targeted training on essential aspects of business development, entrepreneurship, and leadership, enabling the LSPs to enhance their skills and knowledge.

2. Cultivating a supportive and collaborative network, facilitating peer-to-peer learning among the LSPs. This cooperative environment encouraged the sharing of best practices and innovative ideas.
3. Equipping the LSPs with practical skills and tools necessary to optimise their enterprises.

Target audience & districts: 450 LSPs from 8 districts of 4 regions: Dhaka (72), Mymensingh (88), Rajshahi (58) Rangpur(148) & Sylhet (48) divisions.

District	Total LSPs	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Gaibandha	76	38	38
Habiganj	48	24	24
Jamalpur	36	18	18
Kishoreganj	72	36	36
Kurigram	72	36	36
Netrakona	52	28	24
Sirajganj	58	32	26
Sunamganj	36	18	18
	<b>450</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>220</b>

The SHOUHARDO III Plus Leadership Academy Cohort 1 was officially launched in October 2023 and Cohort 2 in December 2023 across 8 districts. Throughout the program, the LSPs have embraced personal and professional development opportunities.

The key highlights of the program include

1. **Leadership Academy:** 99.3% of LSPs completed the 15-week business development and entrepreneurship program, engaging in peer-to-peer learning and practical application.
2. **Digital Extension:** LSPs utilised the Kuza Agri Bytes app for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) training across various crops and livestock, using tablets for personal learning and community education.
3. **Digital Record Keeping:** LSPs recorded profiles of 15,094 farmers and business transactions worth BDT 4.05 billion, enhancing their engagement and operational transparency.
4. **Business and Leadership Skills:** The program enhanced LSPs' business acumen, leadership skills, and self-confidence, empowering them as community leaders.
5. **Empowerment and Growth:** LSPs experienced personal and professional growth, overcoming gender barriers, and planning for business scalability through strategic partnerships.



6. **Community Engagement:** LSPs became advocates for sustainable practices, significantly impacting their communities through training and outreach.



Orientation workshops were held across 8 district locations where LSPs, Teams from the Implementing NGO Partners and CARE Teams were present

## 2.1. Core Program Components

1. Entrepreneurship training and coaching for selected LSPs
2. Digital platform to access Good Agricultural Practices on various value chains
3. Digital record-keeping tools that will help them capture the profile of their farmers, and service providers; record the demand for products and services from their customers (farmers); record their income and expenses; generate financial statements to build their credit history
4. Creation of Local networks of LSPs, farmers, suppliers and buyers by forming Business Networks at the union level and supporting them to move towards self-sustainability
5. Bridging the gap between LSPs and private sector and government sector actors through organising Ecosystem Actor meetup across 8 districts
6. Piloting Livestock Farmer Field & Business School digital content through Model LSPs/ BNLs as part of community engagement and development

**Leadership Academy**

Video content on business & entrepreneurship skills for leadership development.

**Digital Extension**

Portable digital toolkit to offer good agricultural practices & advisory services to farmers.

**Digital Recordkeeping**

Digital Marketplace to convene stakeholders: buyers, sellers, service providers and facilitate transactions

personalized access to the digital mentorship platform for Business Development Entrepreneurship & coaching through bite sized videos carefully curated by the Kuza mentors.

a portable digital kit to engage the smallholder farmer to provide extension & train them on Good Agronomic Practices to earn their trust and sustain with the commissions they earn.

a digital record keeping tool for LSPs to digitally maintain their master data of farmers, suppliers, buyers, and capture all their business transactions and receive auto generated financial statements.



Towards this, the

1. LSPs underwent 15 weeks of Shouhardo Leadership Academy entrepreneurship training and were supported by the Kuza Dedicated Coaches. During this period, 7 Group Mentorship Sessions were conducted (4 for cohort 1 and 3 for cohort 2) across 8 districts.
2. Kuza Agribytes, a digital platform, was set up for the LSPs to access Good Agricultural Practices on various value chains. LSPs were provided access to 44 resourceful videos across 6 value chains, including Agriculture, Business of Agriculture, Pests and diseases, Livestock, Fisheries, and Financial Inclusion. The LSPs took advantage of this to improve their current understanding and also to engage their farmers/ communities.
3. Kuza One Network was set up for the LSPs to enrol farmers, service providers including buyers and sellers. The LSPs recorded a total of 115,094 farmers and recorded transactions worth BDT 4.05 billion of which BDT 4.04 billion was purchases, 9.1 million was sales, 26 million was money in and 93 million was money out.
4. 93 Business Networks across 8 districts were formed through a rigorous, participatory process of selection, which included a review of individual LSP profiling, feedback from Kuza Dedicated Coaches, Field Facilitators & Project Managers from the respective PNGO and TMSRs from CARE. The objective of these Business Networks is to facilitate the creation of local networks of LSPs, farmers, suppliers and buyers at the union level and support them to move towards self-sustainability
5. 8 Ecosystem partner meet ups were facilitated across 8 districts to bridge the gap between LSPs and private sector/ government sector actors. Partners attending these meet ups included ACI, Lal Teer, A R Malik Seeds, ACME, Brac Seed, SMC, DLO, DD-AI, DD-DAE, District Youth Development Officer, Assistant Director Social Service, AFAD, ACI-Health, BRAC, Metal Seed, Aftab Seed, Ispahani Agro limited, Renata Animal health, Bengal meat, Syngenta, Tensa, NDP, SUS, World Vision, SDRS, TMSS, NRBC Bank, Madhumati Bank, Bank Asia, Chamber of commerce who pledged their commitment to support the LSPs and committed to providing better training, improving product quality, facilitating loan accessibility, and enhancing coordination.
6. As part of the Scaling up of Livestock Farmer Field & Business School, 39 priority modules across Facilitation, Gender, Livestock, Marketing and Nutrition were digitized by Kuza and



piloted in the SHOUHARDO III Plus program through the Model LSPs/ BNLs to promote their community engagement and development. So far, the selected 10 BNLs have provided 50 trainings across various topics in Gender, Livestock, Nutrition and Marketing.



Field Visit for program designing to Jamalpur



Model LSPs with their personalised tabs at Sunamganj



Group activities by LSPs during GSM I in Sirajganj



Handholding support to LSPs struggling to use devices



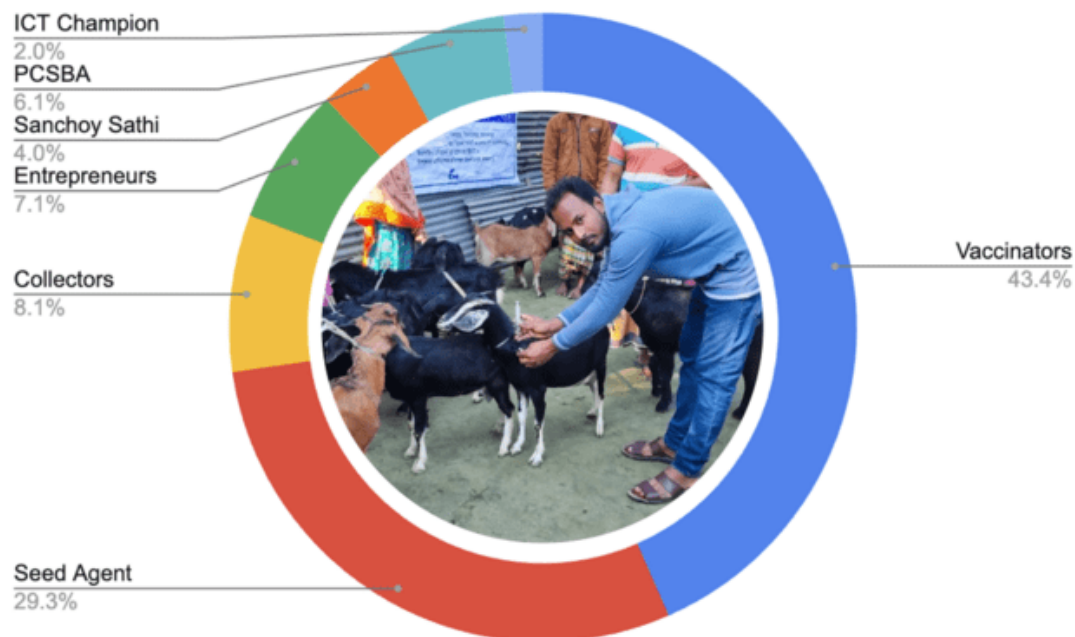
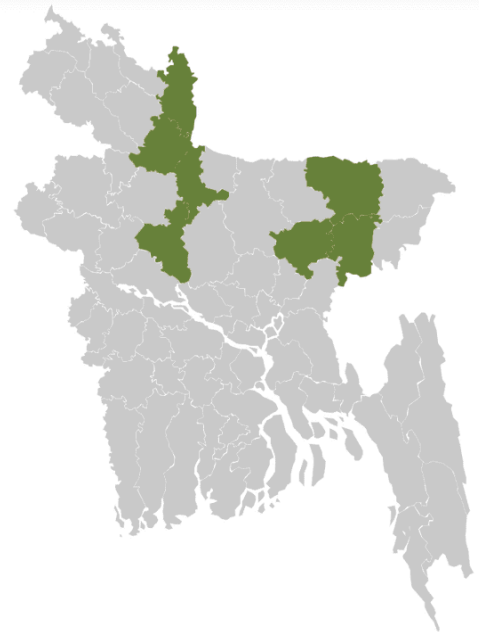
Ecosystem partner meet-up in progress.



Field visits by DCs for LSP Profiling

## 2.2. Demographic profile of LSPs

- 450 LSPs participated in the SHO III Plus Leadership Academy
- 72 from Dhaka, 88 from Mymensingh, 58 from Rajshahi, 148 from Rangpur & 84 from Sylhet Division
- 56% of the LSPs are Youth between the age group of 18-35 years
- 3 of the LSPs are above 60 years
- 18% of LSPs are women
- 43% LSPs are Vaccinator providing vaccination services to the livestock in the community
- 29% of the LSPs are Seed agents supplying seeds and other input products
- 28% LSPs comprise Collectors, Entrepreneurs, PCSBA, Sanchoy Sathi, FFH, BSP, and ICT Champions.



## 2.3. Implementation Structure

The initiative was a collaborative effort involving CARE Bangladesh, Kuza and the National Partner Non-Governmental Organizations (PNGOs), responsible for on-ground implementation and community mobilization of the SHOUHARDO III Plus program, namely Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO), Mahideb Jubo Somaj Kallayan Somity (MJSKS), People's Oriented Program Implementation (POPI) and SKS Foundation. CARE contributed by

developing overall strategies, coordinating activities, and setting up monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Kuza provided digital platforms focussed on entrepreneurship training and market linkages to enhance LSPs' efficiency and productivity and coaching through Dedicated Coaches (DCs). At the same time, the PNGOs facilitated engagement with LSPs and organized and managed resource distribution. Together, these organizations combined their strengths to create a comprehensive and sustainable support system for LSPs, promoting long-term resilience and growth in the agricultural sector of Bangladesh.

## **I. CARE:**

### **a. Overall Coordination and Strategy Development**

- i. Lead the overall coordination of the initiative, ensuring alignment with the project's goals and objectives.
- ii. Develop and refine strategies based on field insights to address the challenges faced by LSPs.

### **b. Capacity Building:**

- i. Design and implement training programs to enhance digital literacy, financial literacy, and market intelligence among LSPs
- ii. Provide guidance on ecosystem development to support LSPs' diversified income-generating activities

### **c. Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- i. Establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress, measure impact, and make necessary adjustments

## **2. Kuza:**

### **a. Capacity Building and Technology support:**

- i. Provide Entrepreneurship and Leadership Development training program to the LSPs
- ii. Provide digital tools and platforms to support LSPs in record-keeping
- iii. Offer training on the use of digital solutions to improve efficiency and productivity among LSPs

### **b. Provide Mentorship support:**

- i. Kuza's Dedicated Coaches offered emotional, functional, and technical support to the LSPs, helping them navigate challenges, optimize their business operations, and leverage technology effectively

### **c. Market Linkages:**

- i. Facilitate connections between LSPs and broader markets to enhance market accessibility and opportunities for higher income

## **3. PNGO:**

### **a. Field Implementation and Local Engagement (Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO), Mahideb Jubo Somaj Kallayan Somity (MJSKS), National Development Programme (NDP), People's Oriented Program Implementation (POPI) and SKS Foundation)**

- i. Execute on-ground activities, including organizing meetings and training sessions with LSPs.

- ii. Facilitate direct engagement with LSPs to understand their needs and provide immediate support
  - b. **Community Mobilization:**
    - i. Mobilize LSPs and stakeholders to participate in the program.
    - ii. Ensure LSPs' feedback and suggestions are communicated back to CARE and Kuza for continuous improvement.
  - c. **Resource Distribution:**
    - i. Manage the distribution of necessary resources, such as digital devices and other allocated resources to LSPs.
- 4. Collaborative Efforts:**
- a. **Joint Planning and Review Meetings:**
    - i. Regularly conduct joint planning and review meetings involving CARE, PNGO, and Kuza to ensure cohesive implementation and address any emerging issues promptly
  - b. **Feedback Loops:**
    - i. Establish robust feedback mechanisms to continuously gather insights from LSPs and other stakeholders, ensuring that interventions remain relevant and effective
  - c. **Sustainability Focus:**
    - i. All partners worked towards creating a sustainable model that empowers LSPs, ensuring ongoing community engagement, and fostering long-term development.

Through a well-coordinated and comprehensive approach, the initiative has successfully empowered LSPs to promote sustainable community development and foster long-term resilience and growth.

## 2.4. Notable Program Achievements

1. Leadership Academy: **99.3%** of the LSPs successfully completed the 15-week business development entrepreneurship and coaching program. LSPs are engaged in peer-to-peer learning and learning by doing.
2. Digital Extension: LSPs have undertaken Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) training via Kuza Agri Bytes app for Cucumber, mushroom, rice, mustard, potato, turmeric, drumstick, homestead vegetable gardening, goatery, poultry, fisheries, etc. The self-learning mobile app empowered the LSPs to understand the GAP practices and assess themselves. Some LSPs are using their tablets to engage and educate their farmers on some GAP practices.
3. Digital Record Keeping: As part of the farmer engagement, LSPs have been recording their farmer profiling. 15,243 farmers have been registered and business transactions worth BDT 9.04 million have been recorded - inputs, aggregation and farm services.
4. Increased knowledge and understanding of business development and entrepreneurship: Through the program, the LSPs gained comprehensive knowledge and practical insights into business development, including financial planning, marketing strategies, and market analysis, enabling them to make informed decisions and effectively manage their businesses.



5. Enhanced leadership skills and self-confidence: The program nurtured leadership skills in fostering their self-confidence and empowering them to take charge of their businesses. They developed effective communication, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, positioning them as influential leaders within their communities and the agricultural sector. And these skills are evident in their progress observed through mentorship sessions.
6. Empowerment of the LSPs: The program has played a vital role in empowering the LSPs, fostering their personal and professional growth. gain confidence, resilience, and a sense of empowerment through mentorship, peer learning, and exposure. The program's focus on fostering a growth mindset has helped them overcome gender-related barriers and emerge as influential leaders in their communities as well as developed an entrepreneurial mindset.
7. Business expansion and scalability: Many of the LSPs have successfully planned to expand their businesses to achieve scalability. They utilised the skills and knowledge gained from the program to identify new market opportunities, diversify their product offerings, and establish strategic partnerships. The program played a crucial role in helping the LSPs overcome challenges associated with business growth and provided them with the tools to navigate scaling their ventures effectively.
8. Increased business performance and profitability: As a direct result of the program, the LSPs experienced increased revenue and improved profitability in their businesses. The adoption of effective marketing strategies, efficient operational practices, and enhanced financial management techniques enabled the LSPs to optimise their business performance.
9. The program's emphasis on market research and customer-centric approaches contributed to higher customer acquisition, retention, and overall business success.
10. Community engagement and social impact: The LSPs actively engaged with their communities, sharing their knowledge, experiences, and success stories. They have become advocates for sustainable agricultural practices, inspiring farmers to improve productivity and yields. Through initiatives such as training, demonstrations and community outreach activities, they have positively impacted the lives of farmers, promoting inclusive economic growth and sustainability.

LSPs dedication to learning and self-improvement remained steadfast throughout and their commitment to their growth journey has been very inspiring. LSPs have consistently shown up, ready to learn, connect, and grow with their peers, making the most out of every learning opportunity. Not only have they embraced their own development, but they have also provided outstanding support and peer to peer mentorship to their fellow LSPs, highlighting the collaborative spirit within the program. LSPs commitment to learning, drive to excel, and camaraderie is shaping them as role models within the program and beyond. As they continue on their growth trajectory, there is no doubt that these LSPs will make a significant impact in their businesses and communities, leaving a lasting legacy of success and inspiration. As we delve into the report, you will discover stories of perseverance, resilience, and innovation. LSPs seized every opportunity to enhance their business acumen, embracing new concepts and strategies with unwavering determination. Witnessing their growth, both as individuals and as a united force, has been an awe-inspiring experience for all involved.

However, the journey was not without its hurdles. The LSPs faced geographical barriers, limited resources, and personal commitments that tested their resolve. Yet, their unwavering spirit and unwavering belief in their dreams propelled them forward. Their stories of overcoming challenges will leave you inspired, reminding us all of the indomitable strength within each one of us. In the face of adversity, we have identified valuable recommendations to pave the way for future initiatives. By broadening their range of services, collaborating as clusters, and engaging in building stronger relations with their customers, the LSPs can significantly enhance the scope and impact of their businesses. When the program brings together strategic partnerships with the private sector partners and creates an enabling environment for them to collaborate, the LSPs can unlock new opportunities for growth and development. By embracing these initiatives, they can not only empower themselves but also contribute to their communities' overall advancement and prosperity.



Aklima from Sunamganj district training 18 farmers from Kaukandi village on homestead vegetable farming and goat rearing practices



With the help of LSP Subas Chandra from Gazaria fulchhari, 20 households received various kinds of vegetable seed from upazila agriculture office. He also trained them on plantations.



Nobi Hossain from Sirajganj district training farmers on cows, goats, sheep and chickens rearing



A free vaccination camp was organized by ESDO at Panchbaria, Islampur on the World Women's Day led by our Model LSP Raju Mia. In this camp, anthrax vaccines were provided to local livestock farmers



### 3.0 Program Components

#### 3.1. Leadership Academy for Entrepreneurship Training

The Leadership Academy is an MBA-inspired executive education program spread over 15 weeks allowing the entrepreneurs to learn at their own pace, practise what they learn (in their day-to-day business) and work with their Dedicated Coaches to refine their goals & plans for running & growing their businesses. The program design is designed to support entrepreneurs in Learning, Connecting, and Growing on their terms and at their own pace in a personalised learning environment with bite-sized mentorship videos and interactive exercises, supported by the Kuza Dedicated Coaches.

The Leadership Academy sessions kicked off with a burst of energy on 08 October 2023, and they have an overall completion rate of 99% (99% in Cohort 1 and 99% in Cohort 2). The sessions received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the LSPs on how they left a profound impact on a personal and professional level. LSPs expressed genuine appreciation for the session, emphasising how it challenged their preconceived notions and opened their minds to new possibilities.

Overall, the 15-week program equips LSPs with the necessary tools and perspectives to not only succeed in their current operations but also to embrace future challenges and opportunities in the dynamic agricultural landscape. The greatest benefit as the LSPs see is the holistic growth and development of LSPs, positioning them for sustained success and impact in their communities.

The insights gained from the interactions with the LSPs, both individually and in groups, during the program implementation provide valuable information for the program evaluation and future planning. They highlight the program's success in attracting talented and motivated LSPs with the potential to drive positive change in the agricultural sector.



**Hadis Mia**  
LSP, Netrokona

Completed 15 weeks of SHO III Plus Entrepreneurship Training  
Completed 01 Value Chain (Livestock)  
Registered 343 Farmers  
Conducting farmer trainings with the Tablet received  
Recording Transactions using One Network

“The past 15 weeks in the Business Development, Entrepreneurship, and Coaching Program have been a game-changer for us as Local Service Providers (LSP). The training sessions equipped us with practical skills, helping us improve our operations, engage with customers better, and explore new agribusiness opportunities. The coaching sessions were personalised and guided us through challenges, refining our strategies. The focus on a growth mindset has been transformative, boosting our confidence and inspiring positive changes in how we operate. We are grateful for this journey, and the program has made us more resilient, adaptable, and committed to excellence. The sessions gave me a realisation that I need to focus on marketing and record keeping. I have already started registering my farmers on the One Network platform to keep a track of my customer base and plan better on marketing. We look forward to continued growth and success with the lessons we've learned.”

## Group Mentorship Sessions

Group Mentorship Sessions (GSMs) are in-person, one-day district-level/cluster-level events organized and facilitated by the Kuza Dedicated Coaches (DC) in collaboration with the Care TM-SRs and the Implementing Partners (IPs) on a monthly basis.

### Objectives of a GSM

1. Create and nurture a collaborative learning and networking platform where LSPs convene under Kuza Dedicated Coach's guidance to share insights, challenges, experiences, and knowledge.
2. Promote peer-to-peer learning, enabling LSPs to draw from each other's expertise, refine business strategies, and receive mentor-led guidance.
3. Conduct refresher training for the LSPs on the Kuza tools for digital record keeping, Agribytes or leadership academy
4. Create a safe space for LSPs to engage in honest conversations and deliberations, creating a sense of camaraderie and forming trusted relations that provide a collective source of encouragement and diverse perspectives.
5. Create networking opportunities for LSPs to establish meaningful connections, explore potential collaborations amongst themselves at a local level, and access opportunities via a broader business community, fostering an environment of shared learning and growth.



The GSMs conducted between November 2023- April 2024 with LSPs proved insightful and transformative. The LSPs actively shared experiences, challenges, and success stories, fostering a collaborative learning environment. The session provided a platform for collective problem-solving, enabling participants to draw from each other's diverse perspectives. The Kuza Dedicated Coaches facilitated discussions on various topics, ranging from market strategies to financial management and tailoring guidance to meet the specific needs of the LSPs. This collaborative approach enhanced the LSPs' understanding of key concepts and built a strong sense of community and camaraderie among them. The Group Mentorship Session emerged as a dynamic forum for knowledge exchange, peer support, and collective growth, contributing significantly to the LSPs' entrepreneurial journey. During Cohort I, a comprehensive series of 39 GSMs was conducted across diverse locations, ranging from single venues to those spanning two different locales. These engagements were strategically distributed across various districts, including Sirajganj, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Kishoreganj, Netrokona, Jamalpur, Habiganj, and Sunamganj.

The locations included:

- **Sirajganj:** Belkuchi (03), Chauhali (03)
- **Gaibandha:** 03
- **Kurigram:** Char Rajibpur (03), Nageshwari, Phulbari (03)
- **Kishoreganj:** Nikli (03), Mithamain (03),

- **Netrokona:** SUS (03), Khaliajuri UHC (03),
- **Jamalpur:** Bakshiganj (03)
- **Habiganj:** Baniachong (03)
- **Sunamganj:** Tahirpur (03), Dowarabazar (03)

The agenda for each GSM was meticulously curated to address key objectives and topics. For instance, **GSM 1** focused on thoroughly understanding the Leadership Academy program sessions, facilitating engaging activities, and creating a platform for participants to share their experiences. Noteworthy discussions revolved around problem mapping to identify challenges faced by LSPs and their interconnectivity. This was coupled with an emphasis on active participation in the Kuza One Network.

Similarly, **GSM 2** delved into the Leadership Academy program sessions, offering insights into specific sessions while encouraging collaboration among participants to tackle implementation hurdles collectively. The GSM aimed to encourage LSPs' to think creatively to address the identified challenges, encourage collaboration, and identify business opportunities and aspirations.

**GSM 3** was dedicated to empowering LSPs to craft their One Page Business Plan, an essential tool for attracting financial support and fostering business growth. The emphasis was on empowering LSPs to create their own One one-page business Plan and presenting the same confidently.

Furthermore, all GSM sessions included informative discussions on the safeguarding policies of CARE Bangladesh, underscoring the importance of adherence to ethical practices and active involvement for sustainable business growth.

Transitioning to Cohort 2, the GSM format remained consistent, albeit with a reduction in the number of sessions to two per location. However, the overarching themes and objectives mirrored those of Cohort 1, ensuring continuity and alignment with the program's objectives across all engagements.

### Group Mentorship Sessions Photos





### 3.2. Kuza Agribytes for Good Agricultural Practices

The LSPs are engaged in various value chains, showcasing their diversity and commitment to agricultural entrepreneurship. Kuza Agribytes supported the LSPs, helping them to learn and adopt good Agricultural practices in Cucumber, mushroom, rice, mustard, potato, turmeric, drumstick, homestead vegetable gardening, goatery, poultry, fisheries value chains and skills on the value chains of interest. The platform provided accessible and relevant agricultural information and best practices that were specific to their local context, enabling the LSPs to enhance their farming knowledge for better customer engagement and improved productivity.



By accessing Kuza Agribytes, the LSPs gained valuable insights into modern and sustainable farming methods for Cucumber, mushroom, rice, mustard, potato, turmeric, drumstick, homestead vegetable gardening, goatery, poultry, fisheries, etc. They learnt about optimal planting and harvesting times, efficient water and resource management, pest and disease control, and effective post-harvest handling techniques as well as best animal husbandry practices. These best practices would help them engage their customers better through disseminating the knowledge. The knowledge acquired through Kuza Agribytes empowers the LSPs to make informed decisions that can positively impact increased profitability and economic stability. Beyond their individual growth, the LSPs recognized the importance of sharing their newfound knowledge with their communities. Some of the LSPs have become local champions and mentors, organising training sessions and workshops to pass on the skills they acquired through Kuza Agribytes. By disseminating these best practices, the LSPs play a crucial role in enhancing the overall agricultural practices within their communities.

Through this knowledge-sharing approach, more farmers would start to embrace improved Agricultural as well as livestock practices leading to a collective impact on food security, income generation, and community development. The LSPs' efforts in disseminating information on Cucumber,



mushroom, rice, mustard, potato, turmeric, drumstick, homestead vegetable gardening, goater, poultry, fisheries value chains further strengthened their position as respected leaders and catalysts for positive change in the region.

In conclusion, Kuza Agribytes facilitated the LSPs' access to valuable agricultural knowledge, empowering them to adopt good Agricultural practices. The acquired knowledge not only contributed to their individual growth and economic prosperity but also enabled them to become agents of change, passing on this valuable information to their communities and contributing to the overall development and prosperity of the smallholder farming community.

The completion rate for the Agribytes :

- 17% of the LSPs have completed Financial Inclusion sessions
- 34% completed Fisheries
- 32% completed Livestock
- 23% completed Pests & Diseases across value chains
- 26% completed Business of Agriculture



#### **Golam Mostofa**

LSP, Sirajganj

Completed 15 weeks of SHO III Plus Entrepreneurship Training

Completed 03 Value Chains (Fisheries, Livestock, Agriculture)

Registered 28 Farmers

Conducting farmer trainings with the Tablet

Recording Transactions using One Network

The "Agribytes" has been a great asset for me. The platform's comprehensive content on Paddy and maize agronomy practices has significantly enhanced my knowledge base. The bite-sized, practical lessons are easy to grasp, allowing us to swiftly adopt and implement best practices. The impact has been profound as I, in turn, train the farmers I serve. I have watched all the videos in the agribyte application. The tablet has become an asset in our mission to empower farmers with the latest and most effective Agricultural techniques as I show videos to LSPs on my Tablet. It has not only streamlined our learning process but has also changed the way we educate and support our farming community. As a result, I have observed positive responses from my customers after implementing this practice."

#### **Potential for LSPs as Agricultural Extensionists**

LSPs serve as invaluable extension agents, playing a pivotal role in supporting smallholder farmers and fostering sustainable agricultural practices. Their unique position as entrepreneurs immersed in the agricultural sector positions them as effective conduits of knowledge and innovation. With a hands-on understanding of livestock/ crop farmer challenges, these entrepreneurs can bridge the gap between traditional practices and modern, efficient techniques.

LSPs bring practical insights and real-world experiences, making them relatable mentors for smallholder farmers. Their entrepreneurial spirit enables them to adapt swiftly to changing agricultural landscapes, offering tailored solutions that align with the specific needs of local communities. Being

embedded in the farming community, agripreneurs facilitate the dissemination of crucial information on best practices, crop management, and market trends.

LSPs leverage the access to the digital content available on their tabs to elevate farmer training. Through the Agribytes content on the tabs, some of the LSPs showcase digital content, making training sessions engaging and informative. This combination enhances the impact of extension services, enabling LSPs to visually convey best farming practices across crop & livestock value chains including pests & disease management. Farmers benefit from a vivid, interactive learning experience, fostering better comprehension and retention. The digital toolkit becomes a catalyst for knowledge dissemination, allowing LSPs to reach a wider audience during community gatherings or training sessions. This innovative use of technology transforms traditional training methods, making them more accessible and impactful for farmers, thereby contributing to sustainable agricultural development.

Despite the many advantages, this model of using LSPs as extension agents also comes with its set of challenges:

1. **Limited Resources:** LSPs face challenges due to limited resources, making it difficult for them to reach all smallholder farmers effectively, and limiting their ability to invest in training farmers eg: farmers expect financial assistance to cover costs to attend the training.
2. **Resistance to Change:** Some smallholder farmers are resistant to adopting new practices, especially those following traditional methods for a long time.
3. **Market Dynamics:** LSPs face challenges in understanding and navigating market dynamics, especially if they are dealing with fluctuating prices and demand and hence are reluctant to change
4. **Climate Change Impact:** Unpredictable weather patterns due to climate change are affecting farming practices, making it challenging for LSPs to provide consistent advice.
5. **Lack of Training Opportunities:** LSPs themselves lack access to continuous training opportunities, hindering their ability to stay updated on the latest livestock/ agricultural practices.
6. **Scale and Reach:** Scaling the model to reach a larger number of farmers can be a logistical challenge, requiring effective coordination and support, sometimes from the district administration or district extension officers.
7. **Scale and Reach:** Scaling the model to reach a larger number of farmers can be a logistical challenge, requiring effective coordination and support, sometimes from the district administration or district extension officers.
8. **Data Privacy and Security:** The use of digital tools may raise concerns about data privacy and security, especially when LSPs try to collect sensitive information about farmers

Despite these challenges, addressing them through strategic planning, collaboration, and ongoing support can enhance the effectiveness of the LSPs as extension agent models. These LSPs serving as extension agents for smallholder farmers can unlock various potentials and benefits:

1. **Market Access:** By connecting with smallholder farmers, LSPs can establish a reliable customer base for their products or services, creating a mutually beneficial market relationship.
2. **Income Diversification:** Serving as extension agents allows LSPs to diversify their income streams. They can earn through consultations, training sessions, and the sale of agro-inputs or technology.

3. **Community Recognition:** LSPs play a crucial role in community development. As they contribute to local farmers' agricultural knowledge and success, they gain recognition and trust within the community.
4. **Innovation and Technology Adoption:** Being on the frontline of agricultural practices, LSPs have the opportunity to introduce and promote innovative farming techniques and technologies, ensuring efficient and sustainable practices.
5. **Capacity Building:** An extension agent positions LSPs as educators, helping farmers enhance their skills and knowledge. This capacity-building role contributes to the overall improvement of agricultural practices in the community.
6. **Networking Opportunities:** Engaging with farmers provides LSPs with networking opportunities. Building relationships with farmers, local organisations, and other stakeholders can open doors for collaborations and partnerships.
7. **Resilience Building:** Through continuous engagement, LSPs can help farmers build resilience against challenges such as climate change, pests, and market fluctuations, contributing to long-term sustainability.
8. **Government Support:** As key players in agricultural development, LSPs may attract government support and incentives for their contributions to community development and economic growth.
9. **Personal and Professional Growth:** Serving as extension agents allows LSPs to expand their knowledge and expertise continually. This continuous learning contributes to personal and professional growth.
10. **Positive Impact:** LSPs become agents of positive change in their communities, contributing to food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable agricultural practices.



In summary, LSPs serving as extension agents not only benefit financially but also play a pivotal role in fostering agricultural development, innovation, and community well-being.

### 3.3. Kuza One Network for Digital record keeping

LSPs maintain their digital record keeping, and as they sync their tablets, the program team can see through their dashboard the performance of the entire cohort and the individual performance of each LSP. Here is a snapshot of the LSP dashboard where you can see the summary of their aggregation business, inputs & post-harvest solutions (PHHS) business, Mechanization and Services business. The total farmers recorded on the platform stands at **15,243 farmers** with **197 farmers** being trained through **12 training sessions** with **35% female farmers**.

#### LSPs Business transaction summary as on 05 Jun 24

Province	Total	Inputs & PHHS*	Farm Services	Aggregation
Dhaka	1,338,006	783,660	554,346	0
Mymensingh	3,003,207	282,099	574,383	2,146,725
Rajshahi	594,468	121,039	323,686	149,743
Rangpur	4,109,983	3,465,839	201,626	442,518
Sylhet	92,942	89,502	2,390	1,050
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,138,606</b>	<b>4,742,139</b>	<b>1,656,431</b>	<b>2,740,036</b>

\* PHHS: Post Harvest Handling Solutions



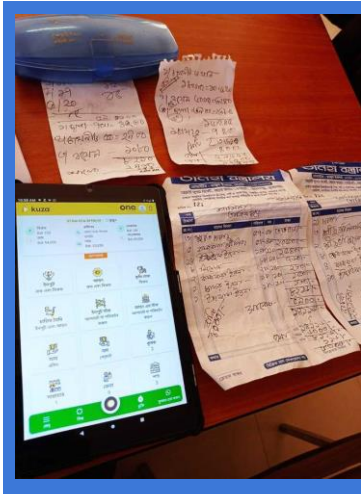
**Shahjalal**  
**LSP, Kurigram**

Completed 15 weeks of SHO III Plus Entrepreneurship Training  
Completed 03 Value Chains (Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries)  
Registered 215 Farmers  
Recording Transactions using One Network  
Volume of transactions: BDT 13.67 million  
Income streams: veterinary pharmacy and veterinary services

"The adoption of digital record-keeping through the Kuza One Network digital platform has been revolutionary. I wasn't much aware of the importance of record keeping and the process looked very difficult. After the financial management sessions my DC helped me in understanding the application. Since then I have started practising at least 3-4 transactions per day as a practice. Now this has become a bit interesting. Previously, managing records was very difficult. Now, with the user-friendly digital interface, the process has become streamlined and efficient. Additionally, the real-time accessibility of



information has empowered me to make informed decisions promptly. It is a powerful tool that aligns perfectly with our commitment to efficiency and excellence in serving our farming community."



#### Samima LSP, Sunamganj

Completed 15 weeks of SHO III Plus Entrepreneurship Training  
Completed 03 Value Chains (Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries)  
Registered 39 customers  
Recording Transactions using One Network  
Income streams: Tailoring Business

Samima is a small Entrepreneur involved in tailoring business, doing Kuza one entry of product purchase vouchers.

### 3.4. Setting up Business Networks

A Business Network is a dynamic ecosystem comprising Local Service Providers (LSPs), Model LSPs, Private Sector Companies, Government Organizations, and other relevant entities, all collaborating to foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable growth. Through synergistic partnerships, knowledge sharing, and resource pooling, the network empowers its members to thrive in a competitive business environment, driving collective prosperity and societal impact.



The concept of Business Network aims at strengthening the business ecosystem at a micro level through setting up business networks at Union Levels. Each group is headed by a **Business Network Leader (BNL)** whom the program team has selected after a thorough evaluation procedure. Some of the criteria were performance in the academy, business acumen, leadership and communication skill, last but not least his own motivation to drive a positive change in the community and support the ecosystem. These BNLs are responsible for setting up Business Networks in their community as well as managing it.

The main objective of a Business Network are:

1. To strengthen the business ecosystem in the union
2. To support the members by sharing knowledge and networks
3. Foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem
4. To serve the community with the quality products and services

The program aims to set up 115 Business Networks across all the unions in 8 program operating districts. Out of which 93 BNLs and Networks are identified through the evaluation and the plan is to identify the rest of the Network leaders from the Model LSPs based on their performance in the upcoming days.

### 3.4.1. Insights on LSPs' portfolio

1. Every LSP is unique and has a different portfolio of products and services that they offer to their customers (farmers)
2. 131 out of the 450 LSPs are **Seed Agents**. Most LSPs have shops from which they avail their products and services. Motiur Rahman (Kishoreganj), Bablu Mia (Sunamganj), Makhon Lal (Kurigram) and Monju Mia (Gaibandha), Hafizul Sarker (Sirajganj) stand out among the Seed agents. The 4 have expanded their business by adding more products in their store as well as increased customer engagement by sharing best agricultural practices videos from agribytes app. This not only increased their sales but also improved their customer relation ultimately impacting customer retention as well as word of mouth promotion. Hafizul also installed pumps at his shop adding another product line to support the community in irrigation services.
3. 192 out of 450 LSPs are **Vaccinators** who deal in animal husbandry services to farmers. They primarily provide vaccination as well as Artificial Insemination services. Hadis Mia (Netrokona), Monoronjon Das (Kishoreganj) and Sahed (Jamalpur) are among the Vaccinators who penetrated their market through an improved marketing strategy. While some of them applied the Place concept and rearranged their shops, some of them added new products, making it a one-stop solution for all kinds of animal needs.
4. Shahid from Jamalpur went the extra mile to promote his business. He started writing his contact number in front of houses where he provides veterinary services. This helped him acquire more customers by increasing service visibility in the community.
5. There are 34 **Collectors** who serve as produce Collectors, primarily involved in availing the market access to the community. Most of them deal in collecting agricultural and animal products and selling them in the local market. Whereas Rashedul Islam from Gaibandha took a dealership from Mari Gold Agri Science Ltd this January to supply pesticides and fertiliser for agriculture. Doing a background integration also aims to supply fresh vegetables to Dhaka from his union; Zia Rahman from Sunamganj expanded his area of operations from 5 to 10 villages buying chickens. This gave him an opportunity to negotiate better with the traders due to scale in aggregation.
6. There are 25 **Private Community Skilled Birth Attendants (PCSBAs)** providing health services to pregnant and lactating women (PLW) at a low cost, right at their doorstep. In the case of PCSBAs, Mahmuda (Netrokona) improved her sales by rearranging

her products in her shop and an improved sales technique; Taslima (Sunamganj) aims to set up her own pharmacy for which she already interacted with the SMC representative; Understanding the need for multiple sources of income opportunity Joba Rani Das (Kishoreganj) started bottle gourd cultivation in addition to her tailoring business & is still working dedicatedly in her home pharmacy with firm plans to expand that.

7. 21 LSPs in the program working **with Sanchay Sathis promoting village-level** savings groups to promote community savings and loan options. Understanding the income limitation from the Sanchay Sathi service most of the LSPs are engaged in some other activities as well. Out of them, some of the LSPs who stood out and became an example for other Sanchay Sathis in their communities are- Khadiza (Kurigram), who, alongside her work as a Sanchay Sathi also manages a tailoring shop and understanding the upcoming Eid market, she is starting her cloth store from where the customers can buy readymade cloths. In Sirajganj, Rehana Parvin purchased a sewing machine with the help of her relatives and already started sewing ladies clothes in her area; now she wants to start a clothing business so that her customers can buy clothes from her for their dresses and "Nakshi Kathas"(She has a Nakshi katha printing business a few years back) alongside sewing to increase her income. Lovely Begum, another Sanchay Sathi from Kishoreganj, manages a cattle farm and, after watching homestead gardening videos on attribute, started vegetable cultivation.
8. There are 32 **Entrepreneurs** in both cohorts. Jannatul, an Entrepreneur (Sunamganj), was a housewife before they started a duck farm with 20 ducks 3 months ago. Now, she is involved in selling eggs for 200 taka each. Mizanur Rahman, another LSP from Kurigram, will start a veterinary medicine and cattle feed shop. He already prepared the shop. Besides, he is planning to take another pond as a lease for fish farming. Md. Babul Ahmed (Kurigram) is planning to start a decorator business as a new venture in addition to his existing online and photocopy shop. He has already rented a shop and is currently purchasing the inventory for the business.

"As LSPs, we truly appreciate the program's support in providing us access to business skills, digital devices and continued support from the Care team, POPI and the Kuza Dedicated Coaches. We would like to request the Program to establish crucial market linkages and finance connections. This will significantly improve our access to reliable markets, ensure fair pricing, timely availability of products and offer valuable insights into value addition. We kindly request ongoing assistance in exploring diverse financing avenues to provide the necessary capital for scaling our veterinary business. Your continuous support is vital in guiding us through the complexities of market dynamics and financial landscapes, helping transform our business journey into a thriving and sustainable venture. Thank you for considering us to be an integral part of the community development initiative."

- Nur Mohammad, LSP, Netrokona

### 3.4.2 Discovery Workshop with a Business Network, Jamalpur

On 28th April 2024, the SHOUHARDO leadership team, led by Mannan da, Mahfuz da, Ashrafiz Apa, and Hedyat Da along with Kuza team - led by Abinash Puri and Farhan Akif conducted a field visit to Jamalpur District, facilitated by the implementing partner, ESDO. The primary objective was to engage in an in-depth dialogue with 21 (Out of which 17 were present) Local Service Providers (LSPs) including 1 BNL and 3 Model LSPs from Goaler Char

Union of Islampur Upazilas, to understand their challenges and explore potential areas for intervention.

All the participants were engaged in a focused group discussion to understand the various challenges faced by the LSPs and whether there is a need to set up some structured committees for everyone's benefit. All the members participated actively in the discussion and suggested some important points. Below are some key insights from the session:



Focus Group Discussion with model LSPs at Jamalpur

### 3.4.2. Key Findings

1. **Challenges:** Here are some of the challenges raised by the LSPs in the current scenario-
  - a. As most of the LSPs are operating at a small scale and lower volume, the profit margin is very low and sometimes loss-making also, because of which it's difficult for them to negotiate with companies for a better deal
  - b. Most of them don't have a storage space to manage inventory
  - c. Lack of capital is a significant challenge in growing their business
  - d. Affordability and accessibility of quality products is also a challenge for the LSPs, restricting them to serve their customers better
  - e. There's a clear need for technical knowledge like artificial insemination for some of the Vaccinators
2. **Existing non-structured network:** One of the Model LSPs, Mofazzal Hossain, a vaccinator by profession, shared how he is getting leads from the 5 Sanchay Sathis of that network. The Sanchay Sathis, on the other hand, also shared that as Mofazzal provides an excellent service, recommending him to the farmers also helps them better engage with them. This discussion not only shed light on an existing informal network but also paved the way to a debate on the need to form more such groups but with some structures to it.



3. **Exploring a structured Business Network:** All the LSPs then engaged in a discussion to identify the need of a structured Business Network and how it can help them maximise their potential. The members then started sharing about what could be various roles and responsibilities, guidelines, etc. The LSPs also shared that it can also help them in demand aggregation, improve communication, knowledge sharing, cross-promotion of products & services, connecting businesses with businesses and lastly a better networking between LSPs & customers.
4. **Identified gaps and potential areas for Intervention:**
  - a. LSPs need support in the initial days to set up the network and plan their activities
  - b. As 75-80% LSPs in the network are non-model LSPs there is a clear need for knowledge sharing
  - c. Some of the LSPs have good network with some private sector companies, they can be guided on how to utilise that network
  - d. The LSPs currently involved in customer engagement can encourage and guide other LSPs
  - e. Although individually they have a limitation of products and services but together as a group they can have a wide range
5. **Program Design**
  - a. The members agreed that the network should have a leader or President who is responsible for overall management, and a Vice President should support him.
  - b. The members should meet at least once in a month to discuss and plan activities
  - c. There should be a membership fee collected from all the members, which can be utilised from team meetings and other group activities
  - d. There should be a Treasurer in the network who will be responsible for any kind of monetary transactions as well as maintaining transparency
  - e. The group should also be open to allowing LSPs beyond the SHOUHARDO program only if all the network members agree
  - f. The members agreed that there should be a name to the group and which can be kept as the 'Union Name Business Network.'
  - g. The Model LSPs who were a part of the SHOUHARDO Leadership Academy will share their knowledge with the non-model LSPs



## Conclusion

The field visit to Jamalpur gave invaluable insight into the challenges faced by both the Model and Non-model LSPs. The discussion also made the whole design participatory through their active involvement. With the insights received from the participants, the program team decided to develop a draft bylaw for the Network, which can be customized later by the Networks as per their needs.

### 3.4.3. BNL Orientation across 8 districts

In-person BNL Orientation Sessions were conducted across 8 districts with 93 Model LSPs in attendance.

Date	District	Venue	Attendees
May 6, 2024	Kishoreganj	POPI Part	<b>CARE:</b> Ashrafiz Apa, Parvin Apa and Mitu Apa <b>Implementing Partner:</b> POPI- PM, POs and all FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Abinash, Zorna and Uhlayee
May 6, 2024	Kurigram	TDH, Kurigram	<b>CARE:</b> Hedyat Da, Pavel Da and Susil Bhai <b>Implementing Partner:</b> MJSKS- PM, POs and all FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Farhan, Masud and Taushik
May 7, 2024	Sunamganj	FIVDB, Shantiganj, Sunamganj	<b>CARE:</b> Harunur Bhai <b>Implementing Partner:</b> DAM- PM, POs and all FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Kanik and Anup
May 9, 2024	Jamalpur	US-DTRC, Jamalpur	<b>CARE:</b> Aslam Bhai <b>Implementing Partner:</b> ESDO- PM, POs and all FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Abinash, Nahid, Saad
May 9, 2024	Sirajganj	NDP Centre, Training Bagbari, Sirajganj	<b>CARE:</b> Rafiq Da, TM-SR <b>Implementing Partner:</b> SKS- PM, POs, and all FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Farhan, Nipun, Bonhi
May 15, 2024	Netrokona	SUS Training Center, Netrakona	<b>CARE:</b> Mitu Apa <b>Implementing Partner:</b> POPI- PM, POs and FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Saad, Uhlayee, Zorna
May 15, 2024	Gaibandha	SKS Inn, Gaibandha	<b>CARE:</b> Laizu Apa <b>Implementing Partner:</b> SKS- PM, POs and FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Shadman, Taushik
May 19, 2024	Habiganj	Union Parishad Hall, Baniachong, Habiganj	<b>CARE:</b> Harun bhai <b>Implementing Partner:</b> DAM- PM, POs and FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Julhas, Anup

Through these Orientation sessions, the LSPs were oriented on the

1. Concept of Business Network
2. Objective of forming business networks
3. Network Bylaw
4. Roles & Responsibilities of the BNL, FF and DCs
5. Action plan

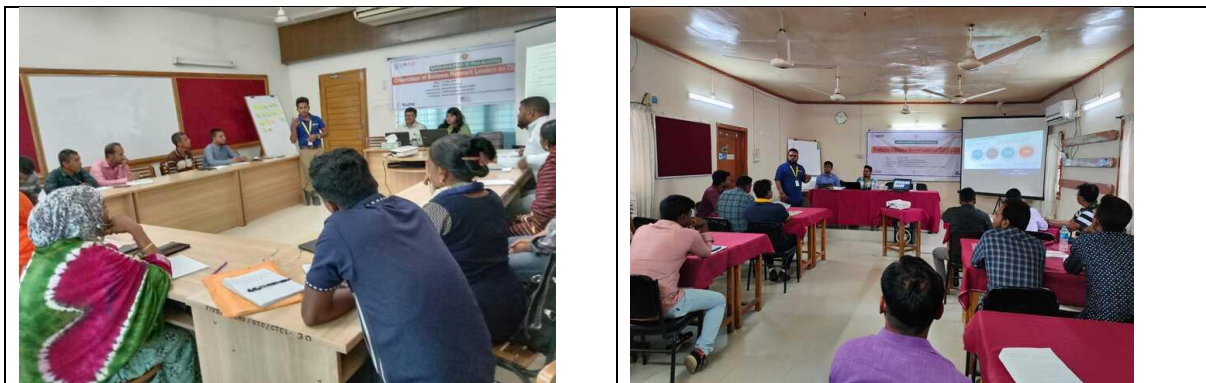
### Group Discussion

To understand the BNL's understanding of the concept and the potential challenges, the Kuza facilitators in every location initiated a group discussion among the BNLs. Here are some of the queries raised by the BNLs:

1. What should be the age bracket for the Network members?
2. What is the maximum number of members can be added in a network?
3. Who will provide the cost of food and travel in the network meetings?
4. Will they be getting any additional devices?
5. Where can they conduct the meetings?
6. Will the IPs/Care/Kuza monitor their activities?

### Challenges highlighted

1. Difficulty in convincing especially the Non-model LSPs to be an active part of the Network.
2. Even if some of them are convinced the members might not come to the meeting due to the harvesting season.
3. The members might expect some kind of remuneration for attending the meetings.



### 3.4.4. Business Network Formation and Meetings

After the BNL orientation the Network leaders went back and shared about this new initiative with other Model as well as Non model LSPs with the help of FFs and Kuza DC. Then with everyone's agreement some of the Business Networks had their 1st meeting where they discussed it and came to a combined agreement on it's operation, As of 25th May 2024, 8 Business Networks had their first meeting with their Network members and shared about the initiative. In all the locations the initiative received a positive response and the members agreed on the bylaws.

Across the various Business Network meetings, common themes included discussions on the importance of networking for business growth, financial transparency, and the selection of key roles such as vice-president and treasurer. Participants emphasized the benefits of a strong network, including business expansion, community impact, and enhanced knowledge-sharing. Challenges faced commonly included coordinating meeting times due to conflicting schedules, ensuring member engagement, and clarifying the use of collected funds. Monthly fees were a recurrent topic, with varying amounts proposed and agreed upon in different networks.

Uncommon discussions and challenges varied by location. Some meetings, such as in Sunamganj, addressed specific issues like transportation challenges for female participants and the need for more accessible meeting venues. Others, like in Kurigram, faced logistical issues such as late arrivals and ensuring effective participation during learning sessions. Unique suggestions included avoiding market days for meetings, proposing evening sessions to accommodate busy schedules, and using multimedia learning methods to engage participants. Additionally, certain networks discussed inviting representatives from companies to future meetings to provide more value to the participants.

## Conclusion

Across multiple regions, various Business Network meetings have been conducted recently, reflecting a concerted effort to bolster local entrepreneurial ecosystems. These meetings, led by dedicated BNLs, have seen enthusiastic participation from LSPs, with discussions covering bylaws, financial management, and the benefits of networking. Challenges such as time constraints and transportation issues have been acknowledged, prompting creative solutions like evening meetings and accessible venues. Notably, IPs and DCs are actively collaborating with BNLs to plan forthcoming Business Network meetings in other locations, underscoring a coordinated approach to foster entrepreneurship and community development.

## 3.5. Strengthening Business Ecosystem

The Ecosystem Actor Meeting serves as a pivotal platform uniting key stakeholders to discuss challenges, explore opportunities, and foster collaboration for mutual growth. Participants will include representatives from private companies, government bodies, MFIs or Banks, and organizations offering technical training relevant to our LSPs. The meetup aims to facilitate networking opportunities for our LSPs while also showcasing our LSPs and their customer base.

### 3.5.1. Ecosystem Actor Meetups across 8 districts

In-person ecosystem Actor Meetups were conducted across 8 districts, with representatives from multiple companies, government organisations, Technical Institutions, etc.

Date	District	Venue	Attendees
May 19,2024	Jamalpur	DTRC, Unnayan Sangha, Jamalpur.	<b>CARE:</b> Aslam Bhai <b>Implementing Partner:</b> ESDO- APM, POs and FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Nahid, Saad, Nipun
May 19,2024	Kurigram	TDH, Kurigram	<b>CARE:</b> Hedyat Da, Pavel Da and Susil Bhai <b>Implementing Partner:</b> MJSKS- PM, POs and all FFs



			<b>Kuza:</b> Farhan, Masud and Taushik
May 20,2024	Habiganj	Union Parishad Hall, Baniachong, Habiganj	<b>CARE:</b> Harun bhai <b>Implementing Partner:</b> DAM- PM, POs and FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Julhas, Anup
May 20,2024	Kishoreganj	POPI PART, Kishoreganj	<b>CARE:</b> Mitu Di <b>Implementing Partner:</b> POPI- PM, POs and all FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Zorna, Uhlayee, Saad
May 21, 2024	Sirajganj	NDP Training Centre, Bagbari, Sirajganj	<b>CARE:</b> Rafiq Da, TM-SR <b>Implementing Partner:</b> SKS- PM, POs, and all FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Farhan, Nipun, Bonhi
May 23,2024	Netrokona	SUS Training Center, Netrakona	<b>CARE:</b> Mitu Apa <b>Implementing Partner:</b> POPI- PM, POs and FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Saad, Uhlayee, Zorna
May 23,2024	Gaibandha	SKS Inn, Gaibandha	<b>CARE:</b> Laizu Apa <b>Implementing Partner:</b> SKS- PM, POs and FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Shadman, Taushik
May 23,2024	Sunamganj	FIVDB, Shantiganj, Sunamganj	<b>CARE:</b> Harunur Bhai <b>Implementing Partner:</b> DAM- PM, POs and all FFs <b>Kuza:</b> Kanik and Anup

### Summary of Events Across Eight Districts

From May 15 to May 23, 2024, various stakeholders, including district-level representatives from private companies, financial institutions, government officials, and local service providers (LSPs), gathered in eight districts in Bangladesh: Jamalpur, Gaibandha, Habiganj, Kishoreganj, Sirajganj, Kurigram, Netrokona, and Sunamganj. The events aimed to address challenges faced by LSPs and explore potential assistance from both government and private entities.

### Key Challenges discussed

#### 1. Challenges in Vaccine Procurement and Administration

- Across all districts, LSPs highlighted delays in obtaining vaccines, particularly for Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), and the high costs associated with private company vaccines.
- The lack of quality semen for artificial insemination (AI) in goats was a recurrent issue.

#### 2. Financial Barriers and Loan Accessibility

- Lengthy loan approval processes and high interest rates were commonly discussed. Many LSPs struggled to persuade banks to lend them money and faced challenges due to limited capital.
- Financial institutions like Bank Asia and NRBC Bank offered loan services starting from a deposit of 100 Taka, with agricultural loans ranging from 40,000 to 50,000 Taka. Interest rates were noted to be around 13.55%.

#### 3. Need for Better Training and Support

- a. LSPs consistently expressed the need for timely and relevant training from both government and private sectors. Many reported a lack of training on new technologies and best practices in agriculture.
- b. Commitments from entities like Laal Teer Livestock and SMC included providing union and village-level training sessions and certification programs.

#### **4. Infrastructure and Licensing Issues**

- a. Transport and storage facilities, especially in Char areas, were inadequate, leading to difficulties in product availability and timely service delivery.
- b. Obtaining licenses for selling pesticides, fertilizers, and veterinary drugs remained a significant hurdle.

#### **5. Market Access and Product Quality**

- a. There were challenges in accessing market-demanded products promptly and at fair prices. Issues with expired products and insufficient commissions from companies on vaccine sales were also noted.
- b. Some stakeholders, like Bengal Meat, encouraged LSPs to avoid business syndicates and directly engage with them for better market access.

### **Key Commitments and Support Offered**

#### **1. Government Officials:**

- a. Promised to address vaccine shortages, provide date-wise vaccine schedules, and maintain continuous contact with Upazila Livestock Officers (ULOs).
- b. AI services were to be limited to government-selected technicians, with plans to assign one AI technician to every union.

#### **2. Private Companies:**

- a. Lal Teer Livestock & other companies committed to providing extensive training sessions and supporting awareness campaigns to prevent diseases like LSD.
- b. Companies like SMC and Syngenta emphasized the need for better seed quality and committed to increasing the supply of demo seeds for testing.

#### **3. Financial Institutions:**

- a. Offered various loan packages to LSPs, emphasizing the need to open bank accounts to facilitate easier loan approval processes.

### **Reflections and Learnings**

#### **1. Stakeholder Engagement:**

- a. Continued dialogue and engagement with stakeholders are crucial. Collecting contact information and scheduling follow-up discussions ensure sustained interest and commitment.

#### **2. Specific and Actionable Commitments:**

- a. While many ecosystem actors attended the meetings, future events should focus on securing specific, actionable commitments rather than just marketing products.

#### **3. Coordination and Timely Support:**

- a. Better coordination among stakeholders and timely delivery of products and services were acknowledged as essential for improving the overall ecosystem.

## Feedback

### 1. Participants:

- a. LSPs and other ecosystem actors appreciated the opportunity to connect and discuss important issues collectively.

### 2. Stakeholders:

- a. Recognized the need for better coordination and timely support, including product delivery and training sessions at the grassroots level.

In conclusion, the gatherings across the eight districts underscored the collaborative efforts of stakeholders in tackling the agricultural challenges faced by local service providers (LSPs). Common challenges such as vaccine procurement delays, financial obstacles, training deficiencies, infrastructure gaps, and market access concerns were thoroughly discussed. Stakeholders demonstrated commitment by offering solutions and support in various forms. The feedback underscored the importance of ongoing dialogue and concerted action to create a more supportive environment for LSPs. These events served as pivotal moments for collective engagement, paving the way for enhanced collaboration and improvement within Bangladesh's agricultural sector. Note: Detailed reports from all the eight district events are included in Annexure III.

## 3.6. Piloting Livestock Farmer Field & Business School

Kuza has partnered with CARE on digitizing the Farmer Field Business School (FFBS), a vital component of CARE's Pathways to Empowerment initiative, embodying a comprehensive approach to agricultural extension. Centered on principles of gender equality, market integration, and nutritional awareness, The scope of work was determined in collaboration with the CARE Bangladesh team, **CARE USA team** and Kuza through a design workshop in November 2023. Through that workshop, the digitization was determined to be of three major modules of the FFBS global toolkit for piloting namely:

1. Gender tools
2. Livestock tools
3. Marketing tools

Topic on Nutrition, was decided to be cross-cutting throughout the modules. For the piloting phase, and considering the local context, a value chain for livestock was established, focusing on cows, goats, chickens, and ducks.

This workshop also drew a clear picture of the topics that needed to be covered across all the tools. A total of 39 modules were finalized for the piloting. In collaboration with the teams, kuza formulated the storyboards for the contents of each module and created the digital sessions across three different digital platforms for effective distribution,

These modules were prepared, curated and substantiated through step by step monitoring and contextualization. Each module comprises introduction, objective setting, case story, self reflection, highlights and a summary. These modules also have value chain centric information cards across all platforms to facilitate the participants with necessary information for their livestock. To make the training interactive for the participants, some of the modules also have activity guides and quizzes for all the sessions. A total of 10 model local service providers (Model LSP) were selected to be the

facilitators for the digitized FFBS. These facilitators were trained through a four day long Training of Trainers by the technical team of SHOUHARDO III Plus activity and kuza mentors.

The technological part was conducted by kuza mentors which covered

1. Basic orientation on the usage of digital devices
2. Troubleshooting of the devices
3. Demo run of the devices with contents

After successful completion of the training of the trainers, the field activity rolled out for the participants. A total of 200 PEP farmers were selected based on their livestock rearing experience and capacity. Ten groups were formed based on the predetermined four value chains where each group got one assigned LSP as facilitators. All the 39 modules were distributed into 10 sessions based on their technical alignment with seasonality. Out of these 10 sessions, 3 sessions are completed.

## 4.0 Program Learnings

### 4.1. Key Learnings & Takeaways

The implementation of the Local Service Provider (LSP) training under the SHOUHARDO III Plus program has yielded several key learnings. These insights are valuable for understanding the impact of the initiative and for guiding future development programs. Here are the main takeaways:

1. **Importance of Tailored Training Programs:** Customised training programs that address the specific needs and contexts of LSPs are essential. By focusing on relevant skills in business development, entrepreneurship, and leadership, the program ensured that LSPs could immediately apply their learnings to improve their operations.
2. **Effective Use of Digital Tools:** Equipping LSPs with digital tools, particularly tablets, proved highly effective. LSPs used these tablets for their own learning, accessing entrepreneurship training and Agribytes content. These digital resources not only benefited the LSPs personally but also enabled them to engage their communities, sharing knowledge and promoting collective growth marking a stepping stone towards SMART Bangladesh.
3. **Community Engagement and Peer Learning:** Creating a supportive network among LSPs facilitated peer-to-peer learning and the exchange of best practices. This cooperative & safe environment not only enhanced individual capabilities but also strengthened community ties and created a culture of continuous improvement and development.
4. **Integration with Public and Private Sectors:** Bridging the gap between LSPs and actors in the public and private sectors through Ecosystem Actor meetups was instrumental. These interactions provided LSPs with opportunities to expand their networks, access new markets, and form strategic partnerships that enhanced their business prospects.
5. **Diverse Roles and Functions of LSPs:** Recognizing the diverse roles of LSPs, such as vaccinators, seed agents, and collectors, allowed the program to cater to a wide range of services and needs within the community. This diversity helped in addressing various aspects of agricultural value chains, contributing to overall community resilience and food security.

6. **Youth and Gender Inclusion:** Including a significant proportion of youth and women among the LSPs was crucial. This inclusion ensured that the benefits of the program were widespread and supported gender equity and youth empowerment, leading to a more inclusive and balanced community development.
7. **Support for Sustainable Practices:** Promoting sustainable practices through Agribytes, a platform with pre-loaded digital content on GAPs was effective. These practices not only improved the efficiency and resilience of farming operations but also enhanced the long-term sustainability of community livelihoods, from some LSPs starting duck farming to others implementing sustainable practices.
8. **Holistic Approach to Development:** The program's holistic approach, integrating entrepreneurship, leadership, sustainable agriculture, peer to peer networking, and private sector engagement, maximised its impact. This comprehensive strategy ensured that various aspects of community development were addressed simultaneously, leading to more sustainable outcomes.
9. **Practical Application and Real-World Impact:** LSPs' ability to apply their training in real-world scenarios was a key success factor. The practical skills and knowledge gained from the program translated into tangible improvements in their business operations, leading to increased incomes and improved livelihoods.
10. **Ongoing Support and Mentorship:** Continuous support and mentorship were critical in maintaining the momentum of the LSPs' growth. The program's emphasis on ongoing engagement helped LSPs navigate challenges, adapt to new information, and stay motivated.

The SHOUHARDO III Plus program's implementation of LSP training has demonstrated that targeted, well-structured training and support can significantly enhance the capabilities and resilience of local service providers. The integration of digital tools, emphasis on community and peer learning, strategic partnerships, and a holistic approach to development have all contributed to the program's success. These learnings highlight the potential for scalable, impactful community development initiatives that can be adapted to various contexts for sustainable development.

#### 4.2. Challenges

Throughout the implementation of the Business Development, Entrepreneurship & Coaching program for the 450 LSPs spread across 8 districts, the LSPs candidly shared insights into the various challenges they encountered in their daily operations. These challenges encompass a wide range of aspects, including logistical issues, financial constraints, and communication barriers. It is imperative for the program to meticulously take note of these challenges as they provide valuable input for refining and optimising the support structure.

Addressing these challenges requires a thoughtful and strategic approach. The program must navigate through these obstacles with careful consideration, developing solutions that are not only effective in the short term but also contribute to the long-term sustainability and success of the LSPs. By actively engaging and understanding the challenges faced by the LSPs, the program can tailor its support mechanisms to provide targeted and impactful assistance, fostering an environment conducive to the growth and development of agricultural entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.

1. **Limited Access to Resources:** Many of the LSPs faced challenges related to limited access to resources such as land, finance, and modern technologies/equipment. This hindered their ability to scale their businesses and implement innovative practices. Some of the LSPs who wanted to scale their business by increasing their product portfolio couldn't achieve it due to lack of resources. Efforts were made to address these challenges by providing guidance on resource optimization and exploring alternative financing options that require minimal resources.
2. **Limited Market Access:** Many LSPs struggled with consistently accessing reliable markets and securing fair prices for the produce they aggregate or for procuring inputs they need to supply. Majorly the Seed agents and Vaccinators were unable to meet the community needs due to unavailability of products in the market. This was exacerbated by factors such as lack of market information, limited transportation infrastructure, and inadequate market linkages. The program would have to address this challenge by providing market intelligence training, facilitating networking opportunities with potential buyers, and encouraging value addition to enhance market competitiveness.
3. **Capacity and Skills Gap:** Some LSPs lacked adequate business management skills, including financial planning, marketing, and record-keeping. In addition, there is a need to help the LSPs examine product-market fit for the products they are dealing with. The SHO III Plus entrepreneurship training and the One-on-One interactions with the Dedicated Coaches addressed some of these gaps and enhanced their capacity in these areas. The LSPs were encouraged to engage in peer-to-peer learning and knowledge-sharing activities to bridge the skills gap.
4. **Limited Support Systems:** The absence of strong support systems, both within the community and from formal institutions, was a challenge faced by many LSPs. This included the lack of access to extension services and limited mentorship opportunities. The program can aim to mitigate these challenges by facilitating partnerships with relevant stakeholders, establishing mentorship networks, and providing guidance on accessing support services.
5. **Lack of Technical Skills:** Some LSPs are willing to start a new business or expand an existing one, but their lack of technical knowledge hinders the expansion. Similarly, some vaccinators want to provide AI services, but they lack the technical training and capital to do so, hindering the business expansion.

Despite these challenges, the program persevered by employing a proactive and adaptive approach. The program team worked closely with the LSPs to address individual needs and overcome obstacles, ensuring that they received the necessary support to thrive in their agribusiness endeavours. The resilience and determination exhibited by the LSPs in the face of these challenges are a testament to their entrepreneurial spirit and the program's impact in empowering them to overcome barriers and achieve success.

#### 4.3 Program Recommendations

Based on the experiences and outcomes of the Program, the following recommendations have been identified to further enhance similar initiatives and support the success of LSPs in entrepreneurship.

1. **Strengthen Access to Resources:** Efforts should be made to increase LSPs's access to land, finance, and modern technologies. This can be achieved through partnerships with financial institutions, government programs, and organisations that provide resources specifically targeted at women and youth empowerment. Additionally, capacity-building initiatives should focus on resource optimization techniques and sustainable farming/livestock practices that require minimal resources.
2. **Expand Market Access and Linkages:** The Program could work closely with Private sector partners and other ecosystem players to improve market access for LSPs by strengthening market linkages, providing market intelligence and information, and facilitating networking opportunities with potential suppliers, buyers and other value chain actors. This can be achieved by establishing market platforms, trade fairs, and buyer-seller forums, as well as developing targeted marketing and branding strategies to promote women-led agribusinesses.
3. **Foster Supportive Policies and Programs:** The Program could work closely with the Policymakers and government agencies to develop and implement supportive policies and programs that create an enabling environment for LSPs in the entrepreneurship ecosystem. This includes ensuring gender-responsive policies, promoting equal access to resources and opportunities, and providing incentives and support for women-led enterprises. Collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and industry stakeholders is essential for the successful implementation of such initiatives.
4. **Continuous Capacity Building and Mentorship:** The Program could plan for ongoing capacity building and mentorship programs tailored to the specific needs of LSPs. These programs should focus on developing business management skills, financial literacy, marketing strategies, and leadership development. Mentorship initiatives, both formal and informal, should be encouraged to provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities for LSPs.
5. **Promote Gender Equality and Challenge Societal Norms:** The Program should make conscious efforts to challenge gender norms and promote gender equality in entrepreneurship. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, community engagement, and the promotion of positive role models. Partnerships with community leaders, influencers, and media outlets can help shift societal perceptions and create an inclusive and supportive environment for women in entrepreneurship.
6. **Establish Sustainable Funding Mechanisms:** Developing sustainable funding mechanisms is crucial to facilitate the growth of LSPs in their enterprises, ensuring the longevity and scalability of programs aimed at supporting them. By establishing sustainable funding models, we can empower LSPs to expand their businesses and enhance their lasting influence on communities.
7. **Fostering a Peer support platform:** There's already some best practices prevailing across different locations among the LSPs. A platform needs to be further developed to provide an inclusive space for LSPs to learn, connect and collaborate from each other in a peer-network.



The community of entrepreneurs should share their learning and experiences with each other to strengthen the ecosystem as a whole.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can create a more supportive and enabling environment for LSPs, paving the way for their increased participation, growth, and success in the sector. It is through collective efforts, collaboration, and targeted interventions that we can empower LSPs to become leaders and change-makers in business, contributing to sustainable development and inclusive economic growth.

#### **4.4. Program Sustainability**

Sustainability is a crucial aspect of any successful program, and this program targeted at the LSPs program is no exception. To ensure the long-term impact and continued support for LSPs, it is essential to establish sustainability measures. These measures should focus on building partnerships, securing funding, and fostering a strong alumni network. By nurturing collaborations with government agencies, non-governmental organisations, financial institutions, and private sector stakeholders, the program can tap into diverse resources and expertise. Seeking sustainable funding mechanisms, such as establishing endowment funds or exploring social impact investment opportunities, will provide financial stability for the program's operations. Additionally, developing a robust alumni network will facilitate ongoing mentorship, knowledge exchange, and opportunities for continued growth and development.

1. **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Establish partnerships with local organisations, government agencies, and private sector entities that share a common goal of empowering LSPs in the agricultural sector. Collaborate with these stakeholders to leverage resources, expertise, and networks, ensuring the program's long-term sustainability.
2. **Institutional Integration:** Integrate the program into existing government programs or schemes to ensure continuity and alignment with broader strategies and policies. Seek endorsement and support from relevant governmental bodies, advocating for the inclusion of the program in their agendas.
3. **Mentorship Network:** Develop a robust mentorship network by engaging successful entrepreneurs, industry experts, and alumni of the program. Encourage these mentors to provide ongoing guidance and support to current and future entrepreneurs, fostering a culture of mentorship within the program.
4. **Alumni Engagement:** Establish an alumni network or support system to maintain a strong connection with the past LSPs. Organise regular events, workshops, and networking opportunities for alumni to share experiences, collaborate, and mentor new cohorts. Alumni can also serve as brand ambassadors, contributing to the program's sustainability through their continued involvement.
5. **Capacity Building and Training:** Enhance the program's curriculum and training modules to meet evolving needs and emerging trends. Regularly assess the skills required by LSPs and tailor the program to address those needs effectively.



6. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the program's impact, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability. Regularly collect data on key performance indicators to measure the program's effectiveness and inform decision-making for program enhancements.
7. **Knowledge Sharing and Best Practices:** Disseminate program outcomes, success stories, and best practices through various channels such as reports, case studies, workshops, and conferences. Share insights and lessons learned to inspire other organisations and stakeholders and encourage replication and adaptation of successful program elements.
8. **Policy Advocacy:** Engage in advocacy efforts to promote supportive policies and create an enabling environment for LSPs entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. Collaborate with government agencies, policymakers, and advocacy groups to address gender-related barriers and advocate for gender-responsive policies, access to finance, and market opportunities.
9. **Continuous Program Improvement:** Regularly assess the program's strengths, weaknesses, and impact through champion feedback, stakeholder consultations, and external evaluations. Use this information to make informed decisions, refine program elements, and adapt to changing contexts and needs.

By incorporating these sustainability components, the Entrepreneurship Development Training & Coaching Program can be designed to thrive and continue making a lasting impact on the lives and businesses of LSPs in the rural sector.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The Entrepreneurship Development Training and Coaching Initiative by Care Bangladesh, in collaboration with Kuza Biashara, has successfully equipped Local Service Providers (LSPs) with essential skills, knowledge, and support, leading to significant improvements in their business planning and empowerment. The program has enhanced LSPs' understanding of business development, entrepreneurship, and leadership, boosting their self-confidence and enabling them to become influential community leaders. The program has fostered networking and collaboration among peers and other partners creating a supportive ecosystem for the LSPs. The strengthened connections, partnerships, and knowledge-sharing opportunities have contributed to their improved business performance, increased productivity, and sustainable growth. Additionally, the program has promoted gender equality by empowering women LSPs and showcasing their contributions. As we recognize the achievements of the 450 LSPs, it is crucial to sustain and expand such initiatives to unlock their full potential, drive economic growth, and foster gender equality in rural entrepreneurship. Moving forward, it is essential to sustain and expand initiatives like this, ensuring continuous support, mentorship, and networking opportunities for these LSPs. By doing so, we can unlock their full potential, drive economic growth, and foster gender equality.