



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND PRODUCTION LINKED TO IMPROVED NUTRITION STATUS, RESILIENCE, AND GENDER EQUITY

# INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES: INCREASING INCOME INCREASES DIGNITY

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Agriculture and Production Linked to Improved Nutrition Status, Resilience and Gender Equity, (SAPLING) USAID-funded Resilience Food Security Activity, is a six-year program that began in October 2015. SAPLING has worked with over 57,000 households in Bandarban District of the remote Chittagong Hill Tracts region of Bangladesh. In collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh,

SAPLING's multi-sector approach has increased household access to diverse and nutritious foods, promoted maternal and child health and nutrition (MCHN), improved household and community resilience, and promoted gender and social equality. SAPLING has created opportunities for on-farm and off-farm income generation, especially for women from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. SAPLING supports households to diversify livelihoods and increase incomes. This leads to increased resilience and aspirational capacity, helping people lead more dignified lives.

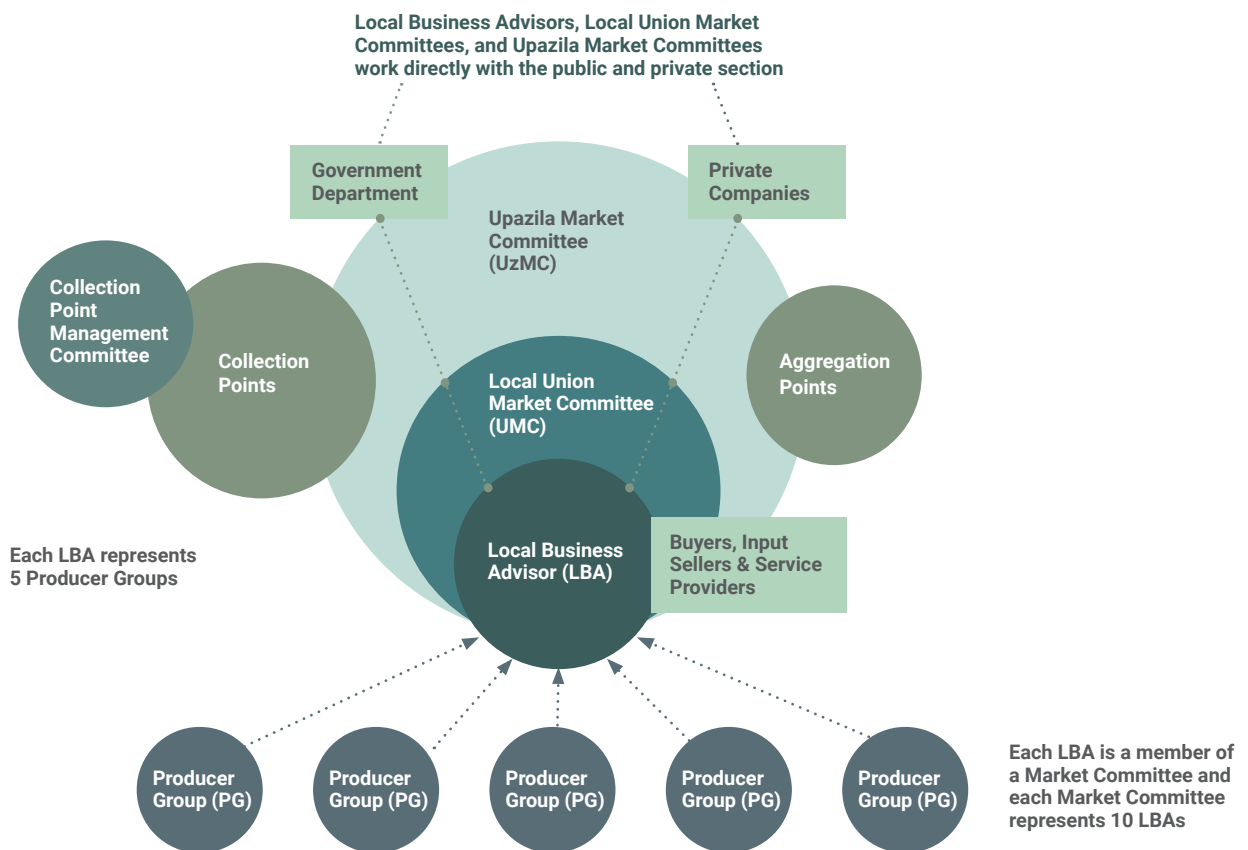
## Strategy to increase market inclusion and strengthen market systems:

- 01 Identify income generating activities (IGA) drawing on traditional skills, locally available resources, and market demand
- 02 Form and train geographically concentrated and sub-sector specific producer groups, increasing climate smart production and business skills
- 03 Develop and strengthen inclusive market structures to increase market access for marginalized populations with a focus on women and ethnic minorities
- 04 Facilitate linkages among key market actors to increase producers' access to inputs and sales outlets
- 05 Promote membership in SAPLING Saving and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) and raise awareness on other available financial products to increase access to financial services
- 06 Provide local support to producers and other market actors to troubleshoot bottlenecks in the supply chain



# INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES (IGAS)

SAPLING assisted three unique types of IGAs within informal, niche, and service markets, as displayed.



## STRENGTHENED MARKET SYSTEMS

To address the challenges of weak markets in Bandarban, SAPLING established market structures and strengthened market actors. This included training and technical support for IGA producer groups, Local Business Advisors (LBAs), Aggregation and Collection Points, and Market Committees. To ensure systemic functionality, all structures were linked with each other and with additional market actors, ultimately providing market facilitation support for over 10,000 IGA producers and homestead food producers and almost 40,000 homestead food producers only (total of 48,727 female producers and 1,279 male producers).

### ● PRODUCER GROUPS

SAPLING organized 10,251 IGA producers into geographical and sub-sector specific groups and linked them to sub-sector specific service providers at the union, upazila (sub-district), and district levels. For both high-value crops and micro-enterprises, SAPLING trained participants in production and business management, and assisted participants to identify critical markets, assess constraints, develop their own business plan and link with buyers directly or through an inclusive market structure. This approach also included linking SAPLING homestead food producers to the structures for easy sale of surplus produce.

### ● LOCAL BUSINESS ADVISORS

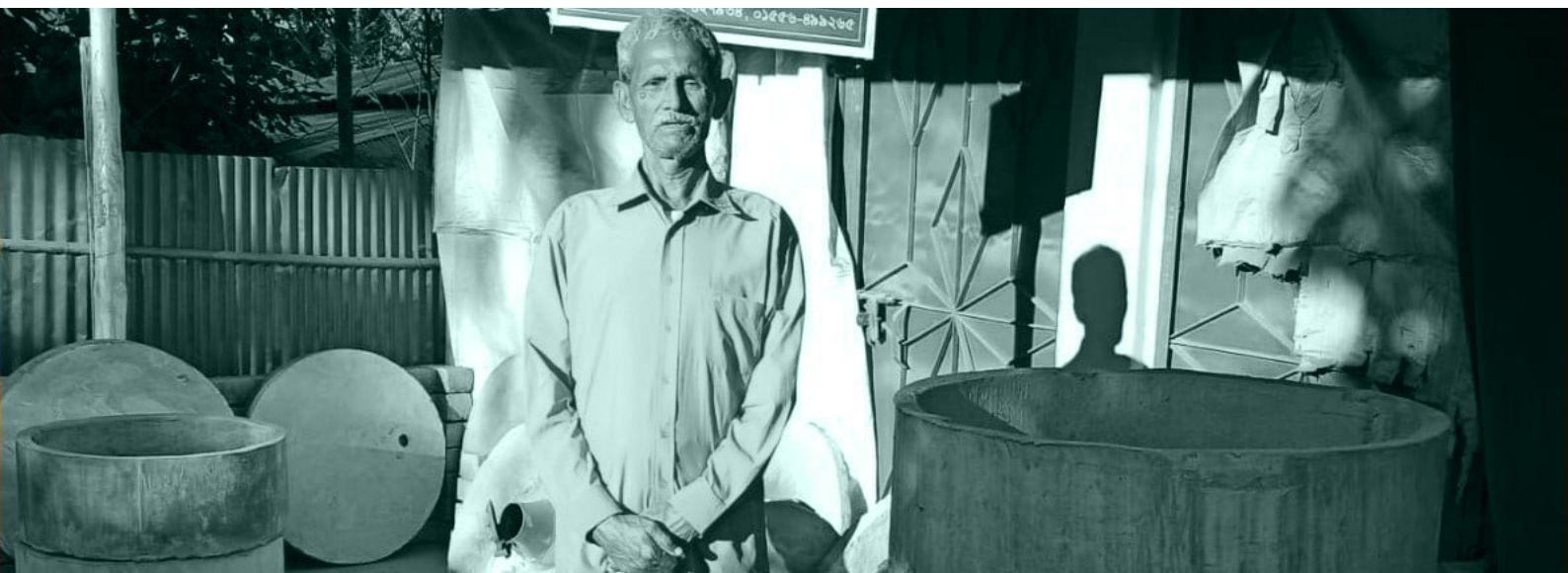
LBAs are producer representatives who receive a fee-for-service from producers for aggregating products and negotiating sales or input purchases. Each LBA is responsible for a geographical area that spans 5-7 villages depending on topography and population density. 274 LBAs were capacitated by SAPLING (263 female, 11 male) with technical, business, linkage, and marketing skills

### ● MARKET COMMITTEES

SAPLING established and trained 21 Union Market Committees and 5 Upazila Market Committees across the implementation area. Market Committee members are LBAs who have a direct link to the APs and CPs, enabling higher-level aggregation and sales negotiations. They facilitate production and sales planning – assessing needs for inputs and timing of harvests, liaise between producers, buyers, and input sellers, and ensure access to services, emphasizing inclusion of women and ethnic minorities. The Market Committees also manage conflicts that may arise. They meet regularly to review progress and plan for upcoming needs, engaging with both private and public sector actors.

### ● AGGREGATION AND COLLECTION POINTS

To obtain higher sales prices and reduce time and expenses of marketing and transporting goods, farmers can bring their produce to a central point near where they live to be aggregated, packed, and transported. LBAs negotiate with buyers and transporters to pick up products at APs and CPs regularly, increasing income for producers and reducing waste by getting goods to market damage-free. The APs and CPs are local solutions to strengthen product-to-market delivery and increase selling and negotiation power for farmers. The APs are more informal and temporal, often catering to only one type of product, whereas CPs have formal management committees, operate year-round, and generally have infrastructure for packing and storage. SAPLING established 19 APs and 7 CPs.



## STRENGTHENING THE THIN MARKETS OF BANDARBAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

SAPLING strengthened the capacity of homestead and commercial farmers and micro-entrepreneurs in sustainable production technologies and business management. Linkage events were organized with key market actors, including public and private sector service providers, input sellers, buyers, and producers. Events foster necessary relationships for LBAs to continue supporting producers following SAPLING phase-out.

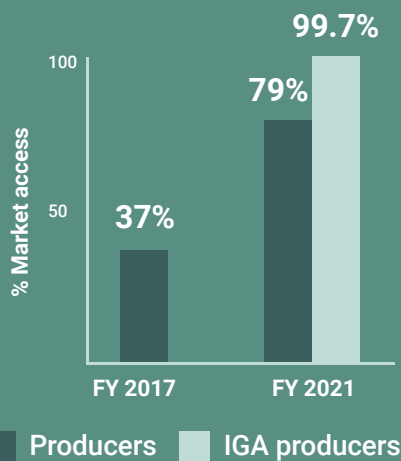


## KEY RESULTS

**Improved agricultural practices/increased use of improved technologies:**

**48,171** individuals applied improved management practices or technologies across the life of the award

**Increased market access for producers:**



**Diversified sources of income generation:**

**10,251** smallholder producers equipped with better business practices and market access, diversifying household income sources

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**Improved economic opportunities for women and vulnerable households:**

**48,727** women from vulnerable households now have access to productive economic resources.

**100%** of female IGA survey respondents in FY21 reported undertaking market interactions themselves

**Increased yields and increased sales for poor and extreme poor households.**

**\$4.4 million USD** reported as annual sales in FY21 from 8,793 producers. This was the highest annual sales and a **211%** increase over 2 years.

**During this time, all value chain sales increased from their base value:**

