

Organizational Profile

GMark Foundation

www.gmarkfoundation-bd.com



GMark Foundation at a Glance

Name of the Organization	: GMark Foundation
Acronym	: GMF
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Executive Director	: Md. Saifuddin Khaled
Year of Establishment	: 2010
Legal Status	: “Registrar of Joint Stock Companies & Firms, Bangladesh” NGO Affairs Bureau, Registration Number: 2814

Background Information

GMark Foundation (GMF) is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization (NGO), founded on the basis of voluntary and charitable directives, and is free from any political party affiliations. The Foundation has been in motion since 2010. Operating in *northern* districts, Jessore & Hilltracts in Bangladesh, the Foundation aspires to engage in projects all over the country, with a vision to expand its activity across Bangladesh.

At GMark Foundation, we are dedicated to improving the socio-economic development of poor, landless, and/or marginalized populations, and are involved in a wide range of activities to find the most effective, innovative, and sustainable solutions to poverty. We ensure that the people we are working with and rooting for- all members of beneficiary communities involved in our projects- are given control over the decisions that affect them, and that they are included at every stage of the process. We have geared our projects to address the most pressing issues that impact the lives of the poorest in Bangladesh.

Who We Work For

Stakeholders include men and women farmers, ethnic and youth groups, micro-entrepreneurs, small-scale producers and their associations, technical staff and other rural development professionals, central and local government officials and policy makers.

Mission Statement

The Foundation's aim is to assist poor, landless, and marginalized communities to increase their socio-economic condition through developing and enhancing local entrepreneurship in different sectors.

Objective of the Foundation

All initiatives of GMark Foundation focus on sustainable rural livelihood development through improved resource allocation & mobilization. As a strategy, GMark Foundation concentrates on capacity building, ensuring information & technology availability and enhancing linkages with private sector actors.

Specifically, GMF works to –

- ☞ Build human and social capital within rural communities, small farmers' organizations and technical staff of rural development projects.
- ☞ Promote the scaling-up of best available solutions and innovations in the region/community to improve development projects performance in their fight against rural poverty.
- ☞ Build up the regional/local capacity to design and implement 'Learning Routes' for future.
- ☞ Support and develop local, talented practitioners and champions to become training and technical assistance service providers.

Governing Body (GB) and Membership Profile

Governing body of GMark Foundation (GMF) consists of active and highly experienced and qualified rural development professionals. There are 07 governing body members, who are full time active working executives of the organization. Governing body members have 18years' experience in the development field with various national and international exposures. They are having hand in experience in working with international donor organizations. Hands on experience of the GB members are from the field of Innovations and Technologies Promotion, Value Chain Development, Inclusive Social Business etc.

Staff Structure and Profile

GMF currently has 06 technical staffs at managerial positions from various technical backgrounds i.e. agriculture, social science, business development and communication. The Foundation has a group of field executives in 02 clusters – Jessore, and Bogra. Each project has a sectoral leader and these sectoral leaders report to Executive Director who is also the Secretary of the Foundation. The Executive Director is responsible for the facilitation of organizational growth as a team leader and participates in project and HRD planning and monitoring and represent organization. He is instrumental in client liaison, strategy management and head the project quality development cell.

Thematic Area

We are focused on the following areas-

1. Market Creation
2. Innovations and Technology Promotion
3. Market Access & Distribution
4. Community-based Strategies for Natural Resource Management
5. Development of Agro-packaging Market
6. Inclusive Social Business
7. Improvement in Social Services

Market Creation

The pressures of globalization and liberalization are creating exclusive markets or value chains between preferred business partners, with serious effects on rural farmers in Bangladesh. A targeted effort is needed to include smallholder farmers and poorer households in integrated food or non-food markets. GMark Foundation promotes poverty reduction of those pro-poor offering its services in market or value chain development in the country. Thus, the Foundation ensures *Improved Quality, Increased System Efficiency and Superior Value to the Buyer* to produce sustainable profitable return to the poorest.

Promoting Technologies

Technology and innovation have been primary factors to increase farm's productivity predominantly in a developing country like Bangladesh. It can affect smallholders' income, labor opportunities for the poor, food prices, environmental sustainability and linkages with the rest of the rural and national economy. The Foundation works on identifying, developing and promoting the most effective technology to generate greater impact of new technology on the lives and livelihoods of the poor.

Market Access and Distribution

Development practitioners of GMF through support from partners has over the last two decades capacitated smallholder farmers to produce different food and non-food commodities in adequate quantities through promotion of sustainable practices. Despite potential of increased yields from numerous sustainable agriculture approaches, small-scale farmers are still unable to successfully access and participate in meaningful market initiatives; this has rendered effects on their livelihoods to remain negligible. The lack of access to markets, calls for innovations from GMark Foundation to enable farmers reap rewards from their hard work. The result embarked the Foundation to take steps for enhancing small-scale farmers' market access and distribution program.

Community-based Strategies for Natural Resource Management for Rural Development

In a place where limited livelihood options exist, and where poverty is extreme and widespread, gaining access to natural resources for livelihoods and incomes is critical. Population growth and economic development are increasing pressure on land, water, forest, and biodiversity resources. Government attempts to conserve natural resources through top-down regulatory systems have often failed.

One route to increasing the benefits to local people has been the through joint ventures with private sector players. Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) gives communities full or partial control over decisions regarding natural resources, such as water, forests, pastures, communal lands, protected areas, and fisheries. Through the extent of this approach, Foundation establishes control which ranges from community consultations to joint management or to full responsibility for decision making and benefit collection, using tools such as joint management plans, community management plans, stakeholder consultations and workshops, and communal land tenure rights.

Development of Agro-packaging Market

Packaging as said have several benefits across different sub-sectors, hence treated as having cross-sectoral impact over other sub-sectors like fruits, grains, flowers, vegetables, and fisheries in different forms. GMark professionals experienced need for funding for agro-allied firms to promote usages of modern packaging techniques & technology for the pro-poor producers. Thus, the Foundation is devoted providing right package for specific agro-products that will have positive impact over farmers' product and increase profitability from production.

Inclusive Social Business

The private sector has a crucial role to play in integrating rural smallholders producers within company value chains, by developing supply chains that grant them access to markets. For companies operating in the food, non-food and related sectors, sourcing from these producers presents both tremendous growth opportunities, but also new challenges in terms of business model adaptation and supply chain innovation. For other companies, providing products and services that benefit the smallholder producers has enormous potential. The Foundation therefore aims to build, develop and promote inclusive business models in the agricultural sector to address pro-poor access to markets with improved product quality and ensured sales & price mechanism.

Improvement in Social Services

- **Health & physical welfare:** In the area of health, the Foundation introduces various programs that promote practices of proper hygiene and sanitation, and provides information about proper nutrition to poor communities. We will be

undertaking projects for the development of rural communities' livelihood by providing health services and facilities to vulnerable people.

- **Education:** GMark Foundation intends to work in the education sector and has developed educational programs catered to the illiterate and semi-illiterate communities to increase work experience. Other initiatives aim to enhance educational programs in the fields of literature, arts and science, and establish schools, colleges and universities according to the needs-assessment criteria.
- **Climate Change:** GMark Foundation is working to ensure that entire communities and especially their at-risk populations are prepared in times of natural disaster, and are able to resume their lives properly after the storm passes. We make sure that our projects address the likely causes as well as effects of climate change, because we are determined to find viable long term solutions to eradicate poverty.

We have taken initiatives to raise awareness and provide information about disaster management programs, and climate change risk mitigation in poor communities, and introduce subsequent rehabilitation programs to them. GMF has introduced climate adaptive agriculture technology to farmers, to enhance their capacities to deal with changing climates, and provide the appropriate support to ensure long term resilience.

- **Advocacy of Human Rights:** Advocacy of human rights constitutes another element of the Foundation's activity areas. Development programs focusing on empowering women, promotion of gender equality, and street children's rights, have been developed to work towards alleviating discriminatory barriers to access and participation of rights. Other programs in the works include initiatives for vulnerable group development and slum development.

Technical Expertise

The Foundation professionals have vast experience and knowledge on some of the key development approaches. Market Development Approach is the core technical expertise, from which several sustainable and viable development approaches have emerged.

Value Chain Development

The “Value chain” refers to all the activities and services that bring a product (or a service) from conception to end use in a particular industry from input supply to production, processing, wholesale and finally, retail. It is called so because value is being added to the product or service at each step. MDA is the recent evolution of Value Chain approach which also is critically based on value chain analysis and focuses on strengthening service market to enhance service provision that benefits the farmers within the market system and focuses on private sector development through sensitizing their role in line with their incentives that relates with the benefit of the disadvantaged, poor/ultra-poor, women and youth.

To develop and strengthen a market, understanding value chain is necessary. GMark professionals are highly knowledgeable in value chain development key issues, through which they are contributing in development through value chain development.

Rural Livelihood Development

As it has proven expertise and remarkable experience, GMark foundation is working on rural livelihood development with the help of its highly professional staffs, partners and donors. It has taken and still working on many projects which have put smile on many rural peoples' faces.

Enterprise Development

From the very inception, the foundation is involved in enterprise development through different mechanism or approaches. GMark works for the private sector development with the support of government, national and international donor agencies. GMark have specialized its expertise in providing technical assistance to the MSMEs, large corporations, and service providers by facilitating the enterprises in finding business serving the poor and vulnerable people those are at the bottom of the pyramid (BOP).

Women Economic Empowerment

The burden of poverty falls disproportionately on women; female-headed households (estimated at 5-9% of rural households) are the worst-off group among the poor. Women Economic Empowerment enables poorest people to become economically independent. Again, success of a project in empowering the women depends on the project's ability to bring the women in the mainstream economy. GMark foundation is specialized in finding the right way which would turn a number of poor rural women into an economically solvent group. The foundation is also determined to accelerate market opportunities for small and household female farmers which will enable them to ensure a better and secured life.

Projects at a Glance

On Going Project(s) of the Foundation:

1. The project for the Construction of Community based Improved Potato Storage Facility to Improve Post-Harvest Management in Shibganj Upazilla

Completed Project(s) of the Foundation:

1. Establishing Natural Storage to Reduce Post-harvest Loss
2. Making Markets Work for the Chars (M4C) in association with SKS Foundation
3. Promotion of Improved Agro-Packaging
4. Farm 2 Market
5. Contract Farming of Industrial Varieties Potato

On Going Projects

Construction of Community based Improved Potato Storage Facility to Improve Post-Harvest Management in Shibganj Upazilla

GMark Foundation is going to start its work on Improved Natural Storage funded by Embassy of Japan. The project aims to construct 07 improved natural storages in Bogra district under Rajshahi division of Northern Bangladesh (around 200KM North of Dhaka City). Each of the storages will have 110MT capacity. The proposed project targeted 07 CBOs (Community Based Organizations) from Bogra district of Bangladesh. The CBOs has been formed by GMark Foundation. Total farming HH in these 07 areas is around 39,221.



Target Beneficiaries: The natural storage project aims to directly benefit 1100 farmers from CBOs in the project area.

Objective of the Project: The project aims to reduce post-harvest losses of potato and ensure better price of potato for the target community through Improved Natural Storage (INS).

The main objectives that the project targets to achieve:

1. To transfer new technology among the grass-root potato farmers
2. To transfer home-stored potato in INS storing to save wastage and improve income
3. To increase storability of potato in natural storage condition
4. To generate sustainable social benefits for potato farmers
5. To extend the benefits of INS among the grass-root people
6. To ensure a sustainable way of meeting the Basic Human Needs (BNH) of the grass-root people

Completed Projects

Making Markets Work for the Chars (M4C)

In partnership with Swisscontact, SKS Foundation has been implementing “Making Markets Work for Jamuna, Padma and Teesta Chars (M4C)” project since 1st October 2012. The project is being implemented in different Chars of Gaibandha, Bogra, Jamalpur and Sirajganj districts through two partner organizations. SKS Foundation is leading the project implementation in Gaibandha and Bogra districts while, NDP of Sirajganj is assigned to work in Jamalpur and Sirajganj districts. GMark Foundation, a national non-governmental organization (NGO), has been working as the Technical Partner in M4C project.

The project aims to improve the market systems for the poor people, living in the chars of the targeted districts, thus opening up new opportunities for job and income generation. In this connection, SKS and GMark Foundation has started working with producers and different market actors following PMSD (Participatory Market System Development) approach in Fulchari and Saghataupazilla of Gaibandha district and Sariakandiupzilla of Bogra district. Following the project plan, concentration is given on the selected products and different market players to alleviate the poverty through increased productivity of the producers and access to the rural markets. Thus, the project aims for increased income and economically solvent producers of Maize and Jute value chains. At the same time, the project is focusing on value chain development of the selected sub-sectors and or value chains involving different market players through systemic market change and towards sustainable development.

Objective

Main objective of the M4C project is to increase farmers' income for 150 groups (about 4000 farmers) by the end of September 2014 ensuring increased productivity, decreased production costs and increased participation of smallholders in commercial markets for high value crops (Jute, Maize and Chili) and improved access to quality inputs through PMSD approach to bring systemic change in the market structure. The key objectives of M4C project are to -

- Apply PMSD approach that ensure char farmers, market actors service providers and other private and public stakeholders to jointly analyze market system and implement activities as necessary;
- Support formation of at least 150 producer groups (minimum 20 producers per group) in selected chars of Gaibandha and Bogra districts initially with Chili, Maize and Jute producers with a scope of addition of new producers/sectors;

- Facilitate establishment of Sales and Service Centers (SSCs), collection points etc. based on the need in selected chars that will strengthen access to inputs and output markets; and
- Support M4C in identification of relevant activities that will enhance the market/business relation between the char producers and input/output market actors.

Establishing Natural Storage to Reduce post-harvest loss

GMark Consulting Limited, principal mentor and funding agency of GMark Foundation have constructed an improved natural storage in Birganj upazilla of Dinajpur district of Bangladesh in the year 2011.

The technology has been learnt from India by Compatible Technology Incorporation (CTI)- an US based research organization and suitably modified for Bangladesh environment. The outcome encouraged GMark Foundation- a CSR unit of GMark Consulting Limited to support more farmers by constructing more improved natural storages in potato growing areas.

Based on the experience GMark Foundation carries the work to promote this low cost innovative technology at farmer's level. Community base construction is a best platform for that.

Farm 2 Market

A project based on Agricultural Value Chain Development approach has been initiated since March 2013. The project is working in Sadar upazilla of Khagrachari District, part of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) area of Bangladesh.

Target Beneficiaries: Farm households involved in agricultural production are the prime beneficiary groups. Project targets to directly benefit 764 poor indigenous farm households (264 are female beneficiaries) by increasing their farm income by two fold within 2015.

Selected Value Chains:

Spices Sub-Sector- Turmeric, Ginger

Fruits Sub-Sector- Orange, Mango, Banana

Vegetables Sub-Sector- Summer & Winter vegetables

Maize Sub-sector – Summer& Winter Maize

Contract Farming of Industrial Varieties Potato

GMark Foundation has initiated Contract Farming of Industrial Varieties Potato which is considered as a high value crop with huge potential for both domestic and international markets. Currently the cultivation of potato is going on in 10 acres of land within 3 villages of Southern districts of Bangladesh through this project.

Target Beneficiaries: Currently there are 25 beneficiaries and it will be multiplied by the end of the project.

Objective

1. To improve the beneficiaries socio-economic conditions through proper cultivation techniques and quality inputs.
2. To allow farmers getting quality seed potatoes, cash loan support for maintaining operational costs.
3. To improve knowledge on cultivation practices and a buy-back guarantee (offering an ensured market linkage for farmers) through a lead firm.

Promotion of Improved Agro-Packaging

In agricultural depended Bangladesh pre- and post-harvest management is an issue for agricultural development. In this wide area, GMark Foundation designed two interventions in a narrow view by promoting improved technology like post-harvest packaging for Vegetable and Fish Sector and pre-harvest packaging for Banana sector.

Target Beneficiaries: The main target beneficiaries for this project are the Poor marginal farmer.

Intervention 01: Promoting Improved Technology for Pre-Harvest Management

One of the main aims of GMF was to raise the income of poor as well as marginal farmers and increase their purchasing capacity and intake nutrition. In Bangladesh, the farmers cultivate almost 13200 acres of land for Banana and total yield in year is about 836000 Metric Tons. But the farmers have no proper knowledge about the pre- and post-harvest management of Banana. Due to lack of knowledge and practices 10-15% of total produces is being wasted or deteriorated in quality. It has thus been a great loss for banana farmers and for the country as well.

GMF take initiatives to introduce LDPE Loom Cover among the Banana farmers through various activities *as to make the poor Banana farmers better off by helping them improve their production and quality of Bananas.*

Intervention 02: Promoting Improved Technology for Post-Harvest Management

In case of agricultural products post-harvest loss is of concern and poor packaging is one its main causes. Rural agro-producers of Bangladesh generally practice poor packaging like gunnysacks, bamboo made basket etc. and sometime no packaging after post-harvest handling causes high rate of wastage up to 40%. These losses lead to low income of the farmers.

GMF find out that this losses can be minimize just to do the farmer motivate to use improved packaging. In this intervention it gives solution to use Improve Bamboo Basket with special feature (handling, quality Bamboo, smoothing, stitching etc.) in replace of gunnysacks, ordinary bamboo basket or no packaging. By this intervention, GMF bring the development for farmer, bamboo basket producer and bamboo basket trader.