



Evidence
Action
Beta

No Lean Season

Guide to Basic Descriptives of 2016 Data

The 'Basic Descriptives of 2016 Data' spreadsheet summarizes the core programmatic data from the 2016 implementation of No Lean Season in Bangladesh. The spreadsheet is arranged in tabs. The **Overall** tab includes top-level statistics of the scale and scope of the program, the list of branch offices and overall numbers of villages and households covered. This generally corresponds with the 'Preparation' phase of the implementation protocol, in which the targeted geographic coverage is determined. The remaining tabs correspond with the stages of the program protocol:

- **Targeting:** this tab summarizes data related to program eligibility, and shows how eligibility criteria were defined and applied to households. This tab also compares the eligibility criteria we used in 2016 to eligibility criteria used in previous rounds of implementation.
- **Offers:** this tab summarizes how many households were eligible to receive offers given the eligibility criteria we used.
- **Disbursements:** this tab presents the numbers of households who took up the travel loan, by eligibility type.
- **Migration:** this tab summarizes how many households actually sent a migrant, and how many of those migrants reported finding a job.
- **Recovery:** this tab summarizes full and partial loan recovery rates.

In each section of this document, we provide contextual information about how decisions were made for 2016 program implementation. In some phases of program delivery, we tested various aspects of the program to better understand how variations of the program delivery might affect outcomes. In other words, we were not always looking to maximize or optimize coverage. For example, this year we picked a range of RDRS-defined 'easy' and 'hard' branches and villages to learn about operational capacity and potential challenges, as well as to manage partners' expectations about these attributes. Last, it should be noted that we did not conduct an experimental evaluation of program *impacts* in 2016 -- we are conducting a RCT this year to simulate the program at scale and to measure its impact. This year, our priority was to focus on the design of the program toolkit and delivery protocol, and we sought to advance our learning agenda through qualitative assessments; programmatic data analysis; and process and performance evaluation.

1. Preparation

Each year, preparing for the roll-out of the program includes selecting program delivery areas, hiring and training staff, and other related steps. The main preparation activities for selecting the 2016 program delivery areas are described below.

1.1 Select Branch Offices

Definition of Branch Office: The smallest administrative unit of implementation at RDRS Bangladesh.

Assumptions:

- Total count of RDRS Branch Offices: 164
- Average # of HH / Branch Office: 3,600

Approach: In the 2016 Branch Office selection, we chose a mix of “easy” Branch Offices (where we assumed higher take-up) and “hard” Branch Offices (where we assumed lower take-up). Categorization of Branch Offices was done by RDRS senior staff, and was based on their prediction of the level of demand and ease of operation in various regions.

Selection Process:

Step 1: Decide on number of Branch Offices

- In 2016, we decided to work with 15 of 164 Branch Offices (as agreed in the MOU with RDRS). This was an increase from previous years, but a number that felt appropriate in terms of overall budget and implementation capacity.

Step 2: Develop List of 15 selected Branch Offices

Selected Branch Offices were:

- All ‘new’ Branch Offices, where the No Lean Season program had never been implemented.
- A mix of ‘easy’ and ‘hard’ Branch Offices. At least 50% of Branch Offices were located in areas where we thought fewer people were already migrating. Our implementing partner (RDRS Bangladesh) identified ‘easy’ and ‘hard’ Branch Offices based on their prior experience.
- Geographically dispersed throughout the target program area in northern Bangladesh.

Step 3: Identify target number of subsidies (i.e. 400, 600, or 800 subsidies) in each selected Branch Office to calculate overall target disbursement numbers.

- Branch Offices believed to be easier were not necessarily assigned a larger target of subsidies to disburse. Rather, targets were balanced and spread evenly across geography and among ‘easy’ and ‘hard’ Branch Offices.

1.2 Select Villages

Definition of Village: The smallest geographical administrative area in Bangladesh (in theory well defined and with clear boundaries).

Assumptions:

- Average # of villages / Branch Office: 20
- Average # of HH / village: 180

Approach: Similar to our approach for Branch Offices, we wanted to include a mix of ‘easy’ and ‘hard’ villages within each Branch Office catchment area to learn about take-up and migration patterns in villages that are different from one another.

Selection Process:

Step 1: Obtain a list of all villages within the catchment area of 15 selected Branch Offices from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. RDRS Field Management staff then identify the villages that fall within their respective Branch Office catchment area. Additionally, we obtain a list of the number of households for each village from data available at the Union Parishad (local government unit) office, which has the most updated household data for villages in this region.

When reviewing village lists for potential inclusion, we aimed to include all villages in the Branch Office catchment area, including villages not currently served by RDRS microfinance or other programs. RDRS Field Management staff also subjectively ranked each village based on available information in terms of how “hard” a village might be to work with (because RDRS had never worked there, because there was historically not a lot of migration there, because it is very remote, etc.). Again, the goal was to ‘pressure test’ the intervention in a range of contexts and not to ‘cherry-pick’ areas that were most likely to succeed.

Step 2: Estimate number of villages to visit

- The program needs to survey a large enough number of households to ensure that we reach the targeted number of subsidies disbursed.
- In the 2014 program implementation round, the data revealed that:
 - % of eligibles among people surveyed = 56%
 - % of people offered the subsidy who accept it = between 56-74%
- The formula used to determine the number of surveys to complete is below.

[# of HHs to survey = # of targeted recipients / % of eligibles / % of acceptance]

According to the above formula, the program needed to survey between 2.4 and 3.1 times the targeted number of subsidies disbursed. We chose to proceed with the upper bound of 3 times the targeted number of subsidy recipients.

- Using these targets and the information on the number of households per village, we identified the number of villages in each branch with the goal of 9,000 disbursements.

Note: A “complete census” of each village and all households in the village was completed, regardless of the apparent socio-economic status of the households.

Step 3: Confirm list of villages to survey

- A list of villages for the selected 15 Branch Offices was prepared and confirmed by Evidence Action and RDRS Bangladesh.

2. Targeting

The goal of the targeting phase is to survey all households in selected villages and identify households that are both affected by seasonality and risk averse towards migration. Accordingly, all households in the selected villages were surveyed using a short questionnaire. Hereafter, households eligible for the program were identified based on several eligibility criteria.

2.1 Household Survey

Survey Period: June 22 to August 10, 2016

of surveyors: 30 field staff (named Migration Organizer, in short, MO)

of villages surveyed: 82

of households surveyed: 32,975¹

2.2 Selecting Villages for Eligibility Testing

Before applying eligibility criteria, we randomly selected 30 of the 82 villages (approximately 8,350 households) to be assigned to a group in which no eligibility criteria would be applied. In these 30 villages, all households were listed as ‘eligible’ and subsequently listed to receive the loan offer. Assigning a portion of the households to this group was carried out with the hope of learning more about the types of households that accept a loan when offered.

2.3 Eligible Household Selection

In the remaining 52 villages, we applied the following eligibility criteria:

- 1) Amount of cultivable land a household owns on paper is less than 50 decimals;
- 2) At least one person in the household did not have “two full meals a day with satisfaction” in the last lean season;
- 3) A working member of the household migrated no more than two times in the last three years.

These eligibility criteria were more restrictive than previous years,² and were implemented in an attempt to learn how take-up varied with different eligibility criteria. Additionally, more restrictive criteria meant fewer households would be eligible for the loan, which we thought would balance well with villages where no eligibility criteria were applied and ensure we did not disburse loans beyond our capacity.

3. Offer

In this phase of program delivery, the migration loan is offered to *all eligible* households in villages where eligibility criteria were applied, and to *all* households in villages where eligibility criteria were not applied. A total of 16,268 households (7,918 eligible households

¹ There were a total of 33,461 surveys conducted. However, there were 477 households with duplicates. After correcting for these duplicate observations, the total household number fell to 32,975.

² In previous years, the only two criteria applied were: (1) Amount of cultivable land a household owns on paper is less than 50 decimals; (2) The household could not manage two complete meals a day with satisfaction in the last lean season.

in 'criteria' villages + 8,350 households in 'no criteria' villages) were listed to receive an loan offer of 1,500 taka, conditional on migration in the coming lean season. Offers were made from August 25 to September 30, 2016.

3.1 Make Offer to Candidates Listed for Loan Offer

Households listed for the loan were offered migration loans using a well-developed offer script, which included the following information:

1. Introduction of the field staff
2. Explanation of the lean season and seasonal migration, including opportunity for seasonal migration for the agro-labor based rural poor during the lean season;
3. The 1,500 taka offer per household, conditional on migration in the coming lean season;
4. Provision of several types of job information in popular migration destination cities and other areas;
5. Explanation of the rights of program participants;
6. Explanation of the process for getting the loan from RDRS.

3.1.1 Make Offer in Group Meeting

All candidates listed for the offer were invited to attend group offer meetings where Migration Organizers made the offer to the participants in public. People tend to migrate/make migration decision in groups in Bangladesh; therefore, group offer meetings were emphasized.

3.1.2 Make Door-to-Door Offer to Absent Households

If any offered candidate failed to attend the offer meeting, Migration Organizers traveled to that person's household to make the same offer. In this way, Migration Organizers made sure that all the households listed for the offer received the offer, either through group offer meetings or door-to-door offers.

3.2 Keep Record of the Listed Candidates Who Accepted the Offer

Migration Organizers kept records of the listed candidates who expressed interest in accepting the offer. In total, 8,200 candidates accepted the offer initially. Later on, Migration Organizers contacted those candidates in order to confirm their continued interest and complete the disbursement process with them. At the same time, Migration Organizers communicated with other eligible households who didn't accept the offer instantly to encourage them to take up the offer and migrate.

Note: All listed candidates were allowed to take the subsidy any time within the subsidy disbursement period (September 20 to December 31, 2016). As a result, candidates might accept the offer immediately or may take some time to make a decision. Therefore, not all 8,200 candidates who initially accepted the offer ultimately took out the loan.

4. Disbursement

The goal of the Disbursement step was to provide the cash subsidy to eligible candidates who accepted the loan offer. The disbursement period was from September 20 to December 31, 2016.

4.1 Identify Disbursement Methods in Each Village

If a village was located far from the Branch Office (more than 12 kms), RDRS arranged to disburse subsidies by going into the village rather than asking candidates from that village to spend money to travel to the Branch Office. However, for nearby villages, eligible candidates accepting the offer were invited to collect the subsidy from the Branch Office.

4.2 Make Disbursements

Subsidies were disbursed to eligible candidates accepting the offer. An eligible candidate could make his/her migration decision and get the subsidy any time within the three-month disbursement period. A four step process was followed for disbursement:

4.2.1 Prepare Loan Application Form

An eligible candidate who decided to accept the subsidy completed a Loan Application Form with his/her necessary information supporting documents (e.g. photocopy of national identity card and passport size photograph) and signature. In this step, it was confirmed that no under-age person received the subsidy.

4.2.2 Prepare Registry

After receiving the Loan Application Form, the RDRS Branch Office Accountant maintained a short official registry (off-line) for the candidate according to government policy of Bangladesh.

4.2.3 Disburse the Subsidies

The subsidy of 1,500 taka was disbursed to the candidate by the RDRS Branch Office Accountant, Branch Manager, or Migration Organizer.

4.2.4 Sensitize Recipients with DOs and DON'Ts during Migration

The Migration Organizer or Branch Manager provided the migrants with some DOs and DON'Ts during migration (e.g. don't travel on the roof of bus, don't get engaged to any political/illegal activities in the destination places etc) in order to ensure their safe and effective migration.

5. Migration Compliance Monitoring

The goal of this step is to verify that the migration conditionality of the loan is respected while ensuring that no coercion is taking place. The migration compliance monitoring period lasted from October 01, 2016 through January 31, 2017. The process for monitoring compliance is described below.

5.1 Identify Compliance Monitoring Schedule

A recipient is to be monitored beginning one week after disbursement. Accordingly, Migration Organizers prepare a schedule to monitor recipients. A recipient household is also scheduled to have migration compliance monitoring visits by the respective Migration Organizer once a week until the recipient migrates.

5.2 Monitoring Compliance

According to the schedule, Migration Organizers travel to villages to monitor if the recipients have migrated within the stipulated time (within one week of receiving the subsidy). If the recipient has migrated already, the Migration Organizers close the compliance monitoring with the household; if the recipient has not migrated yet, the recipient is encouraged by the Migration Organizer to migrate and the household receives another compliance monitoring visit a week after.

5.3 Courtesy Visit to the Family after Migration

Once a recipient completes migration, the Migration Organizes schedules a short courtesy visit to the migrant's household once a month. During this visit, the Migration Organizer asks household members questions about how the migrant is doing at the destination.

6. Recovery

The goal of this step is to recover subsidy money from successful migrants after they return from their seasonal migration. The recovery period lasted from October 15, 2016 to February 28, 2017

6.1 Identify Returning Migrants

During regular migration compliance monitoring visits in the villages, Migration Organizers identify returning migrants. Accordingly, s/he prepares a schedule of subsidy recovery visits to the returning migrant's household.

6.2 Recover the Subsidy from Successful Migrants

Successful migrants may repay the subsidy by going to the Branch Office or may ask the Migration Organizer to collect payment from his/her household. Moreover, s/he may choose to repay the subsidy at once or in three installments. Either way, the paying migrant is provided with a document from the Branch Office proving that s/he has repaid the subsidy.

For unsuccessful migrants (i.e. those who migrated but couldn't find a job in the destination, couldn't earn more than double of the subsidy amount, or experienced any form of physical accident in the destination), the subsidy amount is waived (fully or partially).

6.3 Migration Debrief Survey

After recovering the subsidy, a short migration debrief survey is conducted with the migrant. All 5,300 recipients were surveyed, regardless of their migration/repayment status.³

The migration debrief survey records detailed (but purely self-reported) information about the recipient's migration experience (i.e. date, place of migration, type of job found in the destination, wage got from the job, amount of income saved etc). Such information is collected to share popular destinations, job and wage information with interested candidates during the Offer step in future years.

³ In the data, there were 5,332 loan recipients. However, 20 of these loan recipients were not a part of the original sample and 12 were not eligible by our criterion and thus incorrectly provided a loan.