# Key Findings: Recurrent Monitoring System (May 2021- March 2022)

## Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on SHOUHARDO III program participants

USAID's SHOUHARDO III program, implemented by CARE Bangladesh, works with Poor and Extreme Poor (PEP) communities in northern Bangladesh. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the program extended support to healthcare facilities, spread awareness among participants through messaging, and provided livelihood support through cash transfers to households dealing with the impacts of the pandemic.

To measure the impact of COVID-19 on the lives and livelihoods of SHOUHARDO III participants, the program conducted five rounds of the Recurrent Monitoring System (RMS) from May 2021 to October 2021. SHOUHARDO III generated a mixed method report (quantitative and qualitative) that highlighted the existing ability of program participants to prepare for and adapt to changing conditions, as well as respond to and recover from conditions due to COVID-19. Findings from the five rounds of the RMS indicate that a significant degree of resilience exists among the program participants, especially in relation to coping with the economic impact of COVID-19. Although participants applied several positive coping strategies such as using savings money or receiving money or food from relatives, program participants still felt the burden of repaying loans and/or securing work opportunities due to the negative coping mechanisms applied during the peak of COVID-19.
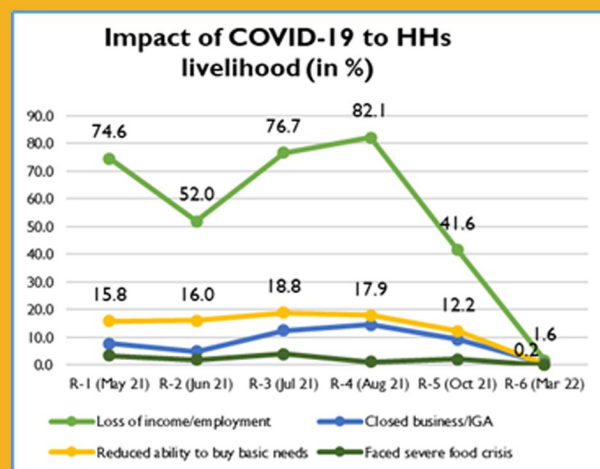
In March 2022, SHOUHARDO III conducted the sixth and final round of the RMS with 425 randomly selected households. This document highlights the key findings of Round 6 to understand the impact on households' resilience after government COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted.

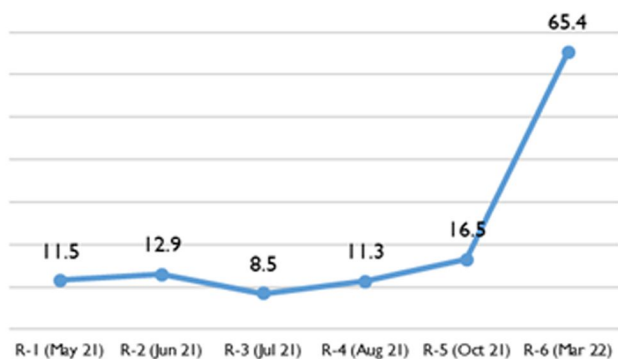## Key Findings



HHs livelihood affected by COVID-19 (in %)
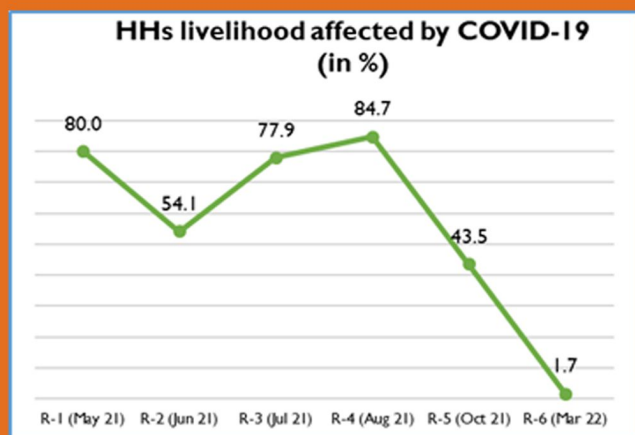
As indicated in the graph, program participants have bounced back from the negative effects of COVID-19 by March 2022. Only 1.7% of the surveyed households still reported an impact due to COVID-19, compared to 80% of households in Round 1. The percentage of households whose livelihoods were affected by COVID-19 started to significantly decrease from Round 4. This was at the same time when the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) lifted the four-month lockdown measures.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the surveyed households income/employment was the biggest area to be negatively impacted. In Round 1, almost 75% of all households reported a loss of income/employment, which increased to more than 80% in Round 4. By Round 6, less than 2% of the households still faced a loss of income. With movement restrictions lifted in February 2022, people were able to resume their employment opportunities. As a result of higher employment rates, households' ability to cover basic needs also improved.
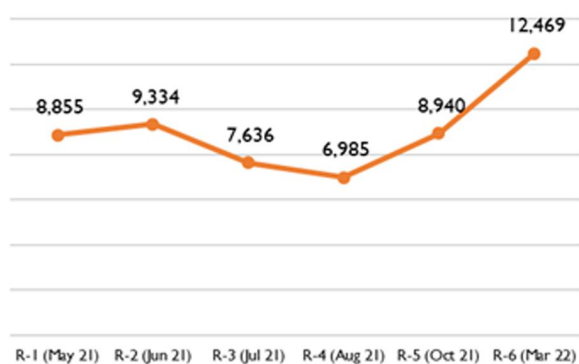


Impact of COVID-19 to HHs livelihood (in %)

## Percent of HHs well-being status improved (indicative/ notational)

65.4

11.5   12.9   8.5   11.3   16.5

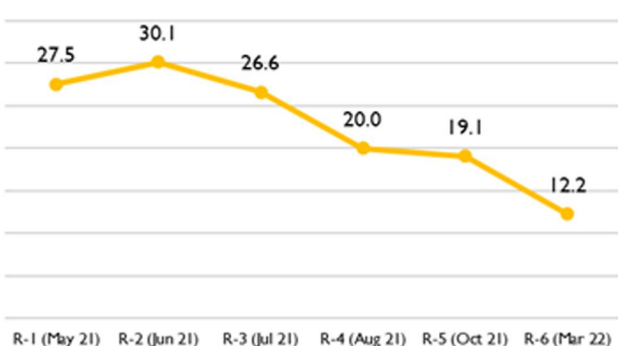R-1 (May 21)  R-2 (Jun 21)  R-3 (Jul 21)  R-4 (Aug 21)  R-5 (Oct 21)  R-6 (Mar 22)

Households' well-being status drastically increased to over 65% by Round 6. This is an indication that participants bounced back from the effects of COVID-19, as a result of re-establishing their income source and food security.

Monthly household income levels increased from BDT 8,855 in Round 1 to approximately BDT 12,500 in Round 6. Day laborer jobs were especially hard hit during the pandemic. Many of the SHOUHARDO III day laborers lost their employment during the pandemic. As lockdown restrictions were lifted, program households were able to recover. By Round 6, households earned more compared to the average earnings reported before round 1 (pre-pandemic average household income BDT 11,598).

## Average monthly household income (in BDT) during COVID-19

12,469

8,855   9,334   7,636   6,985   8,940

R-1 (May 21)  R-2 (Jun 21)  R-3 (Jul 21)  R-4 (Aug 21)  R-5 (Oct 21)  R-6 (Mar 22)

## Households reported any form of violence against women in %

30.1

27.5   26.6   20.0   19.1

12.2

R-1 (May 21)  R-2 (Jun 21)  R-3 (Jul 21)  R-4 (Aug 21)  R-5 (Oct 21)  R-6 (Mar 22)

The percentage of households reporting acts of violence against women (VAW) further decreased by Round 6 to approximately 12%. The findings from the RMS in 2021 revealed that financial struggles and male members spending more time at home (due to unemployment) were the key factors for frequent VAW incidents. With income levels improving and men engaged in work the prevalence of VAW reduced by Round 6.

Findings from the RMS Round 6 held in March 2022, indicate that program participants have been able to adapt, respond, and recover from the effects of COVID-19. Over the course of the SHOUHARDO III program, participants have built a degree of resilience to cope and recover from the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially participants opted for more negative coping strategies such as taking out loans, reducing food consumption, and selling of assets. However, by Round 6, the RMS noted that the majority of households engaged in more positive coping mechanisms such as using savings, taking up new wage labor opportunities, or new employment/business. Once lockdown measures were lifted, program households re-established their income source/employment and are now recording higher income levels. The RMS findings highlight the benefits of the SHOUHARDO III design that is focused on the context specific shocks and stresses and its short-term and long-term interventions that help to prevent and address them by building resilience and sustainability.