

Essays on Politics, Governance and Development (1981- 2021): Reminiscence and remembrance

Tofail Ahmed



**Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD)
Kotbari, Cumilla**

**Essays on Politics, Governance and Development (1981-
2021): Reminiscence and remembrance
Tofail Ahmed**

Published by:
Director General
Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD)
Kotbari, Cumilla

Tel : 0088-02334400601-6
008802334405011
008802334405070
Fax : 0088-02334400406
E-mail : dg@bard.gov.bd
Web : www.bard.gov.bd

ISBN :

Published : Novemner, 2023

Price : Tk.
US\$

Printed by:
Industrial Press, Cumilla
E-mail: ind.press09@gmail.com

Foreword

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to write the foreword for Professor Tofail Ahmed's book, and as the head of the institution, I'm gratified that we've been able to bring this valuable publication to light. The book encompasses a wide array of content, consistently capturing significant policy ideas spanning from the 1980s to 2020/22. Its central themes revolve around local governance, decentralization, local government, rural development and cooperatives.

Professor Tofail Ahmed is an esteemed figure, renowned for his research, writing, and speaking on these diverse subjects. The contents of this book are a treasure trove of multidimensional research theories and information, presented in a reader-friendly style rather than the conventional research paper format. A distinguishing feature of his work is its direct approach to addressing problems and providing practical solutions, which is particularly evident in his policy writings. Thus, this book provides a unique opportunity to delve into a myriad of topics in one comprehensive read.

I extend my special gratitude to Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Director of the Research Division at BARD, for taking the initiative to publish this remarkable book. I believe this addition will greatly enhance and honor our publication list.

I express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Tofail Ahmed for entrusting us with the privilege of publishing this book. He is a figure of high esteem, having been a former faculty member of the Academy. Despite his departure from the institution in 1994, I've witnessed his enduring affection and respect for BARD through his speeches at numerous meetings and seminars. His continued close connection

with our institution is a testament to his dedication, and it adds to our prestige.

I urge all my colleagues at BARD to deeply study each article in this book. By doing so, not only will they benefit, but also individuals and institutions involved in the policymaking and implementation processes of our nation will gain valuable insights, thus enhancing and fortifying the country's policy framework. Moreover, university teachers and students specializing in public administration and related fields in Bangladesh will find this book immensely beneficial.

I extend my warmest congratulations to the author and wish him good health and a long, prosperous life. I have full confidence that this book will find favor with a wide readership.

Allah Hafez, Joy Bangla. May Bangladesh live forever.

Date :

Md. Harun-or Rashid Mollah
Director General (Additional Secretary)
BARD, Cumilla

Prelude about the Book and the Author

I have dedicated more than 27 years of my career to this esteemed academy. Professor Dr. Tofail Ahmed served as a faculty member at BARD, however, he had already transitioned to the Department of Public Administration at Chittagong University two years prior to my arrival at BARD. Regrettably, I did not have the opportunity to work alongside Dr. Ahmed during our time at the academy.

Nevertheless, Dr. Ahmed's name and contributions were widely known, and I occasionally crossed paths with him at various academy events. Additionally, I delved into his numerous books and articles, fostering a sense of camaraderie due to our shared background in Public Administration. Dr. Ahmed's stature in his specialized field is truly unparalleled in Bangladesh, and he commands respect from experts worldwide.

Over the past four decades (1982-2022), Dr. Ahmed has made relentless contributions through books, articles, seminar papers, discussions in both Bangla and English, encompassing local governance, local government, rural development, poverty alleviation, cooperatives, NGOs, and politics and elections. He also regularly shares his insights through columns in popular Bangla and English newspapers and actively participates in public debates in electronic media. In essence, he is a renowned 'public intellectual,' a civil society activist, and a dedicated teacher in the fields of administration and politics in Bangladesh.

I can hardly name another university teacher or researcher who has made such extensive contributions to the field of general public administration practice within such a

specialized domain. Dr. Ahmed's multifaceted career spans academia, governmental roles, and extensive work with international organizations. His journey is a testament to his ability to adapt, learn, and evolve.

Dr. Ahmed's commitment to learning and embracing new challenges is noteworthy. He has emphasized that being unemployed at times is beneficial, as it prevents one from becoming stagnant in routine work. He follows the path of free thinking, always in pursuit of fresh insights and open to awakened conscience.

Now, regarding the book in question, there are four primary objectives for its publication by BARD and my personal involvement. First, it offers historical perspectives on policy thinking in Bangladesh, bridging the gap between the past and present. Second, it invites examination of the impact of these writings on policy-making and highlights areas of influence. Third, it provides invaluable insights to the current generation of policy thinkers. Fourth, it serves as a tribute to one of our esteemed colleagues within BARD.

BARD is releasing two separate volumes of Dr. Tofail Ahmed's anthology in Bangla and English. While not identical, the essays within both volumes complement each other, offering a comprehensive perspective on policy discourses.

The topics covered, particularly on local governance, field administration, and related matters, are rarely found elsewhere. Dr. Ahmed's authority on local government and decentralization is evident, making this collection a valuable resource for public administration and political science students and teachers.

Dr. Ahmed's dedication to BARD is remarkable. Over the past three decades, he has consistently brought knowledge and opportunities back to BARD, enriching the institution. His unwavering support and ongoing contributions to BARD set him apart among former faculty members.

As Dr. Ahmed approaches the age of seventy, we, his colleagues, celebrate his colorful and multifaceted life and works by publishing these two books. We sincerely pray to Almighty Allah for his good health, a long life, and a continued active academic journey.

Allah Hafez. May Bangladesh live long.

21 Oct. 2023

Dr. Mohammad Mizanur Rahman
Director, Research Division
BARD, Cumilla

Note: Dr Tofail Ahmed's books, articles and columns can be found free in his webpage: tofailahmed.info

Author's Note

It is indeed a matter of great pride and profound satisfaction that the institution which was my academic abode since 1980s has honored me by publishing a collection of my essays contributed in various issues of BARD journal along with some other articles published at Rural Development Academy (RDA), Bogura and elsewhere. The essays are being published in two separate books, one in Bangla and another one in English. While composing 'introduction' for English one, mentioning about Bangla one is relevant too. The two books cover the same range of time and topics of contemporary policy issues on local governance, politics, decentralization and rural development. The books contain identical but not the same essays, so Bangla and English both will complement one another in covering time and topics of similar nature.

While reading some of the essays, reader's feelings may be like riding on a time machine, going few decades back and gazing at a new world and discovering new reality which was quite different from now in 2023. In some cases situation improved a lot, there are changes in policy environment and the some of the contributions in policy changes over time may also be attributed to the essays included in the books. There are some issues still need to be addressed. The issues of decentralization, local government and LG finance and budget, water sector issues and embankment maintenance are worth mentioning. The 'Comilla approach' and 'Comilla model' of rural development and few of the experiments on community led Children's education, social development and cooperatives may need humble review and revisit in the present context as well.

The Bangla book contains a long personal note from the author which is not repeated here. I only repeat my

profound gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Director Research of BARD, Cumilla for his painstaking efforts to collect and choose the essays for publications and shoulder all the donkey's jobs single handedly to get the books published. I also like to thank all my other BARD colleagues especially Ranjan Kumar Guha and Abdullah Al Hussain for their supports.

I will be failing in my duties, if I do not mention the eagerness and sincerity of Mr. Md. Haur- or- Rashid Mollah shown towards me and my work and also for contributing a beautiful preface.

Last but not the least, many of the limitations could not be overcome due to time and resource constraint, I hope to be excused by the readers. The opinion got expressed in the book are of author's own. No institution and person but the author alone will remain responsible for the opinions and limitations contain in the book. I hope, if not all, some of the readers may appreciate findings and indications of many of old writings compiled under a single cover.

18.10.2023

Tofail Ahmed
Uttara, Dhaka

Table of Content

Preface

Director Research's Note

Authors Note

Local Government Leadership and Politice

Politics and Development at the Grassroots: A Study of Local Leadership in Bangladesh

The Upajila Chairmen of Bangladesh

Policy Issues on Ward Sabha in Bangladesh

Democracy and Decentralization: Way Forward for Successful Corona Combat

Covid Crisis and Local Government Institutions (LGIs) in Bangladesh

Rural Development and Cumilla Programme

Rethinking the Comilla Model: The Future Options for Rural Development in Bangladesh

Comprehensive Village Development Program (CVDP): An Experiment in Rural Development through Cooperative

The Third World Dilemma of Social Work: A Case Study on Developmental Rural Social Work from Bangladesh

Decentralized District Planning in Bangladesh: An Operational Framework

Mobilisation of Resources for Local Level Planning: Problems and Prospects

Participatory Embankment Maintenance and Resettlement of Destitute: Learning from Self-Sustained Embankment Maintenance Program at Bhola

Cultural Transformation Towards Sustainable Development: Experiments and Experiences from Bangladesh

Literacy Movement in Bangladesh and Role of Community Institutions: Exploring Comilla Experiences

Other Development Issue

National Social Security Strategy and Universal National Pension System in Bangladesh

Gender Specific Development Planning in Bangladesh: A Critique

Local Government Leadership and Politics

Politics and Development at the Grass roots: A Study of Local Leadership in Bangladesh*

Introduction

In recent years social scientists in Bangladesh have accorded high priority in undertaking studies to understand the organizational and developmental significance of the emerging leadership pattern at the local level. The Upajila Parishad (JP) as a body corporate and the chairmen as its leader, occupying as they do, a very crucial position in the political and developmental arenas of Bangladesh in the aftermath of the Upajila Parishad elections of 1985, have been the focus of their attention. The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), the Rural Development Academy (RDA) and the Rural Administration Division of the Bangladesh Academy Development (BARD) conducted several surveys (Ahmed 1986; Rahman 1986). The primary objective of these surveys was to find out the social, economic and political backgrounds of Upajila Parishad Chairmen of Bangladesh who took office in June 1985.

This study follows up two earlier ones [Quddus and Ahmed 1985; Ahmed 1986] and presents findings of a survey to see the trend, over a decade, of changing political affiliations of local leaders. It also seeks to comprehend their perceptions of local governance and local development as well as to record their ideological orientations and political beliefs. It is important to point out at the outset that instead of analyzing data within any theoretical framework in order to reach concrete conclusions, the study presents empirical data with some general observations. This may give us a broad view of the leadership phenomenon at the local level in

* *Politics Administration and Change*, No. 16, Jan-Jun 1991 [New Series], ISSN 1010-9137

Bangladesh during the decades of the eighties and the nineties.

Methodology

Two hundred and twenty questionnaires were administered among 220 UJP Chairmen in Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions of the country, only 145 responded. The low response rate was due to the nature of many questions asked which were considered 'politically sensitive' and therefore many chairmen chose not to participate in the survey. The survey was based on 11 questions (with scope for both open ended and structured answers) dealing with two main variables. These were: a) the time series information of political party affiliations of individual UJP Chairmen; and b) their instant impressions and perceptions of local administration, developmental program preferences and personal and ideological stances. The political background/affiliations included involvement in student politics, the tendency to change political party affiliations with the change of regimes, national political idols (dead or alive) and ideological orientations relating to the economic development of the country are discussed in the first section of the paper. The second section deals with the respondents' impressions and perceptions of administrative and developmental aspects and this covered their opinions regarding the adequacy or appropriateness of existing rules and regulations relating to local administration, the power and authority of UJP chairmen, attitudes of local bureaucrats, and choice of priorities for local development.

Changes in Political Party Affiliation

Traditionally, leaders of political parties in Bangladesh never admit their formal direct involvement in local government elections. Nevertheless, they do extend their support to candidates from the rank and file of the local

branches of their parties. If they fail to nominate their own candidates, they support, for tactical reasons, 'non-partisans' against representatives of parties to which they are opposed. Indeed, no local council election in Bangladesh has ever been held or contested without the direct or indirect involvement of political parties since the days of 'Basic Democracy' in the early 1960s. The Upajila Parishad elections of 1985 were no exception, though officially they were proclaimed to be conducted ostensibly on a non-partisan and non-political basis. To establish its 'neutrality', the military regime made this declaration in the backdrop of massive opposition agitation against martial law regime in 1985. It was keen to lure political parties to participate in the elections and give it a semblance of credibility.

A pre-election survey showed that 33 per cent of the total number of candidates (2,354) were non-partisan or independent, the remainder belonging to different political parties and groups, most of whom had officially 'boycotted' the elections. The post-election survey revealed that 73 per cent of the elected chairmen were affiliated to political parties such as *Janadal* (JD - 45%), *Bangladesh Awami League* (BAL - 12%), *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP - 7%), *Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal* (JSD 4%). *Muslim League* (ML - 2%) and other minor parties (3 %). The so-called 'independents' had dubious political backgrounds [Tables 1]. They often camouflaged their actual political identity or party affiliation and accept the label 'independent'.

It would be helpful to identify the past party affiliations of the present leadership to consider more accurately the trend of changing party affiliations.

Since the 1950s, the presence of students in the political arena of Bangladesh (then part of Pakistan) was increasingly felt. By 1971, during the war of independence, they became the dominant and guiding force in the politics

of the country. As a result, Student Political Activists served as the major source of political recruitment in post-independent Bangladesh. Both major and minor parties inducted them in large numbers. As the majority (62%) of Upajila chairmen were below the age of 45, many of them may be assumed to have commenced their political careers as student activists in the late 50s or early 60s [Ahmed 1986]. It is thus possible to assess the changing political and ideological orientation of the local leadership from the time of their entry into politics.

Table 1 : Party Affiliation of Candidates in 1985 Upajila Parishad Elections

Political Parties	No. of Candidates	n-2354
Janadal	993	42.18
BNP	187	7.94
BAL	176	7.48
JSD	87	3.70
ML(all groups)	62	2.63
Other Minor Parties/Groups	79	3.36
Independents	770	32.71
Total	2354**	100.00

Note :

*Later Janadal liquidated to form Jatiya Party. More than one candidate belonging to JD fought for Chairmanship in the same constituency. Thus the number of candidates outnumbers the number of constituencies.

**The total number of candidates was 2,375. The survey could not ascertain the political affiliation of 19 candidates.

Source: *Daily Ittefaq*, 16 May 1985.

Of the total number of respondents (145), only 35 percent said that they were not associated with any student political organizations before 1971. The remaining 65 percent

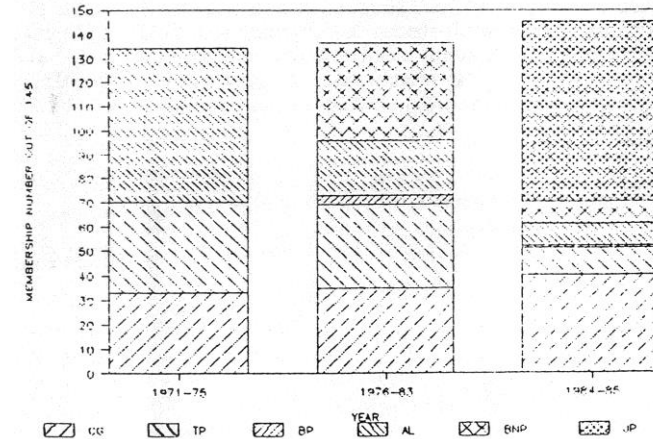
claimed their involvement. They may be placed in four broad ideological categories. The largest group of respondents (37.24%) participated in the nationalist movement against Pakistani regimes before independence. They preferred a mixed economy with greater state control over banking, insurance, big industry and public utility services. The second largest group (about 14%) were involved in socialist movements and actively participated in the independence struggle along with the nationalists. The third group (12.41%) were affiliated with those parties which ideologically were religion-centered. They favored an Islamic state system and were anti-Indian in their stance. However, they pointed out that they had sought the material development of the eastern wing of Pakistan (now Bangladesh) within the political framework of Pakistan. A small number of respondents revealed that they believed in Islamic fundamentalism as professed by Maulana Abul Ala Moududi (founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami) in Pakistan [See Table 2].

Table 2 : Past Involvement of Upajila Chairmen in the student politics with different ideological labels

Ideological Labels	No	N=145
Nationalists	54	37.24
Leftists	20	13.80
Rightists	18	12.41
Islamic Fundamentalists	2	1.38
No Involvement in student Politics	51	35.17
Total	145	100.00

Note: The names of the individual parties mentioned by respondents have been lumped into four dominant ideological categories, which prevailed during 1952 onwards to simplify the basic positions of respondents in national politics.

FIGURE 1 : Political party membership under three ruling regimes among UZP chairmen elected in 1985



Note: CG-Camouflage group (Never disclosed their political identity and always support party in power); TP-Traditional parties existed before PPR of 1976(JSD, NAP(M), NAP(☉), BAKSAL etc.); BP-Breakaway parties (UPP, AL (M), DL and Janata Party) AL-Awami League (Ruling party from 1971-75)and BNP-Bangladesh Nationalist Party (Ruling party from 1976-82) JP-Jatiya Party (Ruling Party from 1983-90)

2. The AL government since 2015 allowed party symbol in local elections and only in case of UP chair, UJP Chair Vice-chairs, City Corporation and Municipal Mayors and District Council Chairs. The members and councillors are not allowed party symbols.

Since the late 70s, changing of political platforms by most politicians in Bangladesh with every change of regime has become the 'rule of the game' [Hossain 1983]. This trend among local leaders can be easily discerned if we divide the one-and-a-half decades (1971 to 1985) into four periods and follow their movement from one political party to another.

All the 145 responses have been distributed among the different political parties/groups in the vertical and horizontal axis in Figure 1. It indicates four crucial

intervening periods when major cracks and fissures appeared in the traditional political party structure. About 70 percent of the respondents were members of six political parties broadly categorized as 'traditional parties', i.e., those which existed before the promulgation of the Political Parties Regulation Order (PPR) in 1976. The abandoning of 'traditional parties' by politicians started in 1976 and their number plummeted by 1985 [See Table 3]. There appeared some short-lived break-away parties and factions but these failed to attract any significant number of people within their fold. The only exception was the BNP which was launched with about 28 percent, at the cost of BAL and JSD. But BNP failed to sustain that advantage after losing its leader, Ziaur Rahman, and thereafter state power. The rise and fall of BNP supporters among the local leadership, i.e., Upajila chairmen, is dramatic which started with 28 per cent in 1980 and ending with six per cent within five years. If the individual positions of the 'traditional' and break-away parties and factions are considered then only three (BAL, JSD and BAKSAL) amongst the 13 parties could maintain their in capacious existence; other parties were lost into oblivion.

A new party-Janadal-- was floated by the Ershad regime (1982). Later renamed as Jatiya Party, the acceptance of Janadal membership by upajila chairmen reached 52 per cent by 1985. This left the two big parties, BAL and BNP, at six percent each. The so called 'independents' (21%) and the 'camouflaged' group (7%) identified themselves with the ruling party for obvious reasons and the Janadal was able to lure into its camp almost 80 per cent of the Upajila Chairmanship. Further shifts also occurred in course of time within the ranks of BAL, BNP and JSD. This could not be covered by this survey.

The pattern that has emerged from the survey can show a highly selective group such as upajila chairmen cannot be

considered as a representative indicator (party change and regime change) but feeble trend of the local political leadership in general.

The trend of changing political allegiance of local government leaders with the change of ruling regimes is only evident here. The urge to share state power has been found to be a crucial factor in the attitude of the local leadership, may the national leadership, which motivates them to shift their political affiliations frequently.

Respondents were asked to name three national political leaders (two living and one deceased) who they admired most. Among the nine deceased leaders named, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proved to be the most popular and earned the admiration of 38 percent of the respondents. Ziaur Rahman was the second-most admired political personality (23%) while the remaining deceased leaders identified were A. K. Fazlul Haque, Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy, General M. A. G. Osmani, Fazlul Kader Chowdhury and Col. Abu Taher in order of popularity [See Table 31].

Table 3 : Deceased national leaders taken as political role model or admired by the Upajila leadership

Leader	No.	%
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1975)	55	37.93
Ziaur Rahman (1981)	34	23.45
Fazlul Haque (1962)	17	11.72
Moulana Bhashani (1978)	13	8.96
S. H. Suhrawardy (1963)	9	6.21
M.A. G. Osmani (1986)	8	5.52
F. K. Chowdhury (1973)	3	2.07
Col. Abu Taher (1977)	3	2.07
No Response	3	2.07
Total	145	100.00

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate the years of their death.

Among the active national political leaders, H. M. Ershad, President of the country until December 1990 and who was toppled by popular upsurge, topped the list with over 54 per cent of respondents admiring him. He was followed by Shah Abdul Aziz (not a very well-known figure in national politics), Ataur Rahman Khan, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, A. S. M. Abdur Rab, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, Begum Khaleda Zia and a host of others which included some well-known personalities [See Table 4].

Table 4 : Active political personalities admired by the upajila leadership

Leaders	No.	%
H. M. Ershad	117	54.67
Shah Abdul Aziz	12	5.60
Ataur Rahman Khan	10	4.67
Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury	10	4.67
A. S. M. Abdur Rab	9	4.21
Sheikh Hasina Wajed	8	3.74
Begum Khaleda Zia	6	2.80
Others	42	19.63
Total	214	99.99

Note: Data collected between July and December 1985. Three had died by 1987.

Among those named by the respondents, Ershad and Begum Zia entered politics in 1982. Fifty percent of them were incumbent members of the Ershad government, some of whom either did not have any political background or were renegades from other parties. Only 25 per cent of respondents chose leaders of opposition parties. All respondents were directly related to their chosen political 'idols' either as their clients or as regular recipients of various forms of patronage. The choice of leaders is conditioned by localism (as in the case of Shah Abdul Aziz and a few in the 'others' category) rather than the overall contributions of the leaders in the context of national politics.

Respondents were asked whether they preferred a free competitive capitalist economy, a centrally controlled socialist economy, or a mixed economy with substantial state control together with limited market mechanisms for the long-term economic development of the country, a large percentage opted for a mixed economy [See Table 51].

Table 5 : Economic system preferred by the local leadership

System	No	%
Mixed Economy	64	44.14
Socialist Economy	40	27.56
Capitalist Economy	32	22.07
No Response	9	6.21
Total	145	100.01*

*Rounding error.

Local Leadership's Perception of Local Administration and Development

The UJP chairmen expressed their utter frustrations about the inadequacies and complexities of governmental regulations regarding local administration. Various issues were strongly debated and intensively discussed by them during conferences held at BARD [See Quddus and Ahmed 1985; Ahmed, Quddus and Huq 1985; Hossain and Islam 1985]. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents found the rules and regulations relating to the powers and functions of the UJP adequate but were concerned about the process of administering those rules effectively. Half of them felt that officials and Professionals at the upper levels of administrative machinery were neither extending their support nor cooperating with the 'popularly elected representatives' of the people in running the local administration. They argued for greater power and authority for efficiently administering developmental activities at the grass roots.

Five major problems of local administration were identified by the respondents. Traditional bureaucratic mentality on the part of local officials was considered the greatest deterrent to efficient administration, followed by their

corrupt practices, negligence, lack of knowledge and skill and dissatisfaction with the working environment.

The responses regarding the problems were lumped together from multiple choices and answers. When the first three problems were explained to the author during the interviews they appeared to be a single problem with different manifestations. For example, unnecessary delays in implementing UJP decisions by an official might have had multi-dimensional effects such as normal bureaucratic procedures for observing governmental rules, tendency to blackmail and resort to corrupt practices, willful negligence, under-estimating and undermining the 'layman' public representative because of their relatively low academic accomplishments and the like. On the other hand, it could be assumed that in many cases the new leadership at the local level failed to understand the art of supervision, getting things done by others and the complex rules and regulations during the initial stages of the Chairmanship. The last problem, lack of job satisfaction and unhappiness with rural postings, was mainly attributed to the newly recruited civil servants at the upajila levels.

After the initiation of the Upajila system in 1982, large number of development projects began to be implemented with grants from the national government under the Annual Development Program (ADP). The Planning Commission issued 'general guidelines' delineating the planning and implementing procedures of all ADP-funded projects to be implemented by the UJP [Planning Commission 1985]. These guidelines were severely criticized by the Upajila chairmen [Ahmed, Quddus and Huq 1985].

One of the most controversial issues raised was the centrally determined sectorial allocations for development projects to be undertaken by the UJP. The Upajila Parishad

Chairmen asserted that the fixing of sectorial expenditures should be left to the UJP with sufficient flexibility to adjust programs and expenditure according to local needs and priorities. They also considered that determination of expenditure heads and program components by the Planning Commission and line ministries were against the principle of decentralized administration and developmental approach.

Ignoring all the given technicalities and complexities associated with the Local Government Ordinance of 1982 and the Planning Commission Guidelines of 1985, the respondents were asked to prioritize the sectoral development programs from the 'felt need' perspective, their personal experience of the local situation, and perceived local needs. The priority order provided by the chairmen widely differed from the government's priority list. Education came first in the respondents' list which is fifth in the government's list. They placed physical infrastructure third in their list, which is at the top of the other list. Four new areas such as cooperatives, rural electrification, flood control and law and order (which normally do not come under development administration) were also identified by the local leadership but which are not included in the government's list as they are not subjects 'transferred' to the UJP for its administration [Table 61.

Table 6 : Government and local leadership's priority areas for local development compared

Governments Priority	Responden's Preference
Transport & Communication	Education
Agriculture & Irrigation Infrastructure Health & Social Welfare Education	Agriculture Population Control Social Development
Small & Cottage Industry Sports & Culture Union Parishad Grants	Health Cooperatives Cottage Industry
Miscellaneous	Rural Electrification Flood Control Law & Order

Source: Planning Commission [1986] and Survey

Conclusion

The survey results presented here and also in Ahmed [1986] only permit us to reach tentative conclusions about the future Impact of UJP as a local government institution vis-a-vis the country's rural development programs within the existing political and economic framework. This is because these surveys merely are snap-shots of a vast and complex social formation which are currently undergoing a rigorous process of transformation.

Analyzing the BIDS survey of the Upajila leadership's background, Rahman [1986:214] considers that the Union Parishads (UPs) are composed of an elite sitting at the apex of a socio-economic structure because of their high income, big landholdings and higher education. Similar findings are also evident in the survey conducted by BARD [Ahmed 1986] with an even larger sample. But the question is whether all these findings are leading to a judgment that the

Upajila leadership is not actually representing the interests of the majority of the population. If they are indeed not truly representative of the people, then what alternatives are left in this phase of the country's social transformation? Blair [1987:8] argues that leaders in any society invariably are an elite of one sort or another, whether they are democratically elected, self-appointed dictators, or functionaries appointed through a party bureaucracy. Therefore, it may be possible that within the structural limitations of Bangladesh's societal framework and if a sufficient gestation period is allowed the local leadership may be able to contribute positively to the country's development initiatives as has been proved in the Panchayat Raj (PRI) system in India, especially in West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu [Blair 1987]. However, the differences between the Indian and Bangladeshi social situations must be considered. Some other specific historical realities responsible for blocking the gradual development of democratic political institutions and the lack of a development environment due to the hegemonic nature of the state encompassing economic, political and ideological aspects of the society also should not be overlooked (Jahangir, 1986:10).

In the specific case of Bangladesh's social formation, the petty bourgeoisie has become dominant as a political and social class which encourages the state to play a Bonapartist militarist role [Poulantzas,1975; Jahangir 1986] although relative autonomy is maintained to keep its political jacket clean and resolve inner contradictions among themselves (traditional petty bourgeoisie vs. new petty bourgeoisie).²

The local government institutions historically served the central power axis in resolving their legitimacy crisis of hegemonic rule at the center with the illusion of autonomy

but at the cost of the impoverishment, immiserization and pauperization of the greatest number of people.

Differentiation and polarization are said to be now all-pervasive among the peasantry (Jahangir 1979; Rahman 1986] but revolutionary confrontation remains confined within the petty bourgeoisie. Contradictions in ideological beliefs and choice of leaders are clearly evident among Upajila leaders. They also manifest a tendency to prostrate before the higher levels of the bureaucracy and seek ways and means to promote their self-interests.

The prospects for real or progressive change in the direction of providing 'greater good for the greater' number of people' ultimately depend on political enlightenment and commitment. In the near future, such prospect appears to be bleak. The political affiliations of the Upajila leadership represent total ideological bankruptcy. Umar [1985] describes the situation as the general crisis of the bourgeoisie rooted in the irreconcilable contradiction between the production relations and the forces of production. The 'terribly bad shaped bourgeois parties' in Bangladesh have no viable program for tackling the situation, rather they are plagued by internal strife, impotence and splits. This crisis situation leads the nascent bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie into a new type of coalition. The armed forces, political parties and the civil bureaucracy normally represent the same class interests, namely the bourgeoisie. They collaborate with each other in the crisis management exercises. In the past, the so called democratic facade of the bourgeoisie rule failed to protect the class interest of the nascent bourgeoisie. Now, the military is considered the last resort to help overcome that crisis, at least for the time being (Umar 1987).

The reorganization of the local government system and the policy of decentralization pursued by the military government in Bangladesh after 1982 should be considered

in the context of the continuous struggle of nascent and petty bourgeoisie to establish themselves as the dominant social and political class. Upajila leaders, because of their propertied class background and bourgeois aspirations, frequently change their political colour and ostracize their ideological beliefs only to safeguard class interests. Decentralized planning for development will simply not work if the 'hidden agenda' of the ruling class persists.

The latent political agendum of the military government was to earn a certain degree of legitimacy of its rule by using the local government institutions (Ahmed 1987). The omnipotent civil bureaucracy exploited the weakness of this politics by increasing its role in the public policy arena by further extending its arms to the grassroots [Khan 1987]. Decentralization, therefore, instead of de-bureaucratizing the administration in the real sense of the term, reinforced the already re-bureaucratized the process of planning and managing development affairs.

For more concrete theoretical discussion please see Tofail Ahmed (2012) PP-19-116 and 264-307.

Notes

1. Former student leaders headed parties like JSD, UPP and many other smaller parties in post-independent Bangladesh. At least, half of the members on the national as well as the local committees of BAL, BAP, and CPB were former student activists.

2. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman established a single-party state with BAKSAL as the sole legitimate party in 1974. After his assassination, the Zia regime restored the multi-party system and provided for the registration of political parties through PPR by an executive order. About 76 political parties registered themselves within a year. By 1980, the number rose to 90 [See Hossain 1983].

References

- Ahmed, T. (1986) 'The Chairmen of Upajila Parishad in Bangladesh: a study of their background', *The Journal of BARD*. 15, July. pp. 1-20.
- Ahmed, T. (1987) 'Decentralization and People's Participation in Bangladesh: A political perspective'. BARD, Comilla
- Ahmed, T., Quddus, M. A. and Huq, A. (1985) *Training Report of the Upajila Chairmen* (mimeo, in Bengali). Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD).
- Ali, A. M. S. n.d. 'The national political process and the Upajila election', *Journal of Local Government*. Special Issue.
- Blair, H W (1987) *Decentralization and Possibilities for USAID Assistance in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: USAID.
- Hossain, A. (1983) 'Political Parties of Bangladesh' (in Bengali). *Lokaat*. 12, September, pp. 5-58.
- Hossain, S. and Islam, N. 1985, *Training Report of the Upajila Chairmen* (mimeo, in Bengali). Comilla: BARD.
- Jahangir, B. K. 1979. *Differentiation, Polarization and Confrontation in Rural Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies.
- Jahangir, B. K. 1986. *Problematics of Nationalism in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies.
- Khan, M. M. 1987. 'Politics of administrative reforms in Bangladesh', *Public Administration and Development*, 7 (4), pp. 351-62.
- Poulantzas, N. 1975. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. London: New Left Review Books.

Quddus, M. A. and AHMED, T. 1985. Report on the Training Programme of the Upajila Chairmen. (mimeo, in Bengali). Comilla: BARD

Rahman, A. 1986. Peasants and Classes: A Study in Differentiation in Bangladesh. London: Zed Books,

Umar, B. 1986. General Crisis of Bourgeoisie in Bangladesh, Dhaka: Papyrus.

Umar, B. 1987. 'Circular movement of Bangladesh politics'. Economic and Political Weekly. 22 (32).

[Tofail Ahmed (2012) Decentralisation and the local state: A study on the political economy of Local Governance in Bangladesh, (Ph. D dissertation at the University of Wales, 1991) Agamee Prokashani, Dhaka. Available for reading in the website: tofailahmed.info (published 13 years after this article)]

Acknowledgment

The author acknowledges the contributions of Late M. Ameerul Huq, Tariq Ahmed and Masuda A. Chowdhury of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development and Suranjit K. Saha and Mike Shepperdson of the Centre for Development Studies, University College of Swansea, in developing this paper.

The Chairmen of Upajila Parishads in Bangladesh: A Study Of Their Backgrounds*

The administration in the field level i.e. from district and below as well as the local government system in general had experienced a major change in Bangladesh with the initiation of administrative decentralization scheme in 1982. The former sub-divisions as field administrative units were abolished, the role of districts curtailed to the bare minimum and the thanas have been made the focal point of administration and development in all respects by remaining as Upajilas (sub districts). Upajila Parishad a representative local government body has been organised with all the powers and authority of planning and implementation of development programmes and control and supervision of civil bureaucracy and officers of other nation-building departments. A Chairman elected on the basis of adult franchise of the Upajila has been made the leader of the Parishad and the chief executive of the Upajila administration. The services of 30 officers of various government departments and civil bureaucracy with approximately 168 supporting staff were placed under the disposal of Upajila Parishad¹. As chief executive of Upajila Parishad the Chairmen supervises the functions of all

* 1 Cabinet Division. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (1984) Manuals on Upajila Administration Vol. III. Page-424 (under the revised organogram of Upajila Administration and by publishing the memorandum from the same Division on May 30, 1985 the services of the staffs and officials of transferred subjects were placed in the Upajila Parishad. Again the Chairmen's authority over these departments and staffs were established in the job description of the officials (Vol. I) and Upajila Parishad Business Rule. II) of Manuals of Upajila Administration. An organogram of Upajila Administration may be seen in annexure for further consultation.)
The Journal of BARD, Vol-XV, July 1986.

departments and officials placed in the services of Upajila Parishad. So the Chairmen of Upajila Parishad has been made the key person in the whole gamut of administration initiated under the scheme 'administrative decentralization'. The process of bringing all the 460 Upajilas of the country under the scheme started in November, 1982 and was completed in eight different phases in December, 1983.

But the election of the position of Chairmen of Upajila Parishad could not be held till May 1985. So a mid-level civil bureaucrat from administrative service held that position as ex-officio Chairmen for the interim period. The election of Upajila Parishad Chairmanship was held on 16th and 20th May 1985 amidst grave polemics. The major 23 political parties of the country grouped in three separate alliances unitedly opposed the election and urged the people to boycott it. On the other hand, government expressed its firm determination to hold the election on non-partisan and non-political basis. In all 3095 candidates filed nomination papers and after the withdrawal of 723, finally 2372 candidates contested for 458+ seats of the Upajila Parishad Chairmanship². The elected chairmen took oath of their office on May 30, 1984.

² Two of the candidates were declared elected unopposed (Debidwar of Cumilla and Lakshamichari of Khargranchari districts).

Daily Ittefaq, May 8, 1985 (one hundred reporters of this daily took part in a countrywide survey on the various aspects of the Upajila election. The survey include pre-election and post election period. It covered the candidate's as well as elected leader's party identity and other background such as education, leadership etc. The findings of that surveys were cited to give a comparative picture in due course.

Data were collected by structured questionnaire supplied to 2301 Upajila chairmen of Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions when they joined one week orientation course on 'Administrative Reforms and Development' in June 1985 at BARD, Cumilla. The filled questionnaires were received from 183 of respondents which composed 80% of the targetted respondents and 40% of the total population (460).

Justification of the study

The leadership emerged through this process is considered to be very significant in the context of the future of local government and also political development of the country. Because, this is for the first time in the administrative history of the country that an elected leader is being placed as chief executive of a vital administrative unit with some power, authority and resources. In Bangladesh generally the government officials are more educated and experienced in comparison with the people's representatives. So in view of the above contention, it is necessary to look into the leadership pattern which took office after winning an election. On the other hand, the election debate appeared to make the system itself controversial to the public for the time being. So party affiliation and political involvement of the candidates is also an important aspect worth investigating. Due to the uncertainty and instability of the political system, leadership discontinuity is also rampant, In case of the parliament members and ministers who took office from post liberation period to till the present regime, adventurism and opportunism is reigning over the whole situation of leadership game. This study will try to look into the leadership emerged through this election by empirical data¹ and personal observation.

Review of Literature

The study of the socio-economic background of leadership of the rural local government, various village institutions and also of rural power structure is not new. A good number of studies have been done by sociologists, political scientists, economists and rural development academics. Most of the studies more or less came with some common set of findings, though there were differences in the perspectives, analysis and outlook. The findings and major

issues raised in these studies. can be summarised in the following way, (i) The rural power structure and rural institution including the local government bodies are largely dominated by the local affluent class, landed gentry, surplus farmer or rural economic elite (Alavi 1976, Bortoooci 1976, Sobhan 1968, Rahman 1981 and Khuda 1980), (ii) The conservative elements are also found in the majority in local institutions in respect of age, political affiliation, family structure etc. (Alam, 1976, Saqi 1980, Mukabbir 1980, Rahman 1981, Khuda 1980). There are some other studies which are claimed or branded as village studies where the role of kinship, lineage, traditional value, religious value, property are found very much dominant in rural power structure. Leadership also remains hereditary in nature in many of the cases. But two studies (Badaruddin 1972 and Mnnnan 1972) conducted in the programme villages of BARD came out with some new findings. In the co-operative institutions of Comilla Kotwali a new set of leadership emerged which replaced the traditional leaders in many respect.

The role, functions, organisation and context of the present study is different from the previous studies. It is assumed that the present leadership in the Upajila Parishad is the continuation of the past. But studies on the leadership background and development perception of the leaders above union level is very much inadequate. Rounak Jahan (1976) studied the parliament members elected in 1970 and 1973. Probably this is the only study of this category in Bangladesh on leadership. Some of the aspects of that study such as age, education, income, occupation, landholding are quite comparable with the present study. As the leadership context and institutions are different and new, the present attempt may be considered the first of its kind in Bangladesh.

In studying the socio-economic background, the following variables were identified for observation, These were age, marital status, family size, education, profession, landholding, level of income, leadership background and party affiliation in politics.

FINDINGS

Age: The age range of the youngest and the oldest Chairmen is from 25 to 70 years. The highest concentration is found between 36-40 years (27%) and the lowest concentration is in between 25-35 years (16.95%) of age. For the convenience of understanding and analysis if we distribute the respondents into two broad categories i.e. below forty five and above forty-five. Then it stands 62% and 30% respectively. (Table-1)

The above data lead to the conclusion that majority of the chairmen of Upajila Parishad are relatively young. The same trend is also found in some of the previous studies. Jahan (1976) found 73% among the parliament members elected in 1973, Alam (1976) 75% Union Parishad (UP) Chairmen, Saqui (1980) 57% Chairmen and 70% members of UP belong to the age group of forty-five and below.

According to a pre-election survey of the Daily Ittefaq a vernacular national daily of Bangladesh 70% of the candidates of Upajila Parishad election belong to the age group of 30-45 years³.

The tables are placed at the end of the report for further information.

Marital Status: Among the respondents 94% were found married and only 6% unmarried. Among the unmarried respondents, all were in the age group of 25-30 years except one who was 48 at that time (Table-2).

Family Size: Data on the family structure of the respondents show that only 13% of the respondents belong to the members of nuclear family (4 member family). So the rest 87% are among the large family group. But again these largeness have got wide range of variations. It varies from 5-35 members (Table-3).

Rahman (1981) found 15%, Alam (1976) 6% and Saqui (1980) 14% among the Union Parishad chairmen as members of 1-4 members family size group.

Education: All the respondents have had their formal education though the level varied from primary to the university. 12% of the chairmen are found below secondary level of education. Among them the highest numbers are graduates (43% and 14% have post graduate degree (Table 4).

Jahan (1976) in her study on parliament members found that 41% and 22% in 1970 and 42% and 27% in 1973 election were graduates and post graduates respectively. The Ittefaq survey finds that 60% of the candidates of Upajila election are graduates and post graduates.⁴

Occupation: The range of occupational background of the respondents is wide and varied. No person is found with single occupation, Even many of the respondents have more than two/three occupations or sources of income. So at times, they got confused and puzzled to identify themselves with a particular occupation.

The majority of the respondents (38%) identified themselves with cultivation, while 37% with business as principal occupation. Again 49% of the respondent's,

secondary occupation is cultivation and similarly business occupies 33% of the respondent's secondary occupation. 15% of the chairmen are houselords. They supplement certain portion of their income from renting houses, godown and open space. Teaching also occupies the occupation of a good number of respondents (14%), but after election most of them have given up that as full time profession but still they identified themselves as teachers. Finally it is found that as profession, cultivation and business dominate very prominently. (Table-5).

In the study of the occupational background of MPs of 1970 and 1973, Jahan (1976) finds law practice, (29 and 26 per cent) business (27 and 24 per cent) and agriculture (4 and 3 per cent) in the first, second and third position respectively. But the nature of multiple occupational background was not considered in her study. But in Rahman (1981), Saqui (1980) and Alam's (1976) study agriculture or cultivation occupies the first and business the second position.

Landholding Pattern: None of the respondent possesses less than three acres. But 3% of the respondents did not answer this particular question. The group is dominated by large farming family and more appropriate to say landlords (Table-6).

Fifty-five per cent of the respondents own land or houses in the district town and some of them have houses or lands in Dhaka (Table-7). In most of the cases the land is owned jointly by the family and not by the respondent himself alone. So the income is also contributed and shared by the other members of the family.

Income: The participants were asked to assess their approximate annual net income in terms of money. The lowest income group is found between Tk. 20-50 thousand

⁴ The term large family is synonymous with joint family. These two terms are used interchangeably. Kabir, Safiqul, Daily Ittefaq, May 16, 1985.

which constitutes 16% of the respondents. Majority of the respondents are found (55%) to have income between Tk. 50-150 thousand annually (Table-8).

Leadership Background: In studying the leadership background the following three distinct institutions were taken into consideration .

- (a) Local government institutions (union parishad, thana parishad, municipality and Jila parishad).
- b) Former Provincial and National Assembly and Jatiya Sangshad of Bangladesh.
- c) Co-operative institutions (KSS, UCCA and BSBL Samabaya Union).

A total of 40% of the respondents have got no experience in the above three types of institutions but they have the experience of various socio-cultural voluntary social welfare organisations and political party leadership. However, 51% of the respondents were associated with Union Parishad as Chairmen, Vice-chairmen or members. Fortyfour per cent have leadership background in co-operative institutions of primary, secondary and national level. About 6% of them were MPA, MNA and MPs of various duration. A small portion also hold various positions in District Board/Council/Parishad and Municipalities (Table-9) there was a Minister and five retired high civil and military officials who have different leadership and professional background to their credit.

Among the 2375 candidates of Upajila election 16% (585) were Union Parishad chairmen and among the 460 Upajila Chairmen, 20% (91) were sitting Union Parishad Chairmen during the election

Former MPA, MNA and Jatiya Sangshad member constitute 3% of the contestants, while 26 of them were finally elected (including two former ministers) which constituted 6% of total chairmen.

Involvement in partisan politics: The data were collected within the two/three weeks of assuming the office by the newly elected chairmen after the election. The election was held on non-partisan and non-political basis". So the researcher did not ask about respondents' party identity, because at that time they were not ready to answer such a direct and sensitive question. So we decided to keep our query limited only in 'Yes' and 'No' regarding their involvement in partisan politics.

Sixty-five percent of the respondents said that they were actively involved in partisan politics while remaining 35% denied partisan political involvement (Table-10).

Though the election was promised to be held on non political and non-partisan basis by the government and major opposition parties of the countries boycotted the election, but only 33% of the candidates were found independent or non-partisan. The party leaders and workers individually participated in the polls (Table-11)⁵.

Again the poll results of Upajila shows that 27% of the elected chairmen can be identified non-partisan. The rest belonged to Janadal (45%), Awami League (12%), BNP (7%). JSD (4%), Muslim League 2% and 3% to some other minor parties. (Table-12)⁶.

Concluding Remarks:

It is evident from the data consulted in the earlier part of the study that the leadership emerged in the Upajila Parishad undoubtedly belongs to the richer class of the society. But the education and previous leadership background also played a significant role in occupying the position (which is again related with propertied-class-advantage). A sizeable number of new leaders also were inducted who were in no way previously related with rural institutions.

5. Daily Ittefaq, June 12, 1985

6. Ibid

In that case education, good family background and political influence were the determining factors.

In observing the landholding pattern and occupational status, it is found that most of the chairmen are somehow or other related with land and cultivation. But majority of them are absentee landlords and urban dwellers. On some other occasion the author varified the matter by personal observation in three bigger districts of Bangladesh and it is found that even after the election the chairmen attend their office from the city, So it is not the "coalition of urban and rural rich",* in most of the cases the urbanities themselves are holding the power at the rural local government institutions.

As regards the political identity most of the new leaders could straightway be called politically flexible. They have no strong ideological footing in politics. As the boycotting political parties did not support their former fellow candidates and all the time talked against the Upajila election, the members elected from those parties (15 and 7 party alliances) took shelter into the fold of government's political wing. The independent candidates also followed the same path. So majority of the Chairmen are now pushed or pulled to identify themselves with the current of government's politics except microscopic minority of JSD candidates (4%) as they contested in the election with party nomination.**

* The terms used in the quotation were from Atiur Rahman's Rural Power Structure-a study of the local leaders in Bangladesh.

** Fifteen party alliance, seven party combine and Jamate-e Islam opposed Upajila election and continually demanded the annulment of Upajila Parishad election along with Presidential referendum. So opposition's move combined the two interested groups Upajila Chairmen and President's party. "Upajila Chairmen Parishad" met President and CMLA H.M. Ershad Anes several times and assured him all out support of the parishad.

So the class background and political ideology of this new set of leadership the nation beholds now through the Upajila have not made any big shift. Rather it is the consolidation of old legacy of the leadership of richer and influential class having clumsy political affiliation and less ideological commitment.

Table 1: Age Distribution of the Upajila Chairmen

Age (in year)	No. of Chairmen	% of Total	Cumulative %
25-30	10	5.47	5.47
31-35	21	11.48	16.95
36-40	50	27.33	44.28
41-45	32	17.50	61.78
Sub-Total	113	61.78	61.72
46-50	26	14.23	76.00
51-55	17	9.22	85.23
56-60	13	7.10	92.33
60+	14	7.66	100.00
Sub-Total	102	65.72	100
Grand total	183	100	

Table-2 : Marital Status

Marital Status	No. of Responses	% of the total
Married	172	93.99
Unmarried	11	6.01
Total	183	100.00

Table-3 : Family Size of the Chairmen of Upajila Parishad

Family size	No. of Responses	% of Total	Cumulative %
1-2	2	1.09	1.09
3-4	21	11.48	1.257

Family size	No. of Responses	% of Total	Cumulative %
5-6	40	21.86	34.43
7-8	34	18.58	53.01
9-10	38	20.76	73.77
11-12	21	11.48	85.25
13-14	7	3.82	89.07
15 and Above	20	10.93	100.00
Total	183	100	100.00

Table-4 : Education level of Upajila Chairmen

Level of Education	No. of responses	% of the total
Below Secondary	22	12.02
Secondary	21	11.47
Higher Secondary	34	18.58
Graduate	79	43.17
Post Graduate	26	14.21
No response	1	0.55
Total	183	100

Table-5 Houses or Land Owned in the District Town

Ownership of Land or House	No. of Response	%
Owned	101	55.19
Not owned	82	44.81
Total	183	100

Table-6 Income Level of Upajila Chairmen (in Thousand Taka)

Income (Tk.)	No. of Responses	%	Cumulative
20-50	30	16.39	16.39
51-100	59	32.24	48.65

Income (Tk.)	No. of Responses	%	Cumulative
101-150	42	22.95	71.58
151-200	18	9.84	81.42
201-250	8	4.37	85.79
251-300	3	1.64	87.43
301-350	5	2.73	90.16
350 and Above	10	5.47	95.63
No response	8	4.37	100.00
Total	183	100	100

Table-7 Occupation of the Upajila Chairmen

Occupation	Principal	%	Secondary	%
Cultivation	69	37.70	90	49.18
Business	67	36.61	60	32.78
Industry	5	2.73	-	-
Contractor	5	2.73	-	-
Teaching	25	13.66	-	-
Law Practice	10	5.46	-	-
Renting of Houses	-	-	27	14.75
Medical Practice	2	1.00	-	-
Others	-	-	26	14.20
Total	183	100		

Table-8 Landholding Pattern (in acres)

Land Holding (in acres)	No. of Response	% of the Total	Cumulative %
0-5	34	18.58	18.58
6-10	37	20.22	38.08
11-15	26	14.21	53.01
16-20	27	14.75	67.76

Land Holding (in acres)	No. of Response	% of the Total	Cumulative %
21-25	18	9.84	77.06
26-30	10	5.46	83.06
31-35	8	4.37	87.43
36-40	5	2.73	33.16
41-45	1	0.55	90.71
46 and Above	12	6.53	97.27
No Response	5	2.73	100.00
Total	183	100.00	100.00

*Others include pisciculture, poultry, dairy and horticulture farming, consultancy, pension holder, dependents on other family member's income, income from the interest of fixed deposit with bank etc.

Table-9: Leadership background of Upajila Chairmen

Nature of the institutions	Position held	Duration in years				Total	% of the total respondent	Cumulative Subtotal
		1-4	5-8	9-12	13 & Above			
Union parishad	Member	3	11	1	1	16	8.74	50.82
	Vice- Chairmen Chairmen	3 24	- 22	- 13	- 15	3 74	1.64 40.44	
Thana Development Committee	Treasurer	1	-	-	-	1	.54	16.01
	Secretary	3	7	-	-	10	5.46	
	Chairmen	6	5	-	-	11	6.01	
Jila Parishad	Member	4	3	1	-	8	4.37	4.37
Former Provincial Assembly	Member	-	5	-	-	5	2.73	6.00
Former Nationala Assembly	Member	-	1	-	-	1	.51	
Jatiya Sangsada	Member	5	-	-	-	5	2.73	
Municipality	Member/ Commissioner	1	1	-	-	2	1.09	3.26
Municipal Corporation	Vice Chairmen	1	-	-	-	1	.54	
	Chairmen	3	-	-	-	2	1.63	
Village Coop/ UMCS	Member	3	5	4	9	21	11.47	31.14
	Secy/Manager	2	2	2	-	6	3.28	
	Chairmen	13	9	5	3	30	16.39	
UCCA/Samabaya Bank	Director	4	4	1	1	10	5.46	7.65
	Chairmen	11	2	1	-	14	7.65	
Jatiya Samabaya Union	Director Chairmen	1 -	- -	- -	- -	1 -	.54 -	.54
Total		54	47	28	29	183	-	-
Percentage (183):		45.90	25.68	15.30	15.84		100	

Table 10: Political Involvement

Political involvement	No. of Response	% of the total
Involved in politics and political party	115	62.82
Not involved in politics and political party	65	35.52
No response	3	1.64
Total	183	100.00

Table 11 Party Affiliation of the Candidates Contested in Upajila Election in May 1985.

Name of Political Parties	No. of Candidates	%
Janadal	993*	42.18
BNP	187	7.94
Awami League	176	7.47
JSD (S-R)	87	3.68
Muslim League (all group)	62	2.62
Jamat-e-Islami	16	.67
BAKSAL	14	.59
NAP (M)	14	.59
UPP	6	.25
Ganatantrik Party	4	.16
Workers Party	4	.16
JSD (M-S)	3	.13
Jana Juba Sanghati	6	.25
Freedom Fighter	12	.50
Independent	770	32.70
Total:	2354**	100

Source-The Daily Ittefaq May 16, 1985.

Note-* More than one candidates of Janadal fought in same constituency in most of the cases. As a result the number of candidates from that one single party rose more than double of the number of constituencies. The party Janadal as such by name is no more existant. It was a party sponsored by ruling regime.

By now ruling regime floated another party named, Jatiya Party merging Janadal and some other parties.

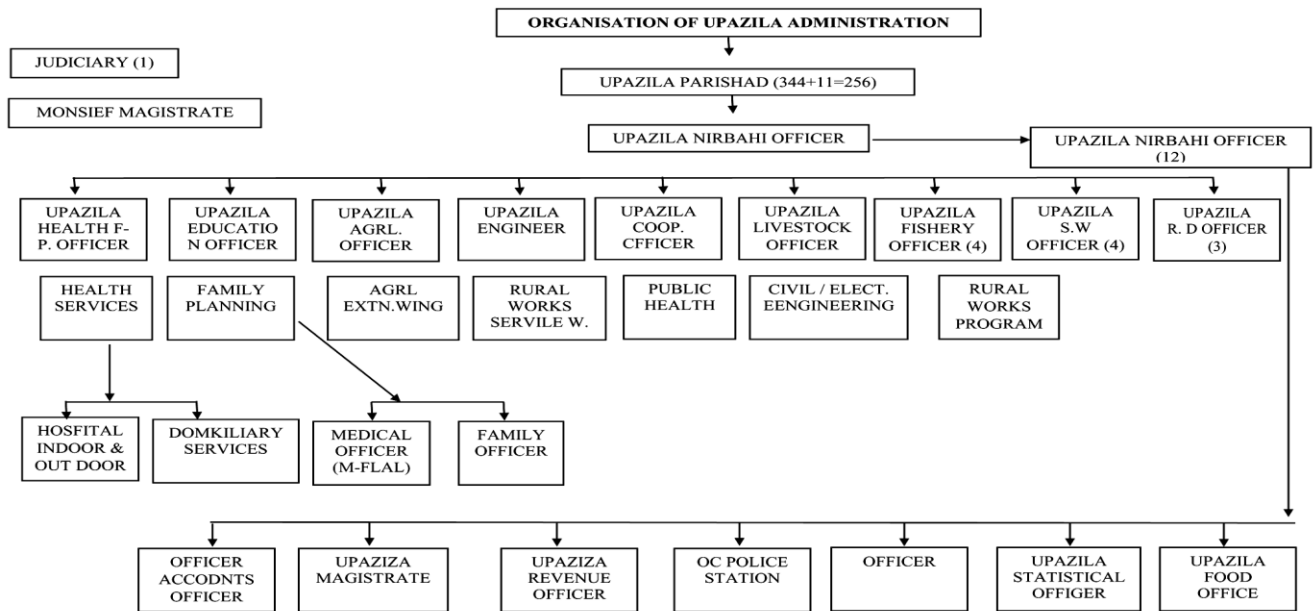
** Total candidates of the election were 2375. The survey could not disclose the party identity of 21 candidates.

Table 12. Party Affiliation of Elected Chairmen as per Survey Conducted by the Daily Ittefaq and Weekly Holiday.

Name of Political Parties	The Daily Ittefaq Total-460		The Weekly Holiday Total-441	
	No. of Chairmen	%	No. of Chairmen	%
Janadal	207	45.00	206	46.71
Awami League	53	11.52	48	10.88
BNP	34	7.39	47	10.66
JSD (S-R)	19	4.13	16	3.63
Muslim League	8	1.74	9	2.04
NAP (M)	6	1.31	4	.90
BAKSAL	4	0.87	5	1.13
UPP	3	0.65	4	.90
JSD (M-S)	2	0.43	3	.68
Ganatantrik Party	-	-	1	.22
Sammyabadi Dal	-	-	1	.22
Khelafate Rabbani Party	-	-	1	.22
Khelafat Andolan	-	-	1	.22
Independent	124	26.96	95	21.54
Total	460	100	441	100

Source: (i) The Daily Ittefaq, Dhaka, June, 29, 1985

(ii) The Weekly Holiday, Dhaka, May 24, 1985,



Note: Figures indicated are the number of staffs and officers of that department
 Detail staff position and designation is omitted because of the shortage of space

References

1. Alam, Manzurul, (1976) Leadership Pattern, Problems and Prospect of local government in rural Bangladesh, BARD, Comilla
2. Jahan, Rounuq, (1976) "Mebers of Parliament in Dhaka". Legislative Studies Quarterly, Vol-1
3. Khuda,-E-Barakat (1981), Power Structure in Rural Bangladesh Some Reflections from a village in Comilla, BIDS-Dhaka (mimeo).
4. Mukabeer, Muhammed, (1980) Socio Economic and Political Background of the Pourashava Representative Elected in 1973, NILG, Dhaka
5. Saqui, QHAH, (1980) Our Leaders at the Local Level: NILG, Dhaka.
6. Rahaman, Atiur, (1981) Rural Power Structure-A Study of the Local Level Leaders in Bangladesh. Bangladesh Book International, Dhaka
7. Alavi, Hamza, (1973(a)) The State in Post Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladerh in K. Gonh and H. P. Sharma (ed) Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia, New York and London.
8. 1973-74 Peasant classes primardial loyalty, Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. I.
9. Bertocci, P. J. (1970) Elusive Village: Social Structure and Community organisation in Rural East Pakistan (unpublished) Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan, State University
10. Sobhan, Rehman, (1968) Basic Democracy, Works Programme and Rural Development in East Pakistan, University of Dhaka.
11. Ahmed, Badaruddin, (1972) Leadership in Village Cooperative, BARD, Comilla.
12. Mannan, M. A., (1972) Rural Leadership and its emerging pattern in Bangladesh, BARD, Comilla
13. Ahmed, Tofail, et el, (1984) Problems and Prospects of Administrative Decentralization views of trainees and case studies, BARD, Comilla.

Policy Issues on Ward Sabha in Bangladesh*

Introduction

The Bangladeshi Rural Local Government System (RLGS) is comprised of a three tier institutional network known as Union Parishad (the lowest tier), Upajila Parishad (intermediate tier) and Jila Parishad (apex tier). All these tiers are not run under a single law or authority and also not clearly inter-linked with one another; rather function separately, but are still considered as a composite institutional mechanism to be known as RLGS. Among the three RLGS component institutions, the Union Parishads maintained a consistent and stable institutional presence (albeit in different names and nomenclature) for almost 150 years since its inception in 1870. The latest law on the Union Parishad (UP)-The Local Government (UP) Act 2009 created a new provision known as Ward Sabha (Ward Council or Ward Sangsad) in each of its electoral constituencies i.e. 'Ward' composed of all the voters of the respective ward. According to the law, each union will have nine Ward Sabhas (WS) in nine of its component general or electoral wards. The law in Chapter -2 of the UP Act provided detailed provisions on the composition, power, function and its rules of business, specially how to arrange two open WS meetings in a year.

The first UP election under the law (Act of 2009) was held in 2011 as the ninth UP election and second election (10th UP election) under the Act was also completed by June 2016. The functioning of WS and all other performances related to WS during the last five years (2011-2016) were not very encouraging. The legal provision of WS and its functioning need a dispassionate review for revised policy

decision. Some of the crucial problems related to the implementation of WS concept as summarised from secondary sources are as follows (Ahmed, 2016):

- The general participation of voters in the Ward Sabha is in decline. In some of the meetings, only women participate relatively in large number due to the special mobilisation and encouragement from some NGOs having special projects at the grassroots levels in different pockets of the country. Only a few men participate but monopolize the deliberations. In non-project areas where no NGO support is there, WS meetings are not normally held. Even if arranged with special efforts, those WSs' in most cases do not follow the processes and procedures as outlined in the law. There are lots of evidences of deviations narrated in different studies.
- Minutes of the meetings are not recorded in a proper manner. The previous minutes are not read out and circulated in the meetings so far seen and observed. In many UPs, the proceedings of the meetings were not found at all, though they claimed that WS meetings were regularly held.
- The persons who attend the meetings mostly seek individual benefit, instead of mooted any motion for collective goods and services.
- The educated and relatively better off people do not attend and participate in WS meetings at all.
- Members and Chairs are less interested in arranging the meetings as it incurs huge expenses and produces no tangible result (as many of them claimed during FGD).

* *The Journal of Rural Development Vol. 40, No. 1, January 2015, pp. 01-10 BARD, Cumilla, Bangladesh*

- 6 People also feel discouraged to attend WS meetings as the decisions taken in the meeting are not implemented and reported.
- Among the attendees 'safety net' beneficiaries and safety net aspirants are found majority and they attend as vote banks to the members and chairs to please their patrons such as UP Members and Chairs.
- The WS meetings seem just a ritual observed to show compliance, and people's participation has become more of rhetoric than a reality.
- The UPs do not do any homework for the two WS meetings; even the proceedings of the last meeting are not circulated or discussed. No follow-up action report is prepared and presented, and reasons for non compliance of any previous decisions are not reported.
- Local officials of different departments posted at UP level do not attend the meetings.
- There prevails a misconception or misunderstanding between Ward Sabha and Ward Sabha meeting in the field. People generally understand that 'Sabha' means meeting, so Ward Sabha means just two meetings in an year. No more no less.
- Some UPs restrict invitation to the WS to 5% of the voters (Salla Union of Kalihati, Tangail) for fulfilling the quorum. Wider audiences are discouraged or restricted indirectly.

The Experiences of Kerala and West Bengal

Kerala Panchayat Act 1994 (came into effect from 24 April, 2004) and West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973 (amended in 1994) included Gram Sabha and Gram

Sangshad respectively in their new laws after the 73rd amendment of the Indian constitution. Out of 11 bindings or obligatory clauses in the constitution, formation of Grama Sabha with all the voters of the ward is the second compulsory provision all states have to adopt in their respective Panchayat laws. Subsequently all the states in India have reenacted their own laws accommodating the directions of the constitution and inserted 'Gram Sabha' provisions albeit with differences best suited to their state interests. The studies which so far examined the performances of 'Gram Sabha' in Kerala and 'Gram Sangshad' West Bengal are also not very encouraging, and to a large extent, similar to those of Bangladesh.

In Kerala, all voters of the ward are members but the quorum for Gram Sabha meeting requires 10% of the voters and they have made the provision to hold four meetings in a year. The member representing the ward in the Village Panchayat (VP) presides over the meeting. In West Bengal attendance of 10% of the voters is also required for quorum but Gram Sangsad holds only two meetings in a year- one in April and another one in November. The Panchayat Proadhan and in his/her absence, Upa-Proadhan (not member of the ward or village) presides over the meeting. All the officials at VP level are obliged to attend the meetings. K.B. Madan Mohan (2006:19-20) in a detailed study on Grama Sabha of Kerala identified 25 different shortcomings of Gram Sabha (Village Council) which are almost similar to West Bengal and Bangladesh as narrated and analyzed in Ahmed et al (2015), Ahmed (2016) and Razzaque (2016). All these findings and observations create formidable doubt about the future of Ward Sabha in Bangladesh. In India. Gram Sabha is a constitutional requirement for the VPs and VPs have adequate staff support, finance and programmes to manage and also to feed the Gram Sabha. In Bangladesh, though it

has been adopted by almost copying West Bengal law, it did not create any support mechanism to make the UPs and Ws vibrant forums.

A Review of Existing Legal Provision and Recommendations for Bangladesh

The Chapter Two of the Local Government (UP) Act 2009 that made the provision of Ward Sabha in Bangladeshi Union Parishad is 'true copy' of relevant clauses of West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973 as amended in 1992, 1994 and 1997 almost word for word. The composition, provisions of meetings, quorum, etc. were copied from clauses 16A, 16B and 17 of West Bengal Panchayat Act (Ganguli, 2001) and power and function were adopted as conferred in Kerala Panchayat Act. The WS part of Local Government (UP Act 2009, specially the clauses 6 and 7 of Bangladesh (UP Act 2009) combine two acts of two of the Indian states together where local government institutions are very strong compared to other states. The Village Panchayat (VP) in Kerala and West Bengal are equipped with adequate finance and human resources which the UPs of Bangladesh are lacking. The Village Panchayat in West Bengal has about nine staff of their own and many other project staff from state and central government projects and in Kerala, about 29 staff are housed in the Panchayat building. The VPs in Kerala and West Bengal handle 2-5 crore Indian rupees in a year. At the grass roots levels political parties are organized democratically and grassroot level people's mobilization is mostly done from political party levels.

There are many other political and cultural differences between Bangladeshi Unions and Indian Panchayats, yet they (Kerala and West Bengal) are facing difficulties in having a properly functional Gram Sabha and Gram Sangsad due to many practical reasons.

The legislation on the Ward Sabha in Bangladesh is no doubt regarded as a progressive step towards democratic decentralisation. After five years of practice, the limitations need to be studied with objectivity and many of the ground realities have to be appreciated with a reformist outlook. Only making a progressive law is not enough to bring desired changes in governance process. Problems and potentials need to be analyzed at regular intervals. The following observations interventions to make the Ws more effective in future are made for appropriate (Ahmed and others, 2015 & Ahmed, 2016) actions.

- The legislation was not explained at the field level adequately, as a result it created confusion about the concept and practice. 'Sabha' in Bangla has got two meanings. The first popular meaning is 'meeting' and in special situations it is applied and meant as forum or council. In Kerala law, the Grama Sabha means a council of voters of the respective ward/ village. In West Bengal, perhaps to avoid confusion between Sabha and meeting, instead of Sabha the word 'Sangsad' is substituted. In West Bengal Panchayat law, the constitutional word 'Gram Sabha' is replaced by the word 'Gram Sangsad'. In Bangladesh, it has been observed that people at the Union and village level still could not internalize the word 'Sabha' as a forum of voters where they will make their representatives accountable, rather they have taken 'Sabha' as an ordinary meeting arranged by the UP. The ways and means have to be devised for internalization of Ward Sabha as a ward level voter's forum among the electorates.
- The legal term 'Ward Sabha' may be considered to be replaced or substituted by 'Ward Sangsad'. Our National Parliament is known as the Jatiya Sangsad, it - may mean similar Sangsad at ward level too. This

may make the differences between the WS as the forum of ward level electorates and confusion around WS as an ordinary meeting could be removed.

- The exhaustive list of power, functions and responsibilities of WS inserted in the relevant clauses (6&7) in the UP law 2009 is highly ambitious and impractical. An informal and loose forum or a deliberative organ like WS cannot perform all these executive functions and deliver the services as envisaged. The list of power, functions and responsibilities need to be reassessed to make those specific, focused and deliberative in nature and executive responsibility should be withdrawn as WS does not have capacity to perform such a long list of functions.
- The UPs have to shoulder many additional responsibilities to make the WS effective functional as outlined in the law (clause-4) it involves lot of additional activities and additional finance, for which no clear provision and direction is there. The UPs in Bangladesh are already under staffed (with only a lone secretary). Hence, additional staff support will be the logical demand for additional work created. In this case, government should enforce the clause 63 of Local Government (UP) Act 2009 and transfer the 13 extension officials from seven ministries already posted and make them work at Union levels with the Union Parishads which will enable UPs to share responsibilities with those officials. It will also create real accountability and transparency of line agency services to the general citizens and electorates of the country. The clause 62(1) of the UP Act 2009 made a provision for a position of Account Assistant cum-Computer Operator in every UP side by side with the Secretary. The position needs to be filled in on an

emergency basis. These all may create an enabling environment to support an effective WS.

- If the Ward Sabha is renamed as Ward Sangsad, it will not only deliberate on UP activity in two of its meetings, but also be transformed as a forum for deliberating on the accountability and transparency of Upajila Parishad, Jila Parishad and Parliament member (MP) of the area for which and whom Ward level electorates accountability could be established among the voters. A sense of responsible way of interaction among the electorates and the elected representatives at all levels will be created the parliament members, Jila Parishad members. Upajila Parishad representatives may also be represented in Ward Sangsad' meetings to answer to their respective electorates. The Ward Sangshad may turn into a grassroot level forum for making all the elected officials accountable at least twice a year. The Pourashava and City Corporation wards should also have WSs in their respective wards and necessary amendment in Pourashava Act (2009) and City Corporation Act should be made to form WSs and hold two WS meetings in a year.
- To make the WS functional and streamline the meetings of the WS, a simple operational guideline may be prepared and circulated, and people need to be oriented on the WS.

Conclusion

The need for a voters' forum at the grassroots may open a new avenue in our practice of democracy. The Ward Sangshad, if constituted at the UP, Pourashava and city Corporation levels and be made to perform in the light of

the recommendations, may become an exemplary institution for promotion of 'deliberative democracy' in Bangladesh.

References

- Ahmed.T; Harun-or Rashid, Kazi Niaz Ahmed and Farhana Razzaque (2015). Social Accountability Mechanism in Local Government- A study on the Union Parishads In Bangladesh, BIGD Helvitas Consortium Project Sharique, BIDG, Brac University, Dhaka.
- Ahmed, T (2016). Ward Sabha under Union Parishads: Challenges and Prospects HYSAWA (unpublished), Dhaka.
- Ganguli, Bashudev ((2001). Panchayat Law in West Bengal, Venus Book Distributors, Kolkata.
- Government of Bangladesh (2019), The Local Government (Union Parishad) Act 2009- (with all subsequent amendments), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Dhaka
- Mohan, K.B. Madan (2007). Gram Sabha: A Hand Book CapDeck, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Kerala.
- Razzaque. F (2015). Reality of Citizen Engagement in the Development at Local Level in Bangladesh: A Study on Union Parishad. Asian Journal of Development and Governance. Vol-1. Issue-1 (Jan-Dec- 2015).

Democracy and Decentralization: Way Forward for Successful Corona Combat*

The Corona virus infection worldwide as pandemic, made all the countries and states commit enormous energy and resources in devising methods and strategies in combating the Covid 19. Few of the early successful countries in controlling the infection are China, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan and Singapore. Some others still in the struggle and meeting with moderate successes are Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Spain, the UK and the EU countries. The USA and India were in limbo and still could not overcome the saga. The USA gradually reduced the infection and death rate but India is in deep crisis with the second wave of infections with new variants which is gradually showing declining trend since August 2021. Though in the second wave, India is a worst sufferer but some states of India like Delhi region, Tamil Nadu, west Bengal and state of Kerala set examples of efficient response system. This is an attempt to observe the approaches and methods various countries specially in Asia adopted in the process of Corona combat for mutual learning.

The South Korean model is widely recognized as democratic response and community based approach build on greater degree of social trust between government and the people.¹ Vietnamese model is characterized as low cost-model with prompt government alertness and pro-activeness together with active mobilization through monolithic party structure. The model evolved from Japan is known as 'cluster based model'. The Chinese model is chartered as 'regimented lockdown model' combined with test, truck, trace and treat. The Chinese model was

* Source:CUS Bulletin on Urbanization and Development No-80&81, June and December 2021

followed in many other countries such as Italy, Spain, France and UK in their own way with partial successes.² Among Europeans, the Netherlands and Sweden pursued different paths. India followed a mixed method which differed from state to state. Among the states, Delhi and Kerala considered successful in their efforts which may be termed as decentralized participatory approach. In all the success cases, side by side with the firm policy direction and huge resource allocations from the central government, the local authorities played key role in mobilizing people's awareness and making the tracing, testing and tracking efforts successful with appropriate care and treatment arrangements. Except China, in almost all other cases there were an environment of free flow of information. To keep people indoors, the relief operation among the poor and needy were entirely managed by the local authorities.

It is found that democracy and decentralization is not a device suddenly adopted by many of the societies those harnessed immense benefit from the approach; it was deeply ingrained in their socio-politico- administrative system and cultural practices in a distinct way. Among the various cultural practices two elements played a significant role are: transparency and free flow of information and mutual trust between government and the people. The widely known nation prevalent all over the world is that West Europe and North America are the "models of democracy, corona to some extent showed that democratic practices may be different and varied but it is not fixed in any given region or any predefined model. It is more of a phenomenon deeply rooted in the culture of a particular society rather devices that is depicted in almost in many of the non- western countries.

The studies specifically focused on South Korea, Japan, Vietnam³ Hong Kong, Singapore and India⁴-the six of our Asian countries on the basis of their responses up to June

2020 may be considered as phase one, showed the very high level of commitment with efficient management under a well- resourced health sector The second phase may be considered from July to December 2020. The beginning of 2021 may be labelled as third phase and popularly discussed as second wave. In the meantime, the vaccine is selectively available and that gave confidence to governments and the people in general and widely considered as the rays of hope in the other side of the tunnel. The new administration in USA took the corona combats one of the priority programs of the government in the initial days of the new Presidency under Joe Biden. The WHO weekly update shows that a show bit steady declining trend in North America, Europe, Scandinavia, East Asia and Mediterranean is visible but win APA some Asian countries and Latin America it is still in the rise.

India experienced a resurgence during the beginning of 2021, Bangladesh also felt the Intensity of increased infection. Bangladesh did not adopt any new approach and strategy by reviewing its past experiences.

This is a matter of regret that community mobilization and community action seem in the process of wane and becoming a forgotten chapter, in phase one (up to June 2020) and two (July-December 2020), Bangladesh adopted an approach which is out and out 'bureaucratic' in letter and spirit. Initially Deputy Commissioners (DCs) were at the helm of all affairs. Later, when it did not produce expected results, it reinforced the same bureaucratic approach by engaging secretaries of central administration for supervision and monitoring of district level corona combat activities.⁵ The so called second wave is silently killing and still in the process of expansion and aggression. Compared to the first phase, the intensity and dimension were also alarming. The local level administration and community seems inactive and unmoved. There prevails an

environment as business as usual everywhere. Only the education institutions remain shut since March 2020 but all other activities are casually being run with benign indifference. The communities and local level people's bodies such as Local Government Institutions (LGIs) are neither spontaneously coming forward nor being asked to come forward. Government issues orders from very top offices, there are very poor compliances at the field. Lack of trust is everywhere. Trust deficit is swallowing the nation as a new social pandemic. The successes of five Asian countries as initially mentioned achieved a miraculous success because of massive confidence building culture amongst the people, government, and local communities 'along with local level functionaries which shared major burden of management of most of the Covid protocols.

The pandemic trend so far observed is clearly showing that it is not going to be finished so soon has come to stay for a while if not more, we may not be free from the pandemic in another one or two years (end of 2022). We may have to live with it during these years We have to prepare ourselves considering its different long-term effects and consequences. So, a sustainable management approach need to be devised to sustain the lives, livelihood, nation and society. Side by side with central or national government, our local government institutions and local level government functionaries need a rigorous reorientation with proper moral, legal and resource support. Our representative bodies such as Union Parishad, Upajila Parishad, Jila Parishad, Municipalities and City Corporations be made more responsive and responsible. Local GOB functionaries should work shoulder to shoulder with them.

Vaccine seems to be a common panacea everywhere. It is scientifically true too. A WHO spoke's person recently told

that the world is not safe until vaccine coverage worldwide reach to at least 70 percent. So far Europe covered 17% in two doses and 32% in single dose (June, 2021). We could vaccinate about 5 million so far in Bangladesh which is a moderate success. Our vaccine program suddenly came to a halt as the Indian Serum Institute failed to honor the contract. We may have to reach to about 85 million population within next one year. We hope, it is achievable with firm commitment by pulling required resources and utilizing utmost management capacity. It needs a clear vision and pragmatic plan keeping next two years in our perspective.

We may need a policy which can be termed as 'Vaccine plus' policy which may not be an entirely alternative to the existing 'bureaucratic approach' but a coordinated approach that brings communities and official combatants together under one single umbrella. People's trust on professionals will be built and people and professionals will join hands and bureaucracy will play the role of facilitators. The authority, function and role need to be redefined and a new engagement rule has to be in place with all the transparency and accountability.

Reference

- 1 Eun A. Jo, A Democratic Response to Corona virus: Lessons from South Korea, The Diplomat, March 10, 2021.
- 2 Haiqian Chen, Liiyu Shi, Yuyao Zhang, Xiaohan Wang and Gang Sun, A Cross country Core Strategy Comparison in China, Japan, Singapore and South Korea During the Early Covid-19 Pandemic, Globalization and Health 7 no-22, 2021/Kazuta Suzuki, Covid-19 Strategy: Japan Model, The Diplomat, April 24, 2021.
- 3 Sanja Ivic, Vietnam's Response to the Covid-19 Outbreak, Asian Bioeth, September 2020, 12 (13) 341-347.

Maya Nguyen, Vietnam's War Against Covid-19. The Diplomat, October, 2020.

4 Rishita Chandra and Smita Sinha, India Fighting Covid-19: Experiences and Lessons Learned from Successful Kerala and Bhilwara Model, Published online by Cambridge University Press, April 19, 2021(the models are also summarized as "Triple-lock containment" and "All Down Curfew")

5 Tofail Ahmed, Covid Crisis and Local Government institutions (LGIs) in Bangladesh, CUS Bulletin on Urbanization and Development, No 79,2020 and Tofail Ahmed, Covid-10 and the Local Government Institutions in Bangladesh : Way Forward in Searching Ways Forward for Bangladesh in the Time of Pandemic, Centre for Governance studies and UNDP, No-6, March 2021, Dhaka

Covid Crisis and Local Government Institutions (LGIs) in Bangladesh*

Introduction

Covid-19 is an unanticipated global crisis suddenly caught the whole world into surprise. The spread was very quick and all encompassing. It started in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and spread to all over China within 30 days and further spread all over the world within next forty five days. The WHO declared 'global health emergency' on 30 January, 2020 and further declared Covid-19 - a 'Pandemic' on 11 March, 2020.¹ The ferocity was unprecedented, responses of different countries were uneven and successes were dubious and mixed. The WHO expressed their frustration in a press meet and the statement of the DG was, the WHO is "deeply concerned both by the alarming level of spread and severity and by the alarming level of inaction".² A total of 222 countries and regions all over the world and so far over 80 million people affected and 1.8 million already died up to December 31, 2020. Only handful of countries such as South Korea, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, China, New Zealand, Australia etc. showed some amount of success.³ The Europe, USA (in USA confirmed cases -1,30,83,877 and death 3,28,041) and Latin America and in Asia Iran and India (in India alone confirmed cases 10, 03, 223 and death-1,90,488) are worst affected countries still could not tackle the crisis substantially and are witnessing a second wave or resurgence since October, 2020.⁴

* Sources: CUS Bulletin, Urbanization and Development, No 79, December, 2020. The Original Study was sponsored by The Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) and published a shorter version as "policy Brief" No 6, March 2021.

Bangladesh as a country and nation was not at all prepared to combat a pandemic like Covid. The health governance in general is highly fragile and not equipped to cover the whole population of the country in normal situation with the existing strength and capacity. The sudden and thunderous blow of Corona exposed the already vulnerable sector to its utter helplessness and bankruptcy. The poor governance in all other allied bodies added more confusions and disarrays, The severity of infection was not recorded as it was expected or as predicted by various quarters. The infection was around 10 to 15 percent of the tested cases. Recovery rate was much higher about 88% and death rate on an average was 1.46%.⁵ Many of the affected people prefer not to avail hospital facility as the hospital system could not earn general public confidence. It does not necessarily mean that people did not go to hospitals, but a large number of unrecorded patients (remain outside Covid statistics) receive private treatment and distanced themselves from all formal system.

Local Government Institutions (LGI) are constitutionally mandated (articles 7, 59 & 60) sub-national level governing institutions to manage administration and services at their respective levels i.e. Unions, Cities, Upajilas and Districts. The 'Covid-19' since March 2020 created 'new reality' and brought a greater change in hither to administration and governance practices and enormously challenged everywhere.⁶ Local government as part of general governance system of the country was also in an all-encompassing disarrays, confusions and lacked appropriate direction. The short study is going to address the critical evaluation of LGI's role and responses to 'COVID-19' and way forward issues. The study will be developed addressing the three following questions.

Key questions focused

- What are the impacts of Covid-19 in the local government of Bangladesh?
- What are the major challenges that the local government faced during the pandemic?
- What are the ways forward and the strategies to address the challenges that the government should take?

Method followed

The study combined the data generated day to day operations of covid combat efforts of the GOB as reflected in the newspapers and for understanding detail at the grass root, one Upajila (Chowddaygram, Cumilla) and one Union Parishad (UP- Kashinathpur of Chowddaygram) were studied carefully. All memos and circulars issued and copied time to time to Upajila and Union were collected and analyzed. The Chair UP Kashinath Pur and the lady Vice- chair of the Chowddaygram UJP, Cumilla were regularly monitored. They reported the activities, at their respective LGs in each of the four months (April- July, 2020). The author also talked to seven elected officials of UP, Upajila, Pourashava, JP and local activists from Chuadanga, Mymensingh and Chittagong to fathom the situation from a comparative perspective. Hard data were received by post and conversations were conducted over cell phone.

Impact of 'Covid 19, on Local Government Institutions (LGIs)

The main impact of 'Covid Crisis' on the LGIs have been exposed from three different angles. (1) It is an age old service mechanism which can deliver services to peoples' door steps very quickly under all circumstances. (2) The

second impact was that it is one 'of the most neglected, emaciated and less trusted organizations in spite of its usefulness. Last but not the least, (3) the central bureaucracy decides and acts, the general people including the media reacts and the poor LGIs take the blames; objective analysis and appreciation of problems at the LGI levels is conspicuously missing.⁷

The Local government Institutions (LGIs) and local community leaders in Bangladesh normally face natural disasters like flood, cyclone, storm surges, crisis like intrusion of saline water, water logging, droughts in some particular areas and food security problem of the poor and destitute as regular programme all over the country. The country in general and LGIs in particular did not encounter any big epidemic for many years. There were times, when Small- fox, Malaria and Cholera as epidemic used to take people's lives in the villages and towns. There are countries that faced SARS, Ebola and yellow fever in the recent past; we in this part of the world did not face any of those. In short, our local communities have not been aware of combating health epidemic except isolated seasonal outbreak of Dihorrial diseases, Dengue, Chickengunia and Malaria.

The GOB started adopting policies and programs to combat corona from March (2020) onward on 'trial and error' basis and still without clear directions. The involvement of LGI in the comprehensive corona combat such as 'trekking, testing, tracing and treatment' were not even outlined as an activity at the local and community levels while strategizing corona combat plan by the central government. The involvement of LGI was perceived only for 'relief distribution 'to the poor, vulnerable, displaced workers and floating population worse affected because of the imposition of lockdown. The relief goods came in the form of cash and kinds such as, cash grants for specific

households, rice, seed supply for farm households, eid presents, baby food, other food bundle, assistance for crop harvest etc. All these happened within three months (April-June, 2020) of corona situation in Bangladesh.

The target households and individuals targeted for corona assistance belong within the geographical areas of one or the other LG unit such as Union Parishad (UP), Pourashava and City corporations. The responsibilities were fixed at the offices of Deputy Commissioners and Upajila Nirbahi Officers. All the central orders, circulars, memos along with the relief materials cash and kinds processed through them and again those are passed on to the UP and Pourashava for distribution on emergency basis. The relief goods came in irregular intervals even in five installments in one single month. The highest quantity of relief materials received at UP levels were received in three months (April, May & June) only and then it started waning and stopped. The UP was not aware of how much quantity of which goods/materials they are going to receive in one month. The total picture of month wise relief distribution of a UP may be seen in the annexure. They could not plan anything ahead because of uncertain time gap and even more uncertain quantity of supply. The required capacity to handle too many different types of materials to distribute among varied groups and clients under varied and separate rules and procedures were not simply exist there. One common problem almost all UPs and Pourashayas faced was the storage problem of the relief materials and dearth of adequate staff support. All 'distribution Orders' were time bound and emergency. Dateline for distribution were fixed at 12 hours, 24hours and 36 hours etc. It created lot of stresses and strain on lone staff (Secretary) at UP. The study reviewed 30 circulars issued from 8 different ministries and local administration such as prime Minister's office, Cabinet Division,

LGRD&C, Public Administration, Health Division, Disaster Management and Relief, Primary and Mass Education and last but not the least DC and UNO offices. Many of the circulars were also issued locally from UNO office without having any discussion at UJP meeting. The relief operations at the UP were directly handled by UP Chairmen, Tag officers (officers designated for each UP from upajila) and respective local officials of the concern ministry under the direction and supervision of UNO. When anything directed to LGs, it is inclusive of UP, Upajila parishad and Jila Parishad, Pourashava and City Corporation. It is a matter to be noted that in Corona Combat Strategy of the government, UJP and JP were not effectively involved in any of the direct operational activities. They acted as any other voluntary agencies of the country. In the districts and Upajila, DCs and UNOs exercised all the *de jure and de facto* roles and authorities. The Paishads at all the three levels were marginalized in their role as LGI, only chairs of those three levels were visible in different meetings and discussions. During the relief operation ventures, UP Chairs and Tag Officers were officially assigned the responsibility but in real term they were in most cases the hostages of the local party cadres of the ruling cliques. They prepared list of beneficiaries, distributed the goods and partially appropriated (misappropriated!) by themselves in most of the cases. All Chairmen, Mayors, Members of Parliament (MP) and officials were either in agreement or succumbed to their crowd power.⁸ Under the above circumstances, the impact of 'Covid 19' on LGs in short are the following:

1. The UP as the lone LGI was heavily involved even beyond its capacity and obviously could not do justice to many of the works that it duly required.
2. The 'mismanagement' in relief operation at UP and Pourashava level created a national hype. They were

squarely blamed and it became a buzz word echoed everywhere. But it is often forgotten that these are the only institutions that delivered the services at their own levels without any additional expenses to the GOB. They grossly lack staff support and administrative capacity.

3. In spite of wide spread blames, no other alternative institution was found which can shoulder the responsibility.
4. The LGI in general lost its face and positive public image though in the whole operation their decision making role was marginal.
5. It really exposed the mis-management and "hazy governance" of highly bureaucratic dominance that did not get objective attention of media.
6. Total relief operation activities were non-transparent as no operational procedure was decided earlier in UP or UJP meetings in a transparent manner, rather every operation was conducted with central instruction on purely adhoc basis.
7. The total operation was officially the sole responsibility of few officials and chairmen/mayors but ultimately swallowed by crowds of different types.
8. Political rivalries at local level also created deliberate chaos to discredit the incumbent chair and members by the aspirant candidates in the ensuing election and sitting chairs and members were also mindful of their vote-banks as the election was approaching.
9. The local ruling party cadres are very powerful stakeholders in all resources distribution activities which no LGI leader can ignore, they too are dependent on them for their political support.

10. The resource hungry UPs and Pourashavas suddenly got a huge quantity of resources and a significant role to play in a national crisis. They played their roles though the appreciation were mostly in the negative.

The challenges LGIs faced

1. The LGI had to face a situation in which they are told that responsibility lies with them for everything though their role and responsibility were undefined.
2. The LGI'S roles kept limited in compliance of GoB orders; their role in policy decisions, local interventions and maneuvering were unclear.
3. The LGI system has not been considered as a vital partner of corona governing efforts. The UP and Pourashava are pacified and their services were utilized for implementing the central decisions. No coordinated effort of UP, UJP, Pourashava and JP were promoted. The UJP and JP were virtually bypassed. As a result LGIs in a unified way could not take any clear stand. They have to participate in the 'corona combat' under official control and direction.
4. The pressures from political opponents, local political cadres and vote banks at times compelled them to indulge in violation or deviations of GoB orders which in official terms are "irregularities". All these 'irregularities' are not corruptions and misappropriations the way the local perception prevails; these are to them 'local adjustments and accommodations' based on the ground reality. The dichotomy between the irregularity and local adjustment is a big challenge in all relief operations.
5. The mandatory supervisory role of assigned GOB officials are compromised to anticipated political

pressure. They kept their mouths shut and eyes close when local political excesses occurred.

6. Limited digitization and lack of staff is a great impediment in smooth functioning of LGIs especially the UPs and Pourashavas in all respects it has been exposed during the Covid crisis.
7. The covid crisis made UPs and Pourashavas aware of their importance during national crisis, at the same time made them aware of their challenges and limitations. The other tiers. UJP and JP felt their relative isolation and uselessness as they were “bypassed” during a great crisis.

Way forward

The Pandemic of Covid 19 challenged the world economic and social order to a large extent. There is economic slowdown and impact on life and livings are enormous. Many of the age-old social norms and cultural practices become obsolete. New economic and social orders came under corona compulsion. Considering the discussion in above two sections the following are some of the way forward.

1. The local administration of regulatory and service under DC and all service agencies, Jila parishad, Pourashava, Upajila Parishad, Union parishad along with CSOs and voluntary sector should sit together in a series of evaluation sessions to outline the challenges so far they encountered and find way forward. No such efforts are so far seen. There are complacencies in the bureaucratic circles, complaints and blames all around and LGIs are in a depressive mood. All these have be exchanged openly for mutual learning.
2. In normal development initiatives as well as during crisis management times, peoples institutions i.e.

LGIs (UP, Pourashava, UJP&JP) should be treated as a single entity. Later the roles and functions may be separated and they mutually can decide each others functional and financial assignments.

3. The UNO from Upajila should not issue direct order to UPs regarding the distribution of any GOB grant or disaster relief. It has to be discussed in the UJP meeting first, then with the decision from UJP delivery order should be issued.
4. The UP Chair with Tag Officers cannot decide or approve any beneficiary list without the approval of full UP meeting. If it is done without discussion at UP meeting that clearly violates the existing UP law. That happened in most cases. This practice has to be stopped and relevant ministry may take it into consideration.
5. Bypassing UJP, JP and proper meeting at all levels encourages an environment of non-transparency and non-accountable decision making and its operation.
6. Digitisation at all levels in handling relief materials (cash and kinds), accounts keeping and stock register is essential. The UP and Pourashava Household(HH) register with categorisation of HHs into extreme poor, moderate poor, threshold level poverty, moderate rich, highly rich with their profession have to be digitised.
7. All UP level GoB staff and officials should be made accountable to UP for their local activities side by side with their respective departments. The LG (UP)Act 2009, madateted 13 officials of 9 ministries posted at Union level, 'transferable' to the UPs. The provision of that legal provision has to be implemented with immediate effect.

8. The Newly constructed UP Complex created office space for all 13 UP level officials, they should occupy office spaces and start their office from UP complex.
9. The UP should be provided with adequate staff support in addition to one lone Secretary.
10. The enhancement of UP Member's and Chair's skill is required to make the Ward Shobha, Standing Committees, budget and planning functions meaningful. The regular UP meetings are not effectively held and dominated by Chairmen to a large extent turned UPs a non- participatory single person dominated institution. The ways and means need to be found by amending law to make it more participatory and democratic.
11. The UJP has become ineffective due to the constant violation of law and rules due to ignorance, neglect, bureaucratic excesses and bureaucratic over enthusiasm, it needs critical reevaluation.
12. District Council (JP) is kept at bay from many of the main stream development process, that also need an assessment to enable JPs to contribute.
13. An effort is needed to unite all three tiers and Pourashava and a framework for inter and intra LG cooperation and coordination mechanism should be made functional.⁹

Conclusions

The role and functions of LGI at different levels are not properly evaluated and objectively addressed, even it is not very clear from different practices that whether they are treated as sub-national governance institutions of autonomous nature or as mere agents of government's service delivery mechanism. During the Covid crisis the

ambivalence has been exposed to a large extent. Institutional incapacity, legal weakness, financial inability and lack of adequate staff support need objective evaluation and proper responsibility be delineated and decentralized with "functionary, function, fund and freedom" to these constitutional bodies of sub-national level governance.

Reference

1. Press conference of DG WHO, March 19-25, 2020.
2. Statement made by DG WHO, April, 2020.
3. CNN on 30, December, 2020
4. WHO, Covid Status Report, December, 21, 2020
5. Covid Status Dashboard, December, 31, 2020
6. Tofail Ahmed, Human Liver and Economy: Can There be a trade off. The Daily Star, 13 April, 2020.
7. There were press report on the 'Irregularities of relief operation at UP and Pourashave levels and LG Division suspended 126 LG elected representatives.
8. These were revealed during our discussions with the local leaders from time to time and results of the memos and circulars.
9. The UJP Association called a press conference on 2, December at Reporter's Unity, Dhaka and also made a writ petition on December 10, 2020. The Writ listed a lot of administrative excesses for which they sought redresses.

Annexure

Table-1: Month wise Relief Operation at KashinathPur Union Parishad in Chowddayyagram Upajila of Cumilla

SL No	Months	Total Rice in kg. /cash flow/other materials	installments	Total no of persons/ households	Rice per person/ HH got in kg	Source of Supply
01	March 2020	500	01	50	10	GoB
02	April 2020	7500	05	850	8+	GoB
03	May 2020	9820+ 65 packet Baby food+ TK.2500x670 =16,75,000 cash	05+1+1	1243+65+670= 1978	7+	GoB (UNO office+Dist Relief+PM office)
04	June 2020	6615+37 food packets+ Ups own relief	03	450+37+1000 =1487	14+	GoB/UP/ Jila Parishad/ Meghna Group
05	July 2020	No GOB allocation				UP
06	total	Rice- 24,435				

Source: UP office memo (15/11/2020)

Notes: The assistance only include GOB Relief materials and cash assistance. The UP arranged some of its own relief operations with local resources which include mask distribution, food support and treatment supports which is not recorded here. Normal Safety net continued as usual.

*GOB Corona relief stopped from July onward and the normal Safety net programmes delivery continues.

Rural Development and Cumilla Programme

Rethinking the Comilla Model: The Future Options for Rural Development in Bangladesh*

1. Introduction

Bangladesh, with a per capita income of US\$ 220 and a human development index score of 0.309 in 1994, is among the poorest countries of the world. The acuteness of the social and economic deprivation suffered by its people is clearly borne out by the persistently low scores it gets on all quality-of-life variables, figures for which are published annually by the World Bank and the UNDP. It is also a country where a predominantly rural economy supports what is probably the world's highest population density. The ecological environment in which that economy is inserted is among the most hazardous in the world. Floods and cyclones recur with a ferocious regularity bringing with them destruction, death and suffering on an unimaginable scale. The country, therefore, offers extremely demanding laboratory conditions for testing out the workability and efficacy of any planning model, even those proven to have had a measure of success elsewhere. With the rapid shifts in the intellectual mood of the 1990s, during which the state's role as the principal agency of planned development itself has been facing increasingly robust challenges, there certainly exists a need for a comprehensive rethinking of the planning models which have guided rural development in Bangladesh since the 1950s and in all of which the state has played such a

* Dr. Suranjit K. Saha is the first author of the article. He was one of directors of studies (supervisor) while the second author Tofail Ahmed pursuing his PH.D in the University of Wales, Swangea, UK.
Source: The Journal of Rural Development Vol. 28, No. 2, July 1998, pp 1 - 34 BARD, Cumilla, Bangladesh

significant role. The principal and most widely known among these was the Comilla model.

The paper is organised in eight sections. Section 2 emphasises the point that the concept and philosophy of rural development is no gift from the West and that there exists a rich South Asian intellectual tradition of thought on the subject which the contemporary planners can draw on with benefit. Section 3 summarises the structure of the original Comilla plan as designed by Akhter Hameed Khan. Section 4 outlines the contents of the Integrated Rural Development Programme launched by the government of newly independent Bangladesh in 1972 which was meant to be a nation-wide replication of the Comilla model. Sections 5 and 6 analyse the principal features of the World Bank-led new dominant paradigm of development which has been taking shape since the late 1970s and its concrete maturation in the structural adjustment packages. Section 7 outlines the main elements of the specific structural adjustment packages implemented in Bangladesh so far. Section 8 stresses the need for redesigning the Comilla model in the light of this radical change in circumstances and points to some of the specific areas where redesigning is most needed.

2. Indigenous Roots of Rural Development Thinking

For the people of the subcontinent of which Bangladesh is a part, the concept and philosophy of rural development is no gift from the West. It is a galaxy of scholars and intellectuals born there who had built up, through their writings and their work, that rich body of knowledge that has now come to be referred to as rural development. The best known among them was Rabindranath Tagore. He had written. His piece called Polleer Unnati (Rural Development) way back in 1915, followed by a substantive and innovative article on Samobay Neeti (Co-operative Principles) written in two parts in 1918 and 1922. In

Bhoomilokkhi (Wealth of Land) written in 1918, he argued for the introduction of technologically improved agricultural practices; in Polli Prokriti (Nature of Rural Life) written in 1928, he repeated the same message with greater emphasis and identified the increasing flow of surpluses from rural to urban areas as a principal cause of rural poverty. In most of his numerous writings on rural development, he continuously put the main emphasis on self-help and local initiative in releasing the creative energies of the rural people for constructive work. "That your welfare should depend on the charity of others is a curse that you really do not want to have" is what he said in a meeting of rural people in 1915. One finds a string of these articles from 1915 to 1940. He also tried to practice what he preached and believed in. On one occasion, he offered to have the wells for use by the rural poor in one particular area brick-lined at his own expenses if they in turn agreed to dig them at their own initiative. He would travel extensively, visiting parts of his far-flung estate in Eastern Bengal (presently Bangladesh), taking his message of rural development directly to the peasants.

Among the pioneers of rural development practice in the subcontinent, the three names which deserve to be mentioned with a great deal of respect are those of Niaz Muhammad Khan, TIM Nurannabi Chaudhuri and H S M. Ishaque, all Indian Civil Service officers working in Bengal in the 1930s and 1940s. Khan was the first to demonstrate the great potential of mobilising voluntary work in carrying out specific rural development tasks. As the subdivisional officer of Brahmanbaria in the 1930s, he effectively used that method in clearing out water hyacinth from tanks and water bodies and re-excavating a vital drainage channel in the area. Ishaque used the same method in Serajganj in organising a mass literacy campaign that included adult education in night schools, opening a large number of new schools for both boys and girls, as well as training camp for teachers. All of this was achieved without any dependence

on government funds. Later on, in a book published in 1945, he develops his practical ideas into a well-articulated operational model of rural reconstruction, which he defines as a movement to give the masses a new consciousness, to awaken in them (a) sense of self help, to educate and organise them in active cooperation and voluntary joint-effort, to create the sense of good citizenship, to build better homes, better villages, in general to promote the physical, social, moral and material advancement of the rural communities as a whole" (1945:23).

When the provincial government of Bengal created a new Department of Rural Reconstruction in 1938, Chaudhury was appointed its first Director. The colonial government, however, did not back up its symbolic move of creating the department by allocation of funds. The elaborate rural development plan that Chaudhury prepared did not receive government approval during the three years he remained in charge. Strapped by shortage of funds and staff and insensitivity of an uncaring colonial government, he did what he could. He organised a training camp for junior government officials at Bishnupur in 24-Parganas (currently in West Bengal, India) in January, 1940 for inculcating the skills and attitudes needed for rural development. Later on, he also organised rural development training programmes for non-officials and volunteers (Ishaque; 1945: 12-17). Chaudhury and Ishaque deserve recognition for pioneering the concept of training people for rural development.

3. The Comilla Model and its Origins

Shortly after the independence of India and Pakistan from the British in 1947, the idea which caught the imagination of a wide range of thinkers and practitioners and, indeed became the dominant ideology of rural development in both countries was that of community development. Ruttan has recently summarised the essence of the idea as "a

process which (i) involves the direct participation of people in the solution of their common problems, (ii) employs a democratic process in the joint solutions of community problems and (iii) activates and/or facilitates the transfer of technology to the people of a community for more effective solutions of common problems" (1984: 393). The summary is correct in what it says. What it omits to say is however more significant. The concept assumes a commonality of interests among people within a community and ignores the sharp, often oppressive and violent contradictions of interest, which may exist there. It assumes that the landless and the middle peasantry, the powerless and the local strongmen and the abandoned women and their polygamous husbands have an identity of interests and shared perceptions of common problems.

India's community development programme was launched on 2 October, 1952, in a village called Alipur just outside Delhi. The quiding spirit and the driving force behind the programme was an immigrant from Bangladesh. His name was S. K. Dey. The core principles of the programme were very basic: (i) muscles can do it, (ii) muscles can be trained to do it and (iii) conditions can be created to do it. The Programme was perceived as a nation-wide movement to consolidate a triple charter of rights for the entire population. which included (i), the right to live, (ii) the right to work for a living and (iii) the right to receive what is earned. The two institutional pillars of the movement were democratic decentralisation (panchayati raj) and co-operative organisations (sahakaria samaj). By April, 1963, the programme had spread to the entire length and breadth of the country. (Dey: 1964).

In Pakistan, community development was sought to be put into practice in the shape of Village Agricultural and Industrial Development (V-AID) programme, which was launched in 1953. This, too, was meant to be a nation-wide

movement and was supported by US aid. The Pakistan Academy for Village Development at Comilla, established in May, 1959 and reconstituted as the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development after the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country in 1971, owes its origins to the need for training officers and other personnel for administering and managing this programme. In concept and approach, the V-AID programme was a re-run of the earlier Rural Reconstruction programme launched in 1938 but quietly discontinued in 1946. The objectives of the new programme were officially stated as follows:

".....to solve the problems of the villages by helping the villagers to help themselves individually and as communities. It uses the principles of community organisation and development which are based on human experience and thus avoids the mistakes of past efforts at community development. Its aims at coordinating the total resources of the Government and the people for a concerted and determined effort to reconstruct village life in Pakistan" (V-AID Administration; 1956: 2-3).

The programme, however, was able to make only a limited impact on the rural society and economy of Pakistan. The government's interest in it waned after the military coup of 7th October, 1958 and it was finally discontinued in 1961 (Tepper; 1966), decades later, Bangladesh/World Bank Joint Study had characterised the programme as "diffused and unfocused" and also "not successful" (1981:1).

After the demise of the V-AID programme, there seemed to exist a planning vacuum in the rural development field in Pakistan. This vacuum was, however, quickly filled by the innovative ideas of Akhter Hameed Khan, a philosopher activist with vision and a clear sense of direction. Khan, who readily acknowledged his intellectual debts of Buddha, Rumi, AL Gazali, Tolstoy and Gandhi, was and continues to be, a maior force in the field of rural development thinking and action (Bangladesh Academy for Rural

Development: 1983: Khan, 1991; Saha, 1992). He tried out his ideas through a set of experimental projects at Comilla and it is the lessons derived from these projects which later came to be known as the Comilla model -- a case of deriving an operational model through learning-by-doing. The model has four principal components:

- The Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) - to provide a focus for decentralised and co-ordinated rural administration at the local level, bringing together a diverse range of local government functionaries of development departments under one umbrella (the thana is a local territorial unit of administration which was for a time also known as Upajila)
- The Rural Works Programme (RWP) -- to build the rural physical infrastructure and to create employment opportunities for the rural poor.
- The Thana Irrigation Plan (TIP) to co-ordinate the formation of pre-co-operative groups to ensure sound use of irrigation equipment.
- The Two Tier Co-operative system - to organise village-based farmers' co-operatives (Krishak Samobay Somities, KSS) and to federate them into a Thana Central Co-operative Association (TCCA).

Three of these were very quickly taken up by the government for nation-wide replication: RWP in 1961-62 TTDC in 1963-64 and TIP in 1967-68. The model also caught the imagination of the world and became the forerunner of what later came to be known as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

The promising results of the experimental projects launched in Comilla Kotwali thana encouraged the government to gradually extend these projects, along with

other additional components, to the whole of Comilla district (now subdivided in Comilla, Chandpur and Brahmanbaria districts) by 1968 and this extended coverage became known as the Comilla District Integrated Rural Development Programme (CDIRDP). In 1970, the Pakistan Government had decided to replicate the IRDP nation-wide. The war of liberation delayed the launching of the IRDP in Bangladesh until 1972. In the first year of its launch... the programme covered only 33 thanas; by 1981 the coverage was extended to 270 thanas and by 1990 to 449 of the country's 490 thanas (Government of Bangladesh and World Bank, 1981:4; Bangladesh Rural Development Board, 1990:1).

4. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and the Role of the State

The IRDP in Bangladesh, which grew out of Akhter Hameed Khan's experimental projects tried out earlier at Comilla, has come in for a lot of scrutiny ever since its launch in 1972. Here we consider two of the major donor sponsored reviews of the programme which were known to have strongly influenced the shaping of rural development policies of the government. The first of these reports had led to the establishment of the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB); the second to the creation of an NGO's Bureau within the President's Secretariat (now transferred to the Prime Minister's Secretariat). The analysis also brings to focus the question of the role of the state in the rural development practice

The World Bank backed review of the IRDP in 1981 reported four main generic criticisms which were that the programme (i) was dominated by big landowners, (ii) did little for the vast number of the landless. (iii) covered far too small a proportion of farm families in its area of operation and (iv) had failed to develop financially viable

and self-sufficient co-operative institutions and was, in consequence, a large and growing burden on the state.

On the question of programme-bias towards big landowners, the report pointed out that category, while constituting only 7.6 per cent of the national population, represented 23 per cent of the TCCA/KSS membership and 44 per cent of the membership of management committees. It is important to remember, however, that in Bangladesh a holding of 5 acres of land qualifies a household for inclusion in the big landowner category, hardly a basis for the oppressive landlordism of the kind that exists in India. Nevertheless, in 1984, 496 large landholding in Bangladesh, comprising less than half of one per cent of all landholding, did own 26 per cent of all agricultural land in the country (GOB, 1991a:162). This fact also needs to be considered in conjunction with the findings of recent rigorously conducted research which shows that social and political power in rural Bangladesh does not stem from the ownership of land but from success in speculative activities backed up by the organised use of violence (Ahmed, 1993). The implications of the big' landowner bias in the IRDP for the development process obviously needs to be more thoroughly examined than seems to have been done in the GOB/WB report.

The neglect of the landless sector of the rural population (households owning less than half an acre of land) is a much more substantive criticism and is also more difficult to defend and rationalise. The Upajila Development Monitoring Survey of 1989 shows that nearly half (49.17 per cent) of the rural households in Bangladesh are landless and in some thanas like Ishwardi in Pabna district, the figure reaches 66 per cent (GOB, 1991:132-33). A poverty alleviation programme that bypasses the main body of the rural poor cannot really be regarded as comprehensive nor as adequately targeted. Not only the

IRDP but also its precursor, the Comilla programme, had failed to incorporate a concern for the landless within the parameter of the programme design. The landless were indeed specifically excluded from the programme right at the stage of conceptualisation because landholding was regarded as an essential prerequisite for membership in the TCCA/KSS system. It was not until 1974 that the KSS membership was opened up for the landless.

Even so, the landless comprised only 8- per cent of the total KSS membership by 1981. Separate credit-line co-operative societies for landless men (Bittahin Samabaya Samity-BSS) and women (Mohila Bittahin Samabaya Samity MBSS) began to be organised within the framework of the RDP around the middle of the 1970s. By 1977, the IRDIP organised 85 co-operatives for the landless with a members of 1,615 which constituted only 0.39 and 0.25 per cent respectively, of the total number of all its co-operatives and their aggregate membership. Even though the number and membership of the IRDP co-operatives for the landless increased seven and a half fold and eleven and a half fold respectively between 1977 and 1980, the landless continued to remain at the outer margins of the programme's concern. The landless co-operatives and their membership accounted for only .84 and 1.42 per cent of the corresponding programme totals in the latter year (see Table 1).

Table-1:Co-operative Societies Sponsored by the Integrated Rural Development Programme

Year	For General No. of Societies	Household Membership	For Landless No. of Societies	Household' Membership	Percentage of Societies/Membership to the Total Societies	Landless Membership
1992	5580	136316	-	-	-	-
1977	21870	649088	85	1615	0.39	0.25
1978	25777	708000	105	2625	0.41	0.37
1980	39610	1300532	638	18800	1.58	1.42
1988	70243	2505500	20939	577200	22.96	18.73
1992	70627	2557248	30915	783327	30.44	23.42

Notes:

1. Krishak Samabaya Samities and Mahilal Samabaya Samities

2. Bittahin Samabaya Samities and Mahila Bittahin Samabaya Samities

Sources: Government of Bangladesh and World Bank, 1981 Government of Bangladesh et al, 1989; Hye, 1992 and Bangladesh Rural Development Board, 1993.

The shift of policy away from the neglect of the landless to a concern for them in the rural development process of Bangladesh has been rather slow and halting and, in many cases, has stemmed from the conditionalities and pressures of external funding. After the overthrow of the government in 1975 by a military coup, then Awami League government World Bank commenced its backing of the development planning process in Bangladesh by funding a rural development project (the RD-1 project) to benefit seven thanas in Mymensingh and Bogra districts in the north of the country. Among the core elements of the RD-1 project, which was launched in 1976, were the organisation of co-operatives specifically for the landless, leasing out of pond fisheries on government owned lands to those co-operatives and credit lines for backing other income generating activities. Even though the project activities provided coverage to only 15 percent of the landless population in the seven thanas, the RD-1 represented a significant marker for the incorporation of the landless into the view of the rural development programme planning in Bangladesh

Ever since the commencement of the RD-1 project, the IRDP projects in Bangladesh, all of which were wholly or externally funded, have predominantly had specific components for benefiting the landless built into them. This has been so not only with regard to those projects which were launched within the rubric of the poverty alleviation programme, e.g. the NORAD and SIDA funded RD-5 for Faridpur, Madaripur and Kurigram districts, the EEC funded RD-9 for Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat districts and the CIDA funded RD-12 for the 17 new districts carved out of the six older districts of Dinajpur, Bogra, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Khulna and Barisal but also projects included in area development and irrigation programmes.

It is interesting to note that, despite increasing emphasis on the landless in the IRDP programme, only 7.83 per cent of the total volume of credit which flowed through the co-operative system sponsored and backed by the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB, the central management agency for the IRDP since 1982) in 1988 reached the landless, who comprise fully half of the country's rural population (Government of Bangladesh et al, 1989:33) The central government's backing even for this clearly inadequate credit line for the landless appears to have been less than enthusiastic, as the following extract from a long conference paper by Hasnat Abdul Hye, who was the Secretary (the top civil servant) in charge of rural development, in the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives at the time, would show:

"The TCCAs, however, could not give much support to the BSS organised by them due to resource constraints. The IRDP also had no arrangement with the designated nationalised bank (Sonali Bank) to provide loans to these co-operatives. In 1982, an agreement was reached between IRDP and another nationalised commercial bank (Agrani Bank) under which credit for non-farm income earning activities was to be given to the BSS for which guarantee was provided by the Planning Commission. This ad hoc arrangement continued until 1986-87 when the Planning Commission asked the Rural Development and Co-operatives Division to provide guarantee. During 1988-89, this arrangement collapsed as the Ministry of Finance gave the opinion that no such guarantee was needed and the Banks should provide loan on their own which the concerned bank evaded. Thus the normal Rural Poor's Programme (RPP), by which this programme came to be known, faced a grave crisis. As the fresh loan was not available there was large scale default and the normal RPP started declining" (Hye, 1992:20). The criticism about the

IRDP's failure to offer al comprehensive credit line coverage to the rural population is too obvious to need any further belabouring. The total membership of 3.34 million in the whole of the BRDB backed co-operative system in 1992 represented a coverage of no more than 30 per cent of the rural households.

On the question of the financial viability of the IRDP co-operatives, the GOB/WB report of 1981 and the GOB et al report of 1989 provide very different findings. The earlier report found "the performance (of those co-operatives) in this regard (to have been) quite good relative to the services offered". It revealed that 25 percent of the TCCA income was derived from fertilizer sales and other business activities and that in the whole system the bad debts did not exceed 3 to 5 per cent. It did, however, point out that "due to limited activities and income, most TCCAs continue to depend upon annual grants from IRDP to meet a major portion of their operating expenditures and training costs" (GOB/WB, 1981:6). The later report, which was sponsored jointly by the Canadian International Development Agency, the Danish International Development Agency, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank found "that although a number of co-operatives are reliant on their own resources; as a whole, the movement has made little progress in attaining or even moving towards a position of greater self-reliance" and put the main blame for this situation on the government, existing organisational and power structure and the nationalised banks (GOB et al, 1989:20-21).

The two donor sponsored reports also diverged in diametrically opposite directions in their recommendations on how best to use the co-operative system as an agency for delivery of the IRDP objectives. The 1981 report pointed out the dysfunctionality of the continued existence side by side of two separate co-operative systems - one backed by

the IRDP, i.e. the TCCA/KSS system and the other managed and controlled by the Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCA). It recommended that "unification of the two co-operative systems should be undertaken as quickly as possible with the TCCA/KSS two-tier model as the foundation of the unified system and IRDP as the sole promotional agency" (GOB/WB, 1981:19). It further recommended that the government required all its agencies concerned with agriculture and rural development to use the IRDP backed TCCA/KSS system as the principal marketing and distribution agency for irrigation equipment and other farm inputs like fertilizers. As the IRDP was, and continues to remain, an entirely government run and managed programme, the donors were then clearly encouraging the state to play a dominant and propulsive role in bringing about poverty sensitive rural development in Bangladesh. The 1989 report, on the other hand, says: "There is no justification for the continued discrimination between the two traditional and the two-tier co-operative systems and the exclusive promotion of the BRDB co-operatives as the blueprint' for co-operative activity" (GOB et al, 1989:55). Significantly, it says nothing about the earlier envisaged government backing to the strong marketing role for the TCCA/KSS system which had yielded 25 per cent of that system's income in 1980. Instead, it seeks to build a powerful advocacy for a privileged position for the NGOs in rural development and, implicitly, for rolling the state back from that field (GOB et al, 1989:43-51).

5. The World Bank and the Emergence of a Dominant Paradigm of Development

The persistent efforts of the World Bank and other multiple and bilateral donor and lender agencies to encourage the Bangladesh government to adopt and implement

increasingly poverty sensitive rural development policies during the second of the 1970s and early 1980s need to be seen in the context of major changes of direction in development thinking which appear to have been influencing the actions of these agencies ever since the famous McNamara speech of 24th September, 1973. Speaking at Nairobi as the President of the World Bank, he had on that day pledged the support of this organisation for improving the productivity and welfare of the rural poor in the poorest countries. Shortly after that speech the World Bank had published its Rural Development Sector Policy Paper in February, 1975. In that document, the World Bank defines rural development in the following way:

"Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural area. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless" (1975:3).

There is no doubt that the McNamara speech had an immediate impact on the prioritisation of the World Bank's lending programme. The number of RD projects as a percentage of agricultural projects jumped from 32 per cent in 1973 to 59 per cent in 1974 and 62 per cent in 1976, staying around the 55-60 per cent mark until 1982. The RD lending as a percentage of the agricultural sector lending also shot up from 15 per cent in 1973 to 49 per cent in 1974, reaching a the peak of 71 per cent in 1982. Since that year, however, importance of RD in the World Bank's scheme of priorities seems to have declined. In absolute terms, the RD lending declined from a peak of 2.2 billion US dollars in 1981 and 1982 to 1.2 billion in 1984, rising again to around 2.2 billion in 1986. As a percentage of the total agricultural sector lending, the RD lending has declined from its 1982 peak of 71 per cent to 36 in 1984,

rising again to 47 per cent in 1986 (World Bank, 1988: 8-21).

The World Bank's unambiguous commitment to poverty alleviation was, however, short-lived. The shift of its concern away from poverty alleviation and toward structural adjustment had already begun in 1980 but a semblance of a balance of emphasis was sought to be maintained at the official policy level between the two objectives until 1982. In that year, the Bank undertook an informal review of its general approach to the alleviation of poverty. The major conclusion of the review was that growth and poverty alleviation are complementary objectives and the former can be better achieved through trade liberalisation or changes in fiscal or price policy than through projects directly targeted at the poor. The operational focus was on structural adjustment policies and the concern for poverty alleviation was expressed by mentioning the need for (i) mitigating the burden that those policies will bring to bear on the poor and (ii) more research to find out the nature of those burdens. Having thus prepared the ground for reviving the old doctrine of reaching the poor mainly through market driven growth, or not at all, it quickly dropped poverty alleviation as a policy concern in its 1983, 1984 and 1985 Annual Reports and abolished the Rural Development Division in 1986 (World Bank, 1980-86),

In 1986, the World Bank again created a special "poverty task force" which wrote a policy study entitled *Poverty and Hunger: Issues and Options for Food Security in Developing Countries* and its Annual Report for that year also included a section on that subject, thus putting poverty alleviation back on its agenda. Its 1987 Annual Report promised "the struggle against poverty" ahead of its advocacy for "economic adjustment and growth, debt rescheduling and trade liberalisation". Among the

initiatives it announced that year were: (i) strengthening the use of the country assistance programme to address problems of poverty, particularly through operations in agriculture, education, health, population and urban development, (ii) increased analysis of the social effects of adjustment, (iii) assistance to governments in designing structural-adjustment and sectoral-adjustment programmes that, to the extent possible, protect the poor and a (v) increased collaboration with other agencies, both official and non-governmental, in addressing poverty concerns in the context of adjustment by supporting compensatory nutrition and employment programmes for the poor (World Bank, 1987: 15-16). The Bank's 1989 Annual Report reiterated its "commitment to poverty alleviation" stating that

"The central goal of the World Bank is the reduction of poverty. Ways to achieve that goal are at the heart of the Bank's activities whether through support for adjustment measures designed to lay the foundations for sustained growth, through investment lending, or through its research and country economic and sector work" (1989:38).

The 1990 Annual Report too puts "special operational emphasis" on poverty alleviation and food security. It refers to a core poverty programme which includes (i) projects and economic and sector work whose primary purpose is the reduction of poverty in identifiable groups, (ii) projects that aim to reduce population growth rates and (iii) activities relating to poverty alleviation which contain significant elements of targeted poverty reduction even though they have other, or more general objectives (1990:57).

The Bank's World Development Report (WDR) of 1990 was focused on the issue of poverty. It advocated a two-part approach to the problem of reducing poverty. The first

part requires the adoption of policies that make productive use of the poor people's most abundant asset -- labour, as a propulsive force for broadly based economic growth. In order to implement this first part of the strategy, it requires developing countries to phase out exchange rate controls, as well as measures to protect manufacturing industries and instead to encourage agriculture and labour-intensive forms of manufacturing. It also requires them to ensure that the public expenditure programmes are targeted at those activities in which the poor are engaged and that the delivery of the services, such as roads, irrigation and agricultural extension, is not biased against the poor. The second part requires the provision of social services - especially primary education, basic health care, family planning and nutrition to improve living conditions and increase the capacity of the poor to respond to whatever income-earning opportunities arise from economic growth.

The Bank's 1991 Annual Report devotes a whole section to the strategies to reduce poverty, particularly highlighting the need for analysing country policies, designing assistance strategies to support those policies, developing an information base and organising effective operational steps to implement the strategy. In order to backstop implementation, says the report, the Bank is supporting the writing of two documents: (i) a handbook on best practices in poverty reduction for the use of operational staff and operational directive (OD) summarising its guidelines on (ii) an operational issues.

The WDRs of 1992, 1993 and 1994 make no reference to poverty alleviation at all. In the 1992 WDR, the concern for rural development is substituted by a concern for 'rural environment policy' which is seen as a problem of resource management by individuals, enterprises, and communities and, at a long remove, by governments. The 1993 WDR is all about how to progressively privatise the delivery of

health care services and the 1994 one focuses on how to speed up the privatisation of the management of the infrastructure and ease out the public sector from that role (World Bank, 1986-94), The 1995 WDR takes up the issue of "inequality of labour incomes" in its Chapter 6, identifies "the inequality in the distribution of assets" as one of the contributory factors, but opposes any solution based on large redistributions of land and capital with, the exception of cases "where much land remains inefficiently used in large holdings". It defines inequality in terms of gender, ethnicity and regionally based disadvantages, thus moving the focus of policy attention away from the grotesque inequalities which exist within between classes of households irrespective of gender and ethnicity and within the same regions by a clever sleight of hand. "Targeted investment" into schemes for preparing the poor people for self-employment in the informal sector and into both physical and social infrastructure are identified as the principal solution. Direct transfers to the poor through "poverty relief policies" are effectively ruled out as a viable option except in cases of the destitute old and disabled (World Bank, 1995: 41-47). The 1996 WDR says nothing at all about poverty. In the same year, however, the World Bank published a new policy document, the core emphasis of which was on designing better technical tools for measuring and monitoring poverty through country-specific assessments and to urge governments to speed up the poverty process of deregulating markets which it hoped, rather optimistically, would benefit the poor (World Bank, 1996).

It is clear that McNamara style poverty alleviation and rural development has now fallen out of the agenda of then World Bank and the need for macro-economic reforms associated with the imperative of structural adjustment has come to occupy the centre-stage of that agenda. It appears.

therefore, that research on rural development may begin to lose relevance to reality unless it takes on board an inquiry into the effects of structural adjustment measures on the rural society and the economy.

6. What is Structural Adjustment

In theory, structural adjustment is the very essence of development because no economy can properly function and develop if the components of its basic structure are at odds with each other. In more concrete terms, it is that part of a country's development policy which seeks to optimise the functioning of the supply side of the economy by taking active measures for the removal of all those state controls and regulations which had hitherto obstructed the free operation of market forces. The other side of the same policy is stabilisation which is targeted at the demand side of the economy. In the context of the recent economic history of the world, however, structural adjustment and stabilisation have both come to be associated with the relentless pressure which the World Bank, the IMF and the dominant donor countries of the West are bringing to bear on Third World countries for bringing the economies of the latter in line with the policies dictated by the former.

The first publicly available IMF text on stabilisation was written by Omotunde Johnson and Joanne Salop in 1980. The IMF and the World Bank must have started their theoretical and project design homework for de-emphasising poverty alleviation and prioritising stabilisation and structural adjustment even earlier than that. The Johnson and Salop paper began with the presumption that external imbalance is the product of overexpansion of demand, rather than exogenous shock and that the crucial issue was increased expenditure arising out of increased demand which was what needed to be contained. The problem with their analysis was that they

studied the impact of stabilisation on poverty in terms of functional (returns to factors), regional and public-private distribution of income and left out of their purview the distributions which alone are interesting and purposive for real world social analysis, i.e. those in terms of individuals, households or socio-economic groups. A later IMF-supported study on distributional impacts of stabilisation and structural adjustment also appears equally inconclusive unilluminating (Sission, 1986); a World Bank study on the same subject carried out at about the same time yielded no definitive results either (Yagci et al, 1985). The problem is that studies of effects of sudden shifts in macro-economic variables on income distribution are usually carried out with reference to the Kuznetsian U-curve which, by definition, are studies of long run changes and, therefore, tell us very little about the welfare impacts at the bottom end of the distribution in the short run, say in a time profile of one to ten years.

6.1 Social Impact of Structural Adjustment: How has it worked elsewhere?

Received theories of neo-classical economics and of Western sociology are of very little help in answering these questions. Economists tend to justify the short-run cutbacks in the consumption levels of the poor by citing future gains which will arise out of the current austerity. But then, their models do not ensure that the social groups which suffer the present cutbacks will be the recipients of the future gains. Furthermore, for the bottom end of the distribution profile which already exists at the frontier of survival, the discount factor for the net present value calculation of any future gains is very heavy indeed.

Structural adjustment programmes usually put heavy pressures on governments to switch investible resources from non-tradables to tradables and from domestic

consumption linked activities to export related activities. Rapid price inflations stemming from this switch generate faster increase in food prices and other basic necessities than the general price level. The poorest in the rural population, e.g. the landless, the marginal peasants and the women in female headed households making a living out of petty trading, rice husking or cow or smallstock fattening who do not grow food and have to buy it from the market, end up suffering most from these differential price rises. The impact of the switch on total factor demand also tends to generate redistribution at the expense of labour. One simulation exercise involving Colombian peasant producers shows that subsidies to expand exports, a course favoured by structural adjustment regimes, increase poverty whereas import tariffs, discouraged by such regimes, lower it (Dervis, de Melo and Robinson, 1982). Often the root of the macro-economic imbalances, which the structural adjustment measures seek to correct, lie in domestic "overheating" and overexpansion of demand associated with positive efforts to improve the consumption levels of the poor if this expansion is forcibly rolled back and, at the same time, it is also stipulated that cutbacks cannot be achieved through investment cuts, as is usually the case in a structural adjustment regime, then the limited gains of the poor emerge as prime targets for receiving the cuts.

There is very clear empirical evidence from several countries of sub-Saharan Africa that forcibly imposed demand contractions built into the structural adjustment regimes have pushed sizeable segments of the poor deeper into more extreme forms of poverty and destitution (Saha, 1991). A country specific study drawing on the Malawian data of the 1980s also clearly shows that the rural poor, particularly the landless, get most hurt by structural adjustment. Between 1981 and 1986, Malawi had to secure three structural adjustment loans from various donors in its

effort to ride out of its severe macro-economic difficulties and, in the process, had to accept very tough IBRD/IMF conditionalities among which were: (i) liberalisation of the grain markets, (ii) forcing the public sector agricultural marketing corporation to scale down its operations and (iii) elimination of fertilizer subsidies. The combined effect of these policy-induced measures was massive rises in fertilizer prices followed by even greater rises in the produce, and therefore retail prices of food. The food deficient rural households, many of them small subsistence farmers, were badly hurt. As the food prices shot out of the reach of their normal buying abilities, many of them were forced to work on larger farms for additional cash wages in order to buy food in the open market. This left them no time to prepare their own small subsistence holdings for the next agricultural season's sowing, thus further aggravating the supply situation of food. The IBRD/IMF sponsored measures also meant a rapid shift of emphasis away from the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP). No alternative delivery system was designed to reach the poorest sections of the small holders (Lele, 1990).

6.2 Theorising Poverty Alleviation in Structural Adjustment the Guiding Principles

A World Bank sponsored study published in 1987 made a serious effort to find a theoretical structure within which poverty concerns of the policy-makers could be integrated into the design of structural adjustment programmes (Demery and Addison, 1987). The study begins with a clear recognition that identifiable poverty group can get badly hurt during the implementation of structural adjustment programmes and that the economic disadvantages suffered by them could be long lasting. It draws on the distinction made by Frances Stewart between "primary claims on resources which arise directly out of the productive process

of work and accumulation and secondary claims which result from the transfer of primary claims" (1983:4-5). It argues that the poverty alleviation component of a structural adjustment programme should put the priority policy emphasis on increasing the primary claims of the poverty groups on resources and that the secondary transfers could be resorted to only as supplementary measures or for reaching those groups who cannot be reached by the former method. Five broad approaches to assisting the poor under adjustment are identified:

- increasing their access to productive assets;
- raising their return on assets;
- improving their employment opportunities;
- ensuring their access to education and health services and
- Supplementing their resources with transfers.

The first four relate to increasing the primary incomes of the poor, the fifth to an effort to give them access to secondary incomes.

The study establishes a set of four guiding principles for macro-economic policy formulations by Third World governments. Firstly, the structural adjustment is unavoidable.. the only choice is between orderly or disorderly adjustment The regime is likely to be more orderly if it takes into account the problems of the vulnerable groups. Secondly, income distribution changes in favour of the better off is an essential part of the agenda of adjustment. These changes are in facta the main incentive or driving force behind the resource allocations without which the objectives of adjustment cannot be achieved. Measures to protect the poor, therefore, must not come in the way of these incentives to the better off in the form of increased incomes. Thirdly, poverty alleviation must, in the main, take place through increased primary

income claims of the poor -- transfer must take a distant second position as an item of policy. In plain English, this means that the poor must be made to work hard in exchange for receiving any additional income and must not expect anything for free. Fourthly, ensuring cost-effectiveness of social expenditure must be one of the core elements of a poverty sensitive adjustment programme. In other words, the poor must be helped not through increased social expenditure but through reallocation of resources from the poor and the not-so-poor to the very poor.

7. Structural Adjustment in Bangladesh

The World Bank's 1992 macro-policy report on Bangladesh is a good source document to study the enforcement of a structural adjustment programme. It recommends that the agenda for the future economic policy management of the government should include these three principal items: (i) to reverse the declining trend in investment (both public and private) through increased domestic savings and improved public sector investment prioritisation so as to increase public investment, (ii) to establish an enabling macro economic environment to support export-led growth by accelerating the implementation of, and strengthening on going reforms and (iii) to reform appropriate public policies, including those relating to food price stabilisation, buffer stock management and distribution and production of minor irrigation equipment, chemical fertilizers and seed. In order to facilitate the pursuance of such an agenda, the government had already negotiated a structural adjustment facility (SAF) programme with the IMF in 1987 which was further augmented by an enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) negotiated in 1991. The government had been extremely cautious in its public sector expenditure management since these facilities were put in place which has led to large shortfalls in public

investment targets, including those in agriculture and rural development sector, since 1988. The World Bank reports "a possible deepening of poverty in recent years" in Bangladesh even though the national economy registered a hefty 6.6 per cent GDP growth in 1990 and not so-bad 3.3 per cent growth in 1991. Nation-wide, the per capita food availability in 1991 was exactly the same as in 1983; in 1990 relative to the 1983 base, it was substantially more. The domestic production of food had increased by 13.2 per cent in 1990 and by 2.0 per cent in 1991. Relative to 1983, domestic food production in 1991 was 24.5 per cent higher. These impressive gains in production and overall macro economic growth, however, did not seem to be filtering through to the poor.

The World Bank identifies three main objectives which agriculture and food policy in Bangladesh should seek to achieve: (i) self-sufficiency in foodgrain production, (ii) improved rural income distribution, nutritional status and employment opportunities and (iii) production of agricultural exports to support the balance of payments. The major elements of the policy reform package it recommends to the agriculture and food sector are: (i) gradual phasing out of the price stabilisation and buffer stock operations, (ii) complete privatisation of distributive trade in minor irrigation equipment. (iii) eliminating subsidies on all minor irrigation equipment, particularly on deep tubewells, (iv) liquidating the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation's (BADC) stocks of unsold shallow and deep tubewells (STWs and DTWs) through a auction, (v) privatising all functional DTWs managed by BADC and writing off irreparable DTWs managed by it, (vi) selling new DTWs at full cost, (vii) elimination of custom duties and tariffs on all irrigation equipment, (viii) gradual withdrawal of the BADC from all Upajila level sales of fertilizers and privatisation of the

retail trade from Upajila level downwards. (ix) abolition of restrictions on movements of fertilizer stocks. (x) decontrolling farm-level prices of fertilizer, (xi) elimination of fertilizer subsidies, (xii) gradual withdrawal of the BADC from breeding and multiplications of seeds and leasing out of BADC seed farms to the private sector, (xiii) gradual withdrawal of the BADC from the Upajila level seed sales and limitation of its role as a wholesaler to the private sector, (xiv) decontrol of seed imports and (xv) elimination of all subsidies on seed sales. The government has already made substantial progress in the implementation of these measures resulting in major increases in the consumption of agricultural inputs and in agricultural production.

The World Bank issued another macro-economic policy document for Bangladesh in 1995. In it, it identified three issues which, in its judgement, deserve priority attention. First, it pronounced that the country was "enjoying unprecedented macro-economic stability, providing a window of opportunity for accelerating economic growth based on a rapid structural adjustment of the economy". Second, it recommended that "in seeking higher growth, the highest priority must be given to raising private and public investments" and specified "a fundamental failure of public administration in Bangladesh" as the principal obstacle to making progress in that direction. Third, it argued that, while the main sources of the future accelerated growth had to be "anchored in both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors", it still needed to be driven largely by the growth of a privatised and deregulated manufacturing sector in which foreign companies ought to be able to invest freely (pp.4-6).

Further on in its 1995 policy document, the World Bank makes it quite explicit that the country's long term salvation lies in its readiness to reshape its macro-economic policy

along the lines of the good old comparative advantages doctrine.

"The new GATT accord holds the promise of a general increase, over the next decade, in world incomes and trade and in the distribution of output and trade. But to take advantage of this, Bangladesh must be well-positioned as a low labour cost production centre. Faster reforms must create a push for exports diversification over the medium term in line with Bangladesh's comparative advantage" (p.11).

There is no research evidence to hand on the impact of these measures on rural income distribution, shifts in nutritional status of, and the creation of employment opportunities for the rural poor. There is, therefore, a clear need for undertaking detailed micro-level research to assess the impact of each of the above elements of policy on rural poverty, as well as productivity in the rural economy.

The shift of emphasis in the World Bank and other multi and bilateral donor and lending agencies from poverty alleviation to structural adjustment as the primary objective of development policy and the progressive encapsulation of the former as a secondary concern within the framework of the latter, went hand in hand with another crucial conceptual shift. This was the shift away from viewing the state as the principal agency of development to a strong advocacy for transferring many of the state's conventional development functions to the market, North-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and North-based consultancy firms. As a knock-on effect of this shift, a large number of domestic NGOs and consultancy firms also came into existence in aid-receiving countries. Many of these only existed and functioned as front agencies of their Northern counterparts. Increasing shares of aid-funds earmarked for developing countries thus started getting siphoned off to support, among other things (i) the

employment of a large number of North-based social science graduates in NGOs and consultancy firms who could not have been otherwise gainfully employed in Northern economies and (ii) continued affluence of a small newly-created "rentier" class within the aid-receiving countries who make a living by managing front institutions for Northern-based NGOs and consultancy outfits.

8. Rethinking the Comilla Model in the Context of Structural Adjustment

In the light of the aforesaid sea changes in the intellectual, as well as ideological contents of the dominant paradigm of development which the World Bank and other North-based donor and lender agencies are now seeking to enforce on Bangladesh, there appears to exist a need for an urgent rethinking of the continued relevance and viability of the Comilla model of rural development and of the IRDP institutions. The state was at the very heart of that model. It was the sponsor and process facilitator for all its four components. Akhter Hameed Khan viewed the land-holding small-peasantry as the backbone of East Pakistan's (now Bangladesh) civil society and the state was regarded as the principal agency of strengthening it, albeit in partnership with the local communities. The state's tasks were, firstly, to build infrastructure and training facilities for improving productivity in the small-holding sector and, secondly, to ensure that the peasants retain a fair share of the fruits of increased productivity. TTDC, RWP and TIP were the instruments for achieving the first task. The second task was sought to be achieved by means of a network of cooperatives which were designed to empower the peasants for dealing with the market on a more equal basis. But with the progress of structural adjustment, the state is now withdrawing from all areas of production and distribution. Irrigation, provision of agricultural inputs and

marketing of agricultural produce are already privatised and with the forthcoming privatisation of all the major banks, the state will find it extremely difficult to channel significant funds into the credit lines of the rural cooperatives. This is already beginning to happen. The Annual Development Plan (ADP) expenditure on the 'self-financed' sector declined from 12.12 billion takas in 1991 financial year, which was 35.07 per cent of the total, to only 2.69 billion takas in 1993 financial year, a mere 6.61 per cent of the total (World Bank, 1995:29).

The crucial questions which need immediate answers are these: What are the short and medium term effects of the currently operating IMF Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) regime on the living conditions of the rural poor? To what extent the planner can continue to engage in those market interventions which have hitherto been his stock in-trade in designing targeted poverty alleviation projects? What are the chances of the co-operative institutions built by Akhter Hameed Khan to continue to survive once the full blast of the unregulated market forces are unleashed on them? What safety nets can be built for the most vulnerable sections of the rural society once the hidden subsidies on food and other rural inputs are phased out? Can the state continue to be the principal agency for building these safety nets? If the NGOs are to step into the space vacated by the state, will the state be able to step into the role of an effective regulator, particularly with regard to the foreign NGOs with bases in dominant donor countries? What percentage of the aid funds earmarked for poverty alleviation is absorbed by the foreign NGOs in maintaining their administrative infrastructures, paying high salaries to their home country personnel and high fees to home country consultants?

Bangladeshi social science researchers, particularly those based in the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), need to take a lead in this. At the present time, the theoretical knowledge on how the various components of the structural adjustment programme actually work their way through the economy and the social fabric to their micro units is rather patchy and tenuous. BARD has already got in its library a large and growing stock of community-level empirical studies on social and economic aspects of rural life as well as experiences of field based projects such as Comprehensive Village Development Programme (CVDP) and Small Farmer and Landless Labourer's Development Programme (SFDP) (Ahmed, 1998 and Bari, 1993). These, if properly interpreted and analysed, can in fact provide a solid foundation on which new blocks of theoretical knowledge can be built. The beginning of the real process of development in the Third World requires that then scholars of the Third World social origins themselves build those theoretical structures which are needed to backstop research for facilitating that process. The World Bank, the IMF and other donor/creditor agencies can help by supporting Bangladeshi institutions in undertaking field-level research on the impact of structural adjustment on rural poverty. These institutions, on their part, cannot afford not to take interest in these macro-micro linkage issues which rural development practice in Bangladesh must now address. If they do not take the initiative in shaping the direction of theoretical development appropriate for addressing the emerging real issues of rural development in Bangladesh, then planning of rural development activities in that country, and elsewhere in the Third World, will continue to be laden with inappropriate theoretical structures evolved by people who have no real

life roots in, or long term commitments to these societies. That is a tragedy that does not need to happen.

It is important to realise that the growing disparities between the rich and the poor is an essential part of the logic of market-led development. Market is a socially constructed mechanism: its structure, and the way it operates, are pre determined by the structure of the distribution of power, wealth and income in the civil society. When the distributions of all these three elements are extremely skewed in the civil society, as is the case in Bangladesh, the market cannot function in a free and unfettered way, nor can it maximise welfare for the structurally disadvantaged majority. In these conditions, it can only function as a mechanism of the transfer of surpluses from the poor majority and their increasing accumulation in the hands of a small dominant class. This is what the World Bank led structural adjustment packages seek to guarantee within the national economies of the countries like Bangladesh. This is their first real objective. If the productivity of the labour of the poor also increases alongside, then the squeeze on them would not need to be as harsh as it would have to be otherwise; hence the emphasis on training and technical support and not on ensuring a fair return to the worker on the fruits of training. Any real redistribution of wealth and income in favour of the poor is incompatible with the central logic of these packages

The second real objective of the structural adjustment packages is to facilitate ever increasing flow of surpluses from the countries at the periphery of global capitalism to those at its core. This objective is of course extremely difficult to achieve without first ensuring a significant concentration of wealth and income in the hands of dominant groups within the former group of countries. Once this happens, the dominant companies of the core

countries can more easily enhance the extent of their control on the economies of the peripheral countries by controlling significant sections of their dominant groups, particularly those engaged in production-for-export.

The challenges for the social scientists now is to understand the implications of these two overriding objectives of the structural adjustment programmes for poverty alleviation and rural development in Bangladesh and in rest of South Asia. This is a challenge not only for the Bangladeshi social scientists but also for all social scientists who have a stake in the development of South Asian societies. We believe that a redesigned Comilla model can be a powerful tool for meeting this challenge. The redesigning has to involve re-embedding it in the local agencies of the people. Insulation from the market is of course no longer a possibility; it probably never was. Social reconstruction of the market to the advantage of the poor is still a possibility and indeed a necessity. This is what the original Comilla model was designed to achieve. It now needs to be redesigned to achieve the same objective in the new and radically changed circumstances.

References

- Ahmed, Tofail (1993) Decentralisation and the Local State Under Peripheral Capitalism, Dhaka: Academic Publishers
- Ahmed, Tofail (1998) Comprehensive Village Development: An Institutional Restructuring of Comilla Model (in Bangla). Comilla: BARD.
- Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (1983) The Works of Akhter Hameed Khan: Rural Development Approaches and the Comilla Model, in three volumes. Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development.
- Bangladesh Rural Development Board (1990 and 1993) Annual Report: 1989-90, Dhaka: Bangladesh Rural Development Board.
- Bari, F. (1993) SFDP: Making of a Model, Comilla: BARD.
- Demery, Lionel and Tony Addison (1987) The Alleviation of Poverty Under Structural Adjustment, Washington DC World Bank
- Dervis, Kemal, Jaime de Melo and Sherman Robinson (1982) General Equilibrium Models for Development Policy; A World Bank Research Publication, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dey, S K (1964) Community Development: A Brief Eye View, Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
- Government of Bangladesh (1991a) Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.
- Government of Bangladesh (1991b) Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.
- Government of Bangladesh Canadian. International Development Agency, Danish International Development Agency, United Nations Development Programme and World Bank (1989) Study on Cooperatives in Bangladesh, Dhaka: Planning Commission.
- Government of Bangladesh and World Bank (1981) Bangladesh Integrated Rural Development Program: A Joint Review by Government and the World Bank. Dhaka: Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives and Ministry of Finance.

- Hye, Hasnat Abdul (1992) IRDP: Replication of an Experimental Project, a paper presented in the International Seminar on Rural Development in Bangladesh: Strategies and Experiences, 15-17 January, Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development.
- Ishaque, H S M (1947) ABC of Rural Reconstruction, Dhaka: Directorate of Public Administration
- Khan, Akhter Hameed (1991) "My Development Education" Asia Pacific Journal of Rural Development, Vol.1, No. 2, pp. 16-34.
- Lele Uma (1990) 'Structural Adjustment, Development and the Poor: Some Lessons from the Agricultural Malawian Experience', World Development, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp. 1207-19.
- Ruttan, Vernon W. (1984) "Integrated Rural Development Programmes: A Historical Perspective", World Development, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 393-401.
- Saha, Suranjit Kumar (1991) "Role of Industrialisation in Development of Sub-Saharan Africa", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXVI, No. 48, pp. 2753-62.
- Saha, Suranjit Kumar (1992) Towards a Socio-Economic Research Master Plan for the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development. (Unpublished).
- Tagore, Rabindranath (1915) "Polleer Unnati" (Rural Development), in Polli Prokriti, Rabindra Rachonabali, Vol. 17, Calcutta: Vishvabharati, pp. 515-23.
- Tagore, Rabindranath (1918) "Bhoomilokkhi" (Wealth of Land). in Polli Prokriti, Rabindra Rachonaboli, Vol. 17. Calcutta: Vishvabharati, pp. 524-27.
- Tepper, Elliot (1966) Changing Patterns of Administration in Rural East Pakistan, East Lansing: Asian Studies Center.
- United Nations Development Programme (1994) Human Development Report 1994, Oxford: Oxford University Press for the UNDP.
- V-AID Administration (1959) Village AID Five Year Plan: 1955-56 to 1959-60, Karachi: Ministry of Economic Affairs, Government of Pakistan.
- World Bank (1975) Rural Development Sector Policy Paper, Washington DC: World Bank
- World Bank (1988) Rural Development: World Bank Experience, 1965-86, Washington DC: World Bank Operations Evaluation Department.
- World Bank (1980-96) Annual Reports, Washington DC: World Bank.
- World Bank (1992) Bangladesh: Selected Issues in External Competitiveness and Economic Efficiency, Dhaka: World Bank.
- World Bank (1986-96) World Development Reports Oxford : Oxford University Press for the World Bank
- World Bank (1995) Bangladesh: From Stabilisation to Growth: World Bank Country Study, Washington DC: World Bank
- World Bank (1996b) Poverty Reduction and the World Bank: Progress and Challenges in the 1990s, Washington DC: World Bank.
- Yagci, Fahrettin, Steven Kamin and Vicki Rosenbaum (1985) "Structural adjustment lending, an evaluation of program design", World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 375, Washington DC: World Bank.

Comprehensive Village Development Program (CVDP): An Experiment in Rural Development through Cooperative*

Rural development (RD) in the fifties and the early sixties was a field of exploration and BARD (former PARD) pioneered it that exploration very successfully, as a result of which few models of RD programmes were developed. After passing three full decades and with the beginning of the fourth one, i.e. the 1990s, RD is no more a field of exploration, rather a field of 'explosion'. Explosion in the sense that thousands of projects and programmes government and non-government organization with different approaches are being pursued.

Bangladesh, in spite of all its efforts still could not bring desired changes in the socio-economic conditions of rural people in a big way through those RD programs. Millions of people still living under abject poverty. A variety of programs and institutions tried in the past, met with very limited success compared to the magnitude of poverty and underdevelopment. On the other hand, it seems that overlapping, duplication, proliferation, non-coordination, isolation, fragmentation, corruption, inefficiency, etc. are the order of the RD sector in Bangladesh.

Various government agencies are designing different programs keeping villagers as target beneficiaries. The problem arises when it is found that different organizations and agencies are going to the same population with more or less same type of program which ultimately results in resource wastage and confusion.

In most cases, RD approaches and interventions lack cohesion, comprehensiveness and uniformity as a result of which development of sustainable institution to promote

RD becomes very difficult, complex and face unhealthy competition in the field. Cooperation among the program implementers inhibit the sound growth and viability of the existing institutions.

The CVDP is not an answer to all the questions raised in the above discussion. It is a modest effort of experimentation that would pursue the above discussion. It is also a modest effort of experimentation that would pursue increasing of production, employment, income, social development and equitable distribution of benefits based on local level planning within a common and single institution for all villagers. This institution will develop common facilities and services (physical & social) as well as economic activities for the villagers. The CVDP as an institutional approach will emphasize firmly to create a multipurpose single village institution as a forum or platform to be used by all development agencies irrespective of GOs and NGOs which may gradually help to reduce duplication, proliferation, wastage and inefficiency in the RD sector and in turn contribute to the development of a sustainable process to build self-managed village institutions.

Background

The CVDP is now (1993) an on-going project. The faculty of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) perceived this programme from the mid-seventies and a program called 'Total Village Development' (TVD) was launched. It had remained only a small effort by the Academy itself till 1988. In 1989 the project was included in the Annual Development Plan of the government of Bangladesh (1988-89). The first phase of the project was continued up to June 1991. During the Second Phase, the programme was expanded to 80 villages of the four divisions of the country under the Fourth Five Year Plan. BARD is entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the CVDP in 40 villages of Dhaka and Chittagong

* **Source :** Co-operation, journal of co-operative sector, Bangladesh Jatiya Samabaya Union, 1993.

Divisions. Rural Development Academy (RDA), Bogra is doing the same in Rajshahi and Khulna divisions based on the experience gained at BARD for the last 15 years.

The author was Project Director of the CVD Programme of BARD in 1990s for a short period. The views expressed in the article are author's own and do not necessarily reflected the views of the organization BARD. He also gratefully acknowledges the valuable contributions made by Mr. Badruddin Ahmed, Director BARD while preparing the draft.

Objectives of CVDP in the Fourth Five year plan

The board objectives of the program would be to improve the socio economic condition and quality of life of all groups of people in the village through a common institutional framework. The specific objectives of CVDP as embodied in the Fourth Five Year Plan of the Government of Bangladesh will be to:

- (a) develop common village facilities and make available at the village level various social and economic services relating to literacy and education, population control and family planning, minimum health care and nutrition along with, income generating activities and others;
- (b) increase production in both farm and non-farm sectors, productive employment and household income, utilizing all available resources maximally;
- (c) encourage capital formation in cooperative societies.
- (d) develop human resources;
- (e) promote greater participation of women in development activities;
- (f) ensure equitable distribution of benefits of development to all.

Institutional Arrangement for CVDP

In each village, there will be a village-based Cooperatives called the Comprehensive Village Development Cooperative Society (CVDCS). It will cover all the villagers-adult males, adult females and children. The members will be divided into a number of functional groups. The CVDCSs will be managed by a Managing Committee having a proportionate representation from each functional group, excepting that of the children. The representative will be selected by the respective functional group members. The CVDCSs will be developed as an economically viable and self-reliant institution by means of resource mobilisation and commercial/business activities within cooperative discipline. The existing cooperative societies and informal groups in the village will be gradually amalgamated with CVDCSs based on the consideration of the extent of their assets vis-a-vis liabilities. No new cooperative society and group other than CVDCSs will be promoted in the village.

Side by side, the CVDCSs will have links to their thana level cooperative associations. The other linkage of CVDCSs will be with local government bodies at different tiers and thana level nation building departments, the purpose of which will be to develop common village facilities and services (physical, social and economic) and obtaining support services available at the union, thana and districts.

Strategies for implementing CVDP

Within the given institutional framework, the following strategy will be adopted to implement the programme:

The CVDCSs will prepare a 'Household Resource Data Base' for each household in the village. It will contain an inventory of household resources to serve as a guide to

identify the gap between the available household resources and those required for improvement of social and economic conditions of the household on the basis of its felt needs." 'The society will then prepare a 'Comprehensive Village Resource Book' which will contain the data base of the household resources as well as an inventory of common village resources and facilities. This data base will be used as the basis for the formulation of a Comprehensive Village Development Plan by the (CVDCS) hereafter be called 'society'.

The above plan will be prepared by the society on an annual basis to be known as 'Comprehensive Village Annual Development Plan' (CVADP). It will be prepared in two parts, one for economic activities of the group members and the society and the other for the development of common village facilities and services. The former will be known as 'Economic Plan' and the later as 'Village Development Plan'.

Each group will prepare its own Economic Plan which will be consolidated at the society level by CVDCSs. The Managing Committee of the society will also prepare a commercial and business activity plan for the society. The two plans, after discussion and approval by the general meeting of the society, will be consolidated into the Society's Annual Economic Plan.

The Village Development Plan will be prepared by the Managing Committee of CVDCSs under the guidance of the project personnel for the time being which will be ultimately shifted to the Union Parishad for Mutual Cooperation.

The CVDCSS will send the Economic plan to its federating central association at the thana level for acceptance and integration with the central association's plan. The 'Village Development Plan' will be submitted to the Union Parishad

by the CVDCSs for acceptance and consolidation with the Union Plan too.

The Economic Plan will be implemented by CVDCSs with credit from Bank and other relevant agencies with other support and services from the central society, the local government institutions at different tiers and thana level nation building departments for different activities under the plan.

Progress of CVDP within the BARD's area of operation

BARD has so far organized 19 CVDCSS in Comilla (Sadar and Burichang thana), 10 in Sylhet Sadar and another 7 in Sonargaon thana of Narayangonj.

As far as the membership coverage and capital formation is concerned (up to June 1992) 19 Comilla societies enlisted 6913 members representing 2761 male 1523 female and 2629 children and total accumulated capital stands at Tk. 92,66,887 as share and savings. Eight out of 19 societies had so far enlisted 100% of the village families and rest of the societies are progressing towards that end. All the Comilla societies finance 70% of credit operation from their own resources. By this time all of the 19 societies of Comilla area and five out the 10 societies of Sylhet have prepared their Village Resource Books on the basis of which they started formulating their village development plans. So far on the basis of the book Comilla societies had implemented 10 and Sylhet societies 2 such Annual Development Plans (ADP) up to June 1992. The project activities in Sonargaon has started only in September 1992. It is expected that by the end of December this year proposed CVDCSs will be able to formulate their plans.

Development and Poverty Alleviation Implications of CVDCSs

As poverty is not a single dimensional problem, there is no short cut method to resolve it. The CVDP is an experiment in creating an institutional infrastructure to address rural problems of socio-economic development. Unlike many target group oriented programmes, the CVDP emphasizes more on hard option to resolve poverty issues through self-initiatives. It discourages soft options/relief orientations in addressing poverty or any other specific problem associated with rural development. It encourages self-management by promoting local leadership and community spirit on the one hand and help to form collective capital through regular small savings. It does not isolate the rich and the poor and divide men and women but the poor and the women get special attention in the process of the implementation of the program.

The concepts poverty, measurement of poverty and intervention in alleviating poverty sometimes seem elusive if poor as person and poverty as a major socioeconomic problem are addressed isolated. The CVDP approach to the rural poverty alleviation does not directly pose to be a sectoral poverty alleviation programme in its obvious sense but comprehensiveness of the approach itself place all its vigor and strength in the process of creating a self-sufficient, self-reliant and self-managed village society. The CVDP societies have been trying to generate their own capital and reinvest them in the villages so as to create more production and employment right within the villages. There are production programs in the field of animal husbandry, fisheries, crops, and vegetables etc. which contribute to higher production. The program while emphasizes on production, employment and income generating aspect of development, does not neglect the social services. The program categorically looks after health, education, family planning, housing, sanitation,

environment social services, social harmony, law and order, etc. with equal emphasis.³

In conclusion, it could be claimed that the continuous training directed to different target group of population within the villages has been contributing to the augmentation of human resources. Thus this program does not wait for the villagers to become poor first and then to make efforts for the eradication of their poverty. Rather, it tries to create a condition in the villages so that new members are not enrolled in the group of the poor. All the villagers with support from government agencies prepare plans and implement programs so that poverty situation does not aggravate. The institutional framework developed through this project tries to help the government render its support services easily and with minimum of costs for all who need their services and pave the way towards a healthy cooperative movement in the country.

Post Script

The CVDP is a national programme now but original institutional and comprehensive development spirit is to a large extent forgotten. It is being implemented like a huge human resource development project with a big thrust on training (2023).

References

1. Badrudin Ahmed and others (1984) Multiplicity of Organizations in the Villages: a case study of three villages, BARD, Comilla.
2. Government of Bangladesh (1990) The Fourth Five Plan 1990-95 pp V-F-8-10
3. For more detail on economic and social planning aspects of the CVDCSs please see, Tofail Ahmed, Comprehensive Village Development Programme: A Further Experiment in Institution Building for Rural Development (a forthcoming Bengali publication), BARD, Comilla, 1993.

The Third World Dilemma of Social Work

A Case Study on Developmental Rural Social Work from Bangladesh*

The very context and content of modern social work which were developed in Europe and North America do not suit the third world. Though they transplanted the western social services models in their respective situations as a legacy of colonial rule (Midgley 1983; pp. 40-51) or as influenced by post war welfare state movement" and in many cases as an outcome of foreign aid during the "modernisation" period of the early sixties, still the developing countries are faced with the dilemma of fitting those ideas in their own rural settings. India tried to find a solution of that dilemma by ruralising the social work (Gore, 1973; pp 39-46). Bangladesh as a part of broad Indian culture also faced the same dilemma and attempted to respond to the greater needs of rural people for social services (FFYP, 1973-78) in the seventies. But in both the cases (India and Bangladesh), professionalism and bureaucratic red tape were found to be the major hindrances to extend and sustain the services in the rural areas. On the contrary, considerably more success is noticed in the community based developmental social services initiated by voluntary agencies (BRAC, Gana Shastha, OXFAM in Bangladesh and in Kerala by joint community and state government effort (Briscoe, 1980) and community itself on self-help basis (Ray, 1983; Uphoff,

* The author pays profound respect to late Mohammad Ghutan Satter Director BARD and Muhammad Yeasin, Founder Manager Deedar for their sincere help and guidance.
The Journal of Rural Development, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, January 1988.

1986) without the intervention of professional social workers and trained professional civil servants from outside. One grassroot level organisation in Bangladesh has made substantial contribution in innovating appropriate social services and care system for the rural community through two and a half decades of concerted effort.

This paper attempts to present the case as an exception to the "conventional" or "professional" social work practice by analysing the societal context, genesis, growth and development of the programmes and its nature of self-reliance.

Government Social Service Structure in Bangladesh

The professional social work in Bangladesh started under the government initiative with the establishment of four orphanages in 1943. UN experts started working in developing some pilot projects on urban community development and the directorate of social welfare was created in 1961 by incorporating the programme of urban community development with the orphanages. This was the beginning of official welfare programme in Bangladesh. Social welfare remained as an attached department of the Ministry of Labour for a long time. During the seventies the subject was endowed with the status of a full-fledged ministry.

There are other ministries with their numerous attached departments such as Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Education, Health and Population Control, Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Labour and Manpower, Women's Affairs, sports and Culture, Youth Development, etc. which devote all their programmes within the broad field of social services. The major programmes of all the above ministries, divisions and directorates are managed by the bureaucracy with some exception in case of local government, rural development

and cooperatives which has to work with people's institutions. The common people of the country desperately need the services from the above ministries. The literacy rate of the country is 23% and still the per capita government expenditure on education is only Tk. 11 (33 US cents). Again straight-way 50% of the total cost of the education sector goes to 15% of the total population of the country. Only 34% of the total school age children attend school, again 63% of them leave school in the first five years of their schooling (Khan, 1978; pp-13 and BBS 1983-84, p-603). The health situation is more vulnerable. Government spends per head Tk. 6.44 (BBS, 1983-84) in health at 1972-73 prices but 60% of the total population (90% of them are rural, (Khan, 1978) are still outside those services provided by the state. So the basic social services programmes are suffering severely due to the lack of resources and its balanced distribution. On the other hand the 'cosmetic' and 'fashionable' social service programmes are registering unbridled growth.

The official figures of all the programmes show an increase in expenditure, expansion of projects, coverage of more areas, improvement of services in every plan period. If the nature of expansion is closely analysed in reality it is the expansion of a bureaucratic empire, and this way over the years the so-called social services sector is overburdened with bureaucracy and overhead expenditure. In most cases development means repair, maintenance and construction. The public expenditure in the social sector is so negligible in comparison with the other sectors that the bulk of the expenditure is consumed by the department itself.

The following table may be evident to understand the situation of expenditure structure of the social services sector in two of the five year plans:

Table 1: The development expenditures incurred in Second Five Year Plan (SFYP) and funds allocated for Third Five Year Plan (TFYP) (percentage of total allocation).*

SI. N.	Ministries/Divisions	SFYP (1980-85)	TFYP (1985-90)
1	Education and Religious Affairs	3.70	4.88
2	Health	2.70	2.02
3	Population Control and Family Planning	2.50	3.48
4	Social Welfare, Youth Development, Women's Affairs, Sports Development and Cultural Affairs	1.70	1.05
5	Labour and Manpower	0.60	0.39
6	Rural Development and Cooperatives	3.30	5.09

Source: Third Five Year Plan (1986), Chapter 2 and 3, pp. 36-56 Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh. *See the table at the Appendix for details about the financial allocations for five sub-sectors of social welfare in Bangladesh (viz., Social Welfare, Women Affairs, Youth Development, Development of Sports and Cultural Affairs) during the Third Five Year Plan (1985-90),*

The financial allocation as envisaged in the TFYP for social welfare alone excluding the other four areas (Youth, Sports, Culture and Women) is Tk. 75 crores (0.03%) of the total development outlay. So what can the small drop of water bring to the vast desert of 10 crore population. Again

among this population 60% are living below the poverty line. If the list of development projects to be undertaken during the plan period (1985-90) are analysed it will show that 90% of the potential direct beneficiaries of those projects are urban privileged classes. Rural population are by passed by these programmes. So these programmes of 'cosmetic' social welfare, social security in the poverty stricken third world countries contribute more to the growing inequality between the official social services rich and the rural poor by the urban programmes of Bangladesh substantiate that view.

The Case of Deedar in Bangladesh

Introduction

Deedar is a cooperative society managed by 1400 members drawn from all the 412 family units of two villages-Kashinathpur and Balarampur in the district of Comilla, Bangladesh. The society was formed in October 1960 by nine people (8 rickshaw pullers and one petty businessman) by depositing half a "rupee" (present value \$. 27) which was at that time worth the value of nine cups of tea. Two thousand and two hundred people live within one and three-quarters miles area of the two villages. The villagers own 201 acres of agricultural land, so the per capita land is. Not more than 09 acres. The population density per square mile is about 1275. There is no family in the area which owns more than 8 acres of land. Only 12 families (3%) own land between 5-8 acres and 10 families with income ranging from Tk. 40,000-150,000 (\$ 1333-\$ 8333) per year. These 10 families derive their income mainly from business outside the village. So this is a community of small and minifarmers and landless labourers. Less than 10% of the working force have employment outside the village and the rest have to find their means of livelihood within the village (Yeasin, 1984).

Background

During the formation of the society in 1960, it was one of the most vulnerable areas of Comilla. The agricultural productivity was very low (10-15 mds per acre; Khan, 1979). Employment opportunities were very limited, the exploitations of money lenders were inhuman (50%-100% interest rate, Khan, 1963), and wants, ignorance and a sense of despondency pervaded the whole village environment. Most of the villagers could not manage to have two meals a day. Even in the lean slack seasons they could not manage one meal, so people used to leave village as a short-term migrant at that time and some of the migrants never returned. The condition was so miserable that there were very few families who could bear the nominal expenses of the burial of their dead relatives. A lot of women used to live on begging alms from door to door. People could not afford any nominal treatment when they were attacked with diseases. Killer epidemics like Malaria, Small pox, Diarrhoea, Cholera, used to take a lot of lives. People were also helpless to natural calamities like flood, famine, cyclone and money lender's oppression as well (Yeasin, 1984).

The Genesis and Development of the process

One of the nine founder members of Deedar society is Mohammed Yeasin who had only six years of schooling, five years in primary school and one year at secondary level. He joined Pakistan police force as a constable at the beginning of his career and lost the job due to his alleged involvement in the police mutiny in 1950. After coming back to village he experienced the miserable life of an unemployed youth. At last he started one tea stall cum grocery shop with the help of his father and gradually became the owner of six rickshaws. Most of the villagers, especially the rickshaw pullers, used to sit in his tea stall for taking tea and also to pass leisure time. People used to narrate their sufferings and personal problems by sitting in

the stall, which used to move him very much. But at that time he could not find any means to help the poor sufferers except expressing sympathy. Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD, former PARD) started working in Comilla under the leadership of Akhter Hameed Khan at the end of 1959. One day Yeasin visited him and sought his help for the village. Khan told him that no charity or dole would improve their condition. If poor villagers organise themselves and form their own capital by thrift and small savings, this can change the situation gradually.

Yeasin tried to organise the villagers into a cooperative society. But he could not convince very many villagers. At last he himself and eight rickshaw pullers (six of them used to ply Yeasin's rickshaws on a hire charge basis) agreed to form a cooperative. Each of them decided to save one cup of tea every day. So on the founding day (probably 15th October) the value of nine cups of tea equivalent to half a "rupee" was saved and deposited. The process of daily savings continued and in five months total accumulated savings became Rs 510 (US\$ 17) and membership increased from 9 to 48 (Ray, 1983). A formal cooperative society was formed and got registered by the name "Deedar Sramik Samabaya Samity" (Deedar worker's cooperative society). Akhter Hameed Khan advised them to invest the savings in some profitable business instead of keeping it idle. Two second hand rickshaws were purchased and distributed among two of the society's members on a hire charge basis which offered employment and higher income and profit to both. By June, 1961 the society became the owner of eleven rickshaws which cost them Rs 3150 and membership increased to 56. In five years time (1965) a lot of rickshaw pulling members became the owners of rickshaws.

A total of 66 rickshaw by using the society's support system, pullers became owners of the rickshaws by the end of 1965, and by 1970 the figure reached to 126 (Ray,

1983). This ownership transformation enhanced their family income three times higher than the previous level. Over the years, the society diversified its activities and made more investments in various business projects. The projects are trucks, tractors, paddy husking mill, brick-kiln, deep tube-well, shopping centres, cooperative store of fertiliser, insecticides, edible oil, fuel oil and other consumer goods, godown, buildings etc., which gave the society good earning prospects. business innovation, imagination and management efficiency brought reinvestible surplus every year. As on June 1984, the society's share capital and asset value stood about at Tk. 2.2 million (US\$ 74,000) and Tk. 7 million (US\$ 234, 000) respectively (Yeasin 1985).

In October 1985, the society observed its 25th founding anniversary. Among these years, every single day and week was eventful, fascinating and innovative in the process of its growth and development. For the convenience of analysis and understanding the 25 years history of the society could be divided into four different historical periods. They are (1) the period of organisation (1960-65), (2) period of diversification and consolidation (1965-70), (3) period of transition and (4) the period of exponential economic growth and expansion of social service projects (1975 onward). After 1991, the society started some crises for which another analysis may be seen. বাংলাদেশ সমবায়ের নতুন সম্ভাবনা- ২০২৩, ঢাকা: সপ্রীতি (ক্রেডিট সমবায় ইউনিয়ন)।

During the period of organisation (1960-65) the prime concerns were to accumulate capital through thrift deposit and making profitable investment, broaden the membership coverage and care fully establish the new norms and values among the members. In the next phase (1965-70) investments were diversified and profits were very encouraging. Most of the heavy investments, such as purchase of land, construction of permanent structures, were done during that period. During the third phase some of the externalities such as change of political situation,

war of liberation, high inflation, deterioration of law and order, price rise, etc., shook the whole of Bangladesh society. Flood and famine also aggravated the situation furthermore. Deedar was also hit by those external factors. But during this period they also cast their attention to the social service programmes. So this is the period of innovation in social development and social service. During the sixties income and employment generation was their prime concern which they attained by generating savings and making wise investment. So during the third phase they were looking for new field of investment.

In the fourth phase (1975 onward) large surpluses were diverted to benefit the poorer section of the society. The profit or surplus is not distributed according to the share of capital. The profits are distributed to four different funds or areas. First of all 20% are distributed directly as dividends to the members according to their shares, 25% is transferred to the reserve fund of the society. 5% is kept in the cooperative development fund (according to cooperative rule of the land) and the rest, 50%, is spent in social development fund specially designed to benefit the poorer people (Ray. 1983). A lot of social issues and problems were identified from time to time, and keeping all the issues in mind they founded 15 social development funds for spending on various social sectors. By 1984 a total of Tk. 0.80 million (\$ 0.26 million) was placed into these fifteen sector funds. During the last 5 years (1981-82 1985-86) more than Tk 1.3 millions (\$ 4,33000) were transferred to the social sector development fund. A detailed break up of allocation for the last five years can be seen from the table,

Table 2: Social Sector Development Programmes and Financial Statement (1981-86)

SI. N.	Name of projects	Year of initiation	Amount spent	Balance	Total Allocation 1981-86)
1	Agricultural development	1976-77	11250	42905	54155
2	Fisheries & Livestock development	1976-77	7866	29434	37300
3	Education & culture	1966	305125	-	305125
4	Vocational & technical training	1975-76	19451	44708	64159
5	Library	1976-77	12733	35380	48113
6	Health, nutrition & F.P.	1976 77	39198	21968	61146
7	Religious & relief	1975-76	89473	-	86473
8	Public works & Law & order	1976-77	13382	24993	38375
9	Charity	1965-66	114088	56322	170410
10	Collective support	1973-74	20033	296081	316114
11	Welfare for disabled	1979-80	-	4639	4639
12	Allowance for aged	1982-83	4700	21554	26254
13	Cattle Insurance	1977:78	2472	14620	17092
14	Deep tube well repair	1973-74	-	112339	112339
15	Television scheme	1975-76	4771	15437	20215
	TOTAL Tk		641529	720380	1361909
	US dollar		21384	24012	45396

Source: Deedar Comprehensive Village Development Society, July, 1986.

Description of the Development Funds

1. Agricultural development fund

The resources of the fund are used as subsidy mainly to introduce innovations in the broad field of agriculture, supplying high yielding variety seeds, diffusing modern technology and providing other new inputs from the society. The society manages agricultural training and extension by using the funds from the above head. Farmers also receive direct help from society during major crop damage and natural disaster. The society conducts pest control campaigns and sprays pesticides in the paddy field. The society also maintains its own agriculture farm which is used as demonstration plots for the extension work. They also grew 5000 coconut trees by using the resources of this fund. The fund is mainly used to subsidise the various services provided for agricultural development of the village.

2. Education and culture fund

There is a long list of activities carried out by using the money from this fund. The prominent contribution goes in maintaining two tuition-free primary schools and one high school in the village. Moreover, the cost of school uniform, books, annual excursion of the students up to secondary level are borne by the society. They support the students studying above secondary level by paying tuition fees and cost of books only. A free transport arrangement is also made for the girl students who attend colleges in the city three miles away from the village.

3. Vocational and technical training fund

The society made a provision of arranging skill development training for the school drop outs or unemployed youth to help them to get jobs or to be self-

employed. So far 98 persons received training with support from the fund in the following fields: tractor driving (17), truck driving (12), engineering trade course (10), engineering diploma (7), mechanics (8), tailoring (4), animal husbandry (10), fish rearing (5), small trade (7), primary health care (4) and improved agricultural methods (10) (Yeasin 1984).

4. Library fund

One reading room with five national daily newspapers and several weekly magazines and a documentation cell is maintained in the society's office premises. It is expected that library will be shifted to a separate building soon.

5. Livestock and fisheries development fund

Artificial insemination services for cows and goats, providing treatment for domestic animals and birds are arranged out of this fund. High breed poultry birds, fish breed, etc., are also supplied to the villagers at half the price. Training is also arranged for the village people on animal husbandry, poultry raising and pisciculture.

6. Health, nutrition and family planning

The society appointed two physicians who provide free prescriptions for all and supply medicines free of cost but with a "ceiling" of Tk 150 per person per year. A considerable amount is spent on health and nutrition education by village health and nutrition workers and midwives. The society encourages people to adopt a permanent method of birth control after having two babies. In addition to the clinical expenses, the society offers Tk 1000 in cash and insures the client for further treatment if any health complication arises within one year of adoption.

7. Religious and relief fund

A mosque and two institutions of religious education (Maktab) were constructed out of this fund. The Imam and the religious teachers are paid by the society from this fund. Needy people are also helped in time of natural disaster or the families without caring member.

8. Public works and law and order

This fund is mainly used for helping the villagers for building new houses, electrification of the houses and streets, constructing roads, bridges, culverts, drains, etc, and also to maintain peace and also to maintain peace and tranquility by maintaining law and order.

Each and every family of the village, after electrification of the house, is entitled to receive a cash grant of Tk 1000 from the society. The cost beyond that amount will be borne by the individual family. Members can get support for building new houses if they submit a plan and keep some money with the society at least for five years. After five years the society pays the incumbent double the amount he deposited.

The society considers itself responsible for maintaining law and order in the village. So it incurs some expenditures by arranging village meetings for settling disputes, watch and ward, etc. Society also encourages people individually to keep vigilant eyes for theft, robbery, drug abuse, gambling, child abuse, wife beating, any social injustice and 'immoral activity including sex abuse. The society offers handsome cash rewards for bravery to those who can catch thieves or robbers red handed with theft goods and pays the costs if somebody needs to appear before the the court as witness, complaintant and defendant in the interest of community.

9. Charity fund

Supporting marriage functions of distressed families, donation to government's relief fund, organisation of relief

operation in time of need and donation to religious, educational and social welfare activities for other villages are provided out of this fund.

One of the very interesting grants Deedar made out of this fund is the provision of extending financial help to the family which loses any of its earning members. Whenever any of the adult members of a family dies, the society hands over Tk. 2000 in cash to the relatives of the deceased before the funeral is arranged. Every family of the village is entitled to receive the grant: The society thinks that the amount may help the bereaved family to some extent in absorbing the personal shock and financial dislocation.

10. Collective support fund

One of the major spendings of the fund goes for paying the total assessed land tax to the government and the local council rates and taxes on behalf of the villagers. So no person or family is required to pay their taxes individually. It saves peoples time, energy and money on the one hand and also saves government and local council's spending in collecting the taxes. It also solves the problems of tax evasion.

11. Welfare for vulnerables

Lump sum donations for the needy families and individuals are provided. Normally, handicapped people get preference in receiving a grant from this fund.

12. Allowance for the aged

The aged members of the society who maintain good records of fulfilling the society's obligation in attending regular weekly meetings, regular thrift deposits, etc., are rewarded with a monthly allowance to meet their extra needs when they are out of work in their old age.

13 Cattle insurance scheme

Society members can insure their cattle by paying a very nominal premium with the society, so that they may not be assetless in case of the death of the cattle.

14. Deep tube well resinking and repair

Deep tube well (DTW) is one of the investments which gives society enormous amount of profit and tremendous service to the farmers. The DTW is one of the services which enables the villagers to grow one extra crop during the dry season. So the society keeps some money reserved for the DTW for replacement and repair.

15. Television scheme

Deedar extends opportunity to members to watch television in its meeting hall everyday from 6-12 p. m. except the meeting time, Generally the male members of the society watch TV in the meeting hall. They also arranged two other television sets for the women inside the village. The black and white TV set in the meeting hall is replaced by coloured one and they also purchased a video cassette recorder (VCR).

Deedar's approach to social work

The Deedar society developed neither as a philanthropic nor as a commercial organisation. The society was developed as a developmental institution which can respond to all the potential issues of a particular village society. So the social work practices evolved within the framework of Deedar are to be considered as part of its development process. The concept of development encompasses its all possible implications of social, economic and cultural aspect in Deedar's policies and programmes. So in some cases it is difficult to make clear

demarcation between the social service and economic development function performed by a particular scheme or project. The programmes are designed in such a way that people can benefit in many ways from one single project. A project of pure economic interest serves social issues. Again a project of social development contributes to the economic development. This is the speciality and uniqueness to the approach of Deedar in responding to and solving social problems. Some of the examples of its multidimensional activities may be illustrated for understanding of the approach.

1 Rural Banking

Deedar runs its banking functions differently from the rural branches (over nos. 2000) of seven commercial and specialised banks of Bangladesh. Deedar keeps its banking transaction open from 6 a. m. to 8 p. m. and seven days of the week. Even during the statutory holidays. Deedar resumes normal public transactions and customer services. No bank of the country can provide this type of service. On the other hand, the interest rate for keeping the money with Deedar is higher than all the financial institutions in Bangladesh. The responsiveness of Deedar's banking attracted more clients than the schedule bank branch which operates next door to Deedar (Agrani Bank, Kashinathpur Branch). As of June 1982, the villagers holding current accounts with Deedar were 464, whereas the number with the Agrani Bank were only 56 (Ray, 1983).

So the services provided by Deedar through banking is not merely confined to traditional banking function. It should be counted as social service too.

2. Court of village arbitration

Village people spend a lot of their resources in fighting against each other over some petty and trivial matters.

Disputes over land and other properties and crimes like theft, robbery, trespass, physical assault, murder, etc., are normally tried in the courts under the law of the land. Judgements in the formal courts are very costly and time consuming. The ordinary people simply cannot afford and endure it. Under certain inevitable circumstances when they become the victims of any court cases, it makes them penniless at the end.

Deedar from the very initial period of its formation used to discourage people from going to court. They started organising village meetings and tried to settle the disputes of various nature amicably. The initiatives proved to be very successful. The instances of going to court defying Deedar's amicable settlement is very rare. The initiative earned people's confidence. So ensuring justice without complicated court procedure with no cost and delay is also a very beneficial social service provided by Deedar to the community.

3. Maintenance of law and order

The society is very keen about the maintenance of law and order in the village. But it very much discourages calling law enforcing agencies (police, ansar, etc) for any matter of the village, they prefer joint community initiatives instead of police action. Every member of the community shares the responsibility of keeping vigilant eyes on the affairs which may affect their life and property adversely. There are provisions of cash awards and high social recognition for personal contribution in detecting crime and criminals. Again, there are instances of rehabilitation of criminals who promised to live normal social life by providing training, credit and business advice.

4. Conscientisation of the community

Deedar holds weekly general meetings (WGM) of its members regularly. The members of Deedar are classified into three categories, i.e, adult males, adult females and juniors (members below 18 years of age). The three groups hold their WGMs on a particular day (Friday) of the week at a particular time. So each category holds 52 meetings within one year. These WGMs are the forum of learning; motivation and conscientisation. They make major decisions, review earlier decisions and innovations from these meetings. They fight against all sorts of superstitious beliefs, rituals, taboos, ignorances, religious fanaticism through these meetings. Real community participation and involvement emanates from these meetings.

The managing committee of the society cannot implement any decision unless it is vetted by the WGMs of the two adult groups. Distinguished personalities of the country are also invited to address the society members from time to time on various aspects of development, The meetings are so efficient and impressive that many outside visitors made a lot of laudable comments. Indian journalist Khusbant Singh called it "mini parliament", the Bangladesh Observer wrote 'replica of direct democracy in Greek city states', and Ray called it a 'benevolent mini government'. The tradition of holding WGMs was never discontinued even for a week for the last 25 years (except only in 1971; they could arrange only 20 meetings in that year because of the war situation).

5. Community health and nutritional care

Malnutrition is one of the greatest problems of Bangladesh society. Deedar tries to improve the nutritional status of people with some programmes. Normally, no nutritious foods or tablets are supplied to the villagers. Deedar encourages people to grow and produce foods by their own initiatives and also advises people to consume those food

items. They give financial and technical support to grow fruit trees, vegetable garden, rearing of milk cows and goats, chickens and duck and also to do pisciculture which enhances their family income as well as helps them to get easy supply of fruit, fresh vegetables, meat, milk and eggs.

Every year the society leaves a lot of quick growing fish to breed in vast water logged paddy fields which offer a natural fishing ground for the villagers who do not have fishing ponds. The society also developed some trained health and nutrition workers to raise peoples consciousness on health and nutrition related activities such as changing food habits, healthy cooking, preparation of special diet for mothers and children and finally how to increase and finally how to increase protein and other nutritious ingredients in daily food intake. Supply of pure and safe drinking water for the whole of the community has been ensured long ago, still people are made aware of the waterborne diseases and being taught about the safe water use. For creating a healthy environment in the homestead people are very much discouraged from using open toilets and provide financial support for installing covered toilets, which prevent the spread of many diseases and unhygienic environment.

6. Social pressure for the development of education

Deedar made schooling compulsory for the members' children in the mid-sixties. For the adults it was decided that within a certain period every member has to learn at least how to sign his/ her name. No member would be allowed to make any transaction with the society by thumb impression. Again a decision is in force for the last five years (1980) that no illiterate person is eligible to apply for the society's membership. So now-a-days no member of the community below 30 years of age would be found illiterate.

7. Social pressure for family planning

Similar type of compulsion is self-imposed by the society in matters of family planning and population control too. They issue letters of caution to the eligible couples who have more than two children. The society's family planning workers visit the couple and motivate them to adopt birth control measures. The society is constantly discussing for last few years the issue of cutting social benefits such as health and education facilities for the families who have more than two children. The permanent employees of the society are required to adopt permanent method of birth control (sterilisation) after having two babies, otherwise they loose their Jobs

The social works and social services provided by Deedar are numerous and all of these are directed to bring all out development for a poor, ill health, low earning, poorly educated and half-fed village community. The efforts of Deedar have proved to be much more effective and comprehensive than the government programme. So far as the per capita allocation of resources, Deedar is much more involved than government in health, education, family planning and nutrition programmes are concerned. Government's share of percapita expenditure in health and education for the year 1982-83 is Tk. 12 (US \$ O. 4) and Tk. 11 (less than \$ O. 4) respectively (BBS 1983-84). Deedar's expenditure in those two sectors is Tk. 50 (\$1,7) and Tk. 350 (\$11.6) during the corresponding years. The responsiveness which Deedar shows to its beneficiaries is unthinkable from the government machinery in any respect.*

* For Government's expenditure see BBS 1983-81, p.667. Per capita health expenditure is calculated by the author by dividing total expenditure in that year with the total population of the country. Similarly Deedar's expenditures were calculated dividing the allotment in Social Development Fund by the total population of village.

So considering all the related facts and realities it is very difficult to analyse Deedar's approach with the existing theoretical framework. A group of researchers identified the model as "cooperative capitalism" which is the result of 'growth model' practised in the sixties. In the later stages during the seventies 'redistribution' strategy was followed more vigorously (Khan, 1979 and Channery 1973). But the above theoretical perspective is also not sufficient because side by side with individual growth there evolved a system of 'communal ownership' of certain means of production, where each contributes to the collective according to the will of the community of collectives. So the communal ownership pattern and the system of the distribution of benefits bring it close to the 'socialist' system. But ideology and political direction from the above play no role there. Still they live in a society where the non-material value of private property is highly regarded. The collective also promotes individual initiatives and entrepreneurship. It does not at all contradict with the community's interest. What the society does is to direct all its policies towards maximisation of the benefit for the poorer sections of the society without contradicting the interest of the relatively richer sections. For example, the share capital of the society varies from member to member. The variation ranges from Tk. 50-1000 (\$1.6-33-3) Only 20% of the profit of the investment is paid as the dividends of share capital. The rest, 80% of the profits are equally shared by all members irrespective of their shares and savings with the society. Again the rules and regulations of social sector development programmes are framed in such a way that the programmes can only serve the interest of the poor. Because, for example, no rich would be interested to catch fishes from the paddy field, getting supply of water-sealed latrine, watching TV in public places, getting loans for beef fattening, receiving saris, lungis and bottle of hair oil from the society's WGM attendance 'lottery prizes'. Arguments could be made in either of the ways to put it into the

framework of 'cooperative socialism' or 'cooperative capitalism'. But the fact is that this community organisation developed in its own ways to meet the felt needs of the society. One of the authorities described the situation that "it resolved the dialectics of class conflicts by forging solidarity among the poor adding economic muscles to their fledgling organisation, overcoming opposition from the vested interest groups and eventually bringing every one, rich and poor, within the fold of the same organisation" (Hye, 1983).

Conclusion

The social work and social service programme that Deedar designed to provide services to a poor rural community of Bangladesh is a hope for (against all other hopeless situations encountered) the millions of the third world. The approach Deedar follows in social work practice is not adherent with the 'generic principles' of social work and the methods are also not case work or group work which are dominant in the social work theory and practice everywhere. Here community work method is largely followed from complete different perspective. It does not separate social work from a economic development. The approach demonstrated that economic self-reliance of an individual group and community can bring total development in a gradual process. The development itself can take care of social work within its fold. So comprehensive development is more important than piecemeal effort of social work based on generic principles for the third world rural societies engulfed in abject poverty.

The approach to developmental community action through viable local institution presented by Deedar may be considered as one of the suitable alternatives for the societies which face dilemma in social work with professional or conventional social work principles and methods.

Appendix Table

Break-up of the projects to be implemented during the Third Five Year Plan (1985-90) in the five subsectors of social welfare in Bangladesh

Sl.	Projects	Financial Allocation (Tk in crore)
A	Social Welfare	
1	Rural community development	31.76
2	Welfare services for handicapped	12.15
3	Welfare services for children	16.79
4	Welfare services for vagrants	7.10
5	Treatment and rehabilitation for diabetic patients	5.20
6	National Academy for Social Services Training	2.00
	Total	Tk. 75.00
B	Women's Affairs	
1	Spill over projects from SFYP	2.67
2	Winding up projects	0.15
3	Skill development training and production centre**	12.45
4	Services for women	5.59
5	Services for children	5.55
6	Strengthening of National Women's Training Academy	3.59
7	Rehabilitation of socially handicapped	18.00
8	Credit revolving fund	2.00
	Total	Tk. 50.00
C	Youth Development	
1	Socio-economic programme and skilla development training for youth**	7.00

Sl.	Projects	Financial Allocation (Tk in crore)
2	Self-employment programme for youth**	3.00
3	International youth year activity	3.90
4	Introduction of National Award, publication of exemplary act and production of character-building film for youth	1.10
5	Support to voluntary agencies**	5.00
	Total	Tk. 17.00
D	Development of Sports	
	Institutional facilities	22.10
	Development of stadiums, gymnasiums etc.	22.70
	Development of sports facilities for women	15.20
	Training	4.00
	Total	TK 64.00
E	Cultural Affairs	
	Language and Literature	6.25
	Library activities	5.55
	Fine and performing arts	21.80
	Museums, shrines and mausoleums	17.40
	Total	TK 51.00
	Grand Total	TK. 257.00

Note: *These projects have some direct relation with rural population (only 2).

**The benefit of these projects may be shared by the rural population (only 4) equally with urban population.

References

- Ahmed, Sahera (1980), Urban Community Development in Bangladesh. Department of Social Welfare (DSW), Dhaka.
- Blair, H. W. (1985), "Participation, Public Policy, Political Economy and Development in Rural Bangladesh". World Development.
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Year Book 1983-84, Dhaka.
- Bangladesh Planning Commission (1986), The Third Five Year Plan, Dhaka.
- Department of Social Services (1986) Social, Service in Bangladesh-annual report. Shegun Bagicha, Dhaka.
- Gore, M. S. (1973), Some Aspects of Social Development, University of Hong Kong and Tata Institute of Social Sciences.
- Hardiman and Midgley (1982), The Social Dimension of Development. Wiley and Co, London,
- Khan, Akhter Hameed (1983), Socio Economic Problems of Developing Society-a lecture delivered in Dhaka in March 1963 incorporated in The Wroks of Akhter Hameed Khan Vol 1, 1983. BARD, Comilla, Bangladesh.
- Khan, Azizur Rahman (1979), The Comilla Model and Integrated Rural Development Programme of Bangladesh: An Experiment in Cooperative Capitalism, World **Development**.
- Khan, N. I. (1978), Social Welfare Services in Bangladesh, (DSW), Bangladesh.
- Livingstone, Arthur (1969), Social Policy in Developing Countries. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Midgley, James (1983), Professional Imperialism-Social Work in the Third World. Heineman, London.
- Midgley, James (1984), Social Security, Inequality and the Third World, Wiley and Co., London.
- Ray, Jayanta Kumar (1983), Organising Villagers for Self Reliance: A case study of Deedar in Bangladesh. BARD, Comilla.
- Rizvi, G. (1987), Contemporary Politics of Bangladesh-a lecture delivered in South Asian Study Centre, University of London (25th February, 1987)
- Uphoff, Norman (1986), The Rural Institutions, Longman.
- Village Extension Resource Centre (1979), Nai Anna Theka Nai Lakh (Nine Annas to nine lacs)-a Bengali report on Deedar in a special issue of their monthly magazine "Shabalambon' Anandapur, Savar, Dhaka.
- Yeasin, Mohammad (1982). Autobiography of a Cooperator (a Bengali booklet) Deedar, Kashinathpur, Comilla.
-(1984), Samabayer Naba Jagarony Deedar (Bengali), Deedar, Kashinathpur, Comilla.
-(1984), Organising Villagers for Self-Reliance the case of Deedar (mimeo), Deedar Society.

Decentralized District planning in Bangladesh: An Operational Framework*

"If we could know where we are and whether we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it." Abraham Lincoln

"Planning is the exercise of intelligence to deal with facts and situations as they are and find a way to solve problems."-- Jawaharlal Nehru

"Planning has become a way of life in government ministries, and every five years or so the latest development plan is paraded out with the greatest fanfareThe planning record, unfortunately, has not lived up to its advance billing and there now exists a growing skepticism about the planning mystique." Michael P. Todaro

Introduction

Increasing disenchantment with the "overgrown state" and "inflexible centralized planning" has led to the recognition of the need for local level planning (LLP). It has gained currency not as an alternative or substitute but as an effective support mechanism for long term national planning. The LLP does not conform to traditional planning as such, rather it refers to a process of disjointed efforts for incremental change by ensuring people's participation through "empowerment " and "capacity building".

Traditionally, national planning concentrates on allocation of resources to various authoritatively determined sectors

against some prefixed goals and projected targets. Plan formulation and plan implementation under this system is highly sector oriented and projects are, in fact, prepared for sectors (GOB, 1990: 14). Resource allocation for national plan is regulated by technically determined macro indicators. The implementation strategy also follows a top-down approach which vertically goes to the bottom line of the organization under a complex network of sectoral ministry via directorate to their respective local arms at the districts, thanas and unions.

Four successive five year plan documents of Bangladesh (1973-1995) marshall facts about the failure of sector-focused long-term nationwide planning strategy, if the poverty factor is taken as an indicator of success. Whatever success is achieved to maintain a certain growth rate is mainly due to the contributions of the sectors of large-scale installation and construction. However, the sectors encompassing broad areas of socio-economic development for the benefit of poor hardly achieved anything conspicuous. Consequent upon this pitfall,current planning strategy, performance of national planning commission and sectoral ministries of the central government have become important issues of debate. Rethinking and revision of the whole system by emphasizing the issues of "decentralized planning" is gradually getting prominence (Sobhan, 1990: 268; Ahmed, 1994).

Already many of the Asian countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, The Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Nepal has started attaching greater importance to local and regional level planning (Routary,1993). Local level planning is not totally an unknown concept in Bangladesh too; rather Bangladesh is one of the pioneering countries in the region to start LLP (Hye1980; Khan and Zafarullah; 1988). The only problem with Bangladesh seems to be the discontinuity of the efforts and lack of timely initiative to consolidate the piecemeal experiences to put them into one

* The author gratefully acknowledges the help and cooperation extended by Md. Abdul Quddus while arranging study and seminar on the issue. Dr. Tofail Ahmed, with Dr. Md. Nurul Islam Associate Professor and Chairmen, Department of public Administration, University of Chittagong. Contributed this article and published in the 'Development Review' Vol-7, January & June, 1995, NO1&2

single package. A strong desire in favor of decentralized participatory planning has been expressed in the Fourth Five Year Plan (FFYP) (GOB, 1990: Chapter 1, pp. 14-15). Unfortunately, when the plan has been put into operation, the political context within which the plan document was prepared' got totally changed.

Under the FFYP, the upajila system was taken as organizational base for decentralized planning. But when the new government came to power in 1991, the upajila scheme was abandoned and the whole exercise in connection with the scheme lost its relevance and continuity. Though the upajila scheme was not fully perfect, its abandonment left a vacuum in the sphere of local governance and LLP in the country. The period of the FFYP (1990-1995) ended in June, 1995, and the period of the Fifth Five Year plan was supposed to commence from 1996. It is expected that the issue of decentralized and participatory planning would reemerge with added emphasis in the new plan document. The Ministry of planning has already initiated the process by arranging some consultation meetings with cross-section of people at the district levels.

Decentralized planning cannot be initiated in vacuum. Organizational settings at the national as well as local levels need to be properly rearranged to pave ways for decentralized planning. The present discussion is an attempt to facilitate the process with some concrete suggestions. At the outset, discussion on "Decentralised Development Planning" with reference to Bangladesh raises some questions. An attempt to find answers to these questions may lead up to the thread of intellectual discussion intended to formulate a policy. The questions include:

1. What should be the appropriate level for decentralized planning?

2. What types of administrative and political representative institution will be chosen to operationalize decentralized planning?
3. Who will provide the resources and how?
4. What should be the linkage mechanism between the national and local level planning components? And
5. What should be the contents of local level planning?

Besides these five main questions, there may be many more subsidiary questions which need to be addressed for the operationalization of the concept.

Deciding the levels of administrative tiers and local government: Institutions for decentralized planning

Bangladesh is a unitary state without having province or state level governmental structure like neighboring countries of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. There exists four administrative tiers with the central government at the apex. The tiers are: divisions, districts, thanas and union. Though unions and villages do also exist at the grassroots, these two tiers are not recognized as formal administrative units.²

Among the above three administrative tiers, division is a unit without active role and mentionable function and as such, an artificial structure. It has become a "post office" - a mere reflection of British imperial legacy. In fact administration – regulatory, service, promotional and developmental begins from the district level and ends at the thana level.

Considering the operational redundancy and administrative practicality there was a strong feeling in the 1980s to abolish divisions and the former sub-divisions (the administrative unit between the districts and thanas). After the upgradation of thanas into upajillas (sub-districts), sub-divisions (mahakumas) were abolished. Subsequently, most

of the former sub-divisions (60) were upgraded into full-fledged districts. The total number of districts increased from 20 to 64.

Though there is no good justification for divisions to exist as administrative units, they do still exist. Also in the last three years (1991 onwards), demands are being raised from various regions of the country to create few more divisions. A Bengali daily speculates that given the existing six divisions, ten more possible additions will increase the number to sixteen (The Sangbad, November, 23, 1994). According to an estimate made in the report, Tk. 600 million will be required as initial capital investment for creating physical infra-structure for those newly created divisions. Moreover, an expenditure of Tk. 240 million every year will also be added to the revenue budget of the government on account of salary and other expenses to man the newly created divisions. During the last decade (1980-1990), few thousand million taka had already been spent for creating various facilities in 64 districts and 460 thanas. Most of these facilities were left meaningless because of the lack of clear policy decisions. In view of the above situation, it may be wise to resort to plan an institutional effort at utilizing those facilities instead of crating new structures. Also, more practical attention, needs to be paid to the lower levels of administration viz., unions and villages. Now the time has come to give some thoughts as to whether unions could be made strong administrative units, shunning the idea of creating new divisions. Even, serious considerations could be given to abolish the existing divisions in the country. The money that could be saved by abolishing divisions as administrative units may be directed to the districts, Upajila and unions for making them administrative units. Proposals and recommendations have already been made by various quarters along this line (Ahmed, 1994: 55-62).³

As far as the political or representative local government is concerned, the country had a long history of three tier local government system. The tiers were: districts, thanas and unions. Each of the tiers had shared planning experiences at its respective level. Thana was recognized as a development planning unit for nine years (upto 1991). As far as the physical planning is concerned thana and union were provided with a plan book and planning manuals. District Councils during British and Pakistan times used to perform many of the development activities independently.

Presently there exists a vacuum of representative institutions at the district and thana levels.⁴ It should be pointed out that administrative and physical infrastructure are present in the above two levels. As far as the administrative divisions are concerned, in addition to 64 districts and 498 thanas, the country is further divided into 4451 unions. At this level, a representative body called, Union Parishad, do exist, and it has been functioning uninterruptedly despite changes of regimes at the national level.

Besides the elected Union Parishads, there are other grass root level people's organizations namely cooperatives and various NGO sponsored groups at the village level. By reviewing the above institutional and administrative environment, a focal planning point can be identified around which a network of existing administrative and people's institution could be built.

Rationales for Focusing District as Appropriate Level for LLP

If we consider the decentralized planning experiences of some of the countries of Asia like India, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, it is found that the "district" has evolved as a popular level of administration in those

countries as well. Though geographic area and population size of the districts are not uniform in every country, uniformity in terms of locus and focus can be easily found. Indian districts vary between 174 to 39114 sq. kms in geographical area and between 28000 to 10,000,000 (1990) in population size (Routary. 1993). Still district planning is considered appropriate there. The same is true of Bangladeshi districts. In spite of variations, in terms of backward and forward linkages requirement for sound planning, districts may be considered an appropriate unit for initiating a process for decentralized planning exercise. Though local government council does not exist at the present time, it has a great potential because physical and administrative facilities are there. Though thanas have been used (and equally abused) as a planning body in the past, under the present condition districts seem to be better equipped to start the process.⁵

There are ample scope to integrate thana structures within the district plan. Some of the reasons for suggesting districts as planning unit may be as follows:

- 1) Almost all the departments of national government are represented at the districts.
- 2) The wide presence of private entrepreneurs and private Voluntary Development Organizations (PVOs) in some form or other may create a market mechanism around the district headquarters.
- 3) Districts are better placed than any other tier of administrative unit in respect of backward and forward linkages.
- 4) As the districts are already linked with required and relevant support services, no substantial additional capital investment will be required.

- 5) Districts may provide enough of intellectual input and space for flourishing enlightened pluralism conducive to local development.

Resource Base

Any planning exercise without prior resource base tends to be an attempt in futility. Under the present arrangement of the government the resources generated within a district goes to various separate departments and agencies (for example, urban local bodies such as municipalities/corporations, district councils (Jilla parishads), rural local bodies, and other rent, service charge and revenue collecting departments). Besides, a very meagre amount of local rate and taxes, most of the other rents and revenues are ultimately deposited to the government exchequer. In return, the central government under separate budget heads channel those resources for all the district level offices. As yet, no separate budget provision is made (either from revenue or from development heads) for comprehensive or integrated "district planning." Under the present arrangement district councils (Jilla parishad) may be asked to provide the venue/forum for district development planning. During the experimental stage a lump sum grant may be allocated to the limited number of Jilla parishads of the country as matching grant. Only financially solvent Jilla Parishads may act as the district planning body at the experimental stage.

Upward and Downward Linkages

Out of 50 functional divisions under 37 ministries of the national government almost 30 divisions are represented at the district. For the planning purposes, only two divisions, namely Planning Division, and Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division need extension up to district level. All the existing departments may provide the necessary sectoral inputs from the national perspective and

establish a horizontal linkage at the districts among themselves. By integrating national sectoral plan components along with individual district projects, district planning authority can make a plan. Thanas and unions will be recognized as the implementation units. In each of the three administrative levels, regular coordination, monitoring and evaluation system needs to be strengthened. Space should also be provided for the participation of the PVOs in each level of administration. An organogram may be created by making district council and a district planning authority as the focal point for initiating local or regional planning.

Contents for District Development plan

Like the Upajila system separate lists of subjects may be prescribed for national and district level planning. The selection of contents or subjects under the jurisdiction of district planning may not be an easy one in the initial years. It has to be taken as an evolving process rather than a blue print. The system may get established after a few years of trial and error. Initially a modest beginning could be made for evolving a new district planning body by reorganizing and regrouping the existing district level offices. The legal framework and experiences of three hill district local councils (Rangamati, Bandarban and khagrachari) may be of some relevance in this respect (GOB 1993). A draft proposal along with organizational structure is placed below for further discussion (see Figures 1. 2. 3 and 4)

District planning Set-up.

At the district level, present Jilla parishad may host and coordinate the activities of the Decentralized District Planning. The activities at various stages would be performed in three different committees and conventions. The composition of which may be as follows:

I. District planning Cell (DPC): Presently Secretary Jilla Parishad may coordinate the activities with expert advices from two mid-level officials from Planning Commission and Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED). Planning Commission and IMED may arrange to depute two of their mid-level officials (Assistant Chief and Deputy Director respectively from Planning Commission and IMED) to sit in the Jilla Parishad. CEO, Jila Prishad, Assistant Chief, Planning Commission, Deputy Director. IMED and District Statistical Officer of the respective district may compose "District planning Cell (DPC)." As the CEO, Jilla Parishad is a Deputy Secretary of the government, s/he can act as the Secretary of District Planning Authority (DPA).

II. District Planning Authority (DPA): Besides the cell, a wide bodied "District Planning Authority" (DPA) may be formed. All members of parliament (MPs) of the district, Deputy Commissioner of the District, all heads of the district level offices of various government, semi-government and autonomous bodies, NGO representatives and other citizen forums and all UNOs under the districts may be given membership of the "District planning Authority". The Chairmen Jilla Parishad will Chair the DPA. In India DPA is now a constitutional body and Chairperson of the jila Parishad is Chair of the DPA. The DPA may also be reorganized after the finalization of Jilla Parishad structure in Bangladesh.

III. Sectoral Expert Group (SEG): District Planning Authority will be assisted by six Sectoral Expert Groups (SEG) formed with the participation of officials and experts working in the district offices of the national government.

The composition of the six Sectoral Expert Groups may be as follows:

Fig-1. Composition of the six Sectoral Expert Group

Sectoral Expert Groups (SEG)	Participating Department/Organization
1. SEG on Institution, Agriculture and Rural & Urban Development	ADC(Rev), ADLG, DD Agriculture, District Chief of BWDB, DD, BRDB, DCO. DLO, DD-Youth Development, Women Affairs, Social Services Departments, DC-Food, UNOs & NGO Representatives.
2. SEG on Social Sector Development	Civil Surgeon, DD Family Planning, District Mass Education Officer, District Education Officer, XEN-Public Health, DD Social Services, DD-BRDB DD-Youth Development, DD-Islamic Foundation, District Sports Officer. District Cultural Officer, Relevant NGOs and UJH & FPOs.
3. SEG on Physical Infrastructure and Energy	Senior Officer available at district from PDB, WDB. PWD, LGED, Facilities. Deptt.. PHE, Petro Bangla etc.
4. SEG on Credit. Employment. Small and Cottage Industries and Poverty Alleviation	BRDB, Cooperatives, Banks. NGOS-MFI, BSCIC & Trade Associations.
5. SEG on Human Resource Development	ADLG, DD-BRDB, Asstt. Director Manpower, Jilla Parishad. BSCIC & NGOS

6. SEG on Plan Coordination	District Planning Cell (DPC)
-----------------------------	------------------------------

IV. Decentralized District Planning Convention (DDPC):

All Union Parishad Chairmen within the district, all NGOs working within the district, all MPs, all District level officials, all UNOs, Trade Union Representatives, Media, Cooperative Leaders, Social groups, Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Prominent Association of owners and workers will be called once a year for a few days in a convention to discuss the prepared draft plan and also to review the progress of the ongoing or previous plan.

Implementation procedures of the District plan

1. Implementation Linkage: In the whole set-up, DPA will be the highest body for decentralized district planning and it will act as the supreme body to finalize the plan document in the light of national plan and local demands. Except the large scale construction and installation projects of technical nature, all other projects will be implemented at the thana and union levels. Thana offices and thana level committees will act as hands and eyes of their respective district offices to render inputs and expert services to the unions and villages while implementing the plan. Through regular training and meetings at thana and unions, the thana officials will monitor the programmes and regularly report to their respective departments and the DPC

II. Union Parishads as Implementation point: Unions will be given adequate training to formulate their own plan which will commensurate with the six expert committee exercises at the districts. They will also be equipped to initiate and coordinate development activities within the union. The effective implementation of district plan will

necessitate the reorganization of Union parishad including its physical facilities, representative character, traditional authority and responsibility as well as financial system. A detailed exercise on Union Parishad reorganization has already been made (Ahmed and Quader. 1992) by BARD, Comilla which may be reviewed in this connection.

111. Involvement of Grassroots Level Beneficiary Group (GLBG): People's organizations at the grassroots level should have to be promoted for generating participatory initiative. In this particular aspect cooperative department, BRDB and NGOS should work within some agreed framework prepared by DPA. Union Parishad and present UJP will monitor institution building activity within their respective jurisdiction. To enlighten the DPA within a framework of institution building and participatory plan at the village level, again some of recent exercises done in BARD, Comilla may be consulted as reference materials (Ahmed. 1992; Ahmed and Das, 1994; Ahmed, Kamal and Bhuyian, 1994; Ahmed and Jahid, 1994).

The materials include detailed manual on the formation of beneficiary organization, building village level data base and using those data for plan formulation, creating service receiving and service delivery mechanism which will create effective linkage among village, union, thana and district level functionaries.

Fig 2: District Planning Set up

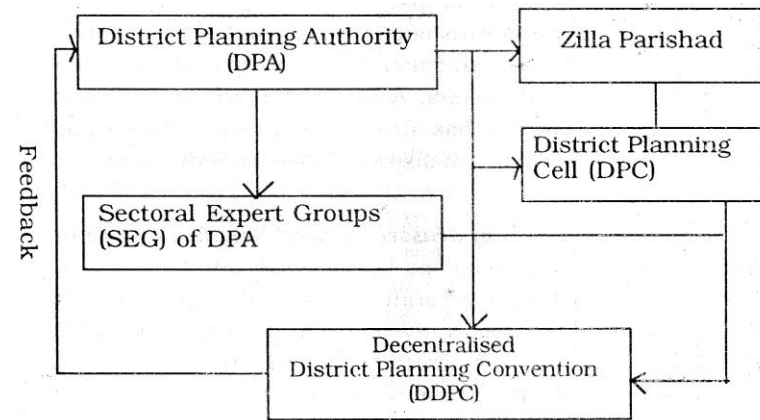


Fig 3: Proposed District Plan Book Format.

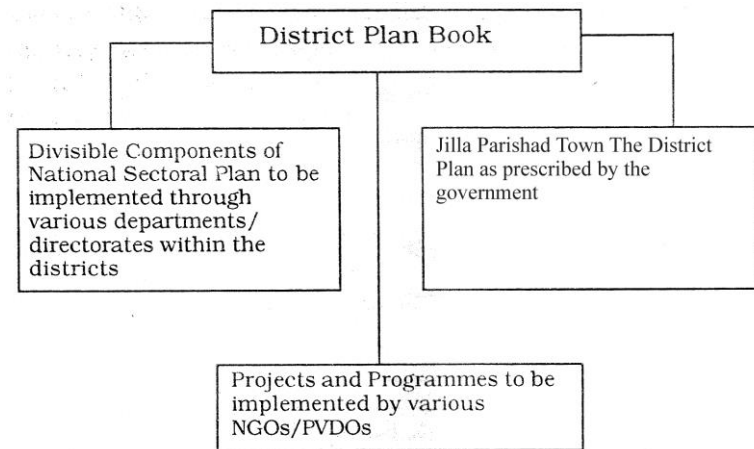
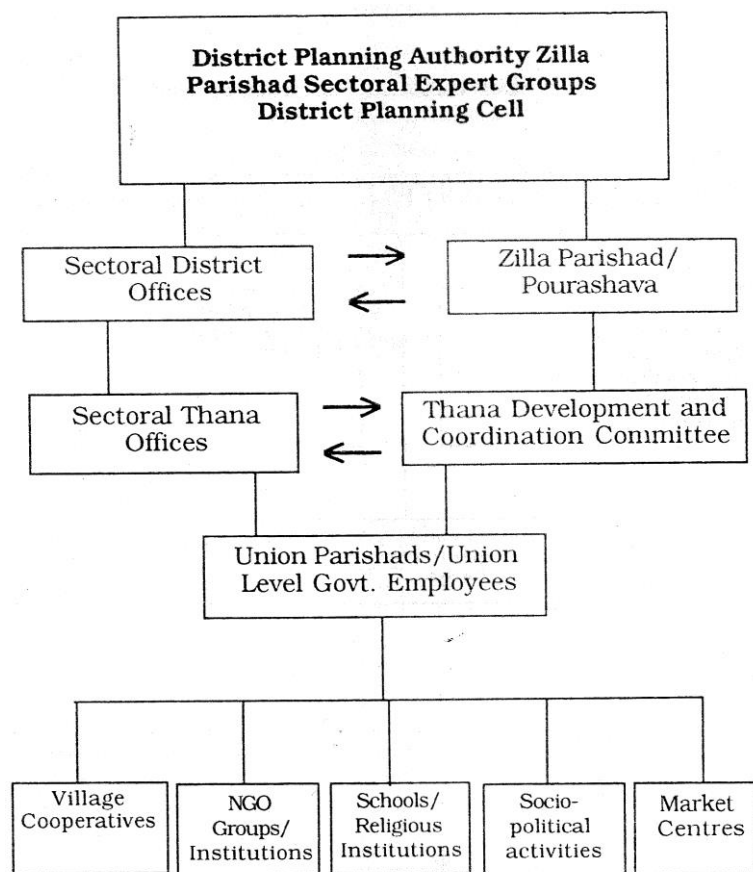


Fig 4: Implementation Metrix of District-Plan



West Bengal Experiences of Decentralized District Level Planning

Keeping in mind certain reservations about the extent of success in district planning as well as differences in the political situation compared to Bangladesh, still many of their relatively successful experiments and experiences of West Bengal may serve as a stimulus in deciding our direction as both Bengals share some common heritages in administration, the politics and objective social conditions

in local governance (Ahmed, 1993: 368-374). The state Government of West Bengal devoted its efforts toward decentralization since the early 1980s which finally culminated into the strengthening of three tier panchayat institutions and initiation of district Planning. Before West Bengal, pioneering efforts on district Planning had been made by the state governments of Maharashtra and Gujrat in the early 1970s which could not live long because of the non-cooperation from the central political and administrative elites of the country (Ghosh, 1988: 656). The "District Planning" reemerged in India as a successful venture in the mid-1980s under the decentralization programme of the Left Front' government of West Bengal. Initially the district plan started in West Bengal with the programmes and projects under integrated Rural Development programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Program (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Scheme (RLEGS), Draught Relief, Operation Barga, Land Reform, etc. and gradually other national and state government programmes were also integrated.

The government of West Bengal started district level planning after achieving modest success in panchayat programs; and finally panchayats at different levels were made the planning and implementation units of the district planning. A separate "budget head" has been created for district planning. In the year 1985-86 a sum of Rs. 20 crore was allocated for 15 districts covering 340 blocks which had gradually been increased in the subsequent years. The experience of district development plan even in West Bengal has not been very smooth all through: it had faced problems from different quarters. Firstly, the state government had to face financial problems to support the growing needs of the local leaders. Secondly, there were bureaucratic bottlenecks in the process of realizing the sanctioned fund in time. To give an example, in the second year (1986-87) of the district planning experience only 12

crore out of the total allocation of Rs. 30 crore were realized within the plan period. Thirdly, the central bureaucracy was resistant to extend required support by providing additional staffs and other procedural supports (Ghosh, 1988: 662-63). In spite of all these hurdles, the major innovation introduced through this experiment contributed a lot to the building of an institutional framework. In West Bengal, all the schemes and programmes that are to be implemented on the ground by various line departments are incorporated in the district plan and are also subject to the approval of District Planning Coordination Committee (DPCC) as part of district plan. The planning process that is exercised in West Bengal districts bear a close resemblance with our erstwhile Upajilla planning practice. However, it is time that we give serious thoughts on starting a planning exercise at the district by learning from West Bengal and Kerala experiences in a more viable manner, in this regard, our previous experiment with upajila scheme may be of great help (Khan and Zafarullah, 1988. Ahmed, 1993)

Accelerated District Approach (ADA): An Experimental Initiative from UNICEF

UNICEF Bangladesh in line with the current district level planning (1991-93) approach spearheaded by the Bangladesh Planning Commission finalized a new strategy acronym ADA (Accelerated District Approach) that will characterize GOB-UNICEF program of Cooperation for the 1996-2000 period (UNICEF, 1994). Initially five districts of Bangladesh will be brought under the programme in the year 1995. Based on the experiences of the initial five districts the programs may be extended to the rest of the districts of the country after 1996 (UNICEF, 1994). Though the detailed framework is yet to be formulated, it is stipulated that mainly the UNICEF assisted projects and programs will be planned and implemented in an integrated fashion in the districts. Hopefully, this initiative at the

district level may come out as a landmark for a new planning process. As suggested in the present paper the ADA of UNICEF may take a lead in organizing SEG on Social Sector Development, the experience of which may help subsequently to organize five other SEGs.

Similarly following the examples of UNICEF other multinational UN agencies, such as UNDP, FAO and World Bank. Bilateral agencies like NORAD, DANIDA, USAID, ODA, JICA, CIDA, SIDA and lead government agencies like the Ministry of Local Government may take initiative to organize relevant sectors at least by providing technical assistance and institutional framework.

Conclusion

Initiation of district level planning in contemporary Bangladesh would be a political issue rather than a matter to be resolved technically or administratively. ⁶In spite of the presence of a well-structured governmental structure, a functional institutional framework at the local level had been lacking since 1990. This has hampered not only local development, but also national development. It is against this fact the need for local level planning has to be analyzed in the context of Bangladesh.

We have argued that the creation of a district planning structure in Bangladesh would not be a very expensive venture in respect of financial and manpower requirement; what would be needed most is a sincere political will and commitment. Indonesian, Malaysian and Thai experiences of disaggregated district level computerized data management system (Routray, 1993), West Bengal experience of political commitment and institutional sustenance (Ghosh, 1988) and our past learning from Upajilla (Ahmed, 1993) may be useful as building blocks for creating a decentralized district planning system in Bangladesh.

Notes:

1. At present there are eight divisions, 64 districts and 498 thanas in Bangladesh.
2. The number of unions and villages are 4,451 and 80,000 respectively.
3. Union Parishad has been declared as administrative unit and 13 officials of 9 Ministries and Divisions are posted at the Union levels.
4. Institutional Vacuum at Upajila and district no more exist. A full-fledged Upajila Parishad and Jila Parishad are in place. Legal empowerment along with functional and financial assignment is needed to be reorganized.
5. District is more convenient as Planning unit compared to the scale of Upajila. There were two feeble attempts by two of our BNP and AL government. Dr. Abdul Moyeen Khan During his tenure in the Planning ministry and A M A Muhit during his Finance ministership. None could succeed and got political support from then respective party and government.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, Salehuddin, "Major Issues on Local Level planning and project Management," in Salehuddin Ahmed and S.J. Anwar Jahid (eds.), Strategies and Issues in Local level planning in Bangladesh, BARD, Comilla (1994).
- Ahmed, T., Background, principles and Strategies of Comprehensive Village Development (in Bengali), BARD, Comilla (1992).
- Ahmed, T. , Decentralisation and the Local State Under Peripheral Capitalism, Academic publishers, Dhaka (1993).
- Ahmed. T. and Quader, M.A, Local Government Crossroads: Some Recommendations for Structural-Functional Re-organization (in Bengali), BARD, Comilla (1992).
- Ahmed. T and Das, R.K., participatory village Development planning (in Bengali), BARD, Comilla (1994).
- Ahmed, T., Kamal, M. and Bhuyian, T.A., Democratization of Family Structure for Development and Solidarity (in Bengali), BARD, Comilla (1994).
- Ghosh, Arun, "Decentralized District planning: West Bengal Experience," Economic and political Weekly, Vol. XXIII. No. 13. pp. 655-663 (1988).
- Government of Bangladesh, A Report on The problems of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Bangladesh Responses for their solution, Special Affair Division, Dhaka. (1993).
- Government of Bangladesh, The Fourth Five Year plan, Ministry of Planning, Dhaka, (1990).
- Hye, A. Hasnat, Local Level planning in Bangladesh, NILG, Dhaka, (1980).
- Khan, M. Mohabbat and Zafarullah, H. Mohammad, The Decentralized planning process in Bangladesh, AIT, Bangkok. (1988)
- Routary, J. K, "Methods and Approaches of Decentralised District planning: A Review of Experiences," Trialog, No. 38, pp. 7-8, (1993).
- Sobhan, R, "The Nature and Scope for Self-Reliant Development Strategy for Bangladesh." in Ole David Khot Norbye (ed.), Bangladesh Faces the Future, UPL, Dhaka. (1993).
- UNICEF, "Watch out for ADA," in News and Views (An in-house Newsletter of UNICEF, Dhaka). No.1 (1994).

Mobilisation of Resources for Local Level Planning: Problems and Prospects*

Part- 1: Problematics of Local Resources Mobilisation

Let me begin the discussion with a few crude and unscrupulous examples to understand the technique how some desperate poor of our country mobilise resources for their survival. In the first instance, take the case of some physically handicapped beggars who flock together and beg alms by singing chorus in the street. Certainly, they attract more alms than others. In the second instance, collection of a blind beggar by an able-bodied one and asking help for both. Third instance may be an able-bodied rural poor going for polygamy and sending all the wives for work or begging which gives him relatively a comfortable living. Lastly, we can also look at the dowry system through which a male person exploits the socially vulnerable position of a female and mobilises some resources for his family. All of these practicing examples are in one way or other mobilisation of resources mindlessly by some of the desperately poor human beings and also relatively less poor greedy people of our society. Had they been supported by the state or community in a decent way they would not had gone for those immoral or unethical practices. If we turn our eyes to the state we do not witness a very different picture. The process is almost the same. Mass poverty, natural disaster and vulnerability have become valuable bargaining chips for the state machinery, as well as for the self-proclaimed social activists to attract the philanthropic wisdom of donors to mobilise resources for uses and abuses.

* **Source:** Salehuddin Ahmed and S.J. Anwar Zahid (ed) (1994) Strategies and Issues of Local Level Planning in Bangladesh, Cumilla: BARD, PP- 83-90.

Given the above unscrupulous background of polemical nature the problematics on the mobilisation of resources for Local Level Plan (LLP) with government initiative may follow a very critical theoretical discourse. The reason for bringing the above half-backed background of Local Resource Mobilisation (LRM) to the notice of the concerned academics and practitioners is only to point fingers to five of the very pertinent questions and issues related to the LRM and LLP in this country. Perhaps this attempt may help to find out the pragmatic answers and may also lead to shed some light on the real problem areas of LLP and LRM. The question and answer together may also culminate into a theoretical framework for further discussion.

Question No. I : How do we define resources?

We should have to define first what do we mean by the term resources? By resources do we mean men, material, money and other natural endowments only? I think if this is so, then whole exercise tends to become futile. Resources are not something of static nature composed of matter and materials alone. Matter and materials become resources only in relation to certain social conditions. As a result, relationship is a key factor in identifying and defining resources. This is the relationship between man and man and in turn between man and matter. For example, the natural endowment of a water body, a land mass and natural forests are resources but not in their static existence only, but in relation to the people living around those resources and exploiting of them.

Similarly relationship is even more important in respect of human being who are subject and object of development planning. An ignorant, unskilled, fatalistic and passive human being who is self-in-himself rather than self-for-himself is a liability. On the other hand, a conscientised,

empowered and self-actualised person is a resource. Conscientisation, empowerment and self-actualisation is a social process. So in defining resources, making of a static inventory of potential resources only is useless, until and unless it is enmeshed in the existing social relations.

Question No. II : What do we mean by mobilisation?

Is it collection of resources for the people living at the grassroots level from and beyond their locality by the outsiders for the wellbeing of the locals or, is it a process of collecting resources for the locality by the locals?

Local resource mobilisation had been an academic obsession for last few decades in this country. Unfortunately, in spite of the piled-up research reports local resource base had been gradually eroded. Persistent plundering and squandering not only eroded the rural resources bases but also eroded the confidence of the people living in the peripheries. For that reason the term ‘mobilisation’ itself along with the purpose of mobilisation and ultimate control of mobilised resources need to be spelled out.

For example, whatever surplus is generated from subsistence rural economy is not reinvested in the rural areas, it is being recycled in the urban sector and that has become the established system. If the system cannot be reversed, mobilisation, alone will not help to retain the resources in the rural communities.

Question No. III : What do we mean by Local?

Local is a relational and relative term. Why do we bring the issue in relation to the village development only? We can consider national in relation to foreign as local too. In most of the time, specially in the context of macro and micro level planning perspective, we emphasize on local

resources for local level planning which seems most of the time shamefully hypocritical. For that reason, the term local should be redefined from the perspective of total national development.

By local in its limited meaning if we mean village community, then control of the villagers on their own resources should have to be ensured. In the present context, they do not have control over their own community vis-a-vis own resources, which need to be firmly reestablished.

Question No. IV : We are advocating planning for a local community under a globalised market economy. Did we resolved the dilemma of open market and planned economy at this juncture of our national development?

Development of market forces is a pre-condition for sustainable growth and development. Before going for full-scale market economy that people’s bargaining power in the market place has to be created, otherwise market itself may become a monster. Because market by its very nature does not care and share the agony of the weak, emaciated and disadvantaged segment of the society. Planning at the local level is untenable if aggression of large capital is not kept in check and balance position for the time being by organizing small persons with limited means

Question No. V : Can LLP and LRM be evolved in an institutional Vacuum?

Institution is one of the fundamental pre-requisites for sustainable development. Currently, country lacks uniform, disciplined and capable local institution which can share and promote people’s urge, aspiration and wisdom. The all-encompassing rent-seeking paraphernalia have been outmaneuvering the spontaneous local initiatives on the one hand and destroying the sound institutional ecology

through unhealthy competition and wastage of resources on the other. Organisations with outside impetus grow like mushrooms, epidemics of mismanagement and corruption put them to death within a very short span of their lives.

Experiments with fresh organisations have become the order of the day. Our development stalwarts love experiments but they seem hate to share the experiences from each other. Certainly this is a country which can be proud of its well knit institutional network down from the villages to the national levels. Now the old institutions are dying, there is none to mourn. Over experimentation is making the institutional ecology of the country unstable and unsteady. Certainly, we need a break for the time being to look back and consolidate. We should bring our villages, unions, thanas and districts into focus for starting effective planning and development exercises. Without strong, stable and transparent local institutions at those levels, LLP and LRM cannot take any viable direction.

Part- II: Prospect of Local Resources Mobilisation

This is a society with a unique tradition of self-sustenance and resilience. Instead of being fed, this society had fed many other societies. Instead of being served, we had served many other countries. It is unfortunate that now-a-days we wait for others to feed us, serve us and look for the oracles to tell us how to mobilise our own resources for local development.

A request may be made to the proponents of local development to please enquire into the matter, by whom and with whose resources all the existing schools, Madrashes, Mosques, Temples, Roads, Bridges, Culverts and many other social infrastructures were built 50 years back from now. It was neither by the governments nor by any modern NGO. It was the people and the community of this society who created all these facilities. In the history of

last 50 years, the intervention of the state, number of state-backed agencies, and the professional philanthropist have increased tremendously which forced the traditional communities to retreat. The intrusion of the state and other outside agencies is all pervasive even in the private life of a humble man. The civil society is in disarray with the continuous intrusion of the state and the bureaucracy. As a result, spontaneous community initiative is gradually dying out.

In a country like ours where many live beyond their means and vast majority without the means for mere sustenance of life, centralised planning simply does not work. For that matter the concept of disjointed, incremental and process plan is being advocated by many and LLP may be one of the such devices. Though LLP is not the only solution. But it can ease at least the problem of the current 'bureaucratic constipation' of the planning system on the one hand and benign patronisation of some uncommitted professionals on the other and the circuit of development may start evolving from inside.

Now again with the initiation of the concept of LLP, the million dollar question of collection of resources resurfaces. The nation at the present point of time can not afford to support one national plan, how it can support 80,000 village plans, 4500 union plans, nearly 500 thana plans and 64 district plans (if these are considered at all as local level planning units)?

BARD, Comilla has done some modest work in this direction. The experiences in Comilla tell us that it is possible. What is needed is firm commitment and readiness to hive off power and responsibility to the people. Instead of policing, trust them. Instead of telling what to do and what not to do share their knowledge and wisdom which can make a bridge of mutual trust and confidence. If trust and confidence can be built, resource is not a very serious

problem. Money and resources want security. Investment need congenial environment. Plan is not only a piece of paper to be read and analysed for the sake of reading and analysis by scholars but basically a set of human activity to be carried out. Only well prepared framework and rich document will not work, if active and committed human element is absent and that human element can be activated through mutual sharing of experiences and wisdom.

In Comilla the idea had been tried in one of the small projects namely Comprehensive Village Development Programme (CVDP). In CVDP 40 LLP units have been organised in four different thanas of the country. These forty village level units started formulating their annual development plans by mobilising their own resources. Upto January 1994, Tk. 1.7 million cash has been accumulated by those villagers and they are using those money in implementing their comprehensive village development plans which include income generation, employment creation, development of agriculture, livestock, fishery, plantation, environment, housing, electrification, education, health, infrastructure, recreation etc (Ahmed 1992; Ahmed and Das 1994). Planning absolutely at the local level by the local people with their own resources can achieve only very limited successes. Commitment of resources and services from the national and regional level is also needed. For that matter the nation does not need additional resources, what is needed is shifting the priority and recognition of the present allocation policy. Before committing resources local institutions should be made strong and capable enough to shoulder those responsibilities. Comilla tried to evolve a planning framework by linking village, Union and Thana under the CVDP; keeping in view the five questions raised in earlier discussion. The experiences gathered through CVDP experiment may be useful for further refinement of the

ideas and practices of LLP and LRM in Bangladesh (Ahmed and Qader 1992: pp.40-42).

Reference

- Ahmed, Tofail, Background, Strategies and Principles of Comprehensive Village Development (in Bangla) BARD, Comilla, 1992.
- Ahmed, Tofail and Abdul Qader, Local Government at the Cross-roads: Some Recommendations for Structural Functional Reorganisation (in Bangla), BARD, Comilla, 1992.
- Ahmed, Tofail and Rakhal Chandra Das, Participatory Village Planning (in Bangla), BARD, Comilla, 1994.

Participatory Embankment Maintenance and Resettlement of Destitutes: Learning from Self-Sustained Embankment Maintenance Program at Bhola*

Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the world's oldest flood plains and alluvial delta formed basically by the silt carried by three mighty rivers – the Ganges (Known as the Padma in Bangladesh), Brahmaputra and Meghna. These three mightily rivers flow towards the Bay of Bengal with all the ferocities and circulate the residue of their flow through a network of almost 150 rivers and tributaries of different length and breadth all over the country. As a result, Bangladesh is regarded as a basin which provides an outlet to the major riverine system of the sub-continent to reach to the sea on the one and also a country with well-knit web of rivers on the other. The major rivers together drain the rainfall of an area about 14 times that of the country itself.

The rivers and tributaries stretch over 2400kms of shore or coast line in two sides of their natural flow. Out of this 2400kms, 1200kms of coast line is identified vulnerable to severe inundation and erosion. Every year about 283 identified spots along the coastline covering 85 number of towns and river ports face the problem of erosion at different proportion and intensity. An estimate shows that

within the period of 34 years from 1954 to 1988, 2000kms of land had already been completely or partially lost into the rivers and deep water of the Bay of Bengal. Another survey of the Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre (BDPC) also reveals that within the period of four years from 1990 to 1994 almost 2.7 million people from 51 districts (out of total 64 districts) had been displaced from their ancestral land and 0.55 million acres of land had also been lost due to inundation and erosion.

Besides recurrent calamity of erosion (causing loss of property and shelter), seasonal flood, cyclone, tornado together with tidal surges with a ferocious regularity bring with them destruction, death and suffering on an unimaginable scale. According to the BDPC estimates, river erosion, tidal surges, cyclone, etc. so far made 3.5 million people homeless and every year on an average 0.25 million more are added to the total figure. These homeless and shelterless floating people take shelter in places like embankments, roadside marginal lands, railway stations, newly raised islands (*chars*), khas land, squatters and create shanties in the major cities.

The problems of erosion, flood, cyclone, tornado and tidal surges had been making the government and the world community concerned since the decade of 1950s. As a result of which the East Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (EPWAPDA) and later on the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) has been established for water resources management and also for building flood protection infrastructures in the country. Construction of cross dams and embankments have been considered as one of the appropriate infrastructures to protect coastal low land from flood water as well as occasional intrusion of saline water and tidal surges. During the last 35 years, various coastal districts have been brought within the protection of about 10,000kms of

* **Source:** The Bangladesh Rural Development Studies Vol. IX No. 1 (1999)

Note:The authors are grateful to Mr Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director ,COAST Trust, currently renamed as COAST Foundation and AHM Bazlur Rahman current Executive Director of BNNRC, Dhaka for supporting the study and arranging a National seminar with the participation of ministry of Water resources and BWDB. Masuda Akther Chowdhury , Joint Director BARD was Co-author of the essay.

embankment. Both construction and maintenance of those embankments are very expensive. Though the construction could have been completed gradually within the range of 35 year, maintenance need arises every year with equal emphasis to all constructions hitherto made.

The article has been divided into two major sections. The first section basically describes the issues relating to embankment maintenance and embankment dwellers as well as various strategies to address the issues under a pilot program. The second section presents the empirical result of the pilot program along with some recommendations for replication elsewhere.

Statement of the Problem

- During the various construction phases huge quantities of arable land had been acquisitioned from private owners and the expensive venture of construction have been commissioned by mobilizing enormous amount of resources from various bilateral and multilateral donors and agencies. At present, maintenance of these huge area of embankment demands budgetary allocation of an unimaginable magnitudes which strain the scarce financial resources of the country. The operational status of most of the water resources infrastructure in Bangladesh is deficient due to the lack of proper and timely maintenance. To bridge the resource gap and also to establish an accountable system for operation and maintenance, currently the government is looking for a suitable arrangement with local accountability and supervision of beneficiaries may be promoted under a sustainable institutional framework. The water sector agencies currently responsible for planning, construction and maintenance of water resources development infrastructures lack

knowledge, experience and skill to involve the local people to plan, manage and supervise those infrastructures.

- The coastal embankment normally occupy an area of average 500ft. in width covering top of the embankment, river side and country side slopes and borrow-pit in both the sides. The slopes are in most cases illegally occupied by the homeless and displaced destitutes on the one hand and the borrow-pit lands by locally influentials on the other. Indiscriminate use and abuse of embankment by those people add to the damage to the embankment thus escalate the cost of maintenance work further. They make the routine maintenance difficult too, as the maintenance work is bound to damage many of the permanent structures erected by them on the embankment.
- A section of the lower level employees of the BWDB, local vested interest group, corrupt officials of general administration and law enforcing agencies have formed a vicious circle or a coalition of corruption which prevent the initiation of welfare oriented steps in the embankment area.
- It has been estimated that on an average 3.5 million destitute families live permanently and seasonally on the embankments throughout the country.
- In Bhola alone 12,000 landless families with over 60,000 population are forced to take shelter on 250km long coastal embankment surround the island.
- They are illegal occupants and a constant source of damage and deterioration to the embankment. They rear cattle, plant trees like banana and papaya, grow bushes around their houses and make holes by

themselves and also create safe abode for mice which make holes on the embankment.

- The rich and influential as well as the BWDB always keep these poor settlers under the threat of eviction. The rich, in the name of so called leases, use the borrow-pit and slopes for different purposes and damage the embankments without any consideration for its maintenance.

An Avenue Explored for Participatory and Low Cost Maintenance of Embankment

The landless and homeless people presently living on the embankment may be organized and engaged effectively for the maintenance work under certain conditions which may also be mutually beneficial. Under the present circumstances the poor settlers are enjoying the benefit of living on the embankment but do not maintain it. Because they feel that land in which they live does not belong to them. Being illegal occupants the threat of eviction from government as well as from the local influential always haunt them. Generally, properties irrespective of movable and immovable are best maintained when they are private and when they belong to the individuals. Having a piece of land for a shelterless embankment dweller is a life time dream. If some sorts of usufructuary property could be given to the landless settler already living on the embankment, it may create a sense of belongingness and thus responsibilities of maintenance may be vested on them.

The embankment and the adjacent land including apron and borrow-pit belong to the government. Those government land may be leased out to the embankment dwellers without cash money but with the condition to maintain the embankment according to the standard and specification set by the BWDB. The above idea was mooted by a multi-

disciplinary expert team commissioned by Asian Development Bank in 1996 (BETS/Euro. Consultant, 1996).

Genesis of a Pilot Project: The Self-Sustainable Embankment Maintenance Programme (SSEMP)

Under the second Bhola Irrigation Project (BHIP-II) the financial assistance aims at addressing the issue of strengthening the Operation and Maintenance (O&M) capabilities of the BWDB for incorporating beneficiary participation as an essential and integral part in the formulation and implementation of the project. Besides the BWDB, Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) is also involved in the BHIP-II from the very inception of the project. The BRDB has been implementing the rural credit programme for the small farmers and landless men and women in the project area. As the landless, the women and the marginal farmers were expected to form the core group of beneficiaries to be mobilized under the pilot project, it was expected that the BWDB would play a major complementary role parallelly with NGOs in organizing and mobilizing such target group (BETS/Euro Consultant July 1996). A pilot project was conceived keeping a lease maintenance agreement between the landless embankment dwellers and the BWDB under which the target group will enjoy the following facilities with the condition of maintaining the embankment.

The Benefit Package and Responsibilities Embodied in the Project are:

- They get a legal right to live and a sizeable plot of GOB land including borrow-pit which they can use for various income generating activities, such as production of paddy, vegetables, fishery, duck, poultry, etc.

- They will be helped by NGOs and the other GOB agencies for the improvement of the quality of their life and eradication of their poverty.
- They will also contribute to give labour to maintain and protect embankment from all sorts of damages and deteriorations which BWDB and NGOs will jointly supervise on the basis of a contract.

Three NGOs have been involved with the implementation of a pilot project called Self-sustained Embankment Maintenance Pilot Programme (SEMP) in Charfassion Thana of Bhola district. The three NGOs involved with the SEMP are Inter Life (Bangladesh), DORP and Action Aid (Bhola) presently Known as COAST Foundation.

Scope of Work by the NGOs

The general scope of work of the NGOs will include but not necessarily be restricted to the following:

- To mobilize, organize and train the embankment dweller families on their respective reaches/stretches of embankment in various activities aimed at O&M of the embankment.
- To train the dweller families in various suitable income generating activities such as crop production, plantation, fish farming, duck rearing etc. which are non-harmful to the embankment.
- To organize of the embankment dweller families into manageable informal/pre-cooperative groups and propagate and motivate the embankment dweller families to come forward to execute lease maintenance agreement. They have to be made familiar and conversant with the contents of the lease maintenance agreement.
- To help the dweller families (in group) to do the required formalities such as applying for the lease and

execution of the lease agreement and also be made familiar, through training, with the nature of embankment maintenance required of them, etc. (the standard and level given by BWDB).

- To extend help and cooperation to the BWDB personnel, as required, in demarcating the leased area of the embankment.
- To help the embankment dweller groups in proper utilization of the embankment and the adjacent acquired and without causing any physical damage for planting trees which otherwise will make whole on the embankment, and advise the dwellers to keep the embankment clear of bushes so that rats and other such animals cannot make holes on the embankment.
- To ensure that the dweller families maintain their stretches of the embankment regularly and in case of default BWDB will issue a warning notice. Then the NGOs will help motivate the families to come up to the satisfaction of BWDB.
- To organize and implement motivation techniques by arranging competition in matters of maintenance of embankment and other socio-economic activities between the groups.
- To train the dwellers in adopting and using improved variety seeds, fertilizer, pesticides etc. They will also train them in other economic activities such as duck, poultry, fish farming, etc. They will provide credit to the families for the purpose.
- To prepare their respective proposals on the basis of the followings:
- The stretch of the embankment to be covered should be long enough to gain relevant experience but short

enough to guarantee proper implementation and management.

- As far as possible, the embankment dwellers should be involved in preparing the proposal.
- To make motivational effort during implementation of the project to shift the dwellers' houses from river side to the country-side of the embankment which will ensure better safety to them in case of cyclone and tidal bore, where it is possible.

Out of the total length of each stretch under each project proposal 50% will be given full project support in terms of investment, training, etc. The remaining will get only propagation, motivation and promotion of lease agreement support. The selected agencies are expected to contribute to improve overall socio-economic condition of the groups under the complete programmes. They will therefore, have a role in general awareness building, provision of safe drinking water, latrines, training and credit for income generating activities. Support in credit, infrastructure etc. will be made dependent on the progress of the groups in embankment maintenance and also use and improvement of embankment plus adjacent land.

The system of judging the progress of improvement of the embankment will be developed by the different groups of the lessees. The system will take the form of competitions on who is the best caretaker of the embankment. Competitions among families of one group will be organized by the group leaders/executive committees. Competition among the groups on similar issue will be organized by a joint committee of the embankment lessees. The selected agencies will help to organize such competitions. The competitions will take shape of festivity where prominent public leaders/government officials may be invited to distribute prizes.

Scope and objectives of the Study

The present study is designed to assess the experiences gained and lessons learnt from the area allocated to the Action Aid in Charfassion Thana of Bhola district. The Action Aid started work within an area of 11km in Char Manika union of Charfassion Thana since September 1996. Later on the embankment area has been reduced to 9.52km due to the legal problem arose between the BWDB and the original owners of embankment adjacent land. The Action Aid has organized all the 480 families living within the area of 9.52km of embankment. The study is confined within the area and beneficiaries covered by the Action Aid only. In short, the study has been designed with the following specific objectives in mind:

- Documentation of various process of the project activities so far undertaken;
- Critical assessment of the impact of the project on the maintenance of embankment as well as the quality of life and living of the people;
- Formulation of recommendations by identifying the strength and weakness of the project; and
- Exploration of potential for replicating the model elsewhere in the country.

The SSEMP Model: An Assessment of Major Activities

Among the three NGOs (DORP, Inter Life and Action Aid), former Action Aid Bhola and present COAST Foundation started implementing the programme in Char Manika Union which covers BWDB embankment kilometer post 119 to 130, a total area of 11km. During the initiation of the programme in July 1996 in all 480 families were living within the 11km embankment areas allotted to Action Aid. All the 480 families were brought within the fold of 19 informal group organizations called by

individual Embankment Samitees by November 1996. Ten organizations with 255 families receive input support and various development interventions and the rest organizations with 225 families did not get project intervention except the lease agreement.

Organization and Management of Groups

Twenty five beneficiary families form a group organization. The family is represented by a single member, male or female. There are eight female groups and eleven male groups each having 25 members with only one exception having 30 members. Each group of 25 member divide themselves into 5 member core groups. One of the five is designated as group leader. On the other hand, a five-member Managing Committee is elected by all the 25 members of the Samitees. A nine-member Central Coordination Committee has also been formed to deal with the matters of mutual interest at the higher levels.

Figure 1: Samitee Organogram

Embankment Maintenance Samitee				
(Member – 25)				
Managing Committee				
Chairperson – 1				
Manager – 1				
Member – 3				
Core Group of 5 members	Core Group of 5 members	Core Group of 5 members	Core Group of 5 members	Core Group of 5 members

Of the Samitees, to look after the management from amongst five, one is elected as chairperson and another one as manager. The other three remain as members of the committee. The chairperson calls and presides over the

meetings and is held responsible for overall supervision of the group. The manager keeps accounts, drafts proceedings of the meetings and preserve the books of records. Both the chairperson and the manager also maintain liaison with project personnel. The group meetings are held weekly in a pre-fixed day and time.

Saving and Loan Activities

The group members regularly saves some money with the group. They already agreed to save a minimum amount of Tk. 5.00 each week. The weekly savings are deposited during the weekly meeting to the manager. Every member holds a passbook which keeps records of all financial transactions of every individual member who carries it. Later on the project personnel collect the money from the manager and deposit them in the Samitee’s account. Until December, 1997 they saved a total amount of Tk. 1,48,645.00 which they never thought of before joining the Samitee.

The credit programme has also been started with 10 Samitees. So far 206 members were brought under micro-credit programme until December 1997. A total amount of Tk. 9,10,600.00 has been distributed and Tk. 4,28,800.00 has already been realized through regular weekly installments. The rate of recovery is 100% according to the realization target set by the project. The beneficiaries invested the credit money in ten different areas of income generating activities best suited to their traditional occupations as well as local condition. The following tables may be seen for general assessment of organizational as well as economic activities of the Embankment Maintenance Samities formed under the sponsorship of Action Aid/COAST Foundation.

Table-1: Organizational Activities Including Savings and Credit Programme of 19 SSEMP Somitees

A. Samitees Covered by Investment

SI. No.	Name of Samitees	Date of Formation	Male/ Female	Total member	Total savings (in Tk.)	Disbursed	Recovered	Loanees
1	Banga Tir	24.10.96	F	25	18,125	103,300	52,870	22
2	Shapla	20.10.96	F	25	11,070	69,400	25,695	19
3	Januna	20.10.96	F	25	10,715	47,000	26,200	13
4	Golap	04.11.96	F	25	15,075	122,400	52,420	25
5	Meghan	04.11.96	F	25	15,940	86,000	43,675	22
6	Jaba	06.11.96	F	25	18,965	15,300	70,515	26
7	Upakul	12.11.96	F	25	15,655	79,000	46,450	17
8	China Mul	13.11.96	M	25	17,605	110,400	53,185	22
9	Suezpur	15.11.96	M	25	12,480	64,800	21,745	20
10	B. Gauranga	24.11.96	M	25	13,015	74,000	36,125	20
	Total			25.0	148,645	9,10,600	4,28,880	206

B. Non-invested Samitees

11	Joie	05.09.96	F	25	-	-	-	-
12	Gazir Bad	05.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
13	Shimul	06.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
14	Akata	06.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
15	Shatata	07.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
16	Paduma	07.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
17	Kank capa	08.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
18	Surja moki	08.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
19	Sagar par	09.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
	Total			22.5	-	-	-	-

Source: SSEMP (COAST) Jan, 1998.

Table-2: Areas of Investment and Credit Programme

SI. No.	Areas of Investment	No. of Loanees	Amount of Loan	Percentage
1	Hilsha Fish Catching	83	2,70,200	23
2	Small Business	100	2,49,000	27
3	Agriculture/Farming	45	1,10,000	12
4	Goat Rearing	14	27,600	03
5	Rickshaw	13	29,400	03
6	Paddy Husking	02	2,000	22
7	Fishery	04	1,000	11
8	Interest Free Loan	85	93,000	10
9	Cow Rearing	70	1,91,400	21
	Total	416	9,10,600	99.33

Note: All the loanees received loan more than once.

Awareness, advocacy and other Social Development

Among all the awareness, advocacy and social development programmes, training activity initially received utmost priority. So far nine separate training courses were arranged which ultimately resulted in initiating a new culture among the beneficiaries. They are now able to think and act differently in normal and crisis time. For example, in normal time they are thinking of engaging themselves in multiple economic activities and in crisis time, whether man made or natural, they stand united to face them which was unprecedented before. They have also become aware of maintaining various social development programmes such as education, health, sanitation, etc. The following table may be seen to observe the training activities of the project.

Table-3: Training Activities

SI. No.	Areas of Training	Duration (in days)	Male	Female
1	Team Building	5	75	175
2	Leadership Development	5	06	14
3	Primary Health Care	5	75	175
4	Homestead Gardening	3	05	20
5	Embankment Maintenance	3	75	175
6	Livestock Development	3	10	30
7	IGA (Poultry, duck, goat, cow, fish culture)	3	75	125
8	Disaster Management	3	75	175
9	Social Forestry	2	75	175

A base line survey was conducted in April, 1996 just before the initiation of the project. The social and economic condition reflected in the survey was very depressing. Within one year remarkable progress have been achieved in various aspects of social development. Table-4 may be seen

to assess the progress in the social sector. Five adult learning centers are being run with the help of the project in which the adult males and females learn how to read and write. The embankment dwellers are eager to start one primary school within their vicinity for their children. Because primary school is too far to send their small kids as they were saying with utter frustration. They were also asking for more tubewells and ring slab latrines during discussions. The male members were asking for increasing the amount of credit to enable them to acquire fishing boats and nets. The female members seconded the view and seemed quite happy with their new role in the family and the society.

Table-4: Comparative Situation in Social Development

SI. No.	Area of Intervention	Situation reflected in the base line survey April, 1996 (In %)*	Situation reflected in the present survey December, 1997 (In %)
1	Population able to sign	24	60
2	Able to read and write	07	20
3	Diarrhoeal incidence	34	20
4	Knowledge of ORS preparation/use	62	100
5	Use of pit or water sealed latrine	09	50
6	Adoption of family planning	57	Accurate figure not available
7	Disaster preparedness	17	100
8	Use of safe water	Not clear	100
9	Paying of illegal taxes to mastans/ influentials	05	None

Lease Agreement and Maintenance of Embankment

Apart from organizational and socio-economic upliftment the core function of the project consists mainly of two activities: (1) Arranging lease agreement between the BWDB and the illegal but landless occupants live on the embankment which will offer them usufructuary right on government land and also land adjacent to embankment; and (2) In return the lessee families and samitees will take up responsibilities of preventive maintenance of embankment earmarked for them.

The lease maintenance agreement for selected stretches of the embankment was handed over in February and March 1997. But it took altogether three to four more months to take possession of land. Problems are still there, as a result of which all the claims of land as per the agreement could not be brought under lessess's possession. Table-5 may be seen for assessing the lease maintenance situation up to August, 1997. The situation was improved at the end of the year and detail land-wise possession may be seen in Table-5.

Table-5: Position of Lease Management and Agricultural Land Under Possession of Embankment Samittee Members (land in acres)

SI No.	Name of Samittees	Male/ Female	Total members	Total land		Per capita land	
				Allocation	Possession	Allocation	Possession
1	Banga Tir	F	25	19.72	19.72	0.74	0.78
2	Shapla	F	25	26.40	26.40	1.05	1.05
3	Januna	F	25	24.10	24.10	0.95	0.95
4	Golap	F	25	27.09	15.00	1.11	0.60
5	Meghan	F	25	27.02	27.02	1.08	1.08
6	Jaba	F	25	16.57	09.00	0.55	0.30
7	Upakul	F	25	20.52	20.52	0.82	0.82
8	China Mul	M	25	34.72	34.72	1.38	1.38
9	Suezpur	M	25	20.09	20.09	0.80	0.80
10	B. Gauranga	M	25	25.94	25.09	1.03	1.03
Total and average per capita land			25.5	242.17 (0.94)	222.52 (0.87)	-	-
11	Joie	F	25	14.76	-	-	-
12	Gazir Bad	M	25	14.18	-	-	-
13	Shimul	M	25	18.45	18.45	0.73	0.73
14	Akata	M	25	13.22	13.22	0.52	0.52
15	Shatata	M	25	14.76	14.76	0.58	0.58
16	Paduma	M	25	13.43	13.43	0.53	0.53
17	Kank capa	M	25	10.46	10.46	0.40	0.40
18	Surja moki	M	25	15.33	05.00	0.62	0.20
19	Sagar par	M	25	15.10	04.00	0.60	0.06
Total and average per capita land			25.5	129.45 (0.57)	78.83 (0.43)	-	-

Note: Land shows in this table exclude slope, pond, top of the embankment and village side land.

Source: COAST Trust, Jan, 1988

Out of 19 samitees six are facing various problems in getting possession of the agricultural land which have been legally given to them under the lease agreement. It was initially thought that each of the family may get average 0.58 acres of land for their use. After the implementation of the lease agreement it has been found that the quantity of land in different settlement area vary from place to place. In spite of variation, after the recovery of the total quantity of land from the possession of previous occupants of influential and rich social background per capita cultivable holdings have become even higher than the original estimate made by the Technical Assistant Team (Table-6 may be seen).

Nature of Problems and Ways Followed to Resolved the Land Problem

Land is such a precious commodity in Bangladesh for which people are even ready to spare their lives. Especially in the newly emerged char areas bloody conflicts of interest between the new lessees and old possession holders or lessees are often found. Problems so far faced were of generally three types. Firstly, in the initial periods of the project the destitute settlers could not be made believe that they would be given lands to live on. Secondly, the rural rich and the influential who were either former lessees or illegally enjoying the harvest of those land in collaboration with the local officials left no stone unturned to retain their old control. Thirdly, (as reported in the field) the corrupt lower level officials of BWDB, some petty officials at the district and the thana land office and the officials of the department of fisheries did not like the idea and indirectly tried to sabotage the programme by applying various delay tactics, misrepresentation of facts, etc. Ultimately all those problems have been overcome through the direct intervention from high officials of the BWDB, Deputy

Commissioner, Thana Nirbahi Officer, Superintendent of police and Officer-in-Charge of the local Thana.

It has been found that 22 local persons created problems of various types and tried to prevent the poor people in taking possession of the leased land. Out of them, 16 are actively related with three main political parties (11 with ruling party AL, 3 with Jatiya Party and 2 with BNP). Among the litigants there was one Union Parishad (UP) Chairmen and two UP members as well. At some stage the encounter took a fierce turn, people from both sides were preparing to confront each other with lethal weapons. One of the key project personnels was kidnapped. Few court cases were also instituted.

The Action Aid personnel handled the crisis very efficiently. They mobilized public opinion, established close contact with relevant government officials and maintained constant touch with local and national press as well as with local political activist. They held meetings and public rallies explaining the objectives of the project and also to show their strength to the opposing parties on the one hand and bringing courage and confidence to the poor settlers on the other. The Deputy Commissioner Bhola, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Thana Nirbahi Officers, Assistant Commissioner (Land) and police officials visited the area and assured the settlers of all possible legal help. The BWDB high officials clearly and quickly finished the lease formalities. The Action Aid officials maintained a constant vigilance over the whole situation and monitored the day to day events. Still two court cases are pending trial which the COAST Foundation (former COAST Trust) is regularly pursuing.

Ownership and Uses of Land

As of August 1997, in all 430 families living on embankment got land in their possession. It was expected

that 50 more would will also get possession soon. After getting possession of land and right to shelter legitimately on the embankment, they are now free from the threat of eviction. The borrow-pit area was brought under paddy cultivation. Many of the families did not have plough, bullocks and necessary fund for other inputs. In some cases it was found that those lands are leased out on share cropping arrangement. One of the families is found cultivating almost 3 acres of land on share cropping arrangement. Some of the members are also planning to start small fishery project. There are 41 ponds covering an area of almost 12 acres. The World Food Programme already approved a project to re-excavate 11 of them for pisciculture. Massive plantation with the help of project has also begun in the slopes. Presently, BWDB leased out whole of the embankment slope to the Department of Forestry. They planted trees few years back on the embankment. The trees are matured by now and the department has been requested to harvest the trees as per the agreement. The local forest office is waiting for the decision from the head quarter for last six months.

The latest position of land distribution among 19 Embankment Maintenance Samittees along with the quantity of paddy produced in the borrow-pit lands may be seen in Table-6.

Table-6: Types of Land in Possession and Quantity of Paddy Produced in Last Amon Season by 19 Samittees

Names of Samittee	Land in Possession (in decimal)					Paddy Produced (in mds.)	Types
	Slope	Pond	Cultivable	Other	Total		
Upakul	410	-	800	841	2052	106	Invested
Meghna	540	-	1620	542	2702	143	“
Banga Tir	394	-	1180	398	1972	185	“
Chinnamul	664	711	1407	710	3492	184	“
Shapla	525	50	1575	490	2640	138	“
Suezpar	401	-	1200	408	2009	128	“
Jamuna	402	-	1446	562	2410	124	“
B. Gauranga	518	25	620	500	1663	67	“
Golap	515	-	525	510	1550	Not Available	“
Joba	331	-	900	350	1581	“	“
Sagarpar	300	-	240	540	1080	“	Non-invested
Surjamukhi	300	-	-	325	625	“	“
Kanakchapa	201	-	100	615	916	“	“
Padma	268	-	650	425	1343	“	“
Satata	293	265	585	324	1467	89	“
Akata	264	-	792	266	1322	83	“
Gazir Bad	283	135	-	344	762	Not Available	“
Joie	300	-	240	325	865	“	“
Shimul	368	90	1192	195	1845	106	“
Total	7276	1276	15172	8571	32295	1353	“
Average per family	15.15	2.65	31.60	17.85	67.28	2.9	“

Source: The COAST Trust (later renamed as COAST Foundation), January, 1998

Embankment Maintenance Activities

The lease maintenance agreement for selected stretches of the embankment was handed over only in March 1997 and it took another four months to take possession of land. Therefore, the maintenance work did not start as planned earlier by the project. In the meantime, all the equipment necessary for earth cutting and labeling have been given to them. They were also given training on the maintenance work. All the embankment dwellers made aware of the effect of the harmful tree plantations such as banana, papaya, etc. on the embankment.

A brisk preparation has been seen in the month of August 1997 for starting the maintenance work. The first drive of maintenance work have been completed in October, 1997. The second schedule for maintenance was made in March, 1998 just before the monsoon.

Though 11 km embankment area was earmarked for 480 members under 20 Embankment Maintenance Society, the area has been reduced to 9 km later on. Out of these 9 km maintenance work has been carried out in 6 km area of embankment till January 1998. Ten of the societies belong to the invested area took part in maintenance and nine other societies of the non-invested area did not comply to their maintenance obligation during the period under review.

Regarding the standard and quality of maintenance, we could not compare the Water Development Board's findings. As to our assessment, the maintenance work so far done were of poor standard. The area covered by invested societies has been found relatively clean but the area under non-invested societies were found unclean. Moreover, bushes, Jungles and many other harmful plants were still being grown in those areas.

We had very fruitful and open discussions with the leaders of various societies belong to the invested area including

the project personnel. All the discussions were held on the embankment sites. In all the discussions embankment society members admitted the fact of their sub-standard maintenance performance without any question. While analyzing the reason they brought the following issues which were responsible for their sub-standard performance:

Many of the societies and members individually did not follow the guidelines provided by the project. For example, all the members of the respective societies did not work together at the same day and time. Individual member finished his/her part of maintenance at his/her own time. As a result, uniformity in leveling and compaction has not been maintained.

It is agreed that in future maintenance work has to be arranged in one fixed day for all the members. No individual member will be allowed to work isolatedly.

In some cases the member who received training on embankment maintenance did not participate in actual maintenance work. Somebody else from his/her family did the actual maintenance work. As non-trained persons participated in the maintenance work, they were not in a position to follow the project's specification and instruction.

In future, non-trained members of the family would not be allowed to participate in the work it should be only under the supervision of the trained person.

Maintenance work has been started after almost six month of the training programme. As a result, many of the participants might have forgotten the messages of the training and ultimately resulted in poor quality of work.

There was a request from the beneficiaries to the project authority to arrange a one-day refresher's course just one week before the next maintenance is implemented.

No inspection has been done from the BWDB during and after the first maintenance work.

The beneficiaries requested the project personnel to bring the BWDB officials during maintenance for spot supervision and guidance in future.

The Views of the Members of the Non-Invested Area

There are nine Embankment Maintenance Societies within a total of 225 members in the area designated as non-invested area. According to the latest land distribution figure as depicted in table-6, nine of the societies of non-invested area (Sagar par, Surjamuki, Kanak Chapa, Padma, Satata, Akata, Gajir Badh, Joie and Shemul) got allocated of 102 acres of different categories of land. They also signed contact to maintain an embankment area of little over 3 km. But ultimately they did not take part in the maintenance work. They also did not remove many of the harmful structures, harmful plants and trees and clear up the bushes from the embankment within their command.

While contacted, some of their leaders said that they would start maintenance work soon but they had lot of many other things to sort out with the project. Two of the issues came up very dominantly in the discussion.

Firstly, many of their members did not get possession of the land given to them officially. Two of the societies namely Surjamuki and Gazir Badh did not get any borrow-pit land. It was decided earlier that Water Development Board will install boundary pillars to demarcate the land allotted to them. No boundary pillar or demarcation pillar

has been given either from the Project or from the Board and as a result they were confused and still the insecurity or threat of losing land were haunt them.

Secondly, there prevails a sense of deprivation and discrimination between the invested and non-invested area. People of the non-invested area, though live in the same area, do not get the social investment support which their neighbors in the invested area are getting. They also said that project staff also pay very minimum attention to their problems.

As per provision of the contract signed between the beneficiaries and the BWDB, the embankment dwellers in the non-invested area are also legally bound to maintain the embankment. But due to the above mentioned reasons they seemed less enthusiastic (though not reluctant) to start proper maintenance work.

The project personnel were of the opinion that if social investment programme had not been started in those areas, it would be very difficult to make them engage in proper maintenance.

The core issue of this experiment is to develop a viable participatory embankment maintenance model. Keeping the core issue and also the strategies and objectives of the SSEMP in vision the following recommendations are made to accelerate the project activities.

- A system of quarterly review meeting should be introduced in which the local officials of the BWDB, project personnel for three NGOs and beneficiary leaders should participate. The review meeting should be hosted at the embankment site by the three NGOs in a rotation. The proceedings of the review meeting should be circulated to all the concerned persons and agencies.

- A yearly maintenance calendar has to be prepared well ahead of the maintenance time.
- The land problem should be solved with utmost priority. The BWDB should complete its obligation by putting boundary pillars and should also take necessary steps to hand over the possession of allotted land.
- The project implementing NGOs should arrange annual maintenance week adding some festivity in which prizes may be distributed among the best performing societies.
- The local administration, press and various other civil society forums should be informed about the outcome of the project.
- The system of dividing the beneficiaries between invested and non-invested areas is not necessary for the experimentation purpose even. The division created anger, frustration and a sense of deprivation among the destitutes. The implementing NGOs themselves should invest their own money in credit programme in the hitherto designated non-investment area.

Conclusion

The project employees had to fight in different fronts during last one year in implementing the land distribution programme. The battles were fought against vested interest groups, local landlords, political mastans, corrupt officials and also in the court premises. As a result, adequate attention could not have been given in monitoring and supervision of many of the very essential components of the project. In the struggle for procuring lands from the clutches of land hungry local elites, government officials

such as Deputy Commissioner, Thana Nirbahi Officer, Police and local Journalist took the embankment dwellers' side which made the initiation of the project possible. In all the future similar projects their role and function should also be formalized.

References:

- *Kafi A Sharif: (eds). Bangladesh land law Regarding River Erosion and Problems People Effected by River Erosion (in Bangla- Bangladesh Nadi Bhamganer Bhumi Ain-O-Nadi Bhangha Manuser Samasha), Dhaka. Nadi Sakashiti Adekar Forum and Bangladesh Development Partnership, April, 1995, 0.1*
- Ibid, p-1
- Ibid, p-3
- Action Aid, less and Action, Vol.1, No.1 November 1996, kp-13, The figure has been contradicted by a BWDB source, according to the BWDB estimates the figure should be 9,296 km. which composed of 3871 km coastal embankments and 4425 other embankments.
- Dirk, R. Frans and Baset, Mohammad Embankments Maintenance by River Erosion Victims, BETS Quarterly, No.23, (Jan-March), 1997-4-5.
- Project Document, Action Aid (Unpublished)
- Ibid
- Action Aid, Building Alternative People Centered Organization for Sustainable Development, December, 1995.
- Action Aid Bhola, office records, 1997. BETS/Euro Consultant, O&M Strengthening of Second Bhola Irrigation Project, Funded by Asian Development Bank and Government of Bangladesh (Unpublished) 1996 and 1997.

Cultural Transformation Towards Sustainable Development: Experiments and Experiences from Bangladesh*

Conceptual Premise of Culture

'Culture' is a term confuses most people when it is loosely applied, again as a serious conceptual issue, it also creates same amount of confusion. There are over 160 more or less definitions of the term 'culture' in the literature. The differences among them however, are minor (Kroeber and Kluckhoh, 1952). Culture we conceive as a serious analytical tool, does not refer to the 'cultivated prestigious pattern of high brows' or upper class group in a society. It also does not focus upon any art, music or manners. Culture conceptually is viewed here "originated at least a half million years ago and refers to the vast store of learned behavior' that has been passed down through the generations and which, increasingly, has differentiated the human way of life from that of other animal species (Leslie, Larson and Gorman, 1973:167). The general arena of culture is so vast and all-embracing that it is difficult to convey its full complexity in any synoptic definition. On the other hand, without a workable definition, the concept is likely to remain vague and imprecise. A formal definition may help us to understand the context and content we are trying to focus in establishing the link between culture and development. For the purpose of our

* The Journal of Rural Development Vol. 35, No. 1, January-2008, pp. 23-33 BARD, Cumilla, Bangladesh

The paper was originally prepared for a Seminar arranged by Soul Public Administration Association in Incheon National University in 2007. The author gratefully acknowledges the co-operation of Dr-Sohel Iqbal and Professor Jong Youl Lee of the Department of Public Administration, Incheon National University.

discussion we will define "Culture as a total learned behavior-including values, norms and language and the resulting material artifacts that compose the way of life of the members of society". It is an accumulated total life experience in a constant process of interaction. Culture also is a worldview acquired by persons as a member of his/her own society.

Relationship between Culture and Development

The relationship between the two is very intimate and close such as, an envelope and a letter inside the envelope. Culture combines flowing stream and blowing wind, and development is a boat that sails smoothly rowed by visionary and efficient sailors. Society is the sustainer that holds both culture and development.

Development in most cases is seen as interventions with certain planned or desired changes in view. Every action has its 'equal and opposite reaction'. Be it positive or negative that is bound to be created. Any single act or intervention creates reactions among the groups, individuals and even in inanimate objects around it. The degree and propensity varies but reaction is universal. Throwing a stone in the calm water of a pond or a tank creates a sound first and waves later that can be heard and seen openly. There are other reactions too; living animals inside water feel jerks, wave action hits the banks, creates erosion and the pond bed had to host a foreign body. If the thrower is a visionary s/he knows, why, when, how and what type of stone to be thrown. S/he also perceives earlier what positive and negative reactions s/he has to encounter and where s/he ultimately wants to reach by throwing the stone. All these may be termed as the cultural discourses in development interventions, and understanding these discourses creates an enabling environment for sustainable development.

Culture from Developmentalist Point of View

Developmentalists or catalysts often encounter cultural shocks. They go with noble ideas to do some useful works but the host society often not only rejects but reciprocate with hostile reactions. There is nothing 'good' or 'bad' There are certain 'folkways' and 'mores' any culture. Inherent and inherent in each society. Conformity to those folkways and a mores are rewarded and non-conformity is punished. For example, in some tribal societies of Bangladesh if you visit them, they will offer you their traditional smoking hubble bubble to smoke. If you accept and smoke with them you are a friend instantly. If you refuse you create alienation. Suppose you are a confirmed non-smoker. What you have to do is to find out alternative ways. There are other means too, to get to be friendly.

Folkways and mores are different in traditional societies or the societies in transition between traditional and modern. But there are some universal values respected everywhere. Cultivation of core human values and universalization of those can bring the people of different societies closer and remove linguistic, symbolic and other barriers of folkways and mores.

Assimilation, Accommodation and Transformation

Since culture can differ within and between the societies, it may bring conflict of ideas and practices. The process of constant exchange and interaction between and amongst various practices gradually create an environment that helps to assimilate and accommodate. For example Indians, Chinese and Americans are invited to a dinner table. Each culture has its own way of eating, Indians use direct hand and fingers, Chinese with chopsticks and Americans with fork, spoon and knife. It may be a cultural shock for three of them. Let them continue each others own way for sometime, at the end there will be some sorts of

assimilation and accommodation. American may try with bare finger; Indian may try chopstick and vice-versa. If they cannot adapt, at least accommodate.

No culture is good or bad. Every cultural practice and expression has got its own context. But some of the cultural practices ingrained in their folkways and mores sometimes create barriers in accepting new and modern ideas and practices. For old-day Indians, there were religious sanctions against sea voyages. As a result, movements were restricted. There were also the rigid caste systems. Gradually with the change of time and because of closer interactions with other cultures both the notions were changed tremendously. In traditional Muslim societies. seclusion of women from open social activities and imposition of veil perpetuated a social discrimination against women. Change in livelihood and also as impact of advanced technology, the situation within the Muslim society is also changing rapidly. Though it takes time and relentless effort but transformation is bound to occur. The developmentalist and catalyst need to study carefully the strengths and weaknesses of the host culture to adjust and accommodate their interventions. Human nature is very much in favor of 'change for betterment'. This is the known path through which civilization advanced from cave age to the modern ages. There is no limit to the civilization. Culture will continue to change, assimilate, accommodate and transform to a better and a new one. The progressive and positive cultural practices will become universal and be adopted and absorbed across the globe.

Cases of Cultural Transformation and Sustainable Development from Bangladesh

Bangladesh as a society is a part of greater Indian culture. For long, due to natural calamities and foreign subjugation, society, economy and culture suffered a stranded and retarded growth. The general characterizations of the

society before the liberation (pre-1971 situation) were as follows:

- Low income and endemic poverty and famine
- Over populous with very high birth rate
- Male dominated and extremely patriarchal
- Hard working people but with poor technology base of society
- People are witty and politically conscious but instability becomes order of the day.

Two identical development interventions are selected here for discussion, which were made to address individual household's economic and social miseries. One miserably failed in spite of its three-decades effort, and the other succeeded within the next three decades of its initiation. One of the secrets of the failures and successes is their level of understanding of the culture of the society at particular time and space.

The two interventions did not come at the same time with the same objectives. The intervention packages were also not the same. But ultimate objective was the upliftment of downtrodden poverty stricken-people and their living standard.

The Programme that Failed

The programme that failed was 'population and birth control' by the then East Pakistan Government initiated in the decade of 1960s. A separate ministry and more than one directorate were created to launch a population control programme but they could not bring population growth rate below 3% after three decades' continuous effort reasons were mostly cultural and some of them are as follows:

- The intervention was designed in such a way that it came into direct conflict with the sentiment and religious ethos of a pre-dominant Muslim culture.

- The target group was mostly women. As women led a secluded social life, the extension people hardly could reach them with their extension messages.
- The low literacy and poor livelihood were their basic problems. In a poor and despondent society. children are thought as insurance and old age pension for the parents.
- Having more children was the expected norm of the society as child mortality rate was very high on the one hand. On the other hand, large family was symbol of power and status in the society.
- The programme was single minded and uni-dimensional. It did not directly touch people's day-to-day livelihood problems rather portrayed a distant despair and hope in a very vague way

As a result, in spite of spending huge resources and engaging thousands of manpower it failed miserably. The successes came in the decade of eighties with the change of approaches and also as a consequence of other approaches and also developmental efforts, such as, increase in the rate of literacy, women's employment and mobility, increase of basic health facility, expansion of democracy at family, society and state levels. The population and birth control as started in the 1960s is a dead programme now and outlived in its failures. The activity itself is integrated as vital component of health and other livelihood improvement programme. The Ministry and the directorate also function with a changed name as Family Welfare.

Grameen Bank: A Success Case in Cultural Transformation and Sustainable Development

Professor Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank (GB), a globally acclaimed success case, were awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. The effort is seen as a micro-credit

support to the poor and successes are highlighted as an effort of bringing peace through poverty alleviation.

To me the whole of the intervention design GB followed, valued culture very highly and thus it may be called an approach of cultural transformation for sustainable economic development of the poor.

The GB was addressing poverty issue by understanding the prevailing poor cultural adaptability at the community level and also inhibiting a cultural practices of existing 'class banking' of the country. As a result, efforts have been designed to achieve drastic change and transformation of the cultural mores of both the poor village community and the existing banking system in a slow but determined way. The GB perhaps aimed at two milestone achievements through the socio-cultural transformation.

- 1) Breaking the 'folkways and mores' of cultural rigidity, backwardness, seclusion from within the community.
- 2) Creation of enlightened values, norms and practices for a popular and mass banking for the poor within the GB organization.

This ultimately has become a challenge to the traditional bankers.

The concept 'culture of poverty' by Oscar Lewis (1972) describes how cultural poverty perpetuates material poverty and creates a state of hopelessness. This particular brand of culture is marked by a pattern of non-integration, non-participation and apathy. Inferiority feeling, dependency, fatalism and sense of hopelessness create a great wall in the process of formation of individual's personality among the people. Even the individual identity and a separate face of an individual are also lost in the ocean of poverty.

Professor Yunus considered this particular issue while designing a programme for economic and social upliftment

of the poor. There is cultural logic in creating solidarity group selecting women as prime beneficiaries, imposing certain discipline through 16 promises in the mobilization package of the GB. He combined economic intervention with heavy social action package. Those together transformed helpless and faceless rural women to a distinct personality. In twenty years, women acquired a distinct personality, a decent living and a worldview of their own. In a predominantly Muslim society where women live behind the curtain, the GB lifted that curtain and brought them to the mainstream of the social and community life. The traditional 'class bankers' are under pressure to satisfy their banking interest to come down from their previous position due to the grand success achieved through the GB approach. Professor Yunus (1998: 148) in his. An autobiography 'Bankers to the Poor' says, *"frequent comments I hear, 'But no doubt it requires the special cultural background that you have in Bangladesh to succeed. And I have to laugh: because in order to succeed in Bangladesh, Grameen has had to struggle mightily to create a counter-culture. That is why so many observers say we are engineering a social revolution."* Regarding the inculcation of a new culture, value and vision of the organization of GB, Holcombe's (1995:57-77) analysis can be seen as an eye opener. She looked at the issues in minor details and drew conclusion that GB's "banking operations were born and developed through a learning process approach". The learning process starts with the techniques to assure that vision and values of the founder and the leadership are widely understood and shared by staff at all levels, and by the client members.

Now-a-days, the 6.6 million Bangladeshi women organized under Grameen Bank are a big social force to bring changes in education, health, population control and family planning, improved sanitation, housing and overall

liberation and emancipation of women through promotion of democracy, participation and integration at all levels of human interactions such as family, community, state and society.

Concluding Remarks

Culture is intrinsically important in people's lives. It also impacts how the different individual and human races shapes, molds and affects people's behaviour society and also impacts how the different individuals and human races in different societies integrate around each other. Sen (1990) very forcefully reiterated the issue of the value of culture while emphasizing sustainability of development. He suggests from one end that culture is a process of learning and emulation and imitation, at the same time; on another count, he also suggests that the process of development can be destructive of culture. As a result of the critical development thinking of the 1990s, a new development paradigm has been put forward by UNESCO and Council of Europe by producing two very valuable documents respectively known as "*Our Creative Diversity and In From the Margins*" (Losito, 2008). These two documents can act as guidelines while formulating cultural policies for the national governments as well as for the development thinkers and practitioners to derive inputs in formulating development strategies by considering cultural aspects of development.

References

Holcombe, Susan (2004). *Managing to Empower: The Grameen Bank Experience of Poverty Alleviation*, University Press Ltd. (Dhaka) and Zed Books, London.

Kroeber, A. L. and Kluckhoh, Clyde (1957). *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definition*" Paper

of the Peabody Museum of America Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

Leslie, G. R, Larson, R. F. and Gorman, B. L. (1973). *Introductory Sociology*, Oxford University Press. London.

Losito, Cristina (2008). *Culture and Development: A New Paradigm*, <http://www.creative.communities.org.uk>.

Oscar, Lewis (1972). *The Culture of Poverty*, In George Ritzer (Ed), *Issues, Debates and Controversies*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, pp. 470-479.

Sen, Amartya (1999). *Cultural and Sustainable Development: An Economic Perspective*, Presidential Fellow Lecture, Tokyo, Japan (google search: see-culture and sustainable development)

Spencer, M. (1979). *Foundations of Modern Sociology* Prince-Hall Inc, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Yunus, Muhammad and Alan, Jolis (1994). *Banker to the Poor: The Autobiography of Muhammad Yunus. Founder of Grameen Bank*, The University Press Ltd., Dhaka.

Literacy Movement in Bangladesh and Role of Community Institutions: Exploring Comilla Experiences*

Introduction

Bangladesh inherited a traditional education system which kept the majority of people outside the school system and denied proper educational opportunities to them. In order to improve the situation the Government of Bangladesh appointed a number of Education Commission/Committees which recommended that the education system should develop among the people an appreciation of national aspirations and it should equip the people with useful knowledge and skill for living a better life materially, socially and spiritually. The Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission which submitted its recommendations in 1974 put heavy emphasis on universal primary education. In response to this, the Second Five Year Plan (1980-85) of Bangladesh for the first time made a commitment for universal primary education and mass literacy in the country (GOB, 1980). The subsequent five year plans (GOB, 1985, GOB, 1990) also continued the emphasis with increased allocation of resources for the purpose. In concert with the declaration of the United Nations and its agencies, the Government of Bangladesh has committed itself to achieving universal primary education and eradication of illiteracy by year 2000 (WCEFA, 1990). Against the goals set in various plans, the country could achieve 81 per cent enrollment of 6-10 year children by 1995 (BBS-UNICEF, 1995^a).

* The Journal of Rural Development Vol. 26, No. 2, July 1996, pp 33-52 BARD, Cumilla, Bangladesh.

The article was jointly produced with Showkat Ara Begum and Masuda A. Chowdury. We all three were faculty members of BARD, Cumilla.

In order to improve the present literacy rate from 35 to 62. per cent by the year 2000, Government of Bangladesh, side by side with the massive primary school-based literacy programme is also putting lot of emphasis on non-formal method of literacy programme. Under the aegis of the newly established Directorate of Non-formal Education, 23 million children of the country, aged between 8 and 15 years, are to be brought under special functional education and literacy programme by the year 2000 (GOB, 1995). The present article attempts to examine the existing organisational infrastructure and overall capacity of the Government of Bangladesh to achieve the defined goal regarding literacy. Simultaneously, it attempts to analyse the inadequacy of the existing system and suggest an alternative organisational avenue to cope with the present inadequacy. The study is divided into three separate sections. The first section deals with the objectives, methodology, and the analysis of the problems. The second section deals with the prospect of utilising *maktab* for strengthening the literacy programme. The last part brings forward the issue of cooperative organisation which may also be used as a vehicle to launch rural literacy programme along with other efforts. A case study is also being presented in support of the usefulness of cooperative with a concrete example of a pilot experimentation.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are

1. to review the existing education and literacy situation in the country with an eye on the achievement of the universal primary education by the year 2000 as committed by the government;
2. to suggest an alternative organisational avenue to cope with the inadequacies of the current programme activities: and

3. to project the potentiality of *maktabs* and cooperative organisations for supplementing and strengthening the literacy programme in the country.

Methodology

The article is primarily an outcome of an exploratory study based on the secondary data. The major source of data on religious institutions is the Maktab-based Feeder School Programme initiated by the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) in the 1960s. The available data have been elaborated and analysed in a contemporary context. The source of data on the potentials of village-based cooperative society is the reports on the performance of eight cooperative societies under the aegis of the Comprehensive Village Development Programme (CVDP) of BARD in Sonargaon thana of Narayanganj district. The accumulated data on cooperatives have been presented in a case study form.

PART-I

Review of the Existing Primary and Basic Education System and Rationale for an Alternative Approach

The Review

At present, there are 50,314 primary schools in the country of which 37,733 are government primary schools where no fees are charged and the teachers are government employees. The rest 12,581 are non-government primary schools (GOB, 1990C). The country covers an area of 144 thousand sq. kilometres, as a result of which spatial distribution of primary schools in Bangladesh works out at one school per 2.85 sq. kilometres (Quadir, 1986). Since the country has about 85,000 villages and there is an uneven spatial distribution of schools among them, many villages do not have any primary schools yet and one such school

has to cover more than one village. For this reason, distance is a big constraint for children in attending schools. According to the government's standard specification, one primary school can accommodate around 300 children and all the existing schools can only accommodate 8.5 million out of the total 16 million primary school-age children of the country. By the year 2000, total number of children of the age between 6 and 10 years will exceed 30 million (Gustavasson, 1990). To achieve universal primary education for 20 million children, the schools, teachers and other facilities have to be improved five times which is very difficult for the Government of Bangladesh to afford with its present resource base.

Though the apparent shortage of classrooms is highlighted in various studies, existing floor space remains underutilised in many places. Among many reasons, poverty and cultural backwardness, on the one hand, and lack of community participation and contradiction between religious and secular education on the other, largely keep traditional village communities out of the educational facilities [Khan, 1983]. As a result of this an objective and comprehensive outlook of the policy planners is needed to minimise the social contradictions as well as the demand for unmanageable resources. If greater community participation and community be added to the government efforts, only contribution can be added to the GOB efforts only then the situation may improve. It is a matter of hope that gradually the number of elementary educational institutes, together with those run by the government directly and indirectly, has increased to 78,648 by 1992. These include the institutes run by the non-government organisations (NGO) as well (UNICEF, 1993). Among the NGOs, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee

(BRAC) runs the highest number of mentary education centres. By following the example of BRAC, etc. many other national, regional and local NGOs either with the help of UNICEF or with donor assistance are running few thousand of non-formal education centres for promoting literacy programme

The Rationale for an Alternative Approach

Under the present approach of universal primary education, government concentrates on the increase of physical facilities of schools, improvement of the service condition of teachers and supply of more teaching aids. In this service delivery mechanism, people's participation is benignly ignored. Rather in the name of participation, some rituals in the name of committees or associations at various levels are being observed.

Community perception of education, existing community education system and indigenous institutions had never got due consideration from the planners in their design of national education policy. Nationalisation of schools and job of the teachers together and a huge amount of foreign aid flow have created a vested interest group within the education system. As a result, the government education programme remained as an isolated programme instead of transforming it to a movement (Quddus and Chowdhury, 1995). Now-a-days, creasing importance is attached to the professional for promoting literacy NGOs Sometimes such NGO activities are taken synonymous with community movement. This is also a misplacement of the real issue.

In View of the situation analyzed and problem focused the present study attempts to explore new avenues in order to further strengthen the organisational capacity of the literacy programme by transforming the present projects and programmes into a movement. In order to explore the avenue the study primarily intends to bring two grass-roots

level community institutions/organisations into the focus of literacy problem for consideration of the concerned policy planners, so that they can explore the potentials of those two institutions.

These two institutions/organisations are

- a) religious institutions like mosque-based maktab.
- b) village level co-operatives organised for socio-economic development of the villagers.

The following two sections describe the experiences and potentials of these two types of institutions/organisations can be used for transforming the elementary education/literacy programme into a movement.

PART-II

Can Maktab and Other Religious Institutions be Considered as a New Avenue?

Maktab is a traditional mosque-based religious educational institution managed entirely by the muslim community where Arabic and Islamic education of elementary levels are imparted. Similar educational institutions are run by Hindu, Christian and Buddhist communities in their respective temples and worship places.

Bangladesh is predominantly a muslim country. Almost 90 per cent of the population are Muslim. Mosques play a vital role in the social life of the Muslim community. It is regarded simultaneously as a place of worship, social gathering and seat of learning. There are villages without a primary school but hardly without a mosque. Similarly villages inhabited by Hindu, Christian and Buddhist communities do not exist without a place of worship. According to a survey conducted in 1984, there were 1,31,641 mosques in Bangladesh (GOB. 1985) whereas

total number of villages in Bangladesh do not exceed the number of 85,000. Out of these 1,31,641 there were 58, 124 mosques which had attached maktab with a total of 74,716 teachers and 8,98,202 students. The non-government sources believe that number of mosques and maktab exceed lakhs in the country.

The peculiarity in the children's education in Bangladesh which severely disturbs all sensible planners is that the maktab restricts itself to imparting only religious education without any concern for general education like Bengali and Arithmetic. The other extreme is the state-run primary schools which teach everything except religion in proper way and with proper emphasis. The main focus of this part of the article is to draw the attention of the government and other agencies working in the field to achieve universal primary education and mass literacy by harnessing the potentiality of maktab as a community institution may lead to integrate community involvement in the literacy programme.

Maktab-based Elementary School Programme: An Experiment in Comilla by BARD

Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Comilla from its very inception experimented various approaches for evolving a suitable rural education model for the country. The Academy found that the existing public sector educational institutions did not serve the purpose of educating the people on a massive scale. Most of the children in the village primary schools dropped out at an earlier stage of primary education and thus remained illiterate throughout their lives. For removing illiteracy among the children and adults, the Academy started Feeder School Programme in 1963 involving the *Imams* (religious leader) of village mosques as teachers with the purpose of teaching both children in the morning shift and adults in the

night shift. It was observed that the programme was made in such a way that the children would be taught general subjects like Bengali and Arithmetic of Class-I standard of primary schools in the morning shift in addition to religious education. The adults would also learn general subjects like Bengali, simple arithmetic, accounts keeping, etc., in the night shift. At the initial stage the community leaders in the rural areas became interested in this new experiment. The programme was also found very successful in involving the community people in the management of the mosque-based Feeder Schools, and rates of enrollment of children, particularly girls, were very high. Attendance of the adult illiterates in the night shift was also satisfactory. Government support to the programme in the form of some allowances to the teachers and necessary materials (e.g. hurricane, books, black board, etc.) was very meagre (Khatun, 1966). In spite of a lot of enthusiasm created by the programme, it had to be stopped because of sudden withdrawal of the government support from the programme. The detailed findings of the experimental programme were documented and are available with BARD (Quddus and Begum, 1985). This old programme deserves rethinking under new social perspective with a new expectation. What is needed now is to generate some fresh thinking in the light of the past experiences and the present requirement.

*Maktab*s in rural Bangladesh are still regarded as an institution of great necessity. In fact, our knowledge in relation to management, administration, teaching capabilities of the Maktab is very limited. A well-designed study can produce useful information which may help the policy-makers to formulate an effective plan for the improvement of Maktab education and provide an effective framework for integrating Maktab, primary schools and non-formal learning centres for mutually sharing each

other's syllabi or to start Feeder Schools throughout the country. Islamic Foundation under the Ministry of Religious Affairs initiated several programmes centering some mosques in the country. Imam Training Programme, mosque-based literacy programme and revitalization of maktabs are some of those programmes. It seems that as the Foundation is sponsored by a different ministry other than the Ministry of Education, their educational and literacy programmes did not receive due attention from the Ministry of Education.

To achieve the desired objectives of literacy programme by the year 2000, the use of religious institutions like mosques and Maktabs may save large volume of extra resources from government. On the other hand, community involvement may also be increased through the programme. For this purpose inter-ministerial and inter-agency cooperation is needed, specially Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs may formulate some joint efforts with the relevant departments and agencies under the Ministries such as directorate of Primary and Mass Education Integrated Non formal Education Programme (INFEP) and Islamic Foundation.

PART-III

Promotion of Literacy Through Village Cooperatives Changing Role of Cooperatives

Cooperative as a distinct movement, institution and enterprise passed through many changes over last 90 years. As a movement and enterprise it created a glorious tradition in the 19th century in Europe by supporting small buyers, producers and manufacturers. The British rule introduced cooperatives in India in 1904 basically to extend credit support to the "small men" through pooling together the resources of the 'like minded people'(Faruk, 1993). Gradually non-credit societies also started emerging and

cooperative movement subsequently attracted small people from all walks of life and professions to unitedly safeguard their economic interests. After the second World War and also during and after the massive decolonisation era of the 1950s and 1960s, cooperative movement in the newly independent countries assumed a new role. Cooperative institution had been adopted as modernising agent for bringing qualitative changes in the life and livings of the traditional rural peasants in many of the newly formed nation states. The famous "Comilla Cooperatives" in erstwhile East Pakistan(present Bangladesh), "Kibutz" in Israel, "Saemaul Undong" in South Korea and "Ujjama Villages" In Tanzania are some of the glorious examples of cooperative spirit with local ideological and socio cultural adaptations.

In the mid- seventies and the early eighties special emphasis was laid on the gender-based cooperatives, because the cooperative movement in the past was dominated by male Population of the society. During the 1980s and 1990s cooperatives started assuming new roles by promoting social development side by side with economic activities.

Cooperatives as organised institutions started showing keen interest in social development programmes such as health, literacy, afforestation, housing, electrification, disaster relief family welfare, population control, maintenance of social peace and order, etc. with a lot of community involvement. In Bangladesh, among many other social problems, illiteracy is considered as one of the crucial issues. The government, NGOs and various donors are devising many methods and programmes to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000. Given the proper scope and opportunity, cooperatives are found in a better position than many other institutional efforts to play an effective role in promoting literacy programmes with community

participation. Cooperative as a movement and institution has the rich and vast experiences of almost ninety years in its store. Though there are failures, shortcomings and problems in such kind of institutions, still the institutional potential is greater than many other efforts specially of those which derive their stimuli from outside the community. Cooperatives though weak and inadequate in terms of resources, still deserved to be considered purely as a community initiative. In spite of the poor resource support, without clear government commitment and donor assistance, cooperatives are managing their programmes almost at their own. There are 1,33,054 primary cooperative societies with 72,53,829 membership in the country. The following table shows administrative division and category wise number of cooperatives and total membership of the cooperative societies (GOB, 1994):

Table -1: Number of Primary Cooperative Societies and Total Membership in Bangladesh up to September 1994

Types of management	Categories of societies	No. of Cooperative Societies				Total Number Total of Cooperative Societies	Total Membership
		Dhaka Division	Chitta gong & Sylhet Divisions	Rajshahi Division	Khulna and Barisal Divisions		
Under the management of Cooperative Directorate	LMCS	17	8	15	16	56	4,073,944
	UMCS	1010	887	951	861	3709	
	FCS	812	1279	539	699	3329	
	FCS	6478	155	3952	4596	18181	
	WCS	801	326	374	332	1833	
	SCGCS	58	-	439	118	609	
	MPCS	112	110	93	113	206	
	WCS	232	97	153	113	608	
	ARDCS	150	-	23	24	294	
Under BRDB Management	Others	3660	2927	1721	2203	10514	31,79,885
	KSS	17474	11,181	17057	11602	57314	
	WCS	3084	1669	1511	1065	7629	
	BSS	4534	2860	4836	3396	15626	
	MBSS	2567	810	4535	5010	12922	
	Others	35	280	9	-	227	
Total		41,027	25491	36200	30336	133054	72,53,326

Notes: LMCS = Land mortgage coop. society, UMCS = Union multipurpose coop. society, FCS= Fishermen's coop. society, FCS = Farmer's cop. society, WCS = Weaver's coop society, SCGCS = Sugarcane growers coop. society, MPCS = Milk producers coop. society, WCS = Women's coop. society, ARDCS = Auto Rickshaw drivers coop. society, KSS = Krishak Samabaya Samity, WCS = Women's coop. society. BSS = Bittahin samabaya samity, MBSS = Mohila bittahin samabaya samity.

In spite of the impressive number of institutions and large membership, cooperative as a movement lost much of its dynamism due to the lack of proper education and excessive bureaucratic control. The overall socio-political and bureaucratic culture and organisational ecology do not favour cooperative movement to flourish. To harness the real potentiality and also revitalise the movement some reforms and reorganisations within the cooperative sector are needed. Above all cooperative should be free from excessive regulatory control and the clutches of dishonest leadership to make it a real peoples institution and movement.

An Experimental Effort in Comilla

In view of the problems and failures of traditional cooperatives as well as growing stagnation within the BRDB cooperatives, BARD, Comilla initiated a new experiment to keep the cooperative movement relevant and conducive to the need of the contemporary rural society. The new initiative is known as Comprehensive Village Development Programme (CVDP) (Ahmed, 1993) in which a broad-based village cooperative has been adopted as institutional mechanism to formulate and implement a comprehensive village development plan. The cooperatives organised under the programme were known as Comprehensive Village Development Cooperative Societies (CVDCSs). These societies are comprehensive in nature from two different aspects. Firstly, instead of a particular professional group the societies opened their membership to all adult people of a village irrespective of gender, age, profession and economic position. Secondly, CVDCSs did not confine their activities to economic activities only, the activities extended to almost all the developmental aspects of village life. The faculty of BARD conceived and started experimenting this programme from

the mid-seventies under the name, "Total Village Development"(TVD). It had remained only a small effort by the Academy itself till 1988. In 1989, the project was included in the Annual Development Plan (ADP) of the government and the first phase of the project was completed in June 1991. The second phase was started under the Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95) and the programme was extended to 80 villages of the 8 different thanas of Bangladesh.

BARD has been implementing the programme in 40 villages four thanas under Chittagong and Dhaka Divisions and experimenting the same in four other thanas of Khulna and Rural Development Academy (RDA), Bogra has been Rajshahi Divisions. In the forty village-based CVDCSs organised by BARD, Comilla, a remarkable progress has been registered in membership coverage, capital formation and income generating activities (Ahmed and Das, 1994). The following table may be seen to assess the situation:

Table - 2: Membership Coverage and Capital Formation under 40 CVDCSs of BARD up to June 1995

Name of sub-project and Thana	Total No. of Societies	Total No. of families in the project villages	Families accepted membership in CVDCSs	Total Number of Members				Share & Savings (in Tk.)
				Adult Male	Adult Female	Minor	Total	
Sadar thana comilla	18	3993 (100)	2726 (88)	2523	1460	2624	6607	95,00,177
Sadar thana Sylhet	10	1552 (100)	910 (59)	929	251	525	1705	7,90,558
Buriching thana comilla	5	1372 (100)	740 (54)	555	450	495	1500	9,82,355
Sonargoan thana narayangonj	7	1669 (100)	1218 (73)	829	835	411	2075	8,58,016
Total	40	8586	5594	4836	2994	4055	11887	1,21,31,106

Source: Records of the Comprehensive Village Development Programme (CVDP), BARD, Comilla, 1995

Contribution of CVDCSs in Rural Literacy Programme

Besides the economic functions and income generating activities all the 40 CVDCSs of BARD undertook various social development programmes under their respective Annuala Village Development Plans (AVDP). The social sector AVDP. includes health, nutrition, family planning, maintenance of village peace, education, general welfare, child development. Promotion of sports and culture, youth welfare, etc. In formulating the plan, they took help from a Village Resource Book (Gram Tathya Boye) prepared by the villagers and annual review of progress of the last plan (Obaidullah, 1993; Ahmed and Das, 1994).

Under those AVDPs all the forty CVDCSs achieved success of various proportions in their literacy programme. All the societies before finalising their AVDP assess the actual situation through quick survey and also determine the number of primary school- age (6-10 years) children of the village which help them to give a special drive to send them to schools. The village societies also assess the physical capacity of the existing schools, their special needs and also try to help the schools in creating additional floor space, providing furniture and other materials. The CVDCSs participate in the School Managing Committees (SMCs) and other Union and Ward level education committees to facilitate the process. They also lobby for resources at the thana offices for the schools of their respective localities. Besides the general mobilisation, some of the CVDCs established schools of various types in their localities at their own expenses which were later included within the governmental support system. Some of the CVDCSs established schools at their own expenses to facilitate education in their own localities. Table - 3 below may be seen to have an overview

Table - 3: Type of Schools Established by CVDCSs

Name of CVDCS and location	Types and No. of Schools			Total
	Nursery	Primary	High	
Deedar, Comilla	1	1	1	3
Joypur (North & South), Comilla	-	1	-	1
Korpai, Comilla	-	1	-	1
Barudi, Sonargaon	1	-	-	1

Source: Records of CVDP, BARD, Comilla

Besides these six schools, all the forty societies manage more than forty maktabas and also extend material helps to the equal number of primary schools in their localities from time to time.

Case Study on Eight CVDCSs of Sonargaon

Under the CVDP, eight CVDCSs were organised in Sonargaon thana of Narayangonj district of Bangladesh in 1992. The societies under the active help and cooperation from various thana level government officials made remarkable progress in raising investable capital, cultivating fish, rearing livestock and poultry as well as developing some other homebased economic activities. Side by side with economic activities, they also devoted their sincere efforts to promoting literacy among the illiterate adults and children. Two years concerted efforts on education by the CVDCSs raised the rate of literacy from 20 to 80 percent in some villages. Through their continuous drive, primary school enrollment in those eight villages exceeded 90 per cent of the school-age children. The following table may be seen to have an overview of the literacy programme of CVDCSs in Sonargaon thana:

Table - 4 : Participation of Eight Comprehensive Village Development Cooperative Societies 'CVDCSs) of Sonargaon Thana in Literacy Programme in 1995

Name of the No. of Cooperative	No of Literacy Centres and learners				Society's involvement in the school managing committee	Maktaos and madrashas managed by the societies	Rate of literacy before 1992 (%)	Rate of literacy after 1994 (%)
	Adolescents (Male)	Adults (Male)	Adolescents (Female)	Adults (Female)				
Satbhaya Para	-	C-4 L-160	C-2 L-80	C-7 L-280	1	Maktab-1 Madrasha-1	20	90
Barudi	-	C-2 L-80	-	C-2 L-80	1	Maktab-1	20	75
Monohordi	-	C-1 L-40	-	C-2 L-80	1	Madrasha-1 Maktab-3	20	80
Haria Baddya Para	C-1 L-40	C-3 L-40	C-1 L-120	C-2 L-80	1	Maktab-3	20	80
Haria Chowdhury Para	C-1 L-40	C-2 L-80	-	C-2 L-80	1	Maktab-2	20	80
Sharpur	C-1 L-40	-	C-2 L-80	C-3 L-120	1	Maktab-1	25	80
Datta para	C-1 L-40	-	C-1 L-40	C-1 L-40	1	Maktab-1	30	40
Alabdee	-	C-1 L-40	-	C-2 L-80	1	Maktab-1	15	50
Total	C-4 L-160	C-13 L-520	C-6 L-240	C-21 L-840	8	Maktab-13 Madrasha-2		

Note: C = Centre, L = Learners

Source: Records of CVDP, BARD, Comilla, 1995

Conclusion and Recommendations

The government has given top priority to primarily education and mass literacy. So, different activities and programmes for promoting literacy are being implemented through government agencies and NGOs. Newly created Non formal Education Directorate has been implementing literacy programme for adolescent boys and girls and adults in 64 thanas of 64 districts. On the other hand, School Managing Committee, Parent-Teacher Association, Student Brigade, Union Education Committee, Ward Education Committee have been formed to increase the enrollment, to reduce drop out and to improve the quality of teaching at primary level. But the effectiveness of these committees is not always encouraging. So, in spite of giving more importance on the literacy programme the attendance as well as literacy rate are still very low. Besides, extension and building new schools is needed for accommodating the growing number of school-age - population. But in consideration of our limited resources, it is very difficult to build required number of new schools for all school going children. In this context there is a scope to think about the utilisation of indigenous rural people's organisations/institutions such as cooperative societies, mosques and maktabas which can help achieve the goal of universal primary education.

It cannot be said that there is no problem in utilising the cooperative societies, mosques-cum-maktabas to expand the facility for promoting primary and mass education. But it will not be difficult to face the problem if there is a good intention. Lastly, possibly maktabas and cooperatives are two only known community institutions in our country which have been tested for a long time to ensure community involvement in literacy programme, hence we should take notice of our tested experience and potentiality

To achieve the desired goal the following recommendations may be considered:

- The feasibility can be examined by constituting a Task Force comprising the Ministries of Education; Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives; Social Services and Religious Affairs and relevant institutions (like BARD, RDA, Islamic Foundation, BRDB, Cooperative Department, etc.) under these ministries.
- Primary and Mass Literacy Directorate, newly created Non-Formal Education Directorate, Rural Development and Cooperatives Division, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) and Social Welfare Directorate may prepare their own action plan for utilising their own potentiality in the promotion of primary education, mass education and mass literacy.
- Primarily, an unbiased survey may be conducted to know the present position of mosques and maktabas, cooperatives and organisations registered under Social Service Department of the country.
- On the basis of this survey, four aforesaid ministries and their respective divisions and directorates together can prepare a National Plan of Action (NPA) for implementing the programme.
- Primary and Mass Education Division of the government may also think about a separate plan for utilising the maktabas as Feeder Schools (pre-primary) where the *Imams* and *Muazzins* can teach the children up to the standard of class - II.

References

- Anmed. Tofail (1993) Background, Principles and Strategies of Comprehensive Village Development Programme: A Theoretical Discussion (in Bangla), BARD, Comilla.
- Ahmed, T and Das, R. C.(1994) Participatory Village Plan: Twelfth Annual Plan of CVDP Societies (in Bangla), BARD, Comilla
- BBS-UNICEF(1995) Progotir Pathay: Progress Towards the Achievement of the Goals for the 1990s, Dhaka.
- Faruk, Abdullah(1993) "Has the Cooperative Movement Lost Its Purpose", Cooperation.
- Government of Bangladesh(GOB) (1980), The Second Five Year Plan 1980-85, Bangladesh Planning Commission, Dhaka1980.
- GOB (1985a) The Third Five Year Plan (1985-90), Bangladesha Planning Commission, Dhaka.
- GOB (1985b) Bangladesh Mosque Census, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Dhaka.
- GOB (1990a) Government of Bangladesh, The Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95), Bangladesh Planning Commission. Dhaka.
- GOB(1990b) Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh 1990. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Dhaka.
- GOB (1994) Quarterly Statistics of Cooperative Sector, Office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Dhaka, September.
- GOB(1995) Integrated Non-formal Education Programme (INFEP). (unpublished document submitted to the Govt.)
- Gustavasson S. (1990). Primary Education in Bangladesh for Whom?, University Press Limited, Dhaka.
- Khan, Akhter Hameed(1983) Problems of Education in The Works of Akhter Hameed Khan. Vol. III. BARD, Comilla.
- Khatun. Safia(1966) Feeder School Experimental Programme Annual Report, PARD, Comilla.
- Obaidullah, A.K.M. (1993) Comprehensive Village Developmenta Programme (CVDP) in Md. Abdul Quddus (ed.) Rurat Development in Bangladesh: Strategies and Experiences, BARD, Comilla.
- Quadir, S.A. (1986) School Enrollment Drives and Enrollment of Children in Class - I, BIDS, Dhaka.
- Quddus. M.A. and Begum, Saleha(1995), Rural Education Experiments in Comilla, BARD, Comilla.
- Quddus, M.A. and Chowdhury, M.A.(1995) Community Participation in Primary Schools: The Case of Chittagong Division, BARD, Comilla.
- UNICEF(1993) Primary Education (in Bangla), Dhaka.
- UNICEF(1990) World Conference on Education for All, World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs: (Conference helda from 5-9 March 1990, Jomtien, Thailand), UNICEF, New York.

Other Development Issues

National Social Security Strategy and Universal National Pension System in Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) has been approved by Government of Bangladesh by putting priority to the social and economic protection of the extreme poor of the society. The Social Protection Programme, which started after 1990, has seen considerable progress in terms of bringing the extreme poor of the society under its wider coverage and gradual increase in the allocation of resources from national budget. According to government calculations, the allocation is not less than 2.02 per cent of the total GDP and constitutes 12% of the public expenditure. The latest government figures claim that the percentage of the poor and extreme poor people in the country has been reduced to 24.4% and 12.9% respectively (GOB-GED, 2015). It is not yet clear whether the Social Security Policy has been finalised based on the basis of newly accepted NSSS Paper. As a result, rooms are still left for affirmative manoeuvring. It is obvious that finalisation and the implementation of the policy are time-consuming, but there is no reason to believe that it is far off. But the directions for financing the whole scheme and implementation process of the policy are still unclear. It is expected that as a country that is progressing towards the status of a 'middle-income' country and constitutionally promises to be a 'Welfare state' (GOB (1), 2011: Article, 15 of the Constitution) the proper implementation of the national Social Security Policy will be deemed to be one of the essential conditions. Keeping that in mind, the aim of this essay is to present some recommendations on the

formulation of a forward looking National Social Security Strategy or the Social Security Policy conducive for a nascent welfare state aspiring to achieve middle income country's economic status.

Though there is ample scope to speak on the social security or safety net programs in effect, this discussion will only touch on the context of the existing Social Safety Net Program issues without going into details. The main discussion will be devoted on the implementation of the proposed 'Universal National Pension System' and the rationale and argument for it. The issues discussed in the paper are divided into two. The first part deals with the existing NSS programme and in the second part discusses the issues of proposed 'pension scheme' and alternative resource avenues by mobilising 'Zakat Fund' (the compulsory contributions by a devout Muslim to the poor) for pro-poor safety net have been elaborated. Discussion on a 'life-cycle oriented social security' and old age pension issues received special attention in the recently accepted Social Security Strategy. But the discussion has not been followed or complemented with appropriate policy commitment. A roadmap of the national pension policy could have been incorporated in the strategy paper-that has not been done with a clear programme mapping. But useful information and data needed to set up a system of national citizen pension has found prominence in the strategy paper. The objective of the current discussion will be towards starting a fruitful conversation on setting up of a pension system for all citizens above a certain age in addition to the government servants and the poorest in the society. The introduction of a universal and comprehensive pension system for all senior citizens would be a way forward in fulfilling the constitutional obligation of seeing Bangladesh as a 'welfare state'

PART-1

Reorganisation of the existing social security programme

The social security programme that are presently in effect are stuck in conventional mire. These programmes are completely bereft of any creativity and are in the grips of corruption and mismanagement. It would be wasteful and meaningless to carry on these programmes in the same manner without initiating major changes to its present conditions. Though the social safety net programmes in this country had gained some momentum after 1990, the history of social security in the form of aid at the time of disaster, special works programmes and food security is not new in this country. But the new phase of this programme as part of sustainable poverty reduction and development at the grassroots has yet to get a powerful and transparent organisational level and structure. At present, the budget for social security and safety net is allocated for 145 programs that are under 23 ministries and departments. This allocated amount in the national budget 2015-16 is about TK. 30,000 crores and it is claimed that the programs will benefit 32 percent of the intended population (GOB-GED, 2015 and MJF, 2015). Both government and non-government evaluations have already pointed out many shortcomings and lapses. Previously in an evaluation of 30 social security programs, which claimed to have incorporated 24.5% of the intended population. It was found that 18% of those were not even qualified for inclusion in the program (MJF, 2015). They were incorporated through various means of corruption and committing irregularities. Analysis of the expenses of the pension of government servants and 5 life-cycle based programs which are supposed to hand over cash funded from the national treasury under the NSS and safety net shows that in the 2015-16 budget, the estimated expense

towards covering 35.7 million beneficiaries will be 345 billion taka. Of this 212 billion will be distributed to those directly benefited. The remaining 133 billion will go towards the expenses in the implementation and administration of the programmes, such a high administrative expense is not acceptable by any standards (GOB (3), 2015). Besides, the corruption, wastage, political abuse and workplace indiscipline prevalent in the social security program under the food assisted development programmes are impediments to quality control and achieving proper and definite goals. So, for the programme to achieve definite goals, several steps need to be taken to rid it of three negative factors of the prevalent clique. One: stopping the illegal and unjust practice of political patronage in delivering safety net; two: minimising excessive relief orientation and transforming those into economically sustainable development programmes and three: stopping indifference, benign tolerance of irregularities, and negligence by the local administration and political leaders towards the prevailing corruption and mismanagement and establishing a strict, transparent and efficient management system. In spite of various limitations so far mentioned, the experiences Bangladesh cumulatively gained are not negligible. All these experiences can lead to redesign the programmes for greater good of the society in an efficient way. The study attempts to formulate few recommendations on the basis of wider discussion on the issue in various civil society forums some of those are furnished underneath may be considered for reorganising the system towards eradication of poverty and a sound social protection system to function with efficiency and economy.

- It should be seriously reviewed whether the existing 145 programs under 23 ministries and departments can be brought under one single 'lead ministry and a

maximum of six administrative ministries. In this case, the leading ministry could be that of Finance, planning and the cabinet division and the administrative ministries could be those of Local Government, Disaster Management, Social Welfare, Women and Children's Affairs, Education (two different ministries under Education) and Health and Family Welfare.

- Instead of increasing the number of programmes, they could be divided into a few main clusters/categories and be implemented through following definite goals and work plan under individual ministers. The main Clusters/categories could be.
- Emergency relief during disaster (Local government and Disaster Management)
- Relief and providing sustainable development support for the extreme poor, disabled, shelter less and floating persons (Local Government, Social-Welfare and Women and Children's Affairs)
- Universal education and universal health programs with the aim of guarantying education and health for all with special provision for the under privileged (Local Government, Two separate ministries of Education and Health and Family welfare)
- Assistance for housing and shelter (Local Government-LGED and Housing and Settlement Department)
- Developing universal citizen pension on the basis of income tax and NSSS (Finance, Planning and Local Government) -NBR

In the first category, emergency relief for people or areas that are victims of floods, storms, cyclones, tidal waves, earthquakes and other disasters will be incorporated. The second category will include social security programs for the extreme poor, disabled, handicapped and the jobless. The third category will require bulk of the expenses and also cover the vast number of people. This will benefit the poor, lower-middle class, middle class equally. The state will bear the entire expenses of education and related costs up to the secondary level for all. The budget will include expenses for the school uniform, lunch and all education equipment. Another one of the main services of this category will be healthcare. All the citizen of the country (infants to elderly, men-women rich and poor) will be brought under the network of guaranteed healthcare of the state in his or her respective areas. Primary healthcare and special treatment will be paid for by the state from its NSS budget. The fourth category will take care of providing support for public and private housing projects, home-loans, low rent housing for the lower middle class and shelter homes for the homeless. At least planning and design of housing even for private initiatives could be ensured under a decentralised mechanism. The last and fifth category will be the guaranteed pension scheme for all senior citizens of the country after a certain age as determined in the policy to be known as 'National Pension Scheme' or Universal National Pension.

Social security programs of mid or high-income countries with comparatively lower-level poverty incidence usually have a structure similar to the one outlined above. So, at the dawn of becoming a middle-income country, the national social security program structure needs to be remodelled. Our next discussion will be an elaboration on the fifth category-the structure of the national pension scheme and its potential funding arrangements.

PART-2

National Pension or State Pension for Senior Citizens

In this country only government service holders- both civil and military are entitled to retirement pension. In recent times, service holders of universities and other autonomous bodies have been added alongside government service holders to the pension system. Therefore, people above the age of 60 years who have held a government job for 25 years receive a pension at a rate based on their last drawn salary amount. They can receive this pension at one go or monthly akin to a salary. After the death of the service holder, their husband/wife and children are entitled to the same. There are private funds and gratuity schemes for the corporate sector or non-government organisations. As per condition of jobs, they receive the benefits after they leave or retire from the job (Myian, Undated).

But there are many in the country who contribute to the development of the society, state and the country during their working life but are not included in the pension system or retirement benefit schemes. At the end of their active lifetime, they cannot live a secure, certain and normal life. There are those among them who regularly paid all taxes when they were fit for work and earned above the tax paying income ceiling. For 10-30 years they have to pay income taxes to the government. Then there are also those who contributed to the development and progress of the country but their earnings were not within the income-tax range. But they have to lead an unbearable life after they no longer have the capability to continue work and earn. The average life expectancy of a Bangladeshi is now 70 years (GOB (2),2015). After reaching the age of 60, if they do not have adequate savings, all senior citizens have to be dependent on the mercy and patronage of others. There is a general trend and tendency to save money by all means in right and wrong ways while in work, so that one

does not have to depend on others in their old age. The state can start a system of cash pension after certain age and ensure health care for all the senior citizens. These two support systems can be given a universal form and structure. A mixed system of insurance and pension can also be established by having arrangement with employers and credible financial institutions.

Universal structure

The structure can be formed through the assimilation of the income tax and the pension system. There can be a social security registration for all working people in the country employed in government-non-government, formal-informal, independent, self-employed and people in their own vocations and businesses. This could be connected to the national identification system (ID Card) that is in effect now. That is, everyone will also have an income tax registration connected to his/her national identification registration and that may also subsequently provide a 'Social Security' number. This can be one of the primary bases of the citizen pension and income taxpaying citizens could be registered first. A certain sum will be contributed to the pension fund on behalf of every income tax paying citizen from the amount of tax they pay. In this way, a close connection can be built between the retirement pension and the income tax. This means, senior citizens will be entitled to a general amount (say 10000 taka per month for every one over 60/62 years of age) but the amount will be increased further based on the proportion of income tax paid by them during their active and working life.

At present, the principal amount of pension for government employees is 90% of the net salary drawn and total amount accumulated will be equal to the amount multiplied by TK 230. The difference of amount among the pensioners will

be determined on the last salary drawn by them and it is going to basic create a difference in the total pension amount among different categories of employees. In this case of newly suggested national pension system, it is not the earning or salary that will create the difference in the total amount of retirement pension benefit, but the amount of income tax paid to the government during the active working life as well as contribution to other insurance schemes. As a large number do not belong to the salaried service or employment. Many people in the country working as doctors, consultants, lawyers, NGO workers, small businessmen, those employed in the services and working independently pay taxes then again and a large number do not. Then there are also some who pay a nominal amount just to dodge the punishment under law or just to register them as tax payers. In reality, those who pay taxes end up being on the losing side in the culture of our society. Because, those who evade the taxes, do have remote possibility for punishment. Those who do pay taxes and within the tax net are not benefitted in any way for paying taxes rather they are faced with many odds under the different rules and regulations. They do not get any direct benefits from the state in exchange for the taxes they pay. They are not entitled to any earmarked or special healthcare for themselves or their family, their children's education, preference in any public utility or recognition from the state. After retirement, they are not entitled to claim any social security either. They have to depend on their children or their savings if they have any. From the tension about uncertain future, a tendency to accumulate wealth through legal and illegal means is rampant and aggressive. If a system of citizen pension in recognition of taxes and other contributions were there, a tax paying culture would have been taken firm root also ensure a life free of tension and worry for the law abiding citizen. Therefore, a system of universal pension for all, side by

side with the government employees can be created by combining income tax payment and retirement pension scheme for all. A similar system has developed into a mature and organised form in West European and Scandinavian countries through changes and reforms over a period of hundred years since the 1920s (Dixson and Scheurell, 2002).

Funding the pension system

A certain portion of the tax amount payable to the government in any given year could be saved in the state pension fund. The state can invest this money in different profitable financial programmes. In this way, a handsome fund could be accumulated by the state for meaningful investment. The number for tax payer citizens will rise rapidly in the country. On the other hand, social insecurity and uncertainty will decrease. A self-respecting society will be created. Every citizen will be brought under the working network after finishing his or her education. They will also be included in the social security and retirement pension system at the same time. The state may be able to receive taxes from the working citizens at least for 40 years and have to pay them retirement pensions for a maximum of 10-15 years.

Pension through 'Social insurance' scheme can also be started through a state guarantee to bring in people under a pension/insurance scheme on their own voluntary contributions. Any person involved in any work can receive pension at a definite rate based on the premium after the age of 60 being member of the scheme. Husband/wife or underage children can also be made part of the pension scheme.

At Present, The biggest portion of government expenses goes towards the wages, allowances, pension and gratuity for civil and military personnel. The total number of

government employees-both military and civilian-is not more than 2 million in the country. Analysing the 2015-16 national Budget Document (Statement-4, combined non-development expenditures fund) and report 6 (non-development expenditures-ministries and departments), the allocated amount for civilian employees is 45,365 crore 92 lakh 29 thousand taka. If the pensions and gratuity amount of 11,584 crore 37 lakh 56 thousand taka allocated in 2015-16 budget is added, the amount stands at 56,940 crore 85 lakh 50 thousand taka. The greater portion of taka 17,961 crore 91 lakh 50 thousand allocated for the armed forces is also that of wages, allowances, pensions and gratuity GOB (4),2015).

It is said that 3.1 million out of total 160 million people in the country have tax (TIN) registration. Of this, only 1.1 million actually pay taxes (Daily Prothom Alo-September 30,2015). Till last year, government employees did not have to pay taxes on their salary incomes-that has been changed recently. Now, they too have to pay taxes on their salary incomes. The wages and allowance of ministers and MPS are exempted from paying taxes for some special reasons. The National Board of Revenue has set a goal of collecting taxes of taka 64,971 crore on the income and profit of individuals and establishments. The target for collection of Value Added Tax (VAT) is 64.262 crore 91 lakh taka. The first category of tax is collected from individuals and organisations directly and the second category tax is on everyone irrespective of rich and poor. In total the government hopes to collect 2, 08,443 crore 29 lakh 96 thousand taka from the NBR taxes, non-NBR source taxes and non-tax incomes of which 74.902 crore 76 lakh 52 thousand will be spent on government employees belong to civil and military services (GOB (4),2015). This expenditure structure of the government is not logical. The common people of the country do not pay different

category of taxes for supporting the government and government employees only. If the services and benefits a citizen can claim in lieu of taxes and other obligations they fulfil are taken into consideration, then a massive change to the current structure will be needed. In future, the primary consideration for pension should not only be the government service-the proper payment of tax as a civic duty needs to be given the top most priority along with government service. Therefore, as **the first step towards establishing a universal citizen tax, a proper idea needs to be developed to bring all tax payers under the retirement pension system.** The citizen pension system needs to be strengthened through reforms in other safety net and social security programmes as a middle-income welfare state. There is no alternative but to go for universalisation of state benefit as far as possible. Only 1-2% of the tax paid by individuals can be set aside for creating the pension fund from the next financial year. A pension system for those above 60 who have paid taxes regularly in the preceding 10 years can be started from 2018-19. This is how it can begin and by 2020 the system can be finalised for fuller implementation.

At the same time, Work should also begin to launch a single national social security and social insurance system for income tax payers first and gradually a national insurance scheme and national citizen pension in accordance with the national social security policy can be started by formulating a road map. The government needs to formulate a transparent and feasible road map to this end and create an independent commission to monitor and assist in the process of formulation and implementation of the policy. The permanent pay commission and social security and pension commission can be integrated into a single entity for initiating the reform.

Alternative funding for the social security programs for the extreme poor

At present, taka 30,000 crore has been allocated for the social safety net system in exchange for cash and food grains. If other social security program, especially the national pension system is started, then a part of the tax revenue will be shifted for that from the existing safety net. This might apparently pose a threat for the current programs or create an extra pressure on the budget, but in reality, it is not however, this can be combated in two ways. One: if the universal pension system is started in the country, then the separate allowance for senior citizens as well as the pension fund for government employees could be merged with National Pension system. Two: Separate allocation for the funding of social security of the extreme poor might become negligible and smaller. Three: The money for supporting extreme poor can be collected from other alternative sources with proper incentives.

A large portion of relatively affluent citizen of the country pay Zakat as part of their religious obligation according to shariah dictum. More people in this country pay zakat than those who pay income taxes. There is no registration for those who pay Zakat and the Zakat system is not connected with any government programme. At present, a nominal rebate is given for the amount of Zakat paid to the fund of the Islamic Foundation. If the government allow further incentives in this case, the society and the Zakat payers will both be benefited and encouraged. The state may find a new avenue with an alternative funding source for the social safety net programme of the extreme poor by utilising the social capital and people will be encouraged voluntarily to donate the Zakat amount to the GOB fund.

A big portion of those who pay taxes at present, also contribute Zakat due to religious reasons. Zakat under the prevailing situation is not delivered in an organised and

Islamic way; the society is not fully benefited from it as expected. On the other hand, it creates an additional anxiety for taxpayers. There are doubts about giving Zakat at the rate of 2.5% of savings on top of paying a considerable sum for taxes. This brings a sense of hesitation and guilt both in many minds. There are conflicts between the punishment for not paying taxes and Allah's wrath for not honouring the fifth pillar of Islam. If the state takes responsibility, a citizen can be relieved of both his civic duty and his religious obligation. A system can be created by the social security programmes of the extreme poor, thus relieving pressure from the national budget. On the other hand, the Zakat payers will be satisfied for having done their religious obligations.

A simple recommendation for the matter can be as follows. Every TIN registered taxpayer will indicate/declare the amount of money s/he wants to contribute to the National Zakat fund on the income tax return forms. The Zakat amount will also be deposited with income tax separately. The government will ensure that the amount indicated by the taxpayer will be deposited in the Zakat fund under the TIN holder's name. In this way, those who pay taxes and contribute zakat regularly will get the opportunity-if s/he pays half of the 2.5% Zakat from his own money, then the government will pay the rest from the tax paid by him. Only condition is that the Zakat contributor has to be a taxpayer and the Zakat money does not exceed 30% of the tax amount. I am sure this combined fund will not be less, if not more, than the money allocated for safety net program every year. There should not be any other separate system of tax rebates (for paying Zakat to state) as it exists now.

To this end, the government can formulate the "national Zakat Collection and Utilization Policy" The National Board of Revenue can transfer the money collected as

Zakat contributions to GOB fund. A combined system can be created by the joint efforts of the Religious Affairs Ministry and the Social Security implementation ministry to determine how the money could be collected and utilised.

CONCLUSION

The reason behind this discussion is to create awareness about the importance of a national pension policy for the benefit of the society and economy of Bangladesh as a sustainable and forward-looking initiative. If we think of the social security issue separately, new impediments of funding and organisation may arise. So, the current income tax, newly proposed universal pension system and subsequently issue of proposed Zakat collection and its utilisation can be incorporated as part of the overall social security policy. The issue needs to be seen from the constitutional guarantee to ensure economic and social security of all citizens-not only government employees, but a system based on the principles of a caring society and discharge of civic duties-especially lawful payment of taxes. If the system is implemented, the scope of the country's income tax collection will rapidly increase. The general people will be relieved of worry and anxiety of sustenance of livelihood in an old age. This will bring peace and stability to social life.

Post script

Government of Bangladesh already declared a 'pension policy' (2023) which does not quite match with the concept and practice of Universal Pension Policy, as practiced in the west Europe, Scandinavian Countries, USA, Canada and Australia etc. It is more of a 'deposit pension scheme'. The issue demands more elaborate discussion and analysis.

References

- Dixon, John and Scheurell, Robert (eds) (2002) *The State of Social Welfare: The Twentieth Century in Cross National Review*, Westport, CT, Praeger.
- GOB (1) (2011) *Constitution of the Peoples Republic Of Bangladesh*, Dhaka Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Bangladesh
- GOB (2) (2015), *National Budget, 2015-2016*, Ministry of Finance, Dhaka Government of Bangladesh.
- GOB-GED (2015) *National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh*, General Economic Division, Bangladesh Planning Commission, Dhaka, Government of Bangladesh.
- Miyan, M. Alimullah (Undated) *Retirement and Pension System in Bangladesh*, IUBAT, Dhaka, email: miyan@iubat.edu

Note: The essay was published by *Manusher Jonna Foundation* (MJF) in 2016. The author was one of the Directors of MJF and Co-convenor of National Social Security Forum. The essay was presented as Keynote paper in one of national dialogues of the Forum in 2016 at Daily Star Building. The Daily Star also published the article in its Founding Anniversary Supplement as a lead essay.

GENDER SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN BANGLADESH: A CRITIQUE*

Introduction

Development as a blanket term and development planning as a practice from its very beginning (from the 1950s) has essentially remained a masculine's domain. Development in theory claims to be gender-neutral, in reality it either bypasses women totally or touches them very marginally. On the contrary, 'gender blindness' in development planning affects the lives of women in a positively harmful way. The women issue in the particular and adverse effect of sectarian development planning (which is largely biased towards the dominant gender) in general have increasingly caught the attention of concerned development thinkers and examined thoroughly over the years (Brett 1990): 1). In the decade of 1980s especially during and after the observance of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-85), intensive discussions on women's vulnerability was recognized all over the world. Though the full emancipation of women yet to travel a long way, it is now recognized that generalized development strategies of the past could not achieve their real developmental goals as they were criminally perceived, because goals under that developmental paradigm focused more on the capital-output ratio to achieve increased GDP and GNP. It was thought that growth strategy (i.e. the increase of GNP) gradually will take care of all other aspects of development (Todaro 1989: 65-67). Rapid growth of GNP was achieved in many countries but at the great cost of poverty,

* A Joint article produced with Masuda A. Chowdhury (Joint Director, BARD) who was the second author.
The Bangladesh Rural Development Studies, Vol, III, No I & 2 (1992)

unemployment and inequality of the vast majority of their people. Because of that the very development model developed and practiced in the 1950s and 1960s faced severe criticisms. When poverty, unemployment and inequality situations are analyzed and applied specifically to women, they are found to be harsher. The comparative analysis of the status of health, education, nutrition, life expectancy, labor participation, employment, income and political participation between men and women in general is found at great variance.

All these consequences resulted in new development thinking in the decade of 1980s which advocates for gender based development planning to cater to specific practical and strategic gender needs (Moser, 1991). Present essay focuses on the specific need for gender planning within the broader framework of development planning, Because very often development planning willy-nilly excludes women or affects them positively harmful way (Gender and Development course outline, CDS, Swansea p-2, 1990). This type of blind folded development policy not only emaciates women but also promotes and perpetuates general underdevelopment of the society.

The study in its first section attempts to review the theoretical issues to underpin the needs and strategies of gender specific development planning. In the second section personal field experience will be brought from Bangladeshi society where women's status is considered to be one of the lowest in the world" (Population Crisis Committee 1988). The concluding section will be devoted to suggest some of the urgently needed practical and strategic issues for inclusion in the future planning.

THEORETICAL ISSUES OF GENDER PLANNING

Gender is relatively a new term which has gained popularity after the pioneering work of Anne Oakley

(1972) wherein conceptual distinction between sex and gender is brought. According to Oakley sex is a biological category, whereas the gender identity is determined in the particular context of history, culture and socio-psychological setting of a given society.

Traditional concept of the division of human being and their labor process on the basis of biological sexes confine female role only in her reproductive functions, but the concept of gender crosses the sex boundary and biological role of women. It determines women's place in society as equal human being with men. Though this is nothing of a new discovery, the distinction between sex and gender reconstructed the earlier fixed meaning and notion of women who did not have any other entity beyond their biological traits. Still the new concept of gender and subsequent gender specific development planning has subtle difference in its approaches and strategies with the various feminist movements or feminism in general. Though the feminist movement itself is known by various ideological labelings, according to Rosalind Delmar this could be classified into-radical feminism, socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, liberal feminism, lesbian separatism, etc. (Mitchel and Oakly 1986:11), However, all common definition of feminism, which says feminism is an active desire to change women's position in society" (Delmar 1986:13). By definition and historical experience feminism is a social movement particularly in its political dimensions and feminists are regarded as its animating spirits (Delmar 1986:16). Gender and development as a distinct approach evolved in the 1980s by absorbing historical experience of all the earlier feminist movements and their concrete achievements. The ideological properties of the movements were translated into concrete programmes embodying the main objectives into one package. International donor agencies. Governments and

various non-government agencies gradually get involved in specific programme components of the package. As a result, feminist movement which was basically a westerner's domain' gradually expanded in the Third World societies with a new developmental dimensions apart from its overt political and ideological militancy. This militant dimension of feminism shifted its emphasis in the later years from mere ideological movements to more concrete issues of food, shelter. education, health, job etc. for women which necessitated a specific planning strategy for which the concept of gender planning provided a firm basis.

BASIS OF GENDER PLANNING

Gender planning is based on the idea that men and women play different roles in society and because of their different roles, they often have different needs. Therefore, development plans must disaggregate households and families within the communities on the basis of gender identifying men and women, boys' and girls' (Moser 1991). The specific needs of the women as weaker gender can be ascertained and addressed by designing some projects and programmes which may make their lives easier and help them in their given tasks. For example, in the productive sector women could be helped by providing better equipment, training and other necessary back up facilities. In the domestic front, project could be aimed at alleviating the drudgery and heavy physical demands of women's work by providing more efficient stoves or grinders, or improving women's access to water. (Breet 1991:6)

WOMEN'S ROLE AND GENDER NEEDS

Women play triple role in society. The first role they play is the reproductive one. Through this role they bear and rear children to guarantee the maintenance and

reproduction of the labor force in the society, not to mention the generation and civilization. Secondly, they play a productive role as direct labor force and often as secondary income earner and lastly, they also play a role as community manager. Generally only women's productive role is recognized as economic activity and other roles are just ignored as natural activity of womanhood and they are not rewarded for those roles. On the contrary, men's every role and work is valued and rewarded, either directly through remuneration or indirectly through status social and political power. The gender specific planning will attempt to cure the disease of 'gender blindness' of planners by bringing the triple roles of women in the forefront and also put forward the gender interest to translate them into planning imperatives.

STRATEGIC AND PRACTICAL GENDER NEEDS

Caroline Moser by following Maxine Molyneux (1985) classified the gender needs broadly into two- strategic needs and practical needs. Strategic gender needs arise from the analysis of women's subordination to men or men's domination over women which again depend on particular cultural and socio-political context. For example, strategic needs may include some of the following: the removal of institutionalized forms of discrimination such as rights to own and inherit property. sexual division of labor, freedom of choice over childbearing, adoption of adequate measures against male cited in violence and control over women (Molyneux 1958, Moser 1991:160).

APPROACHES TOWARDS ADDRESSING GENDER NEEDS

Since 1950s many policy interventions were initiated. Buvinic (1983) and Moser (1991) categorized them into five categories: (1) welfare approach. (2) Equity approach,

(3) anti-poverty approach. (4) efficiency approach and (5) empowerment approach. This shows a continuous shift in policy-women Perspective to approaches from welfare' to equity' to anti-poverty' as categorized by Buvinic (1983) and to other later approaches efficiency and empowerment categorized by Moser (1991). The welfare approach assuming women as passive recipient of development kept its concern limited within the practical gender needs mainly to emphasize the reproductive role. In the 1970s the equity approach brought the productive role in the forefront and particularly focused on `reducing inequality between men and women, especially in the gender division of labor. Thus the equity approach meets important strategic need (Moser 1991: 163). The anti-poverty approach also highlights the productive role of women. The program they put forward was alleviation of poverty by increasing the productivity of women in low income households. The efficiency approach emerged as a by-product of IMF and World Bank policy of structural adjustment in the 1980s. Because of its high social cost, the grass root level women institutions are antipathic to this approach. In most cases this approach fails to meet strategic needs. Moreover, reduction of resources resulted in blocking the ways in meeting practical gender needs. The latest of all the approaches in addressing the gender issue is the empowerment approach but not necessarily of recent origin. This approach addresses strategic and practical gender needs simultaneously. The specific case of Gabriela in the Philippines and Bombay Forum against oppression of women' as cited in Moser (1991: 169) are two of the illustrations of empowerment approach wherein they combined the strategic needs and practical needs together. The Gabriela project (an alliance of local and National Women's Organizations) combines women's traditional task of sewing tapestry with the discussion of women's legal rights in the constitution. Similarly, the Bombay group, though started first

campaigning against rape and bride burning, later focused attention on housing. Because they realized through the movement that homelessness gave rise to many other practical problems and access to housing will meet a very important practical need and gradually the movement converted itself to an organization for lobbying a National Housing Charter which covers strategic purpose as well.

CRITIQUE OF MOSER

Moser's gender planning seems to have downplayed or undermined the class, caste and ethnic considerations. The only reference to the particular issue she mentioned is (1989: 168) that 'women experience oppression according to their race, class, colonial history and current position in the international economic order. But Moser's theoretical framework does not address class specific gender issues as well as the issue of dominant global economic order which, in fact, perpetuate a particular form of exploitation and domination from which the Third World societies in general and the Third World women in particular cannot escape. Marketization, liberalization and commoditization programs promoted by World Bodies from last two decades are patronizing a new class of nascent bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie against the interest of the poor and the vulnerable already living in inhuman condition. In that case Moser and the other gender proponents working for agencies like World Bank, ODA and FAO are only providing a 'human face' to the growing monsters of dehumanized capitalism. Strategic gender issues cannot be addressed by ignoring the recent trend of world capitalism and its subsequent impact on the development of new class configuration in the Third World societies vis-a-vis its domination and subjugation aspects.

For example, even within the Women's movement and women development programmes a new generation of

dominant and exploitative sisters have emerged. The women's programme related local and foreign NGOs are becoming instrumental in creating power base for middle and upper class women who use these institutions as instruments for serving their vested class interests. They themselves are appropriating huge foreign aid in the name of the poor and underclass women in many of the Third World societies.

In view of the above critique what the present essay emphasizes is the class issue which needs careful consideration within 'the gender movement to enable it in achieving clear strategic goals. Otherwise the emerging trend will end up in a new class condition of middle class petty bourgeoisie women and men to perpetuate the present structure of domination under emerging new capitalist order (ironically called new world order).

GENDER PLANNING AND BANGLADESH

With a current population of 110 million and a per capita income of \$ 170 equivalent per annum, Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world. According to the 1986 Household Expenditure Survey, 44.2 million rural and 7 million urban people representing 51% and 56% of the rural and urban population respectively were below poverty level (indicated by 2,122 calories/day/person) and general consensus is that women account for the largest share of the poor (World Bank 1990). The poverty situation accompanied by traditional culture, custom and life pattern segregated them from the main stream of social, economic and political life. For the convenience of relating the theoretical discussion of the previous section, the empirical situation of women only in the areas of health, nutrition, education and labor participation in Bangladesh will be discussed. Then the activities in the sphere of women's development carried out under government and non-

government initiatives will be analyzed to back the issue of the need for gender planning in its proper perspective.

WOMEN'S STATUS IN FEW SELECTED AREAS

Labor Participation. The civilian labor force (age 10 and above) in Bangladesh expanded nearly 75% from 17.0 to 29.5 million between 1961 and 1985 (World Bank 1990:23). During that period female labor force rose only from 0.9 to 2.7 million whereas male figure rose from 16.1 to 26.8 million (BBS, 1987).

Due to the patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal nature of the social system and overall male domination in the economic activities, women's wage and employment conditions are discriminatory both in the formal and informal sectors. On the other hand, in the service sector (formal), for example, in the case of government job, educated women get preferential treatment which reflects a strong middle class affinity or class coalition which is a separate theoretical issue to be dealt with elsewhere.

Health and Nutrition. Females are in more disadvantageous condition than males in Bangladesh in terms of health and nutritional status. There are 94 females per 100 males in 1985 compared to 96 in other low income countries and 104 in industrialized countries (World Bank 1990: ii)

Life expectancy is a year less than males, i.e. 50 versus 51 in 1987 (World Bank 1990). Female infant mortality (up to age I year) ranged from 105 to 125 per 1000 lives birth and for male the range is from 90 to 115. So far as the nutritional status is concerned, girls are the highest nutritional risk group as revealed in a recent survey (BBS 1987) conducted by the Ministry of Planning. Education, presently the literacy rate of women in rural Bangladesh is about half against the male percentage. The female literacy

rate among age 15 and above was 10% against 40% achieved for male during the same period (World Bank 1990:51). The gap is alarmingly high in the sphere of education above the secondary level. The gap that exists between male and female in education at various levels may be seen in the Table-1 adopted from Chowdhury (1990).

According to a recent evaluation of the women in 99 countries which covered 2.3 billion women population (92 percent of total female population) of the world, Bangladesh ranked the lowest among all. While four other South Asian neighbors such as Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Nepal have shown overall improvement, Bangladesh showed an overall depressing trend. In a scale of rank, Bangladesh placed at the lowest in almost all of the individual variables investigated during the evaluation. The table-2 may be seen for clear understanding.

Apart from practical life aspects i.e. labor participation, health, education etc., political participation of women in general and village women in particular is to be considered separately because of its strategic importance. The show piece type and accidental women leadership in political parties and parliament in this case is no reflection of the general political participation of vast majority of village women in Bangladesh. Women are virtually excluded from the electoral process. Their involvement is allowed and encouraged only as 'captive voters' to support the choice of their husbands, brothers and fathers (Ahmed 1990: 270-72). Because of widespread poll violence since the seventies, women's participation suffered the most. In an observation of upajila parishad election of 1990 in Chittagong and Comilla women participation was only 6% as against almost 70% of the male (Ahmed 1990:270).

Table 1: Gender Gap of Student and Teacher at the End of SFYP (1984-85) in Bangladesh (in number).

Type of Institutions	Student			Teacher		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Primary School	6002000 (59.53%)	4080000 (40.47%)	10082000 (100)	159852 (87.21%)	23447 (12.79%)	183299 (100)
Secondary School	1866000 (70.74%)	772000 (29.26%)	2638000 (100)	86667 (88.64%)	11107 (11.36%)	97774 (100)
General College	422693 (82.00%)	92848 (18.00%)	515541 (100)	4909 (82.39%)	1049 (17.61%)	5958 (100)
Engineering University	2292 (93.97%)	247 (6.03%)	2439 (100)	267 (69.39)	10 (3.61%)	277 (100)
Medical College	6261 (75.46%)	2036 (24.54%)	8297 (100)	678 (81.59%)	153 (18.41%)	831 (100)
General University	28378 (79.95%)	7115 (20.05%)	35493 (100)	2386 (89.87%)	269 (10.13%)	2655 (100)

Source: *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh 1987*, (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Dhaka). pp. 529-557 (as adopted in Chowdhury (1990)).

Women's Development in Bangladesh. Government and non-government agencies along with the donors are implementing various programmes to improve the condition of women in Bangladesh. From the institutional point of view, Bangladesh is at the forefront of the whole of the developing world to establish a full-fledged women's ministry. More than 1200 hundred women voluntary organizations are also working in the field. At present Bangladesh is headed by a lady Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition is also from the women community. Yet the country could not find appropriate ways for the real breakthrough in the status of women in society, because the present women leaders generally represent the privileged class instead of those living in inhuman condition.

**Table 2: Comparative Country Ranking of Women in Different Countries of the World
(Maximum Score for each Sector is 20)**

Sectors	Health	Marriage & Children	Education	Employment	Social Equality
Countries					
Sri Lanka	16.0	15.5	10.0	6.0	12.5
Philippines	15.5	14.5	14.0	7.5	12.5
Indonesia	11.5	11.5	9.5	6.0	8.0
India	10.5	12.0	6.0	4.5	10.5
Pakistan	8.0	11.0	5.0	2.0	2.0
Nepal	6.0	9.0	4.0	7.5	10.5
Bangladesh	5.5	4.5	4.0	3.0	4.0
Highest score among all	20 Finland	20 Australia	each US.A. & New Zealand	not accurately assessed Sweden	not accurately assessed Sweden & Finland
Lowest score among all	3.5 Afghanistan	4.6 Saudi Arabia	2.6 Benin	2.0 Pakistan Saudi Arabia North Yamen	Pakistan Saudi Arabia U.A. E.

Source: Country Ranking of the Status of Women: Poor, Powerless and Pregnant, Population Briefing Paper. Population Crisis Committee, Washington, 1988, adopted from Chowdhury, 1990.

Note: 1. Out of the total score of 100, Bangladesh scored the lowest with only 21.5 point and Sweden scored the highest with 87 points.

2. Data for each of the 26 indicators were converted mathematically to 5 point scales giving maximum 20 point for each broad sector. Data profile Include 99 countries

Dilemma of Development Efforts. By custom, life of a Bangladesh woman is shaped by the patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal nature of the social system. As a result of which her reproductive role gets prominence over all other roles. The productive role she plays is secondary and only complimentary to other roles. The community service role she plays is also very much confined and restricted within homestead. Family is considered traditionally as production, reproduction and consumption unit (Westergaard, 1983: 6-4).

The National Government, through its male dominated bureaucracy (Women share only 4% of the total civil service position) and by following generous donors' prescription, is making experiment with various development programmes. If the theoretical mirror of the previous section is used to view those programmes, the basic theoretical inspiration is still drawn mostly from welfarist and anti-poverty approaches which only reflect the predominance of patriarchal view. With the patriarchal approach there is also a very strong component of elite biasness. For example, most of the opportunities created in the name of women's development actually serve the interest of women who belong to the elite classes. For the last 20 years many projects and programs were implemented which could not really meet women's strategic needs except creating some jobs for middle class women. Government and the NGOs are not making meaningful attempt to address those particular structural and strategic issues. Instead, government programmes in most cases cater to the practical gender needs of urban middle class women. Similarly most of the urban based NGOs are also doing the same. The vast majority of rural women who are in abject poverty suffer from ill-health, malnutrition, low literacy and living without enjoying the expected socio-political rights cannot be served by the cosmetic gender activities initiated in the cities. Recently *Grameen Bank*, *BRAC*, *Nijera Kori* and few other NGOs

started working in some of the rural pockets. Their activities are also carried out within the safe enclosure of anti-poverty approach, because the women programmes of both the organizations (GOs and NGOs) receive funds and guidance from the donors. In another analysis the class nature of the state and the NGO stalwarts is basically the same. As a result, they (GOs and NGOs), albeit in competition against each other, ultimately collaborate to safeguard their common class interests.

Secondly, in four of the subsequent government five year plan documents there is a positive trend of increasing resource allocation for the development of women. In the First Five Year Plan (1973-78) neither planning nor programme development focused on women, but during the Second Five Year Plan (1980-85) some TK. 310 million (in 1985 price) for implementation of 25 projects were allocated. That amount increased to Tk. 500 million in the Third Five Year Plan (1985-90) for seven Women Development Programmes and additional 500 million for special Women's development programmes within the sectoral plans of population, local government, rural development and agriculture. Over the past twenty years, government is trying to realize the role of women and restructure its policies to integrate women into the development process. The Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95) included a separate chapter on women's affairs and each sectoral chapter also contains a section on women. The plan document also declared that women should be "mainstreamed" and not to be treated in social welfare terms.

FUTURE PLANNING AND PROGRAMME DIRECTIONS

In spite of many limitations mentioned in earlier discussions, Bangladeshi society registered many positive changes in the overall field of women's development since its independence. Firstly, as far as the legal status of

women is concerned, constitution which came into effect from 1972 granted equal rights to women in all spheres of life (Article 28 and 29). The constitution has been subsequently amended several times. Two amendments, however, appear to be relevant to the present discussion, The first was done in 1977 which removed the principle of secularism and the second one in 1988 declaring Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh. Because of these amendments, reinforcement of many suppressive and oppressive measures may stage a comeback with constitutional legitimacy. Otherwise in the 1980s many reforms were initiated which changed civil and criminal procedures in favor of protecting women from violence, dowry, polygamy and divorce.

Commitments made in legislative Acts, Government plan documents and increased resource allocation do not automatically change the situation in a desired direction. For capitalizing on the commitment of the government and its resource allocation, really dedicated women activists should undertake the tactical move to maximize both the needs i.e. practical as well as strategic. In the Fourth Five Year Plan female education is considered to be one of the priority areas.

This particular programme can achieve twin objectives. It can satisfy the need of skill development, general education, create more employment opportunity, increase income and also facilitate the process of conscientisation and empowerment. Because, for achieving strategic gender objectives, gender conscious education planning may create basic foundation. Unfortunately most of the women NGOs are implementing programmes without careful consideration of the strategic gender needs. As a result, there still prevails a vacuum in the sphere of wise prioritization of programmes. Majority of the women organizations are devoting their efforts in population and

family planning programmes because of the easy flow of aid money. These programmes address neither practical nor the strategic needs which the oppressed Bangladeshi women require at this juncture of social development.

REFERENCES

- The term 'gender blindness' has been drawn to emphasize the ignorance of planners about the triple roles of women in society which are known as productive role, reproductive role and community management role (for detail see Moser 1990).
- For example, growth of prostitution and desertion of women are two of the harmful impacts on women caused by gender blind industrial policy in many countries.
- Deedly Seers wrote, "The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income doubled" (Seers 1969: 3 cited in Todaro 1980)
- On the eve of the International Women Day Observance (March 8, 1992), It was announced by Prime Minister of Bangladesh 1.1 billion Bangladeshi Taka will be spent through 500 women NGOs that in Bangladesh (Daily Ittefaq, March 9, 1992).
- Population Crisis Committee (1990)

- According to a recent figure released in the newspaper by quoting a source of the Directorate of Women's Affairs, (Government of Bangladesh), the total number of women NGOs registered up to 1991 rose to 1200 (*Ajker kagaj*, March 11, 1992)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmed. T (1990), Decentralisation and the Local State Under Peripheral Capitalism, An unpublished Ph. D dissertation, University of Wales, (CDS, Swansea), U. K.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (1987). Statistical Year Book Dhaka.

Brett, A (1991), Why Gender is a Development Issue, in T. Wallace and C. March (Eds) Changing Perceptions OXFAM. Oxford.

Buvinic. M (1983), Women's Issues in Third World Poverty: A Policy Analysis in M. Buvinic, M. Lycelle and W. Mc Greevey (Eds), Women and Poverty in the Third World (Baltimore), John Hopkins University Press.

Chowdhury, Masuda Akhter (1990). Gender and Development: An Alternative Theoretical Perspective, The Journal of Rural Development Vol. 20, No. 1. pp. 52-60.

Delmar, R (1986) what is Feminism? in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley (eds), what is Feminism, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Molyneux, M (1985). Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women's interests, State and Revolution in Nicaragua, Feminist Studies, Vol.' 11, No, 2.

Moser, C. O. N (1991). Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Needs, in T. Wallace and C. March (eds) Changing Perception.

Mitchell, J and Oakley, A (1986), What is Feminism Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Oakley. A (1972). Sex, Gender and Society, Gower publishing Company, U.K.

Population Crisis Committee (1988). Country Ranking of the Status of Women: Poor, Powerless and Pregnant. Population Briefing Paper No. 20, (June) Washington D.C.

Today, M. P (1989). Economic Development in the Third World, Longman, London.

Westergaard, K (1983). Pauperization of Rural Women in For Rural Bangladesh, Bangladesh Academy Development, Comilla.

World Bank (1990). Bangladesh: Strategies for Enhancing the Role of Women in Economic Development. Washington D. C.

National Social Security Strategy and Universal National Pension System in Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) has been approved by Government of Bangladesh by putting priority to the social and economic protection of the extreme poor of the society. The Social Protection Programme, which started after 1990, has seen considerable progress in terms of bringing the extreme poor of the society under its wider coverage and gradual increase in the allocation of resources from national budget. According to government calculations, the allocation is not less than 2.02 per cent of the total GDP and constitutes 12% of the public expenditure. The latest government figures claim that the percentage of the poor and extreme poor people in the country has been reduced to 24.4% and 12.9% respectively (GOB-GED, 2015). It is not yet clear whether the Social Security Policy has been finalised based on the basis of newly accepted NSSS Paper. As a result, rooms are still left for affirmative manoeuvring. It is obvious that finalisation and the implementation of the policy are time-consuming, but there is no reason to believe that it is far off. But the directions for financing the whole scheme and implementation process of the policy are still unclear. It is expected that as a country that is progressing towards the status of a 'middle-income' country and constitutionally promises to be a 'Welfare state' (GOB (1), 2011: Article, 15 of the Constitution) the proper implementation of the national Social Security Policy will be deemed to be one of the essential conditions. Keeping that in mind, the aim of this essay is to present some recommendations on the

formulation of a forward looking National Social Security Strategy or the Social Security Policy conducive for a nascent welfare state aspiring to achieve middle income country's economic status.

Though there is ample scope to speak on the social security or safety net programs in effect, this discussion will only touch on the context of the existing Social Safety Net Program issues without going into details. The main discussion will be devoted on the implementation of the proposed 'Universal National Pension System' and the rationale and argument for it. The issues discussed in the paper are divided into two. The first part deals with the existing NSS programme and in the second part discusses the issues of proposed 'pension scheme' and alternative resource avenues by mobilising 'Zakat Fund' (the compulsory contributions by a devout Muslim to the poor) for pro-poor safety net have been elaborated. Discussion on a 'life-cycle oriented social security' and old age pension issues received special attention in the recently accepted Social Security Strategy. But the discussion has not been followed or complemented with appropriate policy commitment. A roadmap of the national pension policy could have been incorporated in the strategy paper-that has not been done with a clear programme mapping. But useful information and data needed to set up a system of national citizen pension has found prominence in the strategy paper. The objective of the current discussion will be towards starting a fruitful conversation on setting up of a pension system for all citizens above a certain age in addition to the government servants and the poorest in the society. The introduction of a universal and comprehensive pension system for all senior citizens would be a way forward in fulfilling the constitutional obligation of seeing Bangladesh as a 'welfare state'

PART-1

Reorganisation of the existing social security programme

The social security programme that are presently in effect are stuck in conventional mire. These programmes are completely bereft of any creativity and are in the grips of corruption and mismanagement. It would be wasteful and meaningless to carry on these programmes in the same manner without initiating major changes to its present conditions. Though the social safety net programmes in this country had gained some momentum after 1990, the history of social security in the form of aid at the time of disaster, special works programmes and food security is not new in this country. But the new phase of this programme as part of sustainable poverty reduction and development at the grassroots has yet to get a powerful and transparent organisational level and structure. At present, the budget for social security and safety net is allocated for 145 programs that are under 23 ministries and departments. This allocated amount in the national budget 2015-16 is about TK. 30,000 crores and it is claimed that the programs will benefit 32 percent of the intended population (GOB-GED, 2015 and MJF, 2015). Both government and non-government evaluations have already pointed out many shortcomings and lapses. Previously in an evaluation of 30 social security programs, which claimed to have incorporated 24.5% of the intended population. It was found that 18% of those were not even qualified for inclusion in the program (MJF, 2015). They were incorporated through various means of corruption and committing irregularities. Analysis of the expenses of the pension of government servants and 5 life-cycle based programs which are supposed to hand over cash funded from the national treasury under the NSS and safety net shows that in the 2015-16 budget, the estimated expense

towards covering 35.7 million beneficiaries will be 345 billion taka. Of this 212 billion will be distributed to those directly benefited. The remaining 133 billion will go towards the expenses in the implementation and administration of the programmes, such a high administrative expense is not acceptable by any standards (GOB (3), 2015). Besides, the corruption, wastage, political abuse and workplace indiscipline prevalent in the social security program under the food assisted development programmes are impediments to quality control and achieving proper and definite goals. So, for the programme to achieve definite goals, several steps need to be taken to rid it of three negative factors of the prevalent clique. One: stopping the illegal and unjust practice of political patronage in delivering safety net; two: minimising excessive relief orientation and transforming those into economically sustainable development programmes and three: stopping indifference, benign tolerance of irregularities, and negligence by the local administration and political leaders towards the prevailing corruption and mismanagement and establishing a strict, transparent and efficient management system. In spite of various limitations so far mentioned, the experiences Bangladesh cumulatively gained are not negligible. All these experiences can lead to redesign the programmes for greater good of the society in an efficient way. The study attempts to formulate few recommendations on the basis of wider discussion on the issue in various civil society forums some of those are furnished underneath may be considered for reorganising the system towards eradication of poverty and a sound social protection system to function with efficiency and economy.

- It should be seriously reviewed whether the existing 145 programs under 23 ministries and departments can be brought under one single 'lead ministry and a

maximum of six administrative ministries. In this case, the leading ministry could be that of Finance, planning and the cabinet division and the administrative ministries could be those of Local Government, Disaster Management, Social Welfare, Women and Children's Affairs, Education (two different ministries under Education) and Health and Family Welfare.

- Instead of increasing the number of programmes, they could be divided into a few main clusters/categories and be implemented through following definite goals and work plan under individual ministers. The main Clusters/categories could be.
- Emergency relief during disaster (Local government and Disaster Management)
- Relief and providing sustainable development support for the extreme poor, disabled, shelter less and floating persons (Local Government, Social-Welfare and Women and Children's Affairs)
- Universal education and universal health programs with the aim of guarantying education and health for all with special provision for the under privileged (Local Government, Two separate ministries of Education and Health and Family welfare)
- Assistance for housing and shelter (Local Government-LGED and Housing and Settlement Department)
- Developing universal citizen pension on the basis of income tax and NSSS (Finance Planning and Local Government) -NBR

In the first category, emergency relief for people or areas that are victims of floods, storms, cyclones, tidal waves,

earthquakes and other disasters will be incorporated. The second category will include social security programs for the extreme poor, disabled, handicapped and the jobless. The third category will require bulk of the expenses and also cover the vast number of people. This will benefit the poor, lower-middle class, middle class equally. The state will bear the entire expenses of education and related costs up to the secondary level for all. The budget will include expenses for the school uniform, lunch and all education equipment. Another one of the main services of this category will be healthcare. All the citizen of the country (infants to elderly, men-women rich and poor) will be brought under the network of guaranteed healthcare of the state in his or her respective areas. Primary healthcare and special treatment will be paid for by the state from its NSS budget. The fourth category will take care of providing support for public and private housing projects, home-loans. Low rent housing for the lower middle class and shelter homes for the homeless. At least planning and design of housing even for private initiatives could be ensured under a decentralised mechanism. The last and fifth category will be the guaranteed pension scheme for all senior citizens of the country after a certain age as determined in the policy to be known as 'National Pension Scheme' or Universal National Pension.

Social security programs of mid or high-income countries with comparatively lower-level poverty incidence usually have a structure similar to the one outlined above. So, at the dawn of becoming a middle-income country, the national social security program structure needs to be remodelled. Our next discussion will be an elaboration on the fifth category-the structure of the national pension scheme and its potential funding arrangements.

PART-2

National Pension or State Pension for Senior Citizens

In this country only government service holders- both civil and military are entitled to retirement pension. In recent times, service holders of universities and other autonomous bodies have been added alongside government service holders to the pension system. Therefore, people above the age of 60 years who have held a government job for 25 years receive a pension at a rate based on their last drawn salary amount. They can receive this pension at one go or monthly akin to a salary. After the death of the service holder, their husband/wife and children are entitled to the same. There are private funds and gratuity schemes for the corporate sector or non-government organisations. As per condition of jobs, they receive the benefits after they leave or retire from the job (Myian, Undated).

But there are many in the country who contribute to the development of the society, state and the country during their working life but are not included in the pension system or retirement benefit schemes. At the end of their active lifetime, they cannot live a secure, certain and normal life. There are those among them who regularly paid all taxes when they were fit for work and earned above the tax paying income ceiling. For 10-30 years they have to pay income taxes to the government. Then there are also those who contributed to the development and progress of the country but their earnings were not within the income-tax range. But they have to lead an unbearable life after they no longer have the capability to continue work and earn. The average life expectancy of a Bangladeshi is now 70 years (GOB (2),2015). After reaching the age of 60, if they do not have adequate savings, all senior citizens have to be dependent on the mercy and patronage of others. There is a general trend and tendency to save money by all means in right and wrong ways while in work, so that one

does not have to depend on others in their old age. The state can start a system of cash pension after certain age and ensure health care for all the senior citizens. These two support systems can be given a universal form and structure. A mixed system of insurance and pension can also be established by having arrangement with employers and credible financial institutions.

Universal structure

The structure can be formed through the assimilation of the income tax and the pension system. There can be a social security registration for all working people in the country employed in government-non-government, formal-informal, independent, self-employed and people in their own vocations and businesses. This could be connected to the national identification system (ID Card) that is in effect now. That is, everyone will also have an income tax registration connected to his/her national identification registration and that may also subsequently provide a 'Social Security' number. This can be one of the primary bases of the citizen pension and income taxpaying citizens could be registered first. A certain sum will be contributed to the pension fund on behalf of every income tax paying citizen from the amount of tax they pay. In this way, a close connection can be built between the retirement pension and the income tax. This means, senior citizens will be entitled to a general amount (say 10000 taka per month for every one over 60/62 years of age) but the amount will be increased further based on the proportion of income tax paid by them during their active and working life.

At present, the principal amount of pension for government employees is 90% of the net salary drawn and total amount accumulated will be equal to the amount multiplied by TK 230. The difference of amount among the pensioners will be determined on the last salary drawn by them and it is

going to create a difference in the total pension amount among different categories of employees. In this case of newly suggested national pension system, it is not the earning or salary that will create the difference in the total amount of retirement pension benefit, but the amount of income tax paid to the government during the active working life as well as contribution to other insurance schemes. As a large number do not belong to the salaried service or employment.

Many people in the country working as doctors, consultants, lawyers, NGO workers, small businessmen, those employed in the services and working independently pay taxes then again and a large number do not. Then there are also some who pay a nominal amount just to dodge the punishment under law or just to register them as tax payers. In reality, those who pay taxes end up being on the losing side in the culture of our society. Because, those who evade the taxes, do have remote possibility for punishment. Those who do pay taxes and within the tax net are not benefitted in any way for paying taxes rather they are faced with many odds under the different rules and regulations. They do not get any direct benefits from the state in exchange for the taxes they pay. They are not entitled to any earmarked or special healthcare for themselves or their family, their children's education, preference in any public utility or recognition from the state. After retirement, they are not entitled to claim any social security either. They have to depend on their children or their savings if they have any. From the tension about uncertain future, a tendency to accumulate wealth through legal and illegal means is rampant and aggressive. If a system of citizen pension in recognition of taxes and other contributions were there, a tax paying culture would have been taken firm root also ensure a life free of tension and worry for the law abiding citizen.

Therefore, a system of universal pension for all, side by side with the government employees can be created by combining income tax payment and retirement pension scheme for all. A similar system has developed into a mature and organised form in West European and Scandinavian countries through changes and reforms over a period of hundred years since the 1920s (Dixson and Scheurell, 2002).

Funding the pension system

A certain portion of the tax amount payable to the government in any given year could be saved in the state pension fund. The state can invest this money in different profitable financial programmes. In this way, a handsome fund could be accumulated by the state for meaningful investment. The number for tax payer citizens will rise rapidly in the country. On the other hand, social insecurity and uncertainty will decrease. A self-respecting society will be created. Every citizen will be brought under the working network after finishing his or her education. They will also be included in the social security and retirement pension system at the same time. The state may be able to receive taxes from the working citizens at least for 40 years and have to pay them retirement pensions for a maximum of 10-15 years.

Pension through 'Social insurance' scheme can also be started through a state guarantee to bring in people under a pension/insurance scheme on their own voluntary contributions. Any person involved in any work can receive pension at a definite rate based on the premium after the age of 60 being member of the scheme. Husband/wife or underage children can also be made part of the pension scheme.

At Present, The biggest portion of government expenses goes towards the wages, allowances, pension and gratuity

for civil and military personnel. The total number of government employees-both military and civilian-is not more than 2 million in the country. Analysing the 2015-16 national Budget Document (Statement-4, combined non-development expenditures fund) and report 6 (non-development expenditures-ministries and departments), the allocated amount for civilian employees is 45,365 crore 92 lakh 29 thousand taka. If the pensions and gratuity amount of 11,584 crore 37 lakh 56 thousand taka allocated in 2015-16 budget is added, the amount stands at 56,940 crore 85 lakh 50 thousand taka. The greater portion of taka 17,961 crore 91 lakh 50 thousand allocated for the armed forces is also that of wages, allowances, pensions and gratuity GOB (4),2015).

It is said that 3.1 million out of total 160 million people in the country have tax (TIN) registration. Of this, only 1.1 million actually pay taxes (Daily Prothom Alo-September 30,2015). Till last year, government employees did not have to pay taxes on their salary incomes-that has been changed recently. Now, they too have to pay taxes on their salary incomes. The wages and allowance of ministers and MPS are exempted from paying taxes for some special reasons. The National Board of Revenue has set a goal of collecting taxes of taka 64,971 crore on the income and profit of individuals and establishments. The target for collection of Value Added Tax (VAT) is 64.262 crore 91 lakh taka. The first category of tax is collected from individuals and organisations directly and the second category tax is on everyone irrespective of rich and poor. In total the government hopes to collect 2, 08,443 crore 29 lakh 96 thousand taka from the NBR taxes, non-NBR source taxes and non-tax incomes of which 74.902 crore 76 lakh 52 thousand will be spent on government employees belong to civil and military services (GOB (4),2015). This expenditure structure of the government is not logical. The

common people of the country do not pay different category of taxes for supporting the government and government employees only. If the services and benefits a citizen can claim in lieu of taxes and other obligations they fulfil are taken into consideration, then a massive change to the current structure will be needed. In future, the primary consideration for pension should not only be the government service-the proper payment of tax as a civic duty needs to be given the top most priority along with government service. Therefore, as **the first step towards establishing a universal citizen tax, a proper idea needs to be developed to bring all tax payers under the retirement pension system.** The citizen pension system needs to be strengthened through reforms in other safety net and social security programmes as a middle-income welfare state. There is no alternative but to go for universalisation of state benefit as far as possible. Only 1-2% of the tax paid by individuals can be set aside for creating the pension fund from the next financial year. A pension system for those above 60 who have paid taxes regularly in the preceding 10 years can be started from 2018-19. This is how it can begin and by 2020 the system can be finalised for fuller implementation.

At the same time, Work should also begin to launch a single national social security and social insurance system for income tax payers first and gradually a national insurance scheme and national citizen pension in accordance with the national social security policy can be started by formulating a road map. The government needs to formulate a transparent and feasible road map to this end and create an independent commission to monitor and assist in the process of formulation and implementation of the policy. The permanent pay commission and social security and pension commission can be integrated into a single entity for initiating the reform.

Alternative funding for the social security programs for the extreme poor

At present, taka 30,000 crore has been allocated for the social safety net system in exchange for cash and food grains. If other social security program, especially the national pension system is started, then a part of the tax revenue will be shifted for that from the existing safety net. This might apparently pose a threat for the current programs or create an extra pressure on the budget, but in reality, it is not however, this can be combated in two ways. One: if the universal pension system is started in the country, then the separate allowance for senior citizens as well as the pension fund for government employees could be merged with National Pension system. Two: Separate allocation for the funding of social security of the extreme poor might become negligible and smaller. Three: The money for supporting extreme poor can be collected from other alternative sources with proper incentives.

A large portion of relatively affluent citizen of the country pay Zakat as part of their religious obligation according to shariah dictum. More people in this country pay zakat than those who pay income taxes. There is no registration for those who pay Zakat and the Zakat system is not connected with any government programme. At present, a nominal rebate is given for the amount of Zakat paid to the fund of the Islamic Foundation. If the government allow further incentives in this case, the society and the Zakat payers will both be benefited and encouraged. The state may find a new avenue with an alternative funding source for the social safety net programme of the extreme poor by utilising the social capital and people will be encouraged voluntarily to donate the Zakat amount to the GOB fund.

A big portion of those who pay taxes at present, also contribute Zakat due to religious reasons. Zakat under the prevailing situation is not delivered in an organised and

Islamic way; the society is not fully benefited from it as expected. On the other hand, it creates an additional anxiety for taxpayers. There are doubts about giving Zakat at the rate of 2.5% of savings on top of paying a considerable sum for taxes. This brings a sense of hesitation and guilt both in many minds. There are conflicted between the punishment for not paying taxes and Allah's wrath for not honouring the fifth pillar of Islam. If the state takes responsibility, a citizen can be relieved of both-his civic duty and his religious obligation. A system can be created by the social security programmes of the extreme poor, thus relieving pressure from the national budget. On the other hand, the Zakat payers will be satisfied for having done their religious obligations.

A simple recommendation for the matter can be as follows. Every TIN registered taxpayer will indicate/declare the amount of money s/he wants to contribute to the National Zakat fund on the income tax return forms. The Zakat amount will also be deposited with income tax separately. The government will ensure that the amount indicated by the taxpayer will be deposited in the Zakat fund under the TIN holder's name. In this way, those who pay taxes and contribute zakat regularly will get the opportunity-if s/he pays half of the 2.5% Zakat from his own money, then the government will pay the rest from the tax paid by him. Only condition is that the Zakat contributor has to be a taxpayer and the Zakat money does not exceed 20% of the tax amount. I am sure this combined fund will not be less, if not more, than the money allocated for safety net program every year. There should not be any other separate system of tax rebates (for paying Zakat to state) as it exists now.

To this end, the government can formulate the "national Zakat Collection and Utilization Policy" The National Board of Revenue can transfer the money collected as

Zakat contributions to GOB fund. A combined system can be created by the joint efforts of the Religious Affairs Ministry and the Social Security implementation ministry to determine how the money could be collected and utilised.

CONCLUSION

The reason behind this discussion is to create awareness about the importance of a national pension policy for the benefit of the society and economy of Bangladesh as a sustainable and forward-looking initiative. If we think of the social security issue separately, new impediments of funding and organisation may arise. So, the current income tax, newly proposed universal pension system and subsequently issue of proposed Zakat collection and its utilisation can be incorporated as part of the overall social security policy. The issue needs to be seen from the constitutional guarantee to ensure economic and social security of all citizens-not only government employees, but a system based on the principles of a caring society and discharge of civic duties-especially lawful payment of taxes. If the system is implemented, the scope of the country's income tax collection will rapidly increase. The general people will be relieved of worry and anxiety of sustenance of livelihood in an old age. This will bring peace and stability to social life.

Post script

Government of Bangladesh already declared a 'pension policy (2023) which does not quite match with the concept and practice of Universal Pension Policy, it is more of a 'deposit pension scheme'. The issue demands more elaborate discussion and analysis.

References:

- Dixon, John and Scheurell, Robert (eds) (2002) *The State of Social Welfare: The Twentieth Century in Cross National Review*, Westport, CT, Praeger.
- GOB (1) (2011) *Constitution of the Peoples Republic Of Bangladesh*, Dhaka Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Bangladesh
- GOB (2) (2015), *National Budget, 2015-2016*, Ministry of Finance, Dhaka Government of Bangladesh.
- GOB-GED (2015) *National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh*, General Economic Division, Bangladesh Planning Commission, Dhaka, Government of Bangladesh.
- Miyan, M. Alimullah (Undated) *Retirement and Pension System in Bangladesh*, IUBAT, Dhaka, email: miyan@iubat.edu

Note: The essay was published by *Manusher Jonna Foundation* (MJF) in 2016. The author was one of the Directors MJF and Co-convenor of National Social Security Council.

Participatory Embankment Maintenance and Resettlement of Destitutes: Learning from Self-Sustained Embankment Maintenance Program at Bhola*

Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the world's oldest flood plains and alluvial delta formed basically by the silt carried by three mighty rivers – the Ganges (Known as the Padma in Bangladesh), Brahmaputra and Meghna. These three mightily rivers flow towards the Bay of Bengal with all the ferocities and circulate the residue of their flow through a network of almost 150 rivers and tributaries of different length and breadth all over the country. As a result, Bangladesh is regarded as a basin which provides an outlet to the major riverine system of the sub-continent to reach to the sea on the one and also a country with well-knit web of rivers on the other. The major rivers together drain the rainfall of an area about 14 times that of the country itself.

The rivers and tributaries stretch over 2400kms of shore or coast line in two sides of their natural flow. Out of this 2400kms, 1200kms of coast line is identified vulnerable to severe inundation and erosion. Every year about 283 identified spots along the coastline covering 85 number of towns and river ports face the problem of erosion at

different proportion and intensity. An estimate shows that within the period of 34 years from 1954 to 1988, 2000kms of land had already been completely or partially lost into the rivers and deep water of the Bay of Bengal. Another survey of the Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre (BDPC) also reveals that within the period of four years from 1990 to 1994 almost 2.7 million people from 51 districts (out of total 64 districts) had been displaced from their ancestral land and 0.55 million acres of land had also been lost due to inundation and erosion.

Besides recurrent calamity of erosion (causing loss of property and shelter), seasonal flood, cyclone, tornado together with tidal surges with a ferocious regularity bring with them destruction, death and suffering on an unimaginable scale. According to the BDPC estimates, river erosion, tidal surges, cyclone, etc. so far made 3.5 million people homeless and every year on an average 0.25 million more are added to the total figure. These homeless and shelterless floating people take shelter in places like embankments, roadside marginal lands, railway stations, newly raised islands (*chars*), khas land, squatters and create resources shanties in the major cities.

The problems of erosion, flood, cyclone, tornado and tidal surges had been making the government and the world community concerned since the decade of 1950s. As a result of which the East Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (EPWAPDA) and later on the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) has been established for water resources management and also for building flood protection infrastructures in the country. Construction of cross dams and embankments have been considered as one of the appropriate infrastructures to protect coastal low land from flood water as well as occasional intrusion of saline water and tidal surges. During the last 35 years, various coastal districts have been

* **Source:**The Bangladesh Rural Development Studies Vol. IX No. 1 (1999)

Note:The authors are grateful to Mr Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director ,COAST Trust currently renamed as COAST Foundation and AHM Bazlur Rahman current Executive Director of BNNRC, Dhaka for supporting the study and arranging a National seminar with the participation of ministry of Water resources and BWDB. Masuda Akther Chowdhury , Joint Director BARD was Co-author of the essay.

brought within the protection of about 10,000kms of embankment. Both construction and maintenance of those embankments are very expensive. Though the construction could have been completed gradually within the range of 35 year, maintenance need arises every year with equal emphasis to all constructions hitherto made.

The article has been divided into two major sections. The first section basically describes the issues relating to embankment maintenance and embankment dwellers as well as various strategies to address the issues under a pilot program. The second section presents the empirical result of the pilot program along with some recommendations for replication elsewhere.

Statement of the Problem

- During the various construction phases huge quantities of arable land had been acquisitioned from private owners and the expensive venture of construction have been commissioned by mobilizing enormous amount of resources from various bilateral and multilateral donors and agencies. At present, maintenance of these huge area of embankment demands budgetary allocation of an unimaginable magnitudes which strain the scarce financial resources of the country. The operational status of most of the water resources infrastructure in Bangladesh is deficient due to the lack of proper and timely maintenance. To bridge the resource gap and also to establish an accountable system for operation and maintenance, currently the government is looking for a suitable arrangement with local accountability and supervision of beneficiaries may be promoted under a sustainable institutional framework. The water sector agencies currently responsible for

planning, construction and maintenance of water resources development infrastructures lack knowledge, experience and skill to involve the local people to plan, manage and supervise those infrastructures.

- The coastal embankment normally occupy an area of average 500ft. in width covering top of the embankment, river side and country side slopes and borrow-pit in both the sides. The slopes are in most cases illegally occupied by the homeless and displaced destitutes on the one hand and the borrow-pit lands by locally influentials on the other. Indiscriminate use and abuse of embankment by those people add to the damage to the embankment thus escalate the cost of maintenance work further. They make the routine maintenance difficult too, as the maintenance work is bound to damage many of the permanent structures erected by them on the embankment.
- A section of the lower level employees of the BWDB, local vested interest group, corrupt officials of general administration and law enforcing agencies have formed a vicious circle or a coalition of corruption which prevent the initiation of welfare oriented steps in the embankment area.
- It has been estimated that on an average 3.5 million destitute families live permanently and seasonally on the embankments throughout the country.
- In Bhola alone 12,000 landless families with over 60,000 population are forced to take shelter on 250km long coastal embankment surround the island.
- They are illegal occupants and a constant source of damage and deterioration to the embankment. They

rear cattle, plant trees like banana and papaya, grow bushes around their houses and make holes by themselves and also create safe abode for mice which make holes on the embankment.

- The rich and influential as well as the BWDB always keep these poor settlers under the threat of eviction. The rich, in the name of so called leases, use the borrow-pit and slopes for different purposes and damage the embankments without any consideration for its maintenance.

An Avenue Explored for Participatory and Low Cost Maintenance of Embankment

The landless and homeless people presently living on the embankment may be organized and engaged effectively for the maintenance work under certain conditions which may also be mutually beneficial. Under the present circumstances the poor settlers are enjoying the benefit of living on the embankment but do not maintain it. Because they feel that land in which they live does not belong to them. Being illegal occupants the threat of eviction from government as well as from the local influential always haunt them. Generally, properties irrespective of movable and immovable are best maintained when they are private and when they belong to the individuals. Having a piece of land for a shelterless embankment dweller is a life time dream. If some sorts of usufructuary property could be given to the landless settler already living on the embankment, it may create a sense of belongingness and thus responsibilities of maintenance may be vested on them.

The embankment and the adjacent land including apron and borrow-pit belong to the government. Those government land may be leased out to the embankment dwellers without cash money but with the condition to maintain the embankment according to the standard and specification set

by the BWDB. The above idea was mooted by a multi-disciplinary expert team commissioned by Asian Development Bank in 1996 (BETS/Euro. Consultant, 1996).

Genesis of a Pilot Project: The Self-Sustainable Embankment Maintenance Programme (SSEMP)

Under the second Bhola Irrigation Project (BHIP-II) the financial assistance aims at addressing the issue of strengthening the Operation and Maintenance (O&M) capabilities of the BWDB for incorporating beneficiary participation as an essential and integral part in the formulation and implementation of the project. Besides the BWDB, Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) is also involved in the BHIP-II from the very inception of the project. The BRDB has been implementing the rural credit programme for the small farmers and landless men and women in the project area. As the landless, the women and the marginal farmers were expected to form the core group of beneficiaries to be mobilized under the pilot project, it was expected that the BWDB would play a major complementary role parallelly with NGOs in organizing and mobilizing such target group (BETS/Euro Consultant July 1996). A pilot project was conceived keeping a lease maintenance agreement between the landless embankment dwellers and the BWDB under which the target group will enjoy the following facilities with the condition of maintaining the embankment.

The Benefit Package and Responsibilities Embodied in the Project are:

- They get a legal right to live and a sizeable plot of GOB land including borrow-pit which they can use for various income generating activities, such as production of paddy, vegetables, fishery, duck, poultry, etc.

- They will be helped by NGOs and the other GOB agencies for the improvement of the quality of their life and eradication of their poverty.
- They will also contribute to give labour to maintain and protect embankment from all sorts of damages and deteriorations which BWDB and NGOs will jointly supervise on the basis of a contract.

Three NGOs have been involved with the implementation of a pilot project called Self-sustained Embankment Maintenance Pilot Programme (SEMP) in Charfassion Thana of Bhola district. The three NGOs involved with the SEMP are Inter Life (Bangladesh), DORP and Action Aid (Bhola) presently Known as COAST Foundation.

Scope of Work by the NGOs

The general scope of work of the NGOs will include but not necessarily be restricted to the following:

- To mobilize, organize and train the embankment dweller families on their respective reaches/stretchers of embankment in various activities aimed at O&M of the embankment.
- To train the dweller families in various suitable income generating activities such as crop production, plantation, fish farming, duck rearing etc. which are non-harmful to the embankment.
- To organize of the embankment dweller families into manageable informal/pre-cooperative groups and propagate and motivate the embankment dweller families to come forward to execute lease maintenance agreement. They have to be made familiar and conversant with the contents of the lease maintenance agreement.

- To help the dweller families (in group) to do the required formalities such as applying for the lease and execution of the lease agreement and also be made familiar, through training, with the nature of embankment maintenance required of them, etc. (the standard and level given by BWDB).
- To extend help and cooperation to the BWDB personnel, as required, in demarcating the leased area of the embankment.
- To help the embankment dweller groups in proper utilization of the embankment and the adjacent acquired and without causing any physical damage for planting trees which otherwise will make whole on the embankment, and advise the dwellers to keep the embankment clear of bushes so that rats and other such animals cannot make holes on the embankment.
- To ensure that the dweller families maintain their stretches of the embankment regularly and in case of default BWDB will issue a warning notice. Then the NGOs will help motivate the families to come up to the satisfaction of BWDB.
- To organize and implement motivation techniques by arranging competition in matters of maintenance of embankment and other socio-economic activities between the groups.
- To train the dwellers in adopting and using improved variety seeds, fertilizer, pesticides etc. They will also train them in other economic activities such as duck, poultry, fish farming, etc. They will provide credit to the families for the purpose.
- To prepare their respective proposals on the basis of the followings:

- The stretch of the embankment to be covered should be long enough to gain relevant experience but short enough to guarantee proper implementation and management.
- As far as possible, the embankment dwellers should be involved in preparing the proposal.
- To make motivational effort during implementation of the project to shift the dwellers' houses from river side to the country-side of the embankment which will ensure better safety to them in case of cyclone and tidal bore etc. where it is possible.

Out of the total length of each stretch under each project proposal 50% will be given full project support in terms of investment, training, etc. The remaining will get only propagation, motivation and promotion of lease agreement support. The selected agencies are expected to contribute to improve overall socio-economic condition of the groups under the complete programmes. They will therefore, have a role in general awareness building, provision of safe drinking water, latrines, training and credit for income generating activities. Support in credit, infrastructure etc. will be made dependent on the progress of the groups in embankment maintenance and also use and improvement of embankment plus adjacent land.

The system of judging the progress of improvement of the embankment will be developed by the different groups of the lessees. The system will take the form of competitions on who is the best caretaker of the embankment. Competitions among families of one group will be organized by the group leaders/executive committees. Competition among the groups on similar issue will be organized by a joint committee of the embankment lessees. The selected agencies will help to organize such

competitions. The competitions will take shape of festivity where prominent public leaders/government officials may be invited to distribute prizes.

Scope and objectives of the Study

The present study is designed to assess the experiences gained and lessons learnt from the area allocated to the Action Aid in Charfassion Thana of Bhola district. The Action Aid started work within an area of 11km in Char Manika union of Charfassion Thana since September 1996. Later on the embankment area has been reduced to 9.52km due to the legal problem arose between the BWDB and the original owners of embankment adjacent land. The Action Aid has organized all the 480 families living within the area of 9.52km of embankment. The study is confined within the area and beneficiaries covered by the Action Aid only. In short, the study has been designed with the following specific objectives in mind:

- Documentation of various process of the project activities so far undertaken;
- Critical assessment of the impact of the project on the maintenance of embankment as well as the quality of life and living of the people;
- Formulation of recommendations by identifying the strength and weakness of the project; and
- Exploration of potential for replicating the model elsewhere in the country.

The SSEMP Model: An Assessment of Major Activities

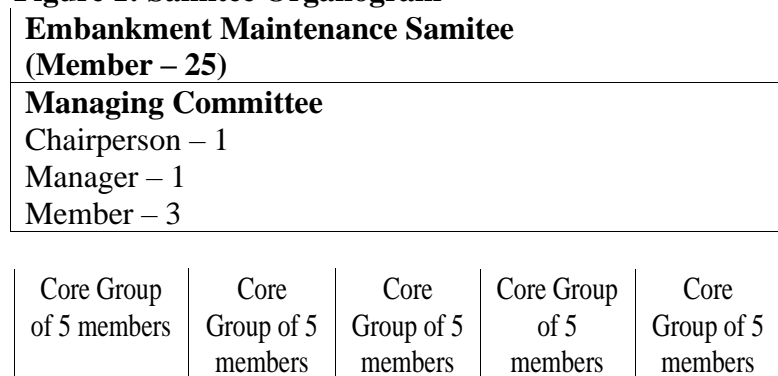
Among the three NGOs (DPRP, Inter Life and Action Aid), former Action Aid Bhola and present COAST Foundation started implementing the programme in Char Manika Union which covers BWDB embankment kilometer post 119 to 130, a total area of 11km. During the initiation of

the programme in July 1996 in all 480 families were living within the 11km embankment areas allotted to Action Aid. All the 480 families were brought within the fold of 19 informal group organizations called by individual Embankment Samitees by November 1996. Ten organizations with 255 families receive input support and various development interventions and the rest organizations with 225 families did not get project intervention except the lease agreement.

Organization and Management of Groups

Twenty five beneficiary families form a group organization. The family is represented by a single member, male or female. There are eight female groups and eleven male groups each having 25 members with only one exception having 30 members. Each group of 25 member divide themselves into 5 member core groups. One of the five is designated as group leader. On the other hand, a five-member Managing Committee is elected by all the 25 members of the Samitees. A nine-member Central Coordination Committee has also been formed to deal with the matters of mutual interest at the higher levels.

Figure 1: Samitee Organogram



of the Samitees, to look after the management from amongst five, one is elected as chairperson and another one as manager. The other three remain as members of the committee. The chairperson calls and presides over the meetings and is held responsible for overall supervision of the group. The manager keeps accounts, drafts proceedings of the meetings and preserve the books of records. Both the chairperson and the manager also maintain liaison with project personnel. The group meetings are held weekly in a pre-fixed day and time.

Saving and Loan Activities

The group members regularly saves some money with the group. They already agreed to save a minimum amount of Tk. 5.00 each week. The weekly savings are deposited during the weekly meeting to the manager. Every member holds a passbook which keeps records of all financial transactions of every individual member who carries it. Later on the project personnel collect the money from the manager and deposit them in the Samitee's account. Until December, 1997 they saved a total amount of Tk. 1,48,645.00 which they never thought of before joining the Samitee.

The credit programme has also been started with 10 Samitees. So far 206 members were brought under micro-credit programme until December 1997. A total amount of Tk. 9,10,600.00 has been distributed and Tk. 4,28,800.00 has already been realized through regular weekly installments. The rate of recovery is 100% according to the realization target set by the project. The beneficiaries invested the credit money in ten different areas of income generating activities best suited to their traditional occupations as well as local condition. The following tables may be seen for general assessment of organizational as well as economic activities of the Embankment Maintenance Samities formed under the sponsorship of Action Aid/COAST Foundation.

Table-1: Organizational Activities Including Savings and Credit Programme of 19 SSEMP Somitees**A. Samitees Covered by Investment**

Sl. No.	Name of Samitees	Date of Formation	Male/Female	Total member	Total savings (in Tk.)	Disbursed	Recovered	Loanees
1	Banga Tir	24.10.96	F	25	18,125	103,300	52,870	22
2	Shapla	20.10.96	F	25	11,070	69,400	25,695	19
3	Januna	20.10.96	F	25	10,715	47,000	26,200	13
4	Golap	04.11.96	F	25	15,075	122,400	52,420	25
5	Meghan	04.11.96	F	25	15,940	86,000	43,675	22
6	Jaba	06.11.96	F	25	18,965	15,300	70,515	26
7	Upakul	12.11.96	F	25	15,655	79,000	46,450	17
8	China Mul	13.11.96	M	25	17,605	110,400	53,185	22
9	Suezipur	15.11.96	M	25	12,480	64,800	21,745	20
10	B. Gauranga	24.11.96	M	25	13,015	74,000	36,125	20
	Total			25.0	148,645	9,10,600	4,28,880	206

B. Non-invested Samitees

11	Joie	05.09.96	F	25	-	-	-	-
12	Gazir Bad	05.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
13	Shimul	06.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
14	Akata	06.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
15	Shatata	07.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
16	Paduma	07.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
17	Kank capa	08.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
18	Surja moki	08.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
19	Sagar par	09.09.96	M	25	-	-	-	-
	Total			22.5	-	-	-	-

Source: SSEMP (COAST) Jan, 1998.

Table-2: Areas of Investment and Credit Programme

Sl. No.	Areas of Investment	No. of Loanees	Amount of Loan	Percentage
1	Hilsha Fish Catching	83	2,70,200	23
2	Small Business	100	2,49,000	27
3	Agriculture/Farming	45	1,10,000	12
4	Goat Rearing	14	27,600	03
5	Rickshaw	13	29,400	03
6	Paddy Husking	02	2,000	22
7	Fishery	04	1,000	11
8	Interest Free Loan	85	93,000	10
9	Cow Rearing	70	1,91,400	21
	Total	416	9,10,600	99.33

Note: All the loanees received loan more than once.

Awareness, advocacy and other Social Development

Among all the awareness, advocacy and social development programmes, training activity initially received utmost priority. So far nine separate training courses were arranged which ultimately resulted in initiating a new culture among the beneficiaries. They are now able to think and act differently in normal and crisis time. For example, in normal time they are thinking of engaging themselves in multiple economic activities and in crisis time, whether man made or natural, they stand united to face them which was unprecedented before. They have also become aware of maintaining various social development programmes such as education, health, sanitation, etc. The following table may be seen to observe the training activities of the project.

Table-3: Training Activities

SI. No	Areas of Training	Duration (in days)	Male	Female
1	Team Building	5	75	175
2	Leadership Development	5	06	14
3	Primary Health Care	5	75	175
4	Homestead Gardening	3	05	20
5	Embankment Maintenance	3	75	175
6	Livestock Development	3	10	30
7	IGA (Poultry, duck, goat, cow, fish culture)	3	75	125
8	Disaster Management	3	75	175
9	Social Forestry	2	75	175

A base line survey was conducted in April, 1996 just before the initiation of the project. The social and economic condition reflected in the survey was very depressing. Within one year remarkable progress have been achieved in various aspects of social development. Table-4 may be seen to assess the progress in the social sector. Five adult learning centers are being run with the help of the project in which the adult males and females learn how to read and write. The embankment dwellers are eager to start one primary school within their vicinity for their children. Because primary school is too far to send their small kids as they were saying with utter frustration. They were also asking for more tubewells and ring slab latrines during discussions. The male members were asking for increasing the amount of credit to enable them to acquire fishing boats and nets. The female members seconded the view and seemed quite happy with their new role in the family and the society.

Table-4: Comparative Situation in Social Development

SI. No.	Area of Intervention	Situation reflected in the base line survey April, 1996 (In %)*	Situation reflected in the present survey December, 1997 (In %)
1	Population able to sign	24	60
2	Able to read and write	07	20
3	Diarrhoeal incidence	34	20
4	Knowledge of ORS preparation/use	62	100
5	Use of pit or	09	50

6	water sealed latrine Adoption of family planning	57	Accurate figure not available
7	Disaster preparedness	17	100
8	Use of safe water	Not clear	100
9	Paying of illegal taxes to mastans/ influentials	05	None

Lease Agreement and Maintenance of Embankment

Apart from organizational and socio-economic upliftment the core function of the project consists mainly of two activities: (1) Arranging lease agreement between the BWDB and the illegal but landless occupants live on the embankment which will offer them usufructuary right on government land and also land adjacent to embankment; and (2) In return the lessee families and samitees will take up responsibilities of preventive maintenance of embankment earmarked for them.

The lease maintenance agreement for selected stretches of the embankment was handed over in February and March 1997. But it took altogether three to four more months to take possession of land. Problems are still there, as a result of which all the claims of land as per the agreement could not be brought under lessess's possession. Table-5 may be seen for assessing the lease maintenance situation up to August, 1997. The situation was improved at the end of the year and detail land-wise possession may be seen in Table-5.

Table-5: Position of Lease Management and Agricultural Land Under Possession of Embankment Samittee Members (land in acres)

SI No.	Name of Samittees	Male/Female	Total members	Total land		Per capita land	
				Allocation	Possession	Allocation	Possession
1	Banga Tir	F	25	19.72	19.72	0.74	0.78
2	Shapla	F	25	26.40	26.40	1.05	1.05
3	Januna	F	25	24.10	24.10	0.95	0.95
4	Golap	F	25	27.09	15.00	1.11	0.60
5	Meghan	F	25	27.02	27.02	1.08	1.08
6	Jaba	F	25	16.57	09.00	0.55	0.30
7	Upakul	F	25	20.52	20.52	0.82	0.82
8	China Mul	M	25	34.72	34.72	1.38	1.38
9	Suezpur	M	25	20.09	20.09	0.80	0.80
10	B. Gauranga	M	25	25.94	25.09	1.03	1.03
Total and average per capita land			25.5	242.17 (0.94)	222.52 (0.87)	-	-
11	Joie	F	25	14.76	-	-	-
12	Gazir Bad	M	25	14.18	-	-	-
13	Shimul	M	25	18.45	18.45	0.73	0.73
14	Akata	M	25	13.22	13.22	0.52	0.52
15	Shatata	M	25	14.76	14.76	0.58	0.58
16	Paduma	M	25	13.43	13.43	0.53	0.53
17	Kank capa	M	25	10.46	10.46	0.40	0.40
18	Surja moki	M	25	15.33	05.00	0.62	0.20
19	Sagar par	M	25	15.10	04.00	0.60	0.06
Total and average per capita land			25.5	129.45 (0.57)	78.83 (0.43)	-	-

Note: Land shows in this table exclude slope, pond, top of the embankment and village side land.

Source: COAST Trust, Jan, 1988

Out of 19 samitees six are facing various problems in getting possession of the agricultural land which have been legally given to them under the lease agreement. It was initially thought that each of the family may get average 0.58 acres of land for their use. After the implementation of the lease agreement it has been found that the quantity of land in different settlement area vary from place to place. In spite of variation, after the recovery of the total quantity of land from the possession of previous occupants of influential and rich social background per capita cultivable holdings have become even higher than the original estimate made by the Technical Assistant Team (Table-6 may be seen).

Nature of Problems and Ways Followed to Resolved the Land Problem

Land is such a precious commodity in Bangladesh for which people are even ready to spare their lives. Especially in the newly emerged char areas bloody conflicts of interest between the new lessees and old possession holders or lessees are often found. Problems so far faced were of generally three types. Firstly, in the initial periods of the project the destitute settlers could not be made believe that they would be given lands to live on. Secondly, the rural rich and the influential who were either former lessees or illegally enjoying the harvest of those land in collaboration with the local officials left no stone unturned to retain their old control. Thirdly, (as reported in the field) the corrupt lower level officials of BWDB, some petty officials at the district and the thana land office and the officials of the department of fisheries did not like the idea and indirectly tried to sabotage the programme by applying various delay tactics, misrepresentation of facts, etc. Ultimately all those problems have been overcome through the direct intervention from high officials of the BWDB, Deputy

Commissioner, Thana Nirbahi Officer and Superintendent of police and Officer-in-Charge of the local Thana.

It has been found that 22 local persons created problems of various types and tried to prevent the poor people in taking possession of the leased land. Out of them, 16 are actively related with three main political parties (11 with ruling party AL, 3 with Jatiya Party and 2 with BNP). Among the litigants there was one Union Parishad (UP) Chairmen and two UP members as well. At some stage the encounter took a fierce turn, people from both sides were preparing to confront each other with lethal weapons. One of the key project personnels was kidnapped. Few court cases were also instituted.

The Action Aid personnel handled the crisis very efficiently. They mobilized public opinion, established close contact with relevant government officials and maintained constant touch with local and national press as well as with local political activist. They held meetings and public rallies explaining the objectives of the project and also to show their strength to the opposing parties on the one hand and bringing courage and confidence to the poor settlers on the other. The Deputy Commissioner Bhola, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Thana Nirbahi Officers, Assistant Commissioner (Land) and police officials visited the area and assured the settlers of all possible legal help. The BWDB high officials clearly and quickly finished the lease formalities. The Action Aid officials maintained a constant vigilance over the whole situation and monitored the day to day events. Still two court cases are pending trial which the COAST Foundation (former COAST Trust) is regularly pursuing.

Ownership and Uses of Land

As of August 1997, in all 430 families living on embankment got land in their possession. It was expected

that 50 more would will also get possession soon. After getting possession of land and right to shelter legitimately on the embankment, they are now free from the threat of eviction. The borrow-pit area was brought under paddy cultivation. Many of the families did not have plough, bullocks and necessary fund for other inputs. In some cases it was found that those lands are leased out on share cropping arrangement. One of the families is found cultivating almost 3 acres of land on share cropping arrangement. Some of the members are also planning to start small fishery project. There are 41 ponds covering an area of almost 12 acres. The World Food Programme already approved a project to re-excavate 11 of them for pisciculture. Massive plantation with the help of project has also begun in the slopes. Presently, BWDB leased out whole of the embankment slope to the Department of Forestry. They planted trees few years back on the embankment. The trees are matured by now and the department has been requested to harvest the trees as per the agreement. The local forest office is waiting for the decision from the head quarter for last six months.

The latest position of land distribution among 19 Embankment Maintenance Samittees along with the quantity of paddy produced in the borrow-pit lands may be seen in Table-6.

Table-6: Types of Land in Possession and Quantity of Paddy Produced in Last Amon Season by 19 Samittees

Names of Samittee	Land in Possession (in decimal)				Total	Paddy Produced (in mds.)	Types
	Slope	Pond	Cultivable	Other			
Upakul	410	-	800	841	2052	106	Invested
Meghna	540	-	1620	542	2702	143	“
Banga Tir	394	-	1180	398	1972	185	“
Chinnamul	664	711	1407	710	3492	184	“
Shapla	525	50	1575	490	2640	138	“
Suezpar	401	-	1200	408	2009	128	“
Jamuna	402	-	1446	562	2410	124	“
B. Gauranga	518	25	620	500	1663	67	“
Golap	515	-	525	510	1550	Not Available	“
Joba	331	-	900	350	1581	“	“
Sagarpar	300	-	240	540	1080	“	Non-invested
Surjamukhi	300	-	-	325	625	“	“
Kanakchapa	201	-	100	615	916	“	“
Padma	268	-	650	425	1343	“	“
Satata	293	265	585	324	1467	89	“
Akata	264	-	792	266	1322	83	“
Gazir Bad	283	135	-	344	762	Not Available	“
Joie	300	-	240	325	865	“	“
Shimul	368	90	1192	195	1845	106	“
Total	7276	1276	15172	8571	32295	1353	“
Average per family	15.15	2.65	31.60	17.85	67.28	2.9	“

Source: The COAST Trust (later renamed as COAST Foundation), January, 1998

Embankment Maintenance Activities

The lease maintenance agreement for selected stretches of the embankment was handed over only in March 1997 and it took another four months to take possession of land. Therefore, the maintenance work did not start as planned earlier by the project. In the meantime, all the equipment necessary for earth cutting and labeling have been given to them. They were also given training on the maintenance work. All the embankment dwellers made aware of the effect of the harmful tree plantations such as banana, papaya, etc. on the embankment.

A brisk preparation has been seen in the month of August 1997 for starting the maintenance work. The first drive of maintenance work have been completed in October, 1997. The second schedule for maintenance was made in March, 1998 just before the monsoon.

Though 11 km embankment area was earmarked for 480 members under 20 Embankment Maintenance Society, the area has been reduced to 9 km later on. Out of these 9 km maintenance work has been carried out in 6 km area of embankment till January 1998. Ten of the societies belong to the invested area took part in maintenance and nine other societies of the non-invested area did not comply to their maintenance obligation during the period under review.

Regarding the standard and quality of maintenance, we could not compare the Water Development Board's findings. As to our assessment, the maintenance work so far done were of poor standard. The area covered by invested societies has been found relatively clean but the area under non-invested societies were found unclean. Moreover, bushes, Jungles and many other harmful plants were still being grown in those areas.

We had very fruitful and open discussions with the leaders of various societies belong to the invested area including

the project personnel. All the discussions were held on the embankment sites. In all the discussions embankment society members admitted the fact of their sub-standard maintenance performance without any question. While analyzing the reason they brought the following issues which were responsible for their sub-standard performance:

- Many of the societies and members individually did not follow the guidelines provided by the project. For example, all the members of the respective societies did not work together at the same day and time. Individual member finished his/her part of maintenance at his/her own time. As a result, uniformity in leveling and compaction has not been maintained.

It is agreed that in future maintenance work has to be arranged in one fixed day for all the members. No individual member will be allowed to work isolatedly.

- In some cases the member who received training on embankment maintenance did not participate in actual maintenance work. Somebody else from his/her family did the actual maintenance work. As non-trained persons participated in the maintenance work, they were not in a position to follow the project's specification and instruction.

In future, non-trained members of the family would not be allowed to participate in the work it should be only under the supervision of the trained person.

- Maintenance work has been started after almost six month of the training programme. As a result, many of the participants might have forgotten the messages of the training and ultimately resulted in poor quality of work.

There was a request from the beneficiaries to the project authority to arrange a one-day refresher's course just one week before the next maintenance is implemented.

- No inspection has been done from the BWDB during and after the first maintenance work.

The beneficiaries requested the project personnel to bring the BWDB officials during maintenance for spot supervision and guidance in future.

The Views of the Members of the Non-Invested Area

There are nine Embankment Maintenance Societies within a total of 225 members in the area designated as non-invested area. According to the latest land distribution figure as depicted in table-6, nine of the societies of non-invested area (Sagar par, Surjamuki, Kanak Chapa, Padma, Satata, Akata, Gajir Badh, Joie and Shemul) got allocated of 102 acres of different categories of land. They also signed contact to maintain an embankment area of little over 3 km. But ultimately they did not take part in the maintenance work. They also did not remove many of the harmful structures, harmful plants and trees and clear up the bushes from the embankment within their command.

While contacted, some of their leaders said that they would start maintenance work soon but they had lot of many other things to sort out with the project. Two of the issues came up very dominantly in the discussion.

Firstly, many of their members did not get possession of the land given to them officially. Two of the societies namely Surjamuki and Gazir Badh did not get any borrow-pit land. It was decided earlier that Water Development Board will install boundary pillers to demarcate the land allotted to them. No boundary pillar or demarcation pillar has been given either from the Project or from the Board

and as a result they were confused and still the insecurity or threat of losing land were haunt them.

Secondly, there prevails a sense of deprivation and discrimination between the invested and non-invested area. People of the non-invested area, though live in the same area, do not get the social investment support which their neighbors in the invested area are getting. They also said that project staff also pay very minimum attention to their problems.

As per provision of the contract signed between the beneficiaries and the BWDB, the embankment dwellers in the non-invested area are also legally bound to maintain the embankment. But due to the above mentioned reasons they seemed less enthusiastic (though not reluctant) to start proper maintenance work.

The project personnel were of the opinion that if social investment programme had not been started in those areas, it would be very difficult to make them engage in proper maintenance.

The core issue of this experiment is to develop a viable participatory embankment maintenance model. Keeping the core issue and also the strategies and objectives of the SSEMP in vision the following recommendations are made to accelerate the project activities.

- A system of quarterly review meeting should be introduced in which the local officials of the BWDB, project personnel for three NGOs and beneficiary leaders should participate. The review meeting should be hosted at the embankment site by the three NGOs in a rotation. The proceedings of the review meeting should be circulated to all the concerned persons and agencies.

- A yearly maintenance calendar has to be prepared well ahead of the maintenance time.
- The land problem should be solved with utmost priority. The BWDB should complete its obligation by putting boundary pillars and should also take necessary steps to hand over the possession of allotted land.
- The project implementing NGOs should arrange annual maintenance week adding some festivity in which prizes may be distributed among the best performing societies.
- The local administration, press and various other civil society forums should be informed about the outcome of the project.
- The system of dividing the beneficiaries between invested and non-invested areas is not necessary for the experimentation purpose even. The division created anger, frustration and a sense of deprivation among the destitutes. The implementing NGOs themselves should invest their own money in credit programme in the hitherto designated non-investment area.

Conclusion

The project employees had to fight in different fronts during last one year in implementing the land distribution programme. The battles were fought against vested interest groups, local landlords, political mastans and corrupt officials and also in the court premises. As a result, adequate attention could not have been given in monitoring and supervision of many of the very essential components of the project. In the struggle for procuring lands from the clutches of land hungry local elites, government officials

such as Deputy Commissioner, Thana Nirbahi Officer, Police and local Journalist took the embankment dwellers' side which made the initiation of the project possible. In all the future similar projects their role and function should also be formalized.

References:

- Kafi A Sharif: (eds). *Bangladesh land law Regarding River Erosion and Problems People Effected by River Erosion (in Bangla- Bangladesh Nadi Bhamganer Bhumi Ain-O-Nadi Bhangha Manuser Samasha)*, Dhaka. Nadi Sakashiti Adekar Forum and Bangladesh Development Partnership, April, 1995, 0.1
- Ibid, p-1
- Ibid, p-3
- Action Aid, less and Action, Vol.1, No.1 November 1996, kp-13, The figure has been contradicted by a BWDB source, according to the BWDB estimates the figure should be 9,296 km. which composed of 3871 km coastal embankments and 4425 other embankments.
- Dirk, Frans and Baset, Mohammad Embankments Maintenance by River Erosion Victims, BETS Quarterly, No.23, (Jan-March), 1997-4-5.
- Project Document, Action Aid (Unpublished)
- Ibid
- Action Aid, Building Alternative people Centered Organization for Sustainable Development, December, 1995.
- Action Aid Bhola, office records, 1997. BETS/Euro Consultant, O&M Strengthening of Second Bhola Irrigation Project, Funded by Asian Development Bank and Government of Bangladesh (Unpublished) 1996 and 1997.