

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN BANGLADESH :
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY



Syed Ali Naqi

384800

Submitted to Dacca University for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dhaka University Library



384800

ঢাকা
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
প্রশাসন

Department of Sociology
1982

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professor A.K. Nazmul Karim gave me immense encouragement and guidance without which it would have been impossible for me to finish the present work. My heartfelt thanks go to the members of Dacca University Library from where I used to get all possible help in having books and references.

I also thank the staff of BIDS Library, Dacca where I was a constant visitor in permitting me to use it in connection of my present study.

I should like to thank Mr. Shamsul Alam for his work on the typescript.

384800



August 3, 1982

Syed Ali Naqi

III

A b s t r a c t

Rural Development Programmes had been undertaken and are being undertaken in Bangladesh in various fields. Past efforts at rural development following Comilla and Ulashi-Jadunathpur approaches had been problematic in both design and implementation and failed to produce any satisfactory impact on the life of small farmers and landless villagers who are the majority of the rural population of Bangladesh. The present study concentrated on finding out the reasons for failure of rural development programmes. It demonstrated that the existing rural social hierarchy based on land tenure system gives rise to social cleavage and conflict which produce an adverse effect on rural development programmes in Bangladesh. The rural elites in collaboration with bureaucracy create factions in the villages along clear lines of patron-client relationship. This weakens the institutional support for rural development resulting in failures of programmes. Bangladesh underwent a prolonged period of what may be termed 'institutional instability'. The formal rural institutions of government were minimum and remained under the influence of rural elites. The relation between the existing rural development strategy and elite dominated institutional framework remained loose and fragile. This failed to motivate the rural people for a structural change of rural society.

384800

Rural development programmes centering on institutions like co-operatives, etc. were channelled through the more prosperous farmers. The co-operatives and other institutions like union parishads were domains of "surplus farmers" because social and political leadership in the village centres on dominant "surplus farmers" who form the elite in rural Bangladesh. Rivalry has long been a feature of the relations between dominant groups of rural elites who come into conflict very often for their supremacy. This rivalry and conflict created an institutional vacuum for which past rural development programmes through major approaches like Comilla, Ulashi-Jadunathpur and Swanirvar could not bring expected results to improve the condition of the mass of the rural population in Bangladesh.



IV

A successful rural development policy within a democratic framework must also supply the means by which rural people can actively and unitedly participate in the resolution of conflicts and in the creation of ways and means to stimulate new resource orientation. Such participation has been lacking as there is rivalry degenerating into conflicts which ultimately hinder the development work of the village community of Bangladesh.

The diffuse and battered rural institutions by the elite and factional conflicts do not help the balanced execution of rural development programmes in Bangladesh. So they should be free from factional influence and elite conflicts. Conflict free occupational groups may be incorporated in union parishad and gram sarkar taking care that persons with conflicting interest may not enter into these organizations.

CONTENTS

Abstract	III
Key to Abbreviated References	VI
<u>Chapter 1</u>	
Introduction	1
<u>Chapter 2</u>	
Rural Development Programmes in Bangladesh - Past and Present	54
<u>Chapter 3</u>	
Agrarian Structure of Bangladesh and Rural Development	118
<u>Chapter 4</u>	
Rural Development Potentials and Problems of Bangladesh	160
<u>Chapter 5</u>	
A Critical Evaluation of Principal Rural Development Programmes in Bangladesh	249
<u>Chapter 6</u>	
Conclusion	341
Glossary	360
Reference and Bibliography	363

Key to Abbreviated References

Some abbreviations though have been fully expressed initially, but have not been done so when occur subsequently and such words are included here.

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APWA	All Pakistan Women's Association
ACF	Agricultural Co-operative Federation
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BJJS	Bangladesh Jatiya Jube Sangstha
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
C.O	Circle Officer
DSC	Development Study Circle
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
ECAFE	Economic Commission for Asia and the East
FY	Financial Year
FEC	Foreign Exchange Component
FPA	Family Planning Assistant
FWA	Family Welfare Assistant
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDK	Geneshasthya Kendra
GNP	Gross National Product
HYV	High Yielding Variety
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
KSS	Krishak Samabaya Samity

VII

LDC	Least Developed Country
LV	Local Variety
Ma	Maund
MCH	Medical College Hospital
NFHRD	National Foundation for Research on Human Resource Development
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSI	Population Service International
PCFPD	Population Control and Family Planning Division
RD	Rural Development
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
TIP	Thana Irrigation Programme
TARC	Training and Research Centre
TTDC	Thana Training Development Centre
TCCA	Thana Central Co-operative Association
TPO	Thana Project Officer
UJ	Ulashi-Jadunathpur
UP	Union Parishad
UJCDP	Ulashi-Jadunathpur Canal Digging Project
US AID	United States Agency for International Development
V-AID	Village Agricultural and Industrial Development

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study is the assessment of rural development programmes in Bangladesh. The study aims at locating the cause of the failure of development strategies in certain sectors of development programme. In such a study we wish to make a humble attempt to bring forth some of the sociological aspects of such failure since there has been a good many studies looking for causes of failure of such programmes from the point of view of economists.

Bangladesh is an agrarian society. The vast majority of her population live in villages and are dependent on agriculture for survival. In such a society rural development has been a major concern for the planners, policy makers and researchers. They have already adopted certain development strategies. In recent times attention is being given to alternative development strategies. A major realization has been to develop policies and initiate programmes that would benefit all strata of the population and not just a favoured minority.

Low productivity, a rapid increase of population, ever widening income disparity between the rich and poor, inherited backwardness and poverty, illiteracy and conservative outlook, a great multitude of unemployed or ineffectively employed manpower, lack of investment opportunities and the slow growth of adequate and self-sustaining institutions to help build an infrastructure are some of the salient features that make up the rural milieu in Bangladesh. It is in this background that the government agencies proclaim policies of rural development and execute short and long term development programmes in agriculture, communication, health,

family planning, education and such others in rural areas. Social planners and policy makers have developed approaches like Comilla and Ulshi-Jadunathpur as device for changing the structure of production and income distribution, thereby extending socio-economic benefits to the landless, small and marginal farmers, making for more equal distribution of opportunities for the rural population of Bangladesh.

Past efforts at rural development following these approaches and experiments had been problematic in both design and implementation and could not produce any satisfactory impact on the life of small farmers and landless villagers who are the majority of the rural population of Bangladesh.

None of the previous studies of rural development programmes have taken a sociologically meaningful approach to explain the causes of setbacks of development projects implemented on the basis of the proclaimed policies and programmes of government. Such studies have primarily concentrated on the economic and agronomical aspects of the programmes.

Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir's Development Strategy for Bangladesh was the first major study on development programmes in Bangladesh. He devoted extensive attention to the strategy of development in rural Bangladesh centering around the themes that agricultural and rural development yields high returns by mobilizing local labour. He concentrated on self-help local investment programmes paid for by wealthier groups and asserts that they will have a beneficial effect on the mass of the population provided the plan of Ulshi-Jadunathpur is followed. Alamgir has mainly made an economic analysis by making a case for a favourable cost-benefit ratio for agricultural investment. He fails to locate the social causes which may befall in

specific situations. He has, however, given us development strategy on self-help basis.

The importance of the role of the agrarian social structure of Bangladesh has been recognized by an increase in the volume of research done recently on agriculture, rural society, rural institutions and so on by a number of scholars. Bertocci's thesis entitled Elusive Village : Social Structure and Community Organization in Rural East Pakistan based on empirical data discusses the main features of social structure and social organization of two villages in Comilla district. His study of royai, shalish and samaj - the core components of social structure and community organization of our agrarian society helps in unfolding the network of rural faction and factional conflicts which greatly influence the development work in present day Bangladesh.

Although social aspects are stressed upon in the field studies of the Comilla Academy, but they are always not done in a sociologically significant way. These studies are generally descriptive sample surveys of rural land ownership patterns giving the demographic characteristics of village communities and rural institutions like co-operatives. Some of them, however, make a brief affirmation of institutional inadequacies in the execution of rural development programmes in Bangladesh. Many other pre and post evaluation studies of public programmes in rural areas have been done as well but have not done in a sociologically significant way. Although it is agreed that GDP and GNP have been rising, in spite of that the rural development programmes have been frustrated. The causes of such frustration have not got proper attention as yet. This is because the

sociological factors involved in such development strategies have not received proper attention. It is therefore of value to make a sociological study of rural development programmes and policies and their impact on our changing agrarian society. It would be interesting to know why these programmes fail to produce the results expected of them. I am directly concerned with those aspects of the development programmes which are found to be relevant to the agrarian structure of Bangladesh.

The focus of my study is to find out the reasons for failure of the rural development programmes to bring about the expected result of reducing mass deprivation and illiteracy in rural Bangladesh. In the present study I hope to make a humble attempt to delineate how the existing status-ranking in rural society based on land tenure gives rise to social cleavage and conflict which have a significant effect on rural development in Bangladesh. In the study I hope to show how development programmes have failed to attain the goal of extending social and economic benefits to the poor section of the village population in the present agrarian society. Higher strata of farmers, for example, can avail themselves of the advantages offered by institutions like co-operatives and also profit from various subsidies given for rural development. This situation adversely affects the programmes

-: 5 :-

and paces the development in rural Bangladesh. Further, the big landholders in collaboration with bureaucracy create factions in the villages along clear lines of patron-client relationship which actually allows the existing village social structure to take control of the institutional infrastructure created for the purpose of development. This weakens the institutional support for rural development resulting in failures of programmes. The major aim of the present study then is to analyze the relationship between conflicting elites in agrarian hierarchy and rural development programmes in Bangladesh. By agrarian hierarchy in the 'amorphous agrarian structure' of Bangladesh I refer simply to land ownership structure which is in constant flux and change. This has great impact on rural development. "Inequality is, in fact, mainly a question of land ownership".¹ Ownership and control of the land are therefore one of the "fundamental bases of social cleavage" and influence the distribution of socio-economic benefits of development programmes in rural society.

In the absence of a strong theoretical base, it is useful for the purpose of my study to make an attempt to analyze the concept "development" and its widely agreed objectives in

1 Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama : An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations, 1968, p. 569.

relation to the stratified agrarian society of Bangladesh. Development which has gained currency only in recent years is a concept applied primarily to a particular context. That context includes the system of practices which is the goal of those governments attempting to bring about development of their countries. The concept of development includes the idea of growth, but goes beyond it in referring to the growth of a structurally complex group. Development then brings out the fundamental questions not asked by its theoreticians : development for what ? development for whom ? And also the question of underlying social inequalities. Can we speak of a development plan common to all classes of society ? These are the questions that need clarification in regard to development problems of rural Bangladesh. "There is wide agreement concerning the ultimate objectives of development, such as adequate levels of living, an equitable distribution of income, goods and services, availability of productive employment, equal opportunity for social mobility, elimination of exploitation and discrimination and popular participation in the decision making process."²

The above widely agreed objectives set forth by Ralph have normative value. They might be put on trial in the least developed countries like Bangladesh with limited resources and present agrarian hierarchy.

2 Ralph Pieris, Asian Development Styles, 1977, p. 8.

To better analyse the content and impact of rural development programmes in Bangladesh, our underlying theory of development and its limitations should first be spelled out. The theory of development worked out mainly in nineteen fifties and sixties on the basis of the work of economists like Hirshmann, Perroux, Myrdal and Rostow contributes to our understanding of three main areas :

- "the fundamental inadequacy of traditional economic calculation in evaluating programmes having to do with underdevelopment and the importance of non-commercial dimensions of economic activities;
- the need for inventing real 'development strategies';
- the phenomenon of domination."³

The limitations of these theoretical analyses lie in the inadequacy of the concept of development itself as they use the term, though the term "development" refers to economic growth oblivious of the growth of society in its totality. The evaluation of this highly complex phenomenon is finally reduced to the estimation of a one dimensional indicator used in a growth model which can easily be shown to be an oversimplification. Immediately the question arises: growth for what and for whose benefit ?

3 Bernard Rosier, Towards a Critical and Comparative Analysis of Types of Development Suggestions on Methodology, Reports/Studies, Sty. 2, Division for the Study of Development, Unesco, Paris, 1979, mimeo, p. 4.

No satisfactory answer is provided by 'criteriological' analysis based on a long list of what are said to be typical factors of development whether rural or urban ranging from the number of calories to the amount of paper consumed on the average by each member of the population, though some of these indicators are certainly of interest. There are two main reasons for this inadequacy :

- the number and heterogenous character of the random criteria used;
- the 'West-Centred' nature of most of the development indicators.

In spite of their theoretical limitations and conceptual inadequacies, the study on rural development programmes in Bangladesh as understood for the purpose of the present study has to be approached as a social project and a social phenomenon. Its mechanism can only be defined and understood in relation to the structure of social relations in Bangladesh society and to the forces which influence them whether from within or from without.

Rural development is essentially the task of the rural people guided by effective leadership. It is because of this that the importance of the problem of participation in development has appeared in recent years more and more in the research, the thinking and debates of international institutions. It has become almost obligatory to present "participation" as one of the essential conditions for the success

of rural development programmes. Thus, for example, the report of a meeting of experts on "Aid for rural development in a basic needs perspective" organized by the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate in 1978 describing the conclusion arrived at notes : "to achieve the objectives of integrated rural development, it is essential that the rural poor participate in decision making at all stages in the development cycle from pre-planning through implementation and even to evaluation. Such participation in decision making should extend to the grass-roots level".⁴ Decentralization of decision making is thus widely accepted as crucial to the success of rural development programmes.

It emerges from our discussion on conceptual and theoretical aspects of development and the inadequacies and limitations of the same that the content and impact of rural development programmes in Bangladesh need to be analysed and evaluated in the context of social inequalities and in terms of objective criteria of adequate levels of living, availability of productive employment, equal opportunity of social mobility, elimination of discrimination, education for all, family planning and popular participation in the decision making process. In such analysis, 'West-Centred' development indicators are to be looked with caution.

4 OECD Development Co-operation Directorate Summary Report of the Informal Meeting on Aid for Rural Development in a Basic Needs Perspective, Paris, 8 August, 1978, p. 10.

II

Approaches and Strategies of Rural Development

Griffin has given three approaches to understand rural development problems : the technocratic approach, the reformist approach, and the radical approach.⁵

According to technocratic approach, the prime objective has been how to increase agricultural output, either by incorporating more conventional inputs such as land or encouraging farmers to adopt an imported technology. The economy is conceived of in terms of free market, competition, respect for private property where the property ownership in land is concentrated in a few hands. The dominant form of tenure is large private and corporate farms, plantations, latifundia. The major beneficiaries of the rural development activities following this approach are landowning elites.

The reformist approach is, however, a compromise between two extreme positions of technocratic and radical approaches. The objective of this strategy of rural development is redistributive income, wealth and increase of output. The major beneficiaries from reformist oriented development activities are middle and 'progressive' farmers and the dominant form of tenure under this approach are family farms and co-operatives. The ideology of reformism is nationalistic (Mexico and Egypt are examples of representative countries), where inconsistencies in government policy are found as it does not in fact do what it claims to do. Reformist strategy places priority on redistributing income to some sections of the community. It promises

5 Keith Griffin, The Political Economy of Agrarian Change : An Essay on the Green Revolution, 1974, pp. 198-203.

greater equity with faster growth by changing and innovating agrarian institutions. In this approach of rural development the government's attempt at reform remains partial, fragmented, incomplete and concentrated in a few limited regions. As a result, this creates a dualism in agricultural sector. The redistribution of income takes place from the upper income groups to middle income groups. The target group (the landless and marginal farmers) do not receive much benefit except some employment.

The radical approach of development aims at social change of fundamental nature, a redistribution of political power, and an increase of wealth and output through higher production. The major beneficiaries of rural development following this approach are small peasants and landless labourers and the dominant forms of land tenure are collectives, communes and state farms. The ideology of such radicalism is biased towards socialism. By abolishing private ownership in land and establishing collective communes and state farms some equality can be achieved. This agrarian system goes in favour of small peasants and landless labourers. Greater emphasis is placed on the immobility and specificity of resources and of exploiting the unique local opportunities. The radical approach to rural development is followed by China, Vietnam, Cuba, Russia and other socialist countries.

Both under the technocratic and the reformist approach, the ownership of the means of production is exclusively concentrated in a few hands. Further, under these systems we find the continued existence of landlords, capitalist farmers, landless labourers, wage workers, sharecroppers and small holders and the major beneficiaries are land possessing class. The radical approach in its programme tries to do away with private ownership in land to increase agricultural production and establish equity in its distribution system.

Present Strategy of Rural Development in Bangladesh

Present strategy of rural development in Bangladesh roughly conforms to reformist approach stated above which will be elaborated in subsequent chapters. However, at the present moment let us examine the widely advocated strategies of rural development in Bangladesh.

Target Group Strategy

There has been wide advocacy of target group strategy of rural development in Bangladesh which gives priority to marginal farmers and the landless. It has become apparent in Bangladesh that technically biased production oriented rural development strategy will provide direct benefit to rural households in proportion to the distribution of rights in land and therefore increases existing inequalities. So there is limitation of working of rural development programmes with marginal farmers and the landless.

One problem with the target group orientation in the rural development strategy is that confusion persists concerning its definition. The target group concept (marginal farmers and the landless) is a logical consequence of the claim for an increased concern about the distributive aspect of rural development. It is recognized that specific action directed to the needs of the disadvantaged groups in the rural areas of Bangladesh is required. So it is essential to be specific in the identification of target group. To define the target group as the rural poor does not serve the purpose. By those who lack political commitment to increase equality, the concept of the rural poor is stretched to include any one living in rural areas.

That is why it is important to identify specific criteria for the identification of the target group. Different criteria may be preferable in different situations. However, access to productive resources, generally land, will often prove to be a variable which correlates with different dimensions of poverty and which is relatively easy to apply. A target group of the rural poor may then be defined as the landless (no homestead land or no cultivable land) and cultivators with less than 'X' acres of land ('X' to be determined). Various refinements can be made to this criterion. Our refinement is to take difference in land productivity into account. It is often justified to make a distinction between irrigated land and non-irrigated land. When calculating the size of a holding, one acre of irrigated land may be counted as one and

-: 14 :-

a half or two acres of non-irrigated land depending upon differences in cropping intensity, yields, value of output, etc. Another refinement is to take the number of household members living from a holding into account. Yet another refinement is to consider payment obligations for leased land. In case of sharecropping the area of the leased land should be reduced with a factor equivalent to the share paid to the landlord. The definition of the target group is, however, a matter of individual judgment, because no consensus has been reached among the sociologists and economists in identifying the target group.

Basic Need Strategy

The Basic Human Needs Model has also been advocated for rural development in Bangladesh. It gives priority to meet all the basic human needs including the provision of employment opportunities to all. However, it is general in nature and attaches no priority to any particular socio-economic group. It not only includes development strategy but a great moral appeal is also implied in the approach itself. The objectives of development under this model include increase in per capita outputs and income, expansion of production facilities, opportunities of employment and greater equity in the distribution of the benefits of growth. This implies reducing poverty by increasing the productivity of the poor and providing them greater access to goods and services. The implementation of Basic Needs Model of socio-economic growth obviously invites radical and pragmatic change in the national policy

package, vital adjustment of the existing development programmes in rural Bangladesh, and dedicated efforts to solve the problems in terms of basic human needs.

People in rural Bangladesh belong to different socio-economic groups having divergent interests and perform various types of work to earn livelihood. So the rural development programmes on basic need model are to broadbase multisectoral approach in the context of stratified society with conflicting interests whereby a series of development activities are to be undertaken simultaneously and their constituent elements are complementary and reinforcing. The programmes under this model could hardly aim at providing a sustained increase in output and level of living of a significant proportion of the rural poor, since the agrarian base is hierarchical and deprivative in nature.

III

Delimitation of the Area of Study

In an agrarian society, the study of rural development contributes to the understanding of its structural changes. Therefore, studying the problems and issues of rural development will give us insight into the changing pattern of an agrarian society like Bangladesh.

Prior to the beginning of such a study, however, the question may be raised why we should be interested in the changing patterns of agrarian Bangladesh as such. Let us address ourselves to this issue before going further.

Just what is Bangladesh? Is it a linguistic group bounded by geographic area? Such a linguistic group, with a common literary tradition and culture would be expected to produce

some 'unique social characteristics' for such an investigation. Since the Bengali linguistic group stretches far beyond the political boundaries of Bangladesh, it can not therefore be meaningfully conceptualized in this way. Nor can Bengali society be conceived of as a racial group to know the fundamental nature and changes of agrarian society of Bangladesh as the Bengalees are an admixture of many races. This area of research, however, may be of interest to the anthropologists. If the geographic area with the common characteristics of flora and fauna is taken up for investigation (as some writers show the influence of geography on social life), this is not advisable because the natural geographic boundaries do not coincide with the present political boundaries of Bangladesh.

Religion has undoubtedly played an important part in the social life and conditioned the social structure of Bangladesh. It is, furthermore, in many respects different and peculiar to the people of Bangladesh. But since religion is, and especially has been heterogeneous in Bangladesh (all of these religions are also found elsewhere), it can not be conceived of as the defining dimension of Bangladeshi society.

We may, thus, argue in the above context that although factors of language, race, geography and religion have bearing on the material and non-material development, none of these factors can individually be an independent area of study to know the changing nature of agrarian Bangladeshi society on a logically sound basis. The above social factors may, however, come up in the course of our discussion about

the society and culture of Bangladesh in relevance to the rural development and its impact on the changing rural society.

In our present study, we have primarily concentrated on rural Bangladesh, its present trends and issues of development and their relation with the nature of change in agrarian society. Since Bangladesh has emerged as a political entity from Pakistan, it has acquired some social and cultural characteristics. So the present study is confined to rural Bangladesh and it can be made sociologically meaningful since Bangladesh is mainly an agricultural country with a vast majority of people depending on agriculture for survival. Keeping this in view the study has taken up main aspects (land relations, family planning, education) of rural development since the establishment of East Pakistan in 1947 until the end of 1980. The study aims at identifying the social constraints of development and evaluating the impact of development programmes on our agrarian society.

Methodology

We have mainly followed in our present study the method of qualitative content analysis of official documents and records supplemented with case study, participant observation and statistical analysis of interview.

The study was divided into phases : In the initial stage, we remained busy for three months collecting basic informations and making a qualitative analysis of secondary data obtained from the official records of governmental and non-governmental agencies. The governmental agencies concerned with rural

development had been visited as well as non-governmental organizations. We acquainted them the purpose of the study, elicited and sought their co-operation and given them an opportunity to provide early input and advice to the study. We then conducted content analysis of laws and policies proclaimed by government since independence and programme policies of development projects initiated by government and non-government agencies. Secondary data obtained from various studies and official sources about rural development projects undertaken in Bangladesh from 1947 up-to-date were analysed.

In the second phase of the study, the exploration of the causes of failures of development programmes in rural areas was done by following the methods of participation observation and an in-depth case study of a limited number of individuals cases for over a period of four months in two unions of Tarati and Kumarghata in Muktagacha, Mymensingh (see figs. 1 & 2) where development programmes have been undertaken since a long time. The case study method furnished a basis of our analysis of rural development programmes. An interview schedule was developed using pre-tested questions to obtain the primary data about landownership pattern. Two villages of Chaknarainpur and Dawakhola were randomly chosen from the villages of Kumarghata Union, Muktagacha thana and a total household survey was conducted for this purpose. The unit of analysis was household heads. The data on landholding were cross checked with local land revenue office, neighbours and friends of the respondents. Further they are compared with the Summary Report of 1977 Land Occupancy Survey of Rural Bangladesh, B.B.S.

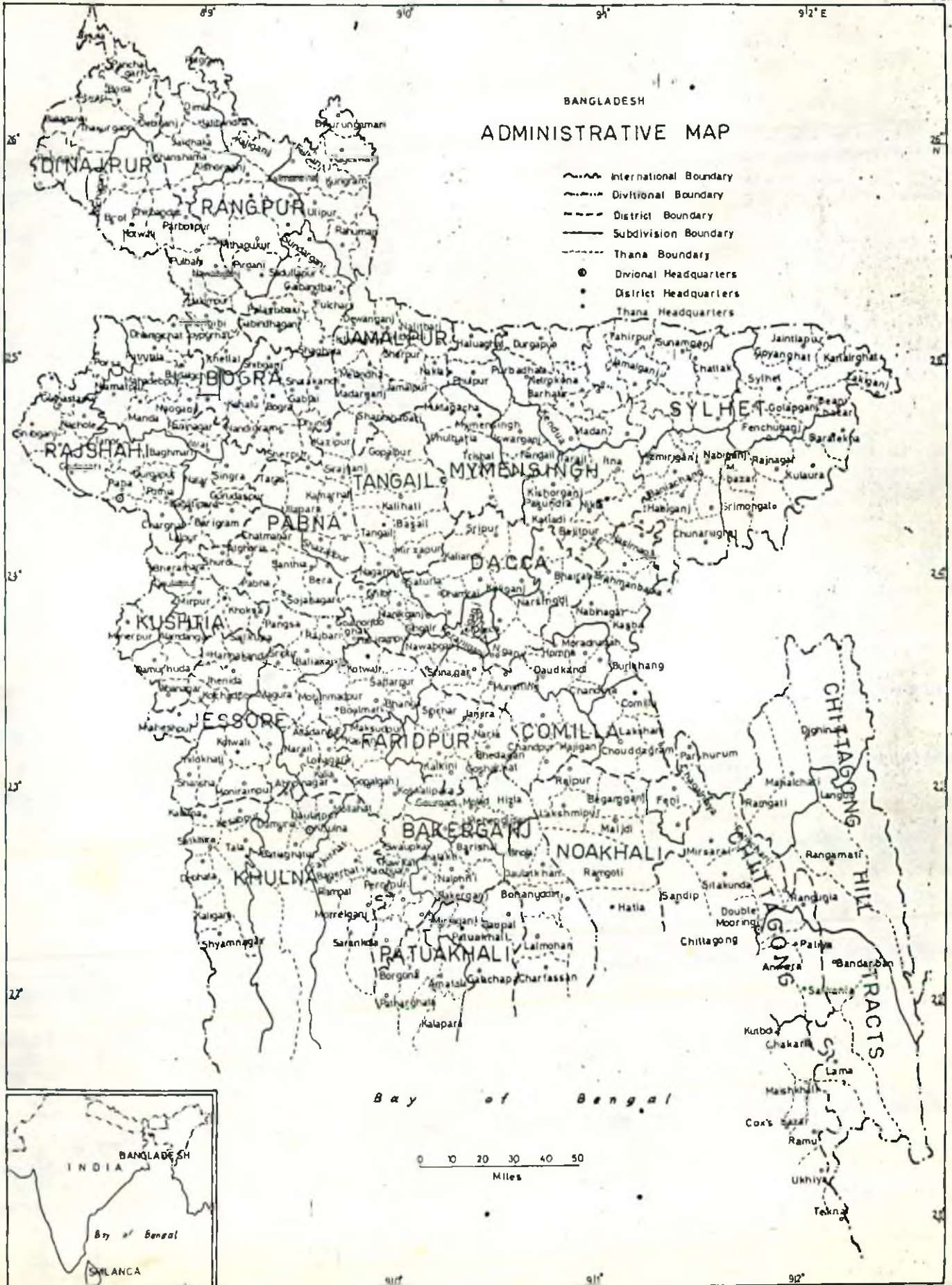


Fig.1



Fig.2

After the collection of data by the procedure stated above, we tabulated them and analysed the land ownership pattern to relate it to rural development programmes.

As the survey area was located in far flung villages, the interviewers with an interview schedule would have been taken at first as strangers and would tend to find that many answers given them were evasive or incorrect and they might even get many refusals of information. So I acted as a participant observer in the sample area one month before the survey was initiated. I helped to introduce survey teams to local leaders, and interpret and check the reasonableness of the answers they received from interviewees.

It is extremely difficult to get a correct picture of land tenure system in Bangladesh. While land distribution factor is extremely important in rural study, it is also difficult to ascertain. Naturally difficulties were encountered by the investigators in obtaining information from the respondents - about their land ownership position. Initially doubts were raised in their minds about the purpose of collecting data on landholding as rumours were widespread that Bangladesh government was planning to reduce land ceiling further. However, the difficulties were overcome by establishing necessary rapport with the villagers and their misgivings were spelled out. Informations about land ownership were none the less obtained from owners themselves, their friends and relatives and finally the land revenue office came to a great help in this regard.

II

Bangladesh Rural Development Policy Objectives

Owing to the predominance of agriculture in the Bangladesh economy, the rural development programmes centre around land, which is considered to be the principal source of power and status in our agrarian society. This invariably leads us to the vital question of land ownership and land utilization determined by the institutional and infrastructural framework of Bangladesh society in reaching the benefit of development activities to various strata of the rural population, particularly the landless poor. Land therefore forms the nucleus for development strategy in Bangladesh, whether in relation to education, family planning or whatever.

It has proven difficult, if not impossible, under the present social structure of Bangladesh, to devise a social mechanism for distributing 'greatest good for the greatest number' to people from land even though it is utilized to the maximum level.

Under the present uneven land tenure system in Bangladesh, the rural development projects aimed at an increase in agricultural production will directly benefit the land possessing class, while the landless rural poor will receive a very small amount of indirect benefit from them. As a result, this will further increase existing social and economic inequalities in our rural society. In view of the present socio-economic

conditions of Bangladesh, it is necessary to understand the theme of rural development policy laid down by the Bangladesh government and also to know the mechanisms which shape the development policies and programmes, as well as the class of people who take advantage of our present agrarian structure to cream off the benefit of development programmes.

From time to time, the policies and programmes of rural development find expression in various plan documents like Five Year Plans and the like. The central theme of these programmes was presented by the Bangladesh Government recently in a working paper entitled "Rural Development Expansion Programme in Bangladesh."⁶ It clearly spelled out development policy aimed to fulfill five fundamental objectives :

- (a) Increasing agricultural yield at an accelerated pace;
- (b) Creating new employment opportunities for the mass of the rural population, particularly the poorer section of the people;
- (c) Making the spread of the programme benefits more broad based;
- (d) Making new rural institutions and strengthening the old ones for effective delivery of development services to all irrespective of their economic and social status;
- (e) Improvement of the rural infrastructure.

6 "Rural Development Expansion Programme in Bangladesh", a paper prepared for US AID to Bangladesh Consortium, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, June, 1977, p.2.

These objectives of rural development go beyond the attainment of maximum economic growth and demonstrate the dangers of past strategies. However, they are of a general nature with no priorities attached and as such these objectives leave room for discussion and various interpretations.

In the absence of any ranking of objectives in the policy paper, it may be assumed that all of them are equally important. To keep increasing benefits to the poor in view, it would mean that rural development programmes would have to have a 'built in bias' towards raising productivity for improving the lot of the rural poor. To initiate development projects to increase agricultural produce by concentrating on big farmers (surplus farmers), for example, might be in consonance with the first objectives, but cannot without qualification be considered in accordance with the other three principal objectives laid down in the paper.

Planners and policy makers are sure to face dilemma owing to the interrelatedness of different objectives, the solutions proposed by them do reflect their value judgement. Although the government of Bangladesh policy paper stresses the need for an integrated approach towards rural development, planners are still left in controversy over the question of how to integrate the different projects/programmes in such a manner that all objectives get equal attention and each stratum of rural population derives the maximum benefit from them in the context of present uneven landownership structure in Bangladesh.

The government of Bangladesh document above referred to, however, says that "no basic conflict between growth and equity exists!"⁷ This may be questioned. Past experience of rural development in Bangladesh has brought to light the conflicts between growth and equity. Therefore a careful look is demanded at both aspects in any rural programme in any hierarchical agrarian society like Bangladesh.

The planners of rural development programmes in Bangladesh have not put forward any fundamental suggestion as how to minimize the potential conflict between 'production' and 'distribution'. But there is need for programmes where this conflict will be reduced to minimum. The government of Bangladesh document referred to above has openly acknowledged that "the poor and disadvantaged groups have largely been by - passed in development activities and that the worsening situation with regard to rural poverty will have to be counter-balanced."⁸

Rural development programmes in Bangladesh designed to improve socio-economic conditions of the rural poor by maximizing benefit to the disadvantaged groups of the rural population portray the government as a benevolent patron with the officials taking the main initiative for implementing development projects for the benefit of rural recipients. The planning process of rural development in Bangladesh therefore

7 Ibid., p.2.

8 Ibid., p.4.

has resulted as being elitist in approach. It originates from the planners at the top level of public administration. People whose life is supposed to be affected are neither consulted nor taken into confidence while chalking out development programmes. Therefore a sense of belongingness is never grown in rural people who are mostly landless and marginal farmers. For lack of effective control over land and in anticipation of receiving a very small amount of benefit from the land, this disadvantaged majority show apathy and indifference to development programmes undertaken either by government or non-government agencies. To add further the ineffectiveness of development programmes owes to conflict of elites and factional leaders who enter into the rural scene and take advantage of the weakness and the poverty of landless and marginal farmers and try to serve factional interests by reducing them to the status of mere clients.

It is clear from the above discussion that rural development programmes are designed by the judgment of bureaucratic elites at the top and traditionally passed on by central decision to the grass-root level through rural elites who give village leadership in Bangladesh. The initiation and execution of programmes follow the top-down approach to development where initiative and control remain always in the hands of a few bureaucrats in collaboration with a handful of conflicting rural elites in Bangladeshi society. Such a top-down model of rural development does not place strong emphasis on people's participation. The rural people themselves are not given a decisive role in decision making in the rural development process.

IV

Different Approaches to Rural Development in Bangladesh

In this section different approaches of rural development so far initiated and tried in Bangladesh will be dealt with since the present study is concerned with the analysis of our rural development programmes.

Cemilla Approach

In considering the endemic poverty afflicting the villages of Bangladesh different approaches of rural development were initiated in the past aiming at changing the quality of life of rural people. The Cemilla co-operative programme pioneered by illustrious founder of Pakistan (now Bangladesh) Academy for Rural Development in Cemilla, Akhter Hameed Khan was started in Ketwali thana, Cemilla District in 1961. The programme was gradually expanded and stretched by the late-1960's over all thanas in Cemilla. In 1970/71 it was decided to apply the Cemilla model to the rest of the country under the title of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The co-operative structure developed in Cemilla was replicated to a large number of districts and thanas. After the independence of Bangladesh, the diffusion of the co-operative movements through IRDP was accelerated and it is expected that soon all the villages of Bangladesh would be brought under co-operatives in the effort of rural development.

The Comilla Academy was set up in 1959. After a few years of intensive research and experiments, the Academy was in a position to initiate an experiment in agriculture and economic development which might have been very significant. Briefly the chief objectives of this experiment was to promote the formation of small cooperative groups of farmers who would adopt improved methods, implements and machines. A small group cooperative would aim at becoming self sustained. The members would learn to save and reinvest the savings in better farming for improving their standard of living.

The basic assumptions seem to lie at the base of the Comilla approach of rural development. These may be summed up as follows :

a) The villagers best understand their own situation and therefore the problems of rural development should be approached from their point of view.

b) It is within the means of the villagers to bring about changes in their socio-economic conditions. They should therefore make cooperative efforts in bringing good to them.

c) Once the means for development are provided by development agencies the villagers themselves would be in a position to initiate the process of change.

The small and medium farmers for whom Comilla model was mainly designed were called upon to organize themselves in cooperatives to accumulate capital and mobilize savings for more production and free themselves from the exploitation by

-: 27 :-

the money lenders and big farmers. Akhter Hameed Khan and his colleagues believed that it would be virtually impossible for government to make modern inputs, information, training, credit, etc. available to the peasantry on individual basis - the rural development agencies had to interact with the organized groups of people working through institutions to reach a significant proportion of farmers. The institution of cooperative was expected to bring a new sense of awareness, collective responsibility and discipline to the farmers irrespective of the size of their holdings. A.H. Khan himself observed :

"Cooperatives can overcome the constraint of impoverished little holdings. They can make credit, machines, fertilizers, pesticides and other modern inputs easily available. By promoting habits of thrift, savings and investment, they can start the process of capital accumulation. They can widely diffuse new technical and managerial skills. Above all, rural cooperatives can create a healthy social consciousness and a desire for harmony and order."⁹

Other features of the Comilla approach such as the thana irrigation programme and the rural works programme demonstrated the collective and integrated character of the model. The development of physical infrastructure and of skills and institutions was much emphasized :

"Evidently, the foremost constraint in Comilla thana was a very defective physical infrastructure. Increased production was scarcely possible without link roads, flood control and irrigation. However, this fundamental network of roads, drains, embankments and irrigation could be constructed and maintained only through vigorous local institutions.

9 A.R. Khan, Comilla Revisited, Comilla, May-June 1977, mimeo, p.11.

-: 28 :-

Hence, the absence of such institutions was the second serious constraint. Improvement of the physical infrastructure was dependent upon the improvement of the institutional infrastructure. Each was linked with the other. This perspective interlinked priorities differed from the viewpoints of old rural reconstruction, community development and agricultural extension. It rather conformed to the Chinese view of the priority of land improvement through local organization."¹⁰

Basically, there were four different components which constituted the integrated approach towards rural development that the Comilla model envisaged :

1) The Comilla approach was an experiment in two tier cooperative system for increased production. The primary cooperative at the village level and the thana federation of cooperatives make up the Comilla cooperative system. The former had around 50 members and all primary cooperatives in a thana were to be federated into Thana Center Cooperative Association (TCCA).

2) The Thana Training and Development Center (TTDC) was responsible for the training of the cooperative managers and model farmers and for the provision of certain services and expert advice to the primary societies.

3) The Thana Irrigation Programme (TIP) was responsible for the supply of cheap credit and subsidized equipment for the installation of irrigation facilities.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.3.

-: 29 :-

4) The Rural Works Programme was to mobilize idle manpower for infrastructural investments. The costs of the programme were to be borne by the government.

The village cooperative societies in Comilla grew out of the conviction that the villagers alone could finally help themselves. The main purpose of the cooperative was to overcome agricultural production constraints and co-ordinate rural service and play a major role in the diffusion of technology.

The institutional machinery for integrated rural development emerging out of Comilla approach is necessarily a mixture of government, semi-government, private and people's organization. The planning and decision making have been greatly decentralized. The Comilla approach can be taken as a vain attempt to tackle the main contradiction between the need for cooperative efforts and the private ownership of land and capital. It was dependent more upon technological rather than social variables. The dominant fact of our rural life is essentially the social inequality arising from the ownership or control of land. The social formation based on economic structure of our agrarian society increases the basic contradiction between the landed and landless people which has not been reduced by any count through the application of Comilla approach of rural development though in the 1960's the spectacular agricultural improvement was registered in Kotwali thana after the introduction of the programme. The figure of landless household heads is ever

increasing in Bangladesh. At present "Between 50-60% of rural heads of households in Bangladesh are landless."¹¹ The 'elite-mass formulation' and factional groupings are still counted as decisive factors in the political and developmental process in rural Bangladesh. "Bangladesh villages are organized internally by factions with clear lines of patron-client relationships."¹² The Comilla approach have been althrough pervaded by 'elite-mass model' and factional relationships in its development effort which will be examined later on. With so much of factional differences and personal jealousy and disputes prevailing in Bangladesh villages a feeling of co-operation is always being negated and they retard the development of institutional network of village co-operatives on Comilla model which might render benefit to the poor landless peasants in true sense.

The Comilla model gained its value and meaning in the context of our societal framework. The basic objective of the Comilla approach was not therefore to put an end of private ownership of land. It was rather an attempt to organize the peasant proprietors for production as well as protection through co-operatives. "Protection was not available to those who could not join it, namely the landless."¹³

11 Syed Ali Naqi, "Integrated Land and Water Use : A Social Analysis of a Proposed Irrigation Project in Bangladesh". The Dacca University Studies, Vol. XXXIV(Part A), p. 131.

12 Ibid., p. 130.

13 Munzur-I-Maula, Comilla and U.J : A Comparative Study of Rural Development Policies, 1980, p. 16.

The Integrated Rural Development Programme being the outcome of Comilla approach aims principally at organizing the land possessing class of rural people through village cooperatives. It provides them the support of an institutional framework for their development activities. Supportive evidence of this contention has been given in the later relevant chapter. Only recently under the assistance of US AID and Bangladesh Bank, the Integrated Rural Development Programme in an attempt to make a breakthrough launched an experiment to bring the target group of landless people and artisans under the fold of the co-operative. Loans are available through these cooperatives simply against a written promise to repay them in time. The system of determining credit worthiness on the basis of land mortgage has been replaced by a system of assessing production potentialities and close supervision. The people having no land expect to derive at least some benefit out of this approach of development. It is anticipated that even this experiment in the long run may be mischannelled by the conflicting rural elites who could try to compete among themselves for winning the favour of creditors for their respective clients.

Ulshi-Jadunathpur Approach

Ulshi-Jadunathpur (UJ) programme has been put on experiment to improve upon Comilla approach of integrated rural development. The approach used in the UJ pilot project in Jessore centred around an irrigation and drainage project

to get quick result in fulfilling the basic needs of the rural poor - the employment and the food requirements. The controversial point raised about the project was that direction of rural development was to come from a combination of administrative and local leadership and therefore it is not congenial for the growth of autonomous development programmes. The UJ project did not in the least depend on government help as the government was unable to finance it in view of its pre-occupations. The district administration only assumed the responsibility of executing the project through mobilizing the rural people and local resources on the basis of the principle of self-reliance. It grew out of the initiative and planning of local people and was executed through a process of mass participation. The UJ approach to rural development fundamentally differed with past attempts. "The V-AID Programme of the 1950's, the Works Programme of the 1960's and the IRDP of the 1970's were all initiated and formulated at the national level."¹⁴ In contrast, the UJ project was initiated by the civil administration in consultation with local people.

Some of the main principles that governed the UJ project are local initiative, planning, decision making and execution. The most interesting aspect of the UJ approach was the manner of collection of necessary funds for executing its development programmes. The project "was financed by taxing those who would

14 Mohiuddin Alamgir, Development Strategy for Bangladesh, 1980, p. 334.

benefit, that is primarily the rich, and paying some of those who worked that is primarily the poor. Moreover, the way contributions were assessed made for a highly progressive tax with the largest landholding paying at a rate $3\frac{1}{2}$ times that for the smallest assessed holdings. Those with tiny holdings paid nothing."¹⁵ In other words, UJ approach makes provision for imposing taxes on the better off beneficiaries of the project. Incomes derived out of such taxation are being used in providing employment for the rural poor, while the resulting benefits of the increased production go primarily to land possessing class. The UJ approach gives a wide coverage by including representatives from the various special groups usually left out of the village power structure such as women, landless and youth. A labour intensive local self-help investment programme of UJ type paid for by the wealthier class of people were intended to provide more assured benefits for the poor than "a strategy which changes input and output prices."

The financing of the UJ project depended almost entirely on the civil administration. In such an approach of rural development by combined local and governmental leadership, the Deputy Commissioner had to play a pivotal role in the UJ project. The UJ approach therefore depends heavily on the leadership of the civil services, although decentralization of decision has been accepted as crucial to the success of rural development programmes.

15 Ibid., p. VIII.

Overall association of landownership with relative social rank gives the leadership of agrarian society of Bangladesh to higher peasant class having higher socio-economic status. Obviously, there remains a possibility of conflict of interests among different social classes in rural Bangladesh. Also various factional interest-groups at the village level contradict and clash which invariably increases the conflict instead of reducing it. Consequently, the best designed project on UJ model develop a tendency to fail. The UJ approach provides no safeguard against the domination of local scene by the rural elites in the execution of development programmes. Local initiative, mass mobilization and self-help as cardinal principles of the UJ approach were always put at jeopardy because of the absence of mechanism by which the frequent elite conflict in rural society of Bangladesh could be checked. Besides, the UJ approach to development was found to have some other drawbacks. The project at Ulshi-Jadunathpur did not integrate programmes to be executed by various government departments and agencies as a part of their approved national schemes.

A second drawback was found in an inadequate and often in an unspecified institutional arrangements. The villages were the basic unit of development, but there was no formal self-governing institution at that level, the Union parishad was a legally constituted body not usually or effectively linkable to an informal organization down to the village level. In the absence of effective formal institution, the peoples' participation could neither effectively satisfy the socio-economic requirements nor was it sustainable.

Socio-Geographic Profile of Bangladesh

The Physical Setting

There are four basic factors in social life of individuals - geography, heredity, society and culture. The geography invariably influences the social and cultural factors in determining the rural development process. So the influences of the geographical environment such as climate, topography and natural resources on the development activities are obvious. This section therefore devote itself to a brief discussion of socio-geographic profile of Bangladesh which bears significance for the present study.

Bangladesh lies roughly between ~~20° 30'~~ and ~~26° 45'~~ North Latitude and ~~88°~~ and ~~92° 50'~~ East Longitude.¹⁶ It is bounded by India on three sides, east, north and west. There is also a small boundary with Burma on the south-east. In the south lies the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh occupies a total area of 55126 square miles with a population 89,940000.¹⁷

Almost the whole of Bangladesh is an alluvial plain tray rased by innumerable rivers and streams and spotted with hills or beels and marshes.

16 Nafis Ahmad, An Economic Geography of East Pakistan, Second Edition, 1968, p.2.

17 Bangladesh Population Census Report, 1981.

The river-built alluvial plain is visited almost every year by floods, tidal waves, draughts and cyclones. These natural calamities take heavy toll of human lives and cattle heads, cause extensive damage to crop and property and bring untold sufferings to the people.

The most significant feature of the flat plain of Bangladesh is the number of rivers which have curved out an interesting drainage pattern with the help of their tributaries and numerous distributaries. The activity and behaviour of these rivers are of utmost importance in determining the socio-economic condition of the people. They serve as drainage channels, ensure an abundant supply of fish, provide cheap and convenient means of transport and communication and above all act as a great fertilizing agency for a large part of the country.

Within the general physiographical uniformity of the plain there is appreciable diversity. A wide strip along the coast consists of a tidal plain with innumerable streams running north and south in between large rivers, estuaries and creeks.

South of the river Madhumati lies the old delta, the coastal area which is covered with forest known as Sundarbans. It is flooded by saline sea-water during the spring tides with a slight mixture of fresh water during the floods of the rainy season.

North of Sundarbans, beyond the range of tides, and west of the Jamuna - Madhumati line, the plain is higher and only partially inundated.

The upper north of the Padma is drained mainly by the Tista and the Atari rivers. In the north the plain is flat while in the south, it is depressed with many areas of swamps and marshes, the largest of which is the Chalan Beel. The decaying rivers are mostly local channels which are unable to spread fertilising silt.

In the west centre, there is about 3600 square miles of a slightly elevated tract of old alluvium, 20 to 40 feet high,¹⁸ called Barind. It is an undulating area interspersed with ravines.

The rivers of Bangladesh are conveniently divided into five systems : (1) the Ganges or the Padma and its deltaic streams (2) the Meghna and the Surma system (3) the Brahmaputra's affluents and channels (4) the North Bengal rivers (5) the rivers of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and adjoining plains.

Most of these rivers flow across the plain towards the south, but the three principal rivers, the Padma flowing from the west; the Jamuna (Brahmaputra) from the north and the Meghna from the north-east meet in the middle part of the country to form the largest delta in the region.

18 Nafis Ahmad, op.cit., p. 25.

-: 38 :-

Great quantity of silt deposited on the beds of the rivers has raised them in many parts higher than the surrounding country plains. During the rainy season when the rivers are in spate, the waters overflow the banks and inundate the vast area and damage the standing crops. The floods are a normal feature of Bangladesh's hydrography. The rivers of Bangladesh eat away the land along their courses in one part, and build new lands, or chars which are very fertile in another. The flat plain is separated for a few miles from the main river bed by high ground which keeps the river generally confined when the rains cease. The beds of the main rivers are very wide. The running water cuts one bank and deposits on the other. On account of oscillation in their courses, the land adjacent to the rivers is subject to continuous change. Hundreds of acres are lost or gained every year for which a constant internal migration of people takes place. Between the Jamuna and the old course of the Brahmaputra and north of the Burhiganga there is an elevated tract of land commonly known as Madhupur Jungle, which is believed to have been upheaved in recent times. This upheaval caused the deflection of the Brahmaputra eastwards into the depressed area of Sylhet jhils.

The plain of north Mymensingh and Sylhet lies at the foot of the scarp of the Assam Range from which there is a heavy run-off in the monsoon season causing devastating floods and forming extensive marshes and jhils known as haers. They have all the physical aspects of the new delta except for the existence of distributaries.

The coastal plain in the Noakhali and Chittagong districts is only about 5 to 6 miles wide and is crossed by several rivers from the hill of which the Karnaphuli and the Sangu are important.

A tropical humid equable climate with plenty of rain and flood water is found in Bangladesh. This helps the growth of a great variety of crops.

Temperature in Bangladesh varies. Maximum temperature is recorded in April all over Bangladesh excepting Cox's Bazar, Chittagong and Noakhali where temperature attains maximum in May. With the exception of the above three places, summer maximum elsewhere generally varies between 91° and 96° F.¹⁹

In Bangladesh, the annual rainfall varies from 55 inches to 200 inches.²⁰ More than two thirds of this rainfall take place in the months from June to September.²¹

The climate of the whole of Bangladesh may be called humid. Humidity is high practically throughout the year. During June and July it varies from about 84 to 90 per cent²² while in winter months, humidity generally varies between 75 and 82 per cent.²³

19 Ibid. p. 41.

20 Ibid. p. 44.

21 Ibid. p. 44.

22 Ibid. p. 44.

23 Ibid. p. 44.

The flora of Bangladesh is very rich and green. The tropical moist climate with very high average temperature and moderately heavy rainfall almost through the year and fertile soil all combine to produce a very luxuriant vegetation. About 16 percent²⁴ land is covered by forest. For pressure of population many forests have been cut down for settlement.

There are three important areas of natural forests. The first is that of the tropical rain forest in the districts of Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts where climbing plants are numerous. They grow rapidly and reach the top of the trees. Teak and garjan which grow abundantly are important trees and plenty of bamboo is also grown.

The second are the delta forests usually known as the Sunderbans after sundral (*herittiera minor*) which is the main tree of this forest.

In marshy places of this forest and at other places grow mangrove plants. Finally there is the Madhupur Jungle. Here sal (*shorea robusta*), locally known as garhgajari is the chief tree.

Some of the other well-known plants of Bangladesh are different types of palms and bamboos, teak, mahogany, silk cotton tree (*salmalia malabaricum*), banana, magnolia and rhododendron.

24 Ibid., p. 199.

In Bangladesh there are few areas of grassland where there are no forest or marshes. Practically the whole plain is cultivated.

Bangladesh with dense tropical rain forest and innumerable muddy rivers has a great variety and wealth of animal and insect life. Reptiles, fishes, Royal Bengal tigers, spotted deers, crocodiles, monkeys, buffaloes, elephants and cows are the important animals of Bangladesh.

Soils of Bangladesh belong to the wet group called pedalfers. New alluvium is widely distributed in the plains, more so in the vicinity of rivers. Old alluvium occurs in the higher tracts of Barind and Medhupur. The effect of leaching is to a great extent made up by the annual deposit of silt.

The land use is not widely varied. The major land use has been shown in the following table.

Table 1.1. Major Land Use in Bangladesh, 1977/78²⁵
 ('000 acres)

Land use categories	Area ('000 acres)	
	Area	Percentage
^a Net cultivated	6669	18.90
Forests	5425	15.38
^b Cultivable area	23187	65.72
Cultivable waste	655	1.86

^a Rivers, tidal creeks, lakes, ponds, roads, homestead, etc.

^b Total net area of non cultivable lands and forests

25 Adapted from World Bank Report, Bangladesh : Food Policy Issues, 1979.

The Socio-Economic Background

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world with the lowest per capita income, a high density of population and a low rate of literacy. For a comparative study of the socio-demographic conditions of Bangladesh with other countries of the world, the following table is presented for perusal :

Table 1.2. Socio-Demographic Conditions of Different Countries

Country	Area (Square miles)	Population (crore)	Rate of popula- tion in- crease (per 1000)	Literacy (in per cent)	Annual per capita income
Bangladesh	55126	9.0	26	26	\$ 120
India	12,64000	70.0	20	36	\$ 180
Sree Lanka	25000	1.5	17	78	\$ 190
Pakistan	3,09000	7.5	31	21	\$ 230
Indoneshia	7,80000	14.0	18	62	\$ 360
Thiland	1,98000	4.5	27	84	\$ 490
Philippine	1,15000	5.0	27	87	\$ 590
Malaishya	1,27000	1.4	27	30	\$ 1090
U.K.	94000	5.6	9	99	\$ 5030
U.S.A.	36,09000	22.2	8	99	\$ 9590

Source : Planning Commission, the Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh.

With a per capita income of about \$ 120, Bangladesh is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Life expectancy is short, child mortality high and human fertility remains largely unchecked. A large part of the adult population is illiterate, ill-fed, ill-housed, unemployed and underemployed. Progress has been slower than in other low income countries; in fact, per capita income in Bangladesh declined by 0.4% a year during 1960-76. Whereas they increased by 0.9% a year in the other low income countries.²⁶ In spite of record rice crop in previous years, per capita rice production has yet to return to the FY 70 level.²⁷ Landlessness is on the increase at an alarming rate; according to a recent survey, about half of the rural population is landless or virtually landless.²⁸ For its financing the country depends critically on foreign aid. Let us take a glance of the GDP Position of Bangladesh from the following table :

26 World Bank Report, 1979, p. 20.

27 Ibid., 1979, p. 20.

28 Summary Report of the 1977 Land Occupancy Survey of Rural Bangladesh, B.B.S.

Table 1.3. Gross Domestic Product (at Factor Cost) in Constant Prices of 1972/73 (in millions of Taka)

	1969/70	1970/71	1971/72	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75	1975/76	1976/77	1977/78
<u>Agriculture</u>	31,836	30,401	27,146	27,220	30,307	29,701	32,627	32,161	34,542
<u>Industry</u>	6,782	5,407	2,875	4,927	4,787	5,756	6,486	7,316	8,207
<u>Services</u>	13,215	13,185	12,126	13,153	14,512	15,141	16,390	16,961	18,091
<u>Gross Domestic Product, at factor cost</u>	<u>51,833</u>	<u>48,993</u>	<u>42,147</u>	<u>45,300</u>	<u>49,606</u>	<u>50,598</u>	<u>55,503</u>	<u>56,438</u>	<u>60,849</u>

Annual GDP Growth Rate, in %

3.3	-5.5	-14.0	7.5	9.5	2.0	9.7	1.7	7.8
-----	------	-------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Notes : All estimates are provisional.

Source: Planning Commission, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Table : Sectoral Contribution to GDP, in Per cent.

	1969/70	1970/71	1971/72	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75	1975/76	1976/77	1977/78
<u>Agriculture</u>	61,42	62,05	64,41	60,09	61,10	58,70	58,78	56,98	56,78
<u>Industry</u>	13,08	11,04	6,82	10,88	9,65	11,38	11,69	12,96	13,49
<u>Services</u>	25,50	26,91	28,77	29,04	29,25	29,92	29,53	30,05	29,74
<u>Gross Domestic Product, at factor cost</u>	<u>100,00</u>	<u>100,00</u>	<u>100,00</u>	<u>100,00</u>	<u>100,00</u>	<u>100,00</u>	<u>100,00</u>	<u>100,00</u>	<u>100,00</u>

Source : Table above

The population of Bangladesh now estimated at nearly 90 million by the Census of 1981 has more than doubled since the 1951 census when it was less than 43 million. Bangladesh is one of the most populous countries of the world with a population density of 1675 persons per square mile.²⁹ Since independence two censuses were taken, one in 1974 and the other in 1981. The growth trend of the population of Bangladesh as revealed in two censuses is shown in the following table :

Table 1.4. Population Growth in Bangladesh

Y e a r s	Percentage increases (per annum)
1961-1974	2.70
1974-1981	2.36

Source : Preliminary Report, Bangladesh Population Census 1981.

The annual compound rate of growth on the basis of adjusted population of 1974 and 1981 has been calculated at 2.36 per cent on average for the intervening period between the Population Census in 1974 and that in 1981. The rate of growth of population according to 1981 census is therefore 2.36% - a decline of .34% from the 1974 rate of 2.7%. The ratio of arable land to population per persons is also very low considering the predominant role of agriculture in the economy. Land values reflect the relative availability of

29 Preliminary Report of Bangladesh Population Census, 1981.

land. This usually depends on the ratio between the area of usable land and the size of the population dependent on it. With the decrease of the per capita land the relative land-value rises and it becomes increasingly a source of conflict among various rural social groups.

Table 1.5. Land - Man Ratio in Bangladesh

Year	Land area (acres)	Cultivated land(acres)	Population (total)	Cultivated land (population rat -1e)
1974	47,300,000	28,400,000	71,500,000	1:2.5
1979	36,000,000	23,000,000	80,400,000	1:3.5

Source : Quarterly Economic Review: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afganisthan , Annual Supplement, 1975 and the Bangladesh Observer, December 16, 1977 and March 22, 1979.

As the table above shows that there has been an increase of the population pressure on land and it will continue to increase until the population explosion is checked.

The total fertility rate (i.e. the average number of children born to a woman surviving through her productive years) is about 6.5.³⁰ Owing to the high birth rate about 45% of the population is below fifteen years of age, although one child in every five dies before the age of five. Life

³⁰ World Bank Report. Bangladesh Current Economic Position and Short Term Outlook, 1980, p. 41.

expectancy at birth is less than fifty years. This demographic setting underlies and reflects an equally dismal social formation. For ever 58% of children under the age of six is stunted by chronic undernutrition. The total adult literacy rate is 26% and female literacy is about 12%.³¹ Against this background and in a predominantly the rural environment, where by social tradition the status of women is no more than the bearing and rearing of children and a large family is a kind of economic security, it is difficult to persuade couples to adopt a small family norm.

There is an evidence of increasing tendency of urbanization in Bangladesh. The urban population is growing at a much faster rate. The percentage variation of rural and urban population to the total and their growth tendency are presented in the following table :

Table 1.6. Urban and Rural Population Variation in Bangladesh

Census Year	Urban Population		Rural Population	
	Both sexes	Variation over 1961	Both sexes	Variation over 1961
1961	2640726		48199509	
		3632877 (137.6%)		17005959 (35.3%)
1974	6273603		65205468	

Source : Based on Bangladesh Population Census, 1974
Bulletin-2, pp. 54-95.

31 Ibid., p. 41.

This gives us a picture of slow and gradual shift of population from rural to urban areas. However, the increase of urban population is attributed to the fact that there are less avenues of employment in villages and more openings in urban centres where commerce and industry thrive and a huge manpower is needed to run them.

We shall now discuss in brief the social factors of race, language, administration and occupation in Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh do not belong to one single race, rather they are an ethnic admixture. The religion is found to be multi-headed. A great majority of the population are Muslims while the rest belong to the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Schedule Caste religious groups. The religion-wise distribution of the population shown in the following table will give an idea at a glance.

Table 1.7, Distribution of Population of Bangladesh by Religion

Religious Group	Number
Muslim	61038929
Hindu	4926448
Schedule Caste	4746600
Christian	215919
Buddhist	438917
Others	110935
Total	71477748

Source : Bangladesh Population Census Report, 1974, p. 142.

-: 49 :-

Bengali is the state language of Bangladesh spoken by almost every Bangladeshi with the exception of a few tribesmen who speak their own language though it has not yet taken a written form.

Bangladesh has been divided into the following six hierarchical administrative organizations :

Division
:
Districts
:
Sub-Division ..
:
Police Station
:
Union Parishad
:
Gram Sarkar

In the civil administrative hierarchy from the grass-roots upwards there are at present 6808 gram sarkars, 4365 union parishads, 469 police stations, 72 sub-divisions, 21 districts and 4 divisions.³²

The tail-end administrative tiers of union parishad and gram sarkar play major role in the execution of rural development programmes in Bangladesh, though these tiers do not that much come into picture in policy making of rural development. Gram sarkar is the lowest tier in the present structure of public administration of Bangladesh which is

32 Bureau of Statistics, Primary Report, Bangladesh Population Census, 1981, p. 4.

yet to be given the final shape. It is formed at a general meeting of the villagers convened by the officer-in-charge. After discussion and deliberations they arrive at a consensus to form the institution of gram sarkar (with 11 members and one village headman and at least two female members). The members represent all kinds of village interest. It has to function for three years as soon as it comes into being and generally 5 years after the first term is over.

Gram sarkars will, however, try to make the villages self-reliant by taking up all round development work particularly in the following fields :

- a. increased food production,
- b. adult education,
- c. population and family planning,
- d. law and order and mediation of disputes.

Union parishad over the head of gram sarkar is supposed to supervise and coordinate the development work of the villages without any prejudice. It operates within a democratic framework established by the national government. It consists of 9 members with a chairman elected by direct vote. Chairman and members together elect 2 female members.

Every year for about five months from mid-December to mid-May when harvesting is over and monsoon cultivation is yet to begin, majority of rural people remain unemployed and many in acute distress requiring perpetual relief dole from government. Bangladesh Population Censuses do not include

the kind of statistics usually wanted for rural studies. At best, they provide a rough indication of occupational status, while "economically inactive category" for Bangladesh does not measure unemployment, it does indicate the relatively large portion of work-age population. Since Bangladesh is mainly an agricultural country with 90% of population³³ living in villages, the most rural households depend directly upon agricultural production as their principal source of livelihood and income. But very few families rely entirely upon these earnings. The most common types of employment of the rural families are working as agricultural day labourers. Likewise, most village families have diversified incomes. Although the majority receive subsidiary income from non-farm sources - especially small business, property rental, professional services, clerical work and peddling, their principal income is derived from farm activities.

Health

In the field of health Bangladesh's position is depressing, particularly the rural health. The insufficiency of the health programme has become conspicuous in the tables presented below. The average position of Bangladesh in respect of health is far from satisfactory. There is almost a complete absence of health facilities in rural areas.³⁴

33 Planning Commission, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, Swanirvar Gram Parikalpana, n.d., p.7.

34 Government of Bangladesh, Planning Commission, The First Five Year Plan, 1973-78, 1973, p. 498.

Health measures are primarily urban-biased and a vast multitude of rural population feel helpless when they do not get proper treatment of their ailments. Although a good number of paramedics and barefoot doctors are recently being trained for giving service to the people of rural areas, but due to their insufficient number and lack of organisation, the rural health programme does not produce any satisfactory result.

Table 1.8. Summary of Medical Facilities in Bangladesh 1972-74

Year	Number of registered doctors	Doctor population ratio	No. of registered nurses	No. of registered midwives	Population (million)
1972	7482	1:9743	821	1092	72.9
1973	5001	1:14917	765	764	74.6
1974	5047	1:15138	1063	856	76.4

Source : Country Monograph Series No.8, Population of Bangladesh, United Nations, New York, 1981, p.188.

Table 1.9. Number of Medical Personnel 1975-1979

Year	Registered doctors	Registered nurses	Registered midwives	Registered health visitors
1975	5103	1214	739	368
1976	5723	1434	844	413
1977	6508	1739	930	413
1978	7035	2012	1041	413
1979	7909	2461	1167	432

Source : Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1980, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, p. 495.

-: 53 :-

On the average the daily nutritional requirements for an individual in Bangladesh have been assessed at 2248 calories, protein 45 gms, calcium 18.6 mgs, iron 2013 IUs, vitamin C 26 mgs.³⁵ As revealed in the nutritional survey undertaken in 1975-76, a person in Bangladesh can not make up the daily nutritional requirements. Of the total households in Bangladesh in 1970, 59% suffer from deficiency in calorie, 60% in protein, 81% in calcium, 89% in vitamin A, 85% in riboflavin, and 93% in vitamin C intakes.³⁶

35 Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, Nutrition Survey of Rural Bangladesh, 1975-76 (University of Dacca), 1977, pp. 31-32.

36 Ibid., pp. 196-202.

CHAPTER 2

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN BANGLADESH - PAST AND PRESENT

I

Evolution of Programmes

This chapter presents a discussion on the evolution of rural development programmes and an evaluation of a few of the current ones undertaken in some areas of rural Bangladesh. The present economic and social situation in agrarian Bangladesh must be seen against the background of development which took place before the country achieved independence in 1971. Economic and social development was already stagnating, partly because excessive emphasis was placed on industry to the detriment of agriculture in the second half of the 1960's. East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) became a net importer of food-grains and the socio-economic condition of the rural masses deteriorated fast. This situation was further aggravated by the destruction caused by the 1971 civil war. An already weak administrative structure was seriously dislocated after independence by the death of many Bangladeshi intellectuals and officials. The present government of Bangladesh is still beset with this inheritance.

The domestic situation which has been marked in recent years by economic and political tensions stabilized in 1976 and the early part of 1977. At present, more and more scope is being given to the private sector, and private investment abroad - particularly the export sector is being encouraged.

In spite of the fact that a programme for reconstruction and development for 1972-73 was formulated immediately after the liberation of the country and that it was followed by a Five Year Plan and a series of Annual Plans within the framework of this plan, Bangladesh is still struggling for finding the foundation for a sound economy.

Owing to increased tax revenues; it is expected that it will be possible to finance from domestic resources about one third of the Bangladesh Government's expenditure on development in 1976-77. The large and persistent trade deficit seems to be narrowing down, partly because of increased exports, but principally because imports have remained well below expected levels.

Although the 1975-76 financial years saw an improvement in the economic situation, Bangladesh for her need still continues to ask for foreign aid to finance development plans for some considerable time to come.

The country's fundamental problems remain an acute food shortage, serious unemployment and a high density of population. In view of this, the present Bangladesh government is working for the speedy achievement of self-sufficiency in food, and

family planning is also receiving increasing attention. There are few programmes aimed especially at the poorest among Bangladesh's citizens - the landless peasants and the squatters in the big cities. The government gives preference to more general programmes, for instance, in the field of rural health care, and promotes the principle of self-help in rural enterprises involving tens of thousands of people in the work of excavation and re-excavation of irrigation canals and reinforcement of dams and dikes by Food for Work projects. In this situation, rural development programmes preoccupy the minds of the planners in Bangladesh. To trace their origin and development, it is better to flash back to 1950. During the 1950's, the then East Pakistan though numerically superior played a minor role in the planning process and was allocated a relatively small share of development resources because of economic and political discrimination against the East Wing. This was indicated by the slow increase in the flow of public sector development expenditure to East Pakistan from about 20 per cent of the national budget for the First Plan to some 38 per cent for the Second Plan and about 50 per cent of the Third Plan allocation. With the vast majority of the population living in rural areas, East Pakistan provided 70 per cent of the G.D.P. by raw materials and processed agricultural products until FY 1967/68.¹ The Government of Pakistan, virtually

1 Statistical Digest of East Pakistan, Dacca, 1964.

-: 57 :-

a monopoly of West Pakistanis at that time, assumed a relaxed posture vis-a-vis agriculture, which was especially detrimental to East Pakistan. The reason may be the easy availability of food grain imports from the U.S.A. under Public Law (P.L) 480.² While the apathy and indifference of West Pakistanis inside and outside the administration towards the East Wing was growing, the right thinking leaders of Pakistan nevertheless showed concern about social and political consequences in East Pakistan that might be generated by increasing rural unemployment and deepening poverty, and this concern led to the introduction of a massive rural works programme to offer seasonal employment and to develop a much needed rural infrastructure.

In view of decaying agriculture and increasing rural poverty a new approach to rural development on an experimental basis was small scale co-operatives developed in 1959 in Comilla thana. This system was to succeed almost defunct union co-operatives. 80 square miles of Comilla thana were brought under a Village-Aid Programme to initiate an experiment in agriculture and economic development to promote the formation and growth of small co-operative groups of farmers. Step by step a co-operative system was developed consisting of small village credit co-operatives run by villagers and

2 US AID made available to East Pakistan for rural works between 1968 and 1969 amounted to 104.3 crores of rupees (86.7 crores as grants and 17.6 crores as rupee loans on favourable repayment terms). See Statistical Digest of East Pakistan, Dacca, 1974.

a central co-operative at the thana level which was responsible for promoting the transfer of technical know-how in agriculture as a rural development programme. The programme content of the co-operatives made the provision of loans and agricultural inputs to farmers. This new approach adopted the elite-mass model of development within the framework of the age old land tenure system of Bangladesh while the rural elite dominated the village scene and the mass of the rural people were being deprived of social and economic opportunities.

By the end of the sixties, the government's assault on agricultural backwardness brought about a number of development programmes in different parts of the country. But the co-ordination between various organizations of government was lacking. The early years of the decade were marked by a broad strategy of rural works programmes to change the policy of dependence on food grain imports under the PL 480 programme of US AID to one of self-reliance, by providing the infrastructure for 'extending market relations' in the rural areas as well as absorbing the huge reserve of unemployed manpower. But no effective effort was made to generate people's participation in rural development planning. The loose link between the bureaucracy and local government and the endemic factional conflict in the village community gradually transformed development resources into wasteful patronage. Meanwhile, institutional support was not provided on a nation-wide basis. Though the old multipurpose union co-operative was a

step forward over the previous system in utilizing credit to productive purposes in agriculture, the programme failed to reach the lower 'credit starved' rung of rural society because of the domination of the co-operatives by the big farmers. The Comilla project for rural development initiated in the early sixties to correct these shortcomings remained 'laboratory experiment'. In the meantime, rice intensification was given national development priority. Thus the Comilla principle of discipline, self reliance and 'internal capital formation' reached under the urgency of the Thana Irrigation Programme which relied on a quasi-co-operative structure to share a pump obtained on easy credit. Though the pressure for agricultural development vis-a-vis rural development increased during the decade 1960-70 with unco-ordinated and weak development policies of government, three distinct approaches nevertheless emerged: the Rural Works Programme built around massive public works, the Comilla experiment in self-reliant co-operatives and the Accelerated Rice Production Programme and Thana Irrigation Project. The last two stressed the rapid increase of agricultural production. They failed to produce the expected result of improving the socio-economic condition of the rural people in Bangladesh. The reason is not very far to seek. The inability to co-ordinate these programmes meant that development in rural areas by and large worked through the top-down model of development, where top-brass in government offices formulated policies and initiated programmes in the absence of the

-: 60 :-

formation of stable local institutions to ensure people's participation in policy making, programme formulation, and subsequent execution.

The present development model applied by the planners in Bangladesh failed to reduce rural poverty and could not bring equity in the distribution of benefits to the rural population because of the presence of conflicting factions in the present agrarian structure of Bangladesh. The process of rural development dragged on through conflicts and contradictions in Bangladesh society without leaving any mark of improvement on the rural condition.

It was in the last year of the decade (1969-70) that the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was initiated in order to establish the necessary co-ordination and create the necessary conditions for an effective rural development programme. However, the programme did not take clear shape until the Liberation War. IRDP, a resultant of Comilla approach basically aims at organizing the rural people through co-operatives. It claims that it provides an institutional framework for all round development activities for the farmers, the women and the youth in the rural areas. This institutional structure is developed under the IRDP main project which has been implemented since 1971. The IRDP emerged from an experiment conducted in the early sixties by the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) in the Comilla Kotwali thana. In 1971 IRDP came into

being as a nationwide rural development programme for a phased coverage of the country.

Since the independence of Bangladesh, the rural development programmes have been given more attention in Five Year Plans. The First Five Year Plan, though could not devote itself sufficiently to rural development, but cared no less for it.

The agricultural sector, was declared by the planners as one of great importance; in reality the main thrust, however, was not given to agriculture.³ The major role of agriculture in rural development was not realized by the planners in the social context of Bangladesh. In the First Plan period, no major innovation of rural institution was introduced. However, some measures were taken in terms of the value systems prevailing in our class-bound rural society. They could be summed up as a general attempt to rejuvenate the Comilla approach to rural development or institution building initiated in the early 1960's for the increased benefit of rural people without doing away with the exploitative nature of our agrarian social structure.

The major institutional approach of the rural development programme finds expression in the following :

- a) The Thana Training and Development Centre;
- b) The Thana Parishad and the Union Parishad;
- c) The Rural Works Programme;
- d) The Thana Irrigation Programme;
- e) The Integrated Rural Development Programme.

3 Government of Bangladesh, Planning Commission : The First Five Year Plan, 1972-73 (Dacca), 1973, p. 31.

-: 62 :-

The Thana Training and Development Centre acts as a via - media to co-ordinate government departments, autonomous bodies and public corporations entrusted with the task of development, and provides training and logistic support, maintenance and service facilities to farmers. The thana Parishad is a co-ordinating body of elected chairmen of the constituent union parishad and thana level government officers and personnel of related public sector bodies. It helps the efforts of the union parishad in the execution of rural development programmes worked out by the government. It 'cross-communicates' between the government and the local people. Gram sarkar has made a recent appearance, but has not gone into full operation. It has been directed by the government to work in close collaboration with the union parishad for rural development activities. The Rural Works Programmes are undertaken to build up the rural infrastructure like roads, community centres, etc., by employing rural manpower. These programmes are executed by local government bodies : the union parishad, thana parishad and zilla Parishad. The Thana Irrigation Programme is the extension of the rural works programme which serves the purpose of local irrigation, with the main emphasis on organizing the farmers into pump co-operatives for providing irrigation water in time. A nation-wide network of IRDP has been set up with a framework of a two-tier co-operative system :

(1) Village based primary farmers' co-operatives or Krishak Samabaya Samity (KSS), composed of individual members for joint production planning and resource use, though each member is allowed to own and cultivate his own land.

(2) Federation of the village primary co-operatives or the KSS into a central co-operative association at the thana level called Thana Central Co-operative Association (TCCA) for providing the needed material inputs and services to the primary co-operatives in collaboration with other development agencies operating in the thana and help the KSS develop as viable co-operative units.

In this structure of IRDP, provisions were made to get proportional representation of the people from various social groups - the landless, the marginal farmers, the big farmers, and women. But these institutions of rural development and their representatives at different levels working in different capacities were not given an understanding and a frame of reference which is a pre-requisite for a meaningful dialogue and joint efforts with the rural people. Secondly, they would not help to identify government action needed to establish the pre-conditions for a participatory approach to rural development. Thirdly, it did not guide the government in taking action in fields where direct and extensive grass-root level involvement is not feasible. Outside the gamut of the Comilla approach three types of institution still continue to operate. The first is, the Union Multipurpose Co-operatives at the base level, the Central Co-operative Banks at the

-: 64 :-

intermediate level, and the Jatiya Samabaya Bank at the national level for advancing credit on a short term basis. Secondly, there are co-operatives for meeting the special needs of village occupational groups like fishermen, weavers, silk producers, etc. Thirdly, in some command areas of Noakhali, Bogra, Pabna and Mymensingh, intensive area development has been taken in hand from external financial resources.

In past efforts at rural development programmes in the field of agriculture, stress was given on increased inputs and logistic support rather than on building an institutional framework free from elite domination and congenial for people's participation in rural development programmes in Bangladesh.

There has been an increasing attempt at modernizing agriculture in Bangladesh by the application of scientific agricultural practices like modern irrigation, fertilizers and credit facilities through an institutional network. But the national educational programme does not correspond to our agricultural needs. Past educational programmes at the primary level did not prove effective in the process of rural development in Bangladesh. Planned by the bureaucratic elites at the top of the administration, the educational policy did not place strong emphasis on agricultural, vocational and technical education. Placing of a relatively higher stress on the general and the higher education at the expense of the technical and vocational ones produced an imbalance in our

educational system which did not produce positive results in rural development. Further, the entire system of education is so cast within our class-bound society as to strengthen the hands of the propertied class to perpetuate the exploitation of the poor. The general educational programme and the mass illiteracy drive by central decision of the government therefore cannot make much contribution in a positive direction to rural development, even though government primary schools increased from 30446 in 1972-73 to 36165 in 1977-78, with an increase in the total enrolment of school aged children (5-9 years) upto 8.3 million. At the end of the First Five Year Plan, growth of educational institutions lagged far behind the growth in the number of school age children.⁴ Further, a sound education system could not grow owing to frequent strikes in educational institutions and chronic factional politics in school and college administration. The latter is especially true in rural areas of Bangladesh.

4 National Foundation for Research on Human Resources Development : Primary Education Network in Bangladesh : Capacity Utilization, (Dacca) 1979, pp. 186-195.

-: 66 :-

Family Planning is another aspect of the rural development programme in Bangladesh. Faced with the challenge of accelerating the rate of population growth and its multiplication at a faster rate, realization has progressively been growing that national achievements in the economic, social, educational and health fields are being threatened by the rapid rate of population growth. With the recognition of the population problem, Bangladesh like many other countries of the world has adopted over the recent years various policies and programmes to deal with this threat. Our modest population programme started from the beginning of the First Five Year Plan (1955-60), when Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan. Some Rs. 500000⁵ was allocated for making family planning a success. East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) got a small share. The Second Plan raised the amount to Rs. 32.5⁶ million and set up a government machinery at the centre and provinces to implement the scheme : family planning boards, a national research institute of family planning and five training-cum-research institutes in the provinces were set up to carry out the family planning programme both in urban and rural areas, with less emphases on the latter. About 1,500⁷ medical and paramedical personnel were trained in the technique. Some 3,308⁸ clinics were opened during that period.

5 Pakistan National Planning Board, The First Five-Year Plan, 1955-60, 1957, p. 30.

6 Ibid., Chapter-13.

7 Ibid., Chapter-13.

8 Ibid., Chapter-13.

-: 67 :-

The Third Five Year Plan (1965-70) raised the financial size of the programme by more than nine times over the Second Plan . It aimed at preventing 5 to 6 million births by reducing the rate from 50 to 40 per thousand.⁹

The Bangladesh family planning movement has gone through five distinct phases :

First phase : a privately and voluntarily sponsored clinic-bound programme (1955-60).

Second phase : a government supported clinic centred programme (1960-70).

Third phase : a government sponsored field oriented programme (1965-70).

Fourth phase : an integrated health and family planning programme.

Fifth phase : a multisectoral family planning programme (since 1975).

In the first two phases, the programme emphasis was mainly on establishing clinics in all general hospitals, dispensaries and maternity centres through the existing services. During 1965-70 the family planning programme was launched throughout the country as a full fledged government programme with separate structure, organization and manpower under the then central and provincial government. This programme was introduced as an

9 The Third Five Year Plan of Pakistan 1965-70, May 1965, Chapter 15.

administrative programme through the general administration of the country with the family planning organization having no separate existence, but in reality, the programme gradually drifted away from other rural development programmes.

During the fourth phase (1971-74), in the post liberation period, an attempt was made to integrate health and family planning as one unified service at the grass-root level. But it was found that multipurpose family welfare workers were too much burdened with immediate health activities and ultimately family planning programmes were reduced in importance.

The fifth phase, the current one, started at the end of 1974 with the creation of a new division in the Ministry of Health in the name of Population Control and Family Planning and was entrusted with the responsibility of implementation of the National Population and Family Planning Programme both in rural and urban areas.

The main emphasis of the present population control and family planning programme is on integrating the population planning activities with overall socio-economic development processes and on having a multisectoral approach to the immediate solution of the country's 'Number One Problem'. But an inadequate institutional infrastructure and the lack of service facilities, family planning officers and welfare workers, arising out of chronic factional conflict, still remain the major obstacles to the adoption of family planning programme in rural areas of Bangladesh. Co-ordination at various

tiers of the administration, which is thought to be most essential for the success of the programme, sometimes fails in the face of elite conflict in the present day rural society of Bangladesh. No single aspect of rural development programme is not affected by the power conflict in the agrarian society of Bangladesh.

II

Organizations Taking up Programmes

It will be relevant for the present study to outline the objectives and working of the rural development programmes undertaken by some of the noted voluntary organizations at the present moment in Bangladesh and governmental agencies in collaboration with the assistance of foreign organizations. Gonoshasthya Kendra at Savar, Faridpur Academy of Baitul Aman at Faridpur, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee are some such popularly known organizations currently engaged in rural development programmes.

Gonoshasthya Kendra (GSK)

Gonoshasthya Kendra (Peoples's Health Centre) is situated in the Savar Police Station twenty miles north of Dacca city. It is somewhat of an exceptional organization in the field of rural development. To comprehend the characteristics of GSK, it is essential to make a qualitative evaluation without concentrating much on quantitative data, because the GSK's major aim is social transformation. The GSK has adopted a

variety of programmes in health, nutrition, family planning, education and agriculture.

The uniqueness of GSK becomes apparent from a study of its origin, its development, the ideas of the leaders, the organization of its work, its mode of decision making and planning for the future.

Persons who set up a field hospital during the liberation war took up a rural development programme at the end of the war. GSK's origin is traced to such an uncommon event. After the beginning of the war of liberation in Bangladesh, some young Bangladeshi doctors in Great Britain set up the Bangladesh Medical Association. They mobilised the resources of nearly one thousand Bangladeshi doctors working in different parts of the world, and dispatched substantial assistance in money and materials to the freedom fighters in Bangladesh. This assistance and Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury's leadership saw the formation of a field hospital at Bishramganj called the Bangladesh Hospital. Without such a hospital it was never possible for freedom fighters to carry on an armed struggle. The Bangladesh Hospital, however, not only served the wounded freedom fighters, it also provided preventive medicines to refugees leaving Bangladesh.¹⁰ Zafrullah and his associates displayed dedication and devotion in nursing the wounded during the liberation war.

10 Dainik, Bengali daily, Dacca, December 6, 1972.

This experience at the Bangladesh Hospital certainly proved fruitful in inspiring Zafrullah and his colleagues to launch the GSK movement at the end of the liberation war. In 1972 the GSK started its activities at Savar¹¹ in a tent without modern facilities. Since the Government itself had a huge Health Department and Directorate, it was not unnatural that some government employees would look upon a voluntary agency like the GSK as a competitor and resort to obstructive tactics.¹² A voluntary agency has to comply with government regulations on numerous matters, so the help from bureaucracy is very much required. The bureaucratic elite, however, did not prove much helpful in materializing the GSK Programmes. The GSK leaders took up the task of developing villages in a self-reliant way with some ideas different from others.

Firstly, it is thought that the villagers, however poor and illiterate they may be, better understand their own problems than others. Secondly, the intricate tasks of rural development can not also attain expected results unless they make room for flexibility to carry out timely changes in predetermined ideas and methods in the light of evolving experiences. Thirdly, the GSK's leaders derive their ideas about various programmes from a clear and long term plan. In developing countries like Bangladesh, ill-health is inextricably linked to illiteracy, malnutrition, superstition,

11 Ibid.

12 Bichitra, Bengali Weekly, Dacca, January 25, 1974, p. 34 & Holiday, March 26, 1972.

unemployment and agricultural backwardness. A health complex is foredoomed to failure unless organizers keep in view the aforesaid problems and draw up a comprehensive scheme.¹³

Fourthly, it is not realistic to expect poor villagers to accept innovation by merely advising them to do so. Superstition and decades of poverty have instilled in them a deep fear that to try anything new may be disastrous.

GSK's leaders therefore tried demonstration farming. Fifthly, it is not correct to imagine that urban people should rush to rural areas and deliver villagers from misery. A few educated and self-sacrificing urbanites have naturally to provide leadership, but it is principally the villagers themselves who have to bear the responsibility for rural reconstruction. Sixthly, many of the thoughts and actions of the GSK's leaders rest on the idea that latent capacities of poor illiterate villagers - individual and collective - are tremendous, and it is possible to rouse these capacities by treating villagers with patience, perseverance, humanity, and above all, respect. Seventhly, success in this venture will depend greatly on building up democratic organization.

GSK's experience attests to the validity of the idea that success in efforts towards rural reconstruction is hard to achieve unless knowledge obtained from villagers themselves sustains these efforts and they are free from the control of rural elites.

13 GSK Progress Report, June to November, 1972, p. 5.

-: 73 :-

GSK approached the agricultural activities and health programmes, including family planning, by adopting a time schedule that is to work strictly in accordance with the convenience of villagers and by establishing rapport with them. The health workers, for example, visited villagers in the mornings and evenings and held extensive discussions with them. This enabled them to realize that to succeed in a family planning programme they must not wait for villagers to turn up at a medical centre. On the contrary, they must reach them at the convenient time of the villagers, try to talk to women informally and build close friendship by informal discussion at short intervals, and then persuade them to adopt family planning.

Despite a deep-rooted social consciousness, however, the GSK's leaders have not been able to overcome the barrier of class disparities in agrarian Bangladesh. During the first few years the GSK's health insurance scheme levied a subscription of 2 takas per family per month.¹⁴ Experience through four years taught the GSK that it was easy for the rural rich and the middle class to pay this subscription, but not for the poor and landless.

In the field of education also, the GSK demonstrated its dynamism by preparing and revising its programmes in the light of its own experience and of the assessment by villagers.

14 GSK Progress Report, June to November, 1972, p. 3.
Progress Report, December 1972 - June 1973, p. 2.

In 1972, a scheme of non-formal adult education was launched by it. In course of discussions adult trainees observed frankly that for them this education was useless, because it could not enable them to raise their incomes. They had already run the race of their life, and it was inconceivable, they added, that non-formal education could extend to them any tangible benefit. They advised the GSK to concentrate on educating children who had a long potential life ahead of them, and could avail themselves of economic opportunities by means of education. The GSK true to its dynamism and flexibility, used this experience and revised its educational programme switching over to the education of children. Thus through dialogue and discussion, the individual members of the village community carried their weight in the decision making process in the programme of rural development.

The GSK tries to carry out its educational programme to conform it to social realities. A majority of the existing village families which have little or no land, or are totally destitutes can not afford to send children to school because the survival of their families depends largely on their earnings. Even these poor families which succeed in sending one or two children to school find it nearly impossible to comply with the school requirements of rigid time table, for their children during hat days and harvesting season work by the side of adult members in the family. Poor students do not have an environment at home congenial to studies;

they frequently come to school without taking food, nor they can purchase books and papers for school work. Their performance in the class is naturally poor which brings contempt and ultimately beating. In order to cope with this adverse situation, the GSK's school called Ganapatshala has devised an educational system where authorities admit the children of villagers who are landless or marginal farmers or totally destitutes.¹⁵ Children do not have to pay fees, they get free books, papers, pensils, etc. and one square meal.

Even then the adverse social circumstances in which the power and influence is virtually the monopoly of the rural elite, and the relationships of patronage and dependence in the semi-feudal economy of Bangladesh produce extreme poverty, compels a regular student in Ganapatshala to become irregular in the course of time.

So far our discussion has revolved around two distinct features of GSK :

(a) The leaders of GSK try to learn from villagers the best way to improve their lot.

(b) The leaders rely on their experiences to discover mistakes, acknowledge them and revise programmes to correct those mistakes.

15 Women and Education, Dacca, Women for Women Research and Study Group, 1978, p. 167.

-: 76 :-

The third salient feature of the GSK is the adoption of an integrated scheme of development from the very beginning. This scheme originated at the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development and is recently most talked of in official documents and research papers. The leaders of GSK understood that there can not be any tangible improvement of health services without development activities in agriculture and education and vice versa. So the GSK adopted an integrated approach right at the beginning.

A health scheme with an admixture of preventive and curative programmes and an appropriate combination of paramedics and doctors has been introduced by GSK in the rural areas on a small scale. The GSK has adopted this pioneering role in the balanced health care of the majority of poor villagers by employing doctors and paramedics in a complementary fashion .

The leaders of GSK pay maximum attention to the deprived section of rural society, especially women. An important aspect of GSK's health and family planning programme is the inculcation of self-confidence among women. Family planning is an effective means to freedom from exploitation for the village women who are poor, illiterate, sick and persecuted.¹⁶

-: 77 :-

Village women are aware of family planning and this demonstrates the women's groping for freedom from exploitation.¹⁷ The GSK has employed women paramedics to help women in this respect. A women paramedic at work in the village tries to help in bringing about a social transformation.

In a situation where most village women are socially backward and ill-treated at home, female paramedics can serve as an example of social emancipation and rouse confidence in them.

In spite of the new health scheme introduced by GSK, the health workers rouse the suspicions of poor illiterate villagers when they prescribe them the cheap medicine of salt-molass-sherbet (drink) as an antidote to diarrhoea at the early stage, while the qualified doctors prescribe expensive medicines to upper class patients for the same disease. This makes them think that they have been discriminated. The poor villagers therefore find it extremely difficult to realize that what is good for the rich is not good for them and begin to suspect the health workers. The purpose of the scheme is frustrated in this way. A scheme to improve health without removing poverty is wholly unrealistic.

Failure of GSK's scheme is sometimes attributed to alluring traps of dependency spread over the rural poor by the rich forming the elite in the rural society of Bangladesh.

17 GSK Progress Report, December 1972 - June 1973, pp. 3-4.

An illustration will make the position clear. Abbas is the son of a poor farmer. The GSK, in accordance with its agricultural programme, has given a goat as loan to Abbas's father. Previously Abbas, aged 12 used to go to Genopathshala. Afterwards, he became too inattentive and disobedient, he ceased to be a student of Genopathshala. Shamsun, a cousin of Abbas was a regular student of Genopathshala. Abbas once fell from a tree and badly injured one hand. Shamsun reminded Abbas and his parents that in GSK they could get the necessary treatment on payment of 50 paisa only. But there was Nur, the son of a well-off villager who would not let slip this opportunity to exploit a poor family or at least to make the family more dependent than previously on Nur and his father. If the family could be induced to spend a lot on Abbas's treatment, his father might be compelled to sell off a portion of his land to Nur's father. In the past, for instance, Shamsun's father had been bluffed by Nur into selling a part of his land to Nur's father. Nur held out the allurements of a job in Saudi Arabia which would enable Shamsun's father to amass money within a short period of time. Nur asked for some cash payment to make necessary arrangements. A gardener in a government park, Shamsun's father could procure this additional sum only by selling land. Nur's father grabbed that land. But the trip to Saudi Arabia did not materialise. Nur furnished various alibis for the failure to carry out his promise. Abbas's father was aware of this incident, and yet, instead of listening to Shamsun's advice that Abbas should be taken to GSK for the treatment of his hand injury, Abbas's father

accepted what Nur said. To some extent, surely, Nur could play upon the nervousness of Abbas's father. Nur recommended that Abbas must go to a big government hospital in Dacca. Nur pleaded with plain lies - that treatment at GSK would be costly and fruitless. The bus to Dacca stops right in front of the gate of GSK's main hospital. Abbas boarded the bus from there, and went to a government hospital in Dacca. Transport to Dacca and back, food in Dacca, and medicine cost 60 taka.

At GSK the total expenditure would have been 50 paisa only. In this manner the dependency relations are made to grow only to exploit the poor and ultimately this leads to failure of many such GSK Programme.

The hindrances to achievement of self-reliance by the rural poor in Bangladesh arise out of the tremendous power wielded by the rural elite. This consists of wealthy landholders, shopkeepers, physicians, and union parishad chairmen/members. They have long-lasting dependency connections and alliances with government officials, lawyers, judges, and powerful politicians in the country's capital. For their narrow self-interests, the elites in rural Bangladesh very often come into conflict for safeguarding them.

The motivation for self-reliance when instilled in the young can become the most effective. Gonopathshala therefore aims at providing that education surely can contribute to self-confidence and self-reliance among its students. This education therefore tries to develop a deep consciousness

of the existing social realities among them. The children at gonopathshala grow to realize why they are poor and inquire who are responsible for their poverty.

Conventional textbooks available in the market are not suitable for imparting the unorthodox and socially meaningful education to the poor. To impress upon the students the nature of socio-economic disparities which are at the root of their poverty, Gonopathshala teachers therefore have been trying to prepare relevant books which may cause conflict with present educational system of the country.

When GSK began to think of an agricultural programme it realised afresh the great urgency of generating consciousness about economic exploitation. In order to develop consciousness about such exploitation and to forge unity and solidarity among the poor to fight it, GSK workers regularly arrange discussion meetings in villages. The workers make the poor farmers understand that sharecroppers get only fifty per cent of the produce even after investing their own labour, hiring draught cattles, purchasing water and seeds. They are in this way exploited by the big landholders. Landlord must not receive more than one third of the produce from sharecroppers. GSK workers provide such political education to the poor peasants. This again tries to weaken and change the existing social structure of rural Bangladesh.

Credit is the foremost requirement of the agriculturists. The government of Bangladesh allocated 325 crores of takas for agricultural credit in the First Five Year Plan.¹⁸ But this credit was available only through Krishi Banks and Co-operatives to those who could mortgage land and therefore beneficial to the rich peasants. In 1977 the government of Bangladesh prepared an agricultural credit scheme of 100 crore taka for the small/marginal/landless farmers. This scheme enabled farmers to mortgage crops for credit.¹⁹ But in order to obtain this institutional credit a poor farmer must be able to persuade a union parishad member or chairman to stand as surety. These influential villagers who form the rural elite, however, are themselves money lenders or they have close link with money lenders.²⁰ If a poor farmer has to request these influential to stand as surety, he has also to surrender himself totally and suffer exploitation in diverse ways. GSK therefore has come forward to offer agricultural credit with new procedures, novel organization and steady resolve.

The GSK simplified the procedure for loan disbursement to carry out its agricultural credit programme, although the risk of repayment went up. The debtor is to form a Debtor's Group and elect leaders (chairman and secretary) and exercise certain responsibilities (disbursement and collection of loans) so that the performance of these tasks without the

18 Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, The Two-Year Plan 1978-80, Dacca, 1978, p. 146.

19 The Two-Year Plan (of Bangladesh), 1978-80, p.147.

20 GSK Progress Report, December 1977, p. 3.

direct participation of the GSK staff can instil in poor farmers a sense of confidence. This can also strengthen their unity, solidarity and democratic consciousness. An individual loan is a group responsibility.

The farmer under the loan terms make payment on easy instalments, for example, a loan of 100 taka has to repay in four months the principal plus interest of 10 kgs of paddy (although the farmer himself is free to invest the loan in the production of any commodity of his choice). The annual rate of interest charged by the GSK ranges approximately between 45% to 48% i.e. 3-4 times the rate charged by government agencies. Under the Bangladesh Government's Integrated Rural Development Programme the rate of interest is 17%²¹ whereas the Bangladesh Krishi Bank charges 11%.²¹ In spite of this large disparity in the rates of interest, however, it is much more advantageous for the poor farmers to secure loans from GSK than from government agencies. They can easily and quickly get loans from GSK by means of a signature or thumb impression upon an ordinary piece of paper which carries a 50 paisa revenue stamp. In contrast, procurement of loan from a government agency entails the wastage of many workdays, expenses on payment of bribes, and resignation to humiliating and insulting behaviour on the part of government employees. It is impossible to predict how many days earnings one has to forego just to secure an application form for a government loan. To this loss is added endless harassment

21 The Two-Year Plan (of Bangladesh) 1978-80, p. 147.

at the hands of arrogant officials and their agents, the scheming middlemen. When a farmer secures a loan after crossing all these hurdles, it may be too late to invest the sum in agriculture. Even if the loan is available in time, the effective rate of interest (i.e. official rate plus bribes, financial losses caused by the wastage of numerous mandays, etc.) exceeds the GSK's rate. Moreover, the interest charged by GSK is not really interest in the long run; it is the foundation of future security and self-reliance for the rural poor. Half of this interest accumulates on deposit for the individual, half for the group to which the individual belongs. In times of distress, a person can draw from GSK a loan up to twice the amount of paddy already accumulated in his personal account. As to the group account, the GSK can use the sale proceeds of paddy, for the GSK can use the sale proceeds of paddy for granting loans to members of this group in future, thereby freeing itself from the burden of finding additional resources towards the dispensation of fresh loans. In this way, GSK plans to convert dependence in the short run into self-reliance in the long run. The GSK tries to use credit operations to promote co-operation and unity among the poor villagers. The responsibilities for repayment rest in a Debtor's Group as a whole. Consequently, members encourage one another to repay, remind one another of the date when an instalment falls due. In case a member does not have cash in hand to pay an instalment immediately, another member may try to help him. A group forfeits the opportunities to secure

new loans in case all of its members do not clear up their dues - such exceptional circumstances as a debtor's death or loss of crops due to natural calamities can justify deviation from this rule. The GSK can certainly claim that this rule contributes to the habits of co-operation and growth of solidarity among the poor villagers.

Experience shows that the big landlords can ultimately prevail upon the GSK debtors by ousting them from share-cropping their land and can oppress them in several ways as they are linked up with high-ups in government administration. Moreover, the infiltration of the well-off influentials masquerading as poor peasant may also take place in Debtor's Group. Such infiltration will jeopardize the integrity and creditability of the group and it sometimes does.

The GSK helps the poor peasants in getting fertilizers and irrigation water. They become victims of exploitation by the rural elites even when they join a co-operative society for having them. In the circumstances, the GSK procures fertilizers and water for them under the GSK's agricultural programme, although this effort may lead to clashes with vested interests.

The GSK is helping to emancipate the Muslim women of Bangladesh. Ordinary Muslim ladies in our country do not come out of seclusion and go to the fields for cultivation and other types of job. It is therefore noteworthy that it succeeded in setting up a women's group for part-time cultivation.

1

The GSK workers have compulsorily to engage in farming every day at the Savar Campus. It has a large number of women employees who work for 2-3 hours daily at this farm. Villagers got habituated to seeing women working at GSK's farm. Gradually, cultivation by women becomes more and more acceptable to them.

The GSK has drawn up an elaborate scheme to use its pharmaceutical products consistent with a realistic assessment of existing conditions in villages. The GSK will sell its drugs to village quacks at a price far cheaper than the price charged by multinational corporations. In a sense, these quacks serving in villages in large number over a long period of time - are an important component of the village resource endowments which no rural reconstruction scheme ignore. The GSK is only realistic when it plans to utilise the services of quacks for supplying cheap medicines to the poor. One need not hesitate to admit that, after all, quacks, in the absence of a better substitute for them, have extended some benefits of modern medicine to villages. There is no doubt that treatment by quacks is deficient in many respects, and that dishonesty aggravates these deficiencies. But it is also true that some of the dishonest practices have their roots in the excessively high prices of drugs marketed by multinational companies. For instance, quacks tend to prescribe antibiotics in inadequate quantities mainly because poor patients can not afford the expenses of consuming costly medicines in adequate quantities. A quack who prescribes

adequately high quantities of expensive drugs will only scare away poor villagers and spoil his practice. Thus, to some extent, the deception practised by quacks upon poor villagers is perhaps inescapable. The GSK is trying to deal with this situation in a careful and innovative way.' It is preparing a directory of all quacks in Bangladesh. The Gene Pharmaceuticals will conduct a sort of free correspondence courses for these quacks, and supply them with elaborate instructions about the use of its drugs. Many village doctors are expected to be enthusiastic about this facility of free training. Furthermore, they are likely to be interested in prescribing medicines in appropriate quantities because GSK's medicine will be cheaper than those multinational corporations.

The GSK's thoughts and programme on family planning reflect respect for villagers. The leaders of GSK expect that villagers themselves will come forward to accept family planning measures when objective conditions dictate such acceptance.²² They think the government's financial incentives are all unnecessary because they will not only encourage bribery and deception but also cause invariably the oppression of the poor.²³ The GSK charges a nominal fee for surgical operations and nothing at all from the destitutes. This not only attracts a sufficient number of family planning acceptors but also preserves their interests as well as dignity.²⁴

22 GSK Progress Report, April 1975, p. 1.

23 Zafrullah Chowdhury, The Bangladesh Times, February 25, 1976.

24 GSK Progress Report, July 1973 - April 1974, p. 2.

The autonomous GSK though has taken up some novel and innovative programmes in rural development in Bangladesh on a minor scale, it has to take into account the social structure of agrarian Bangladesh where the consequences of power structure make themselves felt in all aspects of our society. For instances, the distribution of power in a stratified society such as Bangladesh will influence a government's concern or lack of concern for the programme of any autonomous organization for rural development. An autonomous body after all is a part of a greater society and is to work in the shadow of the government, but not in insolation.

The 'urban bias' from which our development programmes are not yet free is seldom anything but a reflection of the authority's purposive efforts to satisfy the influential elites of rural society in whom its power is based. There is no single technical, economic or social aspect of our rural problems which is not affected by how power and influence are distributed in the society at large, in particular rural society. Probably the GSK is not immune from this influence and the corroding effect of our class-bound society is taking the GSK Programmes downhill.

Faridpur Academy

Some rural development programmes have also been undertaken by Faridpur Academy. The Academy for Manpower and Agro-Industrial Development was formally inaugurated on May 5, 1974, with the objective of trying to assess the causes leading to the socio-economic ills of rural Bangladesh and to engage in action research and social experimentation to seek ways of overcoming them. Faridpur was chosen as the sphere of activity for the Academy because it is a typical agriculture based district where cultivators are generally very poor.

Background

The Academy for Manpower and Agro-Industrial Research, Faridpur was established in 1973 at Baitul Aman, 3 miles from the district headquarter town of Faridpur by M.M. Abdullah, the present Director General along with a few close associates. Its objective was to engage in action research to seek ways and means of overcoming socio-economic constraints experienced in poverty stricken rural Bangladesh. As a first step in achieving this objective the founder member set up the Development Study Circle (now DRC), a Dacca based organization in 1969 to come up with ideas to meet the requirements of the rural people.

Kamal Yusuf and Khaled Yusuf, close associates of M.M. Abdullah offered quite a big parcel of land at Baitul Aman for establishing the Academy to test and try out the philosophy of DSC/DRC, particularly its agro-based programme. A product of emerging Muslim nationalism in the subcontinent Baitul Aman was originally launched in the early forties by Yusuf Ali Chowdhury (Mehon Mia), late father of Kamal Yusuf, a landholding political elite of that time. The idea behind Baitul Aman was to help make the village based artisan class skillful and proficient. With this end in view a weaving school, a foundry, coir-mat making unit were set up and subsequently a free primary school and a charitable dispensary were also run. Thus Faridpur Academy at Baitul Aman began its work for the rural development.

Objectives

Convinced that rural Bangladesh has the resources necessary for its people to free themselves from poverty if given necessary assistance, the Academy had in view the following objectives :

- to engage in scientific investigation and experimentation in agricultural production, agricultural marketing and agro-industrial research and to disseminate the information to the farmers.
- to create conditions for transferring of appropriate technology and thereby to transform cultural practices of the farmers from traditional to rational system in order to increase food and other agricultural production.

-: 90 :-

- to conduct survey on the availability of skill in the rural area and to help create appropriate job opportunities for them.
- to engage in welfare activities of the people such as health care, non-formal education, etc.
- to help creation of entrepreneurs and corporate bodies to engage them in rational effort in agricultural production, agricultural marketing and agro-industries.

Before 1975 the Academy as a private voluntary group had functioned with resources of its own, experimented in social, organizational planning and its main concern was to create intermediate institutions through which to provide necessary technical and financial assistance to help the subsistence and marginal farmers.

Inter-Pares/CIDA and the Asia Foundation joined hands with the Academy in December 1975 and July 1977 respectively to help attain the objectives of the Academy, particularly to test the Kowmiye Khamar System, an innovative tri-partite management-owner-tiller contractual relationship of farming undertaken by the Academy and also to support the experimental-cum-demonstration farm at Baitul Aman.

The basic purposes of the Academy are (a) to contribute to an improved standard of living for small farmers and landless farm workers by increasing food production in the chronic food deficit district of Faridpur in Bangladesh through the Kowmiye Khamar System, an innovative management-owner-tiller contractual relationship and by systematic selection and introduction of HYV food crops as well as

alternative cash crops and with transfer of appropriate technology to the farmers, (b) to generate employment for largely unemployed and under-employed manpower resources in the rural areas in the process and (c) to support programmes and applied research efforts in agriculture, livestock and fisheries to help augment the miserably low income of the rural families.

The physical content of Faridpur model is to be studied in the context of present socio-economic conditions of marginal farmers and the landless in Bangladesh where agricultural land is in the constant process of fragmentation owing to the laws of inheritance, where the small farmers and marginal plough families²⁵ do not have enough surplus to feed themselves throughout the year and as such cannot supply necessary fertilizers, improved variety of seeds, pesticides and irrigation water required to raise production. Further, the complicated banking formalities and collateral requirements make it almost inaccessible for the peasants to obtain institutional agricultural credit. Thus most of these people live at sub-human level without any hope of improving their present condition as the benefit of most rural development efforts reach mainly the landholding rural elites.

25 Definitions of farm size was developed at Faridpur Academy combining land holding with ownership of ploughs. The following categories were developed as part of the Baitul Aman Project at Faridpur :

- 1 Homeless families.
- 2.1 Homestead families only.
- 2.2 Homestead families with plough.
- 2.3 Homestead families with land upto 50 acres.
- 3.1 Plough families with land upto 2.5 acres.
- 3.2 Plough families with land upto 5.00 acres.
- 3.3 Plough families with land upto 7.50 acres.
- 4.1 Small landowners without plough with land upto 2.5 acres.
- 4.2 Small landowners without plough with land upto 5.00 acres.
- 5 Large landowners and plough families with land beyond 7.5 acres.

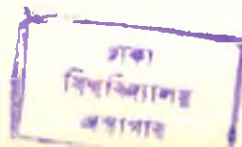
Basic Approach

The Academy through Kowmiye Khamar System (KKS) envisages pulling together of the parcelled cultivable plots of different owners in a given locality but at the same time maintaining individual ownership rights on land under tri-partite sharing between the land owner, the tiller of plough-family and the management group who enter into a contractual arrangement for a given period with their respective rights and responsibilities clearly enunciated. The management group takes upon the burden of supplying of inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation facilities and undertakes proper administration of the farm in co-operation with the other two groups. The role of the management group will ultimately be taken over by entrepreneurs/corporations either locally or otherwise in future replication of the model.

The objective of the tri-partite sharing system is to bring under rational cultivation fragmented plots of land by application of appropriate technology and providing necessary inputs thereby affecting increase in agro-production. It also transformsthe cultural practices of the farmers from traditional to rational system and in the long run to help them stand on their own feet by benefiting from this transfer of technology. This system is fairer and more beneficial to the landless and marginal farmer than other system of socio-economic sharing now existing in Bangladesh, the most common being 50-50 split where the plough-family who actually cultivates the land has to provide all kinds of inputs in

addition to labour to claim the half of the produce. The KKS by taking away the burden of providing inputs, which in any case used to be grossly inadequate for rational farming and by innovative technology and effective management, ensures a larger and more equitable share of the benefits to all concerned. Further, in order to effectively manage and supervise its operations, the Academy has to train and employ a large number of local youths thereby opening new job opportunities for the hitherto unemployed rural work force. Apart from the Kowmiye Khamars, the Academy is engaged in rearing of animals especially heifers in a bi-partite arrangement known as Kowmiye Pashupalan System with the local homestead owners under which the animal is purchased and given to a farm family for its rearing up and after a suitable period of time the animal is sold and the profit shared equally. The Academy in its turn provides a portion of the fodder also, veterinary medicine and medical attention if and when required or in other words, it takes full care of cattle health. The arrangement while it augments the farm income, it also contributes to nurturing the cattle wealth of the district. Thus, it can be seen that the benefits of KKS cover a wide range of rural population - the medium and small farmers, the marginal and landless families, excepting the large well-to-do land owners because they possess surplus cash to invest in input and services. The system also envisages sizeable increase in agro-production by transferring

384800



the know-how of intermediate technology and selection and introduction of alternative cash crops and multiple cropping available through the good offices of the Academy's experimental -cum-demonstration farm at Baitul Aman.

Action programme of the Academy is built around an organisational structure called Kowmiye Khamar System (KKS). Philosophical content of the system has been presented in a pamphlet published by the Academy. It goes as follows :

as Bangladesh agricultural lands are largely subdivided and fragmented because of the law of inheritance;

as the small peasants and plough-families do not have enough surplus to feed themselves throughout the year;

as without collectivisation of small plots of land, it is not possible to bring the land owned by different landowners under modern systems of cultivation through irrigation;

as landless poor plough-families cannot supply the necessary fertilizers, seeds and irrigated water to their lands;

as landless poor peasants cannot collect enough agricultural credit because of the present property restrictions in the distribution of credits;

as small and landless peasants live in extreme poverty for which they do not believe in any change;

as always see their personal interests separately from the social interest;

so, the Academy plans to organise agriculture for better production through the Kowmiye Khamar System, thereby collect the scattered plots of land and at the same time retain the

individual property rights on land. The term "Kewmiye" remained unexplained in the pamphlet. According to the published pamphlet tri-partite sharing of produce among the landowner group, plough-family group and the farm management group is central to the Kewmiye Khamar System. The term 'plough-family' stands to mean anyone who is actually engaged in the cultivation of a piece of land. He may be the owner. In case the owner of the land himself undertakes the cultivation, he is entitled to two-thirds of the produce, once as the landowner, again as the ploughman. There is no restriction on the landowner in cultivating his own land. In practice, most of the landowners have their names recorded in the KKS both as landowner and ploughman; thus registering a claim on two-thirds of the produce. Only the absentee landowners who do not cultivate their land, and the big landowners who lease out part of their land because they cannot afford to manage the farming operation in their total land had to forego this advantage.

Rights and Responsibilities

A. Landowner : As the owner of the land, the landowner has the following rights and responsibilities :-

- 1) He has to bear the expenses of excavating the main drain or canal to irrigate his land, and of excavating small pond or pool to eliminate the mineral content from the irrigation water.

-: 96 :-

2) He has to bear one-third of the expenses of harvesting, and of the post-harvest operations.

3) He has the claim on one-third of the produce of his own land included in the KKS.

B. Ploughman : 1) He is responsible for all the operations of cultivation, including the nursing, weeding, etc. He has to provide his own labour.

2) He has to bear one-third of the expenses of harvesting and post-harvest operations.

3) He has a claim on one-third of the produce.

C. Management : 1) Management is responsible for the supply of necessary fertilizers, seeds, pesticides and insecticides to all land under the Kowmiye Khamars.

2) It will bear the cost of supplying irrigation water.

3) It will bear one-third of the cost of harvesting and post-harvest operations.

4) It will be responsible for the technical management and day to day administration of the farms.

5) It will have the right over one-third of the total produce.

Other Terms

1. A landowner must agree to enter into agreement with the management of the KKS for each of his plots separately.

2. The landowner group of a Kowmiyo Khamar will send two or three representatives in the management council of the Kowmiyo Khamar to see to their group interest as members of the council.

3. A landowner must choose his own ploughman for each of his plots and intimate the management about his selection. Landowners who do the work of cultivation will also register themselves as ploughman for their land.

4. Ploughman group will send two or three representatives to the management council of the Khamar to become its members.

5. The Academy will nominate the Chairman of a Kowmiyo Khamar.

6. The Academy will use the operational records of each Kowmiyo Khamar for research purpose.

7. The Baitul Aman Farm Management Groups (FMG) will act as the management group for all Kowmiyo Khamar. They will appoint the manager/secretary for each Khamar. They will also appoint the supervisor, assistant supervisor, farm assistant for the administration of the farm, and will be responsible for the salaries and other expenses of these employees.

8. The FMG will nominate two to three representatives to the management council of a Khamar.

9. The period of each contract will be specified. Minimum length of the period will be one year.

10. If any Khamar wishes to manage its own affairs, the FMG will withdraw from such Khamar leaving the management entirely to the local organisation.

11. The management council will make all decisions regarding the operation of the farm.

In spite of its new philosophy of tri-partite sharing system to bring under rational cultivation fragmented plots of land by application of appropriate technology to increase production and to maintain so-called equity in distribution, Faridpur Academy still remains under the influence of the landholding elites of Kamal Yusuf and Khaled Yusuf who are founder members belonging to traditional big landlord class. People are, however, skeptical about its achievement in rural development programme. It may at best be called philanthropic activities launched by a member of the traditional elite of Faridpur. The landless and marginal farmers are not decision makers in their participation in development activities of the Academy. They are rather dependent on landholding elite who mould their opinion frequently.

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee

The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) is a non-governmental organization involved in multidimensional activities with the objectives of contributing to the economic and social development of rural Bangladesh within its present social framework.

Begun in a humble way in 1972, to rehabilitate refugees of the 1971 Liberation War, BRAC has grown into an organization²⁶ and has taken up the task of rural development in several districts in Bangladesh. The scope of operation has gradually evolved from rehabilitation to integrated rural development, human and institutional development, and the

26 BRAC, Summary of Current Activities (mimeo), 1980, pp. 1-11.

design, testing and implementation of innovative approaches, techniques and methodologies for rural development in Bangladesh. The focus of development has shifted from community approach to mobilization and organization of the poor and disadvantaged sector of the population.

In addition to the physical and operational growth of the organization, seven years of practical experience in the planning and implementation of rural development programme has enabled BRAC to foster the spirit of development among people and set up institutions necessary for long-term and self-sustaining growth of rural Bangladesh in the field of the sectoral programmes, such as agriculture, horticulture, pisciculture, animal husbandry, duck and poultry raising, nutrition, health care, family planning services and functional education initiated and controlled by co-operative groups of disadvantaged people.

BRAC is currently engaged in many development programmes in rural Bangladesh in similar fashion as Ganashastha Kendra in Savar. Among them Sulla Project in Sylhet is the largest of its kind. In Phase I of the programme, the refugees and fishermen were rehabilitated by the housing and supply of fishing input programmes on easy terms.

In Phase II of the Sulla Project, various agricultural programmes were undertaken. BRAC Workers organized block farms, set up demonstration plots. The technological transfer in the method of cultivation had been given momentum by providing low lift pumps, power tillers and chemical

fertilizers. Embankments were built under Food for Work Programme to prevent damage to crops from early inundation. A functional educational programme was also initiated to provide adult education to the almost entirely illiterate population of the project area.

This project, however, could not be made socially meaningful and relevant even though partial success has been claimed. Landless people, the largest segment of the rural population of Bangladesh received some benefit in a small scale by direct employment in agriculture. But it did not improve their economy that can sustain them for long. It has not contributed to the change of the present village social structure of Bangladesh which makes the position of rural elites strong enough to exploit the poor for more time to come. Assistance though given to landless farmers to lease in land for group farming, the lease of land, however, could not be contracted upon in sufficient amount since land supply was limited and owner farmers resorted to cultivation of their own lands by hired labour as they expected increased production by irrigation facilities provided with by BRAC. Health care and family planning activities were undertaken by recruiting qualified doctors and training local youngmen and women as paramedics and family planning workers.

In Phase III, the last and current phase which ended in December, 1980, the focus had been redefined to the mobilization of landless and disadvantaged people with the hope of ensuring their participation in the process of rural development.

How far this will be successful is a debatable issue because this particular group live and grow up in economic and cultural deprivation that make them dependent on powerful and influential persons. This creates dependency situation for which their participation in the process of rural development becomes almost ineffective and meaningless.

Sullah type of development projects has also been taken up in other parts of rural Bangladesh by BRAC. The emphasis on human and institutional development and the increasing demand for BRAC's functional education method have increased the need for providing training for BRAC workers by establishing Training and Research Centre (TARC). As the training needs and demands of trainees differ, TARC staff and functions have since July, 1978 been divided between BRAC Head Office and the Savar Campus. At the BRAC Head Office, TARC trains the staff of other voluntary agencies and of government departments. And the staff in Savar train BRAC field staffs and members of the organised groups of the disadvantaged from BRAC's field projects. In addition, Savar based staff provide outreach services to organized groups from areas where BRAC has made contact or had field activities but no field projects.

The outreach team's responsibilities are :

- a) to scout out and form viable landless groups in different parts of the country;
- b) to provide continuous training and educational support to these groups;
- c) to ensure regular follow-up guidance and technical and material assistance for implementing their programmes.

The research and evaluation activities in BRAC have been in response to the recent awareness that research on rural issues and institutions must be more deeply rooted in the lives and occupations of rural population. The theme of involving villages in the research concerns coincides with the view that development workers themselves must ask penetrating questions on rural issues to produce a greater movement towards participatory research. The concern has been to bring the disadvantaged villagers into the research process and to encourage them in identifying and analysing their own situation in the socio-economic environment. Emphasis has been placed in trying to understand their environment through their own perceptions.

One of the major constraints of economic well-being of the poor farmers in Bangladesh is their inability or difficulty to obtain institutional credit for productive purposes at a reasonable services charge and within the stipulated time owing to their lack of experience with the banks. The social factors like unacquaintance of the illiterate villagers with the credit advancing procedure, too much Bakshish fee for obtaining a loan and above all the manipulation of the rural elite in the distribution of loans do not unfortunately make the institutional credit system properly workable in spite of the well-intention of the loan givers. To overcome these social constraints in loan giving procedure Rural Credit and Training Project of BRAC began to function in January, 1979. It seeks to assist the landless, women and other

economically disadvantaged groups in income generating activities with credit, training and extension services provided by the staff experienced in rural development. This is essentially an experimental project planned to last for 5 years.²⁷

BRAC has organized health services in some areas of rural Bangladesh. Its medical officer and paramedics have trained the village level volunteer health workers (chosen from the member of organised group) on preventive health for three months and curative care of a few common diseases for one month. These workers are known as Shaistha Shebok/Shebika. The paramedics supervise the village-level Shaistha Sebok/Shebikas, attend patients once a week as they take a weekly round to each village and conduct regular Mother's Club meetings where they discuss issues relating to mother and child health and nutrition.

At Mother's Club, the paramedics vaccinate pregnant mothers against tetanus and provide treatment and keep weight records of children under five. They also provide children with high powered vitamin capsules to guard them against vitamin deficiency.

BRAC believes that the youth constitutes a potential force in the country. It therefore seeks ways to engage community minded people in their respective communities.

27 BRAC, Manikganj Project Report, Phase I (mimeo), n.d., pp. 1-22.

Youth volunteers both male and female are therefore trained to conduct functional educational classes and also such other development activities as (a) cultural activities, (b) games and sports, (c) work camps, (d) seminars and workshops.²⁸ Social and economic pressure on youth have become so intense that the youth programme runs the risk of failure.

Bangladesh Women in Rural Development Programme

In the past decades of development, the women of Bangladesh were excluded from projects and programmes. Women constituting half of the population did not participate in country's development programmes. Their concern has focused on their role as housewives and mothers completely ignoring their rightful position and meaningful existence in society. In our social system women's inferior status is reflected in our social life and social institutions. The purdah system excludes them from 'visible social roles'. But this does mean that they do not work, nor willing to work, nor allowed to work even if they are provided with opportunities. A.B. Farouk's study shows, for instance, that selected rural women work between 10-14 hours a day.²⁹ The number of employed women and those seeking job has enormously increased and studies in the rural areas³⁰ demonstrated that as rural women begin to

28 BRAC, Manikganj Project, Proposal for Phase II & III, (mimeo), n.d., pp. 1-12.

29 A. Farouk, et al., The Hard Working Poor, (A Survey on How People Use Their Time in Bangladesh), Bureau of Economic Research, University of Dacca, 1977, p.73.

30 Florence E.M. Casthy, "Bengali Village Women as Mediators of Social Change", Human Organization, Vol. 36, No. 4, Winter, 1979.

contribute to family incomes, the objections to their engaging in such activities decrease at a faster rate. So there is an increasing social pressure for changing the role of rural women at present.

Past efforts at rural development in Bangladesh have been problem-laden in both design and implementation, especially as they concern women. Various types of programmes that have been attempted are represented by the Village-Aid approach, the Social Welfare approach and the Co-operative approach.

The Village-Aid Programme : The Village-Aid Programme made a beginning in the mid-fifties and was based on the agricultural extension model developed in the United States. In this approach distinction was drawn between women's job and men's job, the former being home economics and the latter agriculture.

Village-Aid in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) adopted the same model as used in the States. That is, one male and one female worker were recruited, trained and they were to work on a number of villages assigned to them. They then went from village to village, the men engaging in agricultural work and the women in home-related jobs, such as the introduction of the smokeless chulas, proper health care, home sanitation or nutrition, etc. The main theme of this programme was demonstrative. Problems that this approach faced include :

- (a) There is no internal organizational structure that developed and grew neither out of the effects of

demonstration nor by the working. The programme lingers as long as the agents make supplies and services available.

- (b) Training and direct education were provided with for the agents but not for the villagers.
- (c) The agents were taken as outsiders and representatives of the government. So they were viewed with a great deal of suspicion and often their own backgrounds and inclinations found them more in sympathy with the wives of the rural elites than with those of marginal or landless families. Naturally, the benefits of the programme went to those already well-off while those in dire need remained untouched.

The Social Welfare Approach : The social welfare approach existed during Pakistan times in the form of APWA (All Pakistan Women's Association) and its activities are present today in the Mother's Club programme initiated by the World Bank and the Ministry of Social Welfare. This approach is often the basis for most programmes of private agencies, foreign institutions and government of Bangladesh.

The social welfare approach finds two unequal groups attempting to establish and work in a condition of equality. On the one hand are the organizational representatives who has controlling power and have access to goods and services, while on the other remain the women or people for whom the programme is organized. Theoretically the organizations are supposed to welcome and develop the participation of "the people" in the programme, but what actually and usually

happens is that village women are given supplies and their participation is restricted to sowing, weaving or handicraft-making. A village representative may be chosen or sent out for training, and she supervises the work in the village after she is finally selected or trained. Villagers devote their time and efforts in building "community centres" or meeting rooms but the decision making power over resources, work rates, and marketing remain beyond the control of the participants. The participants become virtually their clients. Problems in this approach has been identified as follows :

- (a) Goods, supplies and resources are controlled outside the village by either bureaucratic elites or elites in private organizations. There is no organizational development at the village level.
- (b) Programmes using a social welfare approach accept the present social structure and attempt to work within the existing social framework of the village. Nothing is done to significantly alter the patterns of village social structure.

The Co-operative Movement Approach : Representative of the co-operative movement approach is the Women's Programme of the Academy for Rural Development and the more recent Women's Programme of the Integrated Rural Development. Much of the structural foundation of this approach came from the experiences of some European countries and the Antigonish Movement in Canada. However, in developing what has come to be termed as the Comilla approach, care was taken to adapt foreign

expertise and experience to the village situation of the then East Pakistan context. In 1961 a women's education and home development programme was given which attempted to render the economic and social well-being of village women. An organizational approach was developed that brought locally selected rural women from their respective villages to a centre for weekly training in subjects identified by the village women as being of specific concern to them. On receiving the training, the women were to train others in their villages through weekly meetings and home visits arranged for the purpose. They were to become members of village co-operatives and to receive loans in exchange for regular savings and purchasing of co-operative shares. The IRDP Women's Programme follows much the same approach except that it encourages separate women's co-operatives and large-scale economic activities among female co-operative members. Weekly training is held at the Thana Training Development Centre (TTDC) and periodically at other institutions throughout Bangladesh. A concerted effort is made to develop and extend the skills and opportunities of female co-operatives. Shortcomings of this approach are the following :

- (a) Village women lack experience and skill to participate equally with their male counterpart in Comilla co-operative societies. Therefore, have been outwitted by some co-operative managers usually male. Besides, when male co-operative members defaulted on their loans, the women members in the same co-operative societies have lost their savings as it is taken as part of the collateral of the society as a whole.

- (b) As in all other cases, the leadership of the society is taken over by the wives of wealthy peasants and rural elites. In such cases the atmosphere becomes one of paternalism and the initiative moves out of the control of the general members.

Women organization is so poor and scanty in rural Bangladesh that their participation in rural development process has not been found very much tangible. But so long as women are not organized in a body, their voice is not heard by those in authority and it is feared that they would be exploited by the influential people in our male dominated society. So the participation of Bangladeshi women in rural development projects is meagre.

Observance of purdah, the seclusion of women, is certainly a major constraint on the free participation of women in the rural development work. The normal demands on women's time and the cultural constraints related to observing purdah have created a situation in which very few women in Bangladesh actively participate in the development projects undertaken in rural Bangladesh. Many of the income generating activities available to women in other developing countries, such as marketing and farming, would be difficult to participate in while maintaining purdah.

Social Welfare and Youth Development Programme

Youths of Bangladesh are counted as potential force in the country's rural development programmes and social welfare. Let us now discuss the nature and contents of the Social Welfare and Youth Development Programmes undertaken in rural Bangladesh. The Department of Social Welfare, Government of Bangladesh established in 1961 launched a country-wide rural community programme known as Rural Social Service on an experimental basis in 19 thanas - one thana in each district. The programme expanded in subsequent years to various fields, e.g. rural social service, national youth services, socio-economic programmes for youths, population education for out-of-school youths and made a frail attempt to help the landless, the destitute and other groups of rural people to have a qualitative change of their life pattern through their own efforts.

In recent years social welfare programmes have considerably stretched out into the areas of vocational training, income and employment generating activities, family planning, non-formal education, etc. The voluntary social welfare organizations also attempt to make a contribution to rural development as they provide financial assistance in the form of grant-in-aid and professional guidance to various development agencies. Social Welfare is a joint venture by the government and the voluntary agencies in Bangladesh. Its aim is to help reducing rural poverty, providing basic human needs, increasing employment opportunities, reducing population growth and removing illiteracy.

Rural development is first a social and then a technical problem. So it requires planning in the context of inter-connection between social classes and the social base of Bangladesh. Unlike the Integrated Rural Development Programme, Rural Works Programme, Thana Irrigation Programme, which render services and benefits specially to better off farmers and rural elites, the new programmes of rural social service, population education through Mother's Club, population education for out-of-school youths and a few income generating programmes run by the Department of Social Welfare have relatively made a tangible contribution to temporary economic relief for the disadvantaged groups of rural people, although the control and management of these programmes still are in the hands of rural elites and faction leaders.

In the past social welfare programmes were mainly concentrated in the urban areas and emphasis was given on temporary remedial services. But in recent times social work has undergone functional changes and formulation of social welfare policy is now guided by the principle that it is an essential input for socio-economic development whose roots lie in the villages. The latest orientation of social welfare has been given more specifically on development and promotion activities aiming to make the disadvantaged section of rural population economically more productive and useful. But the principal aims of the social welfare programmes can hardly be achieved

as a host of undesirable social conditions have perpetuated a state of under-development.³¹ Such undesirable conditions of the social system of agrarian Bangladesh stem from its present social structure in which richest control more than sufficient means of production while the poorest are completely deprived of them.

There is a growing awareness among the policy makers and programme organizers about the significance and urgency of formulating programmes for the youth of rural Bangladesh. The Second Five Year Plan indicates the importance attached to it. The objectives of the youth programme under the Plan period (1980-85) has been outlined as follows :

- to mobilize the youth population and to inculcate in them a sense of identity and self-reliance with a unified direction for their own and national development;
- to organise the youth force through village level organizations and involve them in the execution of development programmes in their respective areas;
- to train the youth force in agriculture, livestock, poultry farming, fisheries and co-operative with a view to equipping them for self-employment;
- to train educated youth in skilled, semi-skilled and administrative jobs taking into consideration the job opportunities at home and abroad;
- to promote youth leadership through their involvement and participation in community-based activities;

31 Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama : An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations, Vol. I, 1968, p. 58.

-: 113 :-

- to organize competitions in different fields and leisure-time activities for the youth all over the country;
- to undertake activities leading to the generation of goods and services by advancing special credit facilities to the trained but unemployed youths.

To achieve the above objectives the following strategies have been recommended :

- youth force will be exploited to ensure their maximum contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. Multidimensional sectoral programmes in relation to the youths will be taken up under the co-ordination role of the Ministry for Youth Development;
- youth force will be involved in modernizing agriculture, rural farming and massive infrastructure building;
- the youth will be gradually involved in population planning;
- to turn the youth into an effect force for its proper utilization in development activities, major reliance will be placed on non-formal and vocational education to satisfy their needs;
- in order to reach the youth, Bangladesh Jatiya Jubo Sangstha (BJJS), Swanirvar and similar organizations will be formed upto thana level
- the youth will be involved in mass participation at the local level through different youth organizations. They would be effectively put to use in road building, canal digging, land development, literacy drive and family planning and motivation programmes.

The following action programmes have also been proposed during the Second Five Year Plan period (1980-85) in line with the objectives discussed earlier.

Skill Training Programme : It is proposed to impart training to a little over 4 lakh youth in agriculture and a few other selected areas/trades. These trained youths are expected to be leaders of their respective communities who will mobilise the total youth force.

Youth Development Programme : To make the youth of Bangladesh productive, especially in the field of agriculture and other agro-related production aiming at rural development, an elaborate programme has been outlined to harness their talents and energies.

Self-Employment Assistance Programme : Self-employment opportunities will also be created for the youth. For this purpose a large number of youths will be trained up in various agricultural activities, poultry farming, inland and marine fishing, etc. On completion of training they will be provided with financial and technical support to help them in seeking self-employment. Through this programme 'Youth Group' will be organised to induce and mobilise the youths of different organizations to participate in community welfare and infrastructure building activities.

Leadership Training Programme : It is recognised that the creative and constructive tendencies in youth are not produced automatically. The strength and force in the youth of all times are neutral. Whether this strength and power would be converted into socially desirable activities depends on competent and proper guidance and leadership. Only dedicated, honest, sincere and constructive leadership can help a nation utilize its youth force for positive change and progress of an underdeveloped society. It is therefore contemplated to undertake special training programme to channelise such energy and vigour to fulfill the goals as set forth. Some of our traditional values have long been eroding. It is only through such a leadership, training, a change of attitude among the youth of this country is possible.

Programmes for the development of the youths have been in existence in this country for long, but these programmes have left very little impact primarily on account of social and resource constraints and lack of coverage both in terms of regional distribution and target groups and lack of link with our social structure. Till 1978 youth development programme was an integral part of social welfare programme, but in view of growing importance of this sector, a separate Ministry for Youth Development was established in December, 1978. Since then there has been increasing activities in this direction through different programmes. It is also for the first time that an objective of the youth development programme has been formulated and incorporated in the plan document.

Food for Work Programme

Many short term rural development programmes were undertaken and are still in progress in Bangladesh. Food for Work is one such programme. Large scale food-for-work programme was launched after a severe flood that struck Bangladesh at the close of 1974 affecting directly about 30 million people and caused damage to crops and property. Food for Work projects have been provided since 1975 by both the World Food Programme and by the United States Agency for International Development. The objectives of the programme are (a) to relieve the distress of the suffering people (b) to generate employment opportunity in rural areas (c) to implement agro-oriented test relief work, such as excavation and re-excavation of canals and tanks, renovation of embankments with a view to grow more food and (d) to check inflation.

The Food for Work programme although promoted by the assured economic benefits and wide public response at the initial period, it can not claim to have fulfilled its desired objectives. Instead of making the rural poor self-reliant as it is supposed to, it has pushed them further down and failed to grow in them the positive attitude towards life which ultimately make them dependent on foreign aid. Shortcomings of the programme lie in the process of its execution. The self-indulgent local elites and faction leaders in many instances are found to exert their influences on the authorised project officials to get an opportunity

to participate in the management and distribution of the project wheat among the participant villagers who are employed in the project work. At the time of wheat distribution a major portion of it is being misappropriated by them in connivance with project officials. A recent survey on Food for Work programme by M. Elizabeth Marum exposes the ill-intention of the officials in charge of Food for Work project. She makes the following observations in her recent report : "Interviewing project officials proved to be extremely difficult. In many cases their responses were inconsistent and evasive and their estimates of worker attendance were considerably inflated."³² The implication underlying her observation is that by showing inflated figure of workers, the project wheats are misappropriated by the officials with the help of local elites.

32 M. Elizabeth Marum, Women in Food for Work in Bangladesh. US AID, Dacca, 1981, p. 112.

CHAPTER 3

AGRARIAN STRUCTURE OF BANGLADESH AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

I

Development of Land System in Bangladesh

While land is a dominant form of wealth in agrarian society, it is important to raise the issue of landownership pattern which are fundamental to any attempt at a meaningful study of rural development programmes in Bangladesh. Beteille points out the significance of land in determining the economic power and social composition in rural society.

"In agrarian societies in general the ownership and control of land constitute the immediate source of economic power."¹

Access to land principally determines the formation of faction and elite in rural society such as found in Bangladesh where the villages become the centre of 'bitter struggle and factionalism.' This is being supported by Nicholas in his paper on the role of social science research in Bangladesh. Ralph Nicholas concludes :

"Villages which appear to be the most 'natural' of human communities and the most obvious basis for co-operative development organization, frequently prove to be cockpits of bitter struggle, factionalism, and the very opposite of co-operation: no one has an effective remedy, but it is clear that rural development is severely hampered by the prevalence of such conflict."²

1 Andre Beteille, Studies in Agrarian Social Structure, 1942, p. 65.

2 Ralph Nicholas, Social Science Research in Bangladesh, mimeo, 1973, p. 26.

In agricultural societies, it is obvious, ownership of land and the control of other forms of user rights are key sources to power and influence. The analysis of the structure of land ownership is therefore essential for the present sociological study of rural development programmes in Bangladesh. It is justified here to give historical analysis to indicate the mechanism which contributes to a continued stratification in terms of access to land and its impact on the agrarian society of Bangladesh.

Before the advent of British rule in India, the village communities in Bengal as observed by R.H. Hellingbery "were in a state of incipient disintegration through the usurpation of the rights of the headmen of villages by zamindars; while the great body of village proprietors, or the members of village communes were still represented by the khodkhasht (occupancy) ryots."³

Though the intermediaries like zamindars, etc. became important in course of time, the village headman in the village community became key-man, as the villages remained the units of collection in the rest of India. But so far as Bengal is concerned, we find that at the time of British ascendancy the villages were not playing that important a role.

3 As quoted by A.K. Nazmul Karim, The Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, 1980, p. 10.

In the differential development of Bengal land system
Tara Chand maintains :

"The Bengal peasants lived in small scattered hamlets, mostly surrounded by impassable rivers. In these conditions accurate land records could not be maintained for long and, therefore, the Nawabs preferred to farm out the villages. The farmers realised the revenue with utmost severity, with the result that while the coffers of the state overflowed with money, the peasants were reduced to utmost penury. The zamindari fared no better. They were suspected of interference with the revenues in their own interest and were deprived of their functions. Amils, or revenue officers, were appointed as collectors."⁴

This differential Bengal land system had a far reaching impact on Bengal society. At the time of intrusion of British power in this sub-continent, the Bengal society considerably changed and there was quite significant use of sale, mortgage, etc. As R.H. Hellingbery points out :

"Through the usurpation by zemindars (during the pre-British period) of the functions and lands of the village communities in Bengal, were indeed, being disintegrated, but the disintegration only perfected the Khudkhast (occupancy) ryots' title, by freeing him from obligation toward other members of village commune, which, in other parts of India, trammelled the possessor of holding it, transfer of it by mortgage, sale, etc."⁵

4 Ibid., p. 11.

5 Ibid., p. 12.

This leads R.H. Hollingbery to say further that "the purchase of a holding in a village (in Bengal) as distinguished from shares in the whole village regarded as one estate, with the consent of the village community, was indeed practicable at all times, but not by such purchases could a large zemindary have been acquired by a proprietor."⁶

The most important point which is to be noted in our discussion in respect of the differential development of Bengal land system is Max Weber's concept of "prebendalization".

In most of his works Weber emphasizes the importance of the office - prebend in the development of "oriental" social and economic system. Prebendalization did not develop in India on the line as it did in the occidental societies. In Religion of India, he describes the development of the Indian agrarian system in the following words :

"In India, as in the orient generally, a characteristic seigniorship developed rather out of tax farming and the military and the tax prebends of a far more bureaucratic state. The oriental seigniorship therefore remained in essence a prebend and did not become a fief, not feudalization, but prebendalization of the patrimonial state occurred."⁷

In his concept of "prebendalization", Max Weber included revenue collection by zamindars, talukdars, temporary revenue contractors, and also by jagirdars who were given grants for specific politico-military duties. He has termed all

6 Ibid., p. 12.

7 Max Weber, Religion of India, 1960, p. 71.

these different classes of people as "prebends" because such duties did not confer upon them the proprietary right over land. It is only during British rule that the zamindars were turned into landlords with proprietary rights. Weber therefore points out that the process of development during the pre-British period could not be termed as "feudalization" but should be called "prebendalization".

Max Webers in this connection maintains :

"The king gathered his taxes by farming out their collection or leasing them as prebend for payment of fixed lump sums. The tax farmers developed into a class of landlords known as zamindari (Bengal) talukdari (particularly Oudh). They became true landlords only when the British administration held them liable for tax assessment, treating them for this reason as proprietors."⁸

The contemporary distribution of land tenure rights in Bangladesh is the outcome of the historical evolution of a distinctive land system affecting not only Bangladesh society, but also contiguous regions in India.

Before the ascendancy of British power in India in the eighteenth century, the cultivating peasantry enjoyed the security of tenure (not absolute ownership) on lands cultivated by them on condition that they share their farm output with zamindars (overlords acting as intermediaries between king and the tillers of the soil). These zamindars were "revenue farmers" whose interests were different from those

8 Ibid., pp. 60-69.

who themselves worked on land. The zamindari system was institutionalized by the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793. The Settlement established the zamindar's right to fix their own terms of tenancy with the tenants. The land revenue payable by the zamindars to the British Government of India would be fixed in cash. In return, certain proprietary rights to zamindars were accorded. When the rights of cultivating peasantry continued to deteriorate, the British Government intervened to establish regulations to protect tenants from the zamindar's abuse of power. In 1885, the British made an attempt to establish an improved basis for landlord tenant relations in India. Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 came into force. This Act established the basis of landlord tenant relations, but not fully implemented.

Tenancy Relationship

The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 gave recognition to the rights to tenants besides zamindars in the agrarian hierarchy. It became the basis for the subsequent legislation governing the tenancy relationship in Bangladesh. At the top of the hierarchy was the Provincial Government of Bengal. Below the government were zamindars, tenure holders and under-tenure holders having rent-collecting powers. There were occupancy raiyas, non-occupancy rayas and under-raiyats (all of whom were rent payers having specified rights in land).

At the bottom were sharecroppers and landless wage labourers (whose rights in land were either tenuous or non-existent).⁹

Under the provision of this Act, each holder of land in the agrarian hierarchy had rights and responsibilities specified in relation to his holdings.

In the descending order of the agrarian hierarchy a person's right to land was conditional or qualified. There were distinctions by law, if not always in fact, between occupancy raiyat and non-occupancy raiyat (cultivators). Both of them could have their rents increased and both could be ejected legally from the lands they cultivated. But non-occupancy raiyats could have their rents increased easily and more frequently and could be evicted from their lands for more general reasons than these applicable to occupancy raiyats.

The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950 repealed the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. With the independence of Bangladesh, the amended Act remains in force. This Act is a landmark in the history of agrarian relations of the region. It not only repealed the Bengal Tenancy Act, but also invalidated the Permanent Settlement

9 1928 amendment to the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 that sharecroppers (those who cultivate the land of another requiring payment of a share of the produce) could be classified as "tenants" (i.e. rent payers to a superior rightholders in land) only when they had been provided by their landlords with written certification of their status as tenants by a Civil Court. See Kabir, Land Laws in East Pakistan, Vol. II, p. 25.

Act of 1793 by abolishing the zamindari system. The act of 1950 recast the whole system of revenue farming. It abolished the right of rent-receivers to act in behalf of the state in the collection of land revenue and brought the state into a direct relationship with the rent paying cultivators of land. But the Act did little to modify the traditional land system. Rent-receiving landholders were not in fact eliminated, only their right to act as intermediaries of the state in the collection of land revenue was abolished. They became the landholding tenants of the state and were classified as zamir malik (owner of the land). Their rights over the lands retained by them were not in any sense diminished. The Act of 1950 did not change the traditional agrarian structure of Bangladesh. The Act with modification in the form of ordinances in 1970 brought about changes in laws meaning only to landholders who enjoy a permanent occupancy right to land. The new laws were not designed to address the grievances of the peasantry who have no right to land. Sharecroppers and landless agricultural labourers were not beneficiaries either, traditional landholders retained the rights in land and the privileges resulting from it. They are influentials and enjoy social status in rural Bangladesh.

The current land tenure system in Bangladesh is summarized below :

(a) The zamindari system has been abolished. The landholding "tenants" of the state have proprietary rights and

prerogatives with respect to the land. Such tenants have been classified as "owner-cultivators"¹⁰ in Bangladesh agricultural statistics.

(b) The absentee landlords are in abundance. They live apart from the lands they own. But they lease out their land to sharecroppers who give them a share of their produce. They are cultivators by legal fiction.

(c) A land owner can retain holdings no larger than 33.3 acres. But in fact many landholders have lands more than the government ceilings. Such excess holdings have been retained by means of benami (fictitious) transfer of rights in land.

(d) The government of Bangladesh has promised to acquire the lands in excess of the ceiling and distribute them among the landless. But the evidence confirms that government has been largely unable to implement the provision of the Act of 1950.

The tenancy relations in contemporary Bangladesh remained relatively unchanged despite the legislation enacted since independence.

10 They are bona fide cultivators (See Section 82 of the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950). They cultivate land by themselves or by members of their family or by or with the aid of servants or labourers or with the aid of sharecroppers.

Elite in Rural Society

In Bangladesh, following the Permanent Settlement of 1793, the zamindars' rights and prerogatives continued to grow. They became the de facto owners of land, though they did not cultivate it. The tenants paid rent in cash or in kind to the zamindars who paid a fixed amount to the ruling authority as land revenue. These zamindars big or small in the sub-infeudation process were traditional dominant elites in Bengali rural society. They were given recognition as superior in social status to the mass of the population. When the opportunity to invest in landed property was provided in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by British experiments with new forms of land revenue settlement and land tenure, the landed property was valued for the superior prestige and security resulting from its possession. This landowning bhadralok class, no matter how small their holdings or how unproductive their share of rent, they form the traditional rural elite. J.H. Broomfield maintains in this connection :

"A socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent upon landed rents and professional and clerical employment; keeping its distance from the masses by its acceptance of high-caste prescriptions and its command of education; sharing a pride in its language, its literate culture."¹¹

11 J.H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth-Century Bengal, 1968, pp. 12-13.

The Hindu bhadralok (gentleman) were such traditional elites in rural Bangladesh. Side by side with the Hindu bhadralok class, there was Muslim sharif class, but not so powerful like educated Hindu bhadraloks. The introduction of the Permanent Settlement led to the growth of the traditional landholding elite in agrarian Bangladesh.

In the definition of status group, Max Weber distinguishes between the 'open' and 'closed' groups, admission to the latter being determined by birth. By this definition and evidence the landed bhadralok are open status group, for entry is possible through acquisition of agricultural land, wealth, education, service as well as birth.

In our discussion of social and political significance of possession of land, the principal means of production, the picture in the present day Bangladesh is found to be rather complicated. A family's landholding size does not determine exclusively that family's social and political status, though ownership of land constitutes the most important variable in the determination of a family's status and its dominative position in any community. In Bangladesh the variation in landholding size is narrow which is evident from the percentage distribution of total land owned in rural Bangladesh according to the 1977 survey presented in the following table.

-: 129 :-

Table 3.1. Distribution of Total Land Owned
Rural Bangladesh, 1977

Acres	Number of households	Per cent of total	Area (acres)	Per cent of total
Zero	1,311,570	11.07	-	-
0.01-1.00	5,621,303	47.44	1,300,165	9.30
1.01-2.00	1,946,450	16.43	2,792,855	14.43
2.01-3.00	1,055,543	8.91	2,551,605	13.18
3.01-4.00	624,412	5.27	2,153,332	11.13
4.01-5.00	389,454	3.24	1,741,880	9.00
5.01-6.00	247,534	2.09	1,334,433	6.90
6.01-7.00	169,817	1.43	1,102,116	5.69
7.01-8.00	120,339	1.02	899,196	4.65
8.01-9.00	82,365	0.69	696,996	3.60
9.01-10.00	49,589	0.42	476,443	2.46
10.01-11.00	39,931	0.34	414,482	2.15
11.01-12.00	34,086	0.29	392,750	2.03
12.01-13.00	18,408	0.16	228,825	1.18
13.01-14.00	26,356	0.22	351,372	1.82
14.01-15.00	15,711	0.18	230,535	1.19
Over 15.00	95,790	0.80	2,183,991	11.29
Total	11,948,658	100.00	19,351,776	100.00

Source : Summary Report of the 1977 Land Occupancy Survey of Rural Bangladesh, B.B.S.

Bertocci's study of Hajipur and Tinpara villages (in Kotwali Thana of Comilla) also suggests the low variation in size of holding. However, it is generally the landowners who dominate the rural scene with power and influence. They are also in a position to diversify into various activities like moneylending, business, government jobs, etc.; but importantly they retain the control of land and are therefore included in the subsidized programmes of agricultural development. Landholding though varies in size determines one's dominative position in a village in Bangladesh. Since it is vital and scarce resource, its possession gives one an opportunity to be dominant in rural Bangladesh. It is, however, difficult to establish the degree to which ownership of land in Bangladesh is separated functionally from direct investment in agricultural production and labour on the land. There may be broad classification of village folks into cultivators and non-cultivators. They are living and integrated in rural society and either work for their living or are not able to do so. Non-cultivators are landlords who are integrated in agrarian society of Bangladesh without doing any manual labour and who live by exploiting others. Most of them live far away from their native villages and are temporarily settled in cities and towns. The degree of stratification in terms of power and influence among households largely depends on land, although other sources like wealth, official position (by government appointment or by election), leadership role in traditional institution, political affiliation are conceivable. -

The relationship between landholding and status provides the basis for new perspective on the relationship between the agrarian structure of Bangladesh and issues of rural development. Bertocci's data confirmed "an overall association of landownership with relative social rank".¹² But it is also important to note that the rich peasants emerge in the face of the weakening process of fragmentation of land through inheritance as other non-agricultural sources of income become available as a result of higher productivity of holdings at the initial stage. There is a possibility for richer peasants to prey on the misfortunes of others by acquiring their land, or the role of the new technology in stimulating other forms of rural economic (non-agricultural) activity like moneylending. Peasants get opportunity for the accumulation of wealth and acquire status through inter-marriage with lineages of traditionally high status and become powerful in forming a faction in the village.

The traditional elite in present day Bangladesh is facing stress and strain in retaining their influence. A more important factor which undermined the power of the traditional elite was the subdivision and loss of land through the social processes of inheritance, mortgaging and sale. Faced with a smaller share of the traditional sources for power and prestige in the community, many of their heirs of the larger

12 P.J. Bertocci, "Community Structure and Social Rank in Two Villages in Bangladesh", Contributions to Indian Sociology, New Series, Vol. VI, December 1972, p. 41.

holdings suffered a loss in relative status from that of their ancestors. As a result of the downward status mobility, many of the heirs adopted local business to supplement their income and tried to retain their influence.

Another pathological decay of the large holdings in Bangladesh is the phenomenon of widespread land conflict which disintegrates the landholdings and thereby reduces the importance of the traditional elite in rural society. With the influences inheriting from the traditional land base, the traditional village elites try to catch up with the new elites and to retain their position by increasingly taking up commercial enterprises and education.

II

Landownership and its Impact on Rural Development

In rural Bangladesh, the amount of legally-owned land as we observe is not sufficient indicator of a family's status position. The agrarian structure of Bangladesh does not give an uniform classification of peasants. Jenneke Arens, et al. in their Jhagrapur study maintain in this connection :

"In one and the same area there can be wage labourers, traditional small landowners, sharecroppers, landlords, capitalist farmers, independent middle peasants, etc. And, as we found out in Jhagrapur sharecroppers, e.g., do not necessarily belong to the same class. There are sharecroppers among both poor and middle peasant families. It seems to be almost impossible to design one uniform classification for the whole of the country unless it has been formulated flexibly."¹³

Establishing a boundary between landlord and tenant is difficult. A single individual may own land, lease out land to others, take in land from others and at the same time work as an agricultural labourer or in some non-agricultural occupation. Though his social status is principally determined by ownership of land but it also accompanies other factors. However, in rural Bangladesh land is main source of power. Loss and gain of land and its actual operation decrease and increase ones social position respectively.

13 Jenneke Arens/Jos Van Beurden, Jhagrapur : Poor Peasants and Women in a Village in Bangladesh, 1977, p. 71.

Jenneke Arens, et al. explain this position further by an illustration from the study of Jhagrapur village :

"A family in Jhagrapur owns legally 5 bighas but all this land has been given in mortgage. As a result, this family has lost all control over those bighas. Therefore they have been classified as semi-proletarian."¹⁴

It is clear from above that it is not sufficient to use a family's legally-owned land as the only factor in determining its social status in rural society of Bangladesh. Other means of production than land alone and other factors have to be considered as well. Besides, it is important to know how much land a family controls de facto (operational possession of land) in addition to knowledge of the quantity of land it legally owns. The distribution of land is invariably the crucial variable when distribution of benefit of rural development is measured. It is therefore of the utmost importance that some understanding of this be obtained clearly in order to be able to evaluate the impact of rural development programmes in Bangladesh. For the reason known or unknown it is extremely difficult to get a correct picture of land tenure system in Bangladesh villages. While land distribution factor is extremely important, it is also very difficult to ascertain. The knowledge about the fragmentation of land resultant of distress sale and inheritance can hardly be obtained. No up-to-date file at the land revenue office is maintained in this respect. However, some primary data on agricultural landownership

-: 135 :-

pattern were collected from two villages of Mymensingh district (Chaknarainpur and Dawakhola) to compare with the ownership picture given in Bangladesh Land Occupancy Survey, 1977 as provided in table 3.1.

Table 3.2. Distribution of Land of the Respondents by Size class in two Sample Villages of Mymensingh (Chaknarainpur and Dawakhola)

Total Households = 237

Size of holdings (acres)	% of households	Land owned % of the total
Landless : (0)	35.65	-
Below subsistence Farmers :		
0.01 - 2.00	42.18	29.47
Subsistence Farmers:		
2.01 - 4.00	17.43	35.87
Surplus Farmers :		
4.01 - 10.00	1.72	8.21
Big Farmers :		
10.01 and above	2.60	26.41

Total land = 374.66 acres

Source : Total Household Survey

In agrarian structure, it is landholders who are still powerful although they are alienated from land. They own a huge amount of land, far more than they need for their family. Mostly they do not do any manual labour themselves and live purely from exploiting other people, either by hiring in labourers or by leasing their land to sharecroppers. Below them are the rich farmers who own more than sufficient means of production. They hire in labour and sublet part of their land to sharecroppers. They do manual labour in their own fields. They may be subdivided in small and large surplus farmers. The target group that is marginal farmers and the landless come at the bottom of the agrarian hierarchy in Bangladesh and they are dependent in many respects on those who are above them in the agrarian structure. Rural development Programmes in Bangladesh are therefore to be viewed in the perspective of hierarchical and dependency relationship.

Rural development is a holistic process. It is phrased with reference to Bangladesh to imply the need for programmes where short term effects may be associated in time with long term effects. In other words, if rural development is to take place, it will have to be based on the structural transformation of our predominantly agrarian society in which benefits of agricultural innovation accrue to the actual farmers.

For many years, rural development in Bangladesh has been defined in a fashion that gives primacy to the role of agricultural technology. Foreign donors and the government of Bangladesh alike endorsed technocratic approach to rural development without caring other dimensions (political, economic, social) of the rural development problems. The principal impediment to the spread of new technology and its expected benefit to various socio-economic groups is the agrarian structure of Bangladesh. It is the agrarian structure characterized by concentration of land tenure in a minority of rural households and its resultant product of elite conflict and patron-client relationship and related institutions of a traditional nature weakens the process of rural development. The technocratic approach which ignores the importance of structural relationship prevailing in the agrarian society of Bangladesh can not ultimately bring good to the rural people. The basic problem that affects rural development in Bangladesh is its land tenure system which grows the elite conflict and patron-client dependency causing failure of rural development programmes.

While the agrarian structure of Bangladesh is the principal impediment to the introduction and dissemination of modern technology in agriculture, the importance of removing the structural impediment has not been emphasized and given priority by our policy makers. Such technological approach to rural development carries with it the assumption that increasing agricultural production is the only goal that

matters in rural development. The question of who benefits most from such increase is set aside till income irregularities greatly widens in the countryside, conflict and tension grow among participants and non-participants in the growth process.

Field studies in Muktagacha in Mymensingh indicated that the benefits of rural development are not percolating downward in the agrarian hierarchy so that the income and well-being for the majority of peasantry increases. Marginal farmers and landless people are mainly non-beneficiaries of the technology-oriented approach to rural development. It has become increasingly evident that marginal farmers and the landless people are largely dependent on large landholders who cream off the benefit of rural development programmes and the due share of such programmes never go to them, as the big landholders have more lands, access relationships to politicians, administration and the courts and a variety of devices to bring the marginal farmers and the landless people under their dependency. The agrarian tensions in the form of elite and factional conflicts reinforce the prevailing hierarchy of interests in land and increase income and power of those few dominating rural elites. So it impedes the broad based participation in rural development programme in Bangladesh.

The rural majority in Bangladesh live in abject poverty, subject to dependency on the large landholders. This has been documented by the few case studies given in the following chapter.

For centuries, people in Bangladesh live in dependency relationship to those above them in the agrarian hierarchy. They have been conditioned in their mind by custom to accept such a living without protest. People at the bottom of the agrarian hierarchy have not customarily challenged their superiors.¹⁵

In Bangladesh, the landowner's authority remains in many respects absolute, even there has been substantial diminishing of their powers and privileges. They no longer act as agents of the state to collect land revenue. They retain their absolute ownership right in land, although the size of large landholdings has been disguised by means of fictitious transfers of land. The institutional impediments to an agricultural production revolution in Bangladesh are those of custom and law. We refer here, for example, to the custom of landowners neither to perform labour on their holdings nor to invest in them. What we refer to as a dichotomy between ownership of land and labour on it and investment in it is widespread in Bangladesh.

The sharecroppers in the agrarian structure are in constant shift from plot to plot, season by season. Sharecropping is one kind of land tenancy in Bangladesh. It is a contract out of farming of land for a certain percentage of yield (usually 50:50 share). But the terms and conditions of

15 See Migdal, Peasants, Politics and Revolution, 1974, p. 53.

-: 140 :-

sharecropping vary from region to region , sometimes from village to village. If the lessor is unable to cultivate land for either he is an absentee landlord or he is forced by circumstances to sell his draught animals and implements, he rents out the land under certain terms. The sharecroppers are eliminated out of the rented land at the sweet will of the landlord. If they sharecrop on 50:50 basis supplying all the inputs, it may mean less attention and care by them for the cultivation of rented land.. The sharecroppers after all run the great risk when it comes to cultivating land. In the event of a harvest failing or partially failing, they can hardly recover their inputs. The big farmers stay out of the range in the event of a harvest completely fails. At least they will not fetch any share of the crop but they do not lose their capital if the sharecroppers pay for all the inputs.

By retaining the power of eliminating the sharecroppers at their sweet will, landowner retained elements of their traditional power. But, in the process, it has severely weakened the interdependence and stability of relations among people at different strata of rural hierarchy.

Raquibuzzaman in this connection observes :

"It has often been argued that agricultural development becomes very difficult if the farmers do not have their own land and therefore do not have sufficient incentive to adopt modern practices. Most economist agree that

owner-farmers have more freedom in their production plans than tenants, and because they do not have to share their output with others."¹⁶

1977 Land Occupancy Survey data suggest, the very people in Bangladesh whose rights in land are most secure and who therefore have most easy access to new technology in agriculture remain rooted in the traditional system of agriculture; a system which permits the majority of landowners to derive income from the land while separating themselves from both risk and labour in relation to it. In the same way, we refer to institutional impediments that are reinforced by law. Thus, for example, sharecroppers have no status under law and, because they have no de jure rights in relation to the lands they till and are commonly denied access to non-usurious sources of credit, modern inputs, and to the benefits that might be derived from membership in co-operative societies. For them, lacking de jure rights to land clearly limits their capacity to employ new technology on their holdings, even if they wanted to do so. This is despite the fact that such landholders can be classified as small farmers who unlike most de jure owners of land, personally till their lands and assume the full risks of production. Moreover, such "small farmers" are important to any production-oriented rural development strategy because they till more than 40 per cent of the land in rural Bangladesh, but have been mainly non-participants in and non-beneficiaries of rural development

16 M. Raquibuzzaman, "Sharecropping and Economic Efficiency in Bangladesh", The Bangladesh Economic Review. Vol. I, April 1973, p. 149.

programmes in the region of Bangladesh since the time when the subcontinent was partitioned. The small farmers and landless households of Bangladesh constitute the majority of rural households.

In summary then, the current situation in Bangladesh is one in which the traditional agrarian structure (defined by institutions of custom and law) can be said to be both an impediment to the dissemination of new technology in agriculture and, at the same time, an obstacle to the full participation of the rural majority in programmes of rural development. The present agrarian structure also brings about a conflict situation between factions which acts as a hindrance to rural development in Bangladesh.

III

Landlessness in Rural Bangladesh

To continue further the discussion about the impact of agrarian structure on rural development, it is necessary to know about landlessness in rural Bangladesh. Our economy is inextricably linked with overall development of agricultural sector. But the increasing trend of landlessness presents a dismal picture and it indicates a deteriorating aspect of our land tenure pattern. Landlessness as a corollary of our semi-feudalistic economy urgently necessitates basic changes in our century old agrarian system.

Agriculture is beset with a multitude of constraints of which the increasing trend of landlessness presents one of the most decaying aspects of our semi-feudalistic rural economy. The impact of semi-feudalism appears to be prevalent in our agrarian society where the agriculturists and jotdars hold their supremacy because the changes so far brought about in land tenure could hardly hamper their interests.

In fact, no land reform measure has yet been able to safeguard the interest of the ill-fated landless people and ameliorate their economic well-being. The bulk of the disadvantaged rural majority, particularly the landless farmers, are being alienated from land and fail to reap the benefits of development efforts so far undertaken by the government.

It is the rural power structure which has a deterring effect on them. The pattern of rural power structure is such that a micro elite group by virtue of its power and influence subsumes the facilities directed towards the deprived mass of rural population.

The vast majority of landless farmers are not only economically deprived but also socially disadvantaged. The failure to use them productively acts as a major constraint to the increase of our agricultural productivity and any attempt to develop rural economy of Bangladesh keeping this vast manpower of landless farmers unemployed and alienated from land will bring little tangible result on the rural development of Bangladesh.

Landless people as a segment of the rural population existed even during the dawn of civilisation. History is replete with instances of landless people. Sanskrit texts showed the existence of persons who engaged themselves in agricultural pursuits being paid in cash or kind but alienated from having even the least right over land. It was also found among the Brahmins and Buddhist monks that they were offered land through royal patronage but they themselves did not till it. They had their land cultivated by the landless people.

During the Mughal period emperors were entitled with the ownership of land, although the peasants could claim their right of tenancy only. It is the British legal system which made the land transferable alienating the peasants from having their proprietary rights.

Following a rise in the price of land in the nineteenth century the ownership of land went to a few hand and the process of landlessness began.

A number of evidences have been documented regarding the existence of landless people dating back to early British rule in Bengal.

In W.W. Hunter's A Statistical Account of Bengal we find the growth of a class of day labourers during 1877 who neither owned land nor rented it out.¹⁷ Though Hunter produced no numerical data, his book indicates the existence of a growing class who had no land of their own. According to Floud Commission Report (1838-40) landless households turned out to be 30.6% of all rural households. R.K. Mukherjee in his study entitled Economic Structure in Rural Bengal, a Survey of Six Villages of Bengal showed the number of landless people to the extent of 35% of the sample households.¹⁸ Of course, he incorporated agricultural labourers, bargaders and beggars under the broad heading of the landless .

In a plot to plot enumeration by Ishaque in 1944/45, it was revealed that families with no land but homestead constituted 29.9% of all rural households. His enumeration was based on random sampling covering 77 villages in 77 subdivisions of Bengal. Landless agricultural labourers

17 W.W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VI, 1973, p. 25.

18 R.K. Mukherjee, "Economic Structure in Rural Bengal, a Survey of Six Villages of Bengal", American Sociological Review, December 1948.

-: 146 :-

constituted 15.3% of the civilian labour force (Census of Pakistan, 1951) which rose to 17.52% within a decade, as indicated by the agricultural census, 1960.

The existence of landlessness dates back to the time of Permanent Settlement Act. Prior to it the zamindars had no ownership in land. They served only as revenue collecting agents of the British Government as well as the East India Company. The enactment of Permanent Settlement in 1793 made zamindars proprietors of land and they were empowered with the rights of collecting taxes from the peasants.

As per provision of the Act, the zamindars were required to deposit 9/10 of their collected revenue to the government. They could remain the owners of land through generations and their contract with the Government would remain unchanged despite the variation in the price of land, so long they could deposit certain amount of fixed revenue to the government. The Permanent Settlement Act brought about radical changes in the land tenure pattern which conferred the right of ownership in land on the erstwhile revenue collecting agents instead of peasants.

The prime objective of Permanent Settlement Act was both economic and social which gave the land revenue system a stable shape with far reaching social implications.

At their initial period, the zamindars failed to exert their influence on the farmers but gradually they began to extract taxes from the farmers through various immoral means, in some cases even by applying forces. Evidence from history reveals that the process of tax collection in some areas of present Bangladesh was inhuman and cruel. The bailiffs and paiks of zamindars ruthlessly collected taxes from the farmers despite crop failure due to natural calamities and thus the process of landlessness began.

The Permanent Settlement created not only the zamindars but in subsequent stages, it gave birth to a host of intermediaries. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, exploitation and suppression of the intermediate class over the peasants increased gradually, resulting in regular occurrence of food shortage, famine, etc. creating conditions for ousting peasants from their land. The peasants were therefore rendered landless wage labourers alienated from land.

Agrarian system of Bangladesh is characterised by subdivision and fragmentation of holdings which work as a physical constraint affecting agricultural productivity adversely. On average, the farm size is quite small. Agriculture census (1960) and Master Survey of Agriculture (1960) revealed that nearly one-fourth of the farms were below one acre, more than a quarter was between 1 and 2.5 acres in 1960 and it increased by over 11% in 1968, and more than a quarter of the farms were between 2.5 and 5.0 acres in

1960 and 1968. These three groups owned 42% of land in 1960 and 51% in 1968. Since 1960, we observe a continuous and relatively fast decline in the size of holdings. During 1960-1974, average farms under different types of tenure either decreased or remained constant. The average size of owner-farms was 11 acres in 1960 which were reduced to 2.2 acres in 1974. On the whole the average size of farms was 2.8 acres in 1974, but it was as high as 3.5 acres in 1960.

The situation at present is in no way better than that in the sixties and the seventies. A statement made by the then Planning Minister (1981) reveals that 50% of the farms in our country are small (less than 2.5 acres) which turn out to be 19.0% of the total area under cultivation. In Bangladesh 41 per cent of the farm are medium while only 9.0% are large. Land Occupancy Survey of 1977 indicated that most of the households (72.78%) belong to the small landholding group (0.01-3.00 acres) while only 1.3% households to large landholding groups (12.01-15.0 acres and above). The small and large landholding groups underline 36.91% and 15.48% of the total area respectively. Data further reveal that 72.78% households enjoy only 36.91% and only 1.31% households possess 15.48% of the total land. The statistics show that a substantial portion of households (11.0%) have no land at all. In many developing countries of South Asia, the pattern of landownership provides a picture of uneven distribution of land among various strata

of the society. Usually a small proportion, of rural households own the bulk of the cultivated land while the large majority are landless or near landless. In Bangladesh, for example, 8 per cent of the rural households control about 45 per cent of the cultivated land while about 33 per cent of them are landless and 53 per cent are marginal farmers, with the remaining 6 per cent making subsistence farmers. A significant portion of land is being transferred from the majority to the minor section of population which goes a long way in the process of polarisation. The problem of landlessness was further aggravated during the early years after liberation of Bangladesh. The percentage of landless households increased from 17.51% in 1961 to 37.6% in 1973/74.

A Benchmark Survey conducted by IRDP during 1973/74 in 14 sample villages reveals that 38% of the total households had no land other than homesteads. Obviously we observe an increasing trend in the magnitude of landlessness among rural households of Bangladesh. The Land Occupancy Survey of 1977 was a comparative and important national survey dealing with different aspects of landlessness. The coverage of the survey was 400 villages in 400 thanas of Bangladesh. According to this survey, 32.8% of all rural households fell in the category of landless households (here landless households indicate those households who have no land other than homestead). The survey further reveals an alarming picture of landlessness in Bangladesh. It appeared from

the survey data that the magnitude of landless households who had no land at all was 11.07% which comprised 8.13% of the total population. The number of landless households who have no land except their homesteads is more pronounced and they comprise 27.10% of the total population.

Abject poverty is the constant companion of a vast number of rural population in Bangladesh. Majority of them live below the subsistence level - a state of degrading life characterised by malnutrition, hunger, illiteracy and so on. Soaring prices of the daily essentials created a situation which compelled the bulk of small and marginal farmers to sell their land and become landless. A. R. Khan observes that to survive, most of the small farmers (perhaps upto 50% of the total if two acres is accepted as the limit for self-sufficiency) must have been forced to borrow and sell assets. Since most of them were already heavily indebted, distress sale of assets including land must have occurred very frequently. It is obvious that relative importance of the number of tenants is increasing overtime. The magnitude of tenants increased from 2% in 1960 to 7% in 1978. Similarly the owner-cum-tenants had been transformed into landless farmers, selling their own landholdings. Though reliable data on the number of farmers under different categories of tenancy are not available, but it appears from the survey data of 1977 and 1978 that the increase of relative importance of tenants is too fast because the middle and big farmers are found maintaining their right over land, the most important

productive asset of rural areas. The small farmers are losing control over land by distress sale. It has been observed in times of economic stringency the small and marginal farmers take resort to sell land the advantage of which is reaped by a small group of large farmers who are economically sound by increased production farm land. This is one of the main reasons for the concentration of landholding in a few hands. During the late sixties, it was found that the big farmers (i.e. owning 100 to 150 acres of land) managed to increase their average size of landholding by 38% between 1956-68, mainly through this process. A survey by IRDP conducted in 1974 indicates the same where it has been found that the large farmers have been able to increase their landholding through purchase of land over the years.

To examine the magnitude and assess the severity of landlessness, several studies have been undertaken by various organisations on micro and macro level so far. The structural aspect of Bangladesh society acts as one of the most important factors in explaining the problem of landlessness. The high fertility along with declining mortality has aggravated the population explosion in Bangladesh. Of course, the rise in landlessness cannot be explained by demographic factors alone. 'Landlessness' is the inheritance of the past and the adverse socio-economic factors have now accentuated the severity of the landless problem.

During the Bengal famine (1942-43) a significant portion of farm households were deprived of their land ownership by the distress sale of their landholdings. Much landlessness was caused during that period. State Acquisition Act of 1950 led to a rather redistribution of land property from which the rich landholding groups, a closest ally of the zamindars were immensely benefited.

In the framework of semi-feudal mode of production, the influential landholding village elites extract surplus from the peasants and landless labourers through various ways. So long they remain engaged in agriculture, their condition becomes generally serious, particularly more so under an incongenial and semi-feudalistic economy like ours. Following the drastic fall in their purchasing power, the small farmers have to incur mounting debt. To tide over financial stringencies and repay the debt, the marginal families are compelled to sell their land and other assets thereby accentuating the process of landlessness.

Data from BIDS survey indicate that about 44% of the total households sold some type of assets in 1974 in which 37% were reported to be distress sale. The practice of land mortgage against collateral for consumption loans at high interest rates is also an important factor in the perpetuation of landlessness. The mortgage system acts as a vital factor in transferring land from small farmers to the money lenders, who are usually large farmers since a very few poor farmers are able to repay their loans with such an exorbitant rate of interest.

IV

Present Position of the Landless and Marginal Farmers and Sharecroppers

The present position of the landless and marginal farmers and sharecroppers in Bangladesh can be ascertained from our participant observation study of villages of Muktagacha, Wymensingh.

Let us now make a few points about landless and marginal farmers. There are in fact degrees of landlessness. It can mean the lack of agricultural land, it can also mean a virtual lack of all possession, even a small piece of land on which to build a house. Feelings of insecurity and fear dominate the lives of most members of the target group. Will his harvest be big enough to repay the loans he took? Will he get some land in berga (sharecropping) again for the next season?

If he has given some land as security for debt to one of the more prosperous farmers in the village, he will fear that he might not be able to get it back. The money he received as loan against this land might have been used for home consumption. If the land that is left with him, it is not sufficient to feed his family and even when he sells his extra labour he does not raise enough income, how can he repay the loan? Even if he is lucky enough to get the amount needed earlier than the due date, the mortgagee might not

agree to return the land to him before the entire period has expired, or only against a high compensation, covering the 'loss' of extra income. Ultimately he may lose that land to the creditor. At a certain point he might be forced to sell his implements, cutting down both the possibilities of cultivating his own land and getting land in berga. Then he is forced to either hire ploughs to till his own land or to give it in berga. Too little inputs on his field, cowdung sold to others out of need for money, or used as fuel, a small quantity of local variety of seeds kept from previous year, the rest eaten by the family, hardly any chemical fertilizer, not enough land preparation as some ploughs had to be hired, little time for weeding, etc. as labour time had to be sold to earn the daily minimum of food, result in a very meagre output, of which a major portion might have to be sold immediately after harvest when the market price is very low to repay previous debts. Many of these farmers, out of need for money, are forced to sell their crop before it is even matured, getting only about 50% of the value. Farmers then lead a miserable life and eat irregular meals of low quality with no reserves for emergencies. Anything might happen, forcing them to sell their land and other belongings.

Tenants and Sharecroppers

Farmers not having sufficient land to maintain their family have the choice to either sell their labour as a daily wage earner or to take land in borga. As a labour has a lower status in rural Bangladesh than a cultivator, these farmers will prefer to cultivate land in borga.

Although in the study area money can be borrowed through credit institutions, such as banks and co-operatives at interest rates between 10% and 12% per annum, this by no means covers the need for loans in the ever-recurring periods of famine in rural areas. There may be formal reasons for this. The institutions do not give loans to finance the purchase of goods for consumption such as rice. There has to be collateral in the form of land or some other fixed assets. Generally speaking, these loans are only accessible to rich farmers. But even if all the formal requirements can be met, demand for loans far exceeds supply.

One of the major reasons why small-scale and marginal farmers do not resort to official credit institutions is the large social gap. Lack of experience with banks or bad experience of them means that in times of famine they resort to the traditional system of mahadjans. These are rich farmers or traders who put their surpluses in the form of money or goods to productive use by lending them at a certain price. Typical units loaned are 100 taka or 1 maund of paddy.

The periods of the loans cover several months as a rule and the interest rates over a year amount to 400%. These transactions occur especially in times of famine or in famine-struck areas. The interest rates are an important indication of the socio-economic situation in an area.

Another way of obtaining credit is for mortgages to be obtained on agricultural land. This essentially means that the usufruct is relinquished in exchange for a loan.

The mortgage agreements differ enormously. Sometimes the usufruct is relinquished for a given period, for example, seven years, while on other occasions the agreement lapses once the amount borrowed has been paid back. The usufruct functions as a kind of interest. Mortgaging involves large sums and is often the stage which precedes selling of the land. Continuing dire circumstances and inability to pay off the loan in many cases mean that the land falls into the hands of the money-lender, sometimes with the latter paying an additional amount for it.

As the competition of the sharecroppers to get land in borga is high, the bargaining power regarding the share to be paid to the landowner is weak. 50% to the landowner is the usual share, with all inputs paid by the cultivator. Only seed needed for the amount of land under borga is often deducted before the harvest is divided. Besides the sharecropping system prevailing the study area, there are other types of sharecropping found in rural Bangladesh. In some

places like Kushtia if the borgadar deducts his own inputs he is usually left with less than 37% of the crop in the case of traditional cultivation of local varieties. Only in fields where sugarcane is cultivated, the borgadar will get 3/4 of the crop if he also supplies all the inputs. In irrigated areas various shares are worked out. Apart from the 50:50 sharecropping system called bhag (share), there is the tika system of sharecropping, where the sharecropper has to give a fixed amount of paddy after the harvest often higher than the average 50% of the crop. This system is worse for the sharecropper as the land which is usually given for this type of sharecropping is of poorer quality and difficult to reach (long distance, low lying area). Still farmers will prefer this risk to becoming a wage labourer. There exists an unwritten rule that those who have no implements of their own (plough, bullocks) cannot get land in borga, except those who are known as very good cultivators. The sharecropper is judged by his agricultural knowledge and his ability to work and invest time and inputs. Those who are in permanent need of money will not get land in borga: they would have to spend too much time selling their labour working in the field of others. Not only the well-to-do farmers give land in borga, also marginal or small farmers may be forced to share out some of their land: for example, widows not having male adults in the family, farmers without implements or sufficient money to invest, or families in which the working members are disabled or diseased.

Landless and Agricultural Labourers

In the area under in-depth study, those having a small plot of land not in the position to share in more land and those having no land at all, are forced to sell their labour as daily wage earner. Among them there is competition as their number is high and at times there is little paid work available. This labour force can be divided in three groups :

- those who work as permanent labour for one family: they are sure about work twelve months a year against a very low pay, some food and clothing.
- those who are not permanently working on one farm, but called for at that farm when work is available.
- those who have no permanent relation with any employer; these unattached labourers have a very insecure life, as they are never sure whether there will be work.

Usually at sunset, arrangements are made for the next day. Especially the older labourers are in a difficult position as young able bodied persons are preferred as labourers.

It is a very difficult time for their families as for a long time they do not get any cash. The labourers do not even bring back a good amount of money, as the competition of large numbers of migrating labourers again pulls down the daily wages. Usually three meals are given as payment and only a small amount in cash or paddy. In the meantime, the rest of the family has to depend on the labour of children as cow boys, maidservants, or the little profit that can be made by selling chickens or eggs, or by husking paddy with the

dheki (wooden pounding device). Meals are not taken regularly. If loans have to be taken to live through this period, the earned small amount brought back by the labourer, might not even be enough to repay that loan.

Family ties very seldom favour poor members of their family. Only in the beginning when a member starts to become poor, better-off members of his bhongs might employ these people on their needy days for small jobs, out of shame for outsiders. But in a later stage they will not even regard them as member of that same bhongs.

For many of the problems that marginal and landless farmers face, they have to depend on the richer and often more powerful rural elite. Very frequently, however, they are cheated by them in various ways, deprived of their rights, only because they cannot read, and thus often do not know what they sign with their thumb impression. Land is even sometimes snatched away from them, through falsification of papers. Government khasland that was to be registered in the name of landless farmers often ends up in the hands of the better-off. "Enemy property" - land belonging to the Hindus who left for India, "disappeared" before it could be registered with the revenue department. Still there is some khasland left (on paper), but the marginal farmers seldom are in the position to get it settled in their names.

CHAPTER 4

RURAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIALS AND PROBLEMS OF BANGLADESH

I

Development Potentials

It is pertinent to discuss the development potentiality of Bangladesh to carry out her rural development programmes. Bangladesh's limited and poorly diversified natural resources handicap her capacity to expand the gamut of socio-economic activities. Besides natural gas, there are hardly other economically important non-agricultural resources in the country. The principal key to economic development in Bangladesh is therefore to increase agricultural production and employment by a better utilization of her three main assets : man, land and water. Of them, land can only be considered prime and scarce.

Supply of Land

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries of the world. Most of the area of Bangladesh consists of soils best suited for farming. The land man ratio is not very high by international standards. Bangladesh has as much cropland per person as Great Britain and West Germany, and twice as much as South Korea and Taiwan (see the following table). We should also note that the quality of Bangladesh's rich alluvial soils stands second to none in the world and

her climate allows the cultivation of three crops per year if irrigation is available.

Table 4.1. Cropland in Relation to Population Selected Countries. (Early 1970's, rough estimates)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Acres of cropland per person</u>
Bangladesh	0.32
China	0.32
Taiwan	0.15
South Korea	0.17
Japan	0.37
India	0.74
West Germany	0.32
United Kingdom	0.32
Haiti	0.16
USSR	2.40.
Argentina	2.60
United States	21.50
Australia	42.50

Source : Based on World Bank : Land Reform, Sector Policy Paper, May 1975, p. 50 (hectares have been converted to acres above).

Taking multicropping into account, the total cropped land of Bangladesh is about one-third higher than the cultivable land or around 30 million acres (see the following table).

Table 4.2. Land Utilization in Bangladesh
(in millions of acres, approximate figures)

1. Forest	5.5
2. Not available for cultivation	6.5
3. Cultivable Waste	0.7
Total	12.7
4. Current Fallow	1.5
5. Net cropped Area	21.0
Total	22.5
6. Cropping Intensity, Percentage	130%
7. Total Cropped Area (5x6)	30.0

Source : Ministry of Agriculture and IBRD.

It is evident from the above table that there is little scope for increasing production by expanding the frontier of cultivation further. All the arable land is virtually under plough. If the urban requirements for housing settlement and infrastructure grow, the total acreage available for agricultural purposes is likely to decrease rather than increase in future. So an increased food production can

only be achieved through more intensive use of land i.e. by better land utilization. Despite the abundant supply of labour, yields per acre remain always very low in Bangladesh. Discussing the contrast between mass poverty and the richness of the soils, the French agronomist Rene Dumont observes :

"Technically speaking, the agricultural potentialities of Bangladesh, by square mile of arable land, are much higher than those of India, China and Japan. The quality of soil and the average amount of rainfall are much higher than India. The climate does not know any real winter, like the majority of China and Japan. Floods are the bigger constraint, but if all potentialities from flood-free are in summer, and irrigation in winter (with much higher reserves, by desilting rivers and tanks) would be used, the agricultural production of Bangladesh could be at least doubled, inside actual cropping pattern, even with overwhelming rich domination, only with wellknown techniques. By multiple cropping, diversification of crops, full development of fisheries, productive trees on hills, vegetable gardening, fodder and animal production intensification, etc., the actual production could at least be trebled. Technically speaking, it is not true to say that the future of Bangladesh is without any hope, and not only in agriculture".¹

Other estimated figures support Dumont's subjective impression. A World Bank report from 1971² concluded that the current rice production of about 13 million tons per

1 Rene Dumont, Problems and Prospects for Rural Development in Bangladesh, 1973, p. 71.

2 Discussed in Faaland/Parkinson, Bangladesh - A Test Case for Development, 1976, pp. 132 ff.

year could be increased four times by the end of the century with the help of known technologies coupled with a gradual development of irrigation and drainage facilities. Although the limitations of all such technocratic practices which explicitly abstract from the political and socio-economic constraints should be kept in mind, the estimates by the World Bank nevertheless serve to highlight the contrasts between the present status and potential levels of production. Table below gives the major findings of the report in summary form and indicates the technical means to reach the potential targets. The importance of water and water control is conspicuous.

Table 4.3. Potential Rice Production, Bangladesh
(million tons)

Year	Inputs only	Inputs plus Irrigation	Inputs plus full irrigation and drainage
1983	16	26	35
1993	19	32	42
2003	22	38	51

Source : Summary form from the World Bank Report, 1971

Water Resources

The crucial natural factors limiting the cropping intensity and the possibilities to increase yields per acre through the extension of the seed-fertilizer technology popularly known as "green revolution" are related to the availability of water resources. Although Bangladesh does not get sufficient surface water althrough the year for effective use, there are extreme seasonal fluctuations of typical of monsoon climates. Roughly during May to October, there is too much precipitation, and the rise in the water levels of the big rivers combined with the flat terrain to cause too much inundation. (1) It is estimated that two-thirds of the total cultivated area are washed away by flood water annually. (2) About 15 per cent of the land area is inundated to an extent - about six feet or more - that makes crop production virtually impossible during the monsoon season. The rest of the year, however, is almost dry, the river levels are low, and the amount of rainfall is so small in most parts of the country that effective cultivation is almost impossible without irrigation. To this also is added the perpetual danger of natural disasters in the form of unusually heavy monsoon or too little rain, cyclone, hailstorms, tidal waves. Major disasters which damages the agricultural production are expected by conservative estimate to affect the country over two to three years.

The topographic and hydrological conditions in Bangladesh combine to produce a highly risky situation. Crops are often destroyed by heavy floods, and a large part of land under rice cultivation must therefore be planted with relatively low-yielding but flood-tolerant variety of rice. The application of improved seeds and expensive fertilizers and pesticides is a hazardous experiment unless flood control and irrigation is made effective. In this circumstance the majority of farmers are afraid of undertaking seed-fertilizer technology to increase production. As long as they are poor, undebted, dependent on landholding elites, they would not like to take the risk of modernizing the agriculture. With the help of appropriate embankment systems and other flood protection measures, the high risks during the flood seasons could be drastically reduced, although an efficient system of flood control would require the co-operation of the neighbouring countries particularly India to share the great rivers with Bangladesh.

Cultivation of crops other than rice is carried on with the help of the moisture of the soils, but yields are very poor.

The irrigation potential is immense since adequate groundwater resources for irrigation exist in all parts of Bangladesh except two, and estimates indicate that 16 million acres, or more than 75 per cent of the present cultivated area could be irrigated with the help of groundwater resources.³

3 Cf. S. Biggs, et al., Irrigation in Bangladesh on Contradictions and Underutilized Potentials. Discussion Paper No. 22, University of East Anglia, February, 1977/78.

-: 167 :-

Several more millions of acres could also be irrigated from surface water, if excess water from the great rivers could be diverted through creeks and channels in co-operation with India. Technically speaking almost the whole of Bangladesh could even, in the absence of reservoirs and other sophisticated storage facilities for the water from the rainy season, be irrigated with appropriate use of the available surface and groundwater.

In the 1970's, government investment in irrigation has absorbed quite huge share of all government expenditures on rural development, but most of the projects undertaken have been characterized by high costs, low rates of capacity utilization and increasing inefficiency. It is estimated that less than 30 per cent of the installed capacity is under the major irrigation schemes and deep tube wells and only around 50 per cent under the small pump system is actually utilized.⁴ The poor development of water management and irrigation systems - and the low rates of utilization of the facilities, affect the agricultural production. The cropping intensity is unnecessarily low. If heavy flooding could be avoided and the irrigation coverage expanded, there is no reason why Bangladesh could not raise its cropping intensity from the present 1.3-1.4 to 2.0.

4 Agricultural Mission 1977, Selected Policy Issues in Agriculture, p. 44.

This alone would increase the total cropped area by over one-third. The fact that the improved seeds and the "green revolution" inputs are not well suited to deep flooding which contributes, furthermore, to decrease average yields per acre considerably during the wet seasons and many farmers are reluctant to undertake productive investments under the prevailing high risks situation. The abundant supply of water in Bangladesh could also be used for fish culture. The per capita consumption of fish, which is the main contributor of animal protein in Bangladesh has declined steadily over the past decades. Bangladesh has over 600000 acres of tanks and ponds, but about three-fourths of them are found to be derelict, silted, without any benefit whatsoever. Every acre of tank water could if those were reclaimed and kept in good shape yields upto 1500 pounds of fish annually. In addition to fish culture, the tanks could also be used for the purpose of minor irrigation, duck raising, vegetable growing on the beds of the tank.⁵

The Use of Modern Inputs

Although the soil of Bangladesh is, as mentioned earlier, rich and fertile, it nevertheless lacks certain amount of important nutrients which need to be added in the form of fertilizers in order to take the maximum advantage of its

5 The actual and potential uses of Bangladesh's water tanks is discussed in, among others, René Dumont, 1973, Agricultural Mission, 1977, Working Paper V : Fisheries and Abdul Mannan Majumder : Reclamation of Derelict Tank Project, Annual Report, 1975-76, BARD, Comilla, 1978.

potentials. Since fertilizer is a close substitute for land, its use is especially important in a developing country like Bangladesh, where agricultural land is scarce.

In the early 1960's, the use of chemical fertilizers was practically unknown to a big majority of Bangladeshi farmers. Since then, consumption of fertilizer has increased at a reasonable rate (see Table 4.4.), but on a per acre basis it has fallen far below the corresponding figures in most other countries. Thus the use of fertilizer was in 1973, only around 20 pounds per acre, or around fifteen times lower than in both Taiwan and South Korea,⁶ and even further below the recommended levels.

Table 4.4. Actual and Recommended Levels of Fertilizer Use in Rice Crops, Bangladesh 1961-74 (pounds of nutrients per acre)

Period	Aus	Aman	Boro
Average 1961-65	2.8	1.7	9.9
,, 1966-70	5.6	4.8	24.3
,, 1971-74	8.2	6.2	44.1
Recommended doses *	240.0	270.0	270.0

* The figures refer to local varieties of rice. With high yielding varieties the recommended doses would be appreciably higher.

Source : Raisuddin Ahmed, 1976, pp. 36 ff. Cf. also Ch. 3:5.

⁶ For international comparisons of the use of fertilizer, see ADB, 1977, p. 77.

Only a small fraction of the recommended doses of fertilizer is applied and the farmers also tend to use mainly nitrogenous fertilizer instead of a balanced mixture. The actual use is, furthermore, highly uneven with a minority of big farmers using relatively a large amount and a majority using nothing at all. Vast areas of land, especially during aus and aman, are cultivated without any fertilizer, and the same is true with respect to other modern inputs like improved seeds, insecticides, pesticides, etc. as well. The so-called high-yielding varieties (HYV), which were introduced in Bangladesh about ten years ago, still cover only a small portion of the total rice acreage.

The slow spread of the application of fertilizer, HYVs and other inputs of the "green revolution" technology is a major factor explaining the low crop yields per acre in Bangladesh. A scientific combination of irrigation and modern inputs could, physically speaking, easily double yields in all areas where excessive flooding does not occur, and with improved methods of soil preparation and water control output per acre could be expected to increase even more.

Manpower Resources

The concepts of rural unemployment and underemployment are extremely tricky both to define and to measure, and the problems are particularly acute in Bangladesh, where no reliable occupational census has been undertaken. The estimates of the rural employment situation have therefore to be

derived mainly from farm management studies for different crops under different conditions, and the results thus obtained are thereafter extrapolated to the whole country. The size of the available labour force is then compared with the number of man-years of employment that are needed, given the existing cropping patterns and techniques of production. To these estimates of the demand for labour in crop production are added more or less informed guesses about labour requirements in transport and marketing, animal husbandry, fisheries, etc.

There are, needless to say, many pitfalls in calculations of the above. The estimates of the total labour force are far from reliable, and different farm management studies often give conflicting results. There is also a lack of knowledge about many areas of activity which engage a large proportion of the rural population. Not much is known about women's and children's household work; officially, only nine per cent of the women in Bangladesh are economically active in the traditional sense, but since we know that women are hardworking in Bangladesh, as in the rest of the world, this is rather a reflection of the male bias in statistical concepts than positive proof of female inactivity.

There are, furthermore, no accurate estimates of labour requirements for important types of work such as collection of food and fuel, transporting, processing and marketing, storage, etc.

Even if data were available, they are beset with many problems. There is no consensus among socio-economists even at the conceptual level, and concepts like "hidden unemployment," "structural unemployment", "underemployment" etc. are all very much exposed to criticism.

There is also a tendency today to reformulate the entire question of unemployment into a problem of poverty and low productivity. It is sometimes argued that the issue is not so much that people are sitting idle, but the main problem is that their incomes are so low for the activities they are engaged in. It is assumed partly that they are exploited in semi-feudal economy of Bangladesh and partly their productivity is too low in the context of our socio-economy to permit a decent standard of living.

The effects on labour utilization of such factors as low motivation and malnutrition should also be taken into account. In the words of Keith Griffin and A.R. Khan :

"More important, perhaps, than unemployment and under-employment is the low productivity and occasionally low intensity of work arising from the poor motivation, poor health and injustice that is found in most rural areas. The exploitation and inequality to which the majority of the rural population is subjected is demoralizing, engenders resentment and stifles initiative and creativity. The effect is not only to lower current output below its potential but to reduce the capacity and willingness of the population to innovate".⁷

7 K. Griffin and A.R. Khan (eds), Growth and Inequality in Pakistan, 1972, p. 298.

Without taking a definite stand in the conceptual controversy indicated in the preceding paragraphs, we can conclude that the problems of poverty, low productivity, inequality, exploitation and unemployment - which are all very much present in rural Bangladesh - are intimately related to its social structure.

Keeping these factors in mind, and trying to stick to strictly measurable categories, we recall that about one-third of the human resources in rural Bangladesh can be considered unutilized. In absolute numbers, this amounts to between seven and eight million man-years wasted each year. The problems are particularly acute during the slack season, but even during the peaks of labour requirements for crop production there are clear signs of a positive and widening gap between labour supply and demand. In urban areas, the rapid growth of the so-called "informal sector", i.e. various low-productive occupations in the service sectors, bears testimony of the incapacity of the economic system to provide the people with productive work opportunities.

The wastage of educated manpower is also high. According to a report published by the Planning Commission,⁸ 44 per cent of the educated labour force (defined as economically active persons within a minimum of secondary school degree) were unemployed in 1973/74. Recently, Bangladesh has begun to export thousands of skilled workers, service personnel and technicians per year, mainly to the oil-exporting countries in the Middle East. The fact that many educated

⁸ Employment Market and the Educated in Bangladesh, Dacca, 1974, cited in Mahamudul Alam/Mahiuddin Alamgir/Nuimuddin Choudhury: Rural and Urban Unemployment, 1976, pp. 15 ff.

people emigrate is a glaring illustration to the abyss that exists between Bangladesh's actual and potential use of her manpower resources.

From our earlier discussions about land and water resources, we know that productive employment ought not be lacking in the countryside. To protect and improve the soils, to tame the rivers, etc. are tasks which require giant efforts of human labour.

Other examples could easily be given. A tentative list could look as follows :

"Construction of dwellings, godowns, etc.; manual and semi-manual irrigation; collection of human, animal and green wastes and producing fertilizer therefrom; kitchen gardening and tree plantation; pisciculture cultivation of more labour-intensive high-yielding variety cereals in place of traditional ones and following modern, labour-intensive cultural practices traditionally absent; manual and semi-manual transportation; rearing of silk-worms - with easy-to-grow castor leaves and producing castor oil from the seed; spinning, weaving, knitting and other cottage industries of various kinds; participation in mass literacy programmes; family planning and health extension works; extension work in so many areas; and so on. Every developing country has its own combination of numerous, literally numerous, such works that can keep the entire population engaged with relatively small complementary inputs that should not be very difficult to produce. The gain in national product, and in capital formation simultaneously, could thereby be substantial."⁹

9 Anisur Rahman : The Utilization of Labour in the Strategy for Development in the ECAFE Developing Region, paper prepared for the ECAFE, United Nations, mimeo, n.d.

There exists, to conclude, a variety of useful activities that could be undertaken. But the constraints are many, and difficult to overcome; the existing social structure with powerful landholding elite in rural Bangladesh does not help create condition, capable of achieving the necessary mobilization of human and other resources that alone could bridge the gap between Bangladesh's great potentials and her actual levels of production and employment. Rather it stimulates factional divisions which acts a disruptive element in the utilization of development potentials of rural Bangladesh.

II

The Bias and Shortcomings in Agricultural Policies

Among the major problems that cause delay and failure of rural development programmes in Bangladesh are bureaucratic shortcomings and landlord bias in our agricultural policies which are examined in this section.

Role of Bureaucracy in Development

The public sector plays an important role for the overall development of the Bangladesh economy. This circumstance alone introduces a strong bureaucratic element in the economic life of the country. In the dynamics of Bangladesh economy - virtually all development funds are channelled through the state machinery, and in most aspects concerning growth and change, the public administration is likely to be directly involved.

This vital role assigned to the state should be remembered while analysing the sociological aspects of rural development. The state machinery in Bangladesh has been inherited from the British rule and is still retaining much of the old structure from colonial times. The class character of the state in Bangladesh, if observed, it is clear that the actual state apparatus cannot possibly be used to foster socialist objectives. The fact remains that most of the country's investments for development allocated by the public sector

in no way means that the use of these funds is of a collective character; with private control over most of the means of production, and in particular of land, the most important economic function of the state is to channel collective funds to private purposes.

But let us put aside these general aspects of the rôle of the state and concentrate on a few concrete issues connected with the actual functioning of the Bangladesh public administration in the development process. To begin with, briefly we would like to indicate some of the rather technical and administrative deficiencies reducing the overall efficiency of the state bureaucracy, and the possible impact of the latter on the rural community by its use and misuse of resources. We will then proceed to a discussion of the top-down hierarchical approach to planning and implementation which has characterized most attempt to rural development so far. We will, finally, consider some additional aspects of the interaction of the bureaucracy with different strata of the rural population and the impact of corruption in this context.

Some Aspects of Bureaucracy

A speech under the title "The Public Administration System : An Aid or an Obstacle of Development ?" was given in 1977 by a senior official of Bangladesh government¹⁰ dealing with the inefficiency of the bureaucracy.

10 A.N.M. Siddiqui, The Public Administration System : An Aid or an Obstacle to Development ? An Expose Based on Personal Experience. 1977, mimeo, p. 19.

178 19

Every one would agree that the Bangladesh bureaucracy is not doing upto the expectation of the people. Nor would anyone argue that Bangladesh is unique in this respect; the only extreme phenomenon with Bangladesh is perhaps the fact that the multitude of foreign donors constantly interfering with the domestic administrative affairs in respect of planning, co-ordination and implementation.

Complaints over the functioning of the Bangladesh public administration gathered from national newspapers, ordinary citizens and government officials themselves could easily fill many pages, if anyone cared to record them. As a summary of the most common allegation, we could quote a list made up by the former civil servant referred to above :

- i) Instead of encouraging private initiative, public administration system created more formalities and bottlenecks even when private initiatives were sought to be encouraged through specialized institutions.
- ii) The symbol of government in the rural areas continues to be the police and revenue offices, though the declared intention of the development efforts of the past was to introduce new symbols like Thana Training and Development Centres. This by itself deters popular participation in development efforts.
- iii) The capacity to absorb development expenditure has remained inadequate because of the current system of public administration.
- iv) The morale of the government officials dealing with development projects has remained low, because of the prevalent staffing pattern, wages and incentive structure of the government departments.

-: 179 :-

v) Normally expected consequences of development efforts are not being realised due to inefficiency in the present public administration."¹¹

The net effect of these different aspects of the malfunctioning of the administration is a reduction in the rate of growth of the economy in general and rural economy in particular. Although private enterprise is officially very much encouraged, a host of controls limiting the scope for initiatives have been set up, and almost any undertaking requires permits, documents and government approval - a process which is not only time consuming and frustrating but also in practice eliminates 80 per cent of the population mostly the illiterates from many activities.

Within the public administration, development funds are often released only after a long processing of the projects within several different and often competing and rival ministries and agencies. In the Ministry of Public Works, it has been calculated that there are 72 steps involved in the preparation of estimates of expenditure, calling for tender, issuance of work order, etc., and if every official handling the matter works sincerely, the time needed to get the scheme approved and implemented would be five years and one and a half months. Although short examples of this kind should perhaps not be taken too seriously, it is however

¹¹ Ibid., p. 20.

clear that they do illustrate a phenomenon that is well-known to both Bangladesh officials and foreign donors. It is also a common opinion that the low rate of disbursement of foreign aid is not so much due to the low absorptive capacity of the economy as to a slow administrative handling of both commodity and project aid.

Incentive Effects and the Attitudes of Rural People

More important, however, than the technical drawbacks of the Bangladesh bureaucracy, which it shares with most other bureaucracies, is the fact that both private initiatives and attempts to collective self-reliance may be discouraged by the excessive reliance on state funds and development agencies in Bangladesh. "In the absence of private organization capacity for innovation and change", writes one commentator of rural development in Bangladesh, "all rural development becomes 'governmentalized'; assumed as a duty of the government: this leads to reliance on the district gridwork to implement rural change".¹²

Many studies of attitudes of the rural population confirm this impression, and comments of the following kind are frequent: "I observed a complete absence of any initiative taken by the Swanirvar Committee to solve a local problem or undertaking a new project.....About 75 per cent of the people I talked with want the government to do more things for them".¹³ In the SIDA/BIDS landless survey undertaken

12 SIDA/Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies. Landless Study. 1978, unpublished.

13 E.L. Tepper, "The Administration of Rural Reform, Structural Constraints and Political Dilemmas" in Stevens, R.D., et al. edited Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan, 1976, p. 52.

in 1978, it was found that ever half of the respondents - who were all landless agricultural workers answered "if the government helps me" to the question of how they thought that their situation could improve. Another 25% indicated that the formation of a co-operative could improve their lot. Only in one village - a Swanirvar 'success story' - was there a significant proportion of the landless who mentioned alternative like "through our own efforts".¹⁴

This does not mean, of course, that the villagers tend to look upon the government and upon government officials as if they represented the poor. In the same Swanirvar report referred to above, the author of the report hastened to add, after having reported the people's expectations about the government doing thing for them: "I observed a feeling of desperation and frustration among the landless and small farmers. They feel that their fate will not change in the future and all the benefits of 'Swanirvar', government sponsored development projects will flow to the rich and privileged few in the village".¹⁵ And in the SIDA/BIDS study,

14 M. Alam, "A Report on the Swanirvar Programme in Aliakkhali, Lakshmipur, Noakhali". Locally sponsored Development Programmes Series Report No. 19, Rural Studies Project, June 1976, p. 72.

15 Ibid., pp. 12-13.

the overwhelming majority of the respondents - 215 out of 301 - said that, in their opinion, the union parishad (UP) leaders mainly represented the rich, and 238 of them argued that the thana officials represented either the rich rural elite or the government. Only three respondents said they thought that the UP leaders mainly represented the poor, and only one cherished this illusion with respect to the thana officials.

The apparent paradox arising from the people's reliance upon the government for support and their lack of confidence in the representatives of the state is resolved if we consider the almost total absence of alternatives available; although the poor are certain that the government does not represent them, they still believe that it is only through the state that any benefits at all will accrue to them. The following observation by Yunus probably gives a picture of the people's lack of illusions, and realism :

"From their circumscribed existence, the villagers view the national government as a sort of foreign government in the colonial tradition. They consider the government as a wealthy, stupid, clumsy and forgetful outsider..... They make it a compelling occupation to outsmart the government in every way for fun and profit. Being honest with the government on any matter is regarded as a sure sign of imbecility. With the past performances of the government in terms of their policies, programmes, institutions for and dealings with the villagers, they perhaps have come to trust their own assessment of the government."

16 M. Yunus, "Planning in Bangladesh: Format, Technique and Other Essays", Rural Studies Project, June 1976, p. 2.

Institutions that are looked upon in this way can not be expected to play the role of "agents for change" capable of mobilizing the rural population for development purposes. But these institutions are, to repeat, the only ones available, and if the people want something to be done - tubewells, fertilizer, credit, etc. - their only possibility is to turn to a public agency, or to a co-operative fuelled with state funds. The outcome of this contradiction between dependence on the state and lack of confidence in it is likely to discourage individual and collective initiatives and to foster a mentality characterized by a mixture of cynicism and apathy rather than by enthusiasm, self-reliance and collective creativity.

This is not to say that the rural population would be better off in the absence of government aid, although this aid is of dubious value for the poor. The share of state expenditure going to agricultural development is, as we know, exceedingly low, and through a variety of mechanisms there is a large capital and brain drain continuously going on from rural to urban areas. The observations made about excessive reliance on the state rather illustrate the more qualitative aspects of the role of state development expenditures, i.e. their failure to serve as a true supplement to the rural community's own efforts to mobilize resources.

There is no way to estimate the size of these "disincentive" and "passivity" effects - It is suggested that they do exist in the socio-economic context of rural Bangladesh, and that they should be considered. They are also likely to be accentuated by the centralized, hierarchical character of the Bangladesh public administration.

The Top-Down Approach to Development

With the help of growing body of statistics, literature and practical knowledge illuminating the failure of most of the past attempts to modernization-cum-development in rural Asia, more and more researchers and practitioners have begun to question the entire conventional approach to rural development. Much of the criticism has been focussed on the technocratic, "diffusionist" view of rural development which explicitly or implicitly characterizes development efforts in most Asian countries. In this criticism and rethinking, concepts like "collective creativity", "mobilization", "need-orientation", "participation", "de-alienation" and "collective self-reliance" are prominent and serve to indicate the direction of the alternatives that are looked for.

The inspiration to this new approach to rural development has come not only from past failures but from positive achievements of various kinds as well. The Chinese experiment has, of course, been extremely important in indicating an alternative strategy; on a smaller scale, many village

"success stories" in different countries have helped to give practical evidence of the development potentials of Asian rural communities if the people themselves are motivated and mobilized.

This is not the place to make a review of these experiments, or to analyze the new theoretical concepts that are emerging in the discussion about new strategies for rural development.¹⁷ What is important for the purpose of this section is however the fact that the criticism of the traditional approach to rural development to a large extent concerns the role of the state and of public institutions in general. In Bangladesh, the thrust of this criticism is very much valid; there is a tremendous contrast between the top-down, hierarchical way of planning and implementing development programmes in rural Bangladesh and a mobilization-oriented strategy aiming at releasing the full potentials of the villages' human resources through "collective creativity" and "participation". And this is, as will be shown in the subsequent chapter, the case even with the Swanirvar movement, whose basic ideas seem to resemble the alternative strategic concepts referred to above.

17 Suffice it here to mention that, in the Bangladesh context, researchers like Rene Dumont, Keith Griffin, A.R.Khan, Muhammad Yunus and Anisur Rahman - whom we have had occasion to quote several times in this study - have all contributed in different ways to give theoretical guidance. For a particularly clear formulation of the need for a break with conventional approaches to rural development we would also like to refer to the works of a group of Asian scholars connected with the United National Asian Development Institute in Bangkok. See, for example, Wahidul Haque/Niranjan Mehta/Anisur Rahman/Ponne Wignaraje, "Towards a Theory of Rural Development" in Development Dialogue, 1977, p. 2.

"The planning process should start at the local level, not end there", argues Yunus, criticizing the whole approach to planning in Bangladesh. He continues :

"The Planning Commission has underscored the importance of decentralization but failed to suggest an institutional framework for a meaningful decentralization....There is very little left for decentralization if the planning remains the reserve of the central planning authority".¹⁸

As it works today, virtually all ministries and development institutions in Dacca exercise an excessive control over the field offices and officials who, in turn, are relatively isolated from the ordinary villagers, and often ignorant of the latter's needs. Noting the over-reliance on the central administration for steering the public works programmes in Bangladesh, Anisur Rahman makes the following description of how, and for whom, a centralized bureaucracy like that in Bangladesh tends to work :

"Bureaucracy is a system of administration which is not directly responsible to the supposed beneficiaries; the chain of accountability is upwards rather than downwards, so that the system is not sensitive to lapses in the field; the ultimate accountability, in principle, to the people through the 'minister' or his equivalent is too indirect and diffused to contain much practical relevance, and even in principle this presupposes the practice of genuine democracy which is hardly the case in reality. In such a situation one needs a high level

18 M. Yunus, op. cit., p. 29.

of personal commitment of the civil servants to deliver the goods in the field; but such commitment would essentially have to be of a political character, and career civil servants as a matter of principle are supposed not to cherish any political commitments".¹⁹

We should not, however, put all the blame for the relative failure of the state to mobilize village resources in Bangladesh on the bureaucracy per se, and neither should we expect fundamental changes to occur if only the bureaucracy were reformed and made more field oriented and less hierarchical and centralized. For it is the political and socio-economic structure in the villages themselves which by and large determines how the state funds are used and which limits the scope for solving the problems by means of administrative reforms.

The Public Administration's Interaction with the Rural People

In a passage worth quoting at length, Yunus describes two erroneous conceptions which all too often accompany rural development thinking :

"Bureaucratic approach to rural economic change tacitly assumes that the rural people are passive, fatalistic, uninterested in initiating anything of their own, incapable of undertaking initiatives to change their lives, and therefore, need constant prodding, supervision, and

19 Anisur Rahman, op. cit., p. 3.

spoonfeeding. While this view does not do justice to the reality, the opposite view, which seems to claim that the rural people are fully capable and willing to change their lives if only the bureaucrats would leave them alone, is equally unreal. The second view refuses to see the class structure of the rural society and the exploitative process within it. Central intervention through institutional designs, legislations and appropriate policy measures must keep the exploiting class under check and let the dispossessed class have a fighting chance to free themselves from the instruments of exploitation".²⁰

The crux of the problem is to try to avoid the two traps indicated above. Although it is easy to criticize the over centralized approach to development planning in Bangladesh, it must also be remembered that in the absence of control from the government, all institutions at the village level are doomed to be taken over and manipulated by the local vested interests that is rural elites-patrons as long as the rural poor do not possess any viable organizations of their own. The following description of the reasons behind the relative success of the early Comilla model is a good illustration of this point :

"Probably the most important factor was that somehow Akhter Hameed Khan and his associates were able to hit upon the right combination of control from above and participation from below, of supervision and autonomy. Supervision is needed to maintain the probity of administration, to prevent or, more realistically perhaps,

20 M. Yunus, op. cit., p. 51.

to minimize the corruption that must be expected to occur in the absence of a firm and unwavering system of inspection from above. It is also needed to prevent a second danger that inevitably threatens local structures that become too free from higher direction - take over by local elites. On the other hand, there are compelling reasons for having a high degree of autonomy at the local level.....If there is to be democracy at all in any significant sense in Bangladesh, it surely must begin at the local level in order to acquaint the people with its practice".²¹

In reality, however, it has been extremely difficult to "hit upon the right combination of control from above and participation from below". One reason has been, as Gunnar Myrdal has put it,²² that ".....the officials administering development programmes require the co-operation of local elites (if they are to get successful results). No wonder, then, that the evaluation studies invariably conclude that these programmes have helped mainly those in the rural population who were already well-off".

An official wanting to help the poor has to confront a powerful group of local elites who more often than not do not accept either participation from the ordinary villagers, or

21 H.W. Blair, The Elusiveness of Equity : Institutional Approaches to Rural Development in Bangladesh, 1974, p. 23.

22 Asian Drama : An Enquiry into the Poverty of Nations, 1968, p. 293, quoted by Harry W. Blair in "Rural Development, Class Structure and Bureaucracy in Bangladesh" in World Development, No. 1, 1978, p. 73.

supervision from above (or, still worse, from below). The result is, of course, that many well-intentioned officials become frustrated and give up their attempts to come to grips with the problems, trying instead to accommodate themselves to a system which is both inefficient and exploitative. One such example is described in detail in a recent study by Alan Lindquist of co-operatives in Bangladesh. An ambitious Thana Project Officer (TPO), Waheed Ali, was almost physically chased out of a village called Dalalpur after having fought and lost a battle against the corrupt leadership of TCCA. "Waheed Ali, it seems", writes Lindquist,

".....still has a bitter taste in his mouth from the whole Dalalpur experience. The former TPO frankly admitted his failure to check the Chairman and the other Directors in their improper activities and said with a tone of defeat in his voice: 'We gave up trying to fight them'. Waheed Ali says he felt 'Why should I die for this TCCA, which does not want to save itself. Let it go to hell? Speaking now, however, he did not think the situation in Dalalpur was particularly unusual (unlike the new TPO who feels it is more extraordinary). Waheed Ali said the situation in Chandpur - where he is now posted albeit as an Assistant Director of the Chandpur Irrigation Project, not as a TPO any longer - is worse".²³

23 A.C. Lindquist, Co-operative, Rural Development and the State : A Bangladesh Case Study, Thesis, University of Sussex, May 1978, mimeo, p. 82.

The above example is quite exceptional, however, in the sense that the TPO in question really made a serious effort to attack the local elite's corrupt and inefficient practices. Normally, there are very strong incentives for the officials to seek co-operation with the rural rich and this not only for the reason given by Myrdal and partly illustrated by Waheed Ali's failure. There are also, as will be discussed further in connection with the "Landed elite bias" in the subsequent section, very obvious economic factors that work in the same direction. Thus, extension agents experience economics of scale in their work if they concentrate on large farmers, and for the officials responsible for the distribution of credit, fertilizer, improved seeds, etc., the very same mechanisms are operating. It is far easier, from an administrative point of view, to handle a few large farmers who borrow and buy much than to spread out the loans and sales on a large number of small peasants who might, furthermore, be regarded as "bad risks".²⁴

The social, educational and cultural background of most civil servants in Bangladesh should also be taken into view. Most government officials come from the middle or upper strata of society and tend to be neither field-oriented, nor poor-oriented. When they do leave their urban offices to make trips to the field, it is quite natural that it is the rural elite whom they most easily communicate with.

24 Cf. also Harry W. Blair, "Rural Development, Class Structure and Bureaucracy in Bangladesh" in World Development, 1978, pp. 73-74: "...what is important is that the lower level official should be able to tell his superior that he followed a 'responsible' policy in making the loans, i.e. lent money only to those with a clear capacity to repay them".

The way the officials are trained also contributes to separate them from the ordinary villagers. The formal educational requirements, to begin with, immediately put the officials in a different position than the rural peer. Once they have been recruited they are, furthermore, normally sent to training courses in a town somewhere, to which they return now and then during their careers to take additional courses.

Most of the literature they read is in English. Once set in their offices, they often dream of moving to urban centres. Even the civil servants who happen to be more modest class origins soon pick up the urban and elite habits, and when they visit the villages as extension agents or senior development officers, the people they relate to most easily are, of course, the influential, educated elites. It is also from these people the officials can expect most economic benefits.

Administrative Shortcomings

The major impediment to rural development is obviously the inadequacy of resources. But this only underlines the need for a proper utilisation of resources by the civil service which remains the most important and largest agency for development, and which has promoted administrative reform on the plea of fostering rapid development.

An overwhelming majority of villagers in Bangladesh are landless or landpoor.²⁵ Their economy cannot improve without some significant land reform measures.²⁶ As the history of Bangladesh (and East Pakistan) demonstrates, it is not realistic to expect such land reform to take place in the near future.²⁷ From this standpoint, the restructuring of the higher civil service is just not relevant to development.

It is certainly possible to carry out development measures other than land reform and alleviate the distress of the rural poor in Bangladesh. But the success of these measures will depend greatly upon the availability of a large number of dedicated civil servants at the field level, who can counteract the machinations of, or rise above the temptations held out by, the rural rich and their touts.²⁸ Dedication

-
- 25 For some details, see Azizur Rahman Khan, "Poverty and Inequality in Rural Bangladesh", in Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia, Geneva, International Labour Office, 1977, pp. 155-59.
- 26 Mohiuddin Alamgir, in Bangladesh Lekhak Shibir, ed., Bangladesher Samajik Agragatir Samasya (i.e. Problems of Social Progress in Bangladesh), 1975, pp. 55-56 (in Bengali) Badruddin Umar, Judhotar Bangladesh (i.e. Postwar Bangladesh), 1975, p. 12 (in Bengali).
- 27 For elucidation, see M.A. Jabbar, "Land Reform in Bangladesh", in Agrarian Structure and Change: Rural Development Experience and Policies in Bangladesh, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Government of Bangladesh, May, 1978; also see Atiqur Rahman, "The Debate Over Land Reform in Bangladesh: Some Issues Reconsidered", Asian Affairs (Dacca), January-June, 1980. Atiqur Rahman, "On Land Reform", Bichitra (Bengali weekly), Dacca, May 19, 1978.
- 28 For horrifying details about these machinations and the resultant exploitation, see Badruddin Umar, "The Bangladeshi Peasant in the Ayub Khan Regime", Bichitra, EID Number, 5 September, 1978; Mohammad Sirajul Islam, "The Poison Gas of Corruption: From the City to the Village", Bichitra, 29 February, 1980; and Samudra Gupta, "Ordinary Peasants and Village Touts", Arthaniti (Dacca, Bengali monthly), June 1980. Also see Proceedings of the Bangladesh Parliament, Vol. II, No. 21, 28 June, 1973, pp. 933-34, 954.

may be of little avail in a situation where the rural rich have built powerful alliances with the urban rich including men at the top, viz. influential businessmen, politicians and Government Officers.²⁹ Moreover, dedication can hardly flourish, or sustain itself long, at the district/subdivision/thana levels amidst and abundance of information about wide ranging and deeprooted corruption or self-aggrandisement by men at higher levels.³⁰ After all, knowledge of this corruption can only aggravate the frustrations of an ever-sliding standard of living on account of continuing inflation.³¹ Recent restructuring of the higher civil service in Bangladesh can seldom take care of these frustrations.

Nor can this restructuring take care of one of the most serious maladies affecting government service, viz. the delinking of performance from jobs. Partly on account of

29 For elucidation, see Anu Muhammad, "Villages in Bangladesh", Bichitra, 15 September, 1978.

30 The following provide a small but varied sample of references to corruption. Ramani Mohan Debnath, Bangladesher Arthanitik Sangkat (i.e. The Economic Crisis of Bangladesh), 1975, pp.2-3, 14,23 (in Bengali). Badruddin Umar, Bhasha Andolan O Annanya Prasanga, (i.e. On the Language Movement and Related Matters), 1980, p.111 (in Bengali). Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh, Vol.II, No.4, 19 October 1972, p.111. Proceedings of the Bangladesh Parliament, Vol.II, No.25, 8 July 1974, pp.2034,2038, Vol.II, No.27, 10 July 1974, p. 2210; Vol.II, No.10, 5 July 1975, p.362. Atiur Rahman and M.M.Akash, "The Middle Class Way of Life", Bichitra, 15 December 1978, p.44. Anu Muhammad, "To Combat Hunger", Bichitra, 1 June 1979, p.29; Kazi Zawad, "Invisible Rulers", Bichitra, 21 March 1980; Ashabur Rahman, "Foreign Aid: For Whom?", Bichitra, 30 May 1980, pp. 29, 35.

31 The Second Five Year Plan 1980-85, Draft, Chapter I, pp.13-15. Proceedings of the Bangladesh Parliament, Vol.II, No.20, 27 June 1973, pp.853-54, Vol.II, No.26, 9 July 1974, p.2081. Kazi Zawad, "Commodity Prices and Families with Limited Income", Bichitra, 15 June 1979. Sirajul Islam Kadir and Mizanul Kayes, "Commodity Prices and Dacca's Bazars", Bichitra, 13 June 1980.

-: 195 :-

above noted frustrations, and partly of the solidarity among government servants in preserving their jobs, performance has ceased to matter - barring, of course, some exceptional organisations and extra-ordinary individuals in each organisation. Government servants can obstruct, harass, extort, or remain indifferent at best³² - without harming their jobs. Not to speak of diligence or discipline,³³ even presence in the place of work for, say, one-half of the prescribed hours has become a rarity. This is the dominant experience of even highly-educated and comfortably - employed town-dwellers who may have to visit government agencies for an occasional supply of goods and services. One can only

32 The following extracts from a Burmese Government report seem to be applicable to many LDCs like Bangladesh (or India). A Committee investigating bribery and corruption in government wrote: 'If justice were done, a very large proportion of all the public servants in the country would be in jail'. See the Government of the Union of Burma, The Final Report of the Administration Reorganisation Committee, 1951, Rangoon, 1954, Reprint, p.7.

33 Read, for instance, the following: 'In respect of discipline and diligence, the Secretariat is not a model of what to do but an example of what to avoid'. Burma, The Final Report of the Administration Reorganisation Committee, 1951, p. 8.

imagine what is the fate of the illiterate, rural poor trying to depend on government servants.³⁴ Even the highest echelon of the civil service in Bangladesh has the irrefutable record of obstructing the operations of nationalised industries and thereby thwarting vital tasks of developments.³⁵ The expansion of the government's development work in agriculture and industry - or even of welfare activities - has provided

34 The following comments on the miserable failure of various agricultural improvement schemes in a part of India are applicable to many LDCs including Bangladesh. 'These failures have been attributed to wrong planning and the callousness of corrupt officials. But this is somewhat like blaming a horse for drowning in a river which it has been forced to cross. Of course, in this case the officials do not drown but swim with the stream and adjust themselves to the circumstances which they are facing. They do not want to change the world but make a living in it. Posted in the countryside they are not really agricultural extension workers but urban extension workers who project the material aspirations of the towns into the peasants' world. When they find out that there is little scope for such projection they look at least after their own material comfort and satisfy the higher authorities by reporting to them what they want to know or rather what they want to file and shelve. Dietmar Rothermaud and others, Urban Growth and Rural Stagnation Studies in the Economy of an Indian Coalfield and its Rural Hinterland, 1980, p. 459.

On the callousness and corruption of government servants in Bangladesh, see, e.g. Ameerul Islam, Proceedings of the Bangladesh Parliament, Vol.II, No.20, 27 June 1973, pp. 855-57.

35 For an elaborate discussion, see Rehman Sebhan and Muzaffar Ahmad, "Public Enterprise in an Intermediate Regime : A Study in the Political Economy of Bangladesh", Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Dacca, 1980, Chapter 13.

opportunities of self-enrichment for government servants which they have seldom hesitated to utilize.³⁶ In such circumstances, the government appears to become a sort of huge industry manufacturing jobs, a massive organisation for the distribution of patronage.³⁷ To expect to rely upon the dedication of field-level government servants to promote development - especially rural reconstruction - is hardly realistic in this perspective.

Even if one discounts the aforesaid maladies, and, for the sake of argument, assumes the existence of dedicated civil servants at the field level, their efforts towards ameliorating the lot of the rural poor may confront problems which recent administrative reforms in Bangladesh cannot

36 'Perhaps more deplorable even than the low standard of discipline and diligence in the public service is that far too many men see in the new welfare activities of government not new opportunities of service but new opportunities of making money', Burma, The Final Report of the Administration Reorganisation Committee, 1951, p. 8. Again, read The Government of the Union of Burma, The First Interim Report of the Administration Reorganisation Committee, Rangoon, 1949, p. 29 : 'Finally we think it desirable to place on record our conviction that the promotion of welfare is no easy matter, to be achieved merely by the multiplication of rules and officials.....it has frequently happened that officers designed for the promotion of welfare have in fact been little more than additional police officers'. Also see Mohammad Anisur Rahman, in Bangladesher Samajik Agragatir Samasya, n.d., p. 43.

37 Rene Dumont, False Start in Africa, 1969, p. 78. One is tempted to recall the description of the state bureaucracy in France as 'an appalling parasitic body'. See Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1972, p. 104.

resolve. These problems arise out of relations (A) between field officers (e.g. officers concerned with the development of dairies, fisheries, animal husbandry, dugwells, etc. in rural areas) and officials at the headquarters (viz. the Dacca Secretariat), (B) between administrators and politicians at various levels. The tasks of rural development are infinitely complex. Local situations can change unpredictably and frequently. A field officer, therefore, must enjoy substantial autonomy and flexibility in decision making if he has to cope with changing and complex situations. Alternatively, the headquarters' officer must respond quickly to the requests of the field officer for fresh decisions. But, as researchers are too well aware that the headquarter's officers do not normally grant the essential autonomy³⁸ to the field officer, or themselves command necessary speed in decision making which can do away with the need for autonomy. Consequently, the field officer fails to complete essential tasks in time, and funds, limited though they are, cannot be utilised to accelerate development. Such experiences can demoralise the field officer, who subsequently tends to become less and less zealous in the pursuit of his tasks. This problem becomes all the more intractable once politics - especially negative trade unionism-intervenes.

38 Mohammad Anisur Rahman, in Bangladesher Samajik Agragatir Samasya, n.d., p. 45.

It may not therefore be inappropriate to conclude that (as in many other LDCs, in Bangladesh too) the restructuring of the civil service is basically an offshoot of intra-elite competition-cum-collusion which has occasionally used the aim of economic development to lend respectability to the glaring goal of self-aggrandisement.

This is nothing unexpected because the state remains an instrument of domination by the few, and the few include administrators, especially those in the higher civil service. The rich farmers, the traders and small industrialists (ambitious to become large) are the principal interest groups in Bangladesh playing 'a pre-eminent role in the economic life of the country and indirectly in the political process'.³⁹ Civil servants do not practice neutrality and try to regulate the competition among the aforesaid interest groups.⁴⁰ On the contrary, they themselves engage continuously in competition-cum-collaboration with those interest groups to maximise their share of the spoils, i.e. by extraction of surplus from the overwhelming majority of poor powerless compatriots.⁴¹

If this estimate can claim even a partial validity, one can conclude that the recent administrative restructuring in Bangladesh can have little positive impact on economic development, especially rural reconstruction.

39 Nurul Islam, Development Planning in Bangladesh, n.d., p. 3, Kazi Zawad, "Invisible Rulers", Bichitra, 21 March, 1980.

40 Ibid., p. 261.

41 For some insightful comments on how this extraction of surplus has created a crisis of the bourgeois state in Bangladesh, see Rehman Sobhan and Muzaffar Ahmad, Public Enterprise in an Intermediate Regime, pp.562-70. Also see Mohiuddin Alamgir, in Bangladesher Samajik Agragarir Samasya, pp.54-55.

Corruption

The purpose here is not to show the existence of corruption in Bangladesh. Everyone knows that the phenomenon, however defined, is widespread - but impossible to quantify - and that it manifests itself in a variety of different ways in daily life in Bangladesh. The intention in this context is however limited to indicate, very briefly, some of the main causes of corruption.

We will, for the sake of brevity and to avoid getting lost in a difficult conceptual discussion, also limit ourselves to more "modern" forms of corruption. The role of traditional client-patron relationships, factionalism and family lineages, regionalism, etc. - factors which are certainly important in the Bangladesh rural community but which we cannot put in the same category as corruption, although they may sometimes help to explain the character that the corruption assumes - will thus not be dealt with at all.

One way to explain why corruption does exist is to point to the weakness and inefficiency of the public administration and argue, in line with the Gunnar Myrdal tradition, that the Bangladesh state is a "soft state", incapable of exercising its control functions. That this is true in Bangladesh in the sense that interests us here⁴².

42 The famous label "soft state" has many connotations that can be somewhat misleading. All those Asian states which Myrdal calls "soft" have, for example often shown a considerable strength and determination in dealing with the political opposition. The real issue is not so much lack of control, but control by whom? and for what purposes?

The poorer strata of the population are unorganized and weak in village power structure to be able to check the elite's misappropriations and corrupt practices in general. The circumstance that the government officials, for well-known reasons, tend to deal and communicate with the village leaders rather than with the poor and landless naturally also reduces the scope for supervision, be it "from above" or "from below".

Looking at the situation of the officials themselves, it is clear that their formal power and position are not matched by equally privileged material conditions. Civil servants, at least at the local level, are low paid, and many of their beneficiaries visibly enjoy much higher living standards than they do. For the individual official, it must be tempting indeed to try to "tax" the farmers for the services he renders them, and from an economic point of view, the entire system of low salaries plus bribes can be regarded as a means of shifting the burden of paying the officials from the state onto the rural population.

The main reason why corruption arises in the administration of rural development programme is the simple fact that the benefits that are distributed are cheap and scarce, and can accordingly only be handed out selectively. The limited supply and heavy subsidies on irrigation facilities, fertilizer, improved seeds, etc. necessarily give the official delivering the goods a key position, which can be used to his own - or

to his friends' personal advantage. There is always a good margin between the price the official is supposed to charge and the price many people are willing to pay, so in addition to open or disguised corruption we get the well-known side effects of shortage and black markets.

The landless or near landless lack both the economic means and the personal links with the government officials that would enable them to reap the benefits of the subsidy system. Even the small peasants are often left out, especially in the distribution of agricultural inputs, the prices of which rather tend to be higher on the black market than they would have been in the absence of public subsidies and control. "The actual administration of input subsidies", argues Michael Lipton⁴³ in a discussion about rural development policies without particular reference to the case of Bangladesh, "usually makes inputs dearer to the mass of farmers, and confines subsidies to the big farmers.....If fertilizers are scarce already, more will not be got into the field by subsidizing them".

This is not to say that the situation would be better if subsidies were abolished altogether. In the absence of public price support, the rural rich would be almost guaranteed the exclusive monopoly of the use of modern inputs with subsidies, small farmers with limited economic resources at least get a

43 M. Lipton, Why Poor People Stay Poor : A Study of Urban Bias in World Development, 1977, pp. 289-90.

a chance to compete. But, such a system inevitably opens the door for corruption; it requires, in order to be of any help for the poor, a strict system of supervision which is absent in rural Bangladesh. Thus "Corruption impedes the processes of decision making and execution on all levels. It increases the need for controls to check the dishonest official at the same as it makes the honest official reluctant to take decision on his own".⁴⁴

The Landed Elite Bias

The evidences presented in the preceding section suggest that the overall rural development policies in Bangladesh have had a consistent bias in favour of the better-off sections of the population. The urban upper and middle classes have been, and are still, grossly overrepresented within the political leadership at different national and local levels. This is supported by the data given on the occupational background of the members of parliament of East Pakistan 1970 and Bangladesh 1973 by Rounaq Jahan.

44 Gunnar Myrdal, The Challenge of World Poverty : A World Anti-Poverty Programme in Outline, 1970, p. 237.

Table 4.5. Occupational Background of the Members of Parliament, East Pakistan 1970 and Bangladesh 1973

<u>Year</u>	<u>Lawyer</u>	<u>Businessman</u>	<u>Landlord</u>	<u>Farmer</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Tea-cher</u>	<u>Doc- tor</u>
1970	79	72	12	34	7	25	20
%	29.5	26.9	4.2	12.7	2.6	9.3	7.5
1973	75	67	8	42	2	28	15
%	25.5	23.7	2.8	14.8	0.7	9.9	5.3

<u>Year</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
1970	14	5	268
%	5.2	1.9	100
1973	35	11	283
%	12.4	3.9	100

Source : Rounaq Jahan, *Members of Parliament in Bangladesh*, 1975

It is also these better off classes that have benefited most from the economic policies pursued. The role of the state has, by and large, been to help vested interest and conserve the prevailing power structure, and that government institutions and officials tend to interact with, and give their support to the wealthier segment that is the elite in both the rural and urban population. The social and economic factors leading to a favouring of capital rather than labour illustrate that both the urban-rural and personal income differentials have tended to be accentuated

by the capital-biased policies that have been implemented both before and after liberation. Finally, the goals of increasing employment and reducing inequality have been neglected in the successive government's production-oriented rural development strategies.

In this section the effects of "green revolution" strategy of rural development has been discussed and a description of who have benefited most from it has been indicated and how the surplus that has been accumulated in the hands of the major beneficiaries has been invested is also shown. We, finally, draw some conclusion regarding the effects of the landed elite bias on the two, partly inter-related, questions of resource utilization and level of effective demand.

The Green Revolution - Who Reaps the Benefit ?

"With the introduction of HYV, the income from land has been increased manifold. But due to absence of equitable distribution of this income, the gap between the poor and rich has widened further. The difference in the ratio of income between a landowner and a landless labourer has increased significantly. Besides, the well-to-do farmers are getting richer without rendering any labour and are becoming owners of more land. On the other hand, the small farmers are gradually becoming even smaller and at a certain stage are rendered landless with no employment".⁴⁵

45 Phani Bhushan Mazumdar, Minister of Local Government, Rural Development in 1975 quoted in BARD, "Socio-Economic Implications of Introducing HYV in Bangladesh" Proceeding of the International Seminar, Comilla, 1975, p. 9.

It has been estimated that the total increase in production of rice between 1968-69 and 1976-77 by 1.4 million tons was produced by a minority of 15 per cent of the farmers in Bangladesh. These farmers have also enjoyed the most advantageous cost conditions, and the distribution of net profits has therefore been even more unequally distributed.

This pattern is far from unusual in countries experiencing agricultural modernization. For example, in Mexico while the "green revolution" has been perhaps fully practised and in Punjab of India and Pakistan, the production increases have been rather more concentrated in the hands of a limited number of farmers, while the contrary appears to be true in countries like Japan, Taiwan and China, where land reforms have preceded the introduction of the HYV technology and where institutions that have been able to distribute the benefits better have been gradually developed.

The above examples, about which there exists plenty of literature analyzing the interaction between technical change and output, income distribution and employment, illustrate that the gains from the new seeds and modern techniques of production can be very differently distributed in different political and socio-economic set ups. And this is also exactly what we should expect from our observations regarding the scale-neutrality makes it possible for big and small farmers alike to take advantage of the new technology if, the institutions that provide the credits, seeds and necessary inputs are also "neutral". And this is normally not the case in Bangladesh.

There are many different institutions that should be considered in this context. The local power structure at the village level is also of obvious importance; who decides, for example, on whose land a deep tubewell should be installed? To answer this question, both the traditional, "patron-client" kind of informal relationships and the control of elites over "modern" institutions like co-operatives, pump groups, union councils, etc. should have to be considered.

In order to have a better exposition we shall, however, concentrate on a few key factors which are the main determinants, of the unequal access to modern inputs. In particular, we will emphasize the imperfections that characterize the markets for credit and inputs, keeping in view that these imperfections are only the expressions of basic, political and socio-economic factors related to the entire power structure of the rural and urban society.

Thus by far most important market is the credit market. To illustrate its importance, we would begin with a few numerical examples showing how the availability of cheap credit is a decisive factor for the profitability of the new seed-fertilizer technology.

Let us first consider the case when the farmer meets all his cash outlays from his own savings; no direct interest payments are therefore involved. If this is so, and the farmer in question is able to get all the necessary inputs at the official, subsidized prices, the HYV technology for

rural development reduces costs of production considerably. A few conclusions drawn from a sample of farm management studies may be enough to make this point clear. The quotations and data presented below are quite arbitrarily chosen, and the results differ in size from other similar field studies, but the same, general tendencies stand out clearly in all estimates of this kind :

"The production cost of HYV aman is higher (taka 1866) than that of local varieties (taka 1581) per acre. On the other hand per acre profit of HYV aman is much higher (taka 1227) than local varieties (taka 297) because the grain yield of HYVs is 40.12 maunds per acre. Per maund cost of production of HYVs is lower (taka 46.5) than that of LVs (taka 67). The profit per maund of HYVs paddy is taka 30.6 (including value of straw) at the rate of taka 74.50 (government procurement price) per maund. The benefit/cost ratio is 1.65 and 1.19 for HYVs and LVs, respectively".⁴⁶

Or :

"In general, the levels of different input applications per acre in the production of HYVs were significantly higher than those of LVs. The result of the analysis indicated that the farmers with HYVs incurred larger expenses per acre, and also obtained a greater amount of returns per acre than the farmers with LVs".⁴⁷

46 Mian Shahjahan, Cost and Return of Aman Cultivation 1976, 1977, p. 20.

47 Murshed, et al., Production of High Yielding and Local Varieties of Aman Paddy in Mymensingh - An Economic Analysis, 1976, p. 24.

The data given in this study show that the per maund costs of production were take 40.5 and 33.8 for two different HYV crops and take 46.7 and 57.5 for the local varieties studied. This confirms what we should expect, namely that while costs of production per acre increase with the new seeds, the per maund costs of production actually decline.

A shift from LVs to HYVs would thus appear to be very profitable. The results from these and other studies also indicate, however, that the fact that the HYVs require much more expenses than the local varieties signifies that their profitability is very sensitive to changes in paddy prices and to changes in the prices of inputs, which tend to vary considerably between different categories of farmers.

A simple example could illustrate under what circumstances it is profitable to apply the HYV technology. In the following table, costs and returns of HYV and LVs are compared when two factors are allowed to vary: the cost of credit and the price of paddy. The figures used are entirely hypothetical, but may nevertheless be relatively realistic.

Table 4.6. Per Acre Costs (excluding family labour and other non-cash expenses) and Returns of HYVs and LVs under Different Interest Rates and Paddy Prices Received by the Farmer (in taka)

	HYVs				LVs			
	Loan 18%	Interest 30%	Rate 50%	Rate 100%	Loan 18%	Interest 30%	Rate 50%	Rate 100%
a) Input Costs 1000 (amount borrowed)	1000	1000	1000	1000	250	250	250	250
b) Interest, 6 months	90	150	250	500	23	38	63	125
c) Total to be paid	<u>1090</u>	<u>1150</u>	<u>1250</u>	<u>1500</u>	<u>273</u>	<u>288</u>	<u>313</u>	<u>373</u>
d) Yield (maunds of paddy)	30	30	30	30	15	15	15	15
e) Marketable surplus (10 maunds used for family consumption)	20	20	20	20	5	5	5	5
f) Income from Sales at Different Prices of Paddy Received at taka per maund :								
50	1000	1000	1000	1000	250	250	250	250
60	1200	1200	1200	1200	300	300	300	300
70	1400	1400	1400	1400	350	350	350	350
80	1600	1600	1600	1600	400	400	400	400
90	1800	1800	1800	1800	450	450	450	450
g) Profit/(Deficit) after Payment of Input Costs and Interest at Different Paddy Prices. f) - c)								
50	90	150	250	500	23	38	63	125
60	110	50	50	300	27	12	13	75
70	310	250	150	100	77	62	37	25
80	510	450	350	100	127	122	87	25
90	710	650	550	300	177	172	137	75

The assumptions underlying the above table are, of course, highly simplified. The amounts of inputs applied are, for example, independent of the interest rates and of the expected prices of paddy, while a more realistic model would allow for adjustments in these respects. The sales price of HYV paddy should also be slightly below that of the LVs. The amount of paddy reserved for own consumption can, furthermore, be assumed to be a function of prices rather than a fixed constant; a poor, indebted farmer who incurs losses may thus respond by squeezing his own consumption and increase the share of total production that is marketed when paddy prices are low, while other better-off farmers may behave in the opposite way. The example above can, however, be modified to take these and other factors into account, the only inconvenience being that the calculations are cumbersome and the presentation of the results equally tedious.

It should also be stressed that the example refers to owner-cultivators. For sharecroppers who almost invariably have to pay the full costs of all inputs themselves⁴⁸ but are

48 According to the 1977 Land Occupancy Survey of Rural Bangladesh, BBS, the tenants had to provide 99.4 per cent of the seeds, 99.6 per cent of the fertilizers and 99.8 per cent of the pesticides. Mahabub Hossain, ("Farm Size, Tenancy and Land Productivity : An Analysis of Farm Level Data in Bangladesh Agriculture", Bangladesh Development Studies, 3/1977) have however found it to be more common that the landlords share the costs of modern inputs with the tenants. One explanation may be that practices differ between different regions.

forced to give at least fifty per cent of the harvest to the landowner, the situation is much worse, and only under very special conditions will it be possible for a sharecropper who, in addition to all other problems, is in practice excluded from all institutional sources of cheap credit to invest in the HYV technology.⁴⁹

Let us now turn to a few interpretations of the results obtained in the calculations made above.

One first observation is that the price of rice plays a crucial role. If the price is low, all farmers, whether they grow HYVs or LVs and whether they have access to cheap credit or no, will make losses. The conclusion that follows is, of course, that when paddy prices are expected to be low, all farmers try to limit their use of inputs, and the most unfortunate one who pays usury rate of interest would better avoid all cash outlays and restrict themselves to the purchase of seeds only. At paddy prices of 50 taka per maund, a switch to the whole HYV package of inputs is disastrous - at least in our example - since losses on HYV cultivation are bigger for any given rate of interest. Our observations regarding the disincentive effects of low prices of foodgrains are thus illustrated. Unless demand and prices are satisfactory, no production-oriented strategy aiming at accelerating the spread of the HYV technology will succeed.

49 For a tentative assessment of the cost and return situation for a sharecropper, see U.S. AID, The Poor Majority of Bangladesh, Dacca, n.d., mimeo. The estimates used in this study have been of some inspiration for the calculations made in Table 4.6 above.

The importance of the rate of interest also emerges clearly. It is primarily the farmers who benefit from cheap credit who can afford to switch to the HYV technology. This is even more pronounced if we consider the fact that access to institutional credit is closely related to access to subsidized inputs as well, a circumstance that was not considered in the example above and to which we will return in connection with the role of the co-operatives. There are innumerable studies from Bangladesh and many other countries that confirm this pattern that is when inputs are sold at subsidized prices, it is normally the economically and politically dominant groups in our agrarian society that have the easiest access both to cheap credit and to irrigation facilities, fertilizers, extension services of all kinds, etc. The uneven distribution of the allocation of deep tubewells is particularly well analyzed in the Bangladeshi context. It must, however, be emphasized that it is primarily the subsidies that are unevenly distributed; in many cases, the use of irrigation is relatively more frequent on small units than on big ones, the reason being that much family labour is applied in traditional, labour-intensive methods of irrigation, while the heavily subsidized tubewells accuring to the big farmers have such a miserably low rate of utilization that the acreage actually irrigated is proportionately lower than among the small, subsistence farmers getting no subsidies at all.

But it is not always possible to compensate for the limited access to modern subsidized inputs by applying more family labour. Some other related things have also to be purchased from the market in order to enable the farmers to take full advantage of the HYV technology. And since the price of credit affects the costs of all such inputs, including hired labour, the rate of interest paid constitutes the most important single factor accounting for variations in the use of modern inputs between different categories of farmers. Let us therefore turn to the evidence that exists about the availability and cost of credit in rural Bangladesh.

Credit Sources and their Utilization

The credit needs of the rural population in the Indian subcontinent as known from history have been met from non-institutional sources such as tradesmen, marketing intermediaries, etc. After the overthrow of the colonial rule, institutional sources of borrowing have been developed; their role has remained supplementary and non-institutional sources still have maintained their dominance.

Today, the new seed-fertilizer technology and the accelerated spread of market relations in the countryside have greatly increased the peasantry's need for credit. Although reliable data on the extent of agricultural lending in recent years are lacking, any rough assessment of costs of production

and availability of institutional credit reveal that the institutions for rural credit that have been created have failed completely to meet the new requirements. Thus in 1975/76, all institutional credit to agriculture amounted to 466 million taka (see table 4.7 below), which corresponds to less than 15 taka per acre of cropped land. This sum of 15 taka per acre is barely enough to pay for two days of hired labour or, to make yet another comparison, to purchase one fifteenth of the recommended fertilizer doses per acre of HYV land.⁵⁰ Under such circumstances it is only natural that there are very few farmers who come even close to using the recommended levels of fertilizers and other inputs, including hired labour. On the other hand there are, of course, a class of landed elites who have enough liquidity to pay the costs of all inputs without having to incur debt, and if these farmers do borrow from institutional sources, it is often for consumption or for speculative rather than productive purposes.

Of the total agricultural credit from institutional sources in 1975/76, the Bangladesh Krishi Bank accounted for almost 40 per cent, and the commercial banks for another 27 per cent. The co-operatives, which in theory are supposed to benefit the small and medium-sized farmers, provided less than ten per cent of the total.

50	Based on the following doses and prices :	
	Urea : 2 maunds/acre at 60 taka/maund	= 120
	Triple Superphosphate: 1½ mds/acre, 48 taka/md	= 72
	Muriate of Potash: ¾ mds/acre, 40 taka/md	= 30
	Total taka	= 222

! :- 216 :-

Table 4.7. Agricultural Loans Granted by Institutional Lenders, Bangladesh 1975/76, millions of taka

Institution	Target	Actual dis- bursements	Per cent of total disbursements
Bangladesh Krishi Bank	200	185	39.8%
Bangladesh Jatiya Samabaya Bank (BJSB)	340	106	22.8%
IRDP (co-operatives)	205	45	9.7%
Commercial Banks	90	129	27.7%
<u>T o t a l</u>	<u>835</u>	<u>466</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

Source : Agricultural Mission 1977, Agricultural Credit, p.5.

The interest rates from these sources vary between 11 per cent and 17.5 per cent; they are all subsidized by the state. The exact number of persons benefiting from this cheap credit is not known, but Bangladesh Krishi Bank and IRDP were officially granting loans to 67000 and 231000 farmers respectively. In 1975/76, the average size of the loans was taka 2700 and 2000 respectively. If we, somewhat generously, assume that the BJSB and the Commercial Banks, which all have weak financial structures, little capital and few deposits, reached 50000 farmers each, the total number of beneficiaries from institutional credit would be in the range of 400000, or some three and a half per cent of the 12 million rural households in Bangladesh.

There are many reasons why the poor are excluded from the above sources. The first restriction is that land ownership is a requirement for obtaining agricultural credit; the landless or near landless, i.e. the majority of the rural population, are thus automatically left out, even from the IRDP co-operatives. Literacy is, in actual practice, another condition, and few small farmers are able to complete the necessary forms and documents for getting a loan. Influential rural elites are also of importance in dealing with bank officials, co-operative leaders, etc. All lending institutions are, furthermore, obliged to meet some security requirements, which in practice favour the wealthy and secure landholding elites at the expense of the poor and subsistence farmers.

In view of the disastrous credit situation confronting the vast majority of the rural population, an ambitious and much publicized "100 crore credit programme" was launched in 1977 as a "crash programme" especially destined for the rural poor. If actually implemented, it would have more than doubled the entire volume of rural credit. The rate of interest was set to twelve per cent.

The entire programme seems to have failed, however. According to one evaluation, it has failed for three main reasons :

"First, the main intended beneficiaries, the poor and marginal farmers, have not benefited. To quote an official report, 'the share of small farmers in the credit so far disbursed under the special agricultural

credit programme is quite negligible and the main beneficiaries are farmers ploughing '3 - 9 acres of land.....' Second, there is a wide apprehension which, in the face of current operational practices seems to be well founded, that, as usual, a large chunk of the credit disbursed under the programme has not been invested in productive purposes. Third, only 58 crore taka could be disbursed out of the 100 crore..... Against this disbursement, the rate of recovery was on average below forty per cent with one exception to a commercial bank with 49 per cent".⁵¹

A U.S. AID study observes that the 100 crore programme "..... only reaches the top 20 per cent of all farmers, and during its initial stages these farmers evidently used the available credit for unproductive purposes".⁵²

The programme has now been suspended, and some 95-97 per cent of the rural population will continue to rely on non-institutional forms of credit, where the rates of interest are generally assumed to be somewhere between 50 and 300 per cent (loans from friends and relatives, which are of a great but unknown importance, are of course cheaper).

51 Economic Times, Dacca, June 30, 1978.

52 US AID, The Poor Majority of Bangladesh, n.d., p. 23.

Recalling our earlier estimates of costs and returns of the use of HYVs and modern inputs, we can now conclude that the present structure of the rural credit market prevents most small farmers from undertaking the necessary investments in the new technology. Unless cheap credit is provided on a massive scale - or the income and liquidity situation by a miracle can be improved drastically enough to enable the rural poor to free themselves from the clutches of the moneylenders - will it be impossible to spread the miracle yields of the "green revolution" to a significant proportion of the farmers.

Before leaving the credit situation it should be emphasized that the high rates of interest prevailing on the "informal" market affect the profitability of agricultural investments in two different ways. First, the interest paid enters as a cost item in the borrower's budget, thereby reducing both his willingness and ability to invest. Secondly, moneylending as a profitable business enters the opportunity to earn a 100 per cent or more on usury reduces not the ability but certainly the willingness of the rural rich to invest their money productively. The high profitability - in economic, social and political terms - of investing in urban education for the children is another circumstance that militates against productive investments in agriculture; many big landowners spend most of their surplus in giving their sons a good education in a town atmosphere.

Returning to moneylending, we thus see that the pre-dominance of usury capital in rural Bangladesh acts as a serious obstacle to agricultural growth by making both small and big farmers reluctant to undertake productive investments. The speculative element is omnipresent, and it is also very much reflected in the attempts by the rural (and, increasingly, urban) rich to lay hold of the marginal farmer's lands. In the words of a recent report on the rural market for credit in Bangladesh :

"Borrowing from non-institutional sources is either in cash or in kind, as is repayment. The interest rate of non-monetary loans could be 350 - 400 per cent. In some cases it is even higher. Quite often the poor farmer loses his land because of his inability to repay the principal and the interest. As a US AID study observes: 'Whatever the rate of interest, the main objective of landowners making loans of this kind is to acquire land, since the value of land - approximately taka 10000 to 15000 per acre - is far more significant to him than the returns in the form of interest".⁵³

Risk

The risk problem should also be stressed. With respect to the HYVs it has already been noted that these seeds are more delicate than the local varieties more susceptible to diseases, more sensitive to adverse climatic and hydrological

53 Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Proposed for Bangladesh Rural Credit Trust - An Innovative Approach to Finance the Rural Poor in Productive Pursuits, 1977, p. 7.

conditions, it has often been observed that there are much greater variations - between different years - in yields per acre of the HYVs. All these factors reduce the attractiveness of the new seeds in the eyes of the small farmers, many of whom have learnt too late how dangerous the use of the new technology can be. As observed by the 1977 Agricultural Mission, the "green revolution" has created many new landless :

"The irony is that the government's own programme of agricultural and rural development are tending to accentuate this process of dispossession of the poorer farmers. First, the new technology combined with share-tenancy and the risks of farming make them more vulnerable to total indebtedness and forced sale of land. The government's liberal doses of credit and input subsidies to elicit the adoption of the higher cost inputs have been syphoned off by the big landlords, who retail them out at higher interest/rentals to the smaller farmers, resulting in their further indebtedness and ultimately to the forced sale of their land..... If the poor farmer or tenant is to retain his land under such a system, he had better steer clear of the high cost of the new technologies....."⁵⁴

We are now able to assess the supposed scale-neutrality of the HYV "green revolution" in a more realistic way. The high risks associated with the HYVs, plus the unequal access to credit and modern inputs and the non-neutral character of

54 Agricultural Mission 1977, Selected Policy Issues, pp. 72-73.

government policies and institutions, are the main factors responsible for offsetting the "technical" scale-neutrality and instead give the HYV strategy a consistent bias in favour of the richer farmers.

This does not necessarily mean that big farmers, and they alone, invest in the HYVs. But it means that when the big farmers do make such investments, they are able to do so on more advantageous terms than other categories of farmers.

This distinction is important: Big landlords are poor investors, and the few studies about the rate of adoption of the new seeds indicate, that it has rather been the middle-sized surplus farmers who have been the earliest adopters, while both the marginal farmers and the very big ones lag appreciably behind.⁵⁵ The explanation of this apparent paradox is that there exists in Bangladesh - as in most other countries - an inverse relationship between farm size and intensity of cultivation, at least above a certain level. Yields per acre thus tend to be lower on the large units, in particular on the very large ones where neglect of productive investments and under utilization of the soils are salient features. The following table illustrates this rather universal pattern :

⁵⁵ See, for example, Md. Asaduzzaman and Faridul Islam, Adoption of HYVs in Bangladesh. BIDS, n.d.

-: 223 :-

Table 4.8. Paddy Yields of Different Size Groups of Farmers, Bogra District

<u>Category of Farmers</u>	<u>Average Yields Per Acre</u> (maunds of paddy)
Small (0.01-2.00)	18.2
Viable (2.01-4.00)	19.6
Bigger (4.01-6.00)	17.8
Very big (6.01- and above)	12.0

Source : M. Mustafizur Rahman, Land Distribution: Its Impact on Rural Development, in the Bangladesh Times, March 3, 1978.

We thus see that the middle-sized peasants come out at the top, followed by the smallest units, while the biggest farmers show the poorest performance record. This is also consistent with the main results from Mahabub Hossain's studies, in which productivity of land has been found to be highest in the 2.5 to 5.0 acre size group. To this we should add that average cropping intensity tends to be far higher on the small and medium-sized farms than on the big ones; it is a well established fact that the largest farmers often prefer one stable crop which gives a secure income at low cost to several less secure crops - a circumstance which tends to preserve the low cropping intensity and poor utilization of available land.

With respect to the implications of the market imperfections discussed earlier, it should also be observed that the large farmers, whose costs of capital are low, use relatively more material inputs and less labour than the smaller farmers. In a labour-surplus and capital-scarce country like Bangladesh, this signifies another form of misallocation and wastage of resources. It is therefore as pointed out by, among others, Keith Griffin⁵⁶ reasonable to assume that the small, "traditional" farmers come closer than the large ones to using human and capital resources in socially optimal proportions.

The small farmers without access to institutional credit compensate their shortcomings by using more labour (in general family labour, which is not connected with any cash outlays) while the big farmers prefer, when there is a choice, material inputs to hired labour (which is cheap, true, but not subsidized). Formulated in this way, it is easy to see that the "landlord bias" in the present production-oriented, "green revolution" strategy not only increases inequality but also leads to a less efficient use of available resources than an alternative, "small farmer biased" promotion of the HYV technology.

56 Keith Griffin, The Political Economy of Agrarian Change, 1974, p. 46 ff.

So far, we have mainly considered the distribution of gains between different categories of farmers, emphasizing the admittedly vague distinction between "large", "middle" and "small" farmers. But despite the title of this section, the groups that appear to have benefited most are not really landlords in the traditional sense, which hardly exist at all; in Bangladesh, virtually all farmers are small by international standards, and the "landlords" that have been most eager to take advantage of the HYV technology should rather be considered as middle surplus farmers owning perhaps between three-four and eight acres of land. This result may seem to contradict the theoretical arguments about the "landlord bias" presented earlier, but it can best be explained by reference to different behaviour patterns between the cost and price conscious, innovating middle farmers and the largest, "semi-feudal" landlords who appear to be more interested in moneylending and similar activities than in HYVs. The evidence in this respect is not clearcut, however, and these observations should therefore have the character of hypotheses worth testing rather than of well-established facts.

Even those small farmers who own around one acre of land, and for whom the HYV technology is a costly and risky business which rarely makes economic sense, are however a comparatively privileged group in land-scarce Bangladesh. What remains to be discussed further are the

implications of the "green revolution" for the sixty per cent or so of the rural population who own no land at all, or less than one acre, i.e. the full-time or part-time agricultural workers.

"Green Revolution" and Landed Elite Bias

The fact that the "green revolution" in Bangladesh, for reasons analyzed at length earlier, has been much more effective in reducing average costs per unit of output for a minority of large farmers than in increasing the overall level of production indicates that the following "vicious circle" described by Erich Jacoby is frighteningly relevant in the case of Bangladesh :

"It is obvious that the increase in rural unemployment, which is not balanced by additional employment possibilities in urban areas, will have serious repercussions on the domestic market and price developments. The multiplied supply of marketable food crops will be met by a declining effective demand for food due to the rising unemployment. This will cause declining food prices which ultimately will further impair the rural labour situation: on the one hand, the large producers will try to defend their profits by reducing labour costs through an increased use of modern farm machinery and often even by cutting down the actual area under cultivation; on the other, the small farmers, who cannot afford to rationalize, will be forced to market their surplus at prices which will reduce their main source of cash income, with the

result that in the end they may have to sell their land cheaply and join the ranks of the unemployed.

The vicious circle of unemployment, declining food prices and new unemployment must inevitably lead to a deterioration of the social stratification in the rural areas".⁵⁷

What is needed in Bangladesh, and indeed in most other countries, is a growth-plus-equity strategy. The present "landlord bias" in agricultural policies militates not only against justice, but against production as well. It does so in two basic ways :

1. Through the favouring of larger farmers, whose utilization of land, labour and capital is less efficient from a social point of view than that of the smaller peasants, resources are wasted and both production and employment suffer.
2. Through the accentuation of the polarization and pauperization in the countryside, labour's share of output is reduced, real wages and effective demand for foodgrains lag behind, food prices are depressed, profitability in agriculture is deteriorating vis-a-vis other activities and, again, both production and employment suffer.

What remains in terms of achievements of the "green revolution" in Bangladesh is little more than marginal increases in the use of the HYV technology accompanied by increases in yields per acre on the privileged units and

57 E. Jacoby, Man and Land. The Fundamental Issue in Development, 1971, p. 260.

declines in average yields on the remainder of the soils. A minority of surplus farmers - though not necessarily "landlords" in the traditional sense - have been the main beneficiaries; their costs of production have declined, while their share of total production - and, in particular, of the marketable surplus - has increased. The spread of the HYV technology has thus played a role similar to that of food imports: it has contributed to cheaper food consumption, which the urban population has appreciated in particular, while actually aggravating the position for the small and marginal producers.

And this may, in the final analysis, be the main effect of a strategy¹ for agricultural modernization which is not concerned with equity. To put this strategy in a broader perspective, we will conclude this section by giving the last word to Keith Griffin, who in fact coined the expression used as title for this part. Although Griffin does not refer to the particular case of Bangladesh, but rather to countries where the "green revolution" has advanced further, the observations made do have some relevance for Bangladesh too :

"The introduction of high yielding varieties of foodgrains.has enabled the marketable surplus to be increased, and the resource transfer (from agriculture, SdV) to continue, at a negligible cost in terms of investment in rural areas. The significance of the "green revolution"

is not so much that it has resulted in an improved livelihood in rural areas (although certain groups clearly have prospered) as that it has allowed governments to persist with industrial policies which had taken many nations to the brink of the catastrophe.....

Given the needs of urban areas for cheap and abundant wage goods and for a continuation of the subsidy to industry from agriculture, the best thing that could have happened, did happen: the 'green revolution' strengthened those in the countryside who were the natural allies of the urban ruling groups and it enabled these ruling groups to perpetuate the status quo essentially unchanged".⁵⁸

58 K. Griffin, op. cit., p. 128.

III .

Case Studies : Elite, Factions Vis-a-Vis
Development Programmes

An analysis of the distribution of power and influence and patronage and dependence in rural society of Bangladesh is necessary for sociological analysis of rural development programmes.

All power is not vested with a minority, leaving the rest with no power. Rather power is a continuum where the households at one point of this continuum can exercise power and influence on those with less power. The poor exploit the very poor. Spiritual leaders can exercise considerable power and influence on religious matters, but may have limited influence on the running of the local co-operative societies. Similarly, relationships of patronage and dependence vary in origin, in scope and in consequence not only from village to village but also within a village.

In agrarian society like Bangladesh ownership of land and control of other forms of user rights are key sources to power and influence. The analysis of access to land is therefore generally an analysis of the most central aspects of social, cultural and political organization of our rural society.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Bengali rural society was dominated by the bhadrolok⁵⁹ (respectable people). "They were distinguished by many respects of their behaviour - their deportment, their speech, their dress, their style of housing, their eating habits, their occupation and their associations - and quite as fundamentally by their cultural values and their sense of social propriety."⁶⁰ These bhadroloks were distinguished from abhadras. The former did not engage in manual work as opposed to latter. Thus formal political power in our rural areas remain largely with generation bound landed interests. They tend to exercise influence upon the local decision making process. It clearly indicates power and wealth are associated. This power holders associated with land mainly form our rural elite although other kinds of rural elites are not excluded.

The shift in the agrarian economy of Bengal helped the growth of rural based elite. Since the last phase of the 19th century, crops in Bengal⁶¹ were steadily acquiring a commodity value with the ever growing external and home markets in society. As a result, the peasants with substantial holdings which could not be cultivated solely by their own labour, although they were a distinct minority in the entire

59 J.H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal, 1968, p. 12.

60 Ibid., pp. 5-6.

61 Ibid., p. 269.

society, did not any more settle the surplus holdings on other peasants under one of the few temporary tenures allowed under the rules of the permanent settlement of land. Instead, they began to have those holdings cultivated by sharecroppers, recruited from the ranks of impoverished peasants because in this way they could acquire more land from the profitable concern and employ the acquired holdings for the same mode of production. Thus a category known as jotdar (landholder) emerged in rural Bengal. The patterns of ownership and control of land resources in peasant society vary from those in which most of the peasants are landless labourers and sharecroppers. The farmers are asymmetrically linked to the greater society through dominant groups - the big landowners, merchants, money lenders, teachers, doctors, lawyers and mullahs who exploit the peasantry to underwrite their own levels of living and positions of power and prestige. The 'vertical cleavages' which describe the opposition between such groups dominated by different leaders (rich patrons) in the village are the character of the group formation and changes.

Issue of conflict is generally either status or power of economic gain. The relationship between rich and poor within the villages holds in the study area (also true for other parts of Bangladesh) where the richer peasant is a significant employer of labourers who originate from the village itself. The relationships between rich and poor in this situation are very direct economic dependence.

The mechanism which determines the access to productive resources and the terms of access for different households will penetrate central aspects of the distribution of influence and relationship of dependency in the rural society.

We try to establish here by a few case studies from the five villages of the study area (Kumarghata, Garaikuti, Pathalia, Kandulia and Dublakuri) in Muktagacha, Mymensingh, the principal sources of power and influence of the rural elites, their character and above all patron-client relationship as maintained in the rural society of Bangladesh. The local power structure of Muktagacha in-depth study villages is more or less typical of rural Bangladesh. Land is the primary source of power. Among various sources of power of the rural elites, the following are observed: (i) wealth (mainly in the form of land); (ii) kinship; (iii) official position (by government appointment or by election); (iv) leadership role in traditional institution; (v) religious/ceremonial function; (vi) age; (vii) children's education/employment; (viii) other (e.g. political affiliation).

There exists a dependency relationship between the marginal farmers and the landless on the one hand and rich farmers on the other in terms of employment, land for share-tenancy, credits and land mortgage.

This is one end of the picture. On the other, these landed elites have access to various administrative and development organization at Muktagacha thana. They have access to modern inputs and services. Ownership of means of irrigation adds to their economic power. Functionally it adds to as much influence and dominance as ownership of land does. This economic power in turn adds to political and social power. The landed elites dominate the local bodies like the union parishad and gram sarkar.

Another base of local power structure as observed in our study is the strong kinship base. The landed elites dominate the local bodies, while their relations are engaged in service in the modern sector. The young generation of these elites are educated, oriented to progressive ideas and are members of the local voluntary organizations.

Elite, Faction and Conflict

Some space should be devoted to explain the factionalism giving birth to conflicts in village community in Bangladesh. The analysis of factional system of political interaction which originates from elite conflict in rural society of Bangladesh is therefore required for the understanding of sociological implications of rural development programmes. The model of 'encapsulation' was presented by the British social anthropologist F.G. Bailey based upon village social structure and the political process in Orissa State, India.⁶²

62 F.G. Bailey, Politics and Social Change : Orissa in 1959, 1963.

The term faction is used to describe a pervasive form of politico-social interaction. The central theme of this mode of politics is that factional alignment cut across class alignments. The faction is often regarded as disruptive of a prior social order which is characterised by consensus and unity. Factional groupings are based on either kinship or political motivation or economic ties in rural Bangladesh.

Potential elite conflict situations exist in rural Bangladesh when transactions occur between individuals or groups who do not share the same set of working rules or when there is wide divergence between the ideal and real sets of expectation in transaction between individuals or groups sharing a common set of working rules. Even though the development process itself seems to derive at least some of its momentum from potential or actual conflict situations, a successful development programme must include the means for resolving conflicts by fostering the kinds of 'cognitive orientation' and working rules that encourage new resource combinations and higher level of living for the masses of society.

An examination of elite conflict situation in peasant community in Bangladesh can provide understanding the social constraints of rural development programmes. Perhaps no other working rules influence peasant society in Bangladesh (agriculture) to the extent that land tenure institution does. The British introduced the 'proprietaryship' in land. In the past it was possible to get more or less a correct picture of the Bangladeshi society by the assessment of the extent of

power exercised by the landed aristocracy. But following the subdivision and fragmentation of holdings and subinfeudation of the tenure system introduced great complexity of social structure of Bangladesh, the identification of rural elites in such a situation becomes difficult. Power is though shaken still holds its sway. Since the British Bengal and the present day Bangladesh society happen to be predominantly agricultural, old base of the social structure depended on land control to some extent still continues to influence society.

Several examples from the following case studies have been related to the nature of the rural elites, their principal sources of power, patron-client relationship found in sample villages stated above and how they affect the rural development programmes. This is also true for the whole of Bangladesh since these are the typical cases selected for the study.

Case 1

Mizanur Rahman of Garaikuti, Muktagacha achieved the present status of influence by factors of economic superiority, education and occupational status. Mr. Rahman owns 25 acres of land which is the main source of his economic superiority. But he inherited the land from his parents and acquired influence in the village by the traditional land base. His social status is further enhanced by his service position as pilot.

Mr. Rahman's father was a police inspector who comes from a respectable Muslim family and belongs to the traditional rural elite. His eight brothers are highly placed in government job. Not merely he could retain influence in the locality as his social position originates in the possession of a large amount of land which made him socio-economically dominant in the village. He has maintained his present influence in the village by his traditional lineage, land, education, house in Dacca and a personal car. His family held as traditional elite is still very strong in this village.

Case 2

Mokbul Hussain, Chairman of Kumarghata union owns about 50 acres of land. He comes of a traditional rich family which is still dominant in the village. His social respectability has been achieved by the possession of a large amount of land (50 acres) which is the primary source of his power. The village is under the dominance of this family.

Case 3

Mansur Ali Sarkar of Kumarghata owns 25 acres of land and has a wider sphere of influence. He inherited the land from his father whose position was retained by the traditional land base. He has access to various government offices by virtue of the fact that his family was known traditionally rich with great scope for patronage. Meizuddin having .15

acre of cultivable land and Abdus Sobhan, a landless (who has homestead only) are dependent on him. This dependence is due to their sharecropping of Mansur Ali's land, taking credit from him to meet up food and medical expenses for his family members in dire needs. Bailey's notion of broker role⁶³ can very well explain the situation of dependence here. Broker function is performed by Mansur Ali for his clients Sobhan and Moizuddin by such acts like approaching Krishi-Bank Manager to sanction loan for them. The rich farmers in Bangladesh like Mansur Ali by virtue of their political and economic dominance in the village act as brokers for the poor who ultimately become dependent on them.

The degree of dominance of elite families is flexible which varies from village to village and we find such fluctuation corroborates the broader conclusions of Abdullah and Nations.⁶⁴

It will not be out of place to show that a more important factor which undermines the power of the traditional rural elite is the subdivision of land through inheritance. Faced with a smaller share of the traditional sources of power and prestige in the village community, many of their heirs of the larger holdings suffered a loss in relative status from that of their ancestors. As a result of the downward status mobility, many of their heirs established local business to supplement their income.

63 F.G. Bailey, Stratagem and Spoils, 1969, p. 49.

64 A. Abdullah and R. Nations, "Agrarian Development and IRDP in Bangladesh", mimeo., Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, May 1974, p. 6.

Case 4

It is observed by the in-depth study how a family belonging to the traditional elite is falling down in prestige esteem. Sobhan from Garaikuti is such an example. Sobhan's father had 20 acres of land. His social status gradually decreased when he squandered away money by selling land on self-enjoyment. His previous position could be somewhat regained when his son took up some business at Muktagacha.

The growth of new elite since liberation is a phenomenon to be counted in agrarian structure of Bangladesh. Case 5 illustrates such a growth.

Case 5

Abdur Razzaque of Pathalia belonged to the group of marginal farmers having .25 acre of arable land. His position was very low in the social hierarchy. He was practically reared up on public charity and had got his schooling out of public money. When he passed the intermediate level of education, he was married in a high middle class family. In course of time he was appointed cashier of Pubali Bank at Muktagacha thana headquarter. He purchased 10 to 16 acres of land and is willing to purchase more. Razzaque belongs to new elite as he increases power by land purchase, education, a good job and marriage in a high middle class family.

The new rural elites are gradually replacing the old ones. This is evident from our in-depth study. It is observed that some members of gram sarkar are being nominated from the traditional elite, while some others belong to the new elite. In Dawakhola the gram sarkar proedhan Mr. Abdur Razzaq comes from such new elite. 50% of the chairmen of the union parishad in the study area belong to the new elite. It demonstrates that the position of the traditional elite is being weakened in local self-government.

With the fragmentation of land holdings by inheritance and the increased demand for farm products in the urban areas, commercial enterprises have replaced many of the traditional crop and livestock activities in the study area. Although these intensive enterprises have provided additional employment opportunities for the middle peasants, they have also helped create a new village elite gaining more power day by day. Because peasants lack the inputs and knowledge to produce these new enterprises, they enter into exploitative contractual arrangements with big landholders, merchants and money lenders who control most of the communities resources and who dominate the major decision making process.

The existing infrastructure in village communities in Bangladesh is not in many instances utilized by the poor disadvantaged group. Most landless children, for example, are presently blocked by tuition fees and incidentals which are beyond their means to bear. Poorly educated peasants

-:241 :-

with a long history of inferior social relations have not had experience in planning education and organizing modern institutions. So they remain under the patronage of rural elites in reaching the existing services. The rural elites primarily chairmen and members of union parishad, gram sarkar and big landowners reduce the mass of the village population under their patronage.

The agricultural infrastructure is typically inadequate and controlled by the rural elites. For example, the village co-operative of Pathalia is controlled by Surat Jamal who owns a large amount of land (20 acres) and has wider influence and controlling power by becoming a gram sarkar pradhan. The landless, marginal and medium farmers do not in this situation gain strength in order to place their demands more effectively for inputs and services. Village community's major authority holders are members of the rural elite. Jamal, for example, plays an important role in local social and political process. In the distribution of Food for Work wheat in the past he exercised his influence as chairman of union parishad upon the local authority. He was thereby able to maintain an effective control over the community's major decision making process. He collaborates with local government officials on infrastructural development of the locality like roads and bridges.

The rural development programmes undertaken in Bangladesh suffer a set back in many instances by the elite conflict which either hampers or delays or even makes the programmes abandoned without having any decision being reached. The position has been explained by the following case studies from our study area.

Case 6

There was a sanctioned scheme of pacce read from Muktagacha to Begunbari in our study area. Shamsul Huq of village Kandulia, a big farmer owning 25 acres of land and ex-member of parliament came into conflict with Shahidullah owning 14 acres of cultivable land and a local leader of Jatiyabadi Samajtantric Dal (a political party), over the execution of the scheme. It was ultimately abandoned. This demonstrates how the elite conflict in our agrarian society causes a failure of the rural development programme.

Ralph Nicholas's work in West Bengal has been pioneering in respect of factionalism in agrarian society. In his paper on the role of social science research in Bangladesh, he concludes :

"Villages which appear to be the most 'natural' of human communities and the most obvious basis for co-operative development organization frequently prove to be cockpits of bitter struggle, factionalism, and the very opposite of co-operation; no one has an effective remedy, but it is clear that rural development is severely hampered by the prevalence of such conflict."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ R. Nicholas, Social Science Research in Bangladesh, mimeo, The Ford Foundation, Dacca, December 1973, p. 4.

-: 243 :-

Since the problem of factionalism is often regarded as an "ongoing dynamic one", in which divisions in the village are actually created as the result of development programme (the introduction of new institutions such as co-operatives, the flow of new resources such as seed, fertilizer, tubewells, etc.) it is vital to review some aspects of theory and see how it comes into operative in present day rural Bangladesh.

It is often found that development activities themselves stimulate factional divisions within the village as different 'patrons' compete with each other for position, supremacy, and power for new resources in order to retain the loyalty of their followers. The following case illustrates the fight between two factions for such supremacy.

Case 7

A scheme of deep tubewell was sanctioned by the government. The site of the tubewell selected by the peasant's society of Kandulia had been fixed in front of the house of one Sakur Ali Mian, a big farmer who created a faction around him. In the meantime Altaf Ali Mian of the same village who is a chosen leader of the village community in many respects and has a large number followers, friends and clients tried to refix the site in his own land. Conflict between the two heads of the village faction began over the issue. Altaf Ali Mian was showing off his strength as he was henchman of

ex-minister Mr. Shamsul.Huq Chowdhury. So no body could harm him. But Sukur who is also a very influential elite won mass support. In such conflict situation no decision could be reached over the site of installation.

Case 8

Case 8 illustrates the position of a faction leader around his followers. A leading family of Surat Jamal (ex-chairman of Pathalia) which is certainly a landed one (possessing 20 acres of land) gathers around him a good number of followers of a lower socio-economic status namely, Moizuddin having .5 acres of land and Karim, a landless peasant. The nucleus being formed by them, they come to him for advice, for help in finding a job in Mymensingh town or elsewhere or for emergency relief in the form of loan (for example, Kasem Ali came to him to manage a Krishi loan from the Bank Manager). He persuaded IRDP Project Officer for a deep tubewell for Kandulia people. He also stood security for Sorab of Kumarghata to get a loan (Tk. 1000) for him from Rupali Bank Manager. What the leader Jamal gets is a loyal following who will side with him in village rivalries, which dissipate class conflict. It is rather 'a segmental conflict rather than class conflict'. Mr. Jamal is a typical rich peasant. He organizes political groups out of the followers who are economically dependent on him. Some of them are also feel obligated as a result of past favours like government loans.

Case 9

Union Parishad election issue created two factions on para basis in Dublakuri (East Para and West Para) - one being led by Nurul Amin Lahu, an influential rich and another by Momtaj Ali Master, an educated elite. Since the election, conflict between two para began deepening. As a result of the conflict a deep tubewell could not function in its normal capacity as it irrigated only 2.5 acres of land instead of 80 acres. Recently a road has been sanctioned by the Circle Officer Development at Muktagacha. But it is found that this is also getting opposition owing to the factional conflict situation prevailing in the village.

Case 10

Factional politics developed around catching a small bird. Nabu Sarder of village Kumarghata is an influential wealthy peasant who owns about 40 acres of cultivable land. He is a sarder, another name of village leader. A sarder comes from strong gosti. Nabu therefore comes from such strong lineage which has respected social status and extensive economic influence in the village. Since a strong lineage leader he gets a wider respect for his decision and strong sanction at his command. He has attained sarder status beyond his para, even beyond his village. His patronage spreads his own village boundary. Many landless and marginal farmers depend on him in times of their crisis and are obliged to him when they obtain loans and other forms of assistance from him.

-: 246 :-

Nabu's brother-in-law Rashed Molla under the patronage of Akber Mullah, a rich peasant having 30 acres of land and hailing from another lineage leads a faction opposed to Nabu. Nabu's son aged 14 tried to catch a bird from a nest built on a tree in Rashed's house. Nabu's brother-in-law opposed it and there was an altercation which was finally reported to Nabu. The matter was taken up by both the faction leaders and their respective party came to a clash.

Akbar Mullah belonged to Awami League and Nabu to Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Both the party high commands at the sub-divisional level were at first informed. When the situation worsened as a result of the interference of the sub-divisional party bosses, the matter was referred to the national level. One of the ex-minister belonging to Bangladesh Nationalist Party finally took up the matter and had his rival party members Akbar Mullah and his followers arrested. This situation led to bitter quarrel between the factions involving patrons of the respective factions which lasted for two years. Access relationships to politicians, administration and the courts and a host of other methods were designed to ruin the opponent. After this incident it is reported that bickering starts over any development programmes undertaken in the area. Naturally, the programmes do not materialise.

The existence of factional division in the agrarian society of Bangladesh and the threat of 'selective' violence and intimidation are sufficient reasons for preventing the mobilization of the exploited section and strata in their own interest. This has long-run implication for the rural society in the development programmes. The basic 'gravitational' feature in the power structure of rural society tends to invariably infiltrate whatever institutions of rural development that are brought into the scene. Often this has the result of magnifying the power of a group of individuals e.g. when such a group gain control of a relief committee or a co-operative.

For the way to win prestige in the village is not by making immense money, but by enlarging one's follower group and keeping them happy by a distribution of privileges. Naturally, any government that needs to carry on development programme has to work through these faction leaders.

Bertocci in his thesis Elusive Village : Social Structure and Community Organization in Rural East Pakistan discusses factional conflict in rural Bangladesh. "This conflict groups coalesced around one or more leaders: The goals in such conflict are diffuse and may involve to a high degree such material intangibles as prestige."⁶⁶

66 P.J. Bertocci, Elusive Village : Social Structure and Community Organization in Rural East Pakistan, Michigan State University, Ph.D. thesis, 1970, p. 101.

-: 248 :-

Finally factional conflict takes place at the level of the revai, the village and the samaj and even at the national level involving all level organization at one time encompassing a wide area. Factional politics before independence of Bangladesh remained within local level, now it has gone even to national level. The case 10 shows the pattern of factional conflict giving rise to a bigger conflict involving higher levels of administration, even the national level. It resulted in a permanent conflict around common issue including development programmes.

CHAPTER 5

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF PRINCIPAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN BANGLADESH

I

A critical evaluation of the different principal programmes and policies undertaken in rural Bangladesh not only unfolds their failure and success, but also clarifies their meaning in the context of social framework of Bangladesh.

Comilla Programmes

The Comilla approach was developed in the face of inherent and inherited structural weakness and institutional inadequacies existing in Bangladesh. While outlining the problems of rural development, Colkins made meaningful observation about social system of rural East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) which has emerged eroded with unusual institutional fragmentation.

"The dominant fact of rural life seems to be its dispersed diffuse nature or to continue a theme, its atomization. Even geographically, high population density and deltaic flooding have produced a scattered, rather than clustered or uncleared settlement pattern in much of East Pakistan and a social system has emerged that corresponds to this scattered pattern."¹

1 Robert Stevens, "Stability and Change in Landholding and Revenue System in Bengal" in Robert Stevens, et al., edited Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan, 1976, p. 32.

Calkins makes further observation on institutions :

"The point is not that Eastern Bengal exists habitually in a state of anemie, but rather that it seems to exist in a state of unusual institutional fragmentation, that this is a population that appears inherently little organized on a large scale and lacking in extensive institutional foci of rural life."²

Calkins shows the diffused nature of rural institutions in Bangladesh as he maintains :

"Recent field investigators reinforce the view that rural social and political organization is segmented, diffuse and in flux. The atomization that seems to have occurred under the British colonial regime and the Permanent Settlement was enhanced even further by partition turmoil and the rather sudden removal of the Permanent Settlement in 1950 due to the Zamindari Abolition Act."³

It is in the context of institutional instability and its "atomization", the Comilla approach was developed. The approach given by the Academy for Rural Development at Comilla is the basis of present rural development policies in Bangladesh. In this approach co-operative has been considered as a major means to change the community life. But it has been always influenced by the conflicting rural elites in its activities. In this connection Faalad, et al. maintains :

"The uni-purpose co-operative existing for the provision of credit has not succeeded in Bangladesh. The strength of

2 Ibid., p. 36.

3 Ibid., p. 32.

Comilla approach depends on putting the co-operative in a dominant position. Its advocates feel that the co-operative should be at the centre of village activities, that it should be the supplier to agricultural inputs as well as the means how to regulate and organize production and assume responsibility for the purchase of consumer goods, in short, it should control so many of the typical village activities so as to submit most behaviour activity to the test of 'general will' and 'common purpose'. This aspect of rural development in Bangladesh has now reached an impasse, and it is unlikely to get going without a substantial reorganization of systems of local government and strong political leadership. There are signs of growing unrest in the villages and political forces at work resisting the traditional elite. With insecure government in the rural areas, development is bound to be held back and it will be difficult to build up institutions needed."⁴

The main reason for choosing the Comilla approach was that it was thought to be an effective and socially feasible way for an equitable growth. The idea was to bypass the large farmers and the rural elites and strengthen the economic position of the smaller farmers and landless poor. However, in practice, realization of this main objective soon faced difficulties. The fundamental weakness of the Comilla approach was that it left very small farmers and landless labourers out of its fold. Membership to Krishak Samabaya Samity (KSS) was restricted in practice to farmers operating at least

4 Just Faaland, J.R. Parkinson, Bangladesh the Test-Case for Development, 1976, p. 156.

half an acre of arable land. This meant that at least 42% of the rural households in the area were excluded from the KSS. Landless labourers and small peasants being thus excluded, the co-operatives became 'closed club' of rich farmer elites instead of becoming the trade union of small farmers. The advantages associated with member to KSS, credit societies and TIP groups attracted medium and large farmers and in course of time they captured the key management positions of these institutions. Among the large number of studies documenting this process, a few may be mentioned here.

A study of 32 managers of primary societies⁵ showed that 17 of them held land between 5-9 acres, eight between 3-5 acres and only seven between 1-3 acres. The average size of land for these 32 KSS managers was 5.06 acres as against the average size of 1.86 acres of the whole of Comilla thana. Another study⁶ of four successive managing committees of the Agricultural Co-operative Federation (ACF) of the Comilla thana TCCA showed that persons who were not full time farmers by occupation were increasingly getting into managing committees.

Although the small farmers did increase their production, they were grossly underrepresented among the co-operative members. Thus while 41 per cent of the Kotwali agricultural population had below 0.8 acres of land, only 14 per cent of the farmers who had joined the co-operatives belonged, in

5 M.A. Mannan, Rural Leadership and its Emerging Pattern in Bangladesh, 1972, p. 6.

6 A. Badruddin, Who Decides? Role of Managing Committee in A.F.C., BARD, Comilla, July 1978.

the early 1970's to this category. The landless or near landless were in actual practice excluded from the co-operative since they could not obtain any credit, for which land had to be mortgaged as a collateral. The introduction of new technology by Comilla approach in our unreformed agrarian structure resulted in an unequitable distribution of benefits. The dominant group of farm household (usually landholding elites) who have sufficient resources and monopolise the services provided by various government supported programmes took advantage of the new situation more than the smaller ones. The result was an increase in the reinvestment of surplus by the richer elite section of the peasantry who remained at the top in the social hierarchy of rural Bangladesh.

The Comilla co-operative system build laboriously over many years of effort has been no more successful than many other development schemes in solving the problem of the landless. The table below shows that landpoor and landless were unable to benefit from joining co-operative societies organized along Comilla lines.

Table 5.1. Distribution of Total Population and Co-operative Members by Farm Size

Farm size (in acres)	% of total rural population	% of co-operative members	% of rural population who are co- operative members
Nil	15.3	2	5
01-1	30.5	12	15
1.01-2	24.2	43	68
2.01-3	14.4	18	47
3.01-5	10.6	16	56
Over 5	5.0	8	60

Source: Characteristics of the Members of Comilla Co-Operatives, Survey Research Bulletin, No. 10, Comilla.

Only 2 per cent of landless people became co-operative members and 12 per cent having farm size 0.1-1 acre were included in the co-operative. Several reasons may explain why the landless and near landless families did not belong to the co-operatives. First, Comilla co-operative societies required that members make regular cash and kind savings deposits which many families with low incomes would find difficult to do. Second, the loan policy of the co-operative generally excluded persons with less than one acre from taking its loans and thus, the small holders and low income families could not easily benefit from the co-operative membership. Surplus farmers emerged as dominant figures in the village economy. This group of farmers under the conditions of "traditional" agriculture in a monsoon climate invest the grain surplus in economically and politically profitable activities. It has created a condition of dependence of small farmers and landless on the members of these dominant rural elites.

In many cases, the surplus of the rich farmers was used either for purchase of land or for floating loans in the credit market where returns were high.

The socio-economic conditions of the landholding elites seem to have increased by the Comilla co-operatives. Atiqur Rahman observes in this connection :

"The Comilla experience shows that despite considerable care, the benefits of the new technology mostly accrue to large farmers. Although this is not yet well-documented,

there are unmistakable signs that incomes of the richer sections of the peasantry have increased considerably while that of the small farmers and landless labourers have virtually remained stagnant or even deteriorated."⁷

Rahman further observes :

"The TIP groups also came to be dominated by large farmers. Irrigation water is essential for the adoption of HYVs and by 1968/69, a large number of studies established that the TIP members were usually from the upper strata of the rural society."⁸

Apart from the control of the KSS and the TIPs, cheap institutional sources of finance were virtually monopolised by large landholding elites. They were often found to obtain a disproportionately larger amount of credit.

Most of the Comilla co-operative activities were channelled through the more rich farmers. So the co-operatives were the domains of the "surplus farmers", because political and social leadership in the villages centres on the dominant "surplus farmers", who form the elite in rural Bangladesh. Rivalry has long been a feature of the relations between the dominant groups of rural elite who come into conflict very often for their supremacy.

In explaining the deteriorating financial position of the co-operatives Atiqur Rahman maintains :

"One of the important reasons for the deteriorating financial position of the co-operatives is the default by KSS members, especially the larger ones. One of the

7 Atiqur Rahman, New Technology: Institutions and the Prospects of Capitalist Farming in Bangladesh Agriculture, a paper adopted from authors Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Cambridge in 1979, pp. 57-58.

8 Ibid., p. 49.

reasons for non-payment of the loans was that the loans were not used for increasing productive capacity of farmers. A large part of the credit went either to finance non-productive forms of investment or for luxury consumption."⁹

The Comilla co-operative became increasingly dependent on outside resources. In the 1960's there was the huge inflow of foreign and domestic material and human resources into the project area. Indeed, the "basis of the programme was a massive concentration, by Bangladesh standards, of modern inputs (e.g. pumps, tubewells, tractors, improved seed, fertilizer, pesticides, and training) which were heavily subsidized."¹⁰ In the words of H.W. Blair "massive and seemingly unremovable subsidies have been at the very heart of the Comilla programmes, and after the first few years have become more and more a drain rather than a channel for agricultural development in Bangladesh."¹¹ It has been therefore questioned whether the progress made in Comilla actually had much to do with the co-operatives at all.

9 Ibid., pp. 56-57.

10 A.R. Khan, The Comilla Model and the IRDP of Bangladesh, An Experiment in Co-operative Capitalism, Draft (ILO), Geneva, June 1978, mimeo, p. 4.

11 H.W. Blair, The Elusiveness of Equity : Institutional Approaches to Rural Development in Bangladesh, 1974, p. 25, and 27.

The shortcomings of original Comilla model of rural development has been conserved. It could not bring benefits to landless as expected. There was poor mobilization of internal savings and the administrative attention and uncorrupted guidance that had characterized Comilla experiences deteriorated as the programme expanded. Blair observes the rise and fall of the Comilla model and takeover of the co-operatives by the rural elites.

"Supervisory capacity fell off markedly in the late 1960's, at precisely the time of the programmes' most rapid growth and, indeed, largely because of that growth....Worst of all, in terms of the long-term implications, the inspection cadre became corrupted. The inspectors are the key figures in the Comilla programme, and the seepage of venality into their ranks has had a severe impact on the whole experiment....Many of the inspectors, especially in the growth period of the late 1960's when there was in effect an emergency recruitment of personnel to administer the growing programme, were themselves big borrowers from the primary societies that they had been managing. When they became inspectors they were in a position to cover up their own loan defaults....Partly because of this subversion of the inspectors and partly, perhaps, because of the administrative impossibility of keeping close watch on more than 300 primary societies, another perversion set in, that of takeover of the co-operatives by local elites."¹²

12 Ibid., p. 25.

By the early 1970's, the Comilla co-operatives had ceased to represent the small farmers' interest. The management of the co-operatives was increasingly taken over by the farmers who were large. Some of the traditional rural elites, who initially had stayed out of the co-operatives, also began joining the movement, but the group that was most successful appears to have been the category of modern, profit-oriented farmers-cum-businessmen.¹³ A study of the Managing Committee of the Federation of Co-operatives of Kotwali thana (ACF) thus concludes that ".....the Managing Committee of ACF is attracting more and more educated, young and rich persons who have membership of other local councils and have some non-farm occupations in addition to farming."¹⁴ The study observed that "gradually, the percentage of persons having farming as their only occupation began to decrease. A new occupational group known as contractors (who had also their own agricultural farm) began to join the federation in increased number."¹⁵ In the last Managing Committee that was studied, only two out of twelve managers had agriculture as their only occupation. Landownership was significantly larger than the average of co-operative members and with respect to the privileges enjoyed by the Managing Committee members, it was concluded that these co-operative leaders had "....demonstrated their tendency to issue more loans, allot more tubewells, borrow more from its financing bank and to get their own men appointed in the federation."¹⁶

13 See, for example, the BARD studies by Pijush Kanti Chowdhury (1976), Ali Akhter Khan (1971), Badruddin Ahmed (1972 a and b) or Md. Solaiman (1978).

14 Badruddin Ahmed, Who Decides? Role by Managing Committee in AFC, 1972, p. 32.

15 Ibid., p. 16.

16 Ibid., p. 32.

The situation was such in the birth place of the Comilla model. Studies from other areas to which we will return soon, corroborate the conclusion that the management of the co-operatives is dominated by the better-off and powerful rural elites and that the benefits of the co-operatives have become concentrated in the pockets of the few and powerful.

The capture of the co-operatives by the local elites was facilitated by an administrative reform concerning the appointment procedures of the Managing Committees of the TCCAs.¹⁷ According to this reform carried out in 1972 and announced as a step towards a decentralization and democratization of the co-operatives, all twelve members of the Managing Committee were to be elected locally, by the primary co-operative members; in the original Comilla model, between one-third and one-half of the members were thana officers or agricultural experts who were appointed "from above". This apparently very democratic reform carried out in 1972 made supervision of the co-operatives largely illusory, and the surplus farmers, who had come to dominate the primary co-operatives, could now more easily become the undisputed leaders of the TCCAs as well. The reform thus upset, in the words of Lindquist, the "delicate balance in Akhter Hameed's model" and its effects serve to illustrate once again that the issue of centralization versus decentralization is, indeed, a delicate one.

17 This paragraph is largely based on A.C. Lindquist, Co-operative, Rural Development and the State : A Bangladesh Case Study, thesis, University of Sussex, 1978. The consequences of this reform are discussed in the thesis.

With respect to savings, the low rate of growth of deposits, and the deterioration in the co-operative member's repayment discipline made the entire co-operative structure resemble "a leaking bucket rather than a vehicle" for the mobilization of local savings. Instead of becoming self-sufficient, the credit system became totally dependent on larger and larger injections of state funds to cover the deficits. By 1970/71, the accumulated amount of overdue loans in the co-operatives of Kotwali thana reached taka 6 million, or more than three times the loans issued that year, and two and a half times the accumulated value of savings and share capital in the co-operatives. The number of co-operative members getting loans declined drastically (see Table 5.2), in part as a consequence of the financial crisis that affected virtually all primary societies and TCCAs during the early 1970's in part because of the takeover of the co-operatives by a united number of surplus farmers.

Table 5.2. Pattern of Loans in Agricultural Co-operatives Societies, Kotwali thana, Comilla, 1965-72

Year	Total loan issued (thousand taka)	Number of loanees	% of all members getting loans	Average size of loans (taka)
1965-66	7,896	4,400	85.3	181
1966-67	1,671	7,048	83.3	237
1967-68	4,244	7,171	62.3	592
1968-69	2,930	7,947	68.1	369
1969-70	1,713	3,798	34.1	451
1970-71	1,554	3,764	33.4	413
1971-72	455	1,131	9.6	402
1972-73	563	1,395	10.4	404
1973-74	687	1,645	12.0	418

Source : H.W. Blair, Rural Development, Class Structure and Bureaucracy in Bangladesh. In World Development 1/1978, p. 68.

The co-operatives' own savings represented a tiny fraction of the resources that were poured into the project area. In the mid-seventies, the annual average accumulation of savings in the Comilla co-operatives was less than taka 11 per member, i.e. about one-tenth of one per cent of the annual income per member household.¹⁸ The average size of loans, on the other hand, increased from about Taka 200 in the mid-sixties to over 400 ten years later (Table 5.2).

Returning to the problem of overdue loans, Akhter Hameed Khan himself was very well aware of the dangers :

"The problem of wilful and mischievous defaulters is specially alarming. Historically the old co-operative system was captured by influential people and they castrated it by wilful default. The same sort of people want to perform the same operation on the modern co-operative system. They are powerful and well informed. They know that the old sanctions (certificates, notices, pressure by officers) are now dead, and they can repudiate them with impunity. If the new co-operatives are to be saved from mischievous defaulters, the other members, the majority of the small farmers, for whom co-operative credit is the only means to escape from the clutches of the money lender-traders, must create new sanctions."¹⁹

18 A.R. Khan, op. cit., p. 40. .

19 Ibid., p. 18.

Khan's apprehensions were well grounded, but new, effective sanctions have still not been created. The biggest defaulters are not the co-operative leaders themselves. According to one study²⁰ the members of the Managing Committee of 30 primary societies in the Comilla district that were analyzed had an average amount of Tk. 1,354 in overdue loans, while the corresponding average figure for the ordinary member was taka 93. A large proportion (52 per cent) of the defaulters were the members of the Managing Committees of the primary societies, while 79 per cent of these defaulting Managing Committee members were directors and office bearers of the Managing Committees.²¹ It was also observed that since the Managing Committee members belonging to rural elite themselves are the worst defaulters, their effectiveness in realizing overdue loans from the ordinary members was very low. After ten years of operation, the discipline and supervision that had characterized the experiment initially had almost disappeared.

When Akhter Hameed Khan returned to Comilla in 1977, he was quite satisfied by the progress made in irrigation and in the rapid spread of the cultivation of HYVs. "However", he added,

"the progress may be precarious because its institutional foundations are crumbling. For several years thana and union councils have been dormant and rural works have

20 Ali Akhter Khan, Rural Credit Programme of Agricultural Co-operative Federation, 1971.

21 For similar evidence and conclusions, see example GOB/ Planning Commission, 1974 (b), p.56; M. Solaiman, 1978, pp. 31-32; and BARD 1977 (b), pp. 44-87.

been neglected. If further neglected, the infrastructure of roads, drainage, embankments, and irrigation, built over a decade with immense investment, may break down. Once again flooding and drought may prevail. Although the co-operatives are still active, the system is showing signs of decay. Loans and savings have shrunk dangerously. Prospects of self-supporting co-operative banking, marketing and processing are fading away. Weekly training conferences at the Center, and weekly group discussion meetings in the villages, which were mainsprings of the co-operative movement, are now irregular or perfunctory. Unless local government, rural works and co-operatives regain their vigor, I fear that flood and drought, diminishing capital and stagnant skills may cause a regression".²²

The failure of the experiment became gradually clear from the point of view of equity as well. Thus, while the co-operatives had been set up primarily for the protection of the small and medium farmers against the large owners and the moneylenders, the latter groups soon took over the lead of the movement. "The whole exercise", concludes one analyst,

"constitutes a lesson in the futility of such 'co-operation' in a situation of inequality. The programme accepted the unequal distribution of land as an initial condition and hoped to work around the big farmers not by arranging that they 'should be excluded from the new co-operatives', but by hoping that they would 'not be allowed to dominate'. The lesson of the Comilla, if there was any need to learn it, was that it is impossible to prevent them from dominating if they are allowed in. In fact, it would be impossible to prevent them from dominating if they are allowed to exist".²³

22 Akhter Hameed Khan, Comilla Revisited, 1977, mimeo, p.8.

23 A.R. Khan, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

-: 264 :-

In another study, the similar conclusion about Comilla is drawn in the following way :

"The motivation to which this experiment addressed itself was primarily that of individual gain and not of social development of which individual gain could be a part. This turned the institutions essentially into forums for competition rather than co-operation, although co-operation was the slogan and 'co-operatives' were the vehicle to prosperity. Thus the villagers competed, in the institutions, provided by the Comilla Experiment, for scarce material inputs, credit, extension service, training, marketing and managerial power, and for personal channels to managerial and administrative powers. Being a competition between unequals, the inevitable happened, and the distribution of net benefits of the projects tended, after an initial period of learning the rules of the game, to become more and more skewed."²⁴

The Comilla Model Replicated

In 1970-71, the Comilla co-operative model began to be replicated all over the country under the name of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The war of liberation put a temporary halt to the expansion, but after independence, the programme has expanded rapidly. Some quantitative indicators of its growth since 1971 are given in Table 5.3 below :

24 Wahidul Haque, et al., Development Dialogue, 1972:2, p. 28.

-: 265 :-

Table 5.3. Growth of IRDP 1971-72 - 1977-78

Year	Thanas covered (cumulative frequency)	Number of primary Societies (K.S)	Number of individual members
1971-72	33	n.d.	n.d.
1972-73	87	10,180	261,193
1973-74	152	14,690	387,290
1974-75	161	17,690	480,474
1975-76	162	18,980	525,640
1976-77	200	21,870	649,088
1977-78	250	25,777	708,000

In September, 1977, the situation with respect to capital and credit remained as follows :

<u>Capital formation :</u>	<u>Cumulative achievements :</u>
Saving Deposits (million Tk.)	25.5
Share Deposits ,, ,,	18.1
<u>Credit Operations :</u>	
Loan Issued ,, ,,	33.2
Overdue Loans ,, ,,	45.9

Source : Data above are based on IRDP, Basic Information on IRDP and RD-1, Dacca, 1977 and Planning Commission, Two-Year Plan, 1977-80.

The above figures speak about the results of expansion of the IRDP. A few observations should, however, be made in order to assess the relative importance of the programme in quantitative terms.

-: 266 :-

It should, to begin with, be observed that the share of the total agricultural population that has been enrolled to date as members of the co-operatives remains quite small. After many years of expansion of the Comilla type of co-operatives, the number of members is still only around 700,000, a figure which approximately corresponds to the annual increase in the rural labour force. The apparently respectable rate of incorporation of new members represent, in fact, only a very small fraction of the number of new rural households each year. To this we should add that the official enrolment figures are grossly inflated; many primary societies exist only on paper, and many registered members have never attended a co-operative meeting or made a deposit. The percentage of inactive societies and members is not known, but it is generally assumed to be quite high.

Turning to the IRDP's performance in terms of capital formation, we observe that the sum total of savings and share deposits amounts to Tk. 43.6 million, or slightly less than the value of overdue loans. The cumulative credit granted has been in the range of Tk. 300 million, or around seven times the value of the co-operatives' own capital formation. On a per member basis, the credit issued represents around Tk. 400 per co-operative household. Considering the scarcity of institutional credit in rural Bangladesh, the IRDP loanees must be considered a quite privileged minority, although the

rapid spread of the co-operatives to over 200 thanas has signified a rather than spread of resources in comparison with the massive injections of funds into Kotwali thana in the 1960's.

In addition to the normal Comilla KSS type of co-operatives, the IRDP has launched separate co-operative programme for women and for landless. By 1977, approximately 300 co-operatives for rural women and 150 for landless labourers had been formed. These co-operatives have never received much attention or resources however, and they are generally regarded as failures.²⁵

IRDP - An Evaluation

It is early to make an evaluation of the impact of the still expanding IRDP in the same way as the Comilla experiment in Kotwali thana could be analyzed. The main components of the programmes - the two-tier co-operative structure, the emphasis on credit, subsidized inputs and a rapid dissemination of the HYV version is more diluted and lacks the close links with the Irrigation and Rural Works Programmes that the early Comilla model used to have. It is, for this reason, not quite justified to talk about "integrated" rural development in connection with the IRDP, which should rather be seen as a non-integrated attempt to create a co-operative structure capable of distribution of subsidized credit and inputs among the co-operative members.

25 M.A. Hamid, Rural Development : What, For Whom and How ? Paper presented at the Third Annual Conference of Bangladesh Economic Association, June, 1977, mimeo and Bangladesh Times, 16/1 and 25/9, 1978.

The similarities between the Comilla and the IRDP approaches are, however, bigger than the differences, and the basic co-operative structures are virtually identical. The conclusions drawn earlier about the Comilla co-operatives should therefore largely be relevant for the IRDP as well, and this hypothesis is also supported by the few field studies that have been made to date in areas where the IRDP has been working for some time.

There also exist a number of rather comprehensive overviews of the IRDP. The evaluations made by the Planning Commission of Bangladesh in 1974 and by Professor Hamid et al. on Natore and Gaibandha Projects should, in particular, be mentioned in this context. Lindquist²⁶ and Jahangir²⁷ also contain many useful observations and insights. Small research reports, newspaper articles, statements by researchers and government officials and IRDP's own documentation and analyses - where almost all aspects of the programme's quantitative achievements can be found - also add to the growing body of knowledge about the functioning, or malfunctioning, of the IRDP co-operatives to date. It will be sufficient to present some of the most important conclusions that have been drawn in the evaluations hitherto made.

26 A.C. Lindquist, Co-operatives, Rural Development and the State : A Bangladesh Case Study, Thesis, University of Sussex, May 1978, mimeo, p. 11.

27 B.K. Jahangir, Differentiation, Polarization and Confrontation in Rural Bangladesh, Ph.D thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Durham, 1976, mimeo, p. 7.

Before proceeding to this discussion, an important implication of the quantitative difference between the Comilla experiment in Comilla and the IRDP should, however, be observed. The former operated in one District only, whereas the IRDP covers over half of all rural thanas in the country. Within the District of Comilla, insufficient demand for grain never became a serious problem; the output of rice could, as we have seen, more than double in ten years. If, lack of effective demand is the perhaps most important long-term obstacle to agricultural growth in the country as a whole, then a new dimension is added to the problems of replicating the Comilla experiment all over Bangladesh. In practice, the whole IRDP approach towards agricultural development is today based on the assumption that all problems originate from the supply side, while a recognition of the key role played by demand makes it imperative to abandon the excessive emphasis on production and instead concentrate on the income distribution and employment creation objectives.

Organizational Problems

The rapid growth of the IRDP put, as indicated earlier, severe strains on the administrative and supervisory capacity of the organization at all levels. Despite A.H. Khan's warnings from 1971 - "It must be realized that the pace of co-operative organization must never be forced: that is the road to disaster."²⁸ The expansion of IRDP, as measured by district

28 A.C. Lindquist, op. cit., p. 10.

-: 270 :-

and thana coverage, become a goal in itself. The result was, among other things, that the quality of the institutions that were created did not improve.

Lack of qualified staff and lack of co-operation between IRDP and other ministries and departments weakened the pace of rural development and brought about other problems that have been affecting the young organization. There appears to be a high degree of inter-departmental competition in the implementation of the rural development programmes. In recent years a new problem has arisen, namely the Bangladesh Government's emphasis on the "Swanirvar", or self-reliance movement, the relations between the protagonists of this movement and the IRDP officials are somewhat strained, and a sense of insecurity about the government's official policy has become widespread within the different institutions for rural development.

At the village level, the existence of a network of different co-operative structures has created much confusion, as well as rivalry and conflict between different co-operative leaders. It has thus proved impossible to establish a uniform co-operative structure of the two-tier of Comilla type, which now co-exists with the traditional Multipurpose Co-operative Societies (which have existed for decades in Bangladesh), and with the pump group co-operatives, which were originally designed to be an integral part of the Comilla model but which have made themselves quite independent of IRDP.

Sometimes co-operation has also been difficult to achieve between competing factions of kinship groups in the same village, with the result that often there is no KSS at all, or else two competing primary societies are established.

Within the co-operatives, the members' activities tend to be very low. Weekly meetings are seldom held, and often only the managers attend the co-operative meetings. There are many individual exceptions, of course, and quite a few primary societies work in accordance with the intentions, but the general picture that emerges is one of insufficient participation and mobilization. Capital accumulation within the IRDP co-operatives is not low, but strongly negative. The co-operatives have, in short, failed to develop into instruments for the mobilization of the farmer's initiatives, thrift and innovative spirit.

The main reason for this sad state of affairs is not, however, the organizational and other problems referred to in the preceding paragraphs. The fundamental weakness is rather that the co-operatives, as they work today, are institutions for competition rather than for co-operation and for the enrichment of the few and powerful elites instead of for the protection of the poor.

"Closed Clubs of Kulaks"

The fact that land is the only valid security for credit makes the co-operatives rather useless for the landless labourers and sharecroppers. According to most observers,

even the small farmers have been left out in most of the IRDP co-operatives, and the entire structure seems to have become dominated by, in the words of Planning Commission, "the rural elite....in conspiracy with the urban elite".²⁹ A few quotations which speak for themselves will serve to substantiate this conclusion :

"In the main body of the report, we have shown that the co-operative societies have turned into closed clubs of Kulaks.....Membership is dominated by large and medium farmers and the small farmers are grossly under-represented. Leadership in the societies is also dominated by large farmers; medium farmers have some representation, but the small farmers are entirely underrepresented in the leadership. These leaders enjoy a greater share of benefits but their participation, as measured by contribution of share capital and savings, is relatively low. The leaders mostly fail to uphold the basic discipline of co-operative action.....The co-operative societies are mostly imposed from the top. The spirit of co-operation for economic development is far from engendered. They are kept alive through continued injection of grants and aid. At the level of the village society, the aid comes in the form of highly subsidized inputs. The TCCAs receive outright grants."³⁰

"Thus if all goes as planned under the IRDP programme, the rural scene in Bangladesh may present an intriguing appearance by 1980. We shall have on the one hand a large number of landless families - perhaps more than forty per cent of the population. The explosive potential

29 Planning Commission of Government of Bangladesh, 1974, p. 4.

30 Ibid., p. 4 and p. 11.

-: 273 :-

will be still dampened down by kinship and factional linkages, although these bonds will be coming under increasingly severe strain under the impact of labour migration and machines. Of the remaining 60 per cent about one third will probably be organised in primary village societies under the IRDP. Some of the benefits to intensive agriculture will definitely get passed to the really large landowners - they have flocked to the co-operatives in significant numbers.....Certainly the conflict between the 'feudal' landowners: they have pucca houses, private tubewells for drinking water, and walled-in family graveyards. By this time probably they are also the chairmen and members of union parishads and other organs of local governments. They have also branched out into trade and commerce, and perhaps even modest industrial ventures. The co-operatives are probably no longer pure village societies. Horizons have expanded and the elites of the different villages have started communicating, discussing common affairs, discovering identities of views and interests - becoming, in fact, a class at the national level. They are the rising capitalists who have skipped the stage of free competition."³¹

"The study demonstrates that in Natore and Gaibandha about 30 per cent co-operative farmers fall under the category of big farmers (having more than five acres of cultivable land of their own), almost all the executive committee members are surplus farmers; the average per capita loan taken by a Managing Committee member of the TCCA on the average is much higher (Tk. 248/-), and so on. Therefore, the benefits of the IRDP co-operatives,

31 A. Abdullah, R. Nations, Agrarian Development and IRDP in Bangladesh, BIDS, Dacca, 1974, mimeo, pp. 29-30.

if there be any, have largely gone into the pockets of the big farmers.....The biggest tragedy of the IRDP is that with the banner of 'integrated' approach it has although been following a purely 'non-integrated' approach to rural development."³²

"It will have become evident by now that the Directors of the Dalalpur Thana Central Co-operative Association are, into the context of Bangladesh, large landowners, falling in the top 10 per cent of landholders. However, they are not, for the most part, farmers themselves, and have non-agricultural occupations and income. As I have shown most of them are in the process of acquiring business interests of one kind or another.....The co-operatives are not simply being taken over by the local rich, but are being used as a vehicle for getting started or helping oneself move upward; as a means of capital accumulation. Some of the Directors (.....) come from old business families, but even these are not stable but are rather involved in a dynamic process of expansion, e.g. from petty trader to small merchant to large fertilizer dealer plus owner and operator of a tractor. But others of the Directors are moving up directly from rich peasant families and becoming small businessmen (in, for instance, medicine, cloth, or fertilizer), using the TCCA to help them consolidate..... Thus, given the social and economic character of the elites who have taken over the co-operative organisation at the thana level in Dalalpur and the way they are operating it in their own interest, it is hard to see how any 'aid' channelled through such leaders will ever really benefit the poor peasantry and middle peasants

32 M.A. Homid, Rural Development : What, For Whom and How ? Paper presented at the Third Annual Conference of Bangladesh Economic Association, June 1977, mimeo, p. 2.

who make up the overwhelming majority of the population of Bangladesh. More importantly, it is difficult to see how a 'co-operative' organisation with such leaders in control can ever express the needs or serve the interest of this majority."³³

"By definition, a neutral co-operative cannot be expected to work within a non-neutral power structure except in a non-neutral way. If this premise is accepted (as seems proved by the Bangladesh experience), the one alternative would be: to change the power structure so that it becomes neutral so as to match the neutral co-operatives. It is not a coincidence that in all cases where co-operatives have really worked in Asia and the Far East, they have been preceded by land reform. The only other alternative would be to make the co-operatives non-neutral, so as to match the non-neutral power structure. If the assumption is that there is to be no land reform, this would be the only way to get the small 'farmers' co-operatives to meet their own needs."³⁴

"Crash Programmes"

The disappointing performance of agricultural production which the IRDP co-operatives seem to have done very little to improve, and the failure of the co-operatives to meet their broader social and institutional objectives, have given rise to much debate and self-criticism within the Bangladesh administration. One school of thought has argued that the present co-operative structure is not viable at all, and should be replaced by the ideas and institutions represented by the

33 A.C. Lindquist, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

34 Agricultural Mission, 1977, Selected Policy Issues, p. 57.

so-called 'Swanirvar', or self-reliance movement. Others emphasize the distributional defects of the IRDP system while still believing in the basic co-operatives for small farmers and for landless labourers. In this way, the big farmers would not be allowed to dominate any other co-operatives than their own, while larger resources could be diverted to support the co-operative controlled by the small farmers and by the landless themselves.

In recent years, several "crash programmes" aiming at strengthening the existing IRDP structure have also been launched as a solution to the problems of rural poverty and stagnation. The main objective of these programmes is to intensify the present pattern of "green revolution" oriented strategy for rural development through massive injections of resources into selected pilot areas. The philosophy behind such concentrated efforts resembles somewhat the old "take-off" theories of economic growth; once a certain level of savings, investment and growth has been achieved, the country - or, in this case, the co-operative farmers - would be able to break all "vicious circles" and be ready for a period of stable, self-sustained growth.

The best known of, and indeed the model for, these programmes is the so-called Rural Development 1 (RD 1) Project, elaborated and financed by the World Bank in co-operation with the Government of Bangladesh. The RD 1, which was started in 1976, covers seven thanas in the District of Mymensingh

and Bogra and is intended to benefit a rural population of some 1.7 million people at a cost of around 25 million U.S. dollars in five years, of which the World Bank is expected to finance about two-thirds and the Bangladesh Government the rest. The project's economic rate of return is estimated by the Bank to be over 40 per cent. RD 1 is to be followed by an RD 2 project aiming at integrating 29 more thanas into a similar intensive programme.

According to the World Bank's project description, the aim of the project can be summarized as follows :

"The project would strengthen a number of production oriented ongoing rural programmes in the project thanas. To ensure that the benefits reach the smaller farmers, physical inputs and rural credit provided under the project would be channelled through the Comilla type of co-operatives (TCCA-KSSs). A major effort would be made to improve the operation and management of these co-operatives. Technical services to the co-operative members would be strengthened. The project would comprise rural works; minor irrigation facilities; thana facilities; and rural credit. The project would also aim at strengthening of rural institutions and services and would include technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation."³⁵

A similar project, financed by the Asian Development Bank, has recently been initiated in four thanas in Serajganj. The Danish Government has, through its development agency DANIDA, decided to support another intensive project

in three thanas in Noakhali, while the Dutch Government finances a similar - although appreciably less intensive - programme for integrated rural development in four thanas in Kushtia.

There are, of course, many differences in the organizational and institutional set-up of these four different programmes. The most pronounced difference is between the Dutch-financed programme and the other three. The Dutch, who also operate through the IRDP structure, have thus decided to give the project a clear-cut target group approach and designed the project exclusively for small farmers owning less than 2.5 acres each. Surplus farmers above this size are thus excluded as beneficiaries of all the services of the project, which is also markedly "softer" in character than the others.

The Danish project attempts to overcome the negative distributional effects of the existing IRDP structure with the help of a relatively large technical assistance from Danish experts supervising the implementation of the project. The World Bank and the ADB, finally, mainly emphasize a comprehensive, integrated approach with much attention paid to rural works and irrigation. Another emphasis is on administrative measures: strict loan procedures, improved supervision of the distribution of inputs, and organizational reforms, all intended to overcome the admittedly serious weaknesses of the IRDP co-operatives.

-: 279 :-

The quantitative aspects of these four programmes are briefly summarized in Table 5.4 below :

Table 5.4. Some Quantitative Indicators of four "Intensive" Programmes for Rural Development in Bangladesh

Foreign sponsor	No. of thanas covered	No. of acres covered	Total population of project area	Project period (years)
World Bank	7	612 000	1 700 000	5
ADB	4	202 000	905 000	4
DANIDA	3	224 000	725 000	5
Holland	4	320 000	670 000	3

Project Cost (million Tk. and \$)

	Total (Taka)	Foreign Exchange Component (FEC) (US \$)	FEC in % of total cost	Capita in project area	Acre of cropped land in project area
World Bank	370.5	7.7	31.2%	44	121
ADB	675.0	13.8	30.1%	149	668
DANIDA	222.0	5.5	37.2%	77	198
Holland	19.1	0.3	23.1%	10	20

Source : Project Descriptions

Note : To convert taka into U.S. dollar, a rate of exchange of taka 16 per dollar has been used

-: 280 :-

All four projects, except that financed by the Dutch, are, as seen above, quite expensive by Bangladesh standards. It should also be observed that the costs of subsidized fertilizer and similar heavy items are not included in the project costs but are instead shown under the ordinary development budget for agriculture.

The ADB project is, in particular, very costly, both on a per capita and on a per acre basis. It represents a per acre outlay which, if extended to cover all Bangladesh's 22.5 million cultivated acres, would cost over taka 15 000 000 000, i.e. almost five times the present combined development budgets for agriculture, rural institutions and flood and water control. And to this should be added all costs for subsidized inputs. The replication of such a project to a significant part of the country will, needless to say, be financially impossible in the foreseeable future.

After only about two years of operation it is still too early to make a reliable evaluation of the impact of these different programmes on agricultural production and employment. The World Bank's own, preliminary evaluation, dated December 1977, of the RD 1 project indicates, however, that progress so far has been exceedingly small. The Bank thus notes that "the production situation within the RD 1 thanas is no different from that in the non-RD 1 thanas participating in the IRDP program". With respect to the goal of strengthening the co-operatives, the Bank recognizes that the project has

not advanced at all: "Indeed, there are some indications that, in terms of growth in TCCA/KSS membership, loaning, and credit recovery, the performance of RD 1 thanas is less satisfactory than the average for other non-RD 1 thanas." When discussing the reasons for the "failure of RD 1 to take off", the Bank observes the lack of co-ordination between various ministries and departments, the ineffective supervision of the project and "basic deficiencies in the TCCA/KSS system". The somewhat surprising conclusion drawn by the Bank is that, in spite of all the failures registered to date in all important respects, "the basic concepts of the RD 1 project remain sound". As a consequence of the unexpected difficulties that have arisen, the so-called RD 2 project has, however, been postponed.

We have, previously seen how the Comilla co-operative system has developed in three different steps. We first looked at its initial, truly integrated version as implemented in Kotwali thana, where equal emphasis was put on the gradual development of human skills, infrastructural investment and modern techniques of production and of the creation of viable institutions. The early success of the experiment was remarkable, but the basic deficiencies of the system - in particular the peripheral position of the landless and near landless and the competition for individual gain rather than co-operation for social benefit that were built into the model - were clearly visible already at this stage.

In a second phase, the Comilla co-operative structure was spread to the whole Comilla District and, later, to over 200 thanas all over the country through IRDP. During this expansion, the basic defects of the model became increasingly clear, while the virtues - such as the integrated approach and the "combination of control from above and participation from below" - were somehow lost. In the last few years, attempts have been made to rescue the IRDP co-operative structure, which in many areas finds itself in a situation of disarray and confusion, symbolized by deteriorating rates of participation, poor discipline and outright corruption, through foreign-supported "intensive rural development projects". In terms of concentration of resources, these latter programmes resemble the huge investments made in Kotwali thana in the 1960's, but it would be wrong to infer from this that one is today back where one started. The differences between the Comilla Academy's carefully planned and slowly implemented Kotwali experiment and the production-oriented injections of funds into the "intensive" project areas of the RD 1-type are, as we have seen considerable, and we need only recall Akhter Hameed Khan's general assessment of the value of "crash programmes" cited earlier to realize where the thrust of the differences lies.

If we analyze the Comilla model, and its successive modifications through IRDP and RD 1 against the background of Bangladesh's development problems, we are forced to draw

the conclusion that the co-operatives have failed, and are likely to continue to fail, to serve as effective instruments in the struggle against poverty, landlessness, inequality and unemployment.

The co-operatives, these "closed clubs of kulaks", as the Planning Commission has labelled them, today work almost exclusively for the benefit of a small minority of the peasantry and, certainly, in favour of some urban-based interests as well. The landless or near landless, the majority of the population, are not participating at all, and the total officially registered membership of all the IRDP co-operatives is today hardly superior to the annual increase in the rural labour force.

Instead of having converted themselves into self-reliant, self-sufficient vehicles for the accumulation of local savings for productive investments, the co-operatives have turned into leaking buckets which each year demand more and more resources from the state (and from foreign donors). The integration of many different aspects of rural development, which was the cornerstone of the early Comilla model, has today little meaning for the majority of the IRDP co-operatives, and the only successful integration that the IRDP appears to have achieved is the accelerated integration between the rural and the urban elites.

The emphasis in the new IRDP approach, especially in the "intensive programmes", is on increased production through the provision of cheap credit and subsidized "green revolution" inputs to individual farmers competing for scarce resources. It is, in short, a production-oriented and individual-oriented strategy which makes it legitimate to ask whether "competitive societies" would not be a more accurate term than "co-operatives".

The total amount of development expenditures in Bangladesh going to agricultural development is, as emphasized repeatedly earlier, far too low if assessed against the background of the country's huge rural development problems. Despite a couple of comparatively good years with political stability and favourable monsoons and massive foreign assistance, the underlying trends towards increasing landlessness, inequality and poverty continue unabated. A strategy which aims to channel the lion's share of the meagre resources destined for rural development to a minority of surplus farmers, contractors and businessmen through the IRDP co-operative system is, against this background, indefensible.

The scattered initiative and programmes of rural development after reactions against the increasingly bureaucratic approach of Comilla model were consolidated into national "self-reliance movement", the Swanirvar Bangladesh in September 1975. The Swanirvar movement could be regarded as a way of postponing or avoiding necessary structural changes. The local initiatives have been substituted for a government inspired top-down programme. The Swanirvar Programmes seek a solution of chronic stagnation in agriculture, the food-deficit and backwardness in rural areas of Bangladesh.

II

Swanirvar Programme

The Swanirvar Programme sought to develop its organisational structure by setting up Swanirvar Committees in each of the following six tiers: village, union, thana, sub-division, district, nation. The National Committee of Swanirvar Bangladesh is the apex body. At the village level, a Swanirvar Committee consists of representatives from different professional groups, e.g. agriculturists, landless labourers, weavers, fishermen, etc. and also from the women and youth. This was possibly the first significant attempt in Bangladesh at creating an organisation for villagers as a whole.³⁶ In 1976, Swanirvar Committee came into existence in 630 villages - at least one village in each thana in the country being declared as Swanirvar village. In 1977, there was a scheme to set up at least one Swanirvar village in each union and to adopt an intensive Swanirvar programme in thirty-two thanas of five (out of twenty) districts in the country. This led to the declaration of 4000 villages as Swanirvar villages.³⁷

Whereas the Swanirvar Committee remains the executive body in a Swanirvar village, the gram sabha - consisting of all adult members in a village - retains ultimate authority.³⁸ A Swanirvar village commences activities with a socio-economic survey of the village. This survey leads to the preparation

36 B.P. Barua, SASK, i.e. Swanirvar Andolonor Sarbik Karmatatparata (Swanirvar Movement : A Comprehensive Account of Activities), Dacca, Swanirvar Bangladesh, 1979, p. 1.

37 Ibid., Also see BAJ, 1979-80, p. 235.

38 Monotosh Das, ed., Sthaniyo Sarkar : Village and Union (Local Government : Village and Union), Dacca, Swanirvar Bangladesh, 1978, pp. 48-49.

of a village plan, which has to secure the approval of the gram sabha. In theory, the integration of village plans takes place at the union level, of union plans at the thana level, of thana plans at the district levels, and of district plans at the national level. In practice, the Planning Commission has not been able to prepare the national plan in this way.³⁹ Swanirvar workers have carried out surveys in many villages, and prepared plans. But the progress of work has been thoroughly uneven, and prospects are not quite encouraging. This is apparent from some brief and some elaborate surveys of the Swanirvar programme.

In December 1978, a number of important organisations in Bangladesh - viz. the National Institute of Public Administration, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Bogra Rural Development Academy, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Village Education Resource Centre and Proshika - carried out a short survey of twelve Swanirvar villages. The findings of this survey⁴⁰ can be summarised as follows. It is true that some areas the Swanirvar programme have produced few beneficial results. For instance, it has established village organisation where none existed before.⁴¹ It has introduced new crops, e.g. wheat,⁴² and inspired villagers to engage in hitherto untried activities like the planting of fruit-bearing trees on both sides of village roads.⁴³ But even the limited success of the Swanirvar

39 SKMM, i.e. Swanirvar Kariyokrom : Ekti Mulayon (Swanirvar Programme : An Evaluation), Dacca, Village Education Resources Centre, 1979, pp. 9-10.

40 Ibid. p.72.

41 Ibid., p. 73.

42 Ibid., p. 55.

43 Ibid., p. 60.

programme in a village has depended almost invariably on the support of government officers and the rural rich (including members of local government bodies, e.g. union parishads).⁴⁴ This support and the success of the self-reliance programme have been usually hard to achieve on account of the predominantly unresponsive attitude of the rural rich⁴⁵ and government officers⁴⁶ to this programme. Development work in a village being variously tied to the supply of inputs and services by government agencies, it is but natural that the self-reliance programme in a village generally fails or suffers when officials cease to support this programme.⁴⁷ To leave out exceptions,⁴⁸ it is the rural rich who capture the leadership of a Swanirvar programme,⁴⁹ even if they do not have any faith in such a programme. This should cause no surprise because they have been the real beneficiaries of the Swanirvar programme.⁵⁰ Despite some increase of production in Swanirvar villages, and the extension of such activities as tree-planting,⁵¹ pisciculture and poultry,⁵² there has been no general rise in the standard of living in these villages,⁵³ and no improvement in the conditions of the landless farmers and labourers.⁵⁴ This

-
- 44 Ibid., pp. 29, 34, 55, 57, 62-64.
 45 Ibid., pp. 20, 21, 32, 56, 83, 84, 87.
 46 Ibid., pp. 18, 61, 71, 81, 87.
 47 Ibid., pp. 15, 16, 23, 25.
 48 Ibid., pp. 83-84.
 49 Ibid., pp. 27, 33, 57, 64, 77, 78.
 50 Ibid., pp. 16, 65, 70, 72.
 51 Ibid., pp. 22, 28, 31, 42, 60, 86.
 52 Ibid., pp. 24, 31, 42, 57, 58.
 53 Ibid., pp. 15, 18, 31.
 54 Ibid., pp. 19, 42, 46, 47, 55, 56, 71.

may explain why in some areas the rural rich take the initiative in carrying out Swanirvar work and extracting voluntary labour from the rural poor; whereas the rural poor do not show such enthusiasm for voluntary labour, although voluntary labour is an essential components of a programme of self-reliance.⁵⁵

Some of these major findings of a brief survey of the self-reliance programme, noted in the previous paragraph, have been amply corroborated by elaborate surveys of the largest,⁵⁶ most prestigious and thoroughly publicised⁵⁷ Swanirvar project so far completed in Bangladesh - i.e. the Ulshi-Jadunathpur Canal Digging Project (UJCDP). The project required earthwork of 16.6 million cft to dig a 2.65 mile long canal providing drainage and irrigation for 18,000 acres of previously waterlogged land.⁵⁸ Commencing on 1 November 1976, the project was completed on 30 April 1977- the scheduled date.

55 Ibid., pp. 28, 61, 69.

56 Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, "Development Through Self-Help : Ulshi-Jadunathpur : A Review", The Journal of Social Studies (Dacca), No. 2, 1978, p. 58. M.K. Alamgir was the Deputy Commissioner of Jessore District, and took a leading part in carrying out the UJCDP in the Sarsha thana of his district. A thana or police station is about the lowest administrative unit in Bangladesh. As of now, on average, a thana comprises an area of about 130 sq. miles and is inhabited by 1,80,000 people; Ibid., p. 57. Ulshi is one of the seven unions in the project area. A union is a self-governed administrative unit within a thana comprising, on average, 10-15 villages; Ibid., p. 62.

57 M. Ghulam Sattar, Rural Development Through Self-Help : A Study of the Self-Help Ulashi-Jadunathpur Project in Jessore: Bangladesh, 1979, p. 27..

58 M.A. Chashi, 'What is Ulashi ?' in Q.K. Ahmad and Monowar Hossain eds., Development Through Self-Help : Lessons from Ulashi, 1978, p. 16.

The contribution of voluntary labour to the UJCDP was insignificant. The day of inauguration witnessed a tremendous overflow of voluntary labour. Farmers, government servants (including soldiers), and students supplied 4,000 volunteers who actually worked, whereas more than 10,000 could not engage in work on account of a dearth of spades and baskets.⁵⁹ But enthusiasm and voluntary participation dwindled rapidly in course of the next few days. This necessitated a switchover from reliance upon voluntary labour to that upon participation enforced by the rural rich and the Deputy Commissioner.⁶⁰ Even this sort of mobilisation proved inadequate, and the project had to rely upon paid labour, whose availability again depended largely upon administrators smacking of coercion and intimidation.⁶¹ Government officers fixed quotas of earthwork to be performed by landowners in accordance with the area of land owned and an arbitrary calculation of potential benefits. Such quotas were also fixed for owners of trucks and buses as also for other traders and government-licence-holders, none of whom had the guts to contest these decisions of officials, especially the Deputy Commissioner.

59 M.K. Alamgir, op. cit., p. 68.

60 The Ulashi Villages, Dacca, National Foundation for Research on Human Resource Development (NFRHRD), 1978, p. 50. B.K. Jahangir, Local Action for Self-Reliant Development in Bangladesh, 1979, Cyclostyled, pp. 11-12. M.K. Alamgir, op. cit., p. 70. M.G. Sattar, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

61 M.K. Alamgir, op. cit., pp. 71, 75. M.G. Sattar, op. cit., p. 22.

Landowners and businessmen found it convenient to carry on their normal economic functions whereas they contributed cash for earthwork which, on their behalf, the landless and the land-poor could perform and receive payments for. In this way, the have-nots received gainful employment for five days a week, although for two days a week they had to work as unpaid volunteers.⁶² In fact, paid workers registered a faster progress than volunteers.⁶³

The UJCDP could be completed in this way mainly because of the parts played by various government agencies at national and local levels. Late Ziaur Rahman, the then Chief Martial Law Administrator (subsequently president), made it quite clear that he attached an extraordinarily high priority to this project.⁶⁴ It was possible, therefore, for the Deputy Commissioner to persuade or coerce both officials and non-officials to work for a speedy and timely execution of the project. During 150 work-days from 1 November 1976 to 30 April 1977, the Deputy Commissioner, three Additional Deputy Commissioner, and one Subdivisional Officer devoted 145 mandays to this project.⁶⁵ Army, police and ansar (auxiliary police) personnel contributed nearly 12 per cent of the total work on the project.⁶⁶ The Martial Law itself

62 M.K. Alamgir, op. cit., p. 71.

63 Ibid., p. 72, M.G. Sattar, op. cit., p. 15.

64 Q.K. Ahmad, "From Ulashi to New National Economic Order - Some Comments" in Q.K. Ahmad and Monwar Hossain, eds. op. cit., p. 5. M.K. Alamgir, op. cit., pp. 66, 73. The Bangladesh Observer, 2 November, 1976.

65 M.K. Alamgir, op. cit., p. 72.

66 M.G. Sattar, op. cit., pp. 15, 18.

enabled administrators to avoid or overcome resistance that could have overwhelmed them in the absence of the protective cover of Martial Law.⁶⁷

Undoubtedly, the UJCDP led to some increase of production, and heightened popular awareness.⁶⁸ But the local poor had almost nothing to gain from this project.⁶⁹ In actuality, they were threatened with losses when they were compelled to donate labour.⁷⁰ Distribution of reclaimed land among the landless and the landpoor was one of the ambitious claims put forward by the designers of this project. But this claim was reduced to a rhetoric because no machinery was set up to carry out such redistribution,⁷¹ and because nearly the whole of the coveted land was smartly seized by influential villagers.⁷² The rural rich use Swanirvar committees to enhance their influence,⁷³ and to build or enlarge their contacts with administrators for serving selfish ends. If one adds to it the glaring fact that (in addition to paying invisible costs in terms of services by government employees) the government paid more than 50 per cent of the direct costs of constructing the canal,⁷⁴ e.g. in the form of compensation for acquired land, mid-day meals to workers, etc., one may observe that the UJCDP was just another state subsidy to the Haves at the expense of Havenots.

67 Jahangir, op. cit., p. 23.

68 M.G. Sattar, op. cit., p.24. Jahangir, op.cit., pp. 19,22.

69 The Ulashi Villages, NFRHRD, p. 30.

70 Ibid., p. 31.

71 Jahangir, op. cit., pp. 8, 21.

72 The Ulashi Villages, NFRHRD, op. cit., p. 29.

73 Jahangir, op. cit., p. 15.

74 M.G. Sattar, op. cit., p. 24.

Perhaps the existing socio-economic structure makes it unavoidable. At the Ulashi village itself, the top 10 per cent appropriate 30 per cent of the total income,⁷⁵ whereas 47 per cent have no land at all and 7 per cent have less than half an acre of land.⁷⁶ In these circumstances, the Swanirvar programme can make the rural rich richer, and augment their capacity to pauperise the land-poor by buying up their lands, especially in times of distress. It is not, therefore, inappropriate to hold that the talk of self-reliance in Bangladesh may end up as another exhibition of elite manipulation.⁷⁷ This feature of the self-reliance programme is not at all surprising. It conforms to some priorities of national policy. As stated earlier, the most vital aim of the Swanirvar programme in the short run is the attainment of self-sufficiency in food. But certain aspects of national policy on food and agriculture militate against the achievement of this aim.

An appropriate national policy on food and agriculture has to take into account the following features of the Bangladesh economy. This country has a population of about 90 million inhabiting an area of 55,598 square miles. Nearly 90 per cent of them live in villages, whereas 80 per cent are dependent on agriculture.⁷⁸ More than 75 per cent of the people are

75 The Ulashi Villages, NFRHRD, op.cit., p. 45.

76 Ibid., p. 46.

77 M. Hossain, B.A. Mahmood and Q.K. Ahmed, Participatory Development Efforts in Rural Bangladesh - A Case Study of Experiences in Three Areas, Dacca, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, November 1978, pp. 40-41. SKEM.op.cit., p. 72. Also see M.K. Alamgir, op.cit., p. 77.

78 The Second Five Year Plan 1980-85, Draft, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dacca, May 1980, Chapter I, p. 1.

below the poverty line, whereas 50 per cent of the rural people are either landless or landpoor (i.e. they own less than one acre of land).⁷⁹ Concentration of landholding as also landlessness are on the increase. In 1960 and 1968, the top 10 per cent of farms occupied 36 per cent of the total farm area, whereas the bottom 60 per cent occupied 25 per cent; in 1974, the farmer's share rose up to 38 per cent, and the latter's fell to 19 per cent.⁸⁰ Landless households formed 14.3 per cent of all households in 1951, 17.52 per cent in 1961, and 37.6 per cent in 1973-74.⁸¹ According to a 1977 survey, below-subsistence and subsistence farmers (owning 1-4 acres) form 57.54 per cent of all households and occupy 49.32 per cent of total land, whereas surplus and rich farmers (the former owning 4-10 acres) form 9.68 per cent of all households and occupy 50.68 per cent of total land.⁸² The average food and calorie intake have been on the decline in rural Bangladesh. Food consumption declined from 885.9 grams/person/day in 1962-64 to 807.3 grams/person/day in 1975-76.⁸³ The average per capita calorie intake declined from 2301 in 1962-64 to 2094 in 1975-76.⁸⁴ Moreover, only 41 per cent of rural families have adequate calorie intake, viz. 2248 calories per person per day.⁸⁵

79 Ibid., Preface, p. (i).

80 Mohiuddin Alamgir, Bangladesh: A Case of Below Poverty Level Equilibrium Trap, Dacca, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 1978, p. 91.

81 Ibid., p. 101.

82 A.K.M. Gelam Rabbani and others, Summary Report of the 1977 Land Occupancy Survey of Rural Bangladesh, Dacca, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, pp. 28-29.

83 Nutrition Survey of Rural Bangladesh 1975-76, Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, University of Dacca, Dacca, December 1977, p. 21.

84 Ibid., p. 29.

85 Ibid., p. 30.

In this situation, it may not be realistic for the Government of Bangladesh to proclaim the success of the Swanirvar programme by recording such facts as that by February 1980 all the people in four unions learnt how to sign their names,⁸⁶ or that the rate of growth of population declined remarkably in some Swanirvar villages.⁸⁷ These are certainly impressive achievements, but these must not divert our attention from the principal short-run aim of the Swanirvar programme, viz. self-sufficiency in food. In view of the circumstances stated above (of some more notes below) this aim of the Swanirvar programme cannot be realised without the fulfilment of at least two essential conditions:

- (a) changes in the village power structure by means of suitable reforms;
- (b) rational allocation of national resources for agriculture.

A typical Bangladesh village today consists of a few - sometimes less than half a dozen - rich influential families with farms frequently exceeding in size the legal ceiling of 100 bighas ($33\frac{1}{3}$ acres).⁸⁸ These families or their clients and relatives get dominant in local politics by becoming

86 BAJ, 1979-80, p. 237.

87 Proceedings of the Second Bangladesh Parliament, Vol. I, No. 1, 2 April 1979, p. 48; Ibid., Vol. II, No. 13, June 1979, p. 752.

88 Y. Arens and Y. Van Beurden, Jhagrabor, (in Bengali), Noyarhat, Dacca, Ganeshesthya Prakashana, 1980, p. 241. Mohammed Sirajul Islam, "Durneetir Bishbashe : Shehar Theke Gram" (i.e. "The Poison Gas of Corruption : From the City to the Village," Bichitra, Bengali Weekly, Dacca) February 29, 1980, p. 23.

members/chairmen/ of the union parishads, control the supply of such government-subsidized inputs as fertilizer or DTW (deep tubewells) water, and oversee the distribution of relief materials of food in the FWP (Food for Work Programme). There are numerous reports of the rural rich engaging in malpractices on the distribution of such materials⁸⁹. These malpractices serve to make the rich richer and the plight of the poor all the more pitiable. It is unbelievable but true that in certain areas of Bangladesh there are families owning 1,000-30,000 bighas⁹⁰. Some of them are so powerful, and so close to administrators, especially policemen, that they can employ clubmen to loot standing crops and deprive the poor farmers of their hard earned produce.⁹¹

Such exploitation of the rural poor by the rural rich and, and a programme like the Swanirvar programme cannot succeed, unless there are substantial land reforms.⁹² The mode of land reform can be a matter of debate,⁹³ but not its urgency. Since 1947, however, the successive ruling circles in Bangladesh have not showed much interest in improving the

89 See, for example, Sangbad (Bengali daily, Dacca), 9, 10, 14, 21, 24, 27 November 1979, 11 and 21 June, 1980, Holiday (weekly, Dacca), 25 May 1980.

90 For horrifying details, see Badruddin Umar, "The Bangladeshi Peasant in the Ayub Khan Regime", Bichitra, Eid Number, 5 September, 1978.

91 Ittefaq (Bengali daily, Dacca), 14, 23 November 1979. Sangbad, 16 November 1979. Abu Muhammad, "Villages in Bangladesh", Bichitra, 15 September 1978, pp. 17-19.

92 Atiqur Rahman, "The Debate Over Land Reform in Bangladesh: Some Issues Reconsidered", Asian Affairs (Dacca), January-June 1980, p. 60.

93 For a realistic analysis of major issues in the debate, read Atiqur Rahman's article, Ibid.

lot of the rural poor by means of suitable land reforms. The 1950 law prescribed a ceiling of 100 bighas for a joint family. The ceiling remained largely unenforced. Distribution of vested land among the landless never received a priority in public policy.⁹⁴ In the 1960s, during Field Marshal Ayub Khan's rule, the ceiling was revised upward.⁹⁵ Following the liberation of 1971, and the emergence of Bangladesh, the ceiling was restored to 100 bighas. But the ruling circle indubitably revealed its intention to pamper the rural rich by, for instance, making the ceiling applicable not to a joint family but to a nuclear family, creating thereby a situation in which joint families, dissolving themselves into nuclear families, would record no large surplus for redistribution among the landless.⁹⁶ Current public policy does not indicate any serious attempt at land reform beyond a ritualistic enumeration of its importance.⁹⁷ The rural rich persist in bribing government employees, manipulating land records and misappropriating government land which should have been transferred to the landless.⁹⁸

94 M.A. Jabbar, "Land Reform in Bangladesh", in Agrarian Structure and Change : Rural Development Experience and Politics in Bangladesh, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Government of Bangladesh, May 1978, p. 237.

95 Badruddin Umar, In Bichitra, op. cit.

96 Presidential Order, p. 96, The Bangladesh Gazette, 14 August, 1972.

97 See, for example, The Second Five Year Plan 1980-85, Draft, Chapter XI, p. 6.

98 Atiur Rahman, "On Land Reform", Bichitra, 19 May 1978, pp. 42-43. Dainik Bangla (Bengali daily, Dacca), 8 June 1980. Corruption in Land Administration and Survey, Editorial, Sangbad, 20 June 1980.

If the negligence of the ruling circle towards land reforms is an impediment to the realisation of self-sufficiency in food, which is the principal short-run aim of the Swanirvar programme, so is the apathy towards allocating an appropriate proportion of national resources for agricultural development. During 1971-80, the contribution of agriculture to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) has ranged from 55.2 per cent to 64.4 per cent, that of industry from 4.7 per cent to 9 per cent.⁹⁹ The contribution of agriculture to national income has varied from 54.58 per cent to 60.80 per cent during 1972-80, that of industry from 7.28 per cent to 8.71 per cent.¹⁰⁰ In terms of 1972-73 prices, the contribution of agriculture to national income ranged from 2722 crores of taka to 3667 crores from 1972 to 1980, that of industry from 329.8 crores to 585.4 crores.¹⁰¹ The estimated development expenditure by the government on agriculture during 1973-80 is 1086.91 crores of taka, on industry 1234 crores.¹⁰² The government has allocated 1900 crores for industry.¹⁰³ It cannot be denied that allocations for other sectors, too, help agriculture.¹⁰⁴ But the reverse is also true, and an inescapable impression from the figures reproduced in this paragraph is that the ruling circle in Bangladesh is not probably according to agriculture - and to the goal of self-sufficiency in food by means of the Swanirvar programme - the priority it deserves.

99 Economic Review 1978-79, Dacca, Planning Commission, 1979, p. 182.

100 BAJ, 1979-80, p. 2.

101 Ibid., p. 4.

102 The Second Five Year Plan 1980-85, Draft, Chapter I, pp. 22-23.

103 Ibid., Chapter III, p. 10.

104 Ibid., Chapter III, p. 382.

The same impression is reinforced by the contrast between government expenditure on agricultural development and that on subsidies for food rations. Whereas the former amounted to 57.88 crores of taka in 1973-74, 63.88 crores in 1974-75, 130.19 crores in 1975-76, 152.90 crores in 1976-77, 154.14 crores in 1977-78 (at current prices),¹⁰⁵ the latter amounted to 313.3 crores, 254.7 crores, 456.9 crores, 254.2 crores, and 239.2 crores in the respective years.¹⁰⁶ The rural poor get an insignificant share of subsidised rations. For, nearly 90 per cent of these rations are distributed among inhabitants of six major towns (including Dacca) and among some special categories of government servants, viz. the army, police, etc.¹⁰⁷ Even those of the rural poor who move to a city like Dacca do not normally receive subsidised rations unless they are in a position to pay bribes for procuring ration cards.¹⁰⁸ Foreign assistance accounts for a large part of rationed articles. Moreover, food aid to Bangladesh from abroad constitutes a significant component of total foreign assistance. Food amounted to 233.2 million (United States) dollars in a total of 480.1 million dollars of foreign assistance during 1973-74, 373.3 millions in a total of 897.4 millions during 1977-78, and 186.6 millions in a total of 1013.8 millions during 1978-79.¹⁰⁹

105 Ibid., Chapter I, pp. 22-23.

106 Report of the Committee on Gradual Reduction of Food Supply, Dacca, Planning Commission, December 1978, pp. 20-21. Also see Food Minister Abdul Momen Khan, Proceedings of the Second Bangladesh Parliament, Vol. 2, No. 5, 25 May 1979, pp. 153-55.

107 Ashabur Rahman, "Foreign Aid : For Whom ?", Bichitra, 30 May 1980, p. 31.

108 Report of the Committee on Gradual Reduction of Food Subsidy, p. 5.

109 BAJ, 1979-80, p. 100.

Whereas the self-reliance programme is meant mainly for the rural poor, the government apathy towards them is luridly apparent from the disparity between the government expenditure on agricultural development and that on subsidy towards rationing. This apathy to the rural poor is also apparent from the composition of expenditure on agricultural development. Nearly 40 per cent of this expenditure consist of huge subsidies for such inputs as fertiliser, pesticides, DTW, etc. enjoyed mainly by the rural rich.¹¹⁰ For instance, the subsidy on fertilizers rose from 25 crores of takas in 1974-75 to 94 crores in 1978-79, and the rate of subsidy was 43 per cent of the cost in 1974-75, 53 per cent in 1975-76, 44 per cent in 1976-77, and 47 per cent in 1977-78.¹¹¹ The rate of subsidy for granular pesticides varied from 62 per cent to 79 per cent during 1974-78, and that for conventional pesticides from 40 per cent to 59 per cent.¹¹² The rate of subsidy is 50 per cent for Low Lift Pump, and 64 per cent for DTW.¹¹³

110 Ashabur Rahman, Bichitra, 30 May 1980, p. 30. Atiur Rahman, "On Irrigation Reforms" in Bengali, Political Economy (Dacca), Vol. 3, No. 1, 1977, pp. 77-81. Also see Muhammad Yunus, Story of a Deep Tubewell with a Difference, Rural Studies Project, Department of Economics, Chittagong University, Chittagong, May 1977, pp. 31-33.

111 Report of the Special Committee to Examine and Recommend Reduction of Subsidy on Agricultural Inputs, Dacca, Planning Commission, 1979, pp. 23-25.

112 Ibid., pp. 74-75.

113 Ibid., pp. 93-99.

Despite such attractive subsidies, the rural rich do not seem inclined to reinvest their surplus in agricultural production. This surplus appears to be diverted to urban areas - possibly to trade and housebuilding for quick and high profits. According to a 1977 survey¹¹⁴ of three districts, only a sum of 10 per cent of the bank deposits in two of these districts was earmarked for use in those two districts, and in the third district this sum was even less than 10 per cent. By December 1978, urban deposits in Banks stood at 1808.58 crores of takas and urban advances at 1660.22 crores.¹¹⁵ Although these figures cannot by themselves point accurately to a reluctance of the rural rich to reinvest their surplus in agricultural production. Absence of a price incentive¹¹⁶ - causally related to enormous subsidies for rationed items - is undoubtedly a partial explanation of this reluctance.

It follows from the facts and figures recorded above that public policy in Bangladesh is not conducive to the attainment of the basic immediate aim of the self-reliance programme, viz. self-sufficiency in food. For this, public policy does not aim at restructuring village society by means of land reforms; it does not accord the necessary importance to agricultural development in terms of planned outlays. Frequent exhortations¹¹⁷ on making every village a Swanirvar

114 Ashabur Rahman, Bichitra, 30 May 1980, p. 31.

115 Bangladesh Bank, Annual Report 1978-79, Dacca, 1979, pp. 48-49.

116 Report of the Committee on Gradual Reduction of Food Subsidy, pp. 3, 6.

117 For instance, between 29 May and 8 June 1980, one can refer to at least three impressive speeches by the late President Ziaur Rahman calling upon every village to become self-reliant: See The Bangladesh Observer, 30 May and 4 June 1980, Sambad, 9 June 1980.

village cannot conceal the ugly fact that whereas the government urges self-reliance upon the rural poor, it pampers town dwellers and the rural rich by undeservedly huge subsidies having a significant component of foreign aid. In a situation where, during the First Five Year Plan period (i.e. 1973-78), foreign capital inflow formed 78 per cent of the development outlay, and domestic savings were either negative or positive by about 3 per cent only, and the government had to depend on foreign aid for financing not merely development programmes but also current consumption,¹¹⁸ asking the rural poor to practice self-reliance cannot really sound credible. It can, on the contrary, underline the gap between the preaching and practice of a ruling circle in a less developed country, and make the prospects for self-reliant development look rather discouraging.¹¹⁹

118 The Second Five Year Plan 1980-85, Draft, Chapter I, p. 3, Chapter III, p. 3 and Chapter IV, p. 1.

At a press conference on 31 May 1980, Fashiuddin Mahtab, ex-Planning Minister of Bangladesh, declared that, at constant 1977 prices, the per capita foreign aid inflow would rise from the current level of 10 (United States) dollars to 22 dollars in 1984-85, this dependence would decrease to 54.1 per cent. These statements provoked a journalist to write the following: "It may be recalled that the country's First Five Year Plan had also a similar projection for reducing dependence on external assistance. But, in actual practice, external assistance financed more than eighty-five per cent of the total public sector outlay both during the First Five Year Plan periods". See Holiday, 1 June 1980. (The Two-Year Plan was for the period 1978-80).

119 For a glimpse into how some leading journalists assess the Bangladesh Government's efforts towards self-reliance, see commentaries in the editorial pages of Sangbad, 9 and 14 June 1980, and an article by Hossain Khasru in Holiday, 1 June 1980.

The Institutional Aim

The institutional vacuum in the rural areas, already visible during the late Moghul period, was further aggravated during the British colonial era.

The formalized "Swanirvar movement" and its prolongation into the gram sarkar - village government institution, should be seen as the latest attempt to create new rural institutions. While the basic democracies in the Ayub Khan regime "sacrificed participation in favour of co-ordination of scarce resources,"¹²⁰ the Swanirvar programme at least in theory emphasizes local participation. In contrast to the basic democracies the focus of the Swanirvar is the village, one step below the existing administrative and "democratic" structure.

When looking for the ideological background, it is tempting to ascribe a "Ghandian" touch to the Swanirvar movement. There are traces of the same emphasis on nationhood, unity, non-class issues, and, at least rhetorically, on the village as the entity within which "self-reliance" can be achieved.

But probably the ideological roots of the Swanirvar are much closer in time and form part of the misconception of the rural structure in the Indian sub-continent embodied in the early projects for rural development introduced shortly after the independence in 1947. The villages were seen as (at least once) self-sufficient "little republics" based on traditional

120 E.C. Tepper, "The Administration of Rural Reform, Structural Constraints and Political Dilemmas" in Robert Stevens, et al. edited Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan, 1976, p. 47.

harmony. We now know that they were neither self-sufficient nor harmonious in older times; during the last centuries pressure on land, 'pauperization' and 'polarization' have increased tensions and conflicts within factions in the villages, while other factors have drawn increasingly into contact of and dependency on the outside world. We also know that at least in Bangladesh, even the entity of the village is highly dubious. But the myths survive and old names are substituted for new without much change of content. Thus Swanirvar may well be looked upon as a new name for the old Village Aid-programme from the community-development decade of the fifties, involving large resources and personnel in order to motivate the villagers to engage in "self-help" projects.

"Of all the rainbows seen in the fifties.....Pakistan village Aid was the brightest. It was more far-reaching than crash programmes. It promised more than a mere increase in yields. It intended to make villagers not only better producers, but also better citizens, enlightened and co-operative. Community development will teach them to work and play. It will educate and amuse them. Foreclosing communist prophecies, it will usher in a quiet, a peaceful revolution. All conflicts will be resolved; all disputes settled....Here was the right way to economic prosperity and political peace."¹²¹

121 A.H. Khan, Three Essays : Land Reform, Rural Works and the Food Problem in Pakistan. (Reissued by University Micro-Films International, 1978), p. 38.

-: 304 :-

Today the only noticeable results seem to be the well-founded scepticism in the villages "hit" by the programme, against "voluntary community work".

Swanirvar and the IRDP

But such comparisons are seldom made. Instead the Swanirvar is launched by its main proponents as an alternative or superior complement to the Comilla co-operative model spread through the IRDP. According to the Swanirvar view, the most serious institutional weakness of that model is that it is "fragmented, narrow and have built-in mechanisms to make it sit on the lap of the fattest."¹²² And further :

"village co-operatives neither include all people in the village, nor do they include all land within its boundaries. A co-operative is always an organization of only some of the people and covers only some land.... To expect this type of organization to be the vehicle of integrated rural development, one has to be incredibly credulous."¹²³

The co-operatives are pertinently described as a way of formally handing over the weaker class at the disposal of the stronger or "giving the chickens to the jackal for safe-keeping" (an old Bengali proverb). Contrary to the

122 M. Yunus, Planning in Bangladesh: Format, Technique and Priority and Other Essays, 1976, p. 53.

123 Ibid., p. 55.

co-operative model, the Swanirvar openly recognizes the existing class differentiation in the rural areas and legitimizes class based organisation :

"Conflict of interest among these classes must be explicitly recognized before an economic programme or institution is designed."¹²⁴

The most essential feature of this initial phase of the Swanirvar programme is therefore the official sanction and acceptance of creating separate committees for different rural classes. The composition of the central village committee today, not representing these classes in proportion to their relative strength, is seen as a necessary compromise at the present stage. At the same time this "co-operative" body is to a certain extent able to represent and initiate collective ambitions and actions.

Leadership Pattern

The case against the co-operative institutions and the need for a grass-root level collective institution for rural change are both rather obvious. A look at reality leaves, however, less credit to the Swanirvar movement.

Thus, compared to the co-operative movement, the Swanirvar programme seems to be at least as much dominated by traditional vested elite interests.

-: 306 :-

"It appears that a lot of self-seekers and touts have captured the leadership of the Swanirvar movement at the village level."¹²⁵

"The big guys gave the leadership of this movement because they smelt the opportunity of getting some free-off cost benefits out of this."¹²⁶

To substantiate these allegations we can quote from some of the village studies. In a broad study of Mymensingh Swanirvar villages the following landownership and occupation were found among the members of the Swanirvar committees :

Table 5.5. Landownership of the Members of Swanirvar Committee

Landless agricultural labourers	0%
Landless service holders	4%
Less than 1 acre farmers	10%
1-2 acre farmers	17%
2-4 acre farmers	24%
More than 4 acre landowners	45%

Source : Mr. Rahman - A Report on Tangail and Mymensingh Swanirvar Villages, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Evaluation Series No. 2, p. 25.

125 M. Rahman, "A Report on Tangail and Mymensingh Swanirvar Villages" Evaluation Series No. 2, BAU, Mymensingh, August 1976.

126 M.A. Hamid, "Swanirvar Rural Bangladesh : Problems and Prospects" in Political Economy, Vol. 2, Journal of the Bangladesh Economic Association, Dacca, 1976.

The following is the Swanirvar village committee for three neighbouring villages in Neakhali district :

Table 5.6. Occupation and Landownership of the Members of Swanirvar Committee

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Landowned (acres)</u>
Chairman Union Parishad	14
Union Agriculture Assistant	-
Doctor/farmer	16
Business/farmer	. 3
Farmer	4-5
U.P. Member/farmer	2
Farmer	4

Source : N. Alam - Locally sponsored Development Programmes Series Report No. 22, Department of Economics, University of Chittagong, 1976.

Big farmers as well as non-farming people, big landowners with more diversified economic interests are thus well represented. It is not unusual that the representatives of the landless and even the chairman in the landless sub-committees are larger landowners.¹²⁷

"In these committees, at least on paper, all classes of people.....have been included. But unfortunately, because of the nature of the work so far attempted by the Swanirvar villages....very few non-traditional leaders have been able to poke their noses into the decision making process....."¹²⁸

127 J.P. Dutta, "A Report on Swanirvar Programmes in Shilkup, Monkircher, Banskhali, Chittagong". Locally sponsored Development Programmes Series Report No.23, Rural Studies Project, Department of Economics, Chittagong University, October 1976.

128 Hamid/Hussein, et al., "Swanirvar Bangladesh : An Evaluation of Swanirvar Villages of Rajshahi, Pabna, Kushtia, Jessore Districts," Rural Development Studies Series No.6, Department of Economics, University of Rajshahi, 1976, p. 23.

Considering the existing power structure in the rural areas, these findings certainly are of little surprise to anybody.

The Swanirvar organization has in many places just given an official framework to the traditional samaj and factional institutions.

Benefits for the Poor

Neither could it be surprising that Swanirvar committees with such leadership usually have very little to offer the majority of the villagers.

"The vice-chairman himself.....admitted that the committee has done nothing to uplift the fate of the landless labourers nor do they have any future plan to do so. I observed the feeling of deprivation and frustration among the landless and small farmers."¹²⁹

And further : "what surprises one is the complete absence of any programme for organising or employing this large segment (the landless of the village). The U.P. Chairman admitted that they never thought of the landless separately."¹³⁰

It might be argued that the fact that the village committees are dominated by the rich does not make the Swanirvar movement very different from, say, the co-operative programme, while

129 M. Alam, "A Report on the Swanirvar Programme in Atiakhali, Lokshampur, Noakhali", Locally sponsored Development Programme Series Report No. 19, Rural Studies Project, Department of Economics, Chittagong University, June 1976, p. 12.

130 N.S.M. Alam, "A Report on Swanirvar Programmes in Brommather, Rangunia, Chittagong, Locally sponsored Development Programmes Series Report No. 20, Rural Studies Project Department of Economics, Chittagong University, October 1976, p. 15.

still enlarging the scope for collective action and grass-root level initiatives and responsibility. It has, for example, been noted that the self-reliant movement in the

"successful village embraces a much wider spectrum of village life, raises the economic and social status of the village poor, curbs the privileges of the traditional vested interests and makes racketeering by the latter difficult. It socializes the peasants, and major economic and social questions, previously given to bilateral and oligarchic exchanges and coterie decisions, are now to be settled collectively."¹³¹

But there is little evidence that such features form part of the general picture.

There are further reasons to fear that the movement in many cases will be counter productive in raising the consciousness and organization among the village poor. The class-based sub-committees are usually only paperwork. In the official Swanirvar propaganda, it is not these class-organizations that get special attention, but on the contrary the "cooperative" central committee is surrounded by myths and rhetorics about "unity" and common interests. It is also symptomatic that in the present drive for gram sarkar-institutions, there is a strict prohibition against party politics, barring not only the established political parties but also any movement that could give political and ideological support to the landless and poor peasants. They are left in a vacuum, whereas the vested interests of rural elites may use the new hierarchy of Swanirvar committees for their own ends.

¹³¹ Haque, et al., in Development Dialogue, 2/77, p. 35.

The obvious conclusion one can draw is that the official Swanirvar movement is not supposed to become an institutional framework for the emancipation of the rural poor.

In fact the actual implementation of the programme most probably means greater power and influence for the rural rich over the majority of the rural population. Earlier, whatever government service and inputs were offered, could at least theoretically be obtained through separate organizations like the co-operatives, or through individual approach; now most resources will be channelled through the village committees. Through them justice will be administered and law and order maintained.

"The village defence parties, already a functioning entity is likely to be used by (the village) elite in taking care of the malcontent."¹³²

Also the emphasis on "common interests", and "unity" may have an ideological impact, though it is rather impossible to assess.

When encouraged to speak up, the underprivileged groups express their opinion quite clearly :

"Swanirvar means dishonest Chairman and his company"

"He thinks Swanirvar movement is for the rich peasants because landless cannot be Swanirvar (self-reliant)"

"Swanirvar means to stand by own legs by the help of unity. But still there is the distinction between the rich and the poor. The poor people are always utilized by the rich for their interests."¹³³

132 "Gram Sarkar Far From Goal", Holiday, 2/4, 1978.

133 Quotations from SIDA/BIDS Landless Study, 1978.

Open criticism is usually rare, due to fear of not getting employment, or other acts of reprisal. Instead typified slogans are repeated as "if they were taught like parrots" by the village leaders."¹³⁴ In the two Swanirvar villages included in the SIDA/BIDS landless study (1978), the principal answers relating to the "meaning of Swanirvar" were :

(several alternatives given by many respondents)

Table 5.7. Alternatives to the "Meaning of Swanirvar" by Respondents

No idea	6%
"Self-reliance - stand on one's own legs"	81%
"Unity - no quarrels"	49%
"Equality for everybody"	10%
Unspecified "positive" development programme	29%
Exploitation of the poor	6%

Source : SIDA/BIDS Landless Study, 1978. Village Batashan-Durgapur, Rangpur District, and Murad Nagar, Chittagong District.

The Rural Elite

It could be expected that a programme so totally captured by influential landowners at least would be efficient in translating it into activities beneficial to themselves; activities that not necessarily would be in contradiction to agricultural growth and certain indirect benefits for the poor villagers. To a certain extent this also holds

134 Ibid., Commentary to Survey in Batashan-Durgapur.

true the main emphasis of the Swanirvar projects has been on agricultural improvements. Improved relations with the administration and the "Swanirvar status" have been used to attract extra inputs like pumps, seeds, works programme funds, etc. to the villages.

One limiting factor, however, often revealed in the village studies, is due to the factional divisions within the villages, eroding the very essence of the movement.

"After the swanirvar work-camp was over, villagers formed a Swanirvar Gram Committee in a largely attended meeting. Mr. Ruhul Amin was chosen as the Chairman.... But this committee had a very short life. The committee was split up.....according to Mr. Ruhul Amin (the people from the other part of the village) were not at any time ready to listen to his ideas and programmes, and so he had to divide it into two."¹³⁵

Another limiting factor is that many of the leading families only have a secondary interest in agriculture and use the new resources and positions for other unproductive purposes. ".....the lack of efficient leadership and mismanagement have been noticed in almost all of the swanirvar village."¹³⁶

135 A. Taher, "A Report on the Swanirvar Programmes in Amberia, Kirsarai, Chittagong." Locally sponsored Development Programmes Report Series No. 25, Rural Studies Project, Department of Economics, Chittagong University, August 1976, p.11.

136 Hamid/Hussain, et al., op.cit., p. 24.

Top-down Approach

Another tube-stone is obviously the paradoxical ambition to build grass-root institutions from the top. The mushroom growth of so-called Swanirvar villages is the result of official targets and plans, partly coupled with the clear-sightedness of vested interests in the villages, but not the result of broadly based ambitions or initiatives among the villagers. Thus, in sharp contrast to the original model programmes, the national Swanirvar movement has become another "Sarkari programme", initiated by government officials, "not necessarily from their own initiative, but from the directions given by the proponents of the Swanirvar movement". Other common initiators are union parishad members or more influential people from the village living in urban areas. The villages are selected according to "development potentials" and other practical criteria; during the work-camp held together with local and higher government officials and Swanirvar personalities, some physical work are performed; speeches are held, advice and promise given. The following descriptions of work-camps may give an idea of the hollowness of many of these occasions :

".....no sincere attempt was made to allow the villagers, other than those invited, to attend the work-camp and participate in the discussion. Possibly, the presence of Police Station in the work-camp was the most serious hindrance.....the use of helicopter by the national committee members was vehemently criticised.....some farmers pointed out some of their real grievances....

but no attempt was made by the organisers to pursue the matter....huge amounts of money has been spent by the relevant departments in paying (allowances) of the large number of high-ups."¹³⁷

".....The Karmashibir (work-camp) was virtually a one man show of the U.P. Chairman.....All thana level officials took active part in the Karmashibir..... About six chairmen of U.P. and a few students also took part. There was no women participation. To make the Karmashibir a success, the chairman had to hire about 30 labourers at the rate of Tk. 10.00 per day since very few local people were willing to work spontaneously for the Karmashibir."¹³⁸

The thana officials, who regularly get circulars demanding results, take short-cuts to "successes". Village plans are manufactured in their offices and sent to the hurriedly constituted village committees for implementation. Statistics are forged and the lengthy process of local resource mobilization made hollow through on the spot allocations of government resources. The tedious visits to the villages are soon avoided, partly, it is true, because the travel allowances have not been updated for ages.

Under such circumstances it is understandable that many of the committees established for the sake of appearance are not very efficient.

137 J.P. Dutta, "A Report on Swanirvar Programmes in Shilkup, Monkirchar, Banskhal, Chittagong", Locally sponsored Development Programmes Series Report No. 23, Rural Studies Project, Department of Economics, Chittagong University, October 1976, pp. 6-7.

138 Ibid., p. 9.

"I talked with Mr. Badiul Alam who has been elected the secretary of the family planning sub-committee to find out the steps he had taken so far in his sphere. He told me that he didn't take any steps in the field. He further explained that he was not clear whether or not family planning method was allowed by the religion. Moreover he informed me that he didn't actually want to become the secretary of the family planning sub-committee."¹³⁹

This imposition from above is also well reflected in the attitude among ordinary villagers. To many who recognize the word at all, Swanirvar is no different from any other development programme. Passive reliance on government initiatives is mixed with indifference.

Bureaucratic Relations

The role of the movement of co-ordinating rural development activities and improving the relations between villages and the government administration has also been full of contradictions. The Swanirvar programme was seen as a way of by-passing administrative obstacles. While the village committees on the one hand were supposed to ease the burden of the lower level officials, these were on the other expected to be positively influenced by the Swanirvar ideology: to do away with their contempt for village life and physical labour and to become true "partners in development". These are not new ideas, having for a long time been the official ideas of the Comilla model but with very limited results.

For many officials the Swanirvar of course implies a challenge of the traditional image and concept of a government official. Any commitment to these ideals often depends on the presence of superiors. In reality his work-load has also increased by the priorities given to the programme: new paper-work, work-camps, official visits, etc. Most "Swanirvar villages" with any real content have meant higher demands on government attendance either within ordinary development programmes or in the form of contributions to extra-ordinary projects. It is therefore no wonder that the effect often has been deteriorating relations, may be with the exception that the movement has further cemented the already existing links between the rural elites and the administration.¹⁴⁰

The high priority given to the Swanirvar movement has also jeopardized its role as a co-ordinating body. It has evoked jealousy and fear among other institutions. True enough, the movement has only to a limited extent created a separate administrative set-up. But the present loose organizations, the many ad-hoc committees, extra paperwork, offices and officials have contributed little to improve the already serious confusion. "Consequently, it has in many places created more administrative problems rather than solved it."¹⁴¹

140 Hamid/Hussain/Siddique, et al., op.cit.

141 Ibid., p. 36.

-: 317 :-

Revealing is the "ideological" conflict with and rivalry between the co-operative programme and the Swanirvar movement. Certainly there are elements of personal jealousy between elites due to the sudden fame and esteem attached to the Swanirvar movement. But deeper are differences like the one between the slow and tedious task of building up a functional co-operative infrastructure, the brainchild and pride of the Comilla Academy and the cheaply won conglomerate of rapidly established Swanirvar villages. In reality the difference may not be very big between the Swanirvar emphasis on (formal) participation of all and elite-based sub-committees, and the co-operative system with its newly found interest in separate co-operatives for landless and women. The practical results today, however, seem to be that there is nearly no integration between these two national rural development programmes. It has also been noted that in the Swanirvar villages "co-operation takes the back-seat" or "agricultural co-operatives are virtually tabooed...." This seems to be leading to further chaos, inter-agency rivalry and inefficiency.

Self-reliance and Local Resources

The overwhelming impression is that the programme seldom has served as an alternative to scarce and untimely supplied government resources. On the contrary, the Swanirvar movement is usually interpreted as a way of obtaining more resources, in spite of all the rhetorics to the contrary.

"In general it is observed that to become a member of Swanirvar....is to get help and assistance from the outside....The relief and outside help mentality seems to have increased rather than to be on the decrease."¹⁴²

Government authorities have, under the pressure to produce results, often given in and offered special attention to the Swanirvar villages.

"The completion of this project (a canal excavation) has been marked by the C.O.(Dev) as an achievement of the Swanirvar programme, since, as he argued, if (the village) had not been taken on as a Swanirvar village,canal would never have been re-excavated on priority basis."¹⁴³

Things have gone so far that a special government circular has been used saying that "the craving for more government assistance to Swanirvar villages should be firmly dealt with as being contrary to the Swanirvar principle."¹⁴⁴

The neglect of the rural areas and the unequal allocations of development resources have been exposed earlier. In fact it could well be maintained that "self-reliance" is nothing new for the villages in Bangladesh: they have always been obliged to survive and develop on whatever resources were left after the extraction of their surplus. The popular Swanirvar slogans, then might be met by a certain amount of irony by many a villager.

142 Ibid., p. 37.

143 Ibid., p. 11.

144 Ibid., p. 37.

-: 319 :-

From such a point of view, it could certainly be argued that the craving for resources and attention is a very positive effect of the Swanirvar programme. This dependency, however, does not only expose the hollowness of the movement, but also embodies the same problems that it was supposed to tackle. Even if the village according to the official formula puts up with as much as half of the resources (which seldom happens), most activities and thus the "self-reliant" vehicle of change grind to a halt or are seriously slowed down, when the special government attention is withdrawn. With few exceptions the Swanirvar movement is thereby exposed to the same bottlenecks and shortcomings as any other programme for rural development presently under implementation.

Even so it could be expected that the pacifying "disincentive" effects usually connected with government or outside inputs, on the whole, would be less severe within the Swanirvar programme. In the more successful village programmes, where government resources really have been used to supplement local initiatives, this may well be true. But in normal cases the opposite seems to prevail. Here government initiatives often even precede those of the villages.

It is not that local initiatives or local contributions are non-existent. Especially during the initial, enthusiastic phases, "self-help" contributions are probably common. But

it may safely be assumed that such contributions rarely are the result of long-term planning and accumulation of funds, and they constitute only a very marginal share of total capital formation.

They usually consist of an ad-hoc mobilization around a specific project with contributions in the form of labour, land, may be cash funds. One may also well suspect that these contributions often are made in order to obtain government resources of higher value. The result thus turns out to be the reversal of the "ideal model" where the government is supplementing a major initiative undertaken by the village itself. The parallels to foreign aid and development on the national level are obvious.

The "Swanirvar" - content becomes even more absurd if we look at the poor majority in the villages. - ".....a landless can never be 'swanirvar' - observed one landless villager in our study,"¹⁴⁵ illustrating this paradox: the landless and poor peasants, dependent for their existence on the rich peasants and landlords, are admonished to mobilize their "own resources" in order to improve their condition, without any other extra input but an institutional framework dominated itself by the village rich. "...when (the villagers having no cultivable land of their own) set together in a meeting, they could not but confirm that they were poor, helpless and that they could not do anything substantial themselves for the improvement of their lots."¹⁴⁶

145 SIDA/EIDE, Landless Study 1978 (Unpublished), op.cit.

146 Hamid/Hussain, et al., op.cit., p. 24.

One might even call it cynical to talk about "self-reliance" for groups that are so totally dependent on others and whose resource-base is not being changed at all.

These groups run little risk of becoming "pacified" by too much outside resources: they get next to nothing of the government inputs, just as in any other development programme. Their passivity and apparently total reliance on government initiatives and local powerholders in local institutions is, as has been observed earlier, primarily the result of having few if any alternatives at hand.

In the absence of an exaction of contributions from every villager according to their relative benefits and present resources, one might also suspect that most of the voluntary work performed by the poor families implies a transfer of resources from them to the rich.

"Unless this is done, in the existing power structure of the rural society, self-help will be limited to selfless and lifeless participation by the poor to the exclusion of the affluent and be tantamount to a subsidy to the haves from the have nots."¹⁴⁷

Even apart from such considerations, it can be expected that the interest for similar voluntary inputs among those who sacrifice most for such contributions but get the least of the benefits will vanish over time. "To talk to them (the landless) of free labour, of unpaid work, was nothing less than mockery. Was it not evident that they had nothing

147 M.K. Alamgir, Development through Self-Help: Ulashi-Jadunathpur: A Review, Undated, mimeo., p. 27.

to live on except wages?".¹⁴⁸ Such reactions are also evident from the village studies and once again drastically reduce the potentials for local resource mobilization under unchanged structural conditions.

A serious effort for local resource mobilization would furthermore need a consciousness about and instruments and power against the continuous outflow of the local "surplus"; instruments and power which necessarily would have to be placed in the hands of the presently underprivileged groups, the ones with little economic interests outside the village or rural areas. The Swanirvar movement has, to be sure, never even touched upon such intricate dimensions.

It is also very clear that the "self-reliance" of the Swanirvar movement nowhere really forms part of an overall development strategy, neither at national nor local levels.

But then the collective efforts were based on truly collective interests - not private ones covered by slogans. The Swanirvar would gain in credibility if it openly acknowledged itself to be what it mainly is: an association of larger landowning interests pressing for better government service and more resources.

Self-reliance and Production

If we look at the "self-reliance" of the Swanirvar movement as a goal to achieve, the meaning is equally unclear and contradictory. The proponents of the movement usually talk

148 Hamid/Hussain, et al., op.cit., p. 42.

of different levels of self-sufficiency - starting from the family - group or class - village - union - district and national levels.¹⁴⁹ Translated into real terms, self-reliance primarily means higher agricultural out-put, and essentially food-grain. What certainly is painfully clear is that "self-reliance" becomes devoid of any content of value to the majority of the people in the absence of mechanisms for more equal distribution of the production. Even if a village or union really manages to produce enough food-grain for all the families in the area, there is nothing to ensure that these families really get a fair proportion of the produce.

The effect on the national scale of such policies has been demonstrated often enough the recent export of potatoes from Bangladesh while a large part of the population live under minimum. It is therefore important to determine whose "self-sufficiency", or what level we are talking about. At present the urban areas are fed and urban investments made partly through the deficit in consumption endured by a majority of the rural population. Under present conditions increased harvest will mean higher marketable surplus among the big landowners, may be self-sufficiency for some medium farmers but little else for the rest. On the national scale such a definition of "self-reliance" might be appropriate, but it could be expected to have little meaning for the poor. True

149 Mahabul Alam Chashi, "Self-reliant Rural Bangladesh". In Political Economy, Vol. 2, Journal of Bangladesh Economic Association, Dacca, 1976.

enough, "nationhood" is given much importance in the generally diffused Swanirvar ideology but such a message must be a poor compensation for real material benefits. Self-sufficiency in any real sense for these households would imply relatively lower flows of surplus from the rural areas. Therefore, there is an obvious contradiction between the various levels, a contradiction mainly dependent on the present economic structure. Also these problems are disregarded by the Swanirvar movement, which surmises that "self-sufficiency" is something that can be reached gradually, level by level without any conflicting interests.

Just as in any other production-oriented programme, improved conditions for the poor will primarily be obtained through indirect employment effects, the limitations of which already have been reviewed.

"The landless of course are getting some employment..... The increase in the wage rate is also not much with respect to the benefits which the landowners of this locality have actually gained."¹⁵⁰

The complete absence of distribution aspects is not unique for the Swanirvar movement: in this regard it is no better or no worse than other programmes currently under implementation. But this absence is more crucial for the Swanirvar movement and the "development alternative" that it proposes to offer. By falsely pretending to represent a road to improved conditions, based on common interests, it will undermine the popular participation and collective action needed for any substantial impact.

Superficially the Swanirvar programme seems to contain several appealing features, many of which, at least in theory, would be likely to counteract some of the severe biases in the current development strategy reviewed earlier.

Among the most obvious of such features are the commitment to local and labour-intensive technology, the complete absence of foreign involvement and the emphasis on local resource-mobilization and decentralization of planning. It is, however, just as obvious that these features cannot be but a drop in an ocean characterized on the whole by opposite trends, even if fully adhered to. We have also seen that in practice neither local resource nor real participation at the grass-root level are the dominant features in the current programme.

Thus, where agricultural growth has been observed, it is mainly the result of a heavier inflow of government resources. For the dynamic mobilization was made possible by Swanirvar-initiatives. Instead of a self-reliance in a more qualified sense, the "movement" seems to have increased the overall dependency on government assistance. The focus of the original initiatives is increasingly being obliterated by the official sponsoring of the programme and the intensified urban-rural relations.

Similarly the original reaction against the current bureaucratic approach to rural development has largely been nullified in actual practice. People's wishes and methods for realizing them are being formulated in government offices

and local development is again dependent on the short comings and biases in the state machinery. Instead of contributing to efficiency and co-ordination within the present development administration, the programme seems to have increased the confusion and the paper-loads.

The most serious limitation, and reason for the poor results, is however the complete absence of any political commitment to tackle the class-structure and the skewed distribution of assets, income and power in rural society. Most of the benefits of the programme, be it new resources, increased production, higher landvalues or influence, accrue just as in any other current development programme to the larger landowners. Some more employment and nominal increases in wage-rates are what the majority of the villagers, in the best of cases, have benefited from. There are no mechanisms whatsoever in the programme preventing or reducing the negative effects on income distribution and growing landlessness generally connected with the current production-oriented development strategy.

The hitherto dismal results regarding agricultural growth and local resource mobilization is, of course, also intimately related to the lack of true participation and sharing of real power by the majority of the rural population in the new Swanirvar institutions theretically a central goal of the programme. In spite of some initiatives or idealistic

-: 327 :-

ambitions to use the Swanirvar "movement" for elite-based organization in the rural areas, the traditional power-structure prevails. Instead it may be feared that the programme strengthens the rural elites making the poorer classes even more dependant on them.

Under such conditions the Swanirvar programme cannot be expected to become a magical vehicle for rural change that some of its proponents dream of.

"Indeed, it is indicated by our findings that if the society is not appropriately restructured, no such movement can lead to true participatory democracy creating conditions for the development of the reflective power, and the release of the creative energies of the people so that they can play their role properly and effectively in the society's struggle for development."¹⁵¹

151 Ibid., p. 57.

III

Family Planning Programme

Bangladesh is one of the few countries where population growth still remains at a very high level. Government is campaigning family planning programme along with other integrated programmes for the reduction of fertility. Many population experts believe that birth control has never been the primary factor in the observed decline in fertility. Instead social and economic development and reform have been largely responsible for past and current fertility decline and for adoption of more and more effective methods of birth control. Many studies suggest that fertility behaviour and family planning acceptance are closely related with social and economic settings which is in turn determined by the degree of development activities that have taken place in the area. The quality of life in Bangladesh has been deteriorating for high rate of population growth, particularly in rural areas. In order to improve the standard of living of the people, the country must seek to achieve significant progress in controlling the population growth. Government is committed to mobilize all its available resources to implement the family planning programme. To achieve success in this direction appropriate strategies relevant to the social needs are to be formulated. The formulation of

strategies demands investigation of basic drawbacks of the existing programmes. From the point of effectiveness, coverage and acceptance if the drawbacks are identified, the question of evolving new strategies can then only arise.

The Setting

A recent study¹⁵² indicates that Bangladesh's social setting is not conducive to a rapid decline in fertility. This study establishes a "threshold range" deemed to be favourable for achieving the desired goal of reducing the fertility rate in developing countries for various socio-economic variables relating to fertility. Table below shows that the Bangladesh indicator does not approach the threshold range for any of the variables.

Table 5.8. Indicators of Conditions Favourable to Fertility Decline

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Threshold Range</u>	<u>Bangladesh in mid-1970</u> ^a
Population in cities 2000	16-50%	8%
Non-agricultural labour force	50-60%	23%
Life expectancy	60-70 years	48 years
Female marriage before age 20	10-29%	76%
Female literacy	60-75%	12%
Hospital beds per 1,000 population	5	0.2%
Newspaper circulation per 1,000 population	70-100	4

^a Government of Bangladesh, Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh, 1978.

152 W. Parker Mauldin and Bernard Berelson, "Conditions of Fertility Decline in Developing Countries, 1965-75", in Studies in Family Planning, The Population Council, Volume 9, No. 5, May 1978, pp. 90-128.

The urgency of reducing fertility cannot be overstated. If fertility and mortality changed little from present levels, Bangladesh's population would cluster around 160 million by the year 2000. Projections reported in the World Bank's Development Report, 1979 indicate that the population would reach 145 million by the 2000 if the net reproduction rate were to decline at a pace by which it would fall to zero in 2035. Even such a decline in the net reproduction rate would mean that the natural rate of population growth would remain as high as 2% per annum until the end of the century. The implications of such growth are staggering. Arable land per person would decline from the meagre one-third of an acre at present to one-fifth of an acre by the year 2000. Annual foodgrain requirements would increase by 9 million tons just to provide the additional population with a daily ration of 15.5 oz. of foodgrains per capita. Not only could the food situation worsen without a drastic decline in population growth, but it would become increasingly impossible to educate, provide employment for, and satisfy even the most basic needs of the rapidly increasing numbers.

Population Policy and Programme Achievements

The implications of such projections are well understood both by the government and by aid donors, and a population control and family planning programme on a substantial scale

was launched in 1976. Since then, a large cadre of full-time field workers has been assembled and trained, and a wide range of informational, educational and motivational activities has been set in motion. The government's official target is to reduce fertility to the replacement level by 1990 -- a slight reduction from an earlier and unrealistic target (incorporated in a Seven Year Population Control and Family Planning Programme, FY79-85) which was to reach that level by 1985. The setting of such a target represents an indication of the government's recognition of the need for urgent action. Yet even to reach this lower but still ambitious target would require a rate of progress greater than has been achieved in any other developing country including those whose socio-economic environments appear far more conducive (in terms of indicators shown in Table 5.8) to the control of population growth.

The government's current strategy covers a broad set of activities directed towards influencing social and individual values and behavior in favour of a smaller family norm. Principal components of the government's policy are (i) delivery of integrated maternal and child health/family planning mass media activities and motivational programme; and (ii) support of the social and economic emancipation of women. The Population Control and Family Planning Division (PCFPD) of the Ministry of Health and Population Control is responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the various government agencies concerned.

In terms of programme inputs, considerable progress has been made. About 13,500 female Family Welfare Assistants have been recruited by PCFPD and, after brief initial training, are now placed in all 6,500 unions. Multi-sectoral informational, educational and motivational activities appear to have some extent 'desensitized' the population issue, highlighted population growth as both a national and individual family problem, and helped to generate demand for family planning services. Various schemes (co-operative societies, mother's clubs and vocational training) aimed at raising the socio-economic status of women have been launched, with some encouraging early results in terms of family planning acceptance. The government has also encouraged private sector activities and initiated various experimental community participation schemes; these are reported to have had some impact on acceptance of family planning methods. Other organizational developments have included : the setting up of 11 schools for training Family Welfare Visitors; completion of a study of the fertility impact of existing laws; development of a family planning service statistics system; development of a logistics system for delivering birth control materials down to the thana level; establishment of nearly 250 centres and 15 mobile units for sterilization; and creation of a programme evaluation unit in the Planning Commission. These programmes and activities appear to have had some success in raising the demand for family planning services; about 25% of eligible

-: 333 :-

couples are estimated to have an interest in these services. The actual distribution of contraceptive materials and services, however, falls far short of meeting this demand.

Table 5.9. Distribution of Contraceptive Materials and Services ('000 units).

Year	IUDs	Sterilization	Condoms (dozen)	Pills (cycles)	Others
1971-72	9	17	785	22	..
1972-73	16	1	1,598	147	74
1973-74	28	16	937	439	100
1974-75	49	19	773	1,127	107
1975-76	78	48	4,562/a	5,943/a	129
1976-77	60	123	3,848	5,188	69
1977-78	40	78	5,334	7,465	43
1978-79	22	106	4,780	7,006	..
1979-80	9	91	2,471	3,487	..

/a Includes 1,520,333 cycles of pills and 995,400 dozen condoms distributed in a special one-week campaign in January, 1976.

Source : Bangladesh Planning Commission, Family Planning Evaluation Unit, 1978.

Although actual contraceptive use has clearly recorded an increase since the early 1970's, it still falls short (by more than half) of the 5.5 million contraceptive acceptance in 1978-79 targeted by the government in 1978. It is also disturbing to note that in FY79 the reported distribution of IUDs was the lowest since FY73, while the numbers of sterilizations and of condoms and pills distributed were lower than had been recorded in earlier years (See table 5.9). The results for the first half of FY80 were about the

-: 334 :-

same in the first half of FY79 with respect of I.U.D., condom and pill distributions, while the number of sterilizations doubled. The government is hopeful of achieving the target of sterilization. Even if that target were achieved, however, there would remain a large shortfall from the rate of acceptance needed to reduce the net reproduction rate to one by 1990.

The numbers of materials and services distributed, moreover, are considerably above the numbers used, and used effectively. Preliminary analyses of sample surveys carried out by the Planning Commission evaluation unit show that levels of prevailing contraceptive use vary between 14% - 19% of eligible couples as against 8.2% in 1975. More than half of this actual use is provided by the more effective methods (sterilization, IUDs and pills). About one quarter of the eligible population is estimated to have ever practiced family planning. Another survey carried out by the Institute of Statistical Research and Training, Dacca in 1978 indicated contraceptive use at about 16% in surveyed areas. Preliminary results of a recent follow-up study of couples who underwent sterilization during the camp organized in the first half of 1977 show that 90% of acceptors are satisfied with the services received and that about 10% of non-acceptors are now willing to accept sterilization.

Family planning movement advanced at a snail's pace in Bangladesh in early 1960's owing to a multiplicity of factors i.e. superstition, lack of motivation and persuasion and

little knowledge among the general masses about the necessity of fertility reduction. Family planning programme was started on a wider scale since the beginning of 1966. Despite a massive effort, the programme, however, achieved little success in promoting family planning. After independence, the situation began to improve when the people of Bangladesh began realising the economic burden of excessive births. Instead of opposition, favourable attitude began to grow increasingly among the rural people who ultimately became aware of the various methods of family planning.

Relative success of the family planning programme is evident from the fact that the proportion of eligible women knowing some family planning methods rose from 6% (rural) existing before 1960 to 52% in 1969 (PFI Study 1970). In one study done in 1966, Waliullah showed that 90% of rural females had favourable attitude towards family planning. It was, however, a sample study conducted in Dacca. If compared with other studies done in Bangladesh, the results show a sharp contrast.

Increasing awareness about family planning among the rural people has been clearly manifested in a recent report of NFRHRD(1981). According to this report, 77.7% of all currently married women and 70% all married men were knowledgeable at least about one method of family planning in rural Bangladesh. 76% of all currently married men and 67% of all currently married females showed favourable attitude towards family planning.

Thus it is evident that more awareness has spread among the rural people about family planning. There has been also a positive change in their attitude. But the rate of current adoption of family planning practices is lagging far behind the expectation. The vast majority of Bangladesh women have not been found to use contraceptives in any form.

The Impact Survey of 1970 revealed that in 1969, from among 64% of rural eligible women knowing modern methods of contraception, only 2% of them are currently using the methods. The BFS (1975) survey showed that out of 4643 exposed women, 9.6% were reported to be using methods of contraception.

The NFRHRD report (1981) showed the current rate of adoption among the eligible couples at 19.8% including the use of clinical as well as indigenous methods.

If knowledge, attitude and practice are considered as the success index of family planning programmes we find that the rural people of Bangladesh have gained more knowledge about family planning and about its methods by now than before. But the practising family planning i.e. the rate of adoption is disappointingly very low. A wide gap exists between practice and knowledge of family planning.

Practice depends on a multitude of factors i.e. easy availability of family planning methods, strong motivation, definite commitment to practice contraception, etc. So, resorting to contraception is not only the result of motivation but it largely depends on the easy and regular supply

of services. The dissemination of knowledge about the contraceptives among the rural people has been made possible owing to vigorous family planning campaign.

According to the NFRHRD report (1981) it has been found that the major reasons of non-adoption cited by the potential clients who support family planning are fear of side effects of contraceptives, laziness, apathetic attitude and lack of delivery of family planning methods. This is also substantiated by the Second Five Year Plan (1980-85).

Though people by now have more knowledge about methods of family planning and are more favourably exposed to programmes, contraception practice will not be encouraging unless the rural people have easy access to the sources of family planning services and are free from influence of the religious elites of rural society. So the availability of supplies and services and also freedom from religious bigotry have been perennial issues since the inception of family planning programmes in Bangladesh.

It is better to know what are the sources that make family planning materials available in rural Bangladesh and how far the couples are aware of them and to what extent they are accessible ?

The NFRHRD report points out that nearly one-third of the males and a little over one-third of the female do not have any knowledge of service centre. But many of them are willing to practice contraception if available to them.

The majority of male and female respondents have listed thana family planning clinic as the major source tapped by F.W.A. and local market.

The proximity to family planning service centre is an important factor in motivating couples for adopting family planning methods. It has been widely recognized that family planning services in the developing countries are poor. Even the motivated couples will not take trouble in travelling a long distance to procure materials for family planning.

It is observed that though majority of the couples have knowledge of thana family planning clinics, in most cases they are far beyond everybody's reach since most of the villages lie at a long distance from the service centres. Family planning workers though have been stationed in the rural areas of Bangladesh to render services to the eligible couple, the couples know very little about them. This has been believed to be a manifestation of their disappointing performance in rendering services to the people. Local markets and shops are easily accessible sources to our rural people but family planning materials are inadequately found there.

Problems in Programme Implementation

The results noted above, while indicative of some progress, are obviously inadequate both in terms of meeting the government's ambitious targets and satisfying the estimated effective demand for services created partly by the efforts described

earlier. Numerous studies confirm that existing demand is not being satisfied by the present programme for four principal reasons : the failure of field workers to visit households regularly; unsatisfactory co-operation between the Health and PCFP Divisions of the Ministry of Health and Population Control; management and administrative problems affecting PCFPD; and inadequate logistics, religious issue and physical infrastructure. The most fundamental shortcoming of the programme is inadequate management and its unacceptability by the dominating religious elites in rural society of Bangladesh.

The government recognizes that improvements in the areas of management practices and fuller utilization of existing capacities are much needed, and steps have been taken in recent months to accelerate the programme's implementation. Further steps (i) to improve the the performance of PCFPD field workers through an intensive programme of retraining, establishment of a system of supervision from the national to the thana level and improved logistics; (ii) to staff PCFPD through regular appointments of full-time personnel in the middle and senior managerial positions; (iii) to make fully operational the MCH and FP units in all 280 functional thana health complexes and 1000 union family welfare centres to which family welfare visitors have been posted; (iv) to simplify the programme's administrative, financial and recruitment procedures; and (v) to promote better working relationship between the Health and PCFP Divisions has also been recommended.

The mosque and the religious elites in Bangladesh lend no material as well as spiritual support to the idea of family planning as it wound their religious feelings. The conservative and biggoted village elites are not therefore favourably exposed to idea of family planning. They fear that the dissemination of knowledge about family planning will encourage immorality in Muslim society. In many well documented cases, it has been shown that family planning programme in Bangladesh does not proceed at a desired pace owing to such unfavourable exposition. Social acceptance of the field workers may be weighed in terms of prevalent social norms and values. "To examine the social acceptability of field workers, 182 FPAs and FWAs of 9 thana were asked about the social problems encountered by them in performing their duties and it was revealed that majority of them (61%) faced religious problem. FPAs have got social acceptance to some extent but the FWAs i.e. field workers are no doubt subjected to some social criticism".¹⁵³ This is not unexpected in a traditionally sex segregated conservative Muslim society like it is in Bangladesh. Peoples' participation is a necessary condition for the successful implementation of family planning programme. This can be done with much difficulty in our elite dominated village community for the task of supervision and moral support of field workers.

153 First Follow up Survey on the Use of Audio-Visual Vans in Population Activities, External Evaluation Unit of Population Planning Section, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, May 1980, pp. 13-14.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I

Rural development has been the main focus of our many sided development activities aiming at an improvement in social and economic well-being of rural Bangladesh in the larger sense which includes the concept of greater economic equity between different socio-economic groups. It is expected that rural development programmes could not only stimulate economic development of the area as a whole, it would particularly bring benefit to the disadvantaged group of rural people. The continuous neglect of the villages has created a dangerous imbalance in the socio-economic situation of rural Bangladesh. Unless this imbalance is reduced if not removed through pursuing a strategy of development programmes, our cherished goal in raising the living standard of the people of Bangladesh will be belied. For us the vital of development activities is the rural area where about 90% of population live. If development programmes free from social constraints is not accelerated, rural problems will multiply creating a dangerous socio-economic condition for Bangladesh.

Our present study reveals that elite conflict in rural Bangladesh has made virtually ineffective the different strategy of rural development pursued so far like target group approach, basic need approach and area approach bringing no tangible benefit to the mass of the rural population. The strategy of target group approach has been distinguished from the area approach which takes into account only the general characteristics of the rural development problems. It demands an identification of the target group, problems and causes of its poverty and their possible solution.

The target group approach to rural development has been emphasized by the planners and policy makers in the present Bangladesh Government and aid giving agencies. The criteria used to define the target group are arbitrary and relative. They heavily depend on the situational context which varies from region to region in Bangladesh. So, a workable definition has not been reached by consensus. While the definition of the target group has been given by many as these farmers who are either landless, or have upto that amount of cultivable land by which one can make out a bare subsistence living.

A programme which claims to bring about positive change in the living conditions of the disadvantaged group of rural poor (landless and marginal farmers) is bound to face difficulties in the context of present social structure of

Bangladesh which has been imbalanced by the increase of landless people. Launching of any programme is closely related to rural social structure. In other words, the agrarian structure of Bangladesh demands a study of individuals in 'groups and institutions'. The analysis of the distribution of power and influence and of the relationships of patronage and dependence in our rural society is a pre-requisite for the understanding of the social structure of rural Bangladesh. Our tradition-bound society with existing institutions inherited from the past made little contribution to a breakthrough of our agrarian social structure which work under the influence of rural elites. The target group (landless and marginal farmers) exist at the bottom of the agrarian hierarchy of Bangladesh and the unfortunate majority of the rural population belong to this neglected group. It is supported by well-documented cases that the social and economic benefits of rural development projects do not reach them as expected. This is really distressing. It is reported in our study that the target group farmers heavily depend on the rural landholding elites for any kind of help in times of distress and fail to make their decision effective in rural institutions. Therefore, this group make no meaningful contact with the government development agencies in matters of their welfare. In most cases the target group farmers have not been reached by the existing development services and institutions. They have been perpetually kept in ignorance about their rights and in many instances unable to negotiate

on their own initiative with the administrative hierarchy about their problems. Mostly they depend on their elite-patrons who have their close links with the various government offices at the thana, district and capital level. An institutional framework for effectively reaching the target group is almost non-existent in present day Bangladesh.

The problems of the target group have become serious since the number of marginal and landless farmers has increased enormously in Bangladesh. They have created a grave unemployment situation in the country side. So there has been an increased concern about the distributive aspects of rural development programmes. How can the target group consisting of majority of our rural population better benefit from the development projects is a major issue for our planners and aid giving agencies.

Land reforms in the past were not of a fundamental nature. These reforms did not make the position of landless people better as the surplus lands of the big landowners above the ceiling slipped out of the hands of government. Such holdings have been well-disguised by means of benami (fictitious) transfers of rights in land. So the surplus lands could not be distributed among the landless as expected. Sharecropping conditions also remain unchanged. The sharecroppers do not hold any written contract to safeguard their interests. They sharecrop at the mercy of the landlords who can have them ousted any time on any pretext. The unequal distribution of landownership aggravates the existing poverty in rural

-: 345 :-

Bangladesh. The percentage of landless farmers is increasing at a faster rate (at present almost around 50%). In a situation where land is the prime factor of production, the trend of a rapid decrease in access to the main source of income by a growing number of rural families is obviously an unhealthy sign for the country and ultimately it weakens its economy. Any programme of rural development in Bangladesh must take into account the facts of landlessness and unequal distribution of land. In our present social structure, the landholding rural elites invariably take advantage of the helpless dependency situation of the poor target group and cream off the programme benefits. So it will be naive to assume that the project benefit will reach the small and marginal agricultural families, if no basic land reform is done and strong institution is built in the delivery of scarce inputs. The present study will help building new orientation in development efforts and institutions as well as provide fresh insight into the causes of rural poverty.

As bulk of the country's population live in the rural areas rather in poor conditions, the rural development must constitute a major part of the development strategy if a large segment of those in greatest need are to benefit. So the objectives of development must include sustained increase in per capita output and incomes, expansion of productive employment and greater equity in the distribution of economic growth. This implies reducing poverty and human misery by increasing the productivity of the poor and providing them

greater excess to goods and services. Obviously, realization of these objectives necessitates to find out a suitable development model the implementation of which will evidently give utmost emphasis on the strategies for meeting the basic needs of all people of all walks of life in the society. For maintaining sustained increase in the productivity and earnings of the low-income rural workers and house-holders, target groups are required to be specified and specific measure suitable and appropriate for production and income of each group identified. The main target groups among the rural poor in the country are small holders tenants: share croppers and the landless; each separate group may need a special programme of its own to handle the specific problems it faces and its members should participate in the organization of its programme for making the development self-sustaining.

As agriculture is the mainstay of country's economy, its advancement will ensure better employment opportunities, income distribution; increased supply of food and nutrition, etc. Most of the low-income group in the rural areas depend heavily on agriculture for their livelihood. It follows that most of the rural development programmes intended to raise rural income must centre on agricultural development. Keeping in view the shortcomings of the existing land tenure and farm system and the overall socio-economic infrastructure, higher yielding progressive farm has to put in practice. The need oriented farming system will include expansion of irrigation networks, reformed land tenure system, redesigned supply and price policies for food staff and such others.

-: 347 :-

It requires self-sustaining growth of rural institutions to make a meaningful attempt in such rural development process. Past rural development efforts in the country have clearly indicated that without a sound institutional base at the local level neither any programme can be sustained longer nor can it provide meaningful services to the masses. The relation between the existing rural development strategy and scanty elite dominated institutional framework remained loose and shaggy. Thus to attain the goal of rural development, the need is to find out a suitable conflict free institutional model which can optimize the benefits of various rural development programme to all categories of people. The Comilla approach, a two-tier co-operative system: Krishak Samabaya Samity (KSS) and its federation Thana Central Co-operative Association (TCCA) - newly adopted for the whole country under the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) though multi-sectoral in approach does not address itself in totality to all socio-economic problems and class position of rural society and hence is limited in scope. It generally caters to the benefits of landed elites bypassing the interests of the underprivileged - the landless. Moreover many of the development programmes initiated by different agencies and authorities to supplement the programme of IRDP are going in isolation and handicapped by elite conflict. These are rather barring the integration of rural development processes.

II

Breaking of the Rural Development Barriers

Traditional socio-economic and cultural factors can form rural development barriers in Bangladesh. Village elites unaccustomed to having their views challenged may not take easily to a new form of organisation. Since they may control the distribution of privileges their views are not lightly disregarded.

Yet, despite all these difficulties, rural agricultural workers' organisations may be formed as they have been formed in many parts of the developing world. Some are very effective, others less, so some are protected by law - others exist despite it. But, directly or indirectly, they all contribute to both national development and the development of the rural people themselves.

In Africa most of the rural workers' organisations are for wage earning plantation workers. They do a traditional trade union job. Some of the cameroon union, for instance, have started such special services as credit unions and small consumer stores. Several are seeking to protect the interests of seasonal migrant workers. In Zambia where the law and political will are particularly helpful, one union collectively negotiated with commercial farms for the workers and is exploring ways of helping the peasants.

In Asia too most of the organised rural workers are in the plantation sector, but there are also unions for other agricultural workers and for peasants. A plantation union in India runs its own medical services and a peasant union contributes directly to rural development by ensuring that its members get full benefit from the services and subsidies provided by the authorities. It also promotes job creation for the landless unemployed. A peasant union in the Philippines helps its members develop consumer and production co-operative activities and works with the authorities to further the implementation of land reform.

Peasant unions are widespread in Latin America where there are also many plantation unions. All the peasant organisations campaign for land reform, an essential part of rural development in their countries. Bangladesh can take an example from all these countries.

The Swanirvar movement was launched in Bangladesh after the independence of the country. But institutional framework equal to the task that Swanirvar assigns has not emerged. The existing institutional network at the village level is inadequate. In recent years, the government to achieve self-sufficiency created ad-hoc committees of similar type having similar goals. The Village Food Production Committee, Village Swanirvar Committee, Krishak Samabay Samity are the instances. Besides, there are many other organizations, village defence party, mother's club, weaver's association and many other voluntary and class associations. The most recent development

-: 350 :-

in the village level institutions is the formation of gram sarkar in all the villages of Bangladesh. These organisations are neither properly organized nor truly representative. In most cases, it would be found that chairman of a landless krishak samity is the biggest landlord of the village who is also the faction leader and on whom they all depend in times of need. The overlapping nature of different organizations are confusing to the rural people and the influential rural elites have taken command of these organizations. It does not make any sense to put persons having opposing economic interest and widely unequal strength in the same organization to work together. This being the situation, the need for balanced development processes has become an urgent task of Bangladesh Government. It is being increasingly realized that organization, mobilization and participation of village development committees free from conflict and tension constitute the only effective means of the motivation and organization if people in every village of Bangladesh are taken care of by an integrated multipurpose and socially progressive relevant approach and strategy.

People's Participation and Leadership

A successful development policy within a democratic framework must supply the means by which the rural masses can participate actively in the resolution of conflicts and in the creation of working rules that stimulate new resource orientation. People's participation is a pre-requisite to successful implementation of the rural development programmes. It is here defined as the direct involvement of rural inhabitants through grass-root's level organization in the decision making, planning and implementation of development activities without any influence or bias.

In the past no development plan had been able to instil into people the concept of self motivated efforts. It is to be admitted that rural development can not yield quick results unless the people as a whole can be attached to it through their participation. Participation calls for self-motivational efforts which are directly linked with development planning. Unless and until planning does reflect the true mirror of the people, it does not generate peoples' confidence in whatever plans and programmes we undertake in view of pressing social and economic demands. In this regard, the officials shall have to come close to the people who know best where the shoe pinches.

The government is not an isolated phenomenon, divorced from the realities of life. There should not be any social distance between the people and government. So the government officials are to work with the people for rural development. The people on the spot can say where their problems are located. Such people with the enormous manpower and the impressive conflict free organisational management can work out miracles that no magic can equal.

A situation in Bangladesh where government representative consult the local people (normally through the rural elites and faction leaders) guide government decision making and where peoples' involvement in the implementation of development activities is confined to the provision of local resources (generally free labour) and where no village level organization takes initiative in matters of rural development, would not qualify as peoples' participation. In matters of rural development the gram sarkar acts in response to the union parishad and the union parishad in response to thana development agencies and so on. There is, however, a communication gap between the villagers and the higher development agencies which act as patron. The villagers therefore remain unaware about development plans when decisions are taken at higher levels. High level administration simply issues instructions to lower level and hence there is lack of two-way communication between the villagers and higher development agencies. For this reason development programmes are not properly initiated to have better living for the rural mass.

-: 353 :-

The study reveals that leadership of the local institution is given by the rural elites who own a large amount of wealth in land and other assets. The relation between the leaders and the villagers is like relations between patrons and clients. New elite leadership has, however, grown since liberation of Bangladesh, but the traditional leadership of decadent feudal families is also a force to be counted on in the decision making process. Socially they are still held in high esteem though economically they have been downgraded.

The rural life of Bangladesh is based on village community and community relations are influenced by group interaction. As the residence proximity of most of the villagers are characterized by a close-unit social organization, it is easy to approach and communicate with the people in the school, village council, mosque, temple, markets. Most of the village groups usually meet in these places. A village community consists of a number of social groups. These are kinship groups and occupational groups; which in course of time give rise to conflicting factions. A faction is a common and permanent feature of community life of rural Bangladesh. The power in the community being wielded by factions degenerates into conflict which ultimately hinders the pace of development work of the village community.

Village factions play both constructive and destructive role in the rural development work. Their role depend on how they are approached and utilized.

Prior to starting any community development programme in rural Bangladesh, the programme initiator must have to identify the formal leaders such as chairman and members of the union council and gram sarkar prodhans, and informal leaders such as matbars and their factional loyalties and inter-group relationship. Identification of faction and faction leaders can be possible by informal meetings with people and keeping a record of the past history of feuds and litigations of the villages. Social visits on the occasion of birth, akika, sunnat, marriage, death and such others are indications of faction alignments.

After identification of the faction leaders in the initial stage of any rural development programme, it is necessary to hold discussion with different faction leaders to arrive at a consensus to smoothly implement the programmes. Without any meeting and discussion of different faction leaders of the village, if development programmes are taken up, the community participation would bound to become lower at last by feeling.

In a predominantly rural economy like Bangladesh, village is the nucleus of development and each village is considered best as socio-economic institution for rural development. In view of the development strategy for Bangladesh the composition of the gram sarkar may be as follows :

Each occupational group in the village may be organized into association. In organizing the associations great cautions have to be taken so that persons with conflicting interests may not enter into these organizations. The restriction must be backed by strict legal measure. The representatives of these association should form the gram sarkar. The gram sarkar should be elected on the basis of adult franchise and should also represent the village in the union parishad. In other words, the same person who has been elected by the villagers as UP member shall automatically become the gram pradhan. This will remove the existing conflict between the UP member elites and the gram sarkar elites.

What is the future of the people of rural Bangladesh crowded into land which is condemned to a short life through persistent use of depletive cultivation technique, the answer lies beyond the realm of a few simple changes in the economic organization of peasants. As we have seen, the manner in which peasants organize their production units depends not only upon the resources at their disposal and available technology, but also upon the influence & conflict free institutional framework which prescribes the rules for transaction among individuals and groups and establishes opportunities and access to information about physical and social environment. Today, these institutional framework is controlled and manipulated by the rural elites to make their personal gain. Also the peasants' lives are profoundly

influenced by economic and political events which take place outside their local communities, but has an effect on the village community.

Peasants with little or no permanent access to land are not only at the mercy of their superordinates for income earning opportunities, but also are effectively denied the political and social rights associated with the ownership of a viable economic unit. These latter rights are the right to tax, the right to judge, the power to enact; closely related to land tenure institutions, are those working rules by which rural masses organize to provide collectively the infrastructural needs which can not be supplied individually. These working rules are made by politically powerful rural elites in the village communities.

Unless an entirely new development approach is implemented to provide remunerative income earning opportunities and higher levels of living for the rural masses, the resulting conflict situations are likely to evoke violent means of change.

Bangladesh underwent a prolonged period of what may be called institutional instability. The formal rural institutions of government were kept to a minimum and badly administered and they always remained under the influence of the rural elites. The relation between the existing rural development strategy and scanty elite dominated institutional framework remained loose, shaggy and fragile for lack of

motivation of rural people and the absence of their mental preparation for a structural change of agrarian society. The institutional inadequacy carried over to informal or traditional forms of political and social control as well. The permanent settlement proved pernicious to autonomous, non-government channels of decision and social control. The rural institution seem to have been very much weakened by the frequent conflicts of rural elites. Thus the social and political organization of agrarian society of Bangladesh became "segmented, diffuse and in flux" Sardars, or matbars and wealthy influential elites constitute rural political units, act as a court of first resort in the resolution of local conflicts and little less social control. The effect of this system is twofold: local matters remain personalized but institutional under the orgis of authority and wealth. And political authority tend to be dispersed. The diffuse and baltered rural institutions comined with the intricacies and complex network of land tenure do not help the balanced execution of rural development programme. So the fundamntal of rural development is a viable rural institution free from factional influence and elite conflict.

The main reason of failure of rural development programme is lack of identification of conflicting factions which oppose the programmes for maintaining their supremacy over each other. In the present day rural Bangladesh such a strategy is not, however, adopted by the social planners and policy makers.

The basic structure of relationships between the rural elites and the masses of the village community remains essentially the same. This dominant group manipulate the local resources to their own advantage which creates great frustrations among the masses of rural population. How can they improve their position relative to other segments of society, or at least, resist further declines in their levels of living.

Political and social leadership in the villages of Bangladesh centres on the socially and economically dominant group of people. This dominant elite group tend to organize what exists in the way of collective activities, be these religious or secular. Thus a laudable attempt of rural programme to organize development at village or union level is sure to fall in the hands of this group and there is a risk of concentrating the benefits of development in the hands of the dominant rural elites. It enhances the distrust of the poor peasants who are majority in Bangladesh. The rural development, no doubt, collapses in such a context.

The success of the current rural development strategy employed in Bangladesh depends heavily upon resolving the elite conflict and by doing away with patron-client relationship which acts as a great social constraint in the rural development process of Bangladesh. The present strategy has been formulated almost entirely by experts influenced by

-: 359 :-

the elites who continue to exploit the peasantry much the same way as they did in the past. There does not seem to be any indication that rural development programmes undertaken in Bangladesh are improving the socio-economic conditions of the rural masses. The evidence tends to suggest that power had been in the hands of the rural elite before the community development programmes were introduced. We can more or less conclude that programmes taken up so far in Bangladesh have apparently done little to affect the position of the elites in our agrarian society. Rather it has increased the conflict and tension in agrarian society which adversely affect the institutional setting of rural development. As there lacks meaningful peoples' participation in the development programmes in such context of rural Bangladesh, they are bound to fail.

Glossary

Some words, however, though explained initially, have not been explained when they occur subsequently and such words are included here.

Aus	A kind of paddy broadcast in March and harvested in July
Aman	A kind of paddy broadcast in October and harvested in December
Abhadra	Low and mean minded man
Akika	A Muslim ritual of sacrificing animals for the newly born baby
Boro	A kind of paddy broadcast in January and harvested in April
Bakshish	Tips
Benami	Fictitious
Bhadralok	Gentleman
Bargadars	Sharecroppers
Bhongso	Patrilinear Group
Borga	Sharecropping
Chulas	Hearths
Chars	River beds
Cröre	Ten million

Gram Sarkar	Village local self-government
Geno Pharmaceuticals	Medicine for the general mass of the people
Gram Sabha	Village Assembly
Genapatshala	Public School
Genoshastha Kendra	Public Health Centre
Gram Sarkar Proshan	Head of the Village local self Government
Gosti	Lineage
Hat	Local market held once or twice a week
Haers	Depressed area
Jhils	Depressed area
Jagirdars	Persons who are given grants for specific politico-military duties
Jatiya Samabaya Bank	National Co-operative Bank
Jotdar	One who lives on receiving the rent of a half-share of the crops on the land leased out for sharecropping
Karma Shibir	Work Camp
Kowmiye Khemar	Co-operative farm
Kowmiye Pashupalen	Co-operative animal farm
Krishak Samabaya Samity	Peasants' Co-operative Society
Khasland	Government land
Mahedjens	Moneylenders
Maund (1 maund)	One maund is equal to 82.3 lbs
Mullahs	Muslim religious guide
Masque	Place of worship for the Muslims
Matbars	Informal village leaders
Furdah	Veil for the grown up Muslim Women

-: 362 :-

Para	Ward
.Paiks	Peon
Pacca	Made of bricks and cement
Raiyats	Tenants
Reyai	Lineage group
Shaistha Shebak	Male paramedico
Sheistha Shebika	Female paramedico
Shelish	Informal body to settle disputes in the village
Samsaj	Society
Sarder	Headmen
Sunnat	Circumcision
Sarker	Government
Thana	Police Station
Talukdars	Temporary revenue collectors
Tika	Contract
Union Parishad	Union Council (consisting of a number of villages)
Zilla Parishad	District local self-government
Zamir Malik	Owner of land

REFERENCE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdullah, Abu
1973 Land Reform and Agrarian Change in Bangladesh.
Dacca, B.I.D.S.
- Abdullah, Abu/
Nations, Richard
1974 Agrarian Development and IRDP in Bangladesh.
Dacca, B.I.D.S.
- Arens, Jenneke/
Beurden, Jas Van
1977 Jhagrapur Poor Peasants and Women in a
Village in Bangladesh.
Paupers' Press Co-operative Limited, England.
- 1975 Power Structure and Modernisation of
Agriculture in Bangladesh; unpublished.
- Ahmad, Nafis
1968 An Economic Geography of East Pakistan.
(Second Edition), London, Oxford
University Press.
- Alavi, Hamza
1975 "Peasant Classes and Primitival Loyalties".
Journal of Peasant Studies, London (Frank
Class), Vol. I.
- "India and the Colonial Mode of Production".
Socialist Register, London (Merlin).
- Adnan, S./
Islam, R.
1975 Social Structure and Resource Allocation in
a Chittagong Village..
Working Paper. Village Study Group.
University of Dacca/BIDS, Dacca, mimeo.

-: 364 :-

- Ahmed, Badruddin
1972 Who Decides ? Role of Managing Committee in A.F.C.; BARD, Comilla.
- Alamgir, M.K.
1977 Development through Self-Help: Ulashi-Jadunathpur : A Review. Undated, mimeo.
- Bendis, R and
Lipset, S.M.(eds.)
1954 Class, Status and Power.
London; Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Bessaignet, Pierre
1960 Social Research in East Pakistan.
Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan.
- 1963 "Family and Kinship in a Hindu Village of East Pakistan". In Md. Afsaruddin (ed.), Sociology and Social Research in Pakistan.
Dacca: The Pakistan Sociological Association.
- Bertocci, Peter J.
1972 "Community Structure and Social Rank in Two Villages in Bangladesh".
Contributions to Indian Sociology.
N.S. No.6. 28-52.
- 1970 Elusive Village : Social Structure and Community Organization in Rural East Pakistan.
Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. East Lansing: Michigan State University.
- Beteille, Andre
1966 Caste, Class and Power.
Bombay: Oxford University Press.
- 1972 "The Tribulations of Fieldwork".
Economic and Political Weekly,
Nos. 31-33. Special Number.
- 1974 Studies in Agrarian Social Structure.
Delhi: Oxford University Press.

-: 365 :-

Broomfield, J.H.
1968

Elite Conflict in a Plural Society :
Twentieth Century Bengal.
University of California Press.

Bangladesh Land Holding (Limitation) Order (1972) in the
Bangladesh Gazettee, Dacca, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary
Affairs.

Bargadars' Plight in West Bengal (1974), in the Times of
India.

Belden, J.
1973

China Shakes the World.
Middlesex (Penguin).

Bullough, Vera L.
1974

The Subordinate Sex : A History of
Attitudes Toward Women.
Middlesex (Penguin).

Census Commission of
Bangladesh
1973

Population and Estimate of Population
of Bangladesh. Bulletin 1.
Dacca, Ministry of Home Affairs.

1974

Bangladesh Population Census 1974
Provisional Results. Bulletin 1.
Dacca, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Census of Pakistan
1951

Census of Pakistan, Vol. 3, East Bengal,
Reports and Tables.
Karachi, Government of Pakistan.

1961a

Population Census of Pakistan, Census
Bulletin No. 2.
Karachi, Ministry of Home Affairs,
Government of Pakistan.

1961b

Population Census of Pakistan:
District Census Report Dacca.
Karachi, Census Commissioner, Pakistan.

-: 366 :-

- Day, Lal Behari
1970 Bengal Peasant Life.
Calcutta, Book Society of India, 1878.
- Dhansore, D.N.
1976 "Peasant Protest and Politics - The Tebhaga
Movement in Bengal. (India), 1946-47".
Journal of Peasant Studies, London,
Frank Glass, Vol. III.
- Dumont, R.
1973 Short Notes on Some Villages and Some
Problems.
Dacca, Ford Foundation.
1973. A Self-Reliant Rural Development for the
Poor Peasantry of Sonar Bangladesh.
Dacca, Ford Foundation.
- 1973 Problems and Prospects for Rural Development
in Bangladesh.
Dacca, Ford Foundation.
- Dutt, R. Palme
1970 India Today.
Calcutta, Manisha.
- Ellickson, J.
1975 Observations from the Field on the
Condition of Rural Women in Bangladesh.
Comilla (Paper for the BARD Seminar
on HYV).
- Griffin, K.
1970 "Foreign Capital, Domestic Savings and
Economic Development".
In Bulletin of the Oxford University,
Institute of Economics and Statistics.
- Garret, J.H.E.
1910 Bengal District Gazetteers, Nadia, Calcutta.
Bengal Secretariat Book Depot.
- Gough, K./
Sharma, Hari (eds.)
1974 "Indian Peasant Uprisings".
Economic and Political Weekly.
Bombay (Sameeksha).

-: 367 :-

- Huq, M. Aminul (ed.)
1978 Exploitation and the Rural Poor - A Working Paper on Rural Power Structure in Bangladesh.
Comilla, BARD.
- Huq, M. Nurul
1973 Village Development in Bangladesh.
Comilla, BARD.
- Islam, A.K.M. Aminul
1974 A Bangladesh Village Conflict and Cohesion: Anthropological Study of Politics.
Cambridge, Schenkman Publishing Company.
- Jahan, Rounaq
1973 Women in Bangladesh.
Dacca, Ford Foundation.
- Khan, Akhter Hameed
1971 Tour of Twenty Thanas.
Comilla, BARD.
- Kollantai, A.
1972 Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle - Love and the New Morality.
Bristol, Falling Wall Press.
- Karim, A.K. Nazmul
1955 "Some Aspects of Popular Beliefs Among the Muslims of Bengal".
Eastern Anthropologist, Vol.19: 29-51.
- 1956 Changing Society in India and Pakistan.
Dacca, Ideal Publications.
- 1980 The Dynamics of Bangladesh Society.
Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
New Delhi.
- Khan, Azizur Rahman
1972 The Economy of Bangladesh.
London, The Macmillan Press Ltd.

-: 368 :-

- Lindquist, A.C.
1978 Co-operatives. Rural Development and the State : A Bangladesh Case Study.
Thesis, University of Sussex.
- Lipton, M.
1977 Why Poor People Stay Poor : A Study of Urban Bias in World Development.
Temple Smith Ltd., London.
- Ladejinsky, W.
1975 How Green is the Indian Green Revolution ? Comilla (Paper for the BARD Seminar on HYV).
- Lenin, V.I.
1972 On the Emancipation of Women.
Moscow, Progress Publishers.
- 1972 The Land Question and the Fight for Freedom.
Moscow, Progress Publishers.
- 1973 On the Socialist Transformation of Agriculture.
Moscow, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House.
- Lindenbaum, Sh.
1974 The Social and Economic Status of Women in Bangladesh.
Dacca, Ford Foundation.
- Mandel, E.
1971 Marxist Economic Theory.
Calcutta, etc. (Rupa).
- Mukherjee, Ramkrishna
1957 The Dynamics of a Rural Society.
Berlin, Akademie Verlag.
- 1971 Six Villages of Bengal.
Bombay, Popular Prakashan.

-: 369 :-

Myrdal, Gunnar
1970

The Challenge of World Poverty - A World
of Anti-Poverty Programme Outline.
Pantheon Books, New York.

Mereland, W.H.
1968

The Agrarian System of Moslem India.
Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporations.

Planning Commission
1973

First Five Year Plan 1973-78.
Dacca, Government of Bangladesh.

Qadir, S.A.
1964

Village Dhanishwar - Three Generations of
Man-Land Adjustment in an East Pakistan
Village.
Comilla, BARD.

Reed, Evelyn
1972

Problems of Women's Liberation.
New York, Pathfinder.

Restow, W.W.
1960

The Stages of Economic Growth. CUP.

Schendel, W. Van
1974

At Bby : The Peasantry of Bangladesh.
Thesis, University of Amsterdam.

Sen, Sunil
1972

Agrarian Struggle in Bengal 1946-47.
New Delhi, etc. People's Publishing House.

Stoeckel, J./
Chowdhury, Moqbul A.
1973

Fertility, Infant Mortality and Family
Planning in Rural Bangladesh.
Dacca, Oxford University Press.

:- 370 :-

Srinivas, M.N. (ed.)
1955

India's Villages.
Bombay, Asia Publishing House.

Srinivas, M.N. ✓
Shah, A.M.
1960

"The Myth of Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village". Economic Weekly.
Economic Weekly, No. 37, 1375-78.

Weber, Max
1947

The Theory of Social and Economic Organization.
(Translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons).
New York, The Free Press of Glencoe.

1948

"Class, Status, Party".
In H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (translated and ed.), From Max Weber : Essays in Sociology.
London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

1966

General Economic History.
(Translated by Frank, H. Knight),
Collier Books, New York.

Wolf, Eric R.
1969

Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century.
London (Faber).

Wood, G.D.
1973

"From Raiyat to Rich Peasant".
South Asian Review. Vol. VII, No. 1.

1975

The Politics of Rural Development in Bangladesh. A Study of Class and Power from a Comilla Village.
Comilla (Paper for the BARD Seminar on HYV).

.....