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A New Systems Approach to Design Gender- Training for Government Officials in Achieving Higher National Productivity : Bangladesh Perspectives

Kazi Hasan Imam*

Abstract: *The optimum National Productivity (NP) can be achieved when both men and women are developed as Human Resources (HR) with equal importance and they can work supportively together with their full potential. The measures of NP are generally depicted in a manner more economically tuned rather than socially valued. Women's contribution to economic development in the past often went unmeasured and unrecognized. Their potential were ignored, their access to services, assets and opportunities were restricted, rationed and sometimes denied by the patriarchal society. As a result, their productivity relative to their potential remained low. Social re-engineering of the existing value systems through gender-friendly attitudinal changes of people in the society would increase their productivity, which in turn, would help achieve higher NP. Social re-engineering of value systems calls for effective and sustainable training capable of changing attitudes of the society towards gender issues. Imparting such training to the Government officials, the key social change-agents in the developing nations, would be a step forward to this end. Gender-Training carried out so far around the developing world has never been able to address the problems emanated from the deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes of the society, rather it has become to be the charity functions of the sponsoring development partners. The new systems approach developed to design gender-training based on social engineering of attitudes would eventually demolish the existing attitudinal barriers creating dysfunctional impacts on Productivity Relations Systems (PRS) and would be of immense help for reversing women's roles in development. This would obviously, in turn, help achieve higher national productivity.*

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1.0 Introduction

National Productivity (NP) is a composite measure of how efficiently a nation converts its input resources into output goods and services. A nation's productivity performance and its ability to make meaningful improvements are determined by various factors. Human resources (HR) are considered as the central factor of productivity functions. Women folk constitute half of the country's total workforce. Therefore, the optimum NP can only be achieved when both men and women are developed as HR with equal importance and they can work supportively together with their full potential. But the persistent discrimination against women of various magnitudes in different gender issues do not support realization of their full potential.

Basically women have no identity of their own. They are identified as somebody's daughters or sisters or wives or mothers throughout their life—in reality, this is their so called social and family status. Kamla Bhasin has rightly pointed out that "nature produces males and females, society turns them into men and women, feminine and masculine" through its patriarchal attitudes, cultures and practices (Bhasin, 1999, p. 34, emphasis added). The practitioners have realised after decade-long development efforts that enhancing women's participation in development is essential not only for achieving social justice but also for reducing poverty and achieving higher NP. Analysing world-wide experiences the World Bank argued that supporting a stronger role for women contributes to economic growth, improves child survival and overall family health, reduces fertility, thus help to slow population growth rates (The World Bank, 1994, p. 7). Experience suggests that women produce half the food in some parts of the developing world, bear most of the responsibilities for household food security and make up a quarter of work force in industry and a third in services. In addition to income-generating activities, women's household activities include caring for the sick, maintenance of house and such vital works as caring for children, preparing food and fetching firewood and water. Despite these known returns, women still face

many barriers in contributing to and benefiting from development. The barriers begin with comparatively low investment in female education and health, continue with restricted access to services and assets and are made worse by social, legal and regulatory constraints on women's opportunities. As a result, the progress in development over the last few decades has not been translated into proportional gains for women and their productivity relative to their potential remained low.

Most women in Bangladesh still suffer deep discrimination. Their contribution to economic development in the past often went unmeasured and unrecognised (Mian, 1994, p. 2). The in-built biological advantage of girls is soon outweighed by social discrimination. The low status of women is deeply embedded in the traditional society that has valued girls much less than boys. Parents view a girl child as a temporary guest who will leave the household after marriage and cost a dowry. Even after marriage woman carries her low status into her new household (Monsoor, 1999, p. 32). The traditional subservient position of women is also enshrined in Bangladeshi laws. The problem of lack of participation of women in development and lack of access to opportunities basically emanates from religious laws, socio-cultural practices, illiteracy, religious superstitions etc. of the patriarchal society, which govern their lives.

However, despite historical reasons and persisting discrimination against women, the situation is improving. Many of the gaps are slowly narrowing. Some of the changes reflect broader movements in the society. NGOs are playing a vital role in ensuring women's participation in development activities. Their micro-credit programmes, conscientization efforts etc. provided a big breakthrough in this respect. Participation of women in the UP-election, Civil society movements, new literature on women's rights, new consciousness, enactment of new and strict laws, institutional changes and development, employment of women in formal sector establishments, development of women's economic power, adoption of the National Action Plan after the Beijing

Declaration in 1995 and the National Policy for the Advancement of Women in 1997, stipend programme for female education, formation of NCWD (National Council for Women's Development), establishment of hostel facilities for working women, Legal Aid Cell, shelters for oppressed women, National Action Plan for combating women's problems by different Ministries etc. are some of the glaring examples to this end.

Despite all these achievements, several positive interventions undertaken by the Government and massive donors' support over the last two decades, most women still enjoy much less opportunities in all respects like calorie intake, access to education, health care facilities, employment, freedom of and participation in decision making, share of hereditary property etc. as compared to men. Therefore, the efforts made so far could not reverse the women's roles in development and their expected productivity still remains in the dearth. That means, the problem lies elsewhere and the efforts made to this end appear to be a fly's push to move an iceberg. The present study intends to identify where the problems creating dysfunctional impact on the processes of ensuring women's access to opportunities and transforming them in productive workforce actually lie. It then attempts to devise a framework or systems approach, which would guide to offset the iceberg.

1.1 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

NP has both social and economic connotations. But experience suggests that the measures of NP are generally depicted in a manner more economically tuned rather than socially valued. Economists often understand productivity as the ability to produce something economically valued by someone. Nourishing children, caring sick, cooking food, fetching firewood and water etc. performed mostly by women have no productive value in our society. Moreover, the patriarchy puts hundreds of strong left hooks/barriers against women for which they cannot bloom with their full potentials; they cannot work and excel according to the abilities they actually or

might have. Due to the persistent discriminatory attitudes of the patriarchal society towards different gender issues their productivity always remains low. Thus, social re-engineering of the patriarchal gender-values through gender-friendly attitudinal changes of people in the society would increase their productivity, which in turn, would help achieve higher NP. Social re-engineering of gender-values calls for effective "counselling & motivational exercise training" capable of changing attitudes of the society towards gender issues.

Although Gender literature indicates the existence of as many as ten different systems approaches [e.g. (i) The Conceptual Approach, (ii) The Policy Analysis Approach, (iii) The Empirical Approach, (iv) The Action-Reflection Approach, (v) The Experiential Approach, (vi) The Women's Welfare Approach, (vii) The Institutional Approach, (viii) The Gender-Needs Approach, (ix) The Social Development Approach and (x) The Participatory Workshop Approach] to design gender-training, none of them could create a considerable impact on the persistent discriminatory attitudes of the society towards different gender issues. Gender-Training designed on the basis of the above mentioned systems approaches has been under implementation with massive donors' support for more than two decades. Still, it has not yet been institutionalised. In fact, no training institution owns such training; they have no effective and sustainable gender-training agenda; they impart gender-training only when donors' supports are available and they have time to do that (Kasente, 1998, p. 61). Gender-Training carried out so far around the developing world has never been able to address the problems emanating from the deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes of the society, rather it has become to be the charity functions of the sponsoring development partners.

Time demands that gender perspectives be incorporated into development approach as a whole and human development arena in particular (Rahman, 1998, p. 10). The present study considers "appropriate attitudinal changes" towards different gender issues as the driving force for social re-engineering of gender-values, which

would help ensure "women human resources development" and bring about a paradigm shift in the total productivity relations systems. The Government officials at different levels often work as a vital catalyst for any form of social change in our country. They are the planners and implementers of policies, plans and programmes formulated and undertaken by the Government. Their positive attitudes towards gender issues are very important to ensure appropriate formulation and implementation of those policies, plans and programmes in one hand and to bring about any change to this end in the society on the other. Therefore, imparting gender-training "based on social re-engineering of attitudes" to the Government officials, the key social change-agents in the developing nations, would be a step forward to this end. The present study has been designed first to assess their attitudes towards different gender issues which act as barriers to productivity systems and then to develop a systems approach to design gender-training for them so that they become more sensitised and gender responsive for playing catalytic roles in gender development.

Attitude of human beings is a very complex and dynamic phenomenon. Quantitative assessment of attitudes towards gender issues is rather more complex. There is no single parameter by which it can be measured. During mid '1990s, UNDP introduced a number of indices like Gender-related Development Index (GDI), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) etc. for better understanding of the human development issues. In fact, GDI and GEM are composite measures reflecting gender inequalities in human development. The GDI measures achievements in the same dimensions by using the same variables as the Human Development Index (HDI). In addition to that it takes into account inequality in achievements between men and women. While the GEM measures gender inequality in economic and political opportunities (UNDP, 2000, p. 147).

The GDI and GEM are, of course, two powerful indices or tools to look into gender inequalities. But they cannot necessarily reflect how and to what extent gender inequalities emanate from the

patriarchal attitudinal problems and their resultant dysfunctional impacts on productivity relations systems. Although discriminative attitudes towards gender issues create gender inequalities, only GDI and GEM cannot assess them. Therefore, opinion surveys to look into the generic behavioural patterns of people towards different gender issues can be considered as an effective tool to overcome this problem. In this case the generosity and sincerity of respondents may not remain out of question. Moreover, gender problem is not a unisectoral but a cross-cutting issue. It varies from and within sectors, social institutions and class structures.

In the given circumstances, the present study considers "social re-engineering of attitudes" towards different gender issues as the driving force that would regulate the whole productivity systems' functions for increased NP. The underlying universally recognized gender issues have been considered for the study, which may be characteristically categorized into the following three major productivity input sub-systems for better understanding the existing and the conceived productivity relations systems' functions :

- (i) Physiological Input Sub-Systems that includes : (a) Access to Food and Nutrition, (b) Access to Health Care Facilities and (c) Reproductive Rights & Reproductive Health;
- (ii) Social Input Sub-Systems that includes : (a) Access to Education, (b) Access to Employment Opportunities, (c) Participation in the Nation Building Activities, (d) Political Participation, (e) Gender Values in Working Environment, (f) Gender Values Towards Generation Flow, and (g) Freedom of Decision Making; and
- (iii) Regulatory Input Sub-Systems that includes : (a) Birth Rights, (b) Heredity of Rights on Property and (c) Privileges and Empowerment.

Before going on to the detailed analysis of the universally recognized specific gender issues, the study would also look into

the reactions of people under study for understanding their level of awareness about gender issues.

1.2 The Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is "to devise a new systems approach" that can be adopted to design effective and sustainable gender training for the Government officials which would in turn help achieve higher NP. Since "attitudinal changes" have been considered as the "driving force" for such systems approach, the study would assess their existing attitudes towards universally recognized gender issues grouped into the aforesaid three major productivity input sub-systems. However, the specific objectives of the study are as follows :

- a. To assess and analyse the attitudes of the people concerned towards different universally recognized gender issues for understanding their functional relationships within the productivity relations systems;
- b. To devise a new systems approach capable of social re-engineering of gender values and that can be adopted to design effective and sustainable Gender-Training for achieving higher NP; and
- c. To suggest policy measures supportive to effective implementation of the proposed systems approach.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

Experience suggests that development goals cannot be achieved by keeping half of the country's productive workforces aloof from development initiatives. Ensuring mass participation of women in development requires inducement of gender indiscriminate access to services, assets and opportunities and a strongly supportive environment for them. The existing socio-cultural and religious values and practices, religious superstitions, mass illiteracy etc. strongly stand against these initiatives. The Government officials of different levels can play vital roles in eliminating such barriers. Their affirmative attitudinal changes towards gender issues would

reverse the women's roles in development and thus help achieve higher NP. The study intends to find out a means for bringing about such attitudinal changes in the society as a whole and in the Government officials in particular.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Although, the attitudinal problems towards gender issues lie deep into the society (Monsoor, 1999, p. 2), the present study has included the views of the Government officers of different levels only. Psychological study suggests that they tend to be very rational in providing opinions on any issue. A crosscheck survey method has been adopted to check the veracity of their views. It was felt that anthropological study would have been better in this case, but it was not possible to conduct such study due to time and other constraints. The output of the study may be very helpful for the trainers, researchers, policy makers and the action programme managers of the relevant fields during implementation of plans or programmes.

2.0 Methodology of the Study

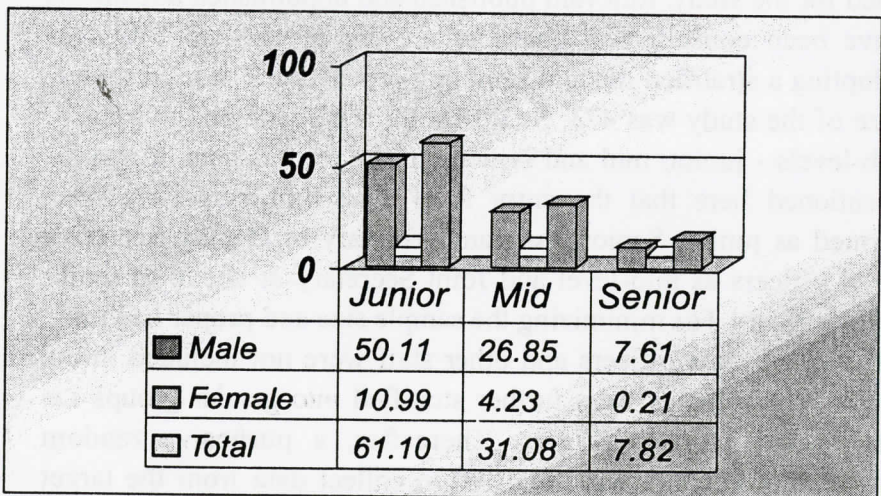
An empirical approach has been followed for conducting the study. Both the primary and secondary information and data have been used for the study. Relevant published and unpublished documents have been consulted. A questionnaire survey method was used adopting a stratified random sampling procedure. The total sample size of the study was 473. Stratification was made on the basis of job-levels - junior, mid and senior—of the respondents. It may be mentioned here that the entry level class-I officers have been termed as junior, Senior Assistant Secretary to Deputy Secretary level officers as mid-level and Joint Secretary & above as senior level officers. For minimizing the sample size and proper handling, the second class officers and other staff were not included in the study. The samples were further stratified into gender groups i.e. males and females (Fig-1). Thereafter, a purposive random sampling procedure was followed to collect data from the target group.

The study has used both simple and cross-tabulation for its analyses. Graphical representations like bar diagrams, conical graphs and other statistical techniques, such as corresponding weighing methods to responses with ranks were employed for analyzing and interpreting data. The analytical description has been made mostly according to the corresponding tables (but tables of primary data have not been presented here only to minimize the size of the paper) and statistical techniques and tests employed.

The process of weighing system of ranked responses was as follows :

Ranks of the Responses	Corresponding Assigned Weights
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6

Fig-1 : Sample Design : Stratified Clusters of Respondents (in %)



The sum of weighted value of each individual parameter was then calculated with the following formula :

$$S = \sum [(n1 \times 1), (n2 \times 2), (n3 \times 3), (n4 \times 4), (n5 \times 5), (n6 \times 6)]$$

... .. [Formula-1]

Where, S = Sum of weighted rank value of a certain parameter;

n = Number of responses;

n1 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 1;

n2 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 2;

n3 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 3;

n4 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 4;

n5 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 5;

n6 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 6;

and 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are the corresponding weight values assigned for Rank 1, Rank 2, Rank 3, Rank 4, Rank 5 and Rank 6 respectively.

Finally, considering the weighted values (with highest rank) of all the responses for a particular parameter as hundred percent, percentage-wise weights/strengths of each parameter was calculated with the help of the following formula :

$$\text{Stn.} = \frac{S}{N \times r_n} \times 100 \quad \dots \dots \dots \text{[Formula-2]}$$

Where, Stn. = Strength or Degree (in %) of opinion of a certain parameter;

S = Sum of weighted rank value of a certain parameter;

N = Total number of responses against a certain parameter;

r_n = The highest possible rank value/weightage for a certain parameter;

It is important to note that the foregoing statistical procedures were performed to convert ordinal data into more quantifiable form so that the respondents' views on different gender issues can be depicted more effectively.

Spearman's Rank Correlation of Co-efficient i.e.

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n^3 - n} \dots \dots \dots \text{[Formula-3].}$$

has been employed applying permutation-combination methods among the respondents of different levels for checking consistency of their views towards different gender issues to draw statistical inferences.

Here, r_s = Spearman's Rank Correlation of Co-efficient
 d = Differences in rank of paired values
 n = Number of pairs

Therefore, the hypothesis, where r_s is used would be as follows :

1. Null Hypothesis : There is no significant consistency amongst the views of the respondents of different job-levels or of different gender groups.
 (H_0)
2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1) : There is a significant consistency amongst the views of the respondents of different job-levels or of different gender groups.

3.0 Analysis and Findings

The attitudes towards gender issues are to a great extent, determined by one's family, educational and religious backgrounds. Other socio-economic characteristics like economic, social association, employment status etc. may also play a vital role in shaping one's attitudes towards gender issues. For example, an educated woman is very much conscious about her reproductive health; fertility rate of employed women is generally low (Rahman, 1993, p. 14); an educated husband usually becomes more tolerant, sympathetic and empathetic to gender problems in general and to his wife's problems in particular. Education is functionally considered as the lever to bring about positive attitudinal changes towards gender issues (Mongella, 1995, p. 114). Illiteracy is a

major contributor to women's marginalization and low status in life. The gender gap is mostly pronounced in the poorer countries of the world because of their low literacy rate, especially low literacy rate amongst the females.

UNDP considers gender equality in all spheres of life as a pre-condition for sustainable human development. It suggests that the best way to achieve this is to decentralize decision-making and allow equal participation for both men and women in planning and implementing programmes that affect their life (UNDP, 1996, p. 27). Statistics shows that gender discrimination is prevalent everywhere - in family, community, society and nation. Women's socio-economic, political and legal status has changed very little throughout the history for the majority of the World's population. A World Bank study indicates that a woman's rights over major decisions about her children's future, place of residence, marriage, inheritance, employment and the like continued to remain insignificant in many parts of the world throughout most of human history (Afkhami, 1999, pp. 47-48). An interactive action research conducted recently in the USA reveals that men's over identification with work and occupation as a source of self-esteem feeds gender inequality just as the presumption that women alone are responsible for family (Bailyn, 2000, pp 167-179).

What Singh (1992, p.1) depicted "development is the best contraceptive" or "contraceptive is the best development" can be similarly explained by analyzing the relationships between "human development" and "attitudinal development towards gender issues". Human development acts like a "contraceptive" against gender discrimination. In other words, gender equity accelerates human development. It does not necessarily mean that the countries with high human development do not experience gender disparity. Of course they have it, but the extent and dimensions of the disparity are very different from the countries with medium and low human development [Table-1].

Table-1 : Comparative HRD & Gender Disparity Indices of Selected Countries

Country	HDI		GDI		GEM		HPI-1		HPI-2	
	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value
High Human Development										
Canada	1	0.935	1	0.932	8	0.739			11	11.8
Norway	2	0.934	2	0.932	1	0.825			1	7.3
United States	3	0.929	4	0.927	13	0.707			18	15.8
Australia	4	0.927	3	0.927	11	0.715			13	12.2
Medium Human Development										
Costa Rica	48	0.797	46	0.789	24	0.553	2	4.0		
Croatia	49	0.795	45	0.790	34	0.517			-	-
Trinidad & Tobago	50	0.793	48	0.784	22	0.583	5	5.1		
Dominica	51	0.793	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Low Human Development										
Bhutan	142	0.483	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Nepal	144	0.474	119	0.449	-	-	80	51.3		
Bangladesh	146	0.461	121	0.441	67	0.305	63	37.8		
Niger	173	0.293	143	0.280	70	0.119	85	64.7		

Source: UNDP : Human Development Report 2000. Oxford University Press, pp. 157-173

Note : HRD=Human Resource Development, HDI=Human Development Index, GDI=Gender-related Development Index, GEM=Gender Empowerment Measures, HPI=Human Poverty Index.

Although the HRD indices do not directly reflect the extent of attitudinal problems towards gender issues, Table-1 shows that the countries with high human development have achieved higher values of GDI and GEM and the countries with low human development achieved lower values of GDI and GEM. Higher attitudinal problems towards gender issues in the countries with low human development is one of the major causes of their lower values of GDI and GEM. Bangladesh is a country with low human development and persistently widespread gender discriminations, many of which lie deep into the value systems of the people and society.

3.1 Respondents' Gender Awareness

The respondents were asked whether they considered identified aspects (listed in the conceptual framework of the study) as gender issues. The study reveals that there were quite a large number of respondents (irrespective of male or female or job-levels i.e. junior, mid and senior) who do not consider those aspects as gender issues

and that irrespective of their job-levels and gender groups, there is a significant consistency in the responses given by the respondents [Fig-2]. This means that majority of them do not consider those as gender issues, although those are universally accepted gender issues. That's why there is an urgent need for undertaking a mass awareness and gender sensitization programmes and gender sensitivity should be the prime consideration in designing any gender training for them.

The study indicates that most of the respondents do not consider "discrimination on birth rights" (54.7%) and "discrimination on food & nutrition" (54.5%) as gender issues whereas the rests were identified as gender issues by most of the respondents. Affirmative attitudinal changes towards gender issues have a strong positive impact on women's access to assets and opportunities and such impact, as a result, help accelerate Women Human Resources Development (WHRD), which have been elaborately discussed below.

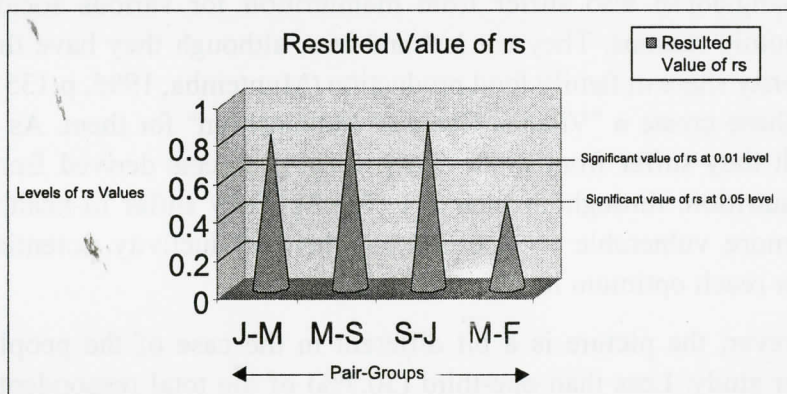


Fig-2 : Consistency of Responses amongst Different Levels & Genders

[J-M = Junior & Mid Levels, M-S = Mid & Senior Levels, S-J = Senior & Junior Levels, M-F = Males & Females]

3.2 Gender Relations of Productivity Systems

Women Human Resources Development (WHRD) is a factor that greatly affects Productivity Relations Systems (PRS). The gender related input factors of WHRD within PRS have been analysed here according to the broad categorization outlined earlier in the conceptual framework of the study.

3.2.1 Physiological Input Sub-Systems

3.2.1.1 Access to Food & Nutrition

Food is a biological need both for men and women. Although biologically, women need a bit of lesser calorie than men, they require additional care and calories during pregnancy and lactation, which are often ignored. Statistics shows that the girl children in Bangladesh suffer from consistent deprivation of nutrition. Girls under-5 and 5-14 years of age usually consume 16% and 11% less calories than those of the boys respectively (Rogers, 1995, p. 97). It is not only a condition prevalent among the young girls; women in Bangladesh also suffer from malnutrition for various socio-economic reasons. They eat last and less, although they have the majority share in family food production (Muntemba, 1995, p.135). All these create a "Vicious Cycle of Malnutrition" for them. As a result they suffer from multi-dimensional problems derived from malnutrition, throughout their life [Fig-3]. They suffer ill-health; are more vulnerable to diseases and their productivity potential never reach optimum level.

However, the picture is a bit different in the case of the people under study. Less than one-third (30.7%) of the total respondents think that males need more food for their hard work than females. 30.5% male and 31.5% female respondents cherish this attitude. The strengths of this attitude among males and females are 70% and 59.7% respectively. The people under study are the most educated and most privileged group in the society. Still, almost one-third of them have the attitude that acts as a strong barrier to women's physiological as well as mental development.

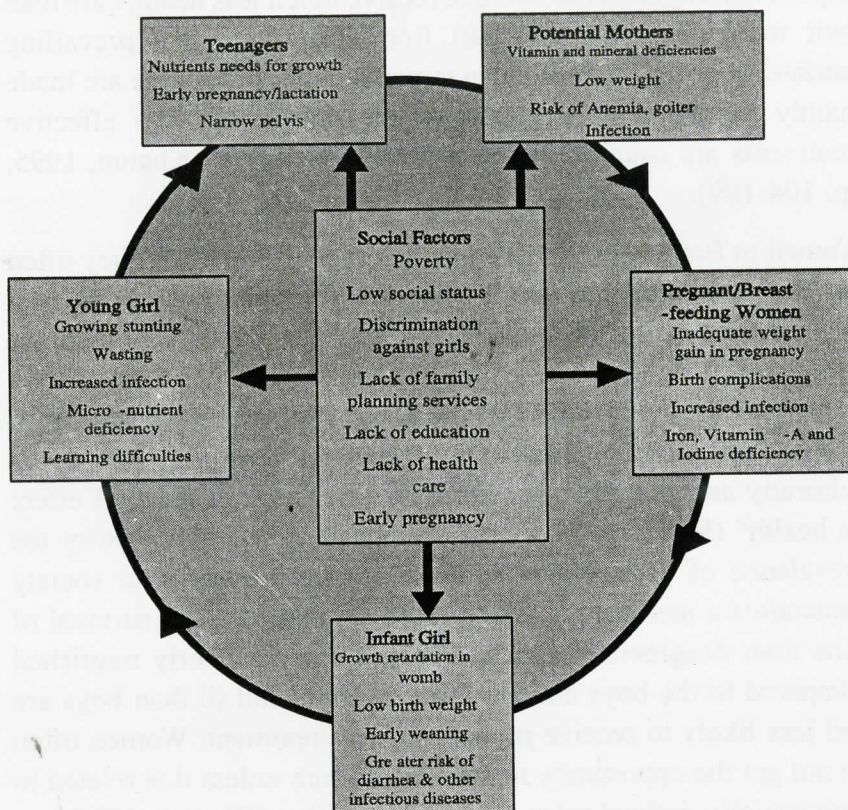


Fig-3 : The Vicious Cycle of Malnutrition
[Source : Modified from UNFPA, 1989]

Most of the female respondents mainly believe that it is not the gender but the nature of job that determines who needs good food. The respondents having gender preference do not really recognize women's contributions to the family and they still hold on to their social malpractices and superstitions. Their attitudinal changes may reverse the situation.

3.2.1.2 Access to Generic Health Care Facilities

Although there has been significant improvement in the health care sector the question remains how far those facilities have reached the women. Extending health care facilities to women does not only depend upon one's economic ability but also on attitudes of males.

Experience suggests that women receive much less health care than their male counterparts. Apart from this, under the prevailing patriarchal socio-cultural value systems, higher expenses are made mainly for the male members of the family and less effective treatments are usually offered to female members (Khatun, 1995, pp. 104-109).

Women in Bangladesh have a peculiar type of mind-set; they often put their children's and family's needs before their own, at the cost of their own health (Younis, 1994). The Bangladeshi women are compliant by nature; they willingly sacrifice a big portion of food in favour of male members of the household, which leads them to a silent cycle of malnutrition. "Since suffering in silence is culturally ascribed feminine attribute - so too is its spin-off effect on health" (Roger, 1995, p. 105, emphasis added). That's why the prevalence of ill health is endemic among women. Our society constraints a mother by placing more emphasis on the survival of sons than daughters (Gribble, 1993). Girls are poorly nourished compared to the boys and are more likely to fall ill than boys are and less likely to receive proper medical treatment. Women often do not get the opportunity to seek health care unless it is related to their socially defined roles of wife and mother (Khattab, 1994).

Most of the respondents, irrespective of gender and job-levels, feel that females are enjoying less health care facilities than males both at micro (family) and macro (national) levels. But most of them (66.8%), irrespective of gender and job-levels opined that they do not have any gender preference for providing health care facilities in their families. There were some respondents (9.3%), mainly male, who have strong gender preference for providing health care facilities. The main reasons behind such preference are :

- (a) Males are the nucleus of the economic activities of the family,
- (b) Male has to work harder than female,
- (c) It is the socio-cultural practices that male has to be provided more care and
- (d) Females have less power to do something for the family.

The above-mentioned opinions indicate that those respondents maintain a very old and traditional value systems in their family. And virtually this type of people works as a strong hindrance to bring about changes in gender situations.

3.2.1.3 Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health

Reproductive rights and reproductive health is not a well-discussed issue in Bangladesh. Our socio-cultural tradition does not encourage and teach to discuss this topic openly in our society. Only in recent years, rich and middle class women in urban areas, especially in the capital city have echoed the concept of reproductive rights and reproductive health (Akhter, 1994, p. 46). Reproductive health status of a society is determined largely by its socio-economic condition. Lack of gender-specific optimal nutrition, access to safe water and sanitation, lower status of women and environmental hazards has negative effects on reproductive health of the society. An individual's life style or behaviour, more importantly, sexual behaviour is another important determinant. The availability, use and efficiency of health care services are also important determinants of reproductive health. The present study has not considered the technical aspect but has focused on the attitudinal issues of reproductive rights and reproductive health situation in Bangladesh.

Fertility in Bangladesh appears to have declined substantially over the last 2-3 decades. This might have been achieved by higher contraceptive prevalence rate in the country. Very little is known about the status of infertility and facilities for diagnosis and treatment of infertility. The information on sexual health is also too scanty to warrant any meaningful interpretation. The risk of maternal mortality is 150 times greater than developed countries (Akhter, Halida, 1994, p. 9). The health situation of children in Bangladesh is also in general very poor.

The idea of reproductive rights is very new in Bangladesh. Common understanding of this right is that women should decide and control their own bodies and reproductive behaviour.

Reproductive rights premises the assertion of individual rights of women over her reproductive power. Women often sensationalize the issue by extending the concept to include whole of female physiology. This excludes the question of political emancipation of women. The term "reproductive rights" does not imply the same meaning to women in Bangladesh as it does to women in the Western societies.

The lives of women in Bangladesh are dictated by family, community, society and nation. Even the aid-giving agencies play vital roles in dictating over women's reproductive rights and behaviour. Population control has been a declared government policy since sixties and various donor agencies have conditionalities on women's reproductive rights. Therefore, "the reproductive right" in Bangladesh is clearly a disguise of the population controllers. Even in personal or family level, the attitudes towards reproductive rights are such that when a woman gets married, she is supposed to surrender her body under the control of her husband (Jahan, Roushan, p. 86).

3.2.2 Social Input Sub-Systems

3.2.2.1 Access to Education

Despite Constitutional guarantee for equal access to education and several interventions made and attractive incentive packages offered by the Government and NGOs, gender disparity prevails at all levels of formal education (Hussain, 1995, p. 91). The study reveals that education is a weapon in a girl's hand with which she can work, make money if she wishes, can help her husband with the family's livelihood, can teach and take care of thier children better and can make a good match and marry someone educated who can make a lady out of her (Mongella, 1995, p. 117). Although the girls' enrolment at primary and secondary levels has encouragingly increased over the last two decades, their dropout rate is alarmingly high. Most of the parents of rural areas and urban poor families prefer to educate male rather than female children. Because of religious superstition and many other socio-cultural practices, most

of them do not like their female children to have education. They fear that their girls will gain a sense of freedom through education, which is dangerous for her, for the society and the family. A study on female education as perceived by "social class" and "gender" depicted that the educational needs for females is perceived more extensively by females than the males and the higher the social class structures, the greater the interests in female education (Duza, 1993, pp. 33-37).

The present study also finds the same scenario about the gender discrimination towards access to education. Most of the respondents (84.1%) strongly believe that there should be equal access to education irrespective of gender. But there are very few respondents (8%), irrespective of genders at junior and senior levels, who do not believe in such access. Again, most of the respondents (65.1%) do not like to have any preference for male in getting higher education. This attitude is highly prevalent among the female respondents (90.4%). Among the respondents (17.8%), who prefer males for higher education are mainly males.

The views given in favour of male education are mainly superstitious, psychological, social and economical in nature whereas the ones in favour of the females are mostly rational and legal. The study indicates that the respondents are more inclined to provide house-tutoring facilities to their female children. Less than fifty per cent (41.5%) of the male and about two-thirds (64.4%) of the female respondents think that females are doing well in education than their male counterparts. Comparatively, the junior level male respondents, who believe in such performance of the females are less in number. Both the categories of respondents i.e. the respondents who believe and those who do not believe in females' better performance have strong arguments in favour of their views. Those are as follows:

Some of the respondents believe that it is not the gender but the merit that determines performance in education. Some male respondents (14.8%) comprised of junior and senior level government officials

provided special support for education to their male children rather than female children. They opined that male baby would have to face more challenges in real life than female baby; that's why they should be given such preference. But some of the respondents opined that females needed special support in respect of transport, accommodation and security because of the country's existing socio-cultural and law & order situation.

Arguments in Favour of Males	Arguments in Favour of Females
● Girls are discouraged in education because of religious beliefs. ● Males are sincere about education. ● Males are innovative. ● Males are more intelligent. ● Males have the requisite capability. Environment is not in favour of the girls. Girls have less diversity of life in the society. ● Some of the females are doing well but their percentage is very low in comparison to males.	● Females are careful, studious and disciplined. ● Females can concentrate more than their male counterparts. ● Females are more sincere, obedient, serious, responsible, self-guided, punctual and attentive. ● Females are more result-oriented and they are patient. ● The latest records of different Board of Education prove that females are doing well. ● Females are quiet than males. ● Females spend more time for education while the males are involved in activities outside home and politics; they may have bad companies. ● Females get slight preferential treatments from male teachers.

The senior level government officials strongly believe that because of their steadiness, devotion, attentiveness, sincerity, patience, discipline etc. females can do well in some special areas of education like teaching, medicine, computer science, honours based university education, nursing, home economics, social science/welfare, art/culture/music etc. But about half of the junior and mid level respondents, irrespective of gender, do not agree to the fact that women can do well in some special areas of education.

Both the male and female respondents agreed to the fact that males are more meritorious and intelligent than females; and females have more learning power, patience and discipline than males. The male respondents have been found attitudinally more responsive

and liberal to their female counterparts. The female respondents think that they have more potential than males.

3.2.2.2 Access to Employment Opportunities

Despite the Constitutional guarantee of equal access to employment opportunities for women, special quota system, NGOs' and Government agencies' preference for female candidates in many jobs, they are not quite proportionately visible all over the job market. In the present study, most of the respondents believe that there should not be any preference for males in access to employment opportunities (50.0%) and females also should not be given any special privilege (42.7%). They believe that access to employment opportunities should be on the basis of merit (68.9%). They strongly believe that there should be an equal access to employment opportunities (58.7%); males are not suitable for some special areas of employment (62.0%) and same is the case for females (68.9%). The respondents also believe that females should be recommended as suitable for some special areas of employment (62.8%). The most important areas of employment as identified by the respondents suitable for females are physician (72.7%), teacher (57.9%), nurse (38.9%), day care services (30.2%), secretarial jobs (26.4%), computer personnel (17.8%), telephone operator (16.9%), banker (12%), researcher (4.2%) and administrator (4%). Interestingly most of the female respondents do also agree with such identification.

Some of the respondents have indicated their gender preferences in access to employment opportunities. The respondents who prefer males think that since gradually they are to shoulder the family burdens. Women's massive entry into job market would make the unemployment problems more acute. They do not like to understand that job competition helps to diversify job opportunities and thus strengthen the overall job market. On the other hand, females have been preferred by some respondents for diminishing existing gender disparity and because of their backward position in the society.

3.2.2.3 Gender Values in Working Environment

Women has risen above the age-old socio-cultural traditions by taking up professional roles. In doing so, sometimes they enjoy a very congenial atmosphere and at times they face multi-dimensional problems and difficulties in their working environment. A recent study on government officials indicates that the female colleagues are quite confident to control their subordinates. Their volume and quality of work are quite satisfactory (Haque, 1988, pp. 70 and 110). At the same time, there are examples that male bosses often consider them as women first, and as workers later. The efficiency of working women is always suspected; co-workers in the office cannot mentally accept the superiority of a woman; their subordinate males do not like their authority over them (Maitra-Sinha, 1993, p. 42). Sex-specific job differentiation exists as a social value with the result that women are denied entry into many occupations (Jahan, 1991, p. 10). As a result the number of women employed in the professional and technical jobs remain low. Working women are also often sexually harassed and exploited by their male bosses. Another study indicates that comparatively easy and light tasks in terms of physical effort, less travelling and less risky tasks are usually offered to them (Haque, 1988, p. 54).

The present study has identified as many as 26 parameters¹ to analyse the views of the respondents about the capacity of men and women in working environment. According to their views both males and females have a certain standard capacity to perform their duties in the job-situation. But males have been viewed as more capable in workplace in terms of their organizing and leadership capacity, control, coordination, decision making, guidance, motivation, supervision, communication, financial management, professional skills, quality and speed of works, capacity of expression, punctuality, responsibility, accountability, power of judgement, personality, cooperation, awareness and team works

1. The 26 parameters are : Organizing Capacity, Leadership Capacity, Control, Co-ordination, Decision-Making, Guiding Capacity, Motivation, Supervision, Communication, Financial Management, Professional Skill, Quality of Work, Speed of Work, Speed of Work, Capacity of Expression, Sincerity, Punctuality, Honesty, Responsibility, Accountability, Discipline, Power of Judgement, Personality, Co-operation, Dependability, Awareness and Team Work.

whereas women have been viewed as more honest, disciplined and dependable. The study also found significant consistency among the views of different gender and job groups.

3.2.2.4 Participation in the Nation Building Activities

Women had little scope to escape from the "men's world" saturated by male dominated ideologies throughout the ages. Their capabilities were not recognized and their potential were ignored. Only in recent times there has been a growing awareness among people of different societies about the dysfunctional implication of the underlying injustice and gender based inequity whereby the nation, especially the women themselves have perpetually suffered. The patriarchal socio-cultural value systems of fundamentalists and neo-fundamentalists often put strong left-hooks on their promising ways (Guhathakurta, 1995, p. 41).

The respondents, irrespective of gender and job-levels opined that participation of women in selected nation building activities such as economic activities, business and commercial activities, cultural activities etc. is much lower than those of males. Participation of women in business and commercial activities is very low. The study indicates that there is a persistent gender disparity in the society against greater participation of women in development and nation building activities. Women are also not, at this moment, confident enough to overcome the situation. Therefore, the country needs to develop and adopt a strategic plan to bring about extensive changes in the existing attitudes of the society as a whole and ensure greater participation of women in this area.

3.2.2.5 Political Participation

The GEM index developed by UNDP to analyze the political participation of women in a society indicates that Bangladesh has achieved higher rate of women's participation in politics compared to many other countries in the developing world with similar socio-economic and cultural background (UNDP, 2000, pp. 172-173). Although Bangladesh Constitution has granted equal status to

women and equality of rights to them, including rights to vote and rights to take active part in politics, political participation of women is merely concentrated into casting their votes in elections. Active participation of women in politics is limited within politically powerful families (Maitra-Sinha, 1993, p. 178). The women voters often feel and opine that since women are by and large more "sincere, hard working, straight-forward, practical and principled" than men, they will be an asset in legislative bodies. They will be able to work harder for gender issues and for the upliftment of the status of women. But nobody is really spontaneously coming up from the grass-root levels, who may represent the voice of the womenfolk.

Since the nineties there has been a shift in development thinking towards women's political participation and decision-making in the community. An increased demand has been put forward for radical restructuring of policy and political structures. Bangladesh has made formal commitments to women's political participation in several important international strategy documents including the Plan of Action (Mexico 1975), the Forward Looking Strategies (Nairobi 1985) and the Beijing Plan of Action (1995). Bangladesh's ratification of UNCEDAW obligates it to creating the opportunities for women's participation in public decision-making. Provision of direct participation of women under reserved seats in UP election has made ways for their visibility in public life at grass-root levels. But women in Bangladesh "*.... have remained outside the play of power politics. Their visibility in popular struggles for democracy, in election campaigns and in community work has not been translated into greater influence in the public domain. Only a small number have been able to enter positions of public decision-making. Their dependence upon traditionally powerful structures within the national political structures has limited their role as cheerleaders. ...*" (Hossain, 1999, p. 178, emphasis added).

The respondents have been found very liberal to their female counterparts in general about their participation in politics. But they have been found highly conservative in allowing their own family

members to participate in political activities. There is a silently growing fear among people about power politics and political processes and activities. Women may not find themselves fit or comfortable there. Terrorism and foul play in politics might have contributed a lot to develop such fear among them. In the present context, the nation should adopt a strategic plan to bring them into politics through a comparatively safer ways like UP election system, where women have provision of some reserved seats to contest.

3.2.2.6 Freedom of Decision Making

Several studies indicate that compared to women, men enjoy much more freedom in decision making in all spheres of life. The male respondents have been found very conservative to allow females to choose their life partners. Their level of confidence on decisions of their junior female members of the family is very low. On the other hand, female respondents have been found very much dependent on males and they allow much more freedom to males than those of their female members. The males have also been found enjoying much more freedom in decision-making in their job-situations than those of their female counterparts. Even the female respondents find more confidence on male's decisions than those of the females. The persistent discriminatory gender values have developed such attitudes among them.

3.2.2.7 Gender Values Towards Generation Flow

In the existing socio-cultural value system, the male children of the family is assumed to maintain generation flow. Female children are considered as temporary guests at their parents' house until they get married. Their generation status is by and large merged with those of their husbands' families. In reality, this is the socially valued and culturally tuned generation flow system in our society, where women have virtually no room for maintaining generation flow of their own.

Most of the respondents at junior (70%) and mid (78.9%) levels do not have any gender preference for maintaining their generation flow and have the idea that both the genders can play this role. Although, mother's name is now being used along with the father's name for several social purposes, the views given above by the junior and mid level Government officials seem to be more rational rather than practical. Interestingly, none of the female respondents at any level preferred female children to maintain their generation flow. The senior level respondents rigidly preferred male children for their generation flow. Only a very few respondents at junior (4.2%) and mid (1.4%) levels preferred female children for their generation flow.

From the above observations, one may conclude that it's a very sensitive area, where the society as a whole may not yet be ready to compromise socially accepted gender preference. This needs a total restructuring of the society, which still remains a far cry and is going to take a long time.

3.2.3 Regulatory Input Sub-Systems

3.2.3.1 Birth Rights

Concerns for gender equity is getting stronger day by day in Bangladesh. Awareness about the issue has been increasing in the society. People, especially those who are well educated, have at least realized that it is no longer acceptable to say openly- "I prefer male rather than female baby". The study reveals that most of the respondents (43.6%) like to have male baby in case of one child [Table-5]. But when they were asked to say whether they prefer male rather than female baby, most of them simply avoided the question by responding as "no" (51.6%) or "indifferent" (31.5%). That means, they still prefer male baby- it is their basic attitude that has encircled their life patterns, values and behaviour. But they do not like to say it directly. This attitudinal trend seems to be very prominent amongst junior and mid level respondents. Another study indicates that gender preferences exist among the government servants and the elderly people in their family

(Fyzennessa, 1994, p. 67). There are evidence that in some cases wives are even forced or pressurized to take babies one after another until they can give birth to a male baby. Most of the senior level government officials (78.4%) directly opined that they prefer male rather than female baby. About 17.8% of the female respondents also belong to this category. The reasons given by the respondents for such preference are mainly the followings :

- (a) males maintain the generation flow and uphold the family status,
- (b) they take care of their parents during old age, (c) they usually shoulder the family burden, (d) they can provide social security to their parents and family and (e) they can freely move outside home.

The respondents who do not have such preferences opined that :(a) females can also help their parents if they are brought up properly, (b) there is no guarantee that males will take care of their parents during old age, (c) both the males and females can contribute to the nation, (d) female baby helps her mother in keeping the house neat and clean and (e) both are equal in all sphere of life.

By looking into the opinions of the respondents one can easily come to a conclusion that although generation flow is termed as a psychological issue, the main reasons behind gender preferences are very much social and economic. If females in our society were properly brought up, empowered and they could provide better social and economic security to their parents and families, the scenario of gender preference would have been quite reverse.

3.2.3.2 Heredity of Rights on Property

Basically, our religious laws determine the heredity on rights to property. The property rights to Hindu women in Bengal were limited to dowry (Stridhan). A widow without children had a right to income from the property of her deceased husband during her lifetime. Young widows, specially, those without male children were seen as unwanted burden on the family. Although dowry system is considered to be an evil practice and the Dowry Prohibition Act was promulgated to curb the situation, the inhuman

practice of dowry continues unabated (Maitra-Sinha, 1993, pp. 11-16). Theoretically, Muslim women have greater property rights, since Muslim law specifies that daughters should inherit one-half of the son's shares (Southard, 1996, p. 45). But in practice, they also suffer from almost same sort of deprivations due to patriarchal attitudes of the society. So long this attitude would prevail, the problems would remain at the same magnitude.

Most of the respondents (77.4%) opined that the existing legal provision of property shares for males and females is quite all right. About 92.8% of the male respondents at junior level agree to the prevailing property share system. It is mentionable that a considerable proportion of female respondents at middle (50%) and senior (100%) levels (who are supposed to have more experiences and realizations about life) also agree to the existing system. They opine that females get property shares from their parents as well as from their husbands, so the existing property share system is quite okay. But the others (only 22.6% of the total respondents), believe that :

- ♦ Since all the children, irrespective of gender are equal to their parents, property should be distributed equally.
- ♦ Since females take more care of their parents and they are still weak in every stage of life, they need more property.

3.2.3.3 Privilege & Empowerment

UNDP argued that there is no correlation between income level and gender disparity in a society. This means that elimination of gender disparity and ensuring women's empowerment do not necessarily depend upon high income. According to the Human Development Report 2000 of UNDP, Norway stands top in women's empowerment [see Table-1], whereas there are many other countries of the world whose income level is much higher. It has been observed that gender empowerment situation of many developing countries is much better than those of many rich and developed countries (Rahman, 1998, p. 11). This indicates that gender empowerment can be achieved/ensured even with low-

income level. GEM picture in Bangladesh is much more positive than those of many other developing nations of the world with similar socio-cultural characteristics.

In fact, women's empowerment is a concept that includes a package programme consisting of different socio-cultural, economic, political and legal issues. As an enthusiastic signatory to both NFS (Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies) and CEDAW and having conflicting socio-cultural matrix, Bangladesh is planning to undertake the crucial approaches and broad-based principles, where women would not be perceived as passive beneficiaries of economic growth and socio-political development but as key players and participants in their own rights. Importance is given to mobilize women as a political force and increase their participation in decision-making process at all levels of society, in the family, community and nation (Choudhury, 1995, pp. 2-4).

Considering DWAN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) approach of political empowerment in Bangladesh context the present study has emphasized not only on narrow institutional matters but also on (a) women's position for entry into different power-bases of the society and into decision-making processes, and on (b) grassroots movement and conscientization. The grassroots movement and conscientization programmes of different NGOs have emerged as able tools for women's political empowerment, where other issues of women's empowerment like health and family planning, rural credit and income generation, education, advocacy, skill development training and conscientization etc. have been incorporated. Women in both rural and urban settings have been increasingly taking up new challenges and accepting non-traditional professions very often (Huq, 1995, pp. 62-65).

Although a considerable improvement has taken place in women's legal position in the society, women in Bangladesh, as elsewhere, are commonly depicted as subjugated and subordinated in the patriarchally dominated society. The image of subordination is aggravated and amplified by the traditional views of stereotype

female roles in the family and society. The main factors contributing to this subordination are the negative impact of tradition, religion, patriarchy, seclusion and paternalistic attitudes in the socio-economic and legal spheres. In fact, women in Bangladesh do not really want to have their rights like women in Western or developed world. They have their own conceptual framework of freedom and rights, which they perceive can ensure their peaceful, dependable and trust-worthy life in the society.

Almost all the respondents believe that males are physically stronger than females. Even all the female respondents have the same kind of belief. In fact, discrimination in entitlements, power and authority originates from this type of attitude. According to the respondents, illiteracy, socio-cultural values, poverty, religious belief and feelings etc. are the most important causes of women's backwardness in the society. Most of the respondents (81.4%) support women's empowerment in the perspective of women's backwardness. Increased privilege for women's education, controlling population growth, reduction of poverty, enlightening people through proper religious knowledge, enrichment of socio-cultural values, development of decision making power etc. were rated very high as the areas in favour of women's empowerment.

4.0 The New Systems Approach to Design Gender-Training

Since the Government officials at all levels, specially the males, maintain negative attitude towards different gender issues, they should undergo intensive "counselling & motivational exercise training" involving gender sensitivity issues for their conscientization and affirmative attitudinal changes. This study suggests the following three strategic systems approaches for designing gender-training for them :

- (a) Many Government officials maintain negative attitudes towards some specific aspects of gender issues. Training curriculum incorporating such gender issues should be designed in such a way that they become fully gender-sensitised and act appropriately.

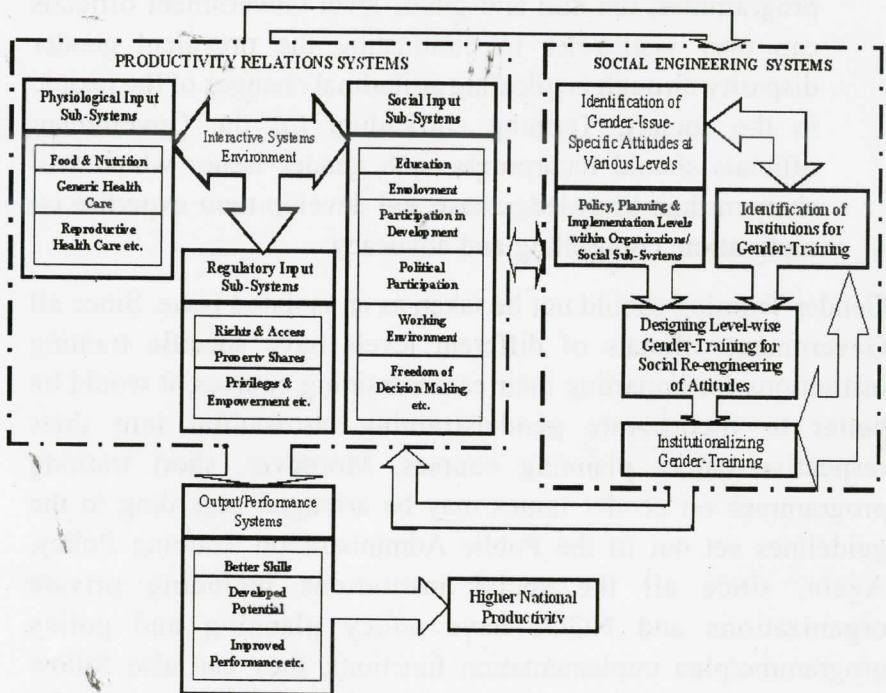
- (b) Some gender issues need to be addressed at policy levels. The Government officials associated with policy making processes should undergo such intensive "counselling & motivational exercise training" that brings about gender-friendly attitudinal changes among them and they adopt them while framing and formulating policies.
- (c) As implementers of the Government policies, plans and programmes, the mid and junior level Government officials can play vital roles in eliminating the prevalent gender disparity through inculcating attitudinal changes of the people in the society. Training curriculum for the Government officials should incorporate such gender issues which will sharpen their knowledge base and develop their expertise on motivation, counselling and advocacy.

Gender-Training should not be taken as an isolated issue. Since all Government officials of different levels have specific training institutions for imparting their career training courses, it would be better to incorporate gender-training curriculum into their respective career planning courses. Moreover, short training programmes on gender issues may be arranged according to the guidelines set out in the Public Administration Training Policy. Again, since all the social institutions including private organizations and NGOs have policy planning and policy programme/plan implementation functions, they can also follow the same strategic systems approaches to design gender-training for their own target groups.

The proposed systems approach is to be called "Social Re-engineering of Gender Values". It outlines both the linear and composite functions of three basic systems i.e. (a) Social Engineering Systems (SES), (b) Productivity Relations Systems (PRS) and (c) Performance Systems. PRS and SES are interactive in nature. The total PRS work within an interactive systems environment of physiological, social and regulatory input sub-systems [Fig.4]. Attitudes of the people concerned act as the driving force in regulating both the individual productivity

functions among and within different input sub-systems and the PRS as a whole. Each of the individual productivity functions has matched gender perspectives. Therefore, social re-engineering of attitudes of the people concerned towards different gender issues would eventually demolish the existing barriers creating dysfunctional impacts on PRS, on its input sub-systems and

Fig -4 : The Proposed Systems Approach to Design Gender-Training



individual productivity functions and increase productivity performance by creating women's opportunities for acquiring better skills, enhancing potential to be gained through having indiscriminate access to services, assets and opportunities; thus their roles in development would be reversed and the resultant performance would help achieve higher NP.

4.1 Suggested Supportive Policy Measures

The implementation of the designed systems approach would get a further momentum, if the following interventions are undertaken simultaneously :

- A mass awareness programme amongst the Government officials for better understanding the gender issues and its multifarious effects in the society and the nation needs to be undertaken urgently.
- Education should be regarded as the basic tool of full promotion and improvement of women's status.
- Motivational activities, counselling and advocacy towards promising future of women's education in contributing to the country's economic emancipation, human and national development should be adopted as basic strategies to eradicate gender discrimination.
- The problems of reproductive health should be given more emphasis in the national strategic plan of actions. Reproductive health should be included in curriculum of both in formal and non-formal education systems in the country for changing the existing social value systems.
- Nutritional education should be incorporated both in formal and informal education systems in the country. A mass movement is required to reshape the nutritional status of women through motivation and counselling.
- Women's empowerment through their mass participation in socio-economic development activities and in decision making processes should be ensured adopting a national strategic plan and an effective legal framework should be developed for enabling them to minimize the existing gender disparities.
- Gender discrimination in providing health care services should be socially and legally treated as a punishable

offence. More care for women should be ensured free of cost during pregnancy and lactation.

- In the given circumstances, special preference should be given to women in some specific areas of employment opportunities like medical treatment, teaching, nursing, day care services, secretarial jobs, computer including IT, telephone operating, banking etc. They should also be given appropriate opportunities to develop themselves along such lines.
- Women should be encouraged to shoulder more responsibilities in the working environment. Such engagement will increase and improve their capabilities.
- The problems of reproductive rights should be handled at personal and family levels, until the government changes its population policy. Extensive motivation, conscientization, advocacy and counselling can be very effective to this end.
- Working women need to be provided with more security in working place. More protection measures should be ensured against any kind of harassment.
- In the country's present context, the nation should adopt a strategic plan to bring women into national and other level politics through a comparatively safer ways like UP (Union Parishad) election system, where women have provision of some reserved seats to contest.

5.0 Conclusion

Gender issues have socio-economic, cultural and political connotations. Therefore, these should be handled socially, economically, culturally, legally and politically. As a key social change agent, the Government officials can play vital roles in actualizing gender parity, equity and equality. In playing such roles they should undergo such gender training designed maintaining aforesaid and the following three strategic systems approaches.

First, the attitudes of the Government officials themselves that regulate their life style, need to be changed to some specific aspects of gender issues. Secondly, their attitudes towards formulating policies, plans and programmes need to be gender friendly. Third, the problems mostly lie in the grass root levels, where lack of education is very high; religious superstitions are still deep-rooted in every pore of the society; cultural believes have been integrated into life styles and poverty has stricken the doorsteps of people. Thus, there is a need for undertaking effective motivation and conscientization strategies by owning the problems at all levels, in the family, community, society and nation. The Government officials of different levels should undergo such training so that they can understand all these problems appropriately and take gender-friendly steps towards various gender issues. This would in turn help develop women as productive forces by reversing their roles in development and as a result, higher national productivity would be achieved.

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Ombudsman : An Aid to Transparent and Accountable Government

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Concept and Meaning of Ombudsman

Ombudsman literally and in all practical sense, connotes the Swedish term for the public officer entrusted with the power to investigate public grievances. In the British system Ombudsman is a special commissioner appointed to receive complaints, and to seek a remedy of the complaint if justified. ⁽¹⁾ Wade describes it 'as a commissioner who has the duty of investigating and reporting on citizens' complaints against the government.'⁽²⁾ Ombudsman is someone who holds national public office, who has responsibility for investigating complaints against actions of official authorities and who is vested with adequate powers to enable him to look at these complaints in depth.⁽³⁾ The Ombudsman is an independent government official who receives and investigates complaints against administrative agencies and their officials and who, if the complaints are justified makes recommendations for the correction of the matter complained about and for the provision of adequate remedies⁽⁴⁾.

By all practical reasons, an Ombudsman is an institution provided for by the constitution or by action of the legislature or parliament and headed by an independent, high level public official who is responsible to the legislature or parliament, who receives complaints from aggrieved persons against government agencies, officials, and employees or who acts on his own motion and who has the power to investigate, recommend corrective action, and issue reports⁽⁵⁾.

Although the system is modeled after the Swedish system, the institution of Ombudsman has been replicated with different nomenclature in different countries. It is called Riksdagens Ombudsman, popularly known as JO in Sweden; Parliamentary

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Commissioner for Administration in Britain; La Defensor del Pueblo in Peru; Wafaqi Mohtasib in Pakistan, Lokayukt in India and so on. According to a listing of the International Ombudsman Institute, the Ombudsman systems have already been functioning effectively in more than 56 countries and many are in the offing.

Under the treaty of European Union and instituted by the Statute of the European Ombudsman, the office of the European Ombudsman was established in 1994 to deal with the complaints concerning mal-administration by EU authorities. In the Andean region, Bolivia, Columbia, Peru and Ecuador have already established the Ombudsman systems and there are legal and constitutional provisions to incorporate this institution in Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela. In all the continents, the institutions of Ombudsman are either effectively functioning or are in the offing.

Ombudsman Offices- Worldwide : Nomenclature

The word 'Ombudsman' is of Swedish origin and means 'representative'; Many other names are used to represent the ombudsman office in the different countries that have adopted this system. For example, Defensor del Pueblo is the title of the ombudsman offices for a number of Spanish-speaking countries (Spain, Argentina, Peru and Colombia). Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (Sri Lanka, United Kingdom); Mediateur de la Republique (France, Gabon, Mauritania, Senegal); Volksanwaltschaft (Austria) Protecteur du Citoyen (Quebec); Provedor de Justica (Portugal); Difensore Civico (Italy); Investigator-General (Zambia); Citizen's Aide (IOWA); Wafaqi Mohtasib (Pakistan); and Lokayukt (India) are the titles of some other ombudsman systems around the world. The following indicates the nomenclature of the ombudsman in different countries:

Country	Nomenclature	Nature of government
Argentina	<i>Defensor del Pueblo</i>	Republic
Australia	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Commonwealth Nation, Democratic Federal State system. Ombudsmen are appointed at both levels.
Belgium	<i>Commissaire du Parlement</i>	Democracy under Parliament Constitutional Monarch.
Canada	<i>Ombudsman Le Protecteur du Citoyen (in Francophone setting)</i>	Commonwealth nation, Confederation with Parliamentary Democracy. Ombudsmen are at provincial level only.
Denmark	<i>Ombudsmand</i>	Constitutional monarchy
Fiji	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Commonwealth nation, Republic.
Finland	<i>Ombusman</i>	Republic
France	<i>Le Mediateur</i>	Republic
Hong Kong	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China
India	<i>Lokayukta</i>	Commonwealth nation, Federal Republic, Ombudsman operate in 12 states and legislation for a Federal Ombudsman termed Lok Pal is planned.
Italy	<i>Defensore Civico</i>	Republic
Japan	<i>National Counselors responsible to a Ministry</i>	Imperial Monarchy with Parliamentary Democracy.
Korea	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Democracy
Macau	<i>High Commissioner against Corruption and Administrative Illegality</i>	Overseas territory of Portugal (to be Special Region of China in 1999)
Netherlands	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Parliamentary Democracy under a Constitutional Monarch.

Country	Nomenclature	Nature of government
New Zealand	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Commonwealth nation Parliamentary Democracy
Norway	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Hereditary Constitutional Monarchy
Pakistan	<i>Wafaqi Mohtasib</i>	Commonwealth nation, Islamic Republic
Papua New Guinea	<i>Ombudsman Commission</i>	Commonwealth nation, Independent State with Parliamentary Democracy
Philippines	<i>Tanodbayan</i>	Republic
Portugal	<i>Providor de Justica</i>	Republic
Samoa	<i>Sulufaiga, Ombudsman</i>	Independent State
Solomon Islands	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Commonwealth nation Parliamentary Democracy
Spain	<i>Defensor Civico</i>	Constitutional Monarchy
South Africa	<i>Public Protector</i>	Republic
Sri Lanka	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Democratic Socialist Republic
Sweden	<i>Ombudsman</i>	Constitutional Monarchy
United Kingdom	<i>Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration</i>	Commonwealth nation, Constitutional Monarchy, Parliamentary Democracy
Vanuatu	<i>Mediateur Abujman Ombudsman,</i>	Republic

Relevance to Good Governance for Transparency and Accountability

Governance is a mechanism through which the relationship between governed and who govern is expressed. Good governance is characterized by an accountable government at the top, an independent judicial system, freedom of thought and expression,

and above all, freedom of choice for its citizens. Good governance implies a situation that encourages:

- Predictable, open and enlightened policy making;
- Bureaucratic efficiency, accountability and transparency;
- Spontaneous participation of the civil society in public affairs;
- Protection of human rights, and
- Freedom of media.

Escalated power of the executive branch is one of the common features of modern-day governments because of the spread of their activities over many areas which, so far were regarded as 'outside their concern'. Generally, they have done so in response to public pressures. With the rapid expansion of government, citizens have gained access to a wide range of government services and support system, but they have also become increasingly vulnerable to the decisions of civil servants. The growth of government has therefore been accompanied by an increasing concern about the need to protect individual rights, particularly as it has become clear that the efficient and fair-minded operation of vast administrative structure is not easily achieved. Mistakes, whether caused by administrative managerial shortcomings, inadequate information, faulty interpretation of known facts or lack of sensitivity to personal circumstances, can do happen.⁽⁶⁾

The need to promote public accountability in the public service is another factor that necessitated the establishment of the Ombudsman. The idea of holding public officials answerable and ultimately removable for their conduct of public business is fundamental to all governments⁽⁷⁾.

If the public comes to believe that all public institutions are being run by self-interested bureaucrats beyond public control and accountable only to their narrow organizational perceptions of the public interest, and that no public leaders seem to care or do anything to restore public responsibility, then it will evidence apathy, cynicism and anarchy.⁽⁸⁾ If the public confidence and trust in

government continues to be undermined, the people will become ungovernable, unresponsive and unproductive and government will be forced to employ more coercion which will be of little avail ⁽⁹⁾. The ascendancy of politics over administration has meant that political leaders are now capable of using their power and the state machinery to foster a growing personalization of their authority.⁽¹⁰⁾

There is a great necessity and urgency to increase public accountability through a wider range of both internal and external controls. This is no longer a matter of determining what already works but also of experimenting with innovations that limit the independence and autonomy of public officials without unduly handicapping their freedom of action, that reduce the privatization of government without restricting individual privacy, that minimize the occurrence of public wrong doing without intensifying bureaucratic pathologies, that increase the public's confidence in public institutions without criminalizing public affairs ⁽¹¹⁾.

Another phenomenon of having ombudsman is that the existing parliamentary procedures and judicial processes have their limitations. That is why there is need for alternative institutions to attend the aggrieved citizen. The ombudsman is a system being considered as quick moving, inexpensive, uncomplicated, independent and impartial as well as significant factor from political considerations.⁽¹²⁾

Relevance to Parliamentary and other Forms of Governments

The accountability of the administration to parliament has been severely strained by the complexity and diversity of the bodies making up the welfare states. Parliament has been required to delegate broad powers and broad discretion to literally innumerable tribunals and commissions, in addition to its numbers large and cumbersome departments.⁽¹³⁾ Moreover, limitations of traditional institutions i.e. Legislature and Courts or redressal of citizens' grievances paved the way for Ombudsman.

Naturally the legislature is less suited to deal with individual grievances. The lengthy procedure of parliamentary deliberations

as well as inclination of party or political arguments are very much time consuming factor.

The administration of so many services and controls under the vast bureaucratic machinery of the government inevitably causes many grievances and complaints. If something illegal is done, administrative law can supply a remedy, though the procedure of the courts is too formal and expensive to deal many complains. Justified grievances may equally well arise from action which is legal, or at any rate not clearly illegal, when a government department has acted inconsiderately or unfairly or where it has misled the complainant or delayed his case excessively or treated him badly. Sometimes a statutory tribunal can be of significant help both in terms of cost and convenience. But there is a large residue of grievances which fit into none of the regular legal methods. A humane system of government must provide some ways of assuaging them, both for the sake of justice and because a accumulating discontent is a serious clog on administrative efficiency in a democratic country.⁽¹⁴⁾

The institution of Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) has been established in Pakistan to institutionalize a new mechanism for redressing injustice done to citizens by public functionaries ⁽¹⁵⁾ The institution of Wafaqi Mohtasib has its foundations in the Islamic concept of accountability. Accountability is the cardinal feature of Islam, the very spirit of faith. The Wafaqi Mohtasib Act implicitly states that the edifice of this institution has been erected on the spirit of Islamic norms of justice and accountability and their practical manifestation in the early Islamic polity.

Nonetheless the Institution of Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) in Pakistan can be compared with contemporary Ombudsman systems developed in the West. It possesses a unique complexion of its own phenomena as well as western concept of ombudsman originated in Scandinavia.⁽¹⁶⁾ It sought to set up a system which combines judicial impartiality, adequate investigative capability, pragmatic flexibility in its procedures and professional insight into the labyrinth of the modern administrative structure.⁽¹⁷⁾

Swedish Model

The institution of Ombudsman is a Swedish origin. It is one of the oldest institutions to guarantee and help aid good governance. Rule of Law has been an outstanding factor in the Swedish Constitution. One of the important statements 'Public power shall be exercised under law' enumerated in the first article of the first chapter of the Swedish Constitution, has been the basis of rule of law in Sweden. This is merely not a statement but a transformed reality in Swedish case since the very first written Swedish Constitution from the Medieval period.⁽¹⁸⁾

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with all powers vested in people. The constitution of 1809 is the oldest written constitution in Europe and in 1975 a new constitution came into force. The Swedish Constitution is based on three constitutional documents or Acts popularly known as fundamental laws. These are a) the Instrument of Government, b) the Act of Succession and c) the Freedom of the Press Act. The Riksdag (Parliament) Act is not considered as fundamental law.

In accordance with the principle of parliamentarianism, the Riksdag Parliament is the foremost representative of the people. The Government rules the country, but is answerable to the Riksdag. If the Riksdag declares that a Minister no longer enjoys its confidence, the Minister shall be discharged.⁽¹⁹⁾ The Riksdag enacts the laws, determines taxes and decides how public funds are to be used. The Riksdag scrutinizes the workings of the Government and the administration of the country.⁽²⁰⁾ The Parliamentary Ombudsman constitute an important and well-known instrument utilized by the Riksdag in its scrutiny of the administration. The Parliamentary Ombudsman is elected by the Riksdag, and it is his duty to supervise in accordance with instructions laid down by the Riksdag the application in public service of laws and other statutes.⁽²¹⁾

The Riksdag has laid down that it is the parliamentary Ombudsman's job to supervise:

civilian and military central government authorities (including COWI:s) ; municipal authorities; officials and others holding posts with these authorities, and others holding posts or performing commissions or contracts that involve the exercise of authority.⁽²²⁾

Sweden is a unique example where rule of law is exercised in absolute terms and the ombudsman system has proven to be the major factor for its transparent and accountable government. The Swedish ombudsman, as an excellent model, could be replicated by other countries of the world at least for the sake of transparent and accountable government.

Bangladesh Scenario

Bangladesh is a Parliamentary democracy. The Prime Minister, as head of the government is constitutionally responsible for managing the state. While implementing the decisions of the government it is necessary to see whether those actions are in consonance with the laws of the land and here comes the question of accountability.

Bureaucracy is one of the important actors in the government of the state. Bureaucrats are influential by virtue of holding permanent jobs, for having a role in policy making and programmes implementation and having control over the financial and material resources of the country.

A bureaucratic system owes its allegiance to the people and works its interests can prevent all forms of excesses. It can turn to be conducive to democracy and to the democratization of the economy. The normal process for making them accountable is that they be subjected to strict enforcement of service rules and other punishment for bad performance.

Article 77 of the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh provides the conditions that there would be a constitutional post of Ombudsman to handle the administrative grievances. The Ombudsman Act 1980 (Act 15 of 1980) enacted by the parliament has categorically indicates the legal provisions and modalities of the ombudsman system. In spite of having the constitutional and legal provisions the institution of ombudsman has not yet been established in Bangladesh.

There is widespread concern about government performance, and a perception that accountability measures and institutions are neither sufficiently transparent nor adequately strict to ensure effective, fair and efficient policy and programme implementation. ⁽²³⁾

Bureaucratic excess, administrative grievances, thousands of cases pending with the Administrative Tribunals and Appellate tribunals; police atrocities inter-cadre or intra-cadre services' rivalries existence of innumerable ambiguous Acts, Ordinances, rules and regulations; and arbitrary decisions are the major impediments to good governance in Bangladesh.

Country like Bangladesh, which has a powerful bureaucracy needs to have an impartial, neutral, legal institution i.e., the ombudsman. The institution of ombudsman can oversee the bureaucratic excesses and administrative grievances of the public. What Bangladesh needs to emphasis is the institutionalization of the system and not the person. If the ombudsman system is institutionalized there would be less sycophancy and better management of the institution of the ombudsman.

Conclusion

Many countries have adopted various methods and means to deal with grievances and complaints of their citizens against government practices and other public authorities. These countries may rely on having the complaints brought up directly to the official establishments or ministries concerned, or through administrative courts, attorney general, public prosecutors, appellate boards, parliamentary representatives or committees and

other persons or bodies including private agencies as well as the press. However, none of these methods or means proved to be capable of carrying out the functions and responsibilities of the ombudsman in the best interest of the people for various reasons.⁽²⁴⁾ It is almost an accepted and settled fact that the ideal form of ombudsman should exhibit the following principle characteristics:

Be legally established; be functionally autonomous; be external to the administration; be operationally independent of both the legislature and the executive; be non-political; be sympathetic to the citizens but not adverse to the administration; be freely accessible; and be given unlimited access to the documents bearing relevance upon the decision in question.⁽²⁵⁾

The constitution of Bangladesh provides for an ombudsman as part of its built-in system for transparency. But successive governments since independence did not appoint such an ombudsman.

This vital institution, which is essential for proper governance has not been established even in three decades since the constitution was framed. The ombudsman if appointed would bring justice to the doorstep of the people. To ensure accountability of the members of parliament and public servants, ombudsman as provided by the constitution is necessary.

In 1980 the government passed an act for installation of an ombudsman and after 22 years on January 6, 2002 the coalition government brought the act into force through a gazette notification. However on February 11 2002 the law ministry proposed to the cabinet for amendment to some provisions of the act which in turn formed a committee to scrutinize the bill. Since then no one knows what has happened to the bill.

The institution of ombudsman is by no means an artificial organism. It is reality sprung out of a great experience and after much trial and error. It is the result of much toil, much patience and continued effort for a sound and honest application of the rule of law and the safeguard of the dignity of man and his basic rights.⁽²⁶⁾

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Urban Local Governance in Bangladesh: Some Arising Issues

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Abstract: It is pertinent to discuss the issues concerning governance so as to devise strategies and policies in delivering efficient urban infrastructure and services by the Pourashavas (municipalities) and City Corporations in Bangladesh. This also has to be viewed in the context of the constitutional and legal framework, institutional, financial and other aspects. The Constitution of Bangladesh provides adequate supports for establishment of local bodies of governments in terms of their composition, administrative domains and financial arrangements. The legal framework for Pourashavas is covered by the Pourashava Ordinance, 1977. Each of the City Corporations has its own Ordinance. In practice, the autonomy of these local bodies is limited. These authorities collect local taxes, fees and rates and receive Government grants, both recurrent and capital. The Pourashava Ordinance, 1977 and the respective Ordinances of the City Corporations of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi have the legal basis for preparing plans and programmes including preparation of master/physical development plans. There is no manpower to prepare such plans in Pourashavas. A number of problems and issues and possible areas of interventions have been identified here so as to ensure good governance for efficient delivery of services by urban local governments in Bangladesh.

Introduction

McCarney, Halfani and Rodriguez define the term governance as a system of government concentrating on effective and accountable institutions, democratic principles and electoral process, representative and responsible structures to ensure an open and legitimate relationship between the civil society and the state. Further, they refer that a system of governing which is concerned with the nature of relationship between the rulers and the ruled, the state and the society, the government and the governed (McCarney,

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et al.,1995). These definitions concern with a number of the vital aspects such as civil society, electoral system, politicians' role and participation, accountability mechanism, governing institutions, etc.

In line with the above mentioned definitions of governance and guided by the principles underlying participation, autonomy and accountability of representative urban local government, this paper seeks to identify some important issues which merit consideration in view of efficient delivery of urban infrastructure and services by the Municipalities and City Corporations so as to devise strategies and policies in addressing future challenges in respect of urbanization in Bangladesh. These issues need to be examined in the contexts of the constitutional and legal framework, institutional, financial and other aspects.

Constitutional Provisions and Legal Framework Constitutional Provisions

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, as modified up to 31st December 1986, highlights the establishment of the local government institutions in Bangladesh for empowerment and participation of the people in the development processes at the local level. With regard to local government institutions, Article 9 of the Constitution, under Fundamental Principles of State Policy, says;

"The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women".

Furthermore, the Constitution, as modified up to 30th April 1996, describes compositions and administrative functions of the local bodies. Thus, the Constitution, under the Article 59, under heading Executive, states as follows:

"(1) Local Government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law.

(2) Everybody such as is referred to in clause (1) shall, subject to this Constitution and any other law, perform within the appropriate administrative unit such functions as shall be prescribed by Act of Parliament, which include functions relating to -

- (a) administrative and the work of public offices;
- (b) the maintenance of public order,
- (c) the preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development. "

Also, as regard the power of local government bodies, there is specific Constitutional provisions. Article 60 of the Constitution, under the heading Executive, relating to the financial power of the local bodies' states as follows:

"For the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of article 59, Parliament shall, by law, confer powers, on the local government bodies referred to in that article, including power to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds."

Thus, the Constitution adequately provides for the establishment of local bodies of governments in terms of their composition, administrative domains and financial arrangements.

Legal Framework

The legal framework for Pourashavas is mainly covered by the Pourashava Ordinance, 1977. Each of the City Corporations has its own Ordinance, namely, The Dhaka City Corporation Ordinance, 1983; The Chittagong Municipal Corporation Ordinance, 1982; The Khulna Municipal Corporation Ordinance, 1984; and, The Rajshahi Municipal Corporation Ordinance, 1987.

These statutes defines organizational structure and character of the municipal government, their constitution and composition, process of elections, the organizational design and the scheme for management, conduct of business, functions, finances, control and supervision of the central government, relationship with other local government, offences and penalties, besides the powers to frame

rules, by-laws and regulations. The laws which govern the municipal governments, include: the Statute i.e., an Act or an Ordinance, the Rules framed by the Ministry under the provisions of the acts or the Ordinances, the By-laws, and, the Regulations.

A Statute is an Act of the Parliament and an Ordinance is promulgated by the President and is the basic law on any subject. Most of the laws, however, continue from the past as a federal legacy and no attempt has been made yet to review or remodel them in the context of present unitary structure of the Government. The relevant Acts and the Ordinances include powers for making rules, by-laws and regulations.

Institutional Aspect

Municipal institutions including City Corporations constitute the urban local governments in Bangladesh. These, again, constitute the vital parts of the political and administrative system which prevails at the local levels in the urban areas of the country. In fact, these municipal institutions have been in operation in various forms and names in Bangladesh since ancient times. The growth and development of these urban government institutions is closely related with the local governments in ancient India, British and Pakistan.

Further, the municipal bodies occupy an important place in the overall system of administration and governance in Bangladesh; firstly, as key local government bodies for urban areas of the country, and secondly, as agencies in rendering important public services and facilities to the urban population. As local government bodies, they enjoy the status of statutory bodies constituted under laws and function as autonomous self-governing units. As agencies of public service, they shoulder the responsibilities for providing a wide range of civic services to the people of the urban areas.

The urban local governments in Bangladesh namely, the Pourashava and the City Corporation are under the administrative control of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives. The Ministry is divided into two Divisions: (i) The Local Government Division; and, (ii) The Rural Development

and Cooperatives Division. The Local Government Division deals with administrative matters of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations. This Division works through 4 City Corporations and 193 Pourashavas. This Division is supposed to play a key role by way of the central Government's supervision and control of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations. This Division lacks the human, capital and other budgetary resources to perform effective tastes of supervision and monitoring.

Both the Pourashavas and the City Corporations are autonomous corporate bodies having perpetual succession and a common seal. The autonomy is limited by the fact of Government acting as the controlling authority in the case of Pourashavas. In the case of City Corporations though there is no provision of prescribed authority, the Government has the authority to intervene in the affairs of the Corporations in several ways.

Financial Aspect

To provide municipal services, City Corporations and Pourashavas collect local taxes, fees and rates and receive Government grants, both recurrent and capital accounts. The source of revenue, both of City Corporations and Pourashavas, are almost similar. Most important of these are: taxes, rates, fees or surcharges, income from own sources such as fees, fines, rents, profits, charges for certain services and Government grants. Broadly, these sources fall into the following four categories: tax revenue, non-tax revenue, government grants, deposit and advance. It has been noticed that expenditure on physical development or on infrastructure takes the lion's share of the total expenditure. It ranged between 37.8 per cent to 48.9 per cent in financial year 1982- 83 among the different types of Pourashavas. It was followed by expenditure on administration (between 24.5 per cent to 29.6-per cent) and health care (13.4 per cent to 20.1 per cent).

Planning Aspect

Besides preparation of master/physical plans of the urban areas, the planning work for Pourashavas and City Corporations covers socio-economic development and infrastructure development as

well as preparation of plans for maintenance and delivery of civic services. However, the Pourashava Ordinance, 1977 and the respective Ordinances of the City Corporations of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi have the legal basis for preparing any plans and programmes including master/physical development plans.

Urban planning in the metropolitan cities of Bangladesh, such as Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi, is the responsibility of the urban development authorities. These authorities are Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (capital development authority - RAJUK) for Dhaka city, Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) for Chittagong city, Khulna Development Authority (KDA) for Khulna city, and Rajshahi Development Authority (RDA) for Rajshahi city. These bodies were established either by the promulgation of Ordinance or Acts. These authorities undertake local planning as well as infrastructure and site development activities for housing, commercial and industrial areas. These authorities also exert development control functions. On the other hand, to accomplish these tasks, there is no such specialized manpower in the Pourashavas. In Bangladesh, there is no town planner in any Pourashava.

Arising Issues

Constitutional Provisions and Legal Framework Context

Some of the rules, regulations and by-laws of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations are no longer relevant to municipal affairs. They do not provide the flexibility for alternative ways to provide services, e.g., through privatization. Since the time of issue of the Ordinance, there has been a proliferation of rules and standing orders making it extremely hard to muster knowledge of all pertinent details. But perhaps the most powerful reason for reforms and updating and consolidating the legal framework for municipalities is to provide these bodies with real self-government and actual operational autonomy. The legal framework of the Pourashavas should be, therefore, reviewed right away with the objectives of consolidating and simplifying the numerous legal provisions affecting the Pourashavas and the City Corporations.

The best strategy for reform is to update and expand the Pourashava Ordinance into a Municipal Law; consolidate all the different legal provisions in regulations and standing orders and apply it equally for the Pourashavas and the City Corporations with specialized provisions, where it is necessary. The main objectives of this law would be to provide a legal framework for municipalities which is compatible with the changing environment of the country as well as allows municipalities more opportunities for self-governance and operational freedom and ensures a greater degree of accountability for the performance having enabling provisions for alternative approaches.

Moreover, the current legal framework for the Pourashavas and the City Corporations is inadequate from the point of view of that rules and regulations do not provide scope for considering alternative approaches for service delivery, through privatization and/or by participation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is important that the Pourashavas and City Corporations are enable to consider alternative options for improving the municipal services and achieving efficient resources allocation. In Bangladesh, there are a few examples where the NGOs and private sector have successfully been involved in municipal services provision independently or in collaborations with the Pourashavas and the City Corporations.

Institutional Context

The Pourashavas have been established with the intention to provide different services and facilities to the city dwellers i.e., to counteract the emerging problems due to urbanization. The existing municipalization process in Bangladesh cannot effectively address the issues affecting urban environment.

Inherently, the Pourashavas suffer from the acute shortage of their own resources which is the root cause for the existence of low level of delivery of municipal services. There exists a vicious circle of low investment by the Pourashavas mostly due to low receipts from the municipal taxes from the city dwellers thus reducing the revenues of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations. There are

also reductions in grants of funds by the central Government. As a result, there are limited new infrastructural developments in the Pourashava and the City Corporation areas. It may be pointed out here that due to people's participation in the local governments through their elected representatives, political consideration greatly influence the flow of resources to certain urban local governments and some of these manage to obtain more funds than the others. Certain parameters such as the magnitude of revenue collections, the population, the level of development, the extent of contribution towards regional development need to be considered to rationalize the process of devolution of funds to the Pourashavas and the City Corporations.

The administrative capabilities of the urban local governments are poor. It is often noticed that the Mayors/Chairmen and Commissioners are sometime ignorant of the basic laws, rules and regulations. A report of an Asian Development Bank financed project namely, the Secondary Towns Infrastructure and Flood Protection Project (STIFPP) identified that project effective in the Pourashavas often characterized by the low level of competence and aptitude of the Pourashava's staff. The Pourashavas lack trained and qualified staff to meet the challenges of providing services to the growing urban population of the country. The career prospects in the Pourashavas are very limited. Trained and adequate manpower requirements for municipalities is an important issue which requires government's urgent intervention. Though the City Corporations of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi have some qualified staff, but they are inadequate in relation to the need for services for the growing population of these cities.

The existing Ordinances provide the elected Chairman of the Pourashava and the Mayor of the City Corporation with all executive powers including the power to delegate to others. In practice, there has been little or no delegation of powers by the Executives. There are allegations of a high degree of arbitrariness in the exercise of powers by the Chairmen/Mayors. The concentration of political powers and the lack of delegation results in poor performance, inefficiency and lack of accountability, much

to the detriment of good governance since they put a workload on the Chairman/Mayor that he/she is not able to accomplish. In order to improve the overall governance of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations, it is necessary to provide effective delegation of powers by the Chairman/the Mayor and limit his/her discretionary powers.

At present, the Chairman of Pourashava/the Mayor of City Corporation controls almost all aspects of urban local governments including the affairs of the elected councils. The roles assigned to the Council and the Commissioners are too vague and the Committee structure of the Municipal/City Councils does not function properly. An important element of government's accountability is the oversight and control of the executive branch of the municipal authorities by the Council. This type of accountability is practically non-existent at the urban local government levels. In particular, the current structure of municipal governance mixes executive and legislative powers by making the Chairman/Mayor also heads of the Municipal/City Council. Thus, the Chairman/Mayor can overrule majority decisions of the Council. The Municipality/City Council needs to play a leading role in budgetary decisions and for overseeing municipal/city finances and operations. The involvement of the Commissioners in all aspects of policy decisions will be the most important step in increasing the political accountability of urban local governments.

It is observed that the Pourashavas and the City Corporations are far from attaining any standards in terms of provision of services as well as maintenance thereof. Even basic activities from the list of compulsory functions are not performed with any acceptable decency. Consequently, the quality of living in the urban areas is falling with the increasing pressure of population. The Pourashavas and the City Corporations with the existing efficiency have failed to perform properly their functional assignments as stated above due to several reasons. Lack of trained and adequate manpower and financial resources, inability to charge an economically viable price for the services due to political and others are some of the main reasons. The weak resource base in terms of men, materials and

money of the municipalities is one main reason for non-performance of the functions of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations.

As far as the managerial strengths and weaknesses of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations are concerned, these organizations are not capable enough to handle any bigger programmes and projects relating to urban service delivery as specified in their functional domains. Hence, there is need to look into their existing service delivery mechanisms. The Pourashavas and the City Corporations carry out their prescribed functions under the administrative control and direction of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives. As such, much time is spent to receive approvals for annual development budgets, development projects, recruitment of staff, etc. from the Ministry.

The classification of function of both Pourashavas and the City Corporations is not clear and precise. The traditional classification of functions between compulsory and optional does not stand, in practice, instead of classifying cities and towns according to their financial strength, these should be classified taking into account the level of urbanization, administrative and the economic importance, etc. and only then functions should be set for these different types of Pourashavas.

Financial Context

The municipal financing is dominated by one tax source - the property tax. It contributes nearly one-third of their total income. On an average, nearly 40 to per cent of the total property tax estimated remain uncontrolled. Proper and regular assessments are not done. Most of the Pourashavas are not even properly equipped to do this. Abolition of the much-criticized octroi deprived many of the Pourashavas of the most buoyant source of revenue. It has been replaced by a compensatory grant which fails to capture this buoyancy. Instead of being compensated by a direct grant from the Government, it could be replaced by a turnover tax by a surcharge on sales tax. This could keep the source buoyant that the present grants system.

A cursory look at the financial situation suggests that most of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations depend heavily on central Government grants for meeting their local financial needs. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the percentage of grants provided by the central Government rose to 15.6 per cent in 1979-80 to 48.8 per cent in 1995-96 to the Pourashava revenue while a low holding tax is often held accountable for the situation. It is expected that an improvement in the level of efficiency in collection of dues, property and other taxes/fees could significantly change the financial status of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations.

Apparently, it appears that the Pourashavas and the City Corporations are autonomous and independent in many ways, but in reality their effective autonomy is limited. Section 146 of the Pourashava Ordinance and section 157 of the respective City Corporation Ordinance grant the Central Government the power to make the rules necessary for carrying out the Ordinances. Consequently, the administrative operations of urban local governments are subject the rule making authority of the Central Government. For example, municipal revenues may be raised only at the marginal rates prescribed by the central Government. Furthermore, the Pourashavas and the City Corporations have limited flexibility in the daily implementation and management of their budgets. Any changes to the Pourashavas and the City Corporations revised budgets require approval of the Ministry, this process is a time-consuming as well as a cumbersome one.

A study conducted on 26 Pourashavas and 4 City Corporations by the World Bank under Municipal Finance Management Sector reveals that the level of collections from the own-revenue sources is extremely low; secondly, the variation in collections of total own revenues per capita across Pourashavas is extremely great; thirdly, there are extremely large differences in the growth rates of collections over times; fourthly, the Pourashavas are heavily dependent on central Government transfers for much of their revenues and this dependence has tended to increase over time. In this backdrop addressing central-local financial relations is a

necessary condition to secure both stable and growing local financial base and to protect the macro-economic balance in the country.

The Pourashavas and the City Corporations should be given some autonomy in deciding on the local taxes and rates. The variations in these rates and taxes represent important signals regarding the levels of services, in particular and the quality of local governance, in general. Increasing the tax base reflecting the market values should increase the revenues from the holding tax. In general, the Pourashavas and the City Corporations make very little use of charges and fees. Under services for which local charges and fees be levied according to the extent of use are heavily subsidized. The rates and fees are set well below what it cost to bring these services. Furthermore, flat rates and fees tend to discriminate small and marginal users (i.e., the poor) and marginal cost pricing in place of flat rates may resolve these problems. The Government may be pursued to rationalize the fees and rates structure on the basis of their users on order to promote fairness and equity at the local levels. Finally, the urban local governments should collect these rates and fees more aggressively.

The local governance ultimately depends on the quality and skills of those who are governing the local bodies. In order to improve the qualitative structure of the governance, massive training is required. This is required for both elected officials and the mid-level managers. In addition, assessment and collection process for all taxes should be computerized especially in the larger urban areas. A closer link between revenue mobilization and the responsiveness of urban local governments to residents need should be pre-conditions for sustained improvements in local tax effort. This link can be strengthened by participation of residents in decision regarding the services to be provided and by increasing the effectiveness in delivery of these services.

Plan Preparation Context

At present, there are no town planners in the medium and small sized Pourashavas though the Pourashava Ordinance, 1977 and the

City Corporation Ordinances make the provision for preparing master/physical plans for their respective areas. Only Dhaka City Corporation has a small unit of town planners. The issue of creation of posts for the town planners in the Pourashavas and the City Corporations is an urgent one in view of the existing deteriorated environmental conditions in the towns and cities of Bangladesh. The town planners can play vital role in implementation improving the overall environmental conditions of the towns and cities. In the overall plan making process, there is need to professionalize activities and draw a clear separation between political and technical tasks of the Pourashavas and the City Corporations.

The Pourashavas and the City Corporations in Bangladesh have a dismal record of not being involving the citizens in their plan making process. The budget process of urban local bodies lack transparency and their council meetings are closed to the public. The public participation helps to local officials identify demands for their services and thus make a more efficient use of resources available. Citizen's participation also helps strengthen their attachment and sense of ownership of community projects and affairs. The daily governance and citizens participation and attachment may be increased by creating community consultation institutions, holding regular meetings or hearings. Another effective way of increasing citizen's participation is to institutionalize the role of grass-root groups such as neighbourhood or community associations.

Conclusion

The present and future urbanization trend is another critical issue for the urban local government bodies such as metropolitan, secondary and smaller cities and towns in delivering services to the urbanites. At present, the urban population is estimated to be more 25 million than which is more than 25 per cent of the total population 120 million. In Bangladesh, the present urban and rural population mix is estimated to be 25:75. There are many projections on the urban population of Bangladesh. Of these, the projection of the World Bank is considered more realistic. According to this projection, the total national population would be

141 million by the year 2000 and 170.5 million by the year 2010- while the total urban population would be 37 million by 2000 and 57 million by 2010. There will be huge agglomeration of the people in the urban areas of Bangladesh. And the existing and newly established urban centres will have to create a good number of services and facilities for this burgeoning people. On the other hand, the urban local governments have institutionally to be equipped to render these services to the new comers to these cities and towns,

The poverty is also widespread in urban areas of Bangladesh and the consequence of the poverty is prevalent. The issue of poverty reduction should be the top most priority task of the local governments. Unfortunately, this issue has not been given due impetus in the routine activities of the local governments. Since it is a complex problem, this task mostly remains unaddressed due to lack of adequate knowledge of the officials of the local governments. The ideas and thoughts in providing urban services by the local governments through NGO-local government collaboration, CBO-local government collaboration, privatization, etc. are completely new aspects to the officials and staff of the local governments in Bangladesh. How these new types of developments are to be accommodated with the existing system of the urban local governments is an another challenge. The issue of good governance is very vital in context of efficient delivery of services by local government. The related aspects - accountability to the people, transparency, efficiency and incorruptibility in conducting the business of government and, above all, non-discriminatory application of the laws of the land are some of the major features of a good government. The present government, in pursuance of its Constitutional obligations is committed to the nation to ensure good governance. It is really a challenging task to achieve this goal at the levels of the urban local governments.

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Refugee Assistance and Development A Search for Self-Reliance

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Abstract : *Refugees are one of the major problems facing the international community today. Now a days the number of refugees are increasing for various reasons. As the number of refugees increased the strategies for addressing this problem become the prime concern of the international community. The main thrust of this article is to find out whether there is any scope to able the refugee people self-reliant while they awaits in the camp. It is the view of the author that refugee problem is no more short-term and that the present efforts to alleviate refugee problems is inadequate both in terms of quality and quantity as well as vision for self-reliance.*

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1990s there was great optimism that the end of the Cold War might also result in the end of the global 'refugee cycle'. Cold War analyses of refugee displacements often highlighted the 'escape' from communism as the principal motive for refugee movements in the north. They tended to explain refugee-generating conflicts in the South in terms of wars conducted by proxy by the two superpowers (Suhrke and Zolberg 1989). In reality though, the global refugee population increased substantially immediately after the end of the Cold War, from about 14.9 million in 1990 to 17.2 million in 1991 (UNHCR 1995a). In the document UNHCR strategy towards 2000 (Geneva, 1997) the primary challenge facing the UNHCR was said to be the fact that "population displacements are more than ever perceived as a threat to economic, social and environmental stability, as well as political security"(UNHCR, 1995: 14). Because of the international and national politics and socio-economic reason the number of refugee is increasing, they are living in the refugee camp sometimes generation after generation without any hope for future.

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The main objective of this article is to review and assess the assumptions and strategies involved in addressing refugee movements on the basis of existing literature. It is argued that the operational mechanisms of the current international response to refugee movements is based upon the assumptions that refugee problem are short term and temporary, are no longer appropriate. The article will try to find out whether there is any scope to able the refugee people self-reliant while they awaits in the refugee camp.

Who are Refugees

In order to develop an appropriate refugee assistance program/strategies, it is important to understand who the refugees are and what are the conditions that forced them to become refugees. The use of the word "refugee" can be very confusing. It is very hard to find a well-defined definition of the term refugee. A sociological definition of refugees has been developed by some social scientists. "A refugee is person who involuntarily under great duress, and typically for political reasons" (Suhrke, 1983:162).

For a better understanding and complete definition of refugee we can cite UN definition regarding refugees. According to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the status of Refugees, the term 'refugee' shall apply to any persons who,

"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of religion, nationality or membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country" (Amberg, 1988 :12).

Causes of Refugee Outflows

Refugees are one of the major problems facing the international community today. The causes of refugeeism are complex and people flee their countries for a wide variety of reasons such as persecution, for racial, political, or religious beliefs. War, armed conflict and repression for political, ethnic, racial or religious reasons are the usual causes behind the movement of refugees.

Refugees are very often the by-product, and sometimes the intended result, of the political leaders wielding power without regard to the rights of its citizens. Within the body of literature on migration there exist a number of theories to explain why people move. However, there is no such theory geared specifically towards refugees. According to Mr. Zia Rizbi,

“ Armed conflicts between and within countries occasioned by the sale of arms from the developed to the underdeveloped countries (today two million dollars per minute are spent on arms), resulting in displaced populations and a devastation of resources. The speaker noted however, that at least 75 per cent of refugees come from border areas, where conflicts were frequent.” (1989:8).

Organization for Refugee Assistance and their Limitations

There are three major actors who deal with refugee problems. They are the United Nations High Commissions for Refugees (UNHCR), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and national governments. They provide legal protection, emergency relief, ongoing assistance and resettlement aid. This constitutes the international response to refugees. A very fundamental problem is that many of the agencies working as operational partners of UNHCR have very little prior experience with refugees or the services they are providing (Cuny, 1981). In this section, I want to discuss the main features and strategies used by the UNHCR and other assisting agencies in order to find out limitation or weakness of the existing machinery.

Within the international system of relief efforts the UNHCR is the major agency working with refugees. The original purpose of UNHCR was to offer protection to refugees from the crises of World War II, placing them in camps until they were permanently resettled (McLean, 1983). Since then, it has become the major recipient and disburser of international funds contributed by governments for refugees (McLean, 1983). It is possible to identify a number of major flaws in the design and implementation of the UNHCR program, This has undoubtedly impacted negatively on its

overall success. The major weakness in the planning process, which is based on faulty assumption that refugee problems, are temporary. For most of the past 50 years, the UNHCR has been at the core of assisting refugees with a parochial vision. UNHCR operates within resettlement and repatriation solutions that are all restorative.

Although the UNHCR dominates the refugee assistance program it is itself an extremely weak organization, with a limited capacity for managing donor agencies and directing change in their attitude. UNHCR is thus in no position to challenge the policies of its funders. Moreover, UNHCR has no authority to carry over any action on the refugee producing government. It also has no financial power to launch any development projects independently. As the UNHCR is financially dependent on the state therefore, the state always maintain a dominant role over UNHCR's policies and programs. As Adelman mentioned,

“critical theorists like political realists, argue that the UNHCR is simply a pawn of state and hence, capitalist interests. As such, the UNHCR is a conflicted organization torn between its legal and human rights obligations and its cow towing to the Western states that pay its bills. The critical theories agree with the realists that the UNHCR is not an independent actor but is subject to the interest of the powerful states that it serves” (Adelman, 2001: 10).

The UNHCR was created by western governments to see their interest in refugee field. The gap between relief and development in the UN system is well known (Rogers and Copeland 1993). The necessity, as well as the difficulties, of expanding relief and humanitarian assistance to include attention to capacity building and sustainable development has been increasingly debated within the UN system.

Generally, though, NGOs are believed to operate much more efficiently than government and international agencies because they are smaller and have less complex organizational structures. They also typically react more quickly to events, work more at the grassroots level, and operate mainly along humanitarian rather than politicoeconomic lines. However, NGOs now face criticisms

similar to those of other institutions. These include their tendency to provide inappropriate aid, to engage in intra and inter agency rivalries, and to not coordinate their activities (Harrell-Bond 1985, 1986; Mazur 1987, 1988; Pitlerman 1985).

Problem with Coordination

Coordination problem in the refugee field has a long history, including the evolution of the fragmentary and overlapping sets of entities established to deal with refugees. One major feature of the multilateral humanitarian assistance is the multiplicity of actors involved. On the donor side there are global and regional intergovernmental agencies, national governments of different sizes and shapes, and a plethora of non-governmental organization (NGOs) that are important conduits of assistance to the field. In fact, NGOs have become an integral part of the refugee regime and a deep mutual dependence has developed between them and UNHCR (Zetter, 1999). In reality, the actions of these multiple agencies are seldom effectively coordinated and they may even undermine each other. As Eldridge mentioned, "We can no longer go along our uncoordinated ways, each of us in his own path. Sometimes unwittingly in competition with one another. The time has come for those of us concerned with problem to create a plan, manpower plan" (1967: 66) Recently, the agency has examined the impact of funding shortages, problems in funding mechanisms and put emphasis on the need for coordination of repatriation, rehabilitation and development services in repatriation programs. UNHCR, in its Framework for the Plan of Operation for Repatriation and Reintegration of Mozambican Refugees said.

"There will be a need for a highly coordinated inter-agency approach throughout both planning and implementation of what we hope will be a comprehensive (reintegration) program A very clear understanding between all of the various actors in the rehabilitation process.... Clear linkages should be developed to ensure smooth transition from relief to development activities" (Hiram 1993: 28)

Phases of Refugee Assistance

The world community has attempted to deal with massive refugee flows in a variety of ways, seeking to ease the plight of the refugees or to relieve the pressure on countries of settlement while searching for solutions to deal with the root causes as well. Between the time that a refugee arrives in host country and a solution to the problem is found, refugee situations and the international response to them can be conceived of as passing through a series of stages. Dewy identified five refugee phases:

“1) pre-emergency; 2) emergency 3) post emergency; 4) durable solutions; and 5) development. The initial phase is pre-emergency in character during which the first signs of refugee movements begin to appear. The next phase is characterized by the need for emergency relief. As refugee situations evolve, they tend to pass through a third, post emergency phase of care and maintenance, often with an emphasis on refugee self-reliance. But in most cases, efforts are made to find a lasting solutions such as voluntary repatriation, local settlement..... The fifth and final stage of a refugee situation..... consists of integration of refugees or reintegration of returnees into the development process of the host country or the country of origin, respectively (Dewy 1984, cited in Gorman, 1985, Quoted in Amberg 1988: 39).

Though theoretically there are five stages of refugee assistance program practically the UNHCR and other NGOs are confined themselves with the primary stages. As Amberg mentioned,

“It is theoretically possible for UNHCR and NGO’s to be very active in each of the five phases. Practically their involvement is usually limited to the emergency phase. This is due to the fact that the existing models for assisting refugees are based on outdated assumptions that problem are temporary and that refugees come from industrialized countries. Emergency relief is geared towards providing for refugees under these short-term conditions ‘ (Amberg, 1988:40).

In Search for Development Oriented Refugee Assistance

The general meaning of development is pattern of regeneration through one's own effort for fighting against dominance and dependence. It means gaining the strength, confidence and vision to work for positive changes. In the field of refugee work, development means refugee's social and economic capacity to withstand and surmount pressure on their lives and ways of life. It means vulnerabilities are reduced and capacities are increased so that refugee people can manage themselves without the help of external agencies. The basic philosophy of development is based on the capacity building of the refugee so that they can participate fully and fairly in shaping their vision of a healthy society.

The concept of refugee aid and development emerged in the late 1970s (it has earlier roots) precisely because of the failures of the traditional refugee assistance system that was narrowly focused on life-sustaining, relief-oriented refugee assistance. What was apparent then was that giving only relief and emergency assistance to refugees leads to dependency, a life in limbo and a heavy burden on the least-developed countries. Failure to pursue a durable solution means that life-sustaining, care and maintenance assistance becomes open ended and expensive. The international community has adopted a series of principles, declarations conclusions and reports which address the issue of the desirability of development-oriented assistance program. Unfortunately, despite all these efforts, the concept of refugee aid and development is still ill defined. (Barry N. Stein 1994).

From the previous discussion it is evident that there are many organizations providing refugee assistance, but their focus is very limited only confined with the humanitarian relief assistance. Their outlook is very parochial rather than panoramic. The organization of international refugee assistance is based upon the false assumption that refugee situations are short-term. "The UNHCR and international NGOs have traditionally responded to refugee crises by providing short-term emergency relief. They continue to do so today" (Amberg, 1988:68)

For a long term solution of the refugee problem some critical issues must be understood and addressed. By the end of the 1970s, the states most directly concerned with the refugee problem in developing regions were beginning to consider the need for alternative models of assistance. Countries of asylum, many of them affected by the related ills of political instability, the global recession and economic mismanagement, stressed the need for 'international burden sharing' so that they could cope with the adverse impact of refugees. Because when refugees used to come in a state it impose an impact on host countries economy especially on its infrastructures, environment and disadvantaged groups. So it became a great challenge for host countries to manage the problem. They lack the infrastructure, administrative set-up, resoures, logistics and experience to bear the extra load. Gorman has summarized that perception,

"There was increasingly a realization that large numbers of refugees, often spontaneously settled in poor countries, could quickly outpace the host country's economic and social infrastructures. In some cases, such as Pakistan, the very relief operation itself caused a deterioration in roads, which were subjected to continuous relief convoys of heavy trucks laden with relief supplies. In arid regions, such as Sudan and Somalia, the massive concentration of refugee populations led to widespread deforestation and desertification"(Gorman, 1993: 103)

So, the extra pressure should be shared by the international community by launching development projects focusing on the upliftment of both host country and refugee as well. Long term, as well as short term programs, can be launched for integrated and comprehensive development so that they become self-reliant rather than dependent. On the basis of previous experience RAD (Refugee Assistance and Development) suggests that assistance programs should have a holistic outlook. Accroding to UNRISD suggestions to obtain balance and short term labor intensive projects as well as long term capital intensive projects, so that people from all walks of life can get benefit from the projects.

What to Do to Bridge the Gap

In connectin with appropriate development strategies, UNRISD has suggested an approach that achieves a better balance between humanitarian and development assistance;

“it is important to achieve a better balance between short-term humanitarian assistance and development aid by channeling more resources toward small-scale community based projects and quick impact assistance designed to rehabilitate agricultural production and essential social services. Long term development assistance focus less on large scale capital intensive projects and more on human” (1993:250).

The overall strategies for self-reliance focused development strategies should have two phases, as mentioned an Emergency Operation Committee,

“in the transitory or short-term phase, projects with immediate impact promoting the transition from emergency to development will be crucial. Projects in this phase should focus upon food services and income generation. In the second, or consolidation phase, emphasis should be on strengthening the absorption capacity and economy of the returnee areas and diversifying the economy. This phase should form a bridge with the transitory phase focusing on agriculture, education, health, water supply, income and employment generation” (1992 m: 4).

In order to develop the fate of refugees there needs to be implement a number of projects. The question is, who will operate the projects? The funding agency or state wants to send their own officials to look after the project activities because they want to utilize their money in an appropriate manner as most host countries have no experience on how to run the projects efficiently and also lack managerial skills. Moreover, there are many third world countries that have other problems such as misappropriation of project money, red-tapism and bureaucracy. So this raises the question of misunderstandings and mistrust. In order to solve these problems NGOs can come ahead with assistance. But many NGOs also have no professional or skilled personnel to tackle the situation. To overcome the problem an organization can be formed comprised of experts from civil society, donor countries, representative from host countries and people from target groups. So that their better participation and coordination can be ensured.

Previous experience shows that many projects failed to achieve its goal lack of people's participation. It is evident that when beneficiaries participate at the beginning of the project cycle, when project design decision are made, the projects objectives are more likely to include beneficiary empowerment. Because participation building the beneficiary capacity, confidence, increased project effectiveness, and improved project efficiency.

"experience gained in the field suggests that instead of determining the infrastructure and economic base of a settlement from outside the refugee communities it is more appropriate and advantageous to design them with the full participation of the refugees, drawing on their capacity for creative innovation and imagination. The virtual exclusion of refugees from any meaningful participation cost beyond the financial means of the refugees and their host-countries, are among the main constraints on the achievement of self-reliance" (Peter Noble, 1987: 98)

Are the Long-term Development Programs More Cost-effective?

For long-term development there will need extra money to implement the projects. There are some donors who feel reluctant and try to avoid the long-term development strategy. The donors are willing to fund short-term low-budget projects but not long-term development programs. It is true that long-term development programs are expensive to implement, but the benefits to refugees greatly outweigh these costs. Increasing economic self-reliance has many advantages. If the refugees can provide for themselves, the burden to the international community, will be eased. Providing opportunities for self sufficiency costs less than continually satisfying basic needs through assistance programs. The psychological effects of promoting a sense of responsibility improves the refugee's self image and makes it easier for them to deal with their situation. As Ruiz mentioned "though the long term assistance program needs more money and it is expensive but in the long run it is cost-effective"(1993:27).

I can mention Eritrean refugee as well as Ethiopian, Uganda and Chad's refugee in Sudan. During the Eritrean struggle for liberation

from Ethiopia- over one quarter of Eritrea's population became refugees. The majority, as many as 500,000 people, sought asylum in Sudan, where some have now been for up to thirty years (Kibreab 1996b). Since independence in 1956, Sudan have been challenged by flows of refugees from Zaire, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Chad. By 1984 there were 700,000 refugee's in the country compared to 35,000 in 1967 (Karadawi, A. 1999: 1) "and helping returnees and their country, work towards self-sufficiency is also more cost-effective than forcing them to remain dependent on emergency relief programs and foreign aid" (Hiram A. Ruiz, 1993: 27)

Do the Political Interest of Donors Affect Assistance Strategy?

The refugee issue is politically loaded and involves many parties in complex sets of power relations. Political tensions between refugee providing and refugee receiving countries may hamper efforts to assist refugees. Since refugee assistance is almost entirely provided by rich donor countries, it is prone to the vagaries of the political interests of such donors. UNRISD has aptly articulated this problem: "the political problem is that long-term development programs are not only more expensive than humanitarian assistance, but funding for them is even more dependent on the perceived political self-interest of donors" (1993:18-19). Refugees have been used to serve foreign policy concerns in many situations. Using the United States as an example Loescher observed,

"refugees from Eastern Europe, Cuba and China have been generously welcomed by the United States. These refugees represent to the U.S the concrete failings of communist countries. Loescher also points out that refugees have been used to undermine and destabilize enemy regimes. In the case of some Southern African countries, refugees have been provided arms and supported their struggle (1987:330).

The United States has had in influence on and supported events in Guatemala through its military and police training programs, sales and donations of arms, weapons, helicopters and other vehicles used in warfare, spare parts etc, and technical assistance and financial aid (Sante, 1983).

Some Examples of Refugee Self-management and Self-reliance

The concept of self-reliance means self-confidence, reliance primarily on one's own human and natural resources, and the capacity for autonomous goal-getting and decision making. Self reliance primarily means the capacity for income to cover minimum household requirements such as, food, clothing bedding and shelter. In 1982, UNHCR devised a standard definition of the relative concepts of 'self-sufficiency' and self-reliance' based on three parameters.

"The first parameter for self-sufficiency was the surplus production of staple food crop. Basic food guaranteed, the second parameter for self-reliance was 'family self-reliance.' This meant that having achieved self-sufficiency in food, a refugee family should be able to generate from other sources enough income to cover minimum household requirements such as additional food, clothing, bedding and shelter. The third parameter was the settlement's self-reliance" (Johnson and Cree 1982, quoted in Karadawi, 1999 : 198).

In the discussion of refugees the concept of self-reliance means "the capacity of refugees to provide for their own economic support and the support of their families" (Martin and Copeland, 1988a:1).

It is very hard to make the refugee people self-reliant in refugee camps. Moreover, the aid agencies are not interested in making the refugee people self-reliant as it takes more money in their language. In spite of this fact some attempts at helping refugees to become self-reliant while awaiting repatriation have been made in Africa and Central America and the output was somewhat optimistic. This ushers a ray of hope and provides new direction about the rethinking of refugee assistance. At least three examples exist where refugee people became self-reliant with the assistance of international and national assistance agencies. In Honduras, the quest for durable solutions has concentrated on food production. One camp managed to grow some of their own food needs. As UNHCR mentioned,

“the camp [Mesa grande, Honduras] covers 100% of its own population’s needs in fresh vegetables [.....] April’s yield alone was nearly 50 metric tons. Out of the camps fish ponds came seven tons of fish per year. Other locally produced sources of protein include chickens (3, 500 distributed per month) and pigs (60 per month). Considering space constraints and the fact that nearly two thirds of Mesa Gande’s Population are less than 14 years old, these are impressive figures [....] they will never come close to meeting the basic needs of 11,000 persons” (UNHCR 1985: 28)

There was also a sign of self-sufficiency in Guatemalan refugees residing in two camps Compache and Quintana Roo settlements. As Amberg mentioned, “the condition, of the quintana Roo and Compeche refugees are somewhat better. The basic infrastructure in the settlement runs smoothly [.....] there is no doubt that the Compeche and Quintana Roo settlements qualify as an attempt at a self-reliance. UNHCR is pleased with the developments taking place in this area” (Amberg 1988: 108,128).

“in the early 1980s, as a brutal civil war swept through El Salvador, thousands of people sought refugee in neighboring Honduras.....Soon, with a couple of sewing machines and material given by a local church agency, they began teaching others how to make shirts, trousers and dresses. Nine years later, every single item of clothing including underwear, hats and shoes was manufactured within the camp, in collective workshops which boasted 150 semi-industrial machines and 240 trainees, virtually all of them were women and youngsters” (Deborah Eade 1997 :188).

Some Recommendations for Future Action

A solution to the problem of long-term dependency on refugee assistance lies in changing the focus of assistance from relief to development oriented strategy. At present refugees receive assistance from the UNHCR, host government and NGOs. The pattern of assistance is based first, on treating situations as emergencies. Development oriented refugee assistance is seen as a positive step because it is aimed at lessening the burden the

refugees may cause to a host country. The concept of durable solutions was developed by and accepted at the 1984 executive committee meeting of UNHCR (UNHCR, 1984). Clark and Stein (1985: 14) summarize the principles, which arise from the meeting:

- “1. Refugee problem demands durable solution because failure to act early means prolonged suffering, increase dependence, and higher cost to host's and the international community.
2. From the outset there is a need to avoid dependence and promote refugee productivity through self-help activities, engagement in food or other agricultural production, employment and other economically productive activities.
3. However, often no solutions are at hand, because in low-income countries sufficient jobs or readily cultivable land are not available. Therefore the only alternative to permanent dependence on relief is to create income-generating opportunities on a large scale.
4. The focus of refugee assistance must change from short-term emergency relief to long-term solutions, which allow for refugees to become self-reliant”.

Skilled development program can enhance refugee's creativity so funds currently used to maintain refugees in camps should be used for appropriate vocational training programs and job creation program for refugees and host country populations. In the refugee camp women, aging people, and children are more vulnerable so special program should be geared up to help these groups. In order to bridge the existing gaps between refugee and development structure, there needs to be closer coordination to ensure that assistance to refugees complemented development oriented assistance. In this context, UNDP can play a central role in the coordination, implementation and monitoring of refugee-related infrastructure projects. NGOs can also play a role in the assessment, planning and execution of development-oriented projects. In addition, UNHCR can play a leading role in relief and

post-relief activities. Above all, it is clear that a change in attitude towards refugee assistance is needed, UNHCR and other international agencies must change the focus of their assistance programs from emergency relief to development oriented assistance.

Conclusion

Through careful analysis of material it became clear that present efforts to alleviate refugee problems is inadequate both in terms of quality and quantity as well as the vision for refugee self-reliance. There is tendency among all the development partners that increased assistance to refugees is a panacea that can only improve their socio-economic condition. Even though material assistance is crucial, it is not the only variable on which the alleviation of the economic and social plight of the refugees depends. There should be an approach, which seeks to call upon the creativity, the energy and activity of the people themselves to work for the defence of their rights and to adopt measures best suited to their respective needs. According to the Geneva Convention, refugees have the 'right' to protection and humanitarian aid. In order to transform the refugees from a liability to an asset and to enable them to become an important factor in the process of development, the participation of the refugees must be ensured. So that the refugees are able to become productive members of the community by putting into practice their creativity and productivity. By the above discussion it is clear that there is need to improve and strengthen the refugee assistance machinery in order to cope better with the present situation, as well as to be able to meet future eventualities.

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An Inquiry into the Nature and Consequences of Dowry in Rural Bangladesh - A Study of a Village

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Abstract : Dowry is a fatal problem in Bangladesh society. In Bangladesh the system of dowry is a widely practiced tradition which is considered as social problem and a curse for women specially in rural society. Its range is expanded from a poor family to rich one in the society in spite of people's consciousness about its undesired impact. The upper stratum people of society can face the problem easily with their surplus resources but the common villagers become economically distressed by losing their last resort. A good number of reasons are identified by the villagers for its introduction for instance poverty, unemployment and lack of women education, greed of husband and his parents, want of social security and poor implementation of dowry prohibition law. Some welfare measures i.e. creating opportunity for women education and employment along with social security, updating the dowry prohibition law by formulating extra law and enhancing capacity and ensuring strict implementation of the same and empowering the local government specially the union parishad, the increasing trend of its expansion can be curbed. This study indicates to explore the nature, consequences, origin, causes, existing laws and their implications in village society, and provide some suggestions on the basis of the opinion of the villagers for establishment of a dowry free society.

Introduction

Dowry, a terrible social evil in rural Bangladesh is a consequence of women's weak position in the family and social life. The problem is crippling the whole society and severely shaking the

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poor economic backbone of the poor villagers. Dowry is existing in society for a number of reasons. Whether we support it or not the presence of its ugly clutches is a must at marriage from the richest section to the poorest of the poorer in the society. The conscious part of society are very much anxious of this terrible social evil like any other vital problems. Once it was mandatory at marriage to provide bride price but today the custom has been reversed. It is a curse to the economically weak parents of several girls who are member of mostly lower income group of society. Abject poverty, unlimited greed of the husband and his parents and women's dependence on men are some of the main reasons for its existence. Side by side inadequate law and its poor implementation is also responsible for its wider expansion. If we look into the various dailies and magazines we come to know a lot of unwanted incidents happening due to dispute over dowry.

The term dowry simply means wedding gift. In the Encyclopaedia Britannica, dowry is defined as a term denoting the 'property' whether reality or personal that a wife brings to her husband on marriage. Normally it is provided to the groom by the bride or her guardian. Dowry is exchanged in various forms such as land, cattle, TV, fridge, motorbike, clock, cash money and other posh materials etc. In the most part the demand of dowry is fulfilled at the time of marriage. Sometimes, before marriage with the consent of girl's parents or guardians.

In general dowry means giving wedding gift from bride's parents or guardian to the groom. In some exceptional cases physically retarded groom inferior in terms of family status provides bride price (dowry) at marriage.

One bridegroom has committed suicide for getting no dowry from the bride's party as per prior verbal agreement. The people of rural area are ignorant in many aspects. Moreover, if any housewives are not physically tortured or killed by her husband due to conflict over dowry a few of the bride or her father pursue to get protection of law because of procrastination in settlement of the case.

According to a study the social problems which are followed due to dispute or demand of dowry and agreement or disagreement i.e, bridegroom party's demand and bride party's positive response that means if the demand of dowry is unfulfilled the repression to wife is a must, husband's demands for dowry after marriage and if the demand remains unfulfilled torture accompany the wife, stagnation at getting marriage of girls in time due to demand of dowry were the common triangular problems in women's life in society. If the problem remains out of good consideration of the government the livelihood of unfortunate women specially rural women will be disastrous and thus social stability will face danger.¹

Degraded outlook towards women from birth to different spheres of social life by man has contributed to the pervasiveness of dowry in Bangladesh. The position of women in family life is very weak specially in agrarian society. There is a familiar proverb 'A woman's heaven lies under her husband's feet' which illustrates the age old tradition of suppression and subordination of women in the male dominated Bengali society. Among the Muslims the difference in the treatment of males and females starts at birth when a male child is welcomed to the world by 'ajan' and continues through the different phases of his life. But by contrast a girl child receives no such welcome. As a whole, in Bangladesh women are dominated by patrimonial and patriarchal kinship system which enforces the dependence of women upon men and regulates their role and status². As if they are the birds in cage that have no way to fly³. Such situation is enhancing the trend of dowry practice in rural Bangladesh. Although the law for prohibition of dowry has been passed in the parliament in 1980 but its application is not effective in consideration of practical requirement. The state has to play a great role to combat this problem with a view to establish congenial atmosphere in society creating employment opportunities for young men and women in association with local government bodies and the support of conscious citizens of the country.

Statement of the Problem

Bangladesh is an agrarian village densed country of South-east Asia. Agriculture is basic to her economy. Majority people of Bangladesh are farmer by profession and most of them living in rural society. The economic condition of the majority villagers are weak and so greater section of them leading below standard of living. They face multifarious problems in their life. At present conjecture dowry has increased their sufferings widening the horizons of the prevailing problems. Due to its bitterness a vast number of families have been suffering severely for having marriageable girls. Their economic vulnerable situation have thrown them in the sea of trouble. Due to violence over the issue of dowry innumerable women are getting divorce or losing their lives by their husband or suicide. A glance into the daily newspapers and weekly magazines of the country will provide testimony to this statement. It is learnt from different newspapers that in Taragonj upazilla of Rangpur district oppression over women are increasing for their incapability to pay demand of dowry after marriage. Violence are happening against women in one place or other of this upazilla daily. Of them about 200 women got divorce under the circumstances of inability to response the demand of their husband for dowry during conjugal life. About 150 women have been living below the mark of human standard. Most of the women are belong to landless poor family. Due to their vulnerable condition they are staying beyond the aid of law of the country. For survival most of them are working as day laborer under discriminatory remuneration system. A larger section of them get half of the remuneration of their male counterpart.

Majority of population in Bangladesh is muslim. In Islam, marriage is a contract where husband has to pay or promise to pay his wife an amount of money in kind or in cash which is usually fixed at the time of marriage. This system of money payment is called dower or moher. It is actually related to the sexual possession of women. Muslim marriage system ensures females economic security

through dower. But in Bangladesh many families have been destroyed due to faulty marriage system, dower, and dowry. In Islam, the demand of dowry is completely prohibited. A muslim can never take dowry at marriage, on the other hand, he is to pay the amount of 'mohrana' to the bride fixed through mutual understanding of both party. Mohrana is an essential factor in muslim marriage system. In Bangladesh about 85% people are muslim by religion. In respect of our religious norms and values the custom of providing dowry cannot be imagined in the society. But the unfortunate fact is that the custom of dowry is widely practiced in muslim society. Some of the people are of this opinion like any other customs the dowry system has been penetrated in muslim society from Hindu religion due to environmental, ecological and historical reasons.

It is learnt from a newspaper (Bangladesh Barta, Kushtia) published earlier, that in three upazillas of Tangail district about fifty thousand marriageable girls are waiting to get marry due to incapability of providing dowry⁴. It can be assumed what is happening in the rest part of the country.

Although there is no real statistics of this figure of the entire country but it is conceived that the rate of sufferings of the victim women are on the wax. But no civilized society can desire such situation. We treat us to be a member of civilized society but our manner and behaviour does not prove that. We must change our mentality to solve this problem. Many educated young men treat marriage as a burden. This is also a reason for unmarried situation of several marriageable girls. Of course the main reason is abject poverty. In developing countries poor people are facing a lot of problems such as poverty, illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition, social superstition but recently dowry has appeared as a curse which has increased the length of problems and sufferings in the poor men's life in their sprained economy.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is :

- i) to know the view of the villagers regarding the causes of dowry and its eradication;
- ii) to observe its extent and nature of violence towards women;
- iii) to find out the ways how to eradicate the dowry system.

Methodology

Primary as well as secondary information are incorporated in this work. A questionnaire was administered to have relevant information from the respondents of different category that is the household head (male+female), son's wives, marriageable young men and women who were available during investigation. Various information regarding peculiar nature of violence against women due to dowry related issues published in the Daily Ittefaq through out the year 1999 were studied to get idea about the pervasiveness and complication of the problem. The survey work has been done in the last quarter of 1999 with the assistance of a group of well oriented informer under the close supervision of the researcher.

Limitations of the Study

Only a microscopic rural area has been selected for understanding of the problem and to investigate the view of the respondents as to the issue. So the suggestion which is recommended here do not bear any significant weightage. During investigation some family head (male) were not available. So in their absence their wife i.e, some of the housewives were interviewed and thus it is envisaged that they could not provide data accurately as per the demand of the questionnaire. Two different types of answers were found from same respondents (son's wives) against same question before their husband and mother-in-law. So some problems could not be avoided in getting accurate information from the respondents. Pertinently it must be mentioned that the view of urban young men and women would be different from their rural counterpart. In spite

of this limitations it is hoped that this work will attract others' attention who are interested in depth study of the issue from different angle. Although this work is not comprehensive and does not bear any discernible significance but it is envisaged to provide some food for thinking about the issue and if enable to attract the attention of the policy makers there might have opportunity to take up necessary steps in eradicating such contagious disease from the society.

About the Study Site

The village Sheikhpara is located in Tribeni union of Shailkupa upazilla of Jhenaidah district. It is situated by the eastern side of Islamic University annexed to the Kushtia-Khulna highway. The number of inhabitants of the village is approximately 1,200 of whom the percentage of men and women are respectively 55% and 45%. The majority of villagers are peasants by profession . Other professional communities include weaver, businessman, carpenter, fisherman, wage laborer, small trader, traditional child birth attendant and housewife. Most respondent women were housewives. The communication network of the village is reasonably good. There are some educational institutions with a haat (village market) situated by the side of Kushtia- Khulna highway.

Nature of Dowry

The concept of dowry in Bangladesh, probably originated from an ancient Hindu custom, an approved marriage among Hindus has always been considered to be a kanyadaan that is gift of the daughter. According to Dharmashatra the meritorious act of kanyadaan is not complete till the bridegroom is given varadakhsina in the form of cash or kind. The predominantly Muslim Bangladesh inherited the menace from the Hindu society which gives "pon" during the daughters' marriage since she does not inherit her father's property. The investigation into pon/joutuk/dowry is illuminating. Usually a woman is considered as a 'commodity' that is to be disposed of her parents as early as

possible after she attain puberty. She is to be transferred from one man (father) to another (husband) as a liability to be looked after. Without 'accompanying assests' that is dowry, she usually does not have much value. The value of human being is now measured by the wealth they possess, and the amount of dowry provided is seen as a reflection of the social status of the bride's family. On the other hand, the man's family when they are looking for a bride is also searching for economic security for their son. These same parents probably have paid dowry for their own daughters. Therefore, they also want to compensate the loss of property through to son's marriage. So the demand for dowry in cash or kind is coming out of the need for economic solvency in the family.

In rural areas, among the poor, money, ornaments or household articles are often demanded as a dowry. Similar demands are made in urban areas, some families even demand luxury goods - a car, television, furniture or even a job abroad or building a house for him. The custom demands a perennial flow of gifts from parents of the boys family on all festivals.

Dowry is provided in three phases. Firstly, before marriage. Secondly, at the time of marriage. Thirdly, after the marriage. When the demand is settled and fulfilled before and at the time of marriage based on the consensus of the bride and groom party, this is completed without any violence. We can term this as violence free phase. If the bride party becomes unable to present the demanded goods and money on the day of marriage ceremony will not be held. Besides the performance of marriage might be held on the basis of the assurance of providing dowry after marriage normally by the bride party. If the father or the guardian of the bride does not provide the promised dowry in time during post marriage time then the groom pressures the bride to realize dowry and torture her in case of incompatibility of the bride party. There are two dimensions of demanding dowry during post marriage. One is that the groom pressures to provide previously promised dowry on the day of the marriage to the bride party and the other is the groom

demands dowry to the bride to satisfy his greed and in case of positive signal their conjugal life continues happily. But if there is any negative reply due to incapability of the brides parents or guardians violence is being started to the women and at a point of time to be relieved from husband's physical and mental torture and other members of his family, she decides to die by suicide or in the end she is killed by her husband or other members of her husband's family. In the existing law for prohibition of dowry the donor as well as the acceptor are accused of guilty and if this is duly maintained the marriage will be held without dowry. But the reality of rural Bangladesh is different. On the basis of the unwritten consensus of the both parties the dowry is prevailed in social life. Because the overburden father of the bride will not confess the dowry at his daughter's marriage. On the other hand, as the groom is accepting dowry he will never disclose the fact before law enforcing agency. In this analysis it is clear that the Act which is working for prohibition of dowry is not adequate enough to facilitate marriage of marriageable girl in time without dowry. If any groom chooses any girl to marry and only due to want of assurance of gaining dowry change his decision he must be penalized by the law enforcing agency and if law of this category comes into existence the pervasiveness of dowry will be curbed and marriageable girl will be able to sit for marry in time in its absence. At the same time all the citizens of the society should be conscious about the social evils.

In that case some problem may arise i.e. there lies some apprehension of misapplication of this proposed rule. Intentionally some of the influential people may litigate against some innocent marriageable young men. If exemplary punishment is provided to the guilty by the honest administration then it is expected that society will be free from such malpractices. The government is to give attention to the education and employment opportunity of the female section of society if any qualitative change is aspired in society in respect of various social evils.

Existing dowry prohibition law is not effective to stop the bad practice in society virtually its existence is observed if somebody of bride's part makes litigation against bridegroom for torturing the wife for dowry during post marriage life whereas due to procrastination and financial burden in disposing the case a few people pursue the law enforcing agency and the court in this respect. So the present law in the most part relief the victim women from husband's violence to her with some financial assistance. In this situation sometimes their conjugal life is cut off by divorce. Considering the inadequacy of present dowry prohibition law in society the villager's view regarding application of dowry prohibition law at marriage is seen in the figure (table -37). The people of the rural area are mostly unconscious. Moreover under the present Dowry Prohibition Act if any women is being beaten or killed by her husband only a few of them pursue the law for protection of their right. In this circumstances, the marriages which are going to be held under demand of dowry are very difficult to discourage. Under the present system of dowry act some of the influential person get assistance of law in long time whenever the case is filed against bridegroom for claim of dowry after marriage but the distressed people who are affected dreadfully and are larger in number have no scope to be benefited from this law. So that the law is ineffective in case of them.

Existing Laws Regarding the System of Dowry

The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980 defines dowry as property or valuable security given or agreed to be given as either directly -

- a) By one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage,
or
- b) By the parents of either party to a marriage or by another person to either party to the marriage or at anytime before or after the marriage as consideration for the marriage of the said parties, but does not include dower or mahr in the case of persons to whom the Muslims Personal law (Shariah) applies.

Penalty for Giving or Taking Dowry

If any person after the commencement of this act, gives or takes or abets the giving of taking of dowry, he shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to five thousand taka or with both.

Penalty for Demanding Dowry

If any person after the commencement of this act, demands directly, from the parents or gurdian of a bride or bridegroom, as the case may be, any dowry, he shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to five thousand taka or both.

Cognizance of Offence

Notwithstanding anything contained in the code of criminal procedure, 1898, act v of 1898.

- a) No court inferior to that of Magistrate of the first class shall try any offence under this act.
- b) No court shall take cognizance of any such offence except as a complaint made with one year from the date of the offence.

Offence to be Non-cognizable, Non-bailable and Non-compoundable

Every offence under this act shall be non- cognizable non-bailable and non-compoundable.

According to Repression Against Women and Children (Special provision) Act of 1995 lays down that-

- a) for causing death for dowry the offender shall be punishable with death penalty;
- b) for attempting to cause death for dowry, the offender shall be punishable with imprisonment for life;
- c) for causing grievous hurt for dowry the offender shall be punishable with imprisonment for 14 years which cannot be less than 5 years and also liable to fine.

Consequences of Dowry

Before presenting field facts pertinently some events are expressed on the basis of survey of daily newspapers and weekly magazines. During post marriage life violence against women is increasing and such news are disseminated regularly in different papers. In this context a well circulated national daily the Ittefaq published in round the year 1999 were studied to purport the nature and dreadfulness of the problem as a sample. It is observed that 24 housewives were killed by their husband, 3 were expired by suicide, 5 housewives got divorce⁵.

Here, two incidents are illustrated from the magazine Robbar and the Dhaka Courier.

- 1) Yasmin Azad Lovely got divorce from her husband. At present she is under her father's shelter. She was severely beaten by her husband and other members of his family. Her golden dream for building a happy conjugal life has turned to ashes. Now her father is in a crux at her presence before them after getting divorce. Now her husband giving her threat saying that acid will be thrown to her. At the time of marriage a suitable amount of money were given to her husband as dowry. Later on she was asked further to manage Tk. 10 lac as dowry from her parents. But her father gave her a small amount of money against the demand considering the future of his daughter. This amount did not satisfy her husband. Following such situation she was divorced by her husband⁶.
- 3) Nazneen Akhter Shilpi, an honors student of the department of Economics of a prominent college of the country was killed by her husband and mother-in-law. The couple had a happy conjugal life. Everything seemed perfect. After some days trouble began between Shilpi

and her husband and her husband's family members particularly with mother-in-law. Shilpi's husband and his mother allegedly started torturing Shilpi for dowry. Their torture and greed gradually increased Shilpi continued to bear the repression. Once she left her husband's residence for her fathers abode. Later on, under a written document she was taken back to her husband's residence. But after her return the rate of torture both physical and mental incresed. Shilpi became very upset. She had nothing to do. Shilpi often disclosed the story of her miserable life to her classmates and friends but could not find any way out. Shilpi, the ill fated young housewife was found dead in her bedroom on December 12 last.⁷ The violence towards women are incresing due to dowry related killings in 1999 according to human rights organization. These isolated cases reported in the daily newspaper, there are still thousands which are unreported. It is found that even when dowry is not demanded at marriage it becomes an issue afterwards.

Dowry practices has many other consequences, the UNDP observes : physical, psychological and sexual abuse of women, divorce, men having several wives, female suicide and parents becoming landless. Abandoned and divorced destitute women are often forced into occupations such as prostitution to survive.

The dowry issue has another different aspect that also is quite important. Daughter of poor families, which are unable to provide dowries, cannot hope to marry and families without sons pay dowries for their daughter but receive nothing to make up for this loss.

Causes of Dowry

The following causes are responsible for existing the problem of dowry :

1. Lack of social status and recognition of women
2. Inequal marriage
3. Lack of beauty of bride
4. Inequal economic condition of two party
5. Social status
6. Social formalities
7. Attitude and outlook
8. Dependence of women on others
9. Attitude of parents
10. Willingness to make husband solvent
11. Lack of self-respect of the young
12. Mentality of the parents of bridegroom

Findings

Now we are going to show a field picture in the form of table and analysis on a surveyed village. The data reflects various dimensions of dowry regarding socio-economic background of the respondents, their thinking about the nature of the problem and its remedy.

Table - 1 : Age of the Respondents

Age group	Family Head (Male)	Housewife (%)	Son's Wife (%)	Unmarried Male (%)	Unmarried female (%)	Total Respondents	%
10-15	-	-	-	01	16	17	5.46
16-20	-	02	30	13	09	54	17.9
21-25	08	08	15	13	02	46	15.3
26-30	10	10	30	03	-	53	17.6
31-35	05	10	13	-	-	18	3.6
36-40	16	20	02	-	-	38	12.6
41-45	05	04	03	-	-	12	3.10
46-50	04	06	-	-	-	10	3.32
51-55	15	02	-	-	-	17	5.64
56-60	05	04	-	-	-	09	2.16
61 to above	11	06	-	-	-	17	5.46
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-I depicts that the highest number of family head belong to 36-40 age group (16) and from 51 or above their muber is 31 out of 79. In the same way majority of housewives (20) belong to 36-40 age group. Son's wives belong to 26 -30 (30). The highest number of unmarried male and female respondents are respectively belong to 16-20 and 10-15 age group. Majority of the respondents. (153) belong to 10-30 age group.

Table - 2 : Academic Status of the Respondents

Level of Education	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total respondents	%
Illiterate	40	47	38	04	-	129	42.38
Can sign name	10	10	10	02	-	32	10.63
Class I -V	15	12	17	-	09	53	17.6
Class VI-X	11	02	26	07	11	59	19.6
SSC	01	01	01	-	-	03	-
HSC	02	-	01	08	05	16	5.3
BA/B.Sc/BSS (Passed & Studying)	-	-	-	08	02	10	3.32
MSS	-	-	-	01	-	01	-
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	-

It is revealed from table 2 that highest number 40 out of 79 family heads are illiterate and only two have passed HSC. On the other hand, the number of illiterate housewife is 47 out of 72. This picture shows us the backwardness of women section in case of receiving formal educational in rural area. The highest number of son's wife (38) also belong to illiterate group which also bears the sign of women's backwardness in education which is similar to the status of housewives. Highest number of married males have passed and studying in honors and pass courses. The highest number of unmarried female (11) are students. Highest number of respondents (112) are in the bracket of class 1-7. This indicates that number of higher educated peoples are negligible in the village area. Otherwise higher educated peoples are residing far away of their own village home for job purpose and other reasons.

Table - 3 : Status of Land Ownership of the Heads of the Households

Quantity of land (Acre)	No of. owner	Percentage %
Up to 0.5 acre	27	17.8
.5 acre - 1 acre	50	30
1.01 acre - 2 acre	22	14.6
2.01 acre - 3 acre	18	11.9
3.01 acre - 4 acre	14	9.2
4.01 acre- 5 acre	12	Nigligible
5. 01 acre - above	08	Negligible
Total	151	

Table 3 shows that highest number of respondents [50 (33%)] own 5-1 acre of land. Only 8 respondents own land more than 5.01 acre. This picture reminds us that a nigligible portion of the villagers are the owner of the majority portion of cultivable land which is a core means of production in Bangladesh.

Table - 4 : Occupational Status of the Respondents

Occupation	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total respondent	%
Agriculture	42 (13.95)	-	-	-	-	42	13.9 5
Service	01	02	-	-	-	03	-
House wife	-	57	90	-	-	147	48.84
Study	-	-	-	26	20	46	15.3
Fishermen	01	-	-	-	-	01	-
Small trading	19	01	03	-	-	23	7.64
Nursing	-	01	-	-	-	01	-
Carpenter	02	-	-	-	-	02	-
Wage labor	09	03	-	02	-	14	4.65
Unemployed	05	-	-	02	07	14	5.65
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table - 4 indicates the diverse occupational status of the respondents although overwhelmingly 42 family head are farmers by profession and 57 are housewives out of 72. Majority of the son's wives (90)% are housewives. Unmarried male and female are students. Majority of the respondents 147 out of 301 are housewives by profession. The table provides us the idea that a small number of people are involved in different profession like small trading, carpenter, wage laborer against a large number of housewife respondents. This highlights the fact that the absence of mobility of labor is acute in rural area.

Table - 5 : Monthly Income Level of the Studied Families

Income level (Tk.)	No. of family	Percentage %
Tk 0- up to 1,000	35	23.2
Tk 1,001 up to 2,000	58	38.4
Tk 2,001 - up to 3,000	22	14.6
Tk 3,001 - up to 4,000	15	9.9
Tk, 4,001 up to 5,000	10	6.6
Tk 5,001 up to 6,000	07	-
Tk 6,001 to up	04	-
Total	151	

Table 5 reveals that the monthly income level of 58 respondents are Tk 1000-2000 which is very meagre for maintaining family expenditure and uphold nutrition level of the family; villagers' standard of living can be considered by their lower income level.

Table - 6 : Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Acceptance of Dowry at Their Marriage

Nature of reply	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Dowry was accepted	30	25	55	36.42
Dowry was not accepted	49	47	96	63.57
Total	79	72	151	100

Table 6 indicates that 30 family out of 79 took dowry at their marriage and 25 housewives out of 72 replied that their father gave dowry to the bridegroom at their marriage. Although more than half portion of the respondent replied negatively but as time passes on this practice is being widely paracticed in our sociey. On the other hand in the past bridegroom party was compelled to provide various gifts ornaments to the bridal party. But today that situation has become reversed.

Table - 7 : Opinion of the Respondents about Materials Gained as Dowry at Marriage

Goods taken as dowry	No of respondent	%
Cash money	12	40
Motorcyle	04	13.99
Household articles	04	13.99
Land	02	07
Freeze	02	07
Gold	03	10
Cattle	03	10
Total	30	100

Table 7 shows that 30 respondents took different things as dowry at their marriage from bridal party. Those are respectively cash money, motorcycle, household articles, land, freezer, gold and cattle. The highest number of respondents (12) took cash money for maintaining expenses at marriage and some money were invested for generation of income during post marriage life.

Table - 8 : Intentions of the Respondents about Getting Dowry at their Son's Marriage

	Yes	No	Total
Family head	06	21 (36.48)	27 (39.13)
Housewife	06	36 (63.15)	42 (60.86)
Total	12 (17.4)	57(82.6)	69(100%)

Table 8 expresses the view of the respondents whether they will take dowry or not at their son's marriage in future. 12 out of 57 replied positively and the rest of the respondents 57 (82.6) are in negative. This is a good sign. This may happen because of the bitter experience of the guardians regarding demand and consequences of dowry.

Table - 9 : Reasons for Taking Dowry at Marriage

Reasons	Family head	House wife	Total
Dowry is a custom at marriage	02	04	06
Dowry will have to be provided at their daughters marriage	03	02	05
Due to necessity of cash money in the family	01	-	01
Money is required to create employment opportunity for the bachelor son	-	-	-
Total	06	06	12

Table-9 appears before us with the informatin regarding the reasons for taking dowry at their son's marriage. 6 respondents informed that they will take dowry because of its presence as custom at marriage. 3 replied that they will take dowry due to necessity of cash money in the family for meeting daily requirements. This situation is a matter to be afraid of because some of the people want to change their destiny depending on other's financial assistance specially father-in-law's economic assistance.

Table - 10 : Number of Marriageable Sons and Girls of the Respondents

Types of respondents	No of daughters	No. of sons	Total	%
Family head	20	19	39	
Housewife	28	43	71	
Total	48	62	110	100

Table-10 indicates the number of marriageable sons and girls of the respondents. There are 39 (20+ 19) daughters and sons at family head's house where 71(28+43) marriageable daughters and son are waiting for marriage.

Table - 11 : Status of Receiving Dowry at Son's Marriage

Identity of respondents	No. of sons	No of respondents	Status	Total	%
Family head	45	7	12	19	35.18
Housewife	70	24	11	35	64.8
Total	115	31	23	54	100

Table-11 informed us of the fact that at 31 son's marriage dowry, was accepted and 23 people did not take dowry. Guardians claimed and realized dowry from 31 son's marriage out of 54. This picture provides us the idea that guardians are interested to obtain dowry at their son's marriage at the expense of the son's father-in-law's family welfare.

Table-12 : Level of consciousness about the Dowry Prohibition Act (the figure with the bracket indicates %)

Whether Conscious or not	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total	%
Conscious	30 (37.10)	43 (59.7)	51(54.83)	22(73.3)	12 (44.44)	158	52.49
Unconscious	49 (62.02)	29(60)	42(45.16)	08 (27)	15 (55.5) 1	43	47.5
Total	79	72	93 (100)	30 (100)	27 (100)	301	100

Table-12 gives us the idea that 30 family head, 43 housewives, 51 son's wives, 22 unmarried male and 12 unmarried female in 158 are conscious about Dowry Prohibition Act. 143 (47.5%) out of 301 were unconscious about the Dowry Prohibition Act. This is a dismal picture and establishes the idea that majority of the rural people are ignorant of the dowry prohibition law.

Table-13 : Opinion of the Respondents about the enforcement of the dowry prohibition law.

Status	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total	%
Dowry law is not enforced in society	67 (84.81)	52 (69.3)	61(73.5) (73.5)	17 (56)	06 (22.2)	203	67.7
Dowry law is enforced in society	12 (15.2)	20 (26.6)	32 (38.5)	13 (43.3)	27(27.7)	98	32.5
Total	79	75	93	30	27	301	100

Table-13 indicates that the respondents of different categories opined i.e., 68 family head 54 housewives, 21 son's wives, 5 unmarried male in 200 out of 301 viewed negatively that dowry law is not practiced in society. 54 housewives out of 75 and 32 son's wives out of 83 gave their information that the Dowry Prohibition Act is not implemented properly and the rest 101 thinks that Dowry Prohibition Act is in execution. In this group the number of respondents in different groups are as follows : Family head-12, Housewife-21, Son's wife-32, Unmarried male-15, Unmarried female-21. In fact due to want of interest for litigation among marriageable girl's father this does not come into existence.

Table-14 : Demand of Dowry at Son's Wife's Sisters Marriage.

Whether dowry was given or not	No. of respondents	No. of sister got marriage	%
Dowry was demanded	67	142	41.40
Dowry was not demanded	26	201	58.60
Total	93	34	100

Table-14 indicates that at the time of wife's sister's marriage 67 respondents have replied that their father had to pay dowry at their sister's marriage. Only 26 replied negatively.

Table - 15 : Demand of Dowry at Son's Marriage

Whether dowry was demanded or not	No. of respondents	Percentage
Dowry was demanded	59	63.44
Dowry was not demanded	32	34.40
Did not make any comment	93	100

Table-15 shows that marriage 59 respondents out of 93 dowry was demanded and the bridal party was compelled to responded positively. 32 respondents replied negatively. Only 2 respondents made no comment in this regard. Majority of the respondents recognized that dowry is reality at marriage in rural Bangladesh.

Table - 16 : Opinion of the Respondents about Whether the Society Treats Dowry as a Social Custom or not.

Nature of reply	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried female	Total	%
Treats dowry as a social custom	58	50	71	23	18	220	73.08
Dowry is not treated as a social custom	21	22	22	07	09	81	26.9
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table 16 shows that 220 respondents think the society treats dowry as a common custom at marriage to the people of lower class becomes victims of this had practice.

Table - 17 : Idea of the Unmarried Male and Female Regarding Dowry.

Level of awareness	Positive	Negative	Total	%
Unmarried male	30	-	30	52.63
Unmarried female	26	1	27	47.36
Total	56	1	57	100

Table-17 informs us that unmarried male and female are also aware of the spread of dowry system 50 out of 57 respondents were aware of the system.

Table-18 :Attitude of the unmarried Males about Demand of Dowry at their Marriage.

Attitude	Unmarried males	%
Wants to get marriage with dowry	06	20
Decision to marriage without dowry	23	77
Depends on parents decision	01	3
Total	30	100

Table-18 indicates that 6 out of 30 unmarried respondents will claim dowry at their marriage but 23 out of 30 will not demand dowry at their marriage. It is a good sign for the society that future citizens are not interested to get marry with dowry. The reason for their such opinion is that they are observing the ill sufferings of this system in society.

Table-19 :Coment of the Unmarried Young Women in Getting Marry with Dowry.

Opinion	Young women	%
Positive	06	22
Negative	21	78
Total	27	100

Table-19 indicates that 6 unmarried young women will sit for marry if dowry is claimed by the bridegroom party and the rest 21 are adamant not to sit for dowry claimed marriage. It is observed that the respondents who are the prime of their marriageable life and whose age is increasing and seems to be passing time of their marriage are agreed to sit for marriage. On the other hand, who are relatively teenager and have been studying in high schools will not be agreed to have marriage with the bridegroom who will claim dowry at marriage.

Table-20 : Opinion of the Young Men to Marry in a Family which want to Give Dowry.

Opinion	Young men	%
Positive	04	13.33
Negative	22	73.33
Did not make any comment	04	13.33
Total	30	100

Table-20 indicates that 4 respondents will marry in a family who are interested to give dowry at their daughter's marriage and 22 respondents do not choice this.

Table-21 : Opinion of the Young Male and Female about the Treatment of Society to the People who Demands and Accepts Dowry at Marriage.

Opinion	Young man	Young woman	Total	%
Society honors dowry acceptors	08	06	14	24.56
Society dishonors dowry acceptors	20	21	41	71.92
Did not make any comment	02	00	02	
Total	30	27	57	100

Table-21 shows that 14 respondents think society honor the people who obtain abundant money and materials as dowry at marriage and 41 says that society hates them instead of paying respects.

Table-22 : Attitude of the Unmarried Young Men and Women in Changing Fate Through Getting Dowry at Marriage.

Opinion	Positive	Negative	Other factors have some role	Total	%
Young men	06	19	05	30	52.63
Young women	02	19	06	27	47.36
Total	08	38	11	57	100

Table-22 indicates that majority respondents (38) do not think that their father-in-law's money and material will change their luck. Only 8 respondents think dowry can change living standard. Some respondents (11) think that other factors also work for changing luck along with dowry.

Table - 23 : Causes for Taking Dowry at Son's Marriage.

Causes expressed by the respondents to take dowry at their son's marriage	No. of respondents in different category		Total	%
	Family head (male)	Housewife		
Dowry is a widely prevailed custom at marriage	02	04	06	31.57
Dowry will have to be provided at their girl's marriage	03	02	05	26.31
Cash money is required in the society	03	03	06	31.57
The son who is out of employment will be provided with father-in-law's money	01	0	02	
Total	09	10	19	100

Table-23 indicates that for various reasons dowry is practiced in society. 6 respondents think that dowry will have to be provided at their girl's marriage so they will demand dowry at their son's marriage. 6 respondents told that due to want of cash money some prefer dowry. 2 respondents replied that unemployed son will be provided anywhere with father-in-law's money.

Table-24 : Opinion of the Respondents about the Reasons for Prevailing Dowry in Society.

Responses	No. of respondents			Unmarried young (male)	Unmarried young (female)	Total	%
	Family head	House wife	Son's wife				
Want of education and employment opportunities for women	40 (50.63)	35	15	06	06	102	33.88
Managing job for young unemployed people	10	05	08	10	01	34	11.29
Providing gift to the daughter by the people belongs to rich section of society	05	05	05	03	-	18	5.98
Want of women's security in social life	06	04	20	02	08	40	13.28
Giving marriage of a lower family girl to the member of a superior family	05	02	05	01	-	13	4.31
Husband's parent's greed	13	21 (29.16)	40	08	12	94	31.22
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table 24 portrays a picture about the reasons responsible for widely practice of dowry in society. 102 out of 301 respondents replied that want of education and employment opportunities for women is a vital for existence of dowry. 34 out of 301 respondents think that managing job for unemployed people is a reason for practice of dowry. 40 respondents think that due to want of women's security in society dowry prevails. 13 respondents believe that giving marriage of a relatively lower family girl to the member of a superior family. One interesting matter is that 40 out 93 son's wives blamed their father-in-law's greediness, where only 94 respondents from all categories out of 301 blamed father-in-law's greediness for existence of dowry.

Table-25: Opinion of the Respondents about Impact of Dowry on Bride's Father's Economic Condition.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried young man	Unmarried young woman	Total	%
Financial structure has been breakdown	54 (68.35)	59	33 (35.48)	13	20	179	59.46 6
Financial structure has not been breakdown	25 (31.65)	13	48 (51.6)	17	07	110	36.54 4
Financial condition is same as before	-	-	12	-	-	12	3.98
Total	79	72 (100)	93 (100)	30(100)	27(100)	301	100

Table-25 briefs us about the consequences of dowry in bride's family after meeting dowry at their daughter's marriage. 179 out of 301 are of the opinion that the financial structure becomes loose after providing marriage to the daughter's meeting demand of dowry. 110 respondents replied that although the financial structure has not been paralyzed but they faced a heavy setback. 12 respondents opined that the financial condition is good as before. One thing is evident that economically well-to-do family never falls in trouble whereas families belong to lower middle class face severe troubles in giving marry to their daughter.

Table-26 : Opinion of the Respondents about Giving Marry to the Daughter of a Poor Family with Dowry.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Poor families are facing severe trouble	57	59	116	76.82
Poor families are not facing trouble	22	13	35	23.18
Total	79	72	151	100

Table-26 presents the position of poor families in facing demand of dowry. 116 out of 151 respondents think that poor families are facing severe troubles due to practice of dowry where 35 respondents observe no problem in this connection.

Table-27: Opinion of the Respondents about Detachment of Conjugal Life of their Daughter for not Providing Dowry at Marriage.

Respondents	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Daughter was divorced	01	03	04	6.06
Daughter was not divorced	22	40	62	93.93
Total	23	43	66	100

Table-27 shows us the impact of dowry at conjugal life. 4 respondents replied that their daughter was given divorced due to failure in meeting demand of dowry after marriage.

Table-28 : Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Killing of any of their Daughter by the Torture of Husband or Mother-in-law.

Respondents	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Killed	02	02	04	2.65
Not Killed	77	70	147	97.35
Total	79	72	151	100

Table 28 informs us that sometimes consequences of dowry becomes dangerous. 4 respondents replied that their daughters were killed following severe beating by their husband and mother-in-law.

Table-29 : Opinion of the Respondents about Committing Suicide of any of their Daughter for Incapability of Meeting Dowry after Marriage.

Respondents	Family head	Housewife	Total	%
Committed suicide	02	02	04	2.65
Did not commit suicide	77	70	147	97.35
Total	79	72	151	100

Table 29 depicts that some of the women committed suicide for their incapability to provide dowry to their husband and husband's physical violence. 4 respondents told that their daughters have committed suicide due to husband's inhuman presentation. This incident expresses the dangerous consequences of dowry in family life.

Table-30: Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Bad Impact of Dowry in Society.

Opinion	Family head	Housewife	Son's wife	Total	%
Deteriorating social tranquility	56	65	89	210	86.06
Not deteriorating social tranquility	23	07	07	34	13.93
Total	79	72	93	244	100

Table-30 awares us about the bad impact of dowry at social life. 210 out of 244 respondents think that this practice is deteriorating social tranquility and the rest of the respondent's (34) opinion is reverse to it.

Table-31: Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Torture by their Mother-in-law not Getting Dowry at Marriage.

Opinion	No. of son's wife	%
Tortured	06	6.47
Free from torture	72	77.41
Did not make comment	15	16.12
Total	93	100

Table-31 reveals that 6 son's wives were tortured by their mother-in-law and 15 respondents made no comment regarding the issue.

Table-32: Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Rude Behavior by their Mother-in-law not Getting Dowry.

Opinion	No. of son's wife	%
Facing rude behavior regularly	16	17.20
Not facing rude behavior	74	76.56
Did not make any comment	3	3.22
Total	93	100

Table-32 manifests the fact that 16 son's wives respondents are facing constant rude behavior from their mother-in-law for not fulfilling their husband's and mother-in-law's demand for dowry.

Table-33: Opinion of the Respondents about Whether the Girl Children are Liabilites or not.

Respondents	Yes	No	Did not make any comment	%
Family head	70	03	06	79
Housewife	64	01	07	72
Son's wife	83	02	08	93
Unmarried male	29	01	-	30
Unmarried female	21	06	-	27
Total	267	13	21	301

Table-33 reflects the views of the poor fathers of the unlucky daughters to their girl child. 167 respondents are of the view that girl children are liabilities to them and 21 did not make any comment regarding the issue. In fact, society is discriminatory outlook toward girl children from the very beginning of their life is not conducive for congenial living atmosphere.

Table-34 : Opinion of the Respondents about the Abolition of Dowry System from the Society.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried Female	Total	%
Support abolition of dowry	63	65	75	22	22	257	82.05
Does not support abolition of dowry	06	05	10	03	03	27	8.97
Did not make any comment	10	02	08	05	02	27	8.97
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-34 informs that 247 respondents are against the practice of dowry and only 27 are in favor of this system. 27 respondents made no comment in this respect. Those who are supporting this system are in an advantageous position of having parents of boy child and do not consider it as a serious problem in society.

Table-35 : Attitude of the Respondents about Taking Initiatives through Joint Effort.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried Female	Total	%
Interested to take joint effort	09	10	79	18	20	136	45.18
Not interested to take joint effort	70	62	14	12	07	165	54.81
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-35 concludes that 136 out of 301 respondents think to initiate joint effort for eradication of dowry practice from the

society. 165 respondents are not aware of the joint effort and some of them are pessimistic of it for its irresistible tempo in social life.

Table-36: Opinion of the Respondents about the Role of UP Member in Elimination of Dowry.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried Female	Total	%
The scope of law is inadequate and ineffective	55	22	30	12	10	129	42.85
Scope of law is adequate and effective	20	12	20	10	09	71	23.58
Did not make any comment	04	38	43	08	08	01	33.55
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-36 shows 147 out of 301 respondents are of the opinion that the public representatives of union parishads can play an effective role in eradicating the dowry problem. 115 respondents opine that playing effective role by public representatives will not be possible. 39 respondents made no comment regarding this.

Table-37: Assumption of the Respondents Regarding Effectiveness of Existing Dowry Prohibition Act.

Opinion of the respondents	Family head	House wife	Son's wife	Unmarried male	Unmarried Female	Total	%
The scope of law is inadequate and ineffective	55	22	30	12	10	129	42.85
Scope of law is adequate and effective	20	12	20	10	09	71	23.58
Did not make any comment	04	38	43	08	08	01	33.55
Total	79	72	93	30	27	301	100

Table-37 indicates the view of the respondents about the existing Dowry Prohibition Act. 129 out of 301 respondents opine that the existing law is inadequate to combat the problem. 71 think that existing law is adequate. 101 respondents made no comment in this matter.

Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the Dowry Prohibition Act is completely unable to prevent bridegroom from demand of dowry. The implementation of law is to be found to some extent after marriage if victim housewives pursue law enforcing agency to take necessary measures for protecting her interest.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Poverty might be one of the many reasons for practice of dowry in Bangladesh but whenever we observe that a man from richer section of society claims dowry then this reason becomes null and void. But normally it is to be found that in a poverty stricken rural economy the existence of dowry is dominant. Although dowry related disputes are happening in segmented manner in different areas of the country but the scale of the problem amounts to a 'major crisis' considering the situation of whole nation which requires urgent and concerted action of government and NGOs as well as spontaneous response of the conscientious portion of society. Thinking all the dreadful nature of this problem some recommendations are forwarded below-

- 1) Government should adopt necessary measures with NGOs assistance for income generation of the common people so that they can improve their living standard and can enjoy a meaningful life.
- 2) The purview of the present Dowry Prohibition Law must be extended through formulation of extra laws and its proper implementation must be ensured.
- 3) Local government institutions should be empowered by the government to monitor the marriage affairs of the inhabitants and some judicial authority to be vested under them so that they can arrange dowry free marriage among the inhabitants.

- 4) Social movements by active participation and consensus of all the influential and conscious part of the society is a must. Without united effort the dream for eradication of dowry will not be possible.
- 5) Every citizen should bear in mind the fact that without providing due respect to others' right protection of own right will be impossible. In this connection enforcement of law is not all in all. Side by side a change in the way people think about others is critically important if they are to respect everyone as equal and to identify their own rights and to claim the protection of the law when needed while recognizing a duty to respect the rights of everyone else^৪.
- 6) Women should be conscious and aware of their rights and dignity along with acquiring education.
- 7) Legal rights of women should be included in educational curriculum.
- 8) Mass media, leaflets, poster may be used to eradicate this.
- 9) Law enforcing agency will have to work indiscriminately and exemplary punishment must be imposed within a shortest possible time after the case had been filed by the victim.

Consequently poverty alleviation is an important remedy to this problem. State is to take prime responsibility in this context. Side by side dowryless marriage can be encouraged by taking different activities. A good number of people are well aware of the measures taken in the Bishwa Ijtemah at Tongi regarding dowryless marriage. This is an instructive lessons for us. Only law enforcing agency is not adequate to eradicate the problem. People of light and leading, socio cultural and religious organization as well as radio, television and newspaper can play important role along with

government in this connection. In concluding stage it can be easily uttered that a good number of reasons are liable for existing of dowry in society. It is caused by many factors such as women's backwardness in family and society, want of social security, lack of employment opportunity, immaterialisation of Dowry Prohibition Act, discrimination between man and woman and so on. The poor villagers especially parents of daughters who are unable to gratify the demand of the groom's party are endangered and in the same way they are confined. Any social evil is harmful to maintaining stability and tranquility in society. The views of the common villagers bear much significance which is observe through their comments on the issue. The sufferer people aspires the disappearance of dowry from the society but the irony is that without social movement attainment of success on this issue will be impossible. The role of government, local government, NGOs might be positive in eradicating this problem to ensure a congenial atmosphere in society. The thinking of common villagers reflect the reality of the problem and the ways and means suggested by the villagers in the form of opinion should be given attention by the policy formulators and policy implementors. One thing is optimistic that young generation of the nation are abhorring the custom of dowry and a sort of hate tendency has been emerging among the most of the unmarried conscious male and female citizens. In every household of the country unmarried male and female are more or less available and most of the families are facing the severity of the problem in the same way. If all the people realize the complication and its negative consequences in the social life as well as their family life then it can be considered that the situation will be improved gradually. At the last, social movement involving all categories of people specially the people who are the worst sufferer might be a great step to eradicate this inhuman social problem.

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