

**Department of Media and Information  
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**Building a knowledge society: The relationship between information  
and development in Bangladesh**

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## *Declaration*

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

Signature:

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## *Abstract*

The objective of the research is to identify how information can influence development in the developing countries, especially in Bangladesh. A variety of information gathering stages were undertaken including documentary analysis, interviews with key officials, structured interviews with individuals living in rural and urban slum areas and focus groups. Officials at the central planning level responsible for community development and information services in Bangladesh were interviewed to ascertain their views of the relation of information and development in Bangladesh. At the grassroots level both information providers and users were interviewed to collect information relating to the impact of information services on development in rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh. Structured interviews which allowed for quantitative analysis were undertaken in four remote villages and two poor urban areas. Analysis of the data collected has led to the development of a model for community information centres which might become central to information dissemination and provide a focus for information policy in Bangladesh.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

The information revolution makes the understanding of information and development more urgent than ever before. It begins with the realisation that economies are built not merely through the accumulation of physical capital and human skill, but on a foundation of information, learning and adaptation. It is generally believed that information can be substituted for other factors such as land, labour, capital and energy and poorer communities can also raise their livelihood through information services. This study will examine the relationship between information and development, with particular reference to Bangladesh, a country currently in the early stages of shifting towards a more information-based society.

This study starts with the assumption that empowerment of the people is the basis of all development. Such empowerment may be achieved in various ways, for example, through development of civil society organizations, mass literacy and re-structuring services provided by the government. The present study argues that information is a key determinant of community empowerment. Information is an essential resource for the social and economic development of third world countries, but how can this be demonstrated? The answer, so far, has been axiomatic. It is expressed in sentences such as “Information is the most critical resource and plays a fundamental role in development” (Menou, 1993: ix). Yet, there is no systematic body of empirical, particularly quantitative, evidence to support this assertion (Saracevic, 1980) (Menou, 1993). This study will collect empirical evidence on the relation of information services to national development.

There has been a good deal of empirical research in developed countries, but little in developing countries like Bangladesh. By definition, developing countries have less know-how relevant to development than developed countries, and the poor have less than the non-poor. The 1998/99 World Development Report suggests developing countries can acquire knowledge overseas as well as create their own at home (World Bank, 1999). The report also mentions that international research may produce knowledge for development, but the most important knowledge for development comes from developing countries themselves (1999: 7).

Tolero & Gaudette (1996: 14) state that rural and poor urban communities can be integrated into the mainstream of economic life, and thereby can raise their income levels, through better information services. They suggest that satellite networks, wireless communication, public telephones, and community information centres are effective channels of information. Community information centres can extend the reach of information services to under-served rural and urban areas. With the help of information technology, the remotest village has the possibility of tapping a global store of information more quickly and cheaply. Zayed, Munshi & Ahmed (1997) suggest that in a country like Bangladesh with an agro-based rural economy, rural development can play a major role in national development. Therefore, quick and easy access to information is vital to the development of the rural community. The general assumption in Bangladesh is that one desirable source of such information would be a library and information centre.

Fieldwork already undertaken as part of the present study in Bangladesh by the applicant has shown that there have been major changes in the economic and social life of people who live in the rural and poor urban areas due to the influence of information. For example, information about how to treat diarrhoea has existed for centuries; but millions of children have died in Bangladesh from it because their parents did not know how to save them. However, the situation has changed in the last few years due to extensive diffusion of information on how to make a simple oral saline at home and its availability even in small village shops or tea stalls. Forty years ago, Ghana and the Republic of Korea had virtually the same income per capita. By the early 1990's Korea's income per capita was six times higher than Ghana's. Some observers argue that half of the difference is due to Korea's greater success in acquiring and using information (World Bank: 1999). Hence the research question arises: how does information influence development?

Bangladesh is a country that lives truly in her villages. At least 76% of the total population, which is 139 millions, lives in villages (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001a). Agriculture is the main occupation of the people employing 68.5% of the labour force. This sector directly contributes around 32% to the gross domestic products (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999). That is why Hossain (1999), a

leading librarian, advises that the rural people of Bangladesh need organizations that will work to increase their political and social consciousness and will decrease the gap between urban and rural people.

Today there is a belief that information and communication technology (ICT) could play a strong role in the growth of developing countries. But barriers remain, notably language, electricity and connectivity that prevent ICT from playing the desired role in most of these countries. Moreover, basic needs, including schools, healthcare centres, balanced nutrition, gender equity, employment, and transportation are lacking (Sood 2002). Furthermore, ICTs are creating a divide within these communities benefiting the rich but not the poor, and enhancing the lives of those who are literate but not those lacking literacy skills. It is the present author's argument that ICT projects for the developing countries should consider actual important areas such as health, education, employment, business and communication; and should also consider their sustainability in doing business in those poor economies. Sood (2002) also states that despite the criticism of "put[ting] the cart before the horse... developing societies simply cannot sit back and wait, but must take charge today, and find ways to use these technologies for the benefit of their own people". One successful example of ICT entrepreneurship is demonstrated by users of the *Grameen* Telephone Company in Bangladesh. Rural people are using its services and mobile phones are also creating employment. Women who are often the most disadvantaged in rural communities in Bangladesh have been given mobile telephones to service the local village population (Bayes, von Braun and Akhter, 1999). Armed with a GSM mobile phone and a list of useful numbers *Grameen* telephone-ladies can make a comfortable living from charging users a small fee for making and receiving phone calls (Chapman & Slaymaker, 2002).

The present study argues that information is a key determinant of community empowerment. Although there are a good number of sources and agents involved in dissemination of information and knowledge in rural and informal urban settlements in Bangladesh, people in these areas question the relevance and appropriateness of some of the services offered to them, because such services do not always satisfy the demand for information by the local residents. As a result, the service may not be accepted and therefore people may not develop information seeking skills which

they can practice elsewhere. This study considers primarily the demand side, focusing on the information needs of residents in rural and poor urban settlements, and the sources they use in accessing that information. The study also examines the problem areas of accessing information encountered by those residents. Finally, the study will result in a critique of information services in rural areas and urban informal settlements of Bangladesh.

**Principal objective:**

The principal objective of this study is to describe and evaluate current information systems and services in Bangladesh, and also identify the information needs of rural and urban slum dwellers.

**Specific objectives:**

1. To identify what information services are already offered in rural and urban slum areas and evaluate the performance of these services. Two sources of information were used to achieve this objective. The first source was the body of official records such as annual reports, activity reports and evaluation reports for organisations which offer information services. An analysis of this extensive literature allowed the development of a descriptive categorisation of information services and identification of the major important providers. The second source is unstructured interviews which were conducted with officials at the central planning level responsible for rural development and rural information services in Bangladesh to ascertain their views of the relation of information and development. This identified factors which generally impact on the provision of information services and gave an insight into the policies of the major providers.
2. To identify the information needs of people in rural and urban slum areas and the functioning of information within a community in selected rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh. This objective involved the collection of information relating to information need and the impact of information services in satisfying that need in rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh.

The data collection had the following elements: structured interviews were conducted which have allowed a quantitative analysis of information need and use in four remote villages and two urban slum areas. At least 10 people from each site were selected from different class, occupational, gender, educational and religious groups. The purpose of the interviews was to identify the information needs of rural and poor urban communities and the problem areas in accessing information. The interviews also examined sources used by the communities in obtaining information related to various aspects of development. Secondly, six focus groups were conducted with representatives of the community in one of the survey areas to allow a deeper discussion of the some of the issues raised by the survey interviews.

3. To assess the structural, economic and social contexts of existing information services which contribute to their effectiveness. To fulfil this objective data was collected on the individual information services offered for rural people by different organizations. At this stage informal interviews were also conducted with the officer in charge of the field unit of the information provider such as field-level non-government organisation (NGO) staff, agricultural extension workers, and health and family planning assistants. This information supplemented that gained from the interviews and documentary analysis undertaken during the previous stage.
4. To make recommendations for future directions for information services in Bangladesh. There are a good number of channel and sources of information services available in the rural and poor areas of Bangladesh. This study concludes with an assessment of the success of information services in meeting the needs of the general public and the development of recommendations for future directions.

### **Significance**

There is a general assumption that information is a determinant of development in countries like Bangladesh but there is little direct research on this assumption. The proposed project contributes to existing knowledge of this area in that it represents a

comprehensive overview of the nature of information services in Bangladesh and therefore provides the basis for an assessment of their role in development. It will be a significant contribution to identifying the major information needs of rural and poor urban people and assessing how well current information infrastructure and services satisfy these needs. Therefore, it contributes to the debate on the relationship between information services and national development.

## **Chapter II: Literature review**

This chapter reviews literature on the relationship between information services and the information needs of rural and poor urban dwellers, including user studies and literature on the information services themselves. This review therefore concentrates first on user studies, which can be sub-divided into two areas; information needs assessment, and information seeking patterns and secondly on information services for rural and poor urban dwellers, which is sub-divided into information services from external sources, and sources of information from the community.

### **User Studies**

User studies started on a small scale in the early twentieth century, but it was after the Second World War that they developed more rapidly. User studies have defined by Katz (1978) as studies that analyse the behaviour of users in relation to libraries. This however is restrictive and inadequate as noted by Dervin and Nilan (1986). A more appropriate definition, to the present study, is that offered by Brittain (1971) who defined user studies as “empirical studies of the use of, and demand for information”. Up to 1965, these studies were mainly in response to demand of scientists and technologists (Davis and Bailey, 1964). Since then, the main focus of user studies has shifted to the information needs of social scientists. By 1978, about 1000 user studies/articles were already been published (Crawford, 1978). An additional 300 studies were carried out between 1978 and 1986 (Dervin and Nilan, 1986). Hewins (1990) confirmed that there was a massive literature on user studies. In his seminal paper on “ On user studies and information needs” Wilson (1981) shows that both ‘information needs’ and ‘ information seeking behavior’ fall within an overall area of ‘user studies’ which was later identified as ‘Information Behavior’ (Wilson and Walsh, 1996).

Chen and Hernon (1982) describe information seeking patterns or behaviour as “the paths pursued by individuals in the attempt to resolve a need”. Kuhlthau (1993, 4) discusses information seeking as “an active personal process. The process of construction within information seeking involves fitting information in with what

one already knows and extending this knowledge to create new perspectives”. Kuhlthau also views information seeking as a sense-making process. Wilson, Ellis, Ford & Foster (1999) outline a model of information-seeking behaviour as goal-determined problem solving. Four problem-solving stages are delineated: problem recognition, problem definition, problem resolution, and solution statement. Finally we can simply define information-seeking behaviour as the actions people take to satisfy a need and/or to gather needed information.

While a large amount of work in this area can be found by searching the LIS literature, an equally fruitful range can be found in other research disciplines. This is illustrated by an integrated review of work in the areas of psychology, consumer behaviour, health communication studies, organisational decision making and information requirements in information systems design (Wilson and Walsh, 1996).

### **Information Needs**

Despite a great deal of research being completed on ‘information needs’, there is still controversy about the definition of this term. Before attempting a definition, it is better to have a clear idea of what is meant by information. Instead of having a number of definitions it is better to have one good definition. “The word ‘information’ is used in the context of user-studies research, to denote a physical entity or phenomenon, the channel of communication through which messages are transferred, or the factual data, imperially determined and presented in a document or transmitted orally” (Wilson, 1981: 1).

Wilson in 1981 expressed the view that “need is a subjective experience which occurs only in the mind of the person in need and, consequently, is not directly accessible to an observer”. The experience of need can only be discovered by deduction from behaviour or through the reports of the person in need. The general concept of need is, of course, a psychological concept, since it refers to a mental state or states and a good deal of attention has been given to the idea, its subjective

character and the motivation for the expression of need or the physiological drives that result in the expression of need (Wilson and Walsh, 1996).

Burnkraft (1976) has defined it as "a cognitive representation of a future goal that is desired". While Zweizig and Dervin (1977, 240) defined the concept of information needs as "when internal sense runs out". Mchumbo (1994) concludes in his PhD thesis titled "Information needs and seeking patterns for rural development in Southern Africa" that "there is a consensus that information need is linked to a specific situations and a need arises when the present level of knowledge is incapable of dealing with a new situation".

Efforts to understand the information needs of the general public are not novel undertakings. Indeed, over the decades a considerable body of literature has grown that portrays and analyses many aspects of the phenomenon. Numerous studies have addressed the information needs of selected professions such as social scientists, scientists, physicians and engineers. However, attempts to discern the information needs of the 'average citizen' with a view towards ascertaining the exact place of various information providers in the information environment of the individual have been undertaken only recently (Chen & Herson, 1982). Issues which have been discussed in the literature include the motivation of information seekers, the ease of use of information resources and the reasons information is not used (Lipetz, 1970; Slater, 1984). Most research has been concentrated upon the patterns by which information needs are resolved for urban residents; few studies have been attempted to generate a similar portrait of information requirements of residents of non-urban areas (Chen & Herson, 1982). These authors believe that the emphasis on urban needs is not because urban needs are different or more important, but because of funding priorities for research and an emphasis on urban studies in American research.

According to Chen and Herson (1982), one of the earliest attempts to describe the information seeking behaviour of general citizens was conducted by Parker and Paisley (1966) in their work on the residents of the California communities of Fresco and San Marino. They queried respondents concerning their utilization of both mass media and interpersonal providers of information, as well as their use of

adult education programs. Their study considered four topics from the perspective of how respondents obtained information pertaining to each: national and international public affairs; occupational skills and information; local public affairs; and leisure time activities. In addition to an analysis of demographic variables (including age, sex, occupation, and income), the type of information need and psychological measures of an individual's motivation for seeking information were compared with information-seeking behaviour. The most significant finding of their study was that the respondent's level of education was the most reliable indicator of his or her formal, institutional, and interpersonal source utilization for resolving information needs. They also found that the particular type of information providers consulted by an individual are a function of a combination of demographic and psychological variables, rather than of the type of information required by a situation (Chen & Herson, 1982, p. 10). In another study, Zweizig (1973) found that the library was seen as just one section of a wide spectrum of information providers. Zweizig found that both demographic and non-demographic variables significantly affected information-seeking patterns. A study undertaken in Baltimore is one of the most cited work in information needs research. In the study Warner, Murray and Palmour (1973) examined the information needs of urban residents and found that age, income and education were not direct determinants of a person's information seeking behaviour. In the Baltimore study, researchers came to realize the presence of an underlying relationship between an individual's level of education and the likelihood of a resolution of his or her information need. A key finding of the study was that "... the best resources are accessed most effortlessly by the more advantaged members of society" (Chen & Herson, 1982, p. 11). Warner et al. also found that interpersonal sources were the most accessible types of sources.

Chen and Herson (1982) discuss two studies which were exclusively concerned with the information needs of rural residents. In the study Baron and Curran (1979) focused on the general information needs of residents in the rural South and produced guidelines for rural library personnel in the planning of library services in response to meet the information needs of users. Mary Eidleman's (1979) study dealt with information and referral services for residents of Maryland eastern shore in three counties. Eidleman's study established the need for information and referral

services in rural areas and demonstrated that the successful implementation of such services could make public libraries a centre for community information.

As with research conducted in western developed countries, information needs research in developing countries focused initially on scientists and technologists' information needs. Later social scientists information needs and seeking behaviours were included in the research agenda but average citizens information needs and seeking behaviours have not been a dominant research interest in most developing countries. Mchumbo (1994) states that the few studies of information needs of rural users in Africa have tended to focus on single subject needs, and have a library orientation. Baregu's (1972) focus, for example, is the subject preferences for books borrowed from rural libraries by neo-literates in north western Tanzania. Ania (1985) focuses on the agricultural information needs of farmers in south-western Nigeria. Ojiambo's (1989) study titled "Communication of agricultural information between research scientists, extension personnel, and farmers", examined how agricultural scientists and extension workers communicate information with each other and the extent to which libraries act as sources of agricultural information in Kenya. Kaniki (1991) attempted to establish the agricultural information needs of farmers in rural areas around Zambia's urban centres and also the needs of workers at agricultural research stations. Aboyade (1984) attempted to establish the information needs of neo-literates and how such needs could be satisfied by a modified formal information service. The study identified the following types of information needs: health and sanitation, agricultural production, government policies and programs, recreation and leisure, literacy primers, Islamic religious literature, child care and care of pregnant women. Temu (1985) carried out a similar study to the above in Papua New Guinea. He attempted to establish the information needs of the rural dwellers through the 'eyes' of the central government officials, extension workers, and villagers. The findings indicate that there is a difference in perception on what the rural dwellers information needs were between government officials and the rural community.

Information needs research in the sub-continent has focused particularly on elite groups such as technologists, doctors, social scientists and academics. A thorough literature search found only one Indian study (Upadhy 1999) which could be

considered as an examination of information seeking in everyday life. She evaluated and assessed the information requirements of users of village information centres in India. However, several attempts failed to locate a copy of her doctoral thesis. In Bangladesh, literature was found mainly in two areas; agriculture and public health. These studies will be discussed in the information seeking behaviour section below. No study has covered Bangladeshi rural dwellers and urban slum residents' information needs in a broad context.

### **Research on knowledge, information and information services in Bangladesh**

As mentioned earlier, information research has been undertaken mainly in two areas in Bangladesh – public health and agriculture. Postgraduate students of the National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM), and academic staff and postgraduate students of the Department of Agricultural Extension, Bangladesh Agricultural University carried out most of the research. The health issues covered were: knowledge, attitudes and practice on different health issues such as family planning and safe drinking water; health seeking behaviour or health care seeking patterns; need for health services and/or education; and awareness of different health issues.

#### ***Research on Community Knowledge***

The research on agricultural and health information issues discussed above has shown that we can classify these researches into three classes – research on whether members of the community have the knowledge of various issues they need in order to experience the best possible life, research on information-seeking behaviour and research on the nature and success of current services.

Begum (1990) carried out a cross-sectional study among infertile women attending the Infertility Clinic, Institute of Postgraduate Medicine and Research (now Bongobundhu Medical University), Dhaka. She found that 84.3% of the respondents do not have a knowledge of the term 'infertility' and they had poor knowledge of the common causes of infertility. Ahmed (1990) conducted a study among *Madrasha*

(religious school and college) students regarding their knowledge of family planning. He found that only 21.4% had positive attitudes to practice family planning in the future. He also found that the level of knowledge of the students had an enormous influence on their attitude towards family planning practices. Pramanik (1989) conducted a study of the knowledge of housewives living in a large slum in Dhaka about rice based oral rehydration solution (RORS). The study showed that age, educational background, religion and occupation of the husbands of the respondents had no influence upon their knowledge about home made rice ORS in the treatment of diarrhoea.

In a cross-sectional study Hakim (1991) found Family Welfare Visitors (FWVs) knowledge satisfactory on different aspects of prevention of diarrhoeal diseases. Islam (1994) indicated a satisfactory level of primary health care knowledge and practices among the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) member households than those of non-BRAC member households. Samadder's (1983) findings on the existing level of knowledge, attitude and practice about antenatal care in a slum area of Dhaka reveal that the study population had a lack of knowledge about antenatal care, and the existing level of service is negligible. In a study carried out in a rural village of Dhaka district, Sarker (1989) found knowledge of primary health care after physical injuries is poor among the survey population.

Biswas (1999) conducted a cross-sectional descriptive study among the leprosy patients at the Leprosy Control Institute and Hospital, Dhaka and found the knowledge of the patients about leprosy was poor. Among the respondents 56% went to qualified doctors and others took different traditional medication. Amin (2000) conducted a study on knowledge of safe motherhood practices among eligible couples in three selected rural areas of Bangladesh. The study found that the majority of eligible couples (85%) had no knowledge regarding danger signs in pregnancy. Only 13% of them knew about suitable ages of marriage for women and 66% of them had no knowledge regarding a place of safe delivery. Ahmed (1995) found that the existing knowledge of hepatitis infection among secondary school students is not enough to safeguard the target population. It is essential to include intervention programs in their educational curriculum. A study on knowledge of

mothers about nutrition in semi-urban areas of Dhaka was conducted by Akhter (1989) and found that their knowledge was unsatisfactory.

In a study of breastfeeding practices in rural area Yasmin (1982) observed that almost all the mothers (96%) fed breast milk to their infants although 60% of them also use cow's milk and powdered milk as supplementary food. Only 26% use other food as supplementary foods. Roy (1995) found that the reasons for not giving breast milk as the first feed to their babies were in nearly all the cases due to insufficient or no milk. Some of them did not give breast milk for the first feed because of traditional beliefs. In a study on working women Talat (1992) found a correlation between a higher level of education and better understanding of nutritional anaemia. Nath (1997) revealed that understanding of communities about primary health care is inadequate and concluded that long term intervention programs would be necessary. In a cross-sectional study among medical and non-medical undergraduate students Khan (2000) found no significant difference in prevalence of smoking and drug addiction between the two population groups.

Several dissertations and research papers have been found discussing knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) studies on various agricultural issues. Haque, Haque and Hossain (1999) conducted a study to determine the knowledge of farmers on organic farming and found that farmers possessed a good knowledge of the importance and functions of organic matter use. Bari (2000) investigated the attitude of farmers towards a hybrid rice variety (*AALOK 6201*) and revealed that 73% of rice growers had at least a moderate attitudes to adoption of this new rice variety. Kashem and Islam (1990) found that farmers who had contact with block supervisor of the Department of Agriculture Extension had comparatively higher agricultural knowledge, more favourable attitudes towards technology and a higher rate of adoption of agricultural practices than non-contact farmers.

In a study on the health information needs of mothers living in a selected slum of Dhaka city Kamaluddin (1987) found that the mothers were unaware of proper antenatal care, safe delivery practice, immunisation during pregnancy, usefulness of colostrum, need for contraception and primary immunisation of children. Kabir (1993) found that street adolescents were not aware of their health care needs and

their health care outlook during illness is a potential threat to public health. Hossain (1986) designed a study to assess the need of health education for primary school children and found that there is a lack of knowledge among students about the most useful information regarding prevention of diseases and personal hygiene. He concludes that this reflects the need for health education among school children in order to give them a basic knowledge of disease prevention and to promote healthful practices.

### ***Information-seeking behaviour***

It is not enough to identify that a community has gaps in its knowledge. It is also necessary to know how individuals fill those gaps or how those individuals play a part in the dissemination of information.

Begum (1996) identified radio and television as the major sources of information regarding iodized salt among the housewives of a rural community in Mymensingh district and found that 86% of the respondents were prepared to disseminate the information to others. Sarker (1991) has done an anthropological cross-sectional study in a rural community among 130 respondents attending four different traditional healers (*Kabiraj* [indigenous medical healer], *Fakirani* [magico-religious healer], Homeopath and faith Healer). He observed that traditional beliefs concerning the nature of and treatment of disease, and the failure of modern medical treatment play an important role in determining the health seeking behaviours of rural people. Rahman (1991) found that literate mothers consulted graduate doctors and illiterate mothers consulted traditional practitioners for their sick children prior to hospitalisation. In a study on 80 cases of viral hepatitis patients admitted in different public hospitals of Dhaka city, Mollah (1993) observed that 64% of the total patients were admitted after getting initial treatment from traditional healers and 36% from physicians and homeopath practitioners.

Rahman, Barkat-e-Khuda, Kane, Mazumder & Reza (1997) assessed factors relating to prenatal care-seeking behaviours among rural women in six *thana*<sup>1</sup>s in Bangladesh. Their findings indicate that poorer women were less likely to seek prenatal care or to consult qualified doctors; and younger and more educated women were more likely to seek prenatal care. Howlader and Bhuiyan (1999) investigated the nature of health-seeking behaviour of mothers and how this behaviour has affected infant and child mortality in Bangladesh. The findings underscore the importance of directing explicit attention to community characteristics such as access to primary health facilities, the number of physicians and nurses in the community, immunisation campaigns, and the nature of water and sanitation systems. Ahmed, Adams, Chowdhury & Bhuiyan (2000) examine the impact of membership in the BRAC's integrated rural development program on gender equity and health-seeking behaviour. They found that when treatment is sought, BRAC members rely to a greater extent on home remedies, traditional care, and unqualified allopaths than non-member households. While reported seeking of treatment from qualified doctors is more prevalent in the BRAC group, non-members use

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<sup>1</sup> **Thana** an unit of police administration. Under a regulation issued on 7 November 1792 by the government of the Bengal Presidency, the district magistrates were asked to divide their respective districts into police jurisdictions called 'thana'. The area of a thana was not to exceed 'ten coss square'. Initially, a thana was purely a police jurisdiction headed by a junior police officer, namely the officer-in-charge (OC). With the creation of circle system, particularly after 1961, thana became the main centre of development activities with most of the development departments of the provincial government having their own functionaries at that level.

After 1982, each thana was upgraded into a upazila (sub-district) and the existing unit of administration, ie 'subdivision' was abolished based on the recommendations of COMMITTEE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM/REORGANIZATION (CARR) formed in early 1982 by the Ershad government. The principal functionary of an upazila was known as UPAZILA NIRBAHI OFFICER (UNO). In 1992, the upazila system was abolished and the post of UNO was transformed into THANA NIRBAHI OFFICER (TNO). Under the upazila system, the rank of the OC was upgraded into that of an inspector. The upazila system has since 1999 been revived. There are now 496 thanas in the country including those in metropolitan police jurisdictions. [Ali 2003]

paraprofessional services of community health care workers almost twice as frequently. In both BRAC member and non-member groups, women suffering illness report seeking care significantly less often than men.

Islam (1998) researched the use of communication media by farmers in making the decision to adopt *Binasail* (a rice variety) and showed that interpersonal communication was used to the highest extent by the farmers. Mass media played a very little role in supplying *Binasail* information to aid the decision-making process by the farmers. Ahmed, Ahmed and Miah (1994) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of agricultural information being received by the farmers from various farm programs broadcast through radio and television. Their study shows that farmers received more information from radio than TV but the information from TV was found to be more suitable in format and content than that from radio. In his master's dissertation Ahmed (1996) also showed that interpersonal communication was used by farmers more than the mass media and publications. Miah and Halim (1998) revealed that rural dwellers were supplied with only one third of their total required information.

### **Information for development**

Available literature (Sood, 2002; Chapman & Slaymaker, 2002) and the programs of various organisations which are interested in information for development often focus on the application of and/or impact of information and communication technologies for economic and social development. This includes the *infoDev* initiative of the World Bank and IDRC (International Development Research Centre, Canada) initiatives on ICT for development. In early 1992 IDRC launched an international multidisciplinary research effort to answer the question "what is the link between 'information' and 'development'?". Over seven years hypotheses were presented, methodologies were formulated, case studies were identified to test and apply these hypotheses, and the final results were evaluated. The outcome of the research is two important publications in this new research agenda 'Measuring the impact of information on development' (Menou, 1993) and 'Defining and assessing the impact of information on development: Building research and action agendas'

(Horton, 2000). However, over seven years of research in five continents of the world end up with the original question not fully answered (Stone, 2000).

It appears that there is no quantitative method of measuring the impact of information on development. A country like Bangladesh has committed itself to the viewpoint that information is a vital factor for development but it is probably too soon to assess this. However it is still possible to suggest that there is enough existing evidence that information access is needed by the population and that adequate sources of information should be available. The following sections of this literature review will therefore assess research on the current information services available to the rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh and research on the relationship between indigenous information and the diffusion of new information.

### *Information services for rural and poor urban residents in Bangladesh*

Having dealt with the information needs and seeking behaviour literature both in developed and developing countries in the previous section the following section will review literature on formal library and information services for rural and poor urban residents in Bangladesh and also indigenous knowledge practices in the country. Hossain (1999), an academic librarian, states that the rural people of Bangladesh need an organization that will work to increase their consciousness and will decrease the gap between urban and rural people. He concludes that a rural library and information centre would be able to narrow the gap. From my own experience it is clear that rural and poor urban areas have never been considered as a component of library planning and services, and are still being neglected and overlooked in government policy and decision-making. A literature survey also shows that a very limited number of studies have been carried out in this area. It is also clear that most are either hypothetical or have a single library bias where the authors discuss the activities and impact of one specific library or information centre.

Rashid (1992, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2000a, 2000b) has published and presented a number of papers mainly on the Community Development Library (CDL) or its

subsidiary organisation; the Rural Information Resource Centres (RIRC). His papers have generally focused on the development of CDL and its programs; and the activities and achievements of CDL and RIRCs. In one of the papers Rashid (1996b) suggests that “if an effective exchange [of information] can be developed within the South, dependency on the North can be decreased. An alternative agenda has to be created to stimulate a process of wider interaction to foster greater co-operation, exchange, and institutional development with the South. Through this process popular initiatives could be highlighted, interaction between people and between organisations could be developed, issues and problems could be identified, and mechanisms of saving them could be analysed and shared”.

Khan (1997, 1999) presented two seminal papers which provided guidelines for establishing rural libraries. At the beginning of his 1997 paper he gave a brief description of Bangladesh, its rural community, education base, library base and information users. He is persuasive in arguing that Bangladesh needs to develop a rural library and information system to meet identified rural dwellers information needs. He believes that, in the rural community environment, the traditional forms, patterns and nature of providing library and information services are not suitable. Methods of providing information services must vary according to need. Khan, Chowdhury & Nazimuddin (1999) believe that cellular telephones will enhance the extension of information support to those who will need it. Khan also discusses the patterns of developing, organizing and maintaining an appropriate rural information support system for the benefit of the rural people. The articles are well written, though they seem rather hypothetical without any empirical research background.

In the article ‘Library and information services to the rural community in Bangladesh: CDL’s experience’ Zabed, Munshi & Ahmed (1997) attempted an overview of the information needs of the rural community. The article presents the need for library and information services in rural Bangladesh and analyses the role of the Rural Information Resource Centres (RIRCs) of the Community Development Library as sources of information in the rural environment. Zabed et al. (1997) explain that the people who work in the agricultural sector of Bangladesh are small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. These farmers and labourers need, among other things, information on those matters that contribute to an increase in

agricultural productivity and related issues. These include grants, subsidies, provision of credit, supply of fertilisers and agricultural implements. They believe that the need for information in the rural communities is largely centred on problems of daily life and earning a livelihood. Approximately seventy% of the people are illiterate and need literacy programs. Poverty and social inequality are also striking features of rural communities. Anti-poverty programs and legislative measures to ease the burden of social inequality may be of interest to them. Facilities for housing, health and hygiene are poor. Food and nutrition, childcare and family welfare are also neglected aspects of the social structure. Most rural people are under-employed, earning their livelihood through hard labour or are unemployed. Rural business people with their small capital, small volume, and lack of reliable market information are at a disadvantage compared with wealthier business people in the rural and urban areas.

Zabed et al. (1997) also state that to many rural people the concept of a library or information centre is somewhat difficult to understand. Many of them do not see any difference between a library and a commercial bookstore. Among rural people, the most common way of transferring information is word of mouth. Information sources originate from such traditional institutions as the local tea-stall, “hat-bazar” (the public market) and many other places where people gather and exchange information (1997, p. 131). At the end of their paper Zabed et al. (1997) suggest that “in a country like Bangladesh with an agro-based rural economy, rural development can play a major role in national development. Therefore, quick and easy access to information is vital to the development of the rural community”.

Begum and Akter (1996) conducted a study on the *Gonokendra Pathagers* or Union Libraries of BRAC which focused on its members’ socio-economic background and demographic issues such as age of users, their educational level and occupation. The study also looked at the publicity about the libraries received by users and usefulness of training provided by the libraries. The study also sought suggestions from the users to know how the services could be improved and the programs more effective. Khan and Akter (1999) carried out a study entitled, “Analysis of issues and problems of BRAC *Gonokendra Pathager* [Union Library]” which focuses on the perception of the community towards the BRAC libraries; explores the trends

and patterns of library use and discusses gender discrimination in using the libraries. It also assesses the needs and interests of the users. Another study conducted by Khan (2000) was aimed at assessing the operational status of the BRAC Union Library. The major findings of his study indicate that community participation, especially at the initial stage of BRAC libraries were satisfactory but participation of both sexes together in development activities in rural areas seemed to be limited.

Numerous socio-economic studies have been carried out on slum dwellers living in Bangladesh especially in Dhaka. However, information services for slum dwellers appear never to have been considered for research. There is a huge difference in basic facilities between slum dwellers and those living in other areas of cities and even rural dwellers. Khuda, Barkat, Helali, Miller & Haaga (1994) mention that, although the government has structured the health and family planning service delivery system for the benefit of the rural poor, it does not have a comparable infrastructure for the urban poor. NGOs are the only primary service providers for the urban slum population.

### ***Indigenous knowledge and diffusion of innovation***

The superiority of western knowledge and the inferiority of rural people's indigenous knowledge has been accepted norm by most development agents. Reddy and Sandeep (1979) viewed rural people's knowledge as inadequate and ineffective. They also made comments like "the source of their knowledge is no better than themselves" and "it is like the blind leading the blind". However, there has been a recent dramatic change in approaches to development; the 'bottom-up' model of development emerged to challenge the 'top down' development model of modernisation and dependency, and this has been accepted by many development agents in the developing countries (Sillitoe, 2000). The *World Development Report: 1998/99* suggests developing countries can acquire knowledge overseas as well as create their own at home (World Bank, 1999). The report also mentions that international research may produce knowledge for development, but the most important knowledge for development comes from developing countries themselves.

Indigenous knowledge is a body of knowledge and beliefs transmitted almost always through oral tradition from generation to generation, or is obtained as a result of experience and trial and error or a combination of the two. This long experience and experiment means it cannot be replaced quickly by other knowledge systems. Indigenous knowledge can be traced in such sectors as agriculture, natural resources and environment, post harvest technology and nutrition, handicraft, micro finance, primary health care, community development and conflict resolution. Each sector possesses typical areas of knowledge or application. Indigenous knowledge is derived from local or particular social contexts while science is constructed globally. Even though there are some slightly differences, basically both indigenous and scientific knowledge are a reflection of human observations, empirical classification and experiences of natural events. It means that there must be an 'interface' (as Norman Long argued) where indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge can work together (Ina Hoi Riwa Foundation, 2003). Therefore, a framework for creating more effective and creative interaction between these two knowledge systems should be established by taking into consideration their strengths and weaknesses. Thus both knowledge systems could complement each other.

Indigenous knowledge is a relatively new area of research in Bangladesh. Agronomists, anthropologists, environmentalists, fisheries and forestry specialists, together with various NGOs are working in this area. Recent strategy documents for environmental management and agricultural extension indicate that the Government of Bangladesh is increasingly interested in seeing some attention given to indigenous knowledge. The National Environmental Management Action Plan (Ministry of Environment and Forest, 1995) includes in its recommended actions on land resources: "study on indigenous land use practices, to increase efficiency of the production system and its application". The New Agricultural Extension Policy (Ministry of Agriculture, 1996) states further that: "It is recognized that farmers' own indigenous technical knowledge is often environmentally sustainable, and efforts should be made to support and learn from farmers, as well as the formal research system".

Bangladesh possesses a rich heritage of indigenous knowledge through which people try to manage their production systems on the floodplain, exploiting land,

fisheries, livestock and forests to earn their livelihoods. But much of this knowledge has been lost with the 'modernization' of agriculture and the rapid spread of new technology (Mallick, 2000). The Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) undertook one of the earliest extensive works on indigenous technical knowledge in Bangladesh. The book entitled "Indigenous agricultural tools and equipment of Bangladesh" (1982), describes the various agricultural tools and traditional appliances that have been used and are still being used in many parts of the country. More recently, Chowdhury, Elias and Ahmed (1996) compiled a list of approximately two hundred indigenous techniques and practices used in agriculture, fisheries and healthcare.

Islam (1996) identifies a number of indigenous techniques that are still used in agriculture in the north-western part of Bangladesh. He found that among the identified techniques 19% were used regularly and a further 46% were used occasionally, and the remaining 35% were rarely employed. The Bangladesh Academy of Agriculture (1997) volume, entitled "Indigenous technologies of agriculture in Bangladesh", is a model compendium of technologies from around the country which includes information on 147 indigenous technologies and practices relating to community production, harvest, post-harvest operation in crops, animals, and forest and fisheries. A study on indigenous technology for watershed management by a group of researchers identified 52 local technologies and practices employed by tribal people in the country's eastern hill tracts region. Chadwick, Mallick and Alam (1998) provide a synthesis of previous works in the field of indigenous knowledge and techniques in a recent study. The main aim of the study was to document indigenous knowledge relating to traditional water management practices from regional perspective.

Islam and Kashem (1999) identified 32 ethno-veterinary medicines used by the farmers related to livestock and poultry bird rearing and management. The study revealed that 25 percent of the farmers were high users, 39 percent moderate users and 36 percent low users of the identified ethno-veterinary medicines. In another study Kashem (1998) found that the use of indigenous technical knowledge by the farmers had significant positive correlation with their education, contact with trusted information sources and perception of the benefits of using such knowledge.

In a pioneering study Ahmed (1955) describes and illustrates the major fishing crafts and gear used by the fishing community in what was then East Pakistan (Bangladesh). Tasi and Ali (1997) provide a valuable compilation containing information on different aspects of open water fish and fisheries in Bangladesh. The *Unnayan Bikalpa Nirdharani Gabeshana* (Policy Research for Development Alternative) (1996) published a booklet on new agricultural movements describing a recent initiative by peasants to innovate using indigenous technology. There are a number of rhymes and proverbs in Bangla that refer to various aspects of rural life including cropping patterns, nature and climate, seasonal changes, vernacular housing, food habits and health promotion behaviour. Ahmed (1974) records many such rhymes that describe how people traditionally cultivated their land, cropping patterns, how seeds were selected and preserved, and how people responded to natural events. Islam (1990) discusses how the folk literature of Tangail Districts describes annual changes in traditional cropping patterns.

A considerable number of studies have been conducted by the academic staff and postgraduate research students of the Department of Agricultural Extension, Bangladesh Agricultural University on diffusion of innovations. Hassanullah's (1990) findings on the diffusion behaviour of paddy and sugarcane growers in Bangladesh shows that after two decades of extension work the level of diffusion of agronomic practices on average has been raised to 60% among paddy growers and 71.7% among sugarcane growers. Ali, Halim and Hossain (1989) identified a high level of correlation between farmers' level of education, organisational participation and extension contact. They found that these factors contributed to both agricultural knowledge and adoption of innovations. Kashem (1986) found that the traditional extension approach as well as the training and visit system (T & V) as 'a disastrous failure' for the development of small farmers' agriculture in Bangladesh. He suggested the establishment of a farmers' service centre in each *Union*<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> **Union** lowest administrative unit in the rural areas. The creation of a union as such can be traced back to 1870 when efforts were made to create certain village level bodies under the Village Chaukidari Act of 1870. Under this Act, villages were grouped into unions to provide for a system of watch and ward in each village. The guidance in detail for the

A few studies were also found on farm technologies and indigenous technical knowledge. Kashem (1999) conducted a study to determine the contacts made by the farmers of Bangladesh and Japan in learning about the use of farm technologies in crop production. His findings show that in rice production neighbours, friends, input dealers, television and extension workers were the common communication sources for both the countries. But in the case of Bangladesh the three most preferred contact media were neighbours, friends and radio. Conversely, among the Japanese farmers the three most preferred media were cooperative societies, newspapers and opinion leaders.

The literature does contain much useful data which can support the development of a model of the relationship between information and development which can contribute to better planning of information services in developing countries. However, there has been little attempt in any of the above studies to cover everyday life information needs and information-seeking behaviour of the common people. This current study will attempt to fill some of the gaps in research on current information systems and services in Bangladesh and to identify the information needs of rural and urban slum dwellers.

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creation of unions is laid down in articles 2 and 3 of the Bengal Chaukidari Manual. Thus emerged in the development process the concept of a local government unit which, though limited to security functions at the formative stage, formed the basis of the primary unit of local government in later years. [AMM Shawkat Ali]

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

The objectives of the research were to describe and evaluate current information systems and services in Bangladesh and to identify the information needs of rural and urban slum dwellers. An understanding of both these issues allows an assessment of the effectiveness of current information services in meeting information needs. The specific objectives were to:

1. identify what information services are already offered in rural and urban slum areas, and evaluate the performance of these services,
2. identify the information needs of people in rural and urban slum areas,
3. assess the structural, economic and social contexts of existing information services which contribute to their effectiveness, and
4. make recommendations for future directions for information services in Bangladesh.

#### *Stage 1: Literature review*

The previous chapter has presented a review of the literature available on the impact of information services on aspects on national development. The review includes journal articles, books, published and unpublished conference papers and published and unpublished reports. It covers areas such as information need, information use and information-seeking behaviour. The materials discussed in the literature review include general theoretical literature and specific studies of user groups and areas outside Bangladesh. Discussion of about current information services in Bangladesh is incorporated into the following chapters which discuss the findings of this research project.

This stage provides a theoretical context for the research project.

### *Stage 2: Development of a descriptive model of information services in Bangladesh*

Two sources of information were used at this stage. The first source was the body of official records such as annual reports, activity reports and evaluation reports for organisations which offer information services. A documentary analysis of this extensive literature allowed the development of a descriptive categorisation of information services and identification of the major important providers.

The second source is unstructured interviews which were conducted with officials at the central planning level responsible for rural development and rural information services in Bangladesh to ascertain their views of the relation of information and development in Bangladesh. This identified factors which generally impact on the provision of information services and gave an insight into the policies of the major providers. Those interviewed were:

- Director, Community Development Library, Dhaka, Bangladesh (whom I know personally),
- Program Head, Continuing Education, BRAC Education Program, BRAC,
- Director, Agricultural Information Service, Government of Bangladesh,
- President, Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh,
- Executive Director, Ain O Shalish Kendra (Centre for Law and Arbitration), and
- Officials of Bangladesh Radio who are involved with broadcasting matters like health and family planning, and agriculture.

This stage contributes to objectives 1 and 2.

### *Stage 3: Information need in rural and urban poor Bangladesh*

This stage involved the collection of information relating to information need and the impact of information services in satisfying that need in rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh. The data collection had the following elements:

### *I. Survey interviews with rural and urban slum dwellers*

- Four remote villages and two urban slum areas in Dhaka Metropolitan City of Bangladesh were selected for data collection.
- Structured interviews which allow for quantitative analysis were conducted since printed questionnaires are unsuitable for areas with low literacy.
- Ten people from each site were selected from different class, occupational, gender, educational and religious groups. Stratified sampling was used to ensure representation from each section of the community.

### *II. Focus group discussions*

- Six focus groups were conducted with representatives of the community in one of the survey areas to allow a deeper discussion of the some of the issues raised by the survey interviews.

### *III. Information providers views*

At this stage data was also collected on the individual information services offered for rural people by different organizations. Informal interviews were conducted with the officers in charge of the field units of the information providers such as field level NGO staff, agricultural extension workers, and health and family planning assistants. In addition a survey was undertaken of staff in the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's Union Libraries. This information supplemented that gained from the interviews and documentary analysis undertaken during the previous stage.

In order to collect the information field visits were made. These included:

- interviews with officers-in-charge of some of the field units or programs;
- collection of information:
  - nature, types and amount of information services offered by those units or programs; and
  - usage and types of user benefiting from those services.
- assessment of the economic and social context of the field unit or program.
- observation of the conduct of information services.

This stage contributes to objectives 2, 3 and 4.

#### *Stage 4: Critique of current information services*

The research concluded with an assessment of the success of information services in meeting the needs of the general public and the development of recommendations for future directions.

This stage contributes to objectives 4 and 5.

### **Issues in the development of the research methodology**

The choice of research methodology was influenced by the objectives above. One might argue that the area of study is too big. However, the reason for choosing current information systems and services in Bangladesh and identify rural and urban slum dwellers information needs in general was same as that given by Mchombu (1994). In his dissertation “*Information needs and seeking patterns for rural development in southern Africa*” he states:

*Most of the studies [rural information studies] were limited to a single subject, or an existing information system. There was thus a failure to study rural people’s information needs beyond the selected system or subject. This meant that in most cases, the studies concentrated on exogenous information system, while the indigenous information system was ignored. Given the problem of low information consciousness of rural people, many studies chose to study information providers or government agencies, for example,*

*extension agents, health workers, to get their views on rural people's information needs. Such studies often resulted in data which show how information providers communicate to rural people and not how rural people seek and use information in their efforts to develop themselves. The majority of rural studies had a single country and often single village base which reduced the range of variables to single country situations, with the possibility that such findings could not be generalised outside the specific situation" (Mchombu, 1994).*

In this study urban slum areas were included as well as rural areas. As a background to this, the study would include identification of information services already offered in rural and urban slum areas. Thus would give an understanding of what sources of information to dwellers in those areas were already available. The literature review has already shown that urban slum areas have been neglected in providing basic services such as health services, electricity and water supply.

The stages of the research have been detailed above. Although the work was divided into four stages the study was done according to the convenience of the researcher not one stage after another. Information from information users was obtained using structured interviews ensuring that the results were not influenced by interviews held with information service providers. Part of the study that needed to be done in Bangladesh was conducted from March to the end of June 2001 during a field visit. Later it was decided that some focus group discussions would enrich the previously collected data and these were conducted during a subsequent field trip to Bangladesh in March and April, 2003.

### ***Interviews with key officials***

Unstructured interviews were conducted with the key officials at the central planning level responsible for information services in Bangladesh to ascertain their views of the success and impact of rural information services in Bangladesh. A simple questionnaire was developed for help during the interviews (see Appendix.

II). The following interviews were undertaken at the end of data collection after finishing all the three previous stages of the research: Director General, Press Institute of Bangladesh; Director, Community Development Library; Assistant Director, Rural Broadcast Programme, Bangladesh Radio; and Programme Coordinator, Continuing Education Programme, BRAC. The interviews were informed by findings already made and enabled a cross check of the policies and success claimed by the heads of these programs. The interviews began with simple questions such as what are the types of information services provided by the interviewees' organization and who are the beneficiaries. Questions were also asked on the problems faced by the organization while providing services or the successes claimed by the interviewee. Interviewees were also requested to provide documentary evidence for their claims. Finally, interviewees' were requested to express their views on how better information services in rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh might be provided.

### *Interviews with rural and poor urban dwellers*

At the beginning of the research design it was decided that a survey would be carried out to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Since the population of Bangladesh is so huge, purposive sampling was selected for data collection. Various methods of data collection such as direct interview and self-address mailed questionnaires were considered. Later it was decided that interviews rather than a printed survey would be more appropriate for the rural and poor urban residents due to high illiteracy rates. Direct personal interviews, allowing a high response rate, direct interaction between interviewer and interviewee, question clarification, and the elaboration of data through the minimization of unclear answers, is conceptually the superior technique especially in areas where there is illiteracy. Its primary drawback is the high cost of training and deploying interviewers in the field (Chan & Herson, 1982). Because the illiteracy rate is very high in Bangladesh and self-administered questionnaires are unsuitable for areas with low literacy, the structured direct interview method was selected for data collection. Moreover, the researcher himself has made all interviews so there was no consideration of the cost of training and deploying interviewers in the field. The researcher himself filled up the

questionnaires and in addition to the questionnaires, interviews with the participants were recorded in audio-cassettes as it is not possible to write everything said during the interview sessions.

### *Questionnaire development*

A questionnaire was developed for structured interviews with rural and poor urban dwellers (see Appendix. I). The questionnaire was partially based on the study in Southern Africa by Mchombu (1994), but needed to be designed especially for Bangladeshi conditions. The questionnaire was divided into five sections on demographic data, income generating activities, information needs, an individual case study, and reading, listening and viewing. The researcher would read out the questions, and also the answers, if necessary, so that the informants could easily choose the appropriate answer or answers. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that the result could easily be used for quantitative analysis using SPSS.

A pilot survey of 10 respondents was conducted in a rural Bangladeshi community and the questionnaire was refined in the light of this pilot. This community and these respondents were not included in the final results.

### *Study areas*

For the purpose of the study four remote villages in four administrative divisions and two urban slum areas in Dhaka Metropolitan City of Bangladesh were selected for data collection. The villages were selected considering remoteness, basic facilities, and geographical and ecological considerations. Slums were included in this study with the consideration that these areas are the pockets of poor urban dwellers who are mostly ex-residents of rural areas. Two villages, *Dakshinduru* in *Norshingdi* district and *Pananagor* in *Rajshahi* district, were chosen because they are comparatively close to city areas. The other two villages, *Ilisha* in *Cox's Bazar* district and *Pail* in *Hobigonj* district, were selected with the consideration that they are far from the cities and also have less basic civic facilities. All the sites have electricity though not all the dwellers have connections at their household. Initiatives were made to collect data from a variety of social conditions. *Dakshinduru*, which is

50 km from the *Norshingdi* district town and approximately 94 km from Dhaka Metropolitan City, is purely an agricultural based village. Both Pail, only 15 km from the *Hobigang* town, and *Pananagor*, 24 km from *Rajshahi* Metropolitan City, are also agricultural based villages. However, in terms of basic facilities in Bangladesh they can be considered as remote villages. *Illisha*, which is 60 km forward from *Cox's Bazar* and 110 km onward from Chittagong Metropolitan City, is a coastal village where fishing is the main sources of income and like other coastal areas the village dwellers are in a very vulnerable situation because of cyclones and costal tides.

### *Sample size*

The total number of participants was determined by considering time, budget and labour constraints. Ten people from each study area were selected purposively from different ages, class, occupation, gender, educational and religious background using the judgement sampling method. It was planned that stratified random sampling would be used to obtain a representative sample of the target population so that any conclusions drawn from the data will apply to the whole population. However, in practice there is no current list of the population living in a particular village in Bangladesh. The situation in the urban slum areas are much worse as there are many people whom do not live in slums permanently, and every day some people are joining and some are leaving particular communities. So there were only two options; to make a list of the population from available sources before going to the study areas or to use the Rapid Rural Appraisal method. The latter method uses gatekeeper individuals in communities to help with a listing of the population. Both of these methods are time-consuming and costly. However, during the fieldwork it was found that each government primary school and also non-government primary schools (only those received grant from the government) conducts a child census every two years to know the exact number of children in the school areas who will need a school place. Thus the researcher used the list as a guide to the population in that particular area. Only adults over 15 were extracted from the list and were used to select 10 participants. In each study area one or two local residents were employed as an assistant, because they had good knowledge of the community and were accessible to most of the households.

### *Focus Group Discussions*

Focus groups emphasize the collective, rather than the individual, they foster free expression of ideas, encouraging the members of the group to speak up (Denzin, 1986; Frey & Fontana, 1993). Besides it is widely believed that focus groups allow social scientists to observe the most important sociological processes between members of groups. Unlike more traditional research techniques, such as face-to-face interviews, group interviews allow researchers to observe participants engaging in dialogue, sharing ideas, opinions, and experiences, and debating with each other. Furthermore, they enable researchers to gather large amounts of information about such interactions in limited periods of time. Compared with individual interviews, the advantage of focus groups is that they make it possible for researchers to observe the interactive process occurring among participants. Often these processes include spontaneous responses from the members of the group that ease their involvement and participation in the discussion (Madriz, 2000, p. 836). Focus groups open possibilities of listening to the plural voices of others “as constructors and agents of knowledge (Fine, 1994, p. 75) and as agents of social change”. Focus groups have some disadvantages too. Sometimes they take place outside of the settings where social interaction typically occurs. Therefore, the range of behavioural information that can be gathered through group interviews is narrower and is, with some exceptions, limited to verbal communication and observation of body language. In addition, given the necessary presence of a facilitator, it is difficult to discern how “authentic” the social interaction in a focus group really is. This last limitation, however, is also shared with participant observation, for it has been argued that the presence of the researcher may also alter the behaviour of those he or she observes. However, the interaction among group participants often decreases the amount of interaction between the facilitator and the individual members of the group. This decreases the influence the research has over the interview. Focus groups are similar to other research methods in that they enable researchers to have access to the opinions, viewpoints, attitudes and experiences of individuals.

Focus groups were conducted to see whether the data collected through this technique could support the previous data which was collected through face-to-face individual interviews. Data from the focus groups would also enrich the interview

data as the interviews were conducted by structured questionnaire with few open ended questions. Only one of the previous study areas- *Norshingdi* - was selected for the focus groups. One of the residents, who is a permanent dweller of the village, assisted the researcher to organise the groups. The researcher selected six focus groups for discussions. Among the six groups, three were male groups and the other three were female groups. In the men's groups, participants in the first were aged between 20 to 30 years; in the second they were aged between 40 to 55 years and in the last group participants were between 55 to 80 years of age. Similar age divisions were used for the women's groups. Each group consisted of between four to six people. Before each interview session the researcher explained to the focus group participants the objectives of the study and assured them that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for academic purposes.

It was found during the focus groups interviews that men are more willing to speak up whereas it was hard to hear the voices of women. The reason is probably that in rural areas of Bangladesh, women traditionally do not speak very much with unknown men. A female moderator who could have conducted the interviews with women groups might have produced better responses.

#### *Collection of data on information services*

There are a number of government and non-government organizations involved in information diffusion in rural and urban areas. For the collection of data on the individual information services offered to rural and urban slum dwellers the following organizations were examined:

- Rural Information Resource Centres of Community Development Library,
- Reading Centres and Union Libraries of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee,
- Rural Broadcast programs of Bangladesh Radio,
- Bangladesh Television,
- Department of Public Health, and
- Department of Agricultural Extension, Bangladesh.

All of these were considered for field visits and in-person visits to HQs. The researcher interviewed the librarians or officers-in-charge of some of the field units or programs; information was collected on the nature, types and amount of information services offered by those units or programs, and usage and types of user benefiting from those services. Assessment of the economic and social context of the field unit or program were also made. Official records such as annual reports, activity reports and evaluation reports of these organisations were examined. The researcher was fortunate that he received a small research grant from the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, well known as BRAC. This grant enabled him to conduct interviews in one of the rural areas and to visit many rural areas for collecting data on rural information services.

This study uses multiple methods because the nature of the field of enquiry is such that a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods will provide triangulation of results. In addition there is a possible problem when professionals in librarianship do research in information needs in that they may be biased towards traditional library services. A combination of data collection methods mitigates against such bias (Newhouse, 1989).



## **Chapter IV: Information and Communication Services in Rural and Urban Slum Areas of Bangladesh**

This chapter will discuss the types of information services provided in rural and urban slum areas of Bangladesh and review their effectiveness. Information relating to rural production and livelihood systems including agriculture, fishing home gardening and poultry and cattle raising are disseminated through both print media and electronic media as well as extension services in Bangladesh (Rashid & Mallick, 2003). He identifies fifteen to twenty sources of knowledge and information in the areas of agriculture, fish culture, home gardening and health and sanitation in rural Bangladesh. Of them, a few sources are involved disseminating knowledge for all the areas, including radio, TV, NGOs, posters and newspapers. Some others are specialized in one or two areas such as the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), family planning and health workers, the Public Health and Engineering Department, village doctors, veterinary doctors, and private sector organisations such as fertilizer dealers, pesticide and fertilizer companies. During the earlier fieldwork it was confirmed that such information services are not always found in urban slum areas. Only a few sources such as NGOs and family planning and health workers are involved in information dissemination and diffusion in the urban slums. However, the number of television ownerships is high in the slums. For the purpose of this study only radio and TV programs dedicated to rural and poor urban dwellers; agriculture extension services; print media services; family planning and health services will be discussed. Library services in rural areas of Bangladesh will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **Mass Media in Bangladesh**

Syed A. Rahim (1976, p. 7) cites Robert T. Oliver in observing,

*“the traditional role of the speaker, or the ‘source’ of communication, in ancient Indian cultures (Hindu and Buddhist) is not one of advocacy. Rather the speaker represents an authority figure who delivers the ‘correct’ and ‘proper’ messages. That message usually represents traditional and*

*communal wisdom. The audience, or the 'receiver' of communication, has a subordinate role in relation to the speaker. The audience is not passive, but its primary role is to listen and to learn from the speaker. The mode of communication is usually ceremonial and ritualistic. Consequently, there are formal prescriptions for the proper way of speaking or listening. Direct face-to-face communication is valued as the most reliable and authentic form of communication. The purpose of communication is to promote social harmony rather than individual well being; to reinforce stability and order rather than to bring change and growth".*

### ***Newspapers***

There has been a significant increase in the number of newspapers, periodicals, television and radio channels in Bangladesh during the last decade. This expansion began as soon as a democratic environment came into being at the end of 1990 when General Ershad's military rule collapsed due to extensive public protests against him.

The increase in the number of newspapers and magazines has occurred in the capital, Dhaka, as well as in the remote towns. One measure of this increase is changes in the government "media list". Publications which find a place in this list are considered fit to include advertisements from the government's various departments and offices. In 1990 there were only 67 newspapers on this list. Of these, 23 were being published from Dhaka and 44 from other towns. At present (Feb, 2002) there are now 282 daily newspapers on this list, an increase of 215 in 10 years. Of these listed daily newspapers, 107 are being published in Dhaka and 185 in other towns and cities. There is probably not a district headquarters town in Bangladesh that cannot boast of its own newspaper. Besides, almost all major newspapers that are published from Dhaka are made available on the same day in most of the cities as well as in villages where there is good communication infrastructure. Weekly newspapers and magazines have increased by 35 in Dhaka to a total of 116. The number of weeklies, however, has gone down by six overall. This is perhaps a result of some weeklies outside Dhaka being transformed into dailies.

There has also been an increase in the number of periodicals published at lower intervals than weekly (Samad, 2002).

Ataus Samad states that “the total number of newspaper copies sold in a day in Bangladesh will not exceed one million. Thus not even one person in a hundred buys a newspaper”. However, in an informal interview with the current researcher Dr. Shaikh Abdus Salam, the then Director of Press Institute of Bangladesh and Professor of Journalism at the University of Dhaka, expressed his belief that the total number of circulation is around 1.2/1.3 million, as one newspaper is read by a number of readers. So the total number of newspaper readers would be around 5 to 6% of the total population (which is 140 million). He also stated that “circulation is higher in big cities and towns but lower in the rural areas. According to statistics more than 50 percent of the total circulation is distributed in 7/8 cities and the remaining are distributed in all over the country”. Dr. Salam believes that, although the number of newspaper readers is small, the media are playing a positive role in awareness building among the people. The Press Institute of Bangladesh runs courses for awareness building on women’s and children’s issues and gender equality for senior media managers and editors. As a result a good number of newspapers have regularly covered these issues.

### ***Radio and TV***

Electronic media - radio and television - have revolutionized human civilization by bringing the people of the world closer via a far-reaching and penetrating communication system. In Bangladesh the rate of literacy is very low and as a consequence most people cannot derive a direct benefit from the print media. As a result, radio and television are the main communication mediums for the largest number of people living in the remotest part of the country.

Over the past two and a half decades Radio Bangladesh, as formerly it was known, evolved into today's Bangladesh Betar. The short wave service is headquartered at Dhaka serving daily programs in Bangli, the local language, as well as programming directed to neighbouring countries in Hindi, Urdu, Nepalese, Arabic, plus twice daily English broadcasts. The Bangladesh Betar broadcasts its programs through its

eleven stations situated in Dhaka (three stations), Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Khulna, Rangpur, Rangamati, Comilla and Thakurgaon and four relay stations in Bogra, Jessore, Barisal and Cox's Bazar. (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999). Presently, Radio Bangladesh broadcasts daily a total of 92 hours of programs.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' 1998 report, a total of 17.68% of household have a radio or transistor, 234,000 sets of licensed radios in all. However, it is assumed that about one million radio sets exist in the country when unlicensed sets are included. Radio is a powerful media in Bangladesh. It can reach people who live in areas with no phones and electricity. Radio reaches people who cannot read or write. It can be a main venue to disseminate information, discuss issues and define Bangladeshi culture (Rahman, 2002). Bangladesh Beter produces its programs at Dhaka and other stations in the country through a decentralised process. The programs concentrate mainly on music, magazine programs, motivational and development programs, news and information, education, religious programs, drama, children's and women's programming (Salam, 1997). Radio stations are mostly commercial and considerable time is taken up with advertisements.

Communication is an element for development and, in a country where so many rural people remain illiterate, there can be no more cost-effective means of communication than broadcasting the spoken word through radio. Radio can catch the imagination of listeners of all ages. But for radio to be effective the programs must be compiled and presented with creativity and skill to attract, inform and motivate rural people. One source of such programming has been the Farm Broadcast Unit of Bangladesh Beter, which has selected, trained and equipped its staff to fulfil these tasks and achieve these aims.

The history of farm broadcasting in Bangladesh goes back 60 years to 1939, when the first farm program was transmitted by the Dhaka Centre via the then All India Radio. The first program Voice of the radio [*Gramer Katha*] started the tradition, continued by its successors, of offering rural listeners what was often their first knowledge of new technologies for farming, fisheries and forestry. Today the subject matter of farm programming includes credit, integrated pest management, crop storage, agro-processing, youth in agriculture, women's interests and the latest agro-

technology. In an interview with the current researcher, Shahana Parveen, Assistant Director of Farm Broadcast Program, claims that their programs for women, and magazine programs are the most successful programs on agriculture. Dr. Shaikh Abdus Salam agrees that the media, especially radio, has been influencing development in the rural areas in Bangladesh. Though the coordinate efforts of various government departments and international and regional NGO's, radio has led to the broadcast to the population of rural areas and informal urban settlements of many programs not only on agriculture and fisheries but also on nutrition, family planning and health issues. Dr. Salam's argument is that those who have exposure to the media, even those not primarily farmers, are getting benefits from home gardening and small projects like fisheries.

Farm broadcasting staffs have been recruited from Bangladesh Beter, the Agricultural Information Service and the Department of Agricultural Extension. Together, they provide the technical knowledge and broadcasting skills required for effective communication through farm radio programs. Daily programs are broadcast from seven Regional Stations at Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sylhet and Borisal. In addition a daily framing program is broadcast nationally from Dhaka. In total Bangladesh Beter broadcast every day 290 minutes of farming programs. In her interview Ms Shahana Parveen said that the Farm Broadcast Programs received many letters from farm families throughout the year especially in situations when farmers are in difficulties because of sudden flood, crop diseases or pests. She suggested the farmers would appreciate free discussions with agricultural experts and entertainment within the program. She also felt that successful farmers, together with block supervisors of the Department of Agricultural Extension who disseminate new information and technology to farmers, and women should participate in the programs.

Every month the Population, Health and Nutrition *Sell* (meaning unit) of Radio Bangladesh broadcasts 375 minutes of programs all over Bangladesh. The *sell* air programs targeting specific age and gender groups such as pregnant women, children, youth, and rural farmers and labourers. The *sell* emphasise population control, producing programs explaining various birth control methods, emphasising the importance of birth control and aiming to motivate a range of target groups.

Another important program area of the *sell* is children's health. In an interview with the researcher Salauddin Ahmed, Assistant Director, Population, Health and Nutrition *Sell*, said that currently 40 percent of the child population are facing oppression, many of them working as child labourers in restaurants, gourmets industries, as domestic servants and in various other trades. His unit broadcasts informative programs on diarrhoea, different types of hepatitis and protection of eyes. They target employers, motivating and mobilising them to look after their child labourers' health.

The *sell* also broadcast programs on safe motherhood, especially paying attention to making programs for the better health of woman during pregnancy emphasising their nursing, food intakes, hygiene, need for regular check-ups and need to take care of themselves. For young adults the *sell* make programs in the format of drama, discussions, talks, interviews and discussions. They use the medium of song to explore what they think about population control, how they can make a good and happy family life, and the benefits of having a small family to enhance their personal, social and family life. Rural farmers are another main target group of the *sell*. Because many rural people do not have access to good health services and formally educated doctors in Bangladesh, the *sell* ask for letters from the rural populace on their problems and get thousand of letters every day. The *sell* provide answers to each of the letters by specialist doctors and can provide prescriptions and a reference of the nearest consultant doctor if needed. The *sell* also campaign and broadcast programs on basic child disease prevention, targeting diseases such as diphtheria, hepatitis, influenza, measles, polio, tetanus and whooping cough. These programs are designed to aid parents in using simple techniques to reduce the chance of their children contracting these diseases.

Salauddin Ahmed, Assistant Director, Population, Health and Nutrition *Sell* told the present author that they evaluate these services through interviews and listeners letters and he expressed the view that people actively listen to the programs, receive information and often send a reply. In addition, staff of this unit undertake field visits in various areas and ask listeners what programs they like and whether they have any suggestions. They plan the programs according to listeners responses. A UNICEF report in 1982-83 also mentioned that Radio Bangladesh is playing a great

role in the development of public health by broadcasting various programs on health issues. Mr Ahmed believes that as radio is portable and cheap it is the only medium which people in general in Bangladesh can use for getting answers to their health problems.

In the interview Mr. Ahmed identified a few problems they are facing currently. They do not have the latest equipment for broadcasting, such as digital broadcasting machines, nor enough talented professional broadcasters. He believes radio is considered as an entertainment media by the residents in rural areas and there is poor reception in various parts of the country. He is also a great believer in the power of radio and believes that radio can change conditions in Bangladesh if the free flow of information can be assured.

### *Television*

Bangladesh Television (BTV) is the only state owned TV organisation. Since its inception in late 1964, BTV has had as its basic objective the enhancement of the quality of national culture through the dissemination of information, extension of education, motivation for development activities and the provision of entertainment programs exploring world trends and domestic needs. Programmes are terrestrially transmitted throughout the country by a network of 15 local centres / sub-centres with two relay centres. Transmission is received by approximately 2 million TV sets. At present 93 percent of the geographical area of Bangladesh is now under the BTV transmission. It is reported that there are more than 600,000 TV sets in the country with a government license (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999).

Programmes originate from Dhaka and are transmitted through regional relay stations. BTV's second fully-fledged TV station, Chittagong, originates one-hour daily programs, of which 30 minutes is regional programming and the rest is transmitted through the National Network. The average transmission time is around 12 hours per day, 80% of the content being produced locally and the rest imported. BTV transmits an additional 4½ hours of programs on Fridays and Saturdays in the morning. Funding mainly comes from the government with revenue from advertising and the licence fee.

Television has also reached villages where, if one household has a television set, members from several other households will come and watch. Programmes and commercials dealing with social issues are produced by the government or donor agencies. Recently BTV has been airing government-sourced advertisements on factors like the consequences of early marriages; benefits of education; the illegality and injustice of dowry and verbal divorces.

According to a media survey, television reaches about 32% of the population, radio about 39% and print media about 11% (Joshi, 1999). But Dr. Shaikh Abdus Salam argued that only 20 percent of villages enjoy the facility of power supply and that people living other parts of the country where there is no electricity do not have the opportunity to see TV programs.

### **Telecommunication**

In the context of Bangladesh, new communication technologies would include telephone, fax, satellite television, computers and the Internet. Bangladesh is a riverine country and the country's long route transmission systems are mainly composed of microwave, UHF and VHF radio links. The use of optical fibre is presently limited within some city areas for interconnecting local exchanges and Remote Switching Units (RSU) in the Multi Exchange Network. All these transmission systems are operated by Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB). All *Thana* (Sub-district) headquarters (the smallest administrative units) are connected with their respective districts through UHF links. Most of such UHF links are now a digital radio system. Some of the district headquarters are connected through digital UHF links. The major backbone transmission links in Bangladesh are presently using a star formation network structure.

### ***Telephone***

There is a good network of telephone communications in the country together facilities for using mobile telephones. The government authority BTTB mainly provides the landline telephone. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics estimate that

there are 374,295 telephone lines existing in the country (BBS 1998). According to Nazmul Ahsan Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, on 11th July 2000 there were about 0.6 million landlines, 0.18 million mobile phones and 1,432 card phones in the country. Total telephone density now stood at about 0.5 telephones per 100 people (05:1000) while the short term target for the year 2000 was 1:100, medium term target for the year 2010 was 4:100 and for the year 2025 it had been set at 10:100.

The responsibility of providing rural telecommunications is entrusted to two private operators, the Bangladesh Rural Telecommunication Authority (BRTA) & Sheba Telecom. Unfortunately, the success of these two operators has been limited and even after about seven to nine years of operation, the coverage has been very inadequate and quality has been poor. According to Chowdhury (2000), there were 57,077 BTTB telephone and 128, 664 private telephone in the rural areas. According to Camp and Anderson (2000), of the total telephone count in Bangladesh, approximately twenty percent serve the rural areas; areas which house 74 percent of the total population.

### *Mobile telephones*

There are a few mobile telephone service providers in the country. Of them *Grameen* Phone, AKtel, Citycell and Sheba Telecom are the most important. According to the *Grameen* Phone Company's recent press release, there are 500,000 users of *Grameen* mobile phones in the country (Monju, 2002). Mobile phone users in Bangladesh jumped 118% to well above quarter a million in 2001. The mobile market is now one-third size of the fixed telephone network of Bangladesh Telegraph & Telephone Board (BTTB). CDMA grew 112% and GSM grew 155% in the year 2000. A continuously widening "access divide" in the mobile market has, however, been diminishing this success story. Mobile subscribers capable of calling to BTTB's landline network grew only fifteen% while the subscribers without such access recorded 359% growth (Chowdhury, 2000).

Altogether 160,000 customers of *Grameen* Phone Company have been isolated from the 616,000 fixed telephone users of the BTTB. The remaining 19,000 "mobile only" users of Pacific Bangla Telecom Ltd (PBTL), Telecom Malaysia International Bangladesh (TMIB) and Sheba Telecom can only receive calls from BTTB's network. Therefore, 64% of the country's total mobile users are barred from calling the mainstream telecom network. The mobile operators' investment plan to expand the BTTB's infrastructure is yet to be approved by the government. The operators' submission for reducing the region's highest tariff (65%) on importing handsets is long pending with the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

Ignoring such adversities, *Grameen* Phone has been consistently maintaining its dominance with 500,000 customers. The 220% growth achieved by the year-end has outstripped *Grameen* Phone's own prediction of 125% growth in 2000. The operator prefers remaining conservative by sticking to 125% growth projection in this year as well. The standard *Grameen* Phone product connects to the local fixed network maintained by BTTB as well as to all *Grameen* Phone mobiles (Camp & Anderson, 1999).

*Grameen* Bank (Rural bank) has launched a scheme that enables borrowers to buy cellular phones in rural areas in order to generate income. Under this *Grameen* Phone system, the organisation leases one handset in one village to a qualified *Grameen* Bank member in that village at a fixed charge with fixed rates for incoming and outgoing calls. In houses where electricity has not yet reached, *Grameen* Phone installs a solar panel for recharging the batteries. The member is of course, taught how to use the handset and so becomes a service provider allowing the people of the village to make and receive calls.

The introduction of the cellular telephone service will have a positive impact on the lives of all the villagers especially of women. Women who are often the most disadvantaged in rural communities in Bangladesh have been given mobile telephones to service the local village population (Bayes et al., 1999). Armed with a GSM mobile phone and a list of useful numbers *Grameen* telephone-ladies can make a comfortable living from charging users a small fee for making and receiving phone calls (Chapman & Slaymaker, 2002). *Grameen* Telecom has plans to create a

network of 50,000 phones covering all 68000 villages of Bangladesh. Each Village Operator is expected to earn TK 50 per day. The phone calls are charged at TK 4 per minute during peak hours (8:00 am to 8:00 p.m.) and at TK 3 per minute from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. The *Grameen* Telecom buys a certain amount of time on air from *Grameen* Phone in bulk and distributes it among the village pay-phone operators. The village pay-phone operators have to pay Grameen Telecom TK 3.50 (\$.079) per minute (or TK 2.50 per minute during off peak hours) for each call and get to keep TK 0.50 as commission. The phones are priced at about TK 16,000 (\$360 approx.) and are acquired on a loan from *Grameen* Telecom just as loans are offered for buying cattle or poultry.

### **Internet**

Internet service in the country began in June 1996 with the establishment of an ISP named Information Services Network Ltd (ISN). Now, there are many organisations including Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTTB), NGOs and other private entrepreneurs involved in this service-related business. According to Chowdhury (2000) there were 70 ISP's operation in the country; of them 50 were involved in services to business. The focus of these services was Dhaka with little service outside the capital city. BTTB extended Internet support to the users of 64 districts and all the digitalized *Thana*. A few organisations also provide support to users outside Dhaka in Chittagong, Khulna and in Barisal (Monju, 2002).

After the introduction of the Internet, the use of email increased exponentially owing to point to point direct transmission. Prior to this dial-up links were used to communicate to an overseas e-mail server using international phone calls. The uploading & downloading of mails took place using UUCPs (Unix-to-Unix copy). Use of chat and introduction of usenet news were also a significant addition to the local users of the net. Now with on-line services, all other functions and services of the Internet are available to the end users of the Internet in Bangladesh (Willem van Nus, 1999).

BTTB is now offering its Internet service in all 64 districts from its remote access server situated at six major cities – Dhaka, Chitagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Bogra &

Sylhet. The users outside these six areas can enjoy an access facility to the Dhaka Server at the expense of one local telephone call. BTTB's dial up Internet services have a special feature of a roaming facility for the subscriber. According to a report published on the BTTB web page their total bandwidth will soon be 10 Mbps (6Mbps down + 4 Mbps Up) (Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board, 2003).

BTTB has also undertaken a project to install a remote access server in all 64 districts. A digital data network is expected to be installed covering all the district towns. BTTB also encourages private ISPs to serve a dial-up Internet service providing leased line backbone connectivity at a reasonable price. Already some ISP's are using BTTB's backbone (Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board, 2003).

### ***Village Computer and Internet Programme of Grameen Communication***

As part of the research plan, the researcher himself visited one Village Computer and Internet Facility Centre of *Grameen Communication* to identify the information and communication services offered by the Centre and also to evaluate their performance. The researcher interviewed informally both the program officer and assistant program officer to gather current information on services. The assistant director of *Grameen Communication*, who looks after the Village Computer and Internet Program, was also interviewed informally at the head office in Dhaka.

*Grameen Communication*, a sister organization of the *Grameen Trust*, has established two centres in *Madhupur Thana* of *Tangail* district and *SarishaBari Thana* of *Jamalpur* district under their Village Computer and Internet Program. The aim is to introduce and provide computer and Internet facilities to the general rural people of Bangladesh. Another centre in Mirzapur, Tangail is planned. These centres are a little different and more advanced compared with other rural information centres, as their objectives are to introduce and provide computer and Internet facilities to the grassroots level in Bangladesh.

### *Their Aims*

- Familiarize the village people, particularly the young generation, with the use of computer and the Internet.
- Provide them computer training at a minimal price, and thus facilitate building up a computer literate generation in the country.
- Provide free e-mail services to teachers and students for educational purposes and to doctors and journalists for emergency purposes.
- Provide e-mail facilities for families having relatives staying abroad and local.
- Facilitate easier access to relevant market information e.g. prevalent market prices of specific products in different locations. This would help the village people to have better bargaining capacity in selling their product.
- Provide computer composition and printing facilities at a low cost in rural areas.
- Enable students' contact with educational/research institutions and libraries abroad.
- Organize IT workshops, seminars and exhibitions in rural areas.
- Create information technology-related job opportunities.

### *Services*

There is a large and growing Bangladeshi expatriate population in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America. It was difficult for village residents to contact them by telephone and send regular mail to their relatives and friends who are working and staying abroad, because of the high costs and long time delays associated with international correspondence. The centres help village residents in sending and receiving email enabling them to keep in contact with family members, friends, and relatives and, also local and international organizations at instant and low cost. However, the question is: does the sender know how to write an email in English? Bayes (1999) states that what the senders in fact do is use the English alphabet to write Bengali.

The village residents are accessing low cost training programs through the centre, which was not available before the establishment of the centre. The centres conduct basic courses on computer operating systems, MS Word, MS Excel and higher courses on Visual Basic, Web Designing, Graphics and hardware trouble shooting. The courses consist of forty lectures, spanning two months, and attendees are charged Tk. 2,550 (AU& 90) for the course.

Villagers can write letters, resumes, college applications, and create documents like newsletters, advertisements and announcements with help of centre operator. As there is not a single computer in any school or college at *Madhupur*, the centre provides the computer lab facility for these schools and colleges. Students can begin to study computing as a subject for their SSC (Secondary School Certificate) and HSC (Higher School Certificate) examination by using the centre as a computer lab and by receiving technical assistance from centre staff. Interactive educational programs and games software for children are provided. The operator has been trained to facilitate such educational programs.

The centre not only acts as a provider of Internet access and training, but also as an information provider. It makes available on the web a database on agricultural products, health, education and government and non-government organizations in *Madhupur*. It also provides assistance in using the Internet to advertise and sell products produced by village artisans.

### **Agricultural Extension Services**

The origin of the agricultural development and extension services on the sub-continent can be traced back to 1870. A separate Department of Agriculture was established in 1906 with an attached farm over 1000 acres of land in Monipur, Dhaka (presently known as Farmgate). But the real extension activities truly began in 1914 with the establishment of 20 acre demonstration farms in each district. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Agricultural Extension Programs continued as they had been conducted over past two decades by the government of Pakistan. The present nomenclature of the DAE came into existence in 1982 with the merging of following departments: a) Directorate of Agriculture (Extension and

Management), b) Directorate of Agriculture (Jute production), c) Directorate of Plant Protection, d) Horticulture Development Board, e) Central Extension Resources Development Institute, f) Tobacco Development Board (Ministry of Agriculture, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2003).

DAE is Bangladesh's largest organization with a nationwide network devoted entirely to agricultural advisory services. It offers extension services for livestock, forestry, fisheries, and environmental issues, in addition to the home economics and youth development-oriented activities developed by other government departments. Though no integrated sustainable agriculture program has yet been undertaken, some sustainability issues, such as soil conservation, integrated pest management, and afforestation, are subsumed within the current programs of most extension work.

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) employs almost 24,000 people of which 12,640 are block supervisor (BS), or village extension workers (VEW), as they are generally called in the Training and Visit systems of the department (Halim, 1991). As stipulated by DAE guidelines, each block supervisor is responsible for providing agricultural extension services to approximately 1,500 families (DAE, 1993). The activities of the block supervisor are supervised at the *Thana* (sub-district) level by the *Thana* Agricultural Officer, Agricultural Extension Officers, and Subject Matter Officers.

Agricultural extension in Bangladesh has followed an evolutionary process of experimentation with components of several recognised extension approaches. Until recently the Training and Visit (T&V) Approach, which was established during the late seventies, formed the backbone of the Department of Agricultural Extension's extension practices. DAE's Revised Extension Approach (REA) has retained many of the primary elements of the T&V Approach, in combination with relevant aspects of their recognised extension approaches, and features developed locally with Bangladesh extension partners (Agricultural Extension Manual, 1999). The following are the unique characteristics of the new extension approach:

*“decentralization of decision making within the extension department (DAE); bottom-up identification of extension needs as a basis for planning*

*and budgeting; farmer responsive extension and farmer participation in problem solving; discussion with groups of farmers to assess common needs; extension covering all categories of farmers (small, medium and large, landless and marginal, women and young); providing technical information for all field crops, vegetables and fruit production, (whereas it was limited to grain production in the past); exchange visits and information sharing with other agencies (NGOS, other extension departments, banks and other rural credit institutions) (Agricultural Extension Manual, 1999)”.*

The changed approach to extension has resulted in lower-cost extension, since farmers are sharing demonstration costs for new and improved technologies; the development of homestead farming which is helping in poverty alleviation and encouraging farmers to grow vegetables; frequent interaction with researchers resulting in local needs-based research program development; transformation of tested information by NGOs and other agencies gathered from common meetings, *Thana* fairs and media campaigns (Weijenberg, 2002).

Many local and international NGOs are also expanding their agricultural services, both to specific localities and nationally. Together, these organizations can be seen as partners in an emerging national agricultural extension system. Within this new system and in light of rising expectations in the farming community and changing agricultural needs, DAE is modifying its role and the way it does business in organizing and offering extension services (The World Bank Group, 2002).

### **Health Services**

The organizational structure of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare follows the general administrative rules of the country. At the national level, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH & FW) is responsible for policy, planning and decision making at macro level. Under MoH & FW, there are two major implementation wings. The Directorate General of Health services is responsible for the implementation of all health programs and providing technical guidance to the Ministry. The Directorate of Family Planning is responsible for implementing family planning programs and providing family planning-related technical support

to the Ministry. Bangladesh has a comprehensive network of health infrastructures up to the union level. The three tiered Health Service Delivery System in the country (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary) follow the decentralized administrative system (BBIN Network for Vector Borne Diseases, 2003).

Table 1: *Health infrastructure in Bangladesh at glance*

<i>Number of medical schools</i>	25
Students graduating every year	1200
Number of specialist physicians	1,500
Number of graduate medical practitioners	25,000
Number of nurses	20,000
Number of allied health professionals	28,000
Number of family welfare workers	30,000
Number of trained birth attendants	25,000
Doctor-population ratio	1 : 5,282
Nurse-population ratio	1: 7,127

### **Human rights**

The Law and Mediation Centre or *Ain O Salish Kendra* (ASK) is a legal aid organisation which provides information services on human rights, democracy and gender rights. In an interview with the present researcher Sultana Kamal, Executive Director of the Centre expressed her belief that both in rural and urban areas there is tremendous need for females to know about their legal entitlements. There is a pressure on the media in Bangladesh to improve awareness and empower women. The problem is that information-providing agencies often provide technical information which sometime could be misleading. Public relations advertisements, which aim to empower and aware women, have often been designed from the perspective of those who made them rather than those in the intended audience. They do not think whether the message has any positive effect on a woman's life or whether the message could touch their mind or have any relation with their needs. ASK's objection to this type of message is that it represents a woman in a

conventional role and does not do anything to empower women. ASK question the motivation of this type of message and whether such messages have any validity in the process of providing women with information.

ASK also works in the urban slum areas assisting when the inhabitants of the slum are facing eviction. Urban slum dwellers are often presented in the media and to the society as causes of pollution of the city environment, criminals and drug dealers. Very few people talk about their rights and there is little done to build them up as a community. Before eviction from a slum the inhabitants do not get any notice nor is information supplied by the public media. ASK believe that the media is very class-based and gender biased.

The Centre has a program called “General social justice” for rural dwellers which starts at the Union level. The main message is that if the population want social justice then this must be based on gender justice. The Centre involves Union council chairmen and members including the mandatory female members of councils in a dialogue and asks them where they are facing difficulties in implementing rights, how they can achieve more rights, how to implement rights and which are the areas where they can work as a protector of rights as social leaders. ASK is a very small organisation which does not have a network of services all over Bangladesh. They try to develop a model in their operational areas which they can later recommend as a way forward for similar services and as a pattern of development which can be incorporated into national plans.

At present the Centre is working in five district bar councils, which are the formal body for lawyers. The Centre formed a Human Rights Advocacy Council in collaboration with the bar councils to provide legal aid for the poor people. The Centre also works with partner organisations like Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), which is a non-governmental organisation and has an extensive network in all over Bangladesh. Together they have formed an Outreach Legal Aid Program where the Centre provides legal aid training to BRAC lawyers on how to introduce gender issues or human rights issues into cases and how to work with a pro-poor attitude.

Ms Kamal claimed that there has been a positive change in the last decade in attitudes to rights which is definitely due to intensive government and non-government initiatives. In rural society, people are better informed about the activities of the government as well as non-government agencies and this has created a huge flow of information for empowerment. For example, in the past in any mediation, rural women were condemned as responsible for the incident but now this attitude has been changed. It is recognised that a victim should have the opportunity to put his/her argument in the mediation process. Furthermore, rural women are participating as members of the mediation team. She also claimed that where a “Gender Justice Program” exists, the Centre has formed a counterforce within the rural community and in many areas their partners have been successful in protecting human rights and dealing with family violence.

Ms Kamal identified the traditional power structure as a problem that it is difficult to counter in Bangladeshi rural society, especially in dealing with public representatives like the Chairmen of the Union Councils (the lowest elected body). In the larger political scenario not a single political party supports ASK and governments consider the organisation as a possible spoiler of their image. ASK frequently raises embarrassing questions about the government policies and files cases against the government. National Security agencies and the Defence Intelligence Agency are opposed to the Centre and the armed forces are not happy with the Centre’s position as a vocal opponent of any army intervention in civil administration.

Ms Kamal feels that there are still many things which ASK can do to improve conditions for Bangladeshi citizens especially women. She identified long-term homes for those women who need shelter and protection, support for unmarried mothers and economic empowerment of women as the basis of their future working agenda. At the moment only one percent of women can control their own income. For this reason, the legal empowerment of the women has become important in Bangladesh.

She agreed that Bangladesh has made a good progress in girl’s education due to government and non-government initiatives. The other area where NGOs have done

a very good job is in women rights. Especially since 1990, the female population are participating in the voting process and applying their voting rights more frequently due to a mass campaign for women to take part in elections. She quoted Mahmud-ul Haq, a famous Pakistani economist and economic consultant of UNDP, who believes that Bangladesh is in much better position than the rest South Asia in regard to women's progress, though the country is far behind the region on many other issues (South Asian Human Development Report, 1999).

## Chapter V: Rural library services in Bangladesh<sup>3</sup>

According to the National Book Centre and other sources Bangladesh has 4000 libraries in rural areas. However the number is insufficient compared with 90,000 villages. Moreover, most of them are very tiny and have very small collections. From the author's own experience it is clear that rural areas have never been considered as a component of library planning and services, and are still being neglected and overlooked in government policy and decision-making. However, some non-governmental organizations have been organizing information resource centres at the community level. The Community Development Library has 27 regional, district and local Rural Information Resource Centres (RIRCs) throughout the country (Rashid, 2000b, p. 6). The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) has 7,030 Reading Centres with BRAC schools as the centre and, since 1995, 446 Union level libraries or "*Gonokendra Pathager*" have been established by BRAC. It should be noted that the Reading Centres do not offer traditional library and information services and are set up to develop the reading habit among adolescent girls and women. They also provide training to develop entrepreneurial skills. These centres encourage indoor games and cultural activities for women, and voluntary savings scheme for members (Non-Formal Primary Education Annual Report, 1999). With the support of UNESCO, three library and information centres have been organised and maintained jointly by Bangladesh National Scientific and Technical Documentation Centre (BANSDOC) and the Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) in three villages of Dhamrai Thana (sub-district), 40 km from the capital city (Khan, Chowdhury & Nazimuddin, 1999, p. 3).

Dhaka Ahasania Mission (DAM) started organizing Rural Libraries or *Gonokendra* as post-literacy centres in 1992. With the passage of time and gradual adding of multi-sectoral services, these libraries have evolved as an approach to life-long learning and community development and their role gradually widened to cater for

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<sup>3</sup> This chapter will discuss rural library services in Bangladesh. There are no specific library services in the slum areas of large cities although there is a good network of public library services available for all urban residents. However a discussion of these would not contribute the research questions asked in this thesis.

the diverse learning needs of the community including providing facilities for economic and socio-cultural activities. At present the organization is running 823 *Gonokendra* in five administrative districts of the country. Though the name is similar to the BRAC's programs, their activities are somewhat similar to the Reading Centres of BRAC. *Grameen* Communication, a sister organization of *Grameen* Trust, has established two centres in Madhupur, Tangail and SarishaBari, Jamalpur under their Village Computer and Internet Programme (which has been discussed in detail in the earlier chapter). They are going to establish another centre in Mirzapur, Tangail. These centres are a little different and more advanced compared with the other rural information centres, as their objectives are to introduce and provide computer and Internet facilities to the general rural people of Bangladesh.

### **BRAC Union Libraries**

The most important providers of library services are undoubtedly BRAC and CDL. The work of these organisations provides a good basis for assessing library services to the disadvantaged. The services of these organisations will therefore now be discussed in some detail. In addition some consideration will be given to the work of DAM. During the data collection the present researcher visited thirty BRAC *Union* libraries and a few branches of Rural Information Resource Centre of CDL. The following discussion is based up on direct observation, official records, informal interviews with field officers, and information from informal interviews with the head office executives.

BRAC, formerly known as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, was established as a relief and rehabilitation organization in 1972 after the Liberation war of Bangladesh. Over the years BRAC has gradually evolved into a large and multifaceted development organization with the twin objectives of "Alleviation of Poverty and Empowerment of the Poor" (BRAC Homepage, 2001). In an attempt to reduce mass illiteracy, and to contribute to the attainment of basic education, to strengthen the government's universal primary education program and to promote increased participation of girls in education, BRAC introduced its Non-formal Primary Education Program in 1985 for underserved children who were not able to

attend, or had dropped-out of the formal system (Begum & Akter, 1996). There are over 34,000 BRAC schools, with 1.1 million students currently attending. Consequently a large number of them have completed a three-year course from these schools. As it is important to continue their education and retain the literacy skills they learnt from the schools, BRAC started the reading centres in the early 90's. During the implementation of these centres, it was noticed that these centres could also extend their services to people of that area other than the NFPE graduates. From this point of view the *Gonokendra Pathager*, meaning public library, or BRAC *Union Library* was established later in 1995, as a component of BRAC's Continuing Education Programme. The main focus is to create a "learning society" in the rural areas of Bangladesh (Non-Formal Primary Education Annual Report, 1999). The libraries are essentially operating as Community Centres providing focal points within communities – places where people can come to read, borrow books, become involved in socio-cultural activities, or to take advantage of the textbook lending scheme for high-school students from poor households.

There are three types of *Union Library*: a) general, b) female and c) small. The categories reflect type of membership, number of membership and the amount of funding (Khan, 2000). General libraries are open for all and should have at least 400 members of which 50% should be woman. Female libraries are operated by women and should have at least 300 female members. Despite their name, men are also allowed to join as members and use the collection. Small libraries are usually set up in economically backward areas where it is hard to mobilize the amount of funding needed for a general library and where the number of the subscribers will be small.

### *Strategies for Sustainability*

A *Union Library* or *Gonokendra Pathager* is usually set-up at the union level, the lowest unit of the local government structure. The following procedure is followed: the community provides at least one room (500-600 square feet) and reconstructs the room if necessary at their own cost. The community forms a local committee to organize the library activities such as reconstruction of library room and mobilizing subscribers. Initially 200-300 subscribers are mobilized with a minimum

subscription of Tk. 30,000 before the library is opened. The number of subscribers should be increased to 500-600 with a subscription of Tk.50, 000 within a period of two years. This condition can be relaxed in case of small libraries, and libraries for women only. These libraries can be opened with 150-200 subscribers and with a minimum subscription of Tk. 25,000. Small libraries are usually set up in economically backward areas. The community agrees to transform the library into a self-managed autonomous trust, be registered with the relevant government department within the stipulated period and develop an “endowment fund” through community contributions to sustain the library financially.

BRAC provides 1000 books and the necessary furniture (two-third of the total cost) for the library once these conditions are met. In addition, BRAC donates an equal amount to the funds mobilized by the local community to match the *Pathager's* existing fund, following its registration as a Trust. The objective of the matching fund is to make the *Pathager* self-financing in terms of its recurring expenses. The fund is kept in a bank account and recurring expenses are financed from the interest earned. BRAC also pays the salary of the librarian and supplies one daily newspaper until the Trust has formed and the library receives interest from the invested fund.

### ***I.II. Operational Fund***

BRAC *Pathagers* are mainly funded by a joint monetary contribution of both BRAC and the concerned community. Initially, when a community is willing to raise a fund, BRAC contributes an equal amount of money to create a reserve fund for the *Pathager* (Khan & Akter, 1999). According to the existing procedure, the contribution of the community cannot be less than Tk. 25,000 for small *Pathager*, Tk. 35,000 for Female *Pathager* and 50,000 for general *Pathager*. BRAC's contribution will not be more than Tk. 50,000, and is given after formation and registration of the Trustee Board which is formed within two years of the establishment of the *Pathager*. The total amount is deposited in a recognised financial institution in the name of the Trustee Board on a fixed term basis. The monthly interest of the reserve fund is used to meet recurring expenditure of the *Pathagers* such as Librarians' monthly salary, electricity bills and newspapers.

### ***I.III. Management***

The daily routine activities of a *Pathager* are performed by a locally recruited part-time librarian and managed by a committee formed among the community to conduct the routine affairs of the *Pathager*. At the initial stage, a convenor committee, consisting of 11-13 members, is formed which exists until the Trustee Board is formed. The respective team in-charge of the concerned BRAC Education Program is included on both the committees as BRAC representative. The other members of the committee are selected from within the community.

A part-time librarian (locally recruited), preferably a woman, is responsible for the *Pathager's* operation. BRAC prefer women librarians because they mainly focus on women and also people living below poverty line (mostly landless). Besides, in the rural area, women are more disadvantaged than men and need support for empowerment. The person receives a short training on operational aspects of the library. The library is kept open four to six hours a day, six days a week depending on the funding position. The library committee decides on the library hours and the weekly holiday. Members of the library and students are eligible to borrow one book at a time for a week.

### ***I.IV. Observations***

In July 2001, BRAC was operating 508 Union Libraries. The number was only 470 when the researcher started the survey in February 2001, showing the rapid expansion of these facilities. The uniqueness of these libraries is that these are mainly funded and managed by BRAC with the concerned local committees. This could be used as a model for establishing sustainable rural libraries in Bangladesh as well as in other developing countries. Operating these libraries through a local Trustee Committee is another good initiative that could be followed by others.

Both the observations of the present researcher and earlier research (Khan, 2000) have found that BRAC *Union* libraries have had a tremendous impact on the respective user community. Before introducing these libraries many of their users

had no idea of what a library is. Now these libraries are meeting the minimum informational needs of the local community and are playing a role in cultural advancement of the local people. Newspapers are the most used reading materials in these libraries providing current information on various issues about the country and the world.

In a survey among 30 *Union* libraries by the present researcher it was found that on average, the *Pathagers* had 462 members and 1146 books, and daily attendance was 67. It was found that on average 348 books were borrowed per month. The number of male members and their daily attendance in the general and small type libraries was higher compared to female, but their membership and attendance was found poor in women libraries. Though female members were found to be 36% of the total user and their attendance in the libraries was 35% of users, the percentage of book issues by the female users was 48%. However, it was also found that most of the users were students as these libraries are mostly operating in school premises, and the number of general readers was also poor (20%) in these libraries. The percentage of women user was found very low in the general and small type libraries because they have limited access in these libraries. This is probably due to socio-cultural factors and patriarchal structure of the society that resists female attendance at libraries particularly those which are sited at public places or in boys' schools/colleges.

Initially while applying for the matching grant the organisers included all the students of that school or of that area and also people with whom they had contact to create the fund and to get approval from BRAC. For this reason actual attendance was found lower in many libraries. Unfortunately there is little incentive for the librarians to increase the number of general members as these members do not enhance the performance indicators used to evaluate the libraries. In informal interviews with the researcher both the librarians and the program organisers expressed no interest in increasing the number of readers because at the end of the year they had to renew their membership which is difficult sometimes and an extra work load on their regular duties. Furthermore, failure to renew the membership also

lowers their performance. This situation contradicts the concept of the public library where people from all sections of society feel able to use the services.

It was also found from the survey that newspapers were the most used library material as these libraries are the only place where many people have access to such publications. In most of the libraries only 20% to 40% of books were issued once or more. This is due to the selection policy at the central level as there are many titles which will not be of interest to many rural readers. BRAC provides more or less same set of books in all these libraries. From the observation of the current researcher it is believed that the nature of the demand for reading materials varies from region to region.

It was found that in addition to library services these *Pathagers* are playing a great role in socio-cultural activities such as celebrating national days, running one-day eye clinics or organising medical camps, discussions, sports, exhibitions, cultural programs and celebrations of anniversary of the library. These types of programs open the opportunity to have social gatherings, spending leisure time and enjoying recreation at activities that are very limited in the rural areas.

A seasonal crops collection has been found to be good method of collecting money for the recurring expenditure of the Libraries. This idea was initiated to increase connection with the local community and form an annual fund. The library committee sells the collected crops later and the money is kept in the savings account of the library. A library can buy books or meet the expense of organising activities from that money. Another good initiative is lending textbooks to poor students of the adjacent schools through the BRAC Continuing Education Program. While organising *Gonokendra Pathager*, BRAC recognised that students in secondary schools, particularly girls coming from poor households, faced difficulty in obtaining textbooks. BRAC therefore introduced a textbook lending program in 1996. Training on different income generating activities is another good initiative of this program. In cooperation with different government departments like the Department of Youth, skill development training such as fishery and poultry are organised for library members. However, during the visits it was found that the concerned government departments were unable to meet the demand for training.

Dr. Shafiqul Islam, Program Head, Continuing Education, BRAC Education Program, believes the success of *Union* Libraries are multifarious. These libraries create awareness about the need for learning in rural areas of Bangladesh. They are unique in that these libraries are mainly funded and managed by BRAC in collaboration with concerned local committees, and this could be used as a model for establishing more sustainable rural libraries in Bangladesh as well as in other developing countries. Operating these libraries by a local Trustee Committee is another good initiative that could be followed by others; and, despite socio-cultural factors and the patriarchal structure of the Bangladeshi society, these libraries are attracting a considerable number of female users. Dr Islam argued that computers can not only bridge the digital divide between rich and poor, urban and rural, but offer new opportunities for development and employment. Some of these libraries are already beginning to work towards that goal.

### **Community Development Library (CDL)**

In September 1978 at a forum of development social workers working with various Non-government Organizations (NGOs) sponsored by Quaker Service, the idea of setting up an organization to serve the development workers with reading materials was proposed. Ms. Susan Mecord, the then Resident Representative Quaker Service, Bangladesh accepted the proposal and started a small library called “Reader’s Service”. On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1980, prior to Ms. Susan Mecord’s departure from Bangladesh, with the encouragement, support and initiative from a large number of social workers, the Reader Service was renamed “Community Development Library” (popularly known as CDL) and thus a national organization was founded.

The CDL, a non-government development organization, was established with the mission of delivering development information to activities and organizations committed to the promotion of sustainable development, gender equity, social justice, human rights and community education (Rashid, 2000b). The organisation gradually developed itself into a service organization addressing a wide range of development issues through its:

- Central library, Documentation and Information Centre in Dhaka,
- 27 Rural Information Resource Centres (RIRCs) including one Divisional Centre in Bogra and one in Khulna,
- Research and Publication,
- Audio-Visual Service,
- Internships and through some other programs (Rahman & Baroi, 1999).

The CDL collects and provides in-depth material and information on environment, education, health, women, children, human rights, and peace and ethnic minorities. The library has developed a video resource centre on development issues and provides information on ideas for community development and experiences of innovative and sustainable development efforts.

The mission of CDL is to narrow the existing knowledge gap between information rich and information poor through sharing critical and urgent information amongst the social change activists, the state, and the civil society for a sustainable social and economic development in Bangladesh. The primary mission of CDL is to provide sustained access to key information to the society in a meaningful way (Community Development Library, 1999).

The main objective of the organisation is to raise the critical consciousness of the society personified in catalysts. Catalysts include, among others, policy makers, gender and development activists, communication personnel, cultural activists, political activists, human right activists, environmentalists, researchers, and community leaders. This means that the target audiences of the CDL are those people and organisations who are engaged in various activities intending to change the quality of life of the people, particularly the vulnerable sections, the poor and women. As a development information services organisation, the CDL caters to various needs of the community and feels that a well-planned effort encompassing collection, processing and dissemination of development information would help in attaining a required level of awareness in the society and, in turn, would accelerate the process of empowerment of the community (Rashid, 2000b).

The library also arranges seminars, discussion meetings, study circles, workshops, and video shows on various socio-economic development and environmental issues. These raise mass awareness through publications, workshops, seminars, study circle and networking activities.

The CDL promotes development initiatives of different grassroots groups and organizations through advisory services, training and logistic support and disseminating those initiatives to the larger audience through publications and videos. NGO workers and other beneficiaries are trained by the audio-visual services. The library also highlights the positive aspects of development endeavours through documenting and disseminating case studies of successful projects. It also lobbies and campaigns on issues which have direct and indirect impact on the lives of the people, especially those who are poor and under-privileged.

Establishing a development information network among NGOs and other groups is one of the objectives of CDL. Information communication is developed through a network of urban and rural resource/information centres using both print and audio-visual methods. The CDL provide strength in the relationship among existing networks. The CDL provide input to planners and policy makers to facilitate social research on wide ranging issues by providing information and reference materials. The library also works as a clearing-house for all non-governmental initiatives through information/sales centre (Community Development Library, 1999).

NGO workers, extension workers, researchers, government officials, teachers, students, and the general public are using CDL services. The CDL has three types of membership: reader member, general member and organization member. Any person who is interested to read books, reports and journals can become reader member. Any Bangladeshi citizen who is directly involved with any development works may be general member of CDL. Any Bangladeshi and foreign organizations, government department, college, university may become an organization member.

### ***Central Library, Documentation and Information Centre (CELDIC)***

The central library is in Dhaka. Since 1980, CDL has collected 21,500 books and research reports on different issues and subjects including poverty alleviation, gender and development, rural development, environment, child and human rights, good governance, health, and micro-credit (Community Development Library, 1999).

Table 2: *Acquisition of books, reports, journals for the last five years*

<b>Materials</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>Total (1980- June 1999)</b>
Books	1095	1459	1494	1597	1698	21,500
Research reports	225	382	415	481	538	6,561
Journal	60	60	74	74	84	--
News clipping	1651	1861	2075	2305	2520	--
Newspaper	12	12	12	12	12	--
Statistical reports	486	503	598	658	720	--

Note. From (1999). "*Community Development Library: impacts and achievement*", M. S. Islam, 1999, Unpublished master's thesis, Rajshahi University, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

The Central Library, Documentation and Information Centre (CELDIC) of CDL has become an information resource centre for its users. In 1998 53,185 users benefited from the services offered by the library and information centre (CDL Annual Activity Report, 1998). Development workers are improving their quality of work by using information services. The library and information services of the central library has had a positive impact on the status of the community people through workshops, seminars and study circles organized by the centre. The collection and dissemination of development resource materials on other countries encourages users in understanding and participating in development activities.

### ***Rural Information Resource Centres (RIRC)***

CDL has been providing development information services at the grass roots level through 27 Rural Information Resource Centres (RIRC). The RIRC's have library

facilities; and organize seminars, workshops, study circles, discussion meetings, and video shows to enrich people's knowledge of development issues. In 1998 a total of 364,203 people received information services from RIRC and 397 NGOs were involved with RIRC activities (Rahman & Baroi, 1999).

The target users at the local level are the NGO workers, social development workers, teachers, students, mid level and junior level government officials, infrastructure engineers, community physicians, local level public representatives, extension workers, peasants and the general public (Rashid, 1992).

Table 3: *RIRC program activities and their frequencies in the last five years*

<b>Activities of RIRC</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>Up to June 1999</b>	<b>Total</b>
Seminar	70	15	25	76	50	236
Discussion meeting	84	53	35	41	--	213
Video show	85	94	16	130	50	375
NGO meeting	4	5	15	12	10	46
Workshop	15	4	12	12	--	43
Study circle	34	42	22	17	--	115

Note. From (1999). "*Community Development Library: impacts and achievement*", M. S. Islam, 1999, Unpublished master's thesis, Rajshahi University, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

The claimed results of the RIRC program are that:

- a) reading materials and audio-visual materials on alternative development are available;
- b) NGOs and local community members are equipped with the latest ideas on development;
- c) positive aspects of development initiatives are highlighted through collecting and disseminating information about successful projects;
- d) the information needs of NGOs and community people are identified;
- e) reading habits have been encouraged and the use of development information has been increased;
- f) networks have been developed among NGOs and other civil organizations working in rural areas;

- g) experiences are shared, duplication is minimized and successes are replicated;  
and
- h) NGOs and local community have opportunities to learn about environment friendly projects;

The local community, NGO workers and local government officials are availing themselves of information services through RIRCs. The end users are enriching their knowledge in primary health care, education, environment, agriculture, rural development, sanitation, child issues, human rights, women issues and disaster management through RIRCs. Besides, the reading habit of community people is also increasing. During July 1995 to June 1996 77,720 readers were given information services through RIRCs (Zabed et al., 1997). In 1997 a total of 256,279 people received information services from the RIRCs (Rashid, 2000b) where as in 1998 the number increased to 364,203 (Rahman & Baroi, 1999). In an interview with the present researcher Harun-ur-Rashid, the then Director of CDL, stated that rural readers are becoming sophisticated users of library services. Readers now ask for a specific book rather seeming satisfied with any book as in the past.

### *Audio-Visual Program*

CDL started this program activity in 1987 because it considered that dissemination of information in audio-visual form is effective. At the initial stage, the primary goal of the unit was to collect various films and documentaries on development issues from home and abroad. In 1990, a full functioning production unit was established with facilities for local production, editing and language versioning. The unit has produced 20 video documentaries on various critical development issues (Rahman & Baroi, 1999). CDL-AVP regularly arranges video shows at headquarters and also in rural centres. Other NGOs and clubs also borrow CDL videocassettes through CDL centers and sub-centers for their training, seminars and workshops.

CDL's video collection on environmental matters and its holding of a video festival on the environment has raised awareness among the users. There has been a growing demand from NGOs and development activists for the audio-visual services of CDL.

Audio-Visual Programmes have been proved very useful and encouraging in rural areas as:

- a) video has no literacy barrier, it can reach people who cannot read or write.
- b) video technology is simple to learn even by those not familiar with electrical appliances.
- c) video is very effective and can convey messages and ideas directly.

### ***Research and Publication Program***

The Research and Publication program aims to provide information services on social issues, specifically publication and dissemination of development materials and organizing workshops and seminars. CDL regularly publishes current news, bulletins, posters, compilations of development literature, and translations of development information. Although CDL does not regard itself as a research organization, it often carries out information gathering and analysis as a part of its activities. CDL conducts research and information gathering on various development-related issues and themes (Rahman & Baroi, 1999). There are not very many development-related books or materials in Bangla. Since one of CDL's identified target groups are the field level development workers who cannot read any foreign language, CDL translates some of these important publications into simple Bangla. At present CDL has 90 publications to its credit.

### ***Special Programs***

Over two million Bangladeshi children who live in the slums and streets have little or no access to basic primary education. Although primary education has been declared free and compulsory, many parents cannot afford to send their children to schools due to a host of financial and social factors. CDL has aimed to reach a portion of these children by providing them with basic education and medical services to help them take part in mainstream development efforts. In view of this situation, CDL launched its Development Education Program (*Chetana Bikash Kendra*) in May 1986 (Community Development Library, 1997). About 800 street

and slum children who are deprived of their right of education and those who are often forced to work outside to earn their livelihood are getting primary and vocational education from the school program. About 2500 parents and guardians also benefit from the discussion meeting held once in every two months on social environment, health and sanitation issues.

CDL has been providing a six-month in-service training program (Internship) since 1995. The students of the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Dhaka, are currently undergoing in-service training in CDL after completing their Masters' examination (Zabed et al., 1997). CDL organized a seven day training course on "How to make Video Documentaries Interesting" jointly with the British Council, Dhaka. A 10 days training on CDS/ISIS (Computerized Documentation System/ Integrated Set of Information System) was organized with outside participants. As a continuation of the first training course the second training course on Micro CDS/ISIS was organized on 23 to 30 September 1999 (Community Development Library, 1999).

The CDL is maintaining active liaison with about 1000 NGOs, research institutes, and government agencies at different levels (Community Development Library, 1999). CDL has started a new program with UNICEF-Bangladesh titled Knowledge Network. The program provides an outlet for disseminating uniform health and education information to NGOs and the civil society through seminars, workshops, exhibitions, discussion meetings and video screening (Islam, 1999). CDL provides consultancy services to other NGOs and UN bodies in the following fields: translation, editing and printing of materials; shooting, editing, translation and production of Audio-Visual materials; and information management including cataloguing, classification and database creation (Islam, 1999).

### **Ganokendra of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)**

DAM was established in 1958 as a social welfare organisation with the fundamental objectives of worship of God and services to God's creatures. From the beginning, it was devoted to the facilitation of the well being of disadvantaged classes in society.

Gradually the scope of the organisation became widened and various socio-economic and cultural concerns entered into its purview. The mission increased the number of its programs as time went on. These include: non-formal education for unprivileged illiterates irrespective of age, training, savings and micro credit, development of education materials and distribution, preservation of the environment, and rehabilitation of the distressed.

DAM, in the course of its implementation of literacy and non-formal education programs, found that there is a wide-scale dearth of reading materials in the rural areas and that without post-literacy programs, the literacy skills of the new literates could not be sustained. To provide a structured post-literacy and continuing education program, DAM started organising *Ganokendras* (literally people centres) as post-literacy centres in 1992. With the passage of time and gradual adding of multi-sectoral services, *Ganokendras* have evolved as an approach to life long learning and community development and its role has gradually widened to cater to the diverse learning needs of the community including providing facilities for economic and socio-cultural activities.

The general objective of organising *Ganokendras* is to create facilities for lifelong learning and community development. Specifically, a *Ganokendra* is organised to facilitate institutionalised support for the people in the community leading to improvement in the quality of life, social empowerment and economic self-reliance.

*Ganokendras* have a number of innovative features:

- *Ganokendras* are accessible to all people in the area, not limited to the neo-literates from literacy centres. Illiterates, out-of school children, people with limited reading skills, local school students and youths are allowed to participate in other activities.
- The literacy support is not time-bound. It addresses the learning needs of the participants for indefinite periods and offers scope for lifelong learning.

- The members and local agencies use *Ganokendra* as information and issue-based discussion and training centres. To serve as this need newspapers, periodicals, newsletters together with information-communication materials of government and non-government organisations and agencies are made available there.
- Socio-economic and environmental programs and services of various agencies are linked with *Ganokendra* activities towards peoples' empowerment and community development.

### *Strategies and functions*

Facilities are created for lifelong learning of the people to bring positive change in their lives. Supports in terms of supply of books, newspapers, newsletters, magazines, booklets, posters and wall magazines are provided for peoples at different levels of literacy skills. Basic and advanced educational programs are organised to cater to the learning needs of the local people. To ensure access to other services, linkages are established with various agencies serving health, sanitation, education, environment, credit and recreational needs.

Participation of *Ganokendra* members in social activities and decision making is promoted through gender sensitization, organisation of socio-cultural activities, leadership development and development of skills in decision making. Specialised training courses are organised to address these needs. Information and communication materials for developing these skills are regularly supplied to the *Ganokendra*.

The required skills of the members are developed through vocational training and by establishing linkage with micro-credit organisations or programs. Scope is created for the development of enterprises in the area to create employment opportunities for the community.

The members of *Ganokendra* learn by doing. Socio-cultural activities are organised with community support for promotion of gender development, environment conservation, recreation, immunisation, etc. Each *Ganokendra* can have its own plan for organisation of social activities depending on the decision of the members. In some *Ganokendra*, local experts, such as a local craftsman on handicraft design, are invited to facilitate discussion meetings or skill training programs. In other cases, assistance from outside resource persons, such as a government health workers, is utilised for the development of a community health program. Crucial information, such as methods of detecting arsenic poisoning, is collected from Health Department.

### ***Organisation***

Steps for organising *Ganokendra* include surveys, organisation of community groups, formation and orientation of the management committee, training of facilitators, finalisation of *Ganokendra* infrastructure including physical construction of the centre house, and supply of materials, equipment, books and other reading materials. *Ganokendra* are organised by the groups of newly literate people with back-up support from the DAM and in collaboration with the local community. One facilitator is recruited from the community who works as community worker. She/he initiates the activities and looks after smooth functioning of the *Ganokendra*.

### ***Management***

The overall management of the *Ganokendra* is the responsibility of the management committee, consisting of five to seven members, representing the people of the locality. Local people, existing and potential users of the *Ganokendra* are consulted in the process of the formation of the management committee. The committee is responsible for developing plans for the activities the *Ganokendra* would undertake, such as training courses, networking activities, and the community library and ensuring that the activities are implemented satisfactorily. The members of the

committee are provided with brief training or orientation sessions on the concept, philosophy and functioning of the *Ganokendra*, the scope of activities and the ultimate process of transfer of its ownership. There is regular communication between the facilitators, management committee and the DAM field staff, all of whom attend monthly management meetings at the *Ganokendra*. While this committee takes decisions on organisational aspects and on the spectrum of activities of *Ganokendra*, the facilitator takes care of the actual operational aspect or day-to-day functioning. The decisions in the meeting are taken on a consensus basis and implemented by the facilitator with community and DAM support. Implementation of the decisions is reviewed in the follow-up meetings. Besides local supervision, the Mission monitors functioning of *Ganokendra* regularly against set indicators.

### ***Sustainability***

Technical, materials and financial support services are provided from the Mission during the initial years of its operation. *Ganokendra* members raise funds for undertaking activities at the local level. Gradually the Mission's support is phased out. The management committee will be responsible for ensuring the financial validity and independent running of the *Ganokendra* at the end of initial support from Dhaka Ahsania Mission.

## Chapter VI: Analysis of structured interviews

### Profile of Study areas

Table 4: *Geographic location of study areas*

Division	District	Thana	Village/ Word	Number of interviewees
Chittagong Dhaka	Cox's Bazar Dhaka	Chokoria	Illisha	10
		Gulshan	Karail	10
		Gulshan	Taltola	10
Rajshahi	Norshingdi	Balabo	Dakshinduru	10
	Rajshahi	Durgapur	Surjyabhag	10
<b>Sylhet</b>	Hobigong	Habigong Sador	Pail	10

Table 4 shows that in each study area 10 participants were interviewed. Among the six study areas four were rural and two were in urban slum areas. Two villages are closed to Metropolitan cities – *Bejanabo* is 90 km from Dhaka Metropolitan city and *Pananagor* is 24 km from Rajshahi Metropolitan city. The other two can be considered as remote villages in terms to road communication and other basic facilities – *Pail* is 15 km from the Hobigong town and *Illisha* is 120 km from the Chittagong Metropolitan city. Slums are selected purposively as there are more than 2200 individual slums in *Dhaka* Metropolitan city. Two study areas were selected in *Gulshan Thana*, where the total number of slums is 33.

### *Urban slum areas*

After the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country in 1971 most of the urban areas including Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi cities were confronted with the problems of a sudden and large influx of people coming from all over the country for livelihood. With the passage of time, the influx of population from the rural areas to these cities and other urban areas has multiplied. In 1970 there were 730 slums in Dhaka city. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971,

the rate of migration to Dhaka increased significantly. In the eighties, the number of slums of Dhaka city became 1068. In the decade of the 1990s, the number increased more and more and rose to 2147 (Dhaka City Corporation, 2003). Famine, flood, river erosion, social and economic injustice, better wages in the cities and joblessness forced the slum dwellers to leave their village homes in the rural areas of Bangladesh. A large proportion of them started building unauthorised shanty houses on abandoned land, government land, along the shoulders of the highways, within the rail stations, along the rail-road tracks and in the industrial belts. Most of the slums of Dhaka city lack proper drainage, sewerage systems are filled with garbage and there is no electricity or gas. Slum dwellers work as day labourers, rickshaw pullers, masons, and vegetable vendors. They earn a meagre living and live from hand to mouth. Despite the crucial role that they play, slum dwellers are one of the most neglected and disempowered sections of society in Bangladesh.

Low-income patterns in urban Bangladesh ensure that access to shelter and land is limited to the small percentage who can afford to pay the price. In Dhaka, the capital, an estimated 70% of the urban households are low-income, with 28% middle income and 2% high-income. The small proportion of high-income households has access to 15% of the residential land while the vast majority of low-income households have access to just 20%. Similar distributions apply in the three other major cities (McAuslan, 1999).

The slum population accounts for 6.71% of the urban population and 0.13% of the total population of the country (Population Census-1991). It is evident in the 1997 census that highest percentage of slum dwelling units is temporary dwellings and tin sheds. The average household size in the slums is 4.16 which is 27% smaller than the total for the urban population. The literacy rate of slum dwellers is 14.66%. This is much lower than the literacy rate found in the *Bangladesh Population Census 1991* (32.4%). Only 4.7% of slum residents are unemployed or not working. The census also found that 57.7% of slum households have access to electricity for light, 28.1% have access to a reasonable toilet facility, and 77.11% of the households get their drinking water from tube-wells and taps.

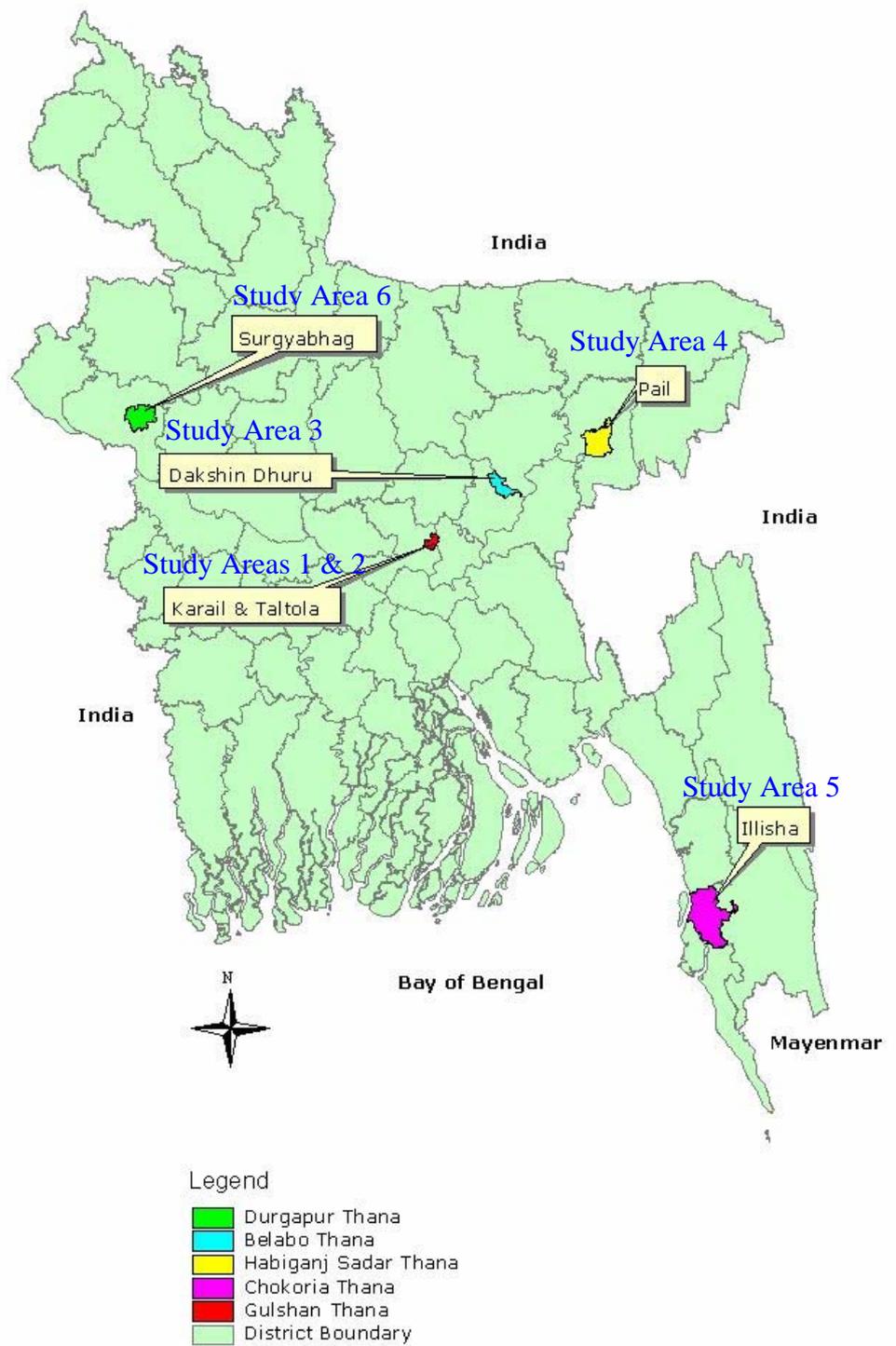


Figure 1: Study areas location on the map of Bangladesh.

### *Study area 1: Karail Slum*

Karail Slum is one of the biggest slums in the Gulshan Thana of Dhaka City. More than 16,227 people 8,505 male and 7,722 female live in 4,188 households in this slum (*Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 1997*). However some residents of this slum believe that the total population is around 20,000. Almost half of the area is surrounded by a canal. As with other slums rural residents from various parts of the country migrated here because of famine, flood, river erosion, social and economic reasons in their rural areas. The slum has no proper drainage and sewerage systems, has no gas supply but has electricity in most of the households. There has also a lack of water supply, proper sanitation and solid waste management facilities. Like the other slum dwellers the residents of this slum lack access to land. The size of household is extremely small and there is no security of tenure.

Since the slum settlement is illegal there are hardly any Government or aid agency projects to improve the living quality of this poorest population of the city. There is a small health centre run by Marie Stopes Clinic Society providing reproductive health services. Tube-wells are the only source of water in this slum though the number of tube-wells is too small for the huge number of residents. Children of this slum attend the primary school in the nearby residential area as there is no formal government primary school in this area. There is a big market (*Bazer* in Bengali) at the middle of the slum.

### *Study area 2: Taltola Slum*

This slum has a total population of around 1,609 people – 811 male and 798 female – in 337 households (*Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 1997*) and the area is under *Word*, a *Word* is the smallest geographical unit in a city, number 18 of Dhaka City Corporation. Many of the residents of this slum work as cleaners with Dhaka City Corporation. Due to high rent rates in the city these people built this slum on government land. With the passage of time many of their friends and family shifted here from rural areas to avail themselves of modern facilities such as

education, health services, security and better employment opportunities. Moreover, there are some residents in this slum who are renting from the illegal owner. Like other slums houses are built without providing basic amenities such as water supply and sanitation. However, in comparison with other slums the average household size is bigger and there is better infrastructure. Most of the houses have electricity connections. Dwellers of this slum use tube-well water for domestic usage.

### ***Rural villages***

#### *Study area 3: Dakshindhuru, Norshingdi*

*Dakshindhuru* is a small village in Balabu thana of Norshingdi district. Norshingdi was one of the sub-divisions of former Dhaka district. It was upgraded to a district in 1984. *Norshingdi* district is located between 23°29' and 23°45' north latitudes and between 90°10' and 90°43' east longitudes. It has an area of 1141 sq. km including riverine area and is only 0.77% of the total area of the country (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1995). In respect of area, the district rank 14<sup>th</sup> among the 17 districts of *Dhaka* Division and 55<sup>th</sup> among the 64 districts of the country. There are 6 *thanas*, 70 *unions* and 647 *mauzas* (smallest official geographical unit) in the district.

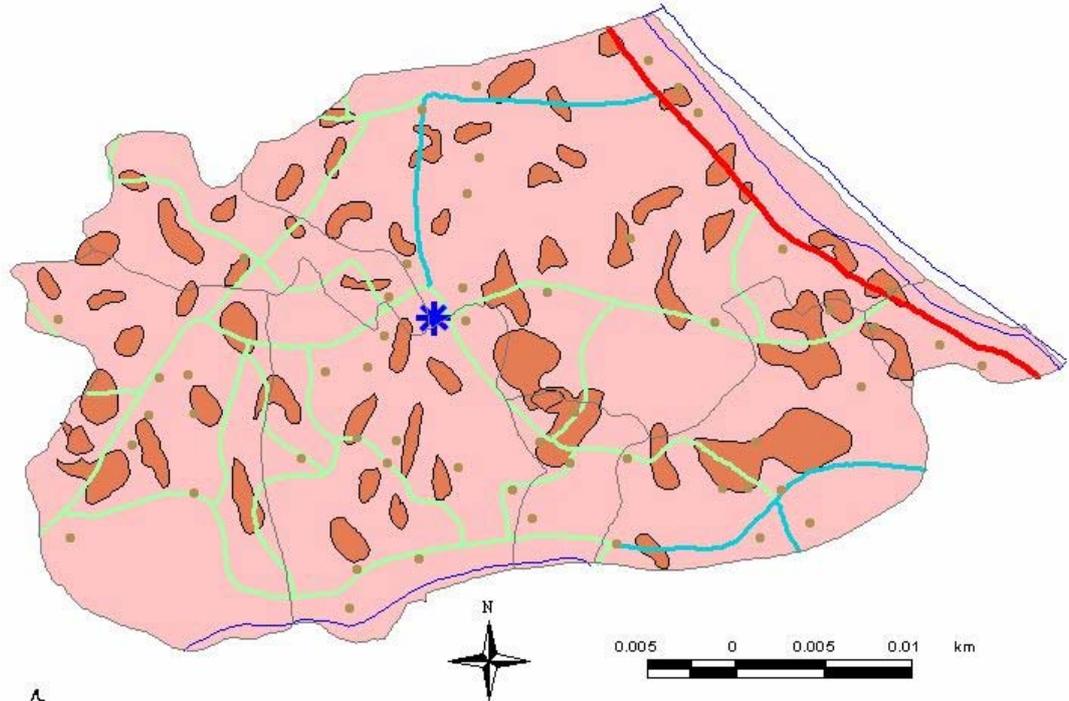
*Balabo* the smallest *thana* of *Norshingdi* district in respect of population, came into existence on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April, 1982. Previously it was part of *Monohardi* and *Raipura* *thanas*. The *thana* occupies an area of 117.66 sq. km. it is located between 24°02' and 24°12' north latitude and 90°46' and 90°58' east longitudes. The *thana* is bounded by on the north by *Kuliarchar* and *Katiadi* *thanas* of *Kishoreganj* district, on the east by *Kuliarchar* and *Bhairab* *thanas* of *Kishoreganj* district, on the south by *Raipura* *thana* of *Norshingdi* district and on the west by *Monohardi* and *Shibpur* *thanas* of *Norshingdi* district. The *thana* consists of 7 unions, 52 *mauzas* and 97 villages (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1995).

The soil of the district is mainly formed by the old *Bramaputra* and the new *Bramaputra* floodplains. The *Madhupur* Tract upland soil mixed with the old

*Bramaputra* floodplain is found in the village as well as in the north eastern part of the district.

According to the *Bangladesh Population Census 1991*, the village of *Dakshindhuru* has only 178 households with 865 people. As the final report of the Bangladesh Population Census 2001 has not yet been published, the current official population is not available. But according to the Child Census done by the respective primary school teachers in every alternative year there were 197 households with 985 individuals in 2000. So the average household size is 5. The village occupies only 144 acres of land. It is a predominantly Muslim village with only 76 Hindus. The rate of literacy for population 7 years and above was 33.9% in 1991.

## Bajnaba Union



### LEGEND

-  Union Office
-  Pof.shp
-  NHW
-  RHW
-  FRA
-  FRB\_Pucca
-  FRB\_Katcha
-  Rural\_Pucca
-  Rural\_Katcha
-  River
-  Settlement
-  Union boundary

Figure 2: Map of Bajnabo Union, Balabo Thana, Norshingdi

The area enjoys the same climatic condition as Dhaka does in the tropical monsoon zone. The hot summer, the long rainy season and the pleasant spring-cum-winter are the main noticeable seasons prevailing in the community. The summer begins at the end of March and is merged with the rainy season that continues up to September. The duration of winter is recorded from early November to late February. The highest and the lowest temperatures as recorded are 35°C and 12.1°C in the month of April and January respectively. The average humidity is around 77%. There is plenty of rainfall during the monsoon and most of the rainfall occurs during the months of May, June and July. The annual rainfall recorded in 1996 was 2044 millimeters (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001b).

The economy of Dakshinduru is predominately agriculture. 120 of the households own and 58 do not own agricultural land. Among the 178 households, 153 households depend on agriculture as the main sources of household income. Other sources of household income are non-agricultural labour (1), business (5) and employment (23). The farm households produce varieties of crops, local and HYV paddy, wheat, vegetables, spices, cash crops, pulses, sugarcane and others. Various fruits such as mango, banana, jackfruit, guava and coconut are grown. Fish of different varieties abound in the area. Varieties of fish are caught from rivers, tributary channels and even from the paddy field during the rainy season (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001b).

Most houses are made of Corrugated Iron sheet (69.7%) with most of the rest made of straw and bamboo (30.3%) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1995). In the village only 34 households had sanitary latrines. This may have changed in the last 12 years but no official statistics available yet. Observations during the interview sessions in 2001 and group discussion sessions in 2003 showed that most of the households have an electricity connection. In the village, 121 households use tube-wells and 57 households use dug-wells as their main sources of drinking water. (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1995).

#### *Study area 4: Pail, Habiganj*

*Pail* is a comparatively bigger village in size. The village is itself a *Union* in *Habigonj Sadar thana* of *Habiganj* district. *Habiganj* was one of the sub-divisions of former Sylhet district. It was upgraded to a district on the 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1984. There is a popular view that in the past there was a prominent man named Habibullah who set up a ‘*Ganj*’ meaning trading centre in the present district headquarters. It is believed that the district name might have been originated from the name *Habibullah* and the word “*Ganj*”. *Habiganj* district is located between 23°58′ and 24°42′ north latitudes and between 91°09′ and 91°40′ east longitudes. It has an area of 2636.58 sq. km including 63.61 sq. km of riverine area and 116.44 sq. km is under forest (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1996). In respect of area, the district rank 4<sup>th</sup> among the 4 districts of *Sylhet* Division and 23<sup>rd</sup> among the 64 districts of the country. *Hobiganj* district is about 1.75% of total area of the country. There are 8 *thanas*, 77 *unions* and 1312 *mauzas* in the district.

*Habiganj Sadar*, the fifth largest thana of *Habiganj* district in respect of both area and population, came into existence on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April, 1893. Previously it was part of *Monohardi* and *Raipura* thanas. The thana occupies an area of 253.74 sq. km including 2.38 sq. km river area. It is located between 24°15′ and 24°27′ north latitudes and 91°19′ and 91°30′ east longitudes. The thana is bounded on the north by *Baniachong* and *Nabiganji* thanas, on the east by *Bahubal thana*, on the south by *Chunarughat* and *Madhabpur* thanas and on the west by *Lakhi* thana of *Sylhet* district. The *thana* consists of 10 unions, 3 words, 153 *mauzas*, 45 *mahallahs* (suburbs) and 259 villages.

*Pail* has a total of 1522 households with 8,549 people (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1996). The average household size is 5.6. The village occupies only 10104 acres of land. It is a Muslim majority village but with a substantial population of 968 Hindus. The rate of literacy for those 7 years and above was 15.2% in 1991.

The district is located in the northern and eastern hilly areas of the country. The soil is mainly rocky, shallow flooding and well-drained. It is permeable but droughty in dry season.

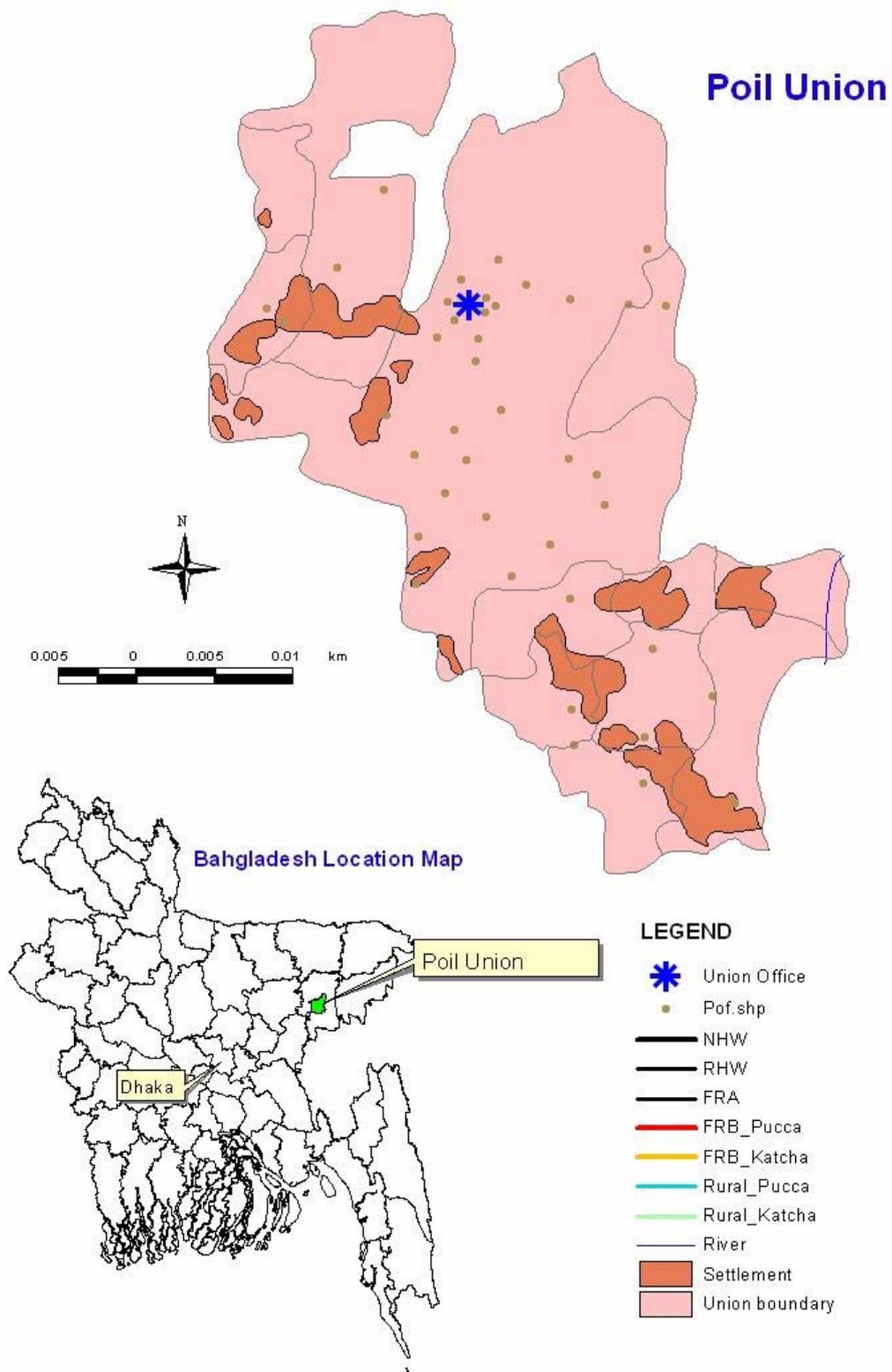


Figure 3: Map of Pail Union, Habiganj Sadar Thana, Habiganj

The climate of the district is warmer in the summer and cooler in the winter. The mean annual temperature is about 25°C and the mean monthly relative humidity ranges from 77% in the dry season to about 88% in the rainy season. Heavy rainfall occurs during the monsoon. Annual rainfall is recorded in 1996 was 4017 millimetres (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001c).

The economy of Pail is predominately agricultural. Among the 1522 households, 793 households depend on agriculture as the main sources of household income. Other sources of household income are non-agricultural labour (105), business (249), construction (48), transport (94) and employment (56). The farm households produce varieties of crops, namely local and HYV paddy, wheat, vegetables, spices, cash crops, pulses, oilseeds and others. Various fruits such as pineapple, mango, banana, jackfruit, guava, black berries, coconut, papaya, palm, lichi and dates are grown. Fish of different varieties abound in the district and as in other parts of the country, varieties of fish are caught from rivers, tributary channels and even from the paddy fields during the rainy season (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001c).

In the village only 63 households had sanitary latrine facilities which must have changed a lot in the last 12 years but no official statistics available yet. Only 180 of the dwelling households have electricity connection in 1991. In the village, 1475 households use tube-wells. Only one household had a tap, 4 households use agricultural wells, 35 households use ponds and 7 households use the river as their main sources of drinking water. In *Pail*, 773 of the dwelling households own and 749 do not own agricultural land (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1996).

#### *Study area 5: Illisha, Cox's Bazar*

*Illisha* is a small village of *Chokoria* thana in the costal district of *Cox's Bazar*. *Cox's Bazar* is located at the fringe of the Bay of Bengal with an unbroken sea-beach which is one of the longest in the world. *Cox's Bazar* was formerly a sub-division of *Chittagong* district. It was upgraded to a district in 1984. The district is located between 20°43' and 21°56' north latitudes and between 91°50' and 92°23' east longitudes. The total area of the district is 2,491.86 sq. km of which 188.34 sq. km is riverine and 474.97 sq. km is under forest (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics,

1992). In respect of area, the district rank 7<sup>th</sup> among the 11 districts of *Chittagong* Division and 26<sup>th</sup> among the 64 districts of the country. *Cox's Bazar* district is about 1.6% of total area of the country. There are 7 *thanas*, 64 *unions* and 193 *mauzas* in the district.

*Chokoria* is the largest *thana* of *Cox's Bazar* district in respect of both area and population. *Chokoria* police station was upgraded to a *thana* on the 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1982. The *thana* occupies an area of 643.46 sq. km including 38.95 sq. km river area and 17.77 sq. km forest area. It is located between 21°34' and 21°55' north latitudes and 91°54' and 92°13' east longitudes. The *thana* is bounded on the north by *Banshkhali* and *Lohagara* thanas of Chittagong district, on the east by *Lama and Nakhyongchhari* thanas of Bandarban district, on the south by *Cox's Bazar Sadar* and *Ramu* thanas and on the west by *Moheshkhali* and *Kutubdia* thanas (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1992). The *thana* consists of 17 unions, 66 *mauzas* and 340 villages.

*Illisha* has a total of 324 households with 2,248 people (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1992). The village occupies only 10104 acres of land. It is a Muslim majority village with a few Hindu households. The rate of literacy for those 7 years and above was 25.7% in 1991.

The district is bordered with a long coastal belt and offshore islands on its western side. The soil of the coastal areas and that of the islands are of the type of active mangrove tidal floodplains with grey silty clay. The climate of the district is tropical in nature as it is situated in the tropical zone. The district is remarkable for its uniform temperature, high humidity and heavy rainfall during May to October. The sea breeze helps in keeping the climate even and the average summer temperature raises up to a maximum of 32.8°C. The level of humidity is around 86% from September through December and around 70% from December through February. Annual rainfall as recorded in 1996 was 3855 millimetres (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2000). In the early summer (April and May) and late in the monsoon season (September to November), storms of very high intensity often occur with wind speeds of more than 160 km per hour piling up the waters of the

Bay of Bengal to crests as high as 6 metres that crash with tremendous force onto the costal areas and the offshore islands of *Cox's Bazar* inundating them and causing heavy losses of life and damage to crops and properties.

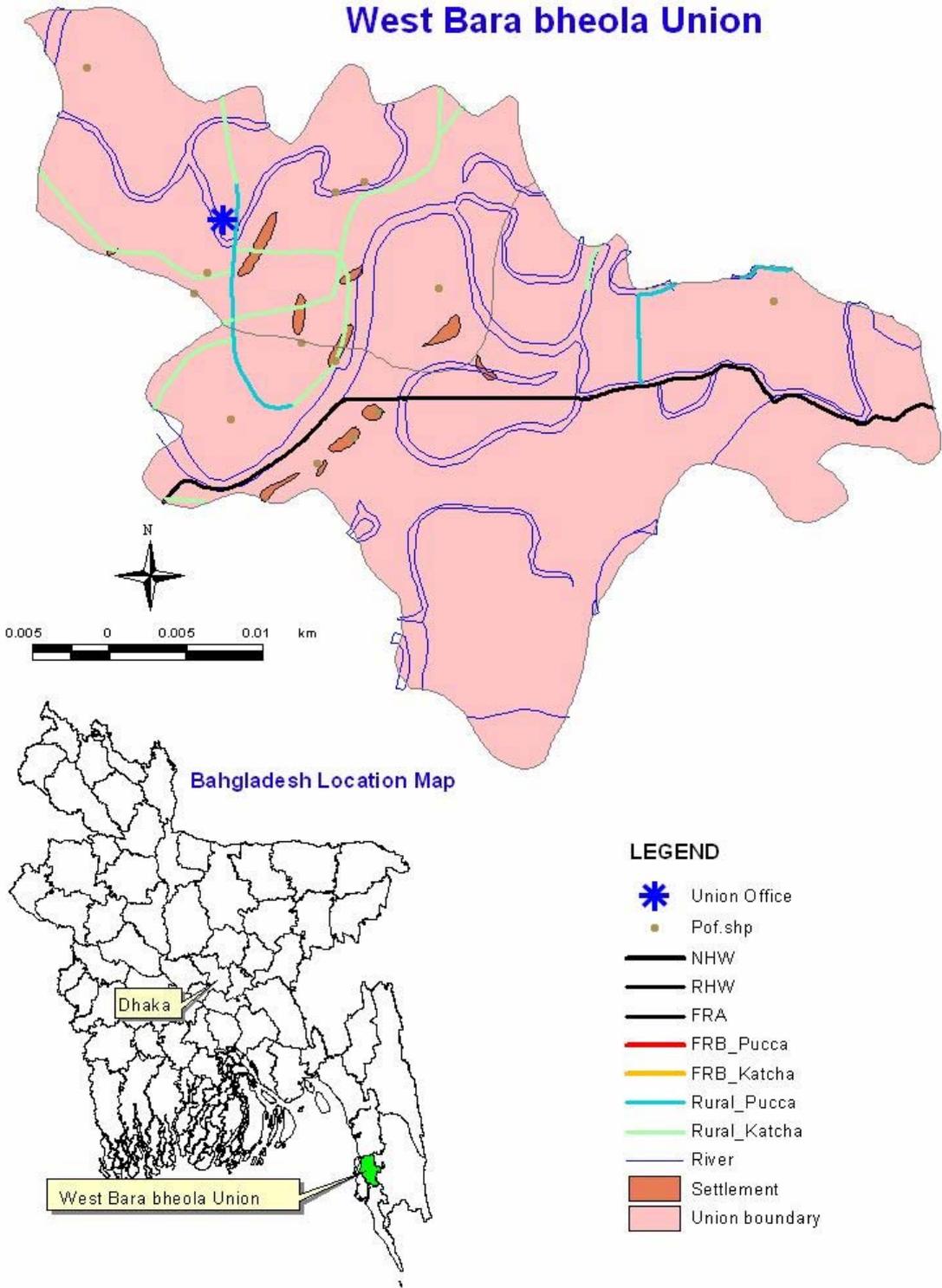


Figure 4: Map of West Bara Bheole Union, Chokoria Thana, Cox's Bazar District.

The economy of *Illisha* is predominately agriculture. The village is different compared to other villages in that the former *Jaminder* family still owned all the land of the village and the rest of the population work for them. They produce varieties of crops, namely local and HYV paddy, wheat, vegetables, spices, cash crops, pulses, betel leaves and others. Various fruits such as banana, jackfruit, guava, and coconut are grown. Fish of different varieties abound in the village which enjoys the advantages of marine fishing. Prawn farming and salt production are the most important economic activities of the area. Most houses are made of straw and bamboo (278), with only a few made of corrugated iron sheet (16) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1992). In the village only a few households had sanitary latrine facilities and electricity connection. Most of the dwellers use tube-wells as the main source of drinking water.

#### *Study area 6: Surjyabhag, Rajshahi*

*Surjyabhag* is a small village in *Durgapur Thana* of *Rajshahi* district. *Rajshahi* was one of the sub-divisions of former greater *Rajshahi* district. It was upgraded to a district in 1984. *Rajshahi* district is located between 24°07′ and 24°43′ north latitudes and between 88°17′ and 88°58′ east longitudes. The total area of this district is 2,407 sq. km including riverine area and is only 1.63% of the total area of the country (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1993). In respect of area, the district rank 5<sup>th</sup> among the 16 districts of *Rajshahi* Division and 27<sup>th</sup> among the 64 districts of the country. There are 8 *Thanas*, 102 *Unions* and 1809 *Mauzas* (smallest official geographical unit) in the district.

*Durgapur* the second smallest *Thana* of *Rajshahi* district in respect of population, came into existence in 1909. The *Thana* occupies an area of 195.03 sq. km. It is located between 24°23′ and 24°32′ north latitude and 88°40′ and 88°52′ east longitudes. The *Thana* is bounded by on the north by *Bagmara Thana*, on the east by *Kuliarchar* and on the south by *Puthia Thana*, and on the west by *Paba* and *Mohanpur Thanas* of *Rajshahi* district. The *Thana* consists of 7 *Unions*, 114 *Mauzas* and 122 Villages (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1993).

## Pananagar Union

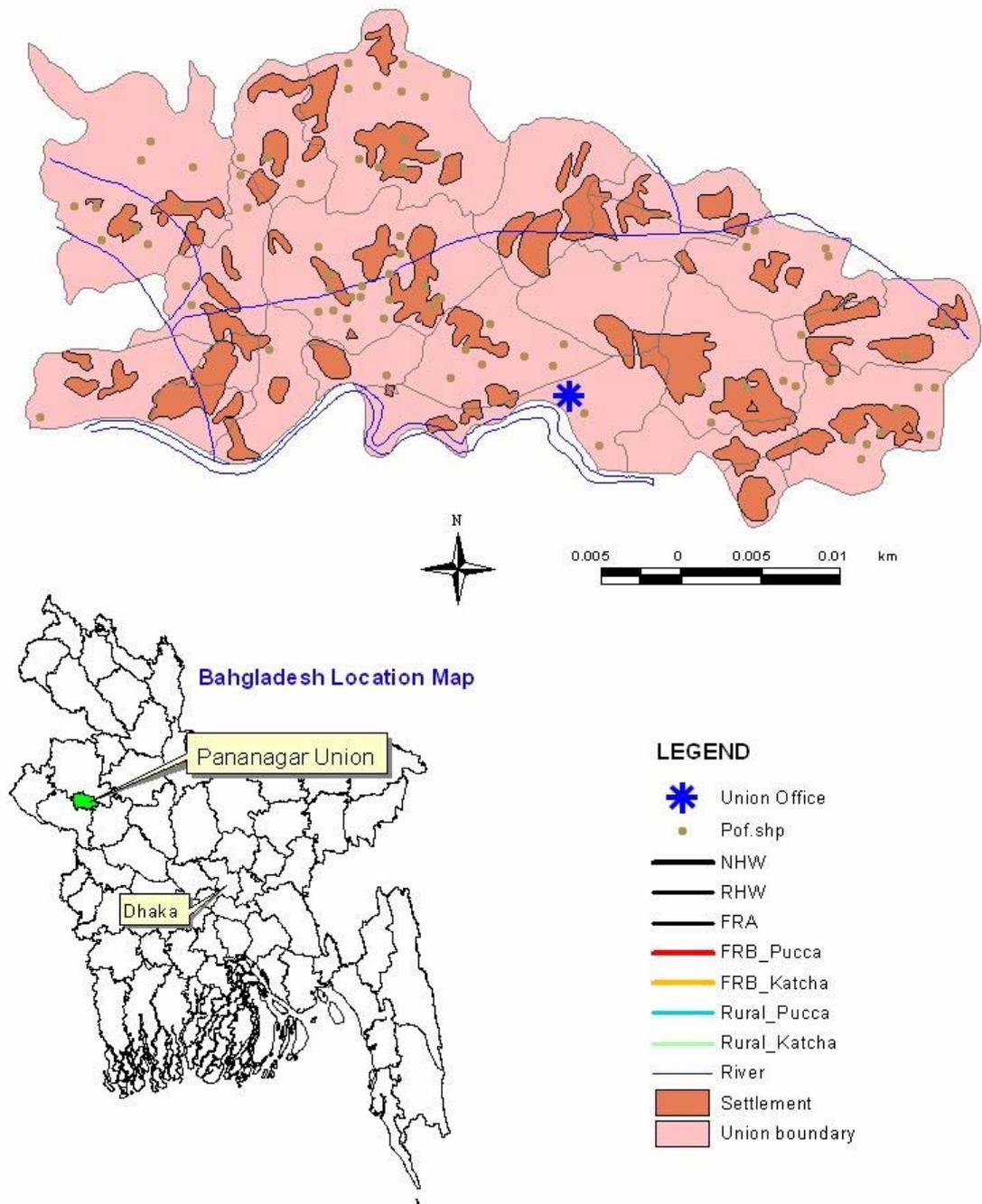


Figure 5: Map of Pananagar Union, Durgapur Thana, Rajshahi District.

According to the *Bangladesh Population Census 1991* the village of *Surjyabhag* has only 188 households with 780 people. As the final report of the *Bangladesh Population Census 2001* has not yet published the current official population is not available. The village occupies only 272 acres of land. It is a predominantly Muslim village. The rate of literacy for those seven years and above was 17.6% in 1991.

The soil of the village mainly formed by plae brown silty clay loam of meander floodplain of the older *Ganges*. It is generally marked by a typical monsoon climate with high temperature, considerable humidity and moderate rainfall. The minimum and maximum mean annual temperatures vary between 10.6° to 36.7°c. The mean monthly relative humidity ranges from 64% in the dry season to about 88% in the rainy season. Annual rainfall as recorded in 1996 was 1269 millimetres (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

The economy of *Surjyabhag* is predominately agriculture. Among the 233 households, 185 households depend on agriculture as the main sources of household income. Other sources of household income are non-agricultural labour (30), business (7) and employment (11). The farm households produce varieties of crops, local and HYV paddy, sugarcane, wheat, potato, vegetables, spices, jute, oil seeds, pulses, and others. Various fruits such as mango, banana, jackfruit, guava and litchi are grown. Especially mango and litchi are famous and available in abundance. Fish of different varieties abound in the area. (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

Most houses are made of corrugated iron sheet (147 households) followed by households made of straw and bamboo (41 households) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1993). Observations during the interview sessions in 2001 and the group discussions revealed that most the households have an electricity connection. In the village, tube-wells are the main source of drinking water.

## *Survey results*

Table 5: *Age distribution of interview participants*

<b>Age range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
16-25 years	17	28.3
26-35 years	21	35.0
36-45 years	9	15.0
46-55 years	9	15.0
Above 55 years	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0

There was no intention to collect data from children and younger people. The predominance of people younger than 35 is to be expected as there is a low average age among the population in Bangladesh.

Table 6: *Gender distribution among the interviewee*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	30	50.0
Female	30	50.0
Total	60	100.0

Data were collected from 60 participants of which 30 were selected purposively from male and 30 from female. According to the last population census 2001 the sex ratio is found to be 103.8 which indicates that there are just 103.8 males per 100 females in Bangladesh.

Table 7: *Marital status of interviewees*

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Single	17	28.3
Married	43	71.7
Total	60	100.0

Among the 60 participants 43 were married and only 17 were single. The average age of men at marriage in Bangladesh is between 25 and 30. Women are married

earlier, usually after 18 and before they are 25. In rural areas both men and women get married early compared to the average in urban areas.

Table 8: *Level of education of the interviewees*

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Illiterate	21	35.0
Literacy Program Completed	2	3.3
Primary School	6	10.0
Secondary School	18	30.0
Higher Secondary School	4	6.7
Graduate	7	11.7
Master's	2	3.3

The literacy rate in Bangladesh is 32.4 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999). In the sample group only 21 were illiterate. As it was not possible to use the random sampling method to select only 10 people in each study area, the participants were selected purposively based a number of criteria and educational qualification was one of the major criteria. Hence the number of illiterate is less than the proportion which would be found if a random sample were taken of the Bangladeshi population.

Table 9: *Occupation of participants*

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Business	7	11.7
Farmer	7	11.7
Housewife	13	21.7
Service	8	13.3
Student	8	13.3
Laborer/Worker	15	25.0
Others	2	3.3

Agriculture is the main source of income and also profession of most of the people in the rural areas of Bangladesh. However, participants were selected from a wide range of the community, and came from different professions and occupations. People who are working in the agricultural sector of Bangladesh are marginal small

farmers, and agricultural labourers. Most of the rural women are housewives. However, observation reveals that the number of females involved in teaching and income generating activities such as domestic gardening, poultry raising and small cottage industries is increasing.

Table 10: *Number of adult members in the household*

<b>Number of Adults</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	2	3.3
2	19	31.7
3	7	11.7
4	10	16.7
5	8	13.3
6	6	10.0
7	5	8.3
8	2	3.3
12	1	1.7

The average household size according to preliminary figures in 2001 census is 4.8 persons including children. On the table above only 14 participants had more than 5 adult people (those who were over 15 years of age) in their household.

Table 11: *Number of illiterate members in the household*

<b>Number</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
0	24	40.0
1	12	20.0
2	12	20.0
3	9	15.0
4	2	3.3
6	1	1.7

Table 11 shows that 36 participants have at least one or more illiterate members in their household though only 21 participants were illiterate among the 60 participants. This matches with the current literacy rate of 32.4 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999).

Table 12 Assistance with literacy needs

Source of help	Frequency	Percent
Children	4	6.7
Husband	3	5.0
Neighbours	8	13.3
Relatives	5	8.4
Wife	2	3.3
Not applicable	38	63.3

It was found that illiterate participants get help mainly from neighbours if the other members of their family are also illiterate. It should be noted that there were 38 participants who felt they did not need help with reading or writing. There was therefore one participant who presented as literate but needed help. May be this person distrusted their skill level or had lost a formal knowledge of reading and writing.

Table 13: Performed activities by the participants in the household

Activity	Frequency	Percent
None	18	30.0
Normal Family Activities	28	46.7
Normal Family Activities Plus Some Income Generating Activities	11	18.3
Domestic farming	3	5.0

In general the male members of any Bangladeshi family are not involved with any household activities especially cooking and cleaning. However, they mainly do take responsibility for shopping. The female members are involved in household activities and in many cases they are not involved with any occupation especially in the rural areas.

Table 14: *Main sources of income of the interviewees*

<b>Sources of Income</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Business	8	13.3
Farming	14	23.3
Labour	11	18.3
Service	9	15.0
Multi Sources	17	28.3
Others	1	1.7

There were some people among the participants who were involved in more than one occupation and had multiple sources of income. In the rural areas members of marginal farm families usually have other sources of income such as service and business. Farm labourers and other labourers have to perform other occupations like rickshaw-pulling in between the crop seasons.

Table 15: *Everyday information needs of the participants*

		<b>Cases</b>	<b>Response-Percent</b>
Information need	Information about farming	35	58.3
	Family Planning information	37	61.7
	Flood Control/Natural Disaster Management	50	83.3
	Health Related Information	55	91.7
	Knowledge about the World	56	93.3
	Financial/Loan Assistance	40	66.7
	Entertainment	38	63.3
	Education	4	6.7

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it should cover the main areas of information needs of the participants and there was one option where participants had the opportunity to choose more than one type of information which they thought to be important for them. Table 15 indicates that most of the participants felt a need for information about flood control/natural disaster management, health related issues and knowledge about the world. Surprisingly 41.7% participants did not considered agriculture as their area of information need. Many had the opinion that

they know very well what they are doing. Moreover, some expressed their views that agricultural extension workers or even the agricultural scientist should share their practical experience.

In the past few decades family planning campaigns have helped increase consciousness about this issue among the majority of the people in Bangladesh. This may explain why the number of participants who expressed a need for family planning information was not so high.

Table 16: *Comparative information needs of rural and urban slum dwellers*

Types of need	Rural		Urban slum	
	Cases	Response-Percent	Cases	Response-Percent
Information about farming	30	75.0	5	25
Family Planning information	26	65.0	11	55
Flood Control/Natural Disaster Management	34	85.0	16	80
Health Related Information	36	90.0	19	95
Knowledge about the World	38	95.0	18	90
Financial/Loan Assistance	26	65.0	14	70
Entertainment	28	70.0	10	50
Education	4	10.0	--	--

Two-third of the participants chose financial/loan assistance as one of their areas of information need. Need for and lack of money in the form of cash is a common feature in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Urban dwellers also need money as the living cost is high. However, many rural people do not like loan assistance because of high interest rates and uncertainty about being able to pay the monthly instalments. They may also be uncomfortable about loans for religious reasons. A comparative analysis shows that there is a sharp difference between rural and urban slum informants information needs regarding farming which is not surprising. Whereas 75% rural dwellers chose farming as one of their major area of information need, only 25% of urban participants chose farming as one of their area of

information need. There were also slight differences for categories such as family planning information, flood control/natural disaster management and health-related information, knowledge about the world and financial/loan assistance as shown in the table below. In the case of rural informants, entertainment information need was 20% higher than for their urban counterparts. In the rural areas 10% of informants also expressed an interest in information to serve their educational needs.

Table 17: *Sources of information*

<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Response-Percent</b>
Friends, Relatives & Neighbours	56	93.3
Library/Information Centre/Reading centre	2	3.3
Newspaper	30	50.0
Own Experience	48	80.0
Radio	46	76.7
Television	44	73.3

Table 17 indicates that people still consider friends, relatives and neighbours as their main sources of information. Own experience, radio and television were chosen as sources of information by 48, 46 and 44 participants respectively. Half of the respondents/participants/informants consider the newspaper as one of the source for getting information. Only 2 participants consider the library as one of their sources of information. However among the six study areas only one, (Pail) has a library in the village.

Table 18: *Sources of information for rural participants*

<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Response – Percent</b>
Friends, Relatives & Neighbours	36	90.0
Library/Information Centre/Reading centre	2	5.0
Newspaper	23	57.5
Own Experience	29	72.5
Radio	31	77.5
Television	30	75.0

Table 19: *Sources of information for urban slum participants*

<b>Sources of Information - Urban</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Response- Percent</b>
Friends, Relatives & Neighbours	20	100.0
Library/Information Centre/Reading centre	0	00.0
Newspaper	7	35.0
Own Experience	19	95.0
Radio	15	75.0
Television	14	70.0

If we consider the rural and urban situation separately we find that 90% of rural informants consider friends, relatives and neighbours as one of their major sources of information whereas it was 100% in the urban slum cases. Another difference is dependence on newspapers – 57.5% in the case of rural participants and only 35% in the case of their urban counterparts. Moreover, findings indicate that 72.5% of rural informants regard their own experience as a source of information whereas 95% urban slum informants regard that as a source of information. In the cases of radio and television the differences are minimum.

Table 20: *Community gatekeepers for the interviewees*

<b>Reliable people in the Community</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Response – Percent</b>
Extension Workers	2	3.6
Husband/Wife	4	7.1
Local Government Staff	1	1.8
Local Politicians	17	30.4
Professional (Doctor/ Lawyer/so on)	3	5.4
Religious Leaders	2	3.6
School Teachers	12	21.4
Depends on problem	5	8.9
Other sources - Friend, Relative & Neighbour	21	37.5

Table 20 shows the variety of persons from whom participants received information within the community. Though it was not included in the interview questionnaire as one of the answers for this question, 37.5% of participants mentioned friends, relatives and neighbours as the major sources of information for new ideas. Local politicians and school teachers were regarded as the main sources of ideas and information by 30.4% and 21.4% of participants respectively. Only 5 participants said that they chosen the source according to the nature of the problem. Women leaders and NGO workers of BRAC, *Grameen* Bank and *Proshika* field staff were included as sources in the questionnaire but there was not a single response for them.

Table 21: *Community gatekeepers for the rural participants*

<b>Reliable people in the rural community</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Response-Percent</b>
Extension workers	2	5.1
Husband/Wife	4	10.3
Local Government Staff	1	2.6
Local Politicians	12	30.8
Professional (Doctor/Lawyer/so on)	2	5.1
School Teachers	11	28.2
Depends on problem	4	10.3
Other sources – Friends, Relatives & Neighbours	13	33.3

Table 22: *Community gatekeepers for the urban slum participants*

<b>Reliable people in the urban slum community</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Response-Percent</b>
Local Politicians	5	29.4
Professional (Doctor/Lawyer/so on)	1	5.9
Religious Leaders	2	11.8
School Teachers	1	5.9
Depends on problem	1	5.9
Other sources – Friends, Relatives & Neighbours	8	47.1

Comparison between the rural and urban slum communities shows that rural people had a good variety of reliable people as sources of information including extension workers and local government staff. Sometimes a husband or wife was also regarded as a reliable source of information in the rural community especially for those who didn't have access to other sources. Local politicians were cited as major reliable people in both the rural and urban slum community. The rating for school teachers was higher in the rural areas (28.2%) than urban slum areas (only 5.9%). However, reliability on friends, relatives and neighbours was higher in urban slum areas (47.1%) than rural areas (33.3%). It was expected that women leaders and NGO workers would also be considered as reliable people especially in the rural community, as there is a provision of having at least one elected female member in *Union Porishod* (the lowest local government elected authority/the lowest local government elected public body), and most of the development projects of the non-

government organizations are targeted towards deprived people and women. In fact no respondents mentioned these categories of people as a source of information. Only a very few informants, 4 in the rural study areas and only one in the urban slum areas, said that their choice of selecting the reliable people depends on the type of problem they had.

Table 23: *Sources of getting local information*

<b>Sources of Local Information</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Local Shop/Local Tea Stall	9	15.0
Market	6	10.0
Neighbours	26	43.3
Neighbours & Other Family Members	7	11.7
Other Family Member	3	5.0
Others	9	15.0

Table 23 shows that 36 participants got local information from neighbours and other family members. It is generally believed that local tea-stalls and markets are the places where people gather and exchange information. But only 9 and 6 participants respectively mentioned these as sources of getting local information.

Table 24: *Sources of getting local information - rural participants*

<b>Sources of Local Information</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Local Shops	4	10.0
Market	6	15.0
Neighbours	17	42.5
Neighbours & Others	2	5.0
Family Members	3	7.5
Others	8	20.0

Table 25: *Sources of getting local information – urban slum participants*

<b>Sources of Local Information</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Local Shops	5	25.0
Neighbours	9	45.0
Neighbours & Others	5	25.0
Others	1	5.0

A comparison of the sources of getting local information between rural and urban dwellers shows that 25% of urban dwellers obtained local information from the local shop/tea stalls where only 10% rural dwellers obtained local information from the same source. The market was a less popular source in the urban settings. The comparison also shows that 55% rural participants received local information from neighbours and/or other family members, where as it was 70% for the urban participants. Moreover, 20% rural participants received local information from a variety of sources and in case of urban participants it was only 5%. As with other research projects, other individuals are the most important source of information for respondents. This may be a problem for agencies which want to disseminate information but may not be able to identify a group of individuals trusted by all members of the community. The reliance on known individuals, family members and neighbours, is particularly shown in the urban slum areas where obtaining access to information may be particularly difficult.

Table 26: *Frequency of getting Extension Information*

<b>Categories of people</b>	<b>Never or very rarely</b>		<b>At least once in this year</b>	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Agriculture/Veterinary Extension Workers	43	71.6	17	28.3
Health Assistant	41	66.7	19	31.7
Family Planning Worker	30	50.0	30	50.0
Community Development Worker	38	63.3	22	36.7
Library/Information Services Staff	59	98.3	1	1.7
Other Category of Govt. Staff	59	98.3	1	1.7

There is a variety of persons whose major responsibility is the provision of information to the general public. Participants were asked if they had used such people as sources of information. This table shows the number of participants who had interactions with extension workers and other categories of people whose job is to give information to and help the community. In the cases where information had been sought within the last year, the highest percentage (50%) said this was from a family planning worker. The second highest category of professional information workers contacted was community development workers (36.7%). Health assistants and agricultural/veterinary extension workers were also used by nearly one third of participants. It is desirable that in a country like Bangladesh with an agro-based economy, rural people should have frequent contact with agricultural/veterinary extension workers especially as crop yields are dependent on good farming practices. In comparison with these workers only one participant is recorded as having any contact with a member of the library or information service staff. The lack of access to libraries in all but one of the areas of the study no doubt accounts for this but it can also be explained by the fact that people see libraries as sources of recreation rather information.

Table 27: *Frequency of getting Extension Information by rural participants*

<b>Categories of people</b>	<b>Never or very rarely</b>		<b>At least once in this year</b>	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Agriculture/Veterinary Extension Workers	23	57.5	17	28.3
Community Development Worker	25	62.5	22	36.7
Family Planning Worker	16	40.0	30	50.0
Health Assistant	24	60.0	19	31.7
Library/Information Services Staff	39	97.5	1	1.7
Other Category of Govt. Staff	39	97.5	1	1.7

Table 288: *Frequency of getting Extension Information by urban slum participants*

<b>Categories of people</b>	<b>Never or very rarely</b>		<b>At least once in this year</b>	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Agriculture/Veterinary Extension Workers	20	100.0	--	--
Community Development Worker	13	65.0	7	35.0
Family Planning Worker	14	70.0	6	30.0
Health Assistant	17	85.0	3	15.0
Library/Information Services Staff	20	100.0	--	--
Other Category of Govt. Staff	20	100.0	--	--

A comparison between the rural and urban slum participants of the study shows that there were major differences in terms of getting extension services. In the rural study areas, the performance of the family planning workers was higher than other services – 60% of the participants indicated to have had contact in the past year where as in the urban slum areas only 30% participants have had contact in the past year. In the rural study areas the next category of extension services in terms of performance was agricultural/veterinary extension workers; 42.5 in the past year and another 5% within the last two years. The agricultural/veterinary extension services

are obviously not available in the urban slum study area. Health extension services were the next category in the rural areas – 40% participants were received relevant information in the past year, whereas surprisingly only 15% of the urban slum participants were contacted by the health assistants in the past year which also means that 85% of the participants were never been contacted. In is worthwhile to mention here that the government has changed the policy for providing health services in both rural and urban areas in recent years. Residents are now encouraged to visit the nearest Health and Family Planning Complex to obtain health information or services. The performance of the community development workers who are mostly NGO workers’ was almost same in both rural and urban study areas. Although extension workers have had contact with a reasonable proportion of the respondents, there is clearly a majority for whom these extension services are either unavailable or not sought. There is also a clear distinction between the rural and urban slum areas with information not reaching dwellers in the urban slums.

Table 29: *Recall of discussion with extension information workers*

<b>Recalled discussion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	41	68.3
Don't remember	2	3.3
Not applicable	17	28.3

Participants were requested to recall the type of information they were provided by extension workers on the last occasion they met. Table 29 shows that 43 participants were in contact with extension workers or others – among them 41 recalled the information or help they received from them and only two participants didn’t remember whatever they discussed. Seventeen participants were never in contact for information or help with those workers in the past year. The rate of recall of the information provided implies that the information services used supported a need which was sufficiently important to have made an impact.

Table 290: *Major information problem*

<b>Problem faced</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	37	61.7
No	23	38.3
Total	60	100.0

Participants were asked if they or members of their household had experienced a major information problem in the last one year or so before the interview date. If they had, they were asked to categorise what that problem was. Table 30 shows that out of 60 interviewees 37 had experienced information problems very recently. The following discussion only refers to these participants who stated that they had experienced a major information problem.

Table 31: *Types of information problem*

<b>Types of problem</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Financial	16	43.2
Health	16	43.2
Judicial	1	2.7
Land ownership disputes	3	8.1
Unemployment	1	2.7

Table 31 shows the types of problem either the participants or a member of their family had. The findings indicate that finance (43.2%) and health issues (43.2%) were the two major problem areas the participants faced in the past few months or so before the interview session. These two areas account for a total of 86.4% of all the problems mentioned by the participants. The next category was land ownership disputes (three cases). The other two areas of information problem were judicial (only one case) and unemployment (only one case).

A comparison between rural and urban participants shows that types of information problem were more or less same in rural as well as urban slum areas. However, in case of rural participants the percentages for different types of problem were a bit higher (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV). In addition to that rural informants had some information problems such as land ownership disputes and unemployment. It is very surprising that participants from farm families did not mention any problem regarding farming.

Table 32: *Major information providers for the interviewees*

<b>Information provider</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Doctors/Hospitals	16	43.2
All other sources	16	43.2
Don't get advice	2	5.4
Don't seek advice	3	8.1

Table 32 represents the type of information provider consulted about the problems detailed in the previous question. The data reveals that a source consulted for information or services by the highest number of informants (43.2%) is either doctors or hospitals. Another 43.2% participants received help from a variety of sources which includes local leaders, family members, relatives, neighbours, association, lawyer and police. The figures also show that only two respondents did not get anyone to solve the problem they had and surprisingly another three respondents did not seek for advice to anyone as they thought nobody could help solving their problem. A comparison shows that frequencies of getting information from the providers were almost same in rural and urban areas (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV). However, the only major difference was information received from other sources (local political leaders, family members, relatives, neighbours, various associations, lawyers and police) which is 32.5% in the rural areas but only 10% in the urban areas.

Table 30: *Satisfactory reply received?*

<b>Received satisfactory answer/service</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	28	87.5
No	4	12.5

Table 33 shows 87.5% participants received satisfactory help or service from the provider. Only 12.5% informants said that they were not provided with a satisfactory answer or reasonable help.

Table 31: *Reasons for choosing the information/service provider*

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
I was referred	4	12.5
From Prior experience of Knowledge	22	68.8
It was nearby and easy to go	3	9.4
It just happened to be there	1	3.1
Others	2	6.3
Total	32	100.0

Table 34 indicates reasons for choosing the source. Overwhelmingly 68.8% participants went to that particular source due to prior experience or knowledge. In situations in which participants had been referred (12.5%), they usually found the source through the recommendations from doctors or neighbour (only one case). Geographic proximity and other factors like easy access were considered by only three participants.

Table 32: *Reasons for choosing the information/service provider by the rural participants*

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
I was referred	2	8.3
From prior experience or knowledge	18	75.0
It was nearby and easy to go	3	12.5
Others	1	4.2

Table 336: *Reasons for choosing the information/service provider by the urban slum participants*

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
I was referred	2	25.0
From prior experience or knowledge	4	50.0
It just happened to be there	1	12.5
Others	1	12.5

A comparative analysis of the data regarding reasons for choosing the source to solve their problem reveals that 75% rural participants chose the sources from their prior experience of knowledge where as only 50% urban participants did that. The experience of the current researcher is that those rural residents who found themselves in very difficult situation which threatens their survival are more likely to have migrated to urban areas. They are new residents with little idea of what information may be available to them in their new situation. Such migrants are likely to end up living in slums. Only rural participants (12.5%) considered geographic proximity and other factors like easy access, and one of the urban slum participants indicated that it just happened.

Table 347: *Level of satisfaction with the information provider*

<b>Level of satisfaction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Satisfied	13	40.6
Somewhat Satisfied	12	37.5
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	6.3
Very Dissatisfied	4	12.5
Don't Know	1	3.1
Total	32	100.0

Table 37 shows the level of satisfaction the participants had after getting the help or services, 40.6% were very satisfied with the information or services provided and 37.5% were somewhat satisfied. Only one participant was somewhat dissatisfied and the remaining four were very dissatisfied with the assistance or service they received. However, we should remember that 23 participants did not have any recent information problem and another five participants did not get anyone to solve the problem or did not seek advice to anyone as they thought nobody could help solving their problem.

Table 35: *Liking for the source*

<b>Liking for the source</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Liked the source	20	62.5
Didn't like the source	12	37.5
Total	32	100.0

The question was also asked whether informants have any complaint or not against information provider. The data reveals that an overall of 62.5% informants liked the sources and 37.5% did not. However, in rural study areas 70.8% informants liked the information or service provider and 29.2% had complains against them, whereas in the urban slum areas only 37.5% were found happy with the provider and 62.5% were not happy with the service or information they received (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV).

Table 3936: *Intention of seeking help again*

<b>Intention for seeking help again</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	20	62.5
No	10	31.3
Don't Know	2	6.3
Total	32	100.0

Table 39 represents the intention of seeking help again from the same source among the participants. The majority (62.5%) of the participants said that they would return to the same provider if a similar problem arose in the future. However, a good number (31.3%) of them said they would not return to the same source even if for a similar problem in future. Only two participants did not know what they would do in future if a similar problem arose.

In the rural areas, 70.8% of participants were found who would like to seek help again from the same source for the same type of problem. Only 25% expressed their lack of interest in seeking help for the same reasons from the sources they used before. In the urban slum areas the rate was much lower than in the rural areas – only 3 (37.5%) participants were found who were interested in going back to the same sources and 4 (50%) participants expressed their lack of interest in seeking help from the sources they used before for the same reasons (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV).

Table 370: *Newspaper and magazines reading habits among the participants*

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Mentioned only Newspaper	23	38.3
Mentioned only Magazine	1	1.7
Both Newspapers and Magazine	4	6.7
None	32	53.3

An important aspect of establishing the information seeking patterns of rural and urban slum communities was to find out their reading habits and the part reading plays in getting their current information. The majority of the participants (53.3%)

were unable to mention any name of either a newspaper or magazine. A good number of participants (38.3%) were able to mention one or more names of newspapers which they read very often for current national and international news. Only one participant mentioned a magazine as a source of current information and four mentioned both newspapers and magazines.

Table 381: *Newspaper and magazines reading habit among the rural participants*

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Mentioned only Newspaper	18	45.0
Mentioned only Magazine	1	2.5
Both Newspapers and Magazine	3	7.5
None	18	45.0

Table 392: *Newspaper and magazines reading habit among the urban slum participants*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Mentioned only Newspaper	5	25.0
Both Newspapers and Magazine	1	5.0
None	14	70.0

Informants who gave this response vary between rural and urban slum areas. In the rural study areas 18 participants (45% of the total) were able to mention one or more names of newspaper where as only 5 of the urban slum participants (25% of the total) were able to mention any newspapers by name. In the case of rural informants 10% were able to mention both newspapers and/or magazines whereas only 5% of urban respondents were found to be familiar with both newspapers and magazines. Participants were asked to indicate the type of materials which they read often. Data on participants reading habits is presented in the table below.

Table 403: *Types of literature read by the participants*

<b>Type of Materials Read</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Only Recreational Literature	5	8.3
Only Textbooks	6	10.0
Both	8	13.3
None	8	13.3
Other type/types of Books	14	23.3
Not applicable	19	31.7

The findings reveal that the largest group of respondents are those who said they do not read anything as they are illiterate, as shown in Table 43. Moreover, another 13.3% of participants do not read anything because of lack of interest or non-availability of desired reading materials. The largest group (23.3%) who have a reading habit chose either religious books, mainly by those who are aged, or children's books as they do not have access to other types of recreational literature. The rest of the data in the table indicates that the types of materials reported to be read by the participants are first, both textbooks and recreational literature (13.3%); second, only textbooks (10.0%); and thirdly, only recreational literature (8.3%). What the available data reveals is that while the reading habit is not totally absent in rural and urban communities, it is still at an early stage of being formed, and cannot be depended upon to serve as a tool for information seeking by the majority of rural and poor urban people. A comparison between rural and urban slum participants responses also shows that the level of reading activity among rural dwellers was higher for most different types of materials (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV). The reason may be that in the poor urban communities people spent most of their time earning money because of high living expenses. Also the number of illiterates is high among them.

Table 414: *Availability of radio in participants household*

<b>Availability of Radio</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Have Radio	42	70.0
Don't have any Radio	18	30.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 44 represents the extent of working radio ownership among the participants. The data shows that 70% of the participants had a working radio during the period of interview and 30% did not have any radio. However, there were variations in reporting the availability of having radio. It was found that radio ownership is somewhat higher in the rural study areas (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV). The above data might not be representative as the participants were chosen purposively from different groups and according the last national survey only 23% of the total population of Bangladesh have a working radio in their household.

Table 425: *Type of radio programs liked by the interviewees*

<b>Types of Radio Program liked by the Informants</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Songs	5	11.6
Song & Drama	1	2.3
Songs & Discussions on Health and Family Planning	2	4.7
News	5	11.6
News & Agricultural Programs	1	2.3
Don't listen radio	4	9.3
Songs, news & discussions	4	9.3
News & Songs	4	9.3
News & entertainment programs	2	4.7
News & discussions on Farming, Health & Family Planning	1	2.3
Sports	1	2.3
News, drama & agricultural programs	1	2.3
Discussions & magazine/entertainment programs	2	4.7
Agricultural programs	1	2.3
Family planning program	1	2.3
Any program	2	4.7
News & drama	1	2.3
Religious programs	1	2.3
News, songs & drama	1	2.3
Drama	1	2.3
Songs & sports	1	2.3
News, drama, songs & discussions	1	2.3
Total	43	100.0

From Table 45 one can clearly understand that there was no dominant pattern of listening to radio programs among the interview participants. Instead they had chosen a number of radio programs which they listen to regularly. One of the participants who did not have a radio in the household was found to like listening songs in the radio. Among the radio programs news, entertainment programs and discussions such as agricultural programs and family planning programs were of some importance to the participants. A very few participants chose one type of

program only: news (5 respondents), songs (5 respondents), agricultural programs, drama, family planning programs and sports (one respondent each). The strong rating of news, entertainment programs and discussions might possibly suggest that to many rural and poor urban people who mainly migrated from the rural areas, radio is seen as a news and entertainment medium as well as a medium for getting new ideas and information. A comparison between rural and urban radio listeners among the participants reveals that rural listeners listened to a higher number of programs than their urban counterparts (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV).

Table 436: *Usual listening time of radio programs by the participants*

<b>Radio-Listening Time</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Response -Percent</b>
Morning	11	28.2
Afternoon	21	53.8
Evening	28	71.8

Table 46 shows when the participants listen to radio programs. The majority of the participants (71.8%) preferred evening as their normal listening time, 53.8% preferred afternoon and only 28.2% preferred morning for listening radio programs. It is important to know when people are listening because this determines when is the best time to broadcast a program. There are more information programs on Bangladesh Radio that are broadcast in the morning, although common-sense and the above data shows that fewer will be listening. However, the radio stations also broadcast some informational programs in the afternoon and evening. There is no significant difference in the pattern of listening to radio programs between rural and urban slum residents.

Table 447: *Availability of television in the household*

<b>Availability of Television in the Household</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Have Television	27	45.0
Don't have any Television	33	55.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 48:45 *Place of TV watching*

<b>Watched TV in neighboring house or in market</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	21	35.0
No	12	20.0
Not applicable	27	45.0

Table 47 shows the availability of a working television set in the household of the participants. Among the 60 participants 27 had a working television set during the time of interview which might not be the true picture of having TV set among the household of Bangladesh in general. Moreover, table 48 shows that another 21 participants used to watch TV programs in neighbouring houses or in markets. Only 12 participants do not watch television programs at all.

If we consider TV ownership between rural and urban study areas it was found that ownership of TV was lower in the rural areas – 42.5% as against 50% in the urban slums (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV).

Table 46: *Type of television programs liked by the participants*

<b>Types of Television Program</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
News	3	6.3
News, Film & Drama	10	20.8
News & sports	3	6.3
News and Discussions	1	2.1
Drama	2	4.2
Drama & film show	2	4.2
Film show	4	8.3
News & Drama	9	18.8
Any	4	8.3
Magazine/ Entertainment program	1	2.1
News, drama & discussions	3	6.3
News & magazine/entertainment programs	1	2.1
News, drama & magazine program	1	2.1
News, film show, drama & sports	1	2.1
News & film show	2	4.2
None	1	2.1
Total	48	100.0

Table 49 represents the type or types of television programs liked by the informants. The data indicates that news and entertainment programs are the most liked programs, a similar response to that for radio. The strong rating of news and entertainment programs might possibly suggest that to them, television is seen truly as a news and entertainment medium. A comparison between rural and urban slum participants responses show entertainment programs such as drama, film and film show were much more popular in the rural areas (*see* Appendix. III & Appendix IV).

Table 470: *Existence of library in the study area*

<b>Existence of library in the area</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	9	15.0
No	50	83.3
Don't know	1	1.7

Table 481: *Frequency of library use*

<b>Frequency of Library Use</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Once in a week	4	6.7
Once in a month	1	1.7
Never	3	5.0
Not applicable	52	86.7

Table 492: *Preferred types of library materials by the participants*

<b>Desired Library Materials</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Recreational literature	3	5.0
Not applicable	55	91.7
Recreational literature & newspaper	1	1.7
Various	1	1.7

Table 503: *Satisfaction on library services*

<b>Meet the demand</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	2	3.3
No	3	5.0
Not applicable	55	91.7

Among the six study areas only one (*Poil* in *Hobigang* district) has a library in the village. It was found that nine participants were aware of the existence of the library

in their village. Among them four informants visited the library at least once in a week, one informant once in a month and the rest never visited the library. Either they are illiterate or they had no interest in reading. Recreational literature was found as to be most desired type of reading materials from the library, mentioned by three informants. Another expressed the view that more recreational literature and newspapers were needed for the library. The other participants wanted to have more reading materials on various disciplines. Among the five participants who used to go to the library, two were satisfied with the library services and three were not as the library did not meet their demand.

## **Chapter VII: Summary of focus group discussions**

It was found that the male participants were concerned about their community and their future whatever their age group. However, the younger participants showed the greatest desire to improve their condition. This is probably because they are the most enlightened section of the rural community who have received the benefits of both formal and informal education. The oldest male participants tend to be devoted to their religion and filter their ideas through their religious beliefs. They therefore tend to be more traditional and will accept change only if it fits with their ideology.

Compared to their male counterparts, younger women participants were found not too be concerned about their community and not empowered like their male partners or brothers. They are very dependent in their use of information and expect it to be provided for them and explained to them without much effort on their part. By contrast, the middle aged female participants were working women who seemed concerned about the village and other important issues. However, they expressed the view that they do not have enough time to think about anything or do anything other than their work and family activities.

The older women were very concerned about the future of their families especially their adult children and about the health issues faced by themselves and other family members. But like other rural women of different ages they were found not to be analysing and thinking about socio-economic issues relevant to their own lives and community lives. Because of this they appear on the surface not to have any clear ideas about what to do about the problems facing them and their community.

Respondents in the focus groups identified a number of problems which rural dwellers are facing in earning an adequate income. Those are: lack of money for investment, poor planning, insufficient labour during the crop season, unavailability of advice/consultancy services, single income family, higher number of family members, increased cost of agricultural accessories such as diesel, insecticides and fertilisers, and increased wages of agricultural labourers. They also mentioned lack of an adequate road communication system, unemployment, lack of systematic

marketing of agricultural products, increased production costs of agricultural crops, inadequate academic institutions in the rural areas, lack of medicine and health services, social deprivation and narrowness and finally environmental disasters.

Focus group participants raised the following issues as pre-requisites for improved prosperity in rural areas in Bangladesh: a change of attitude of customers so that they pay immediately in cash rather than giving an oral agreement to pay at a later date, better road communication and electricity supply, investment in agriculture and government control over the price of agricultural goods. They also mentioned information needs, such as the need for skills in small crop and vegetable growing, understanding of new agricultural methods, and advice and training for business.

In order to develop themselves and their community better participants suggested that villagers should have positive thinking, should be tolerant of any good initiatives, should eliminate retaliation and disputes, should build a co-operative society and keep the environment clean. All the group participants expressed the view that education is the first pre-requisite of a better rural community, both formal and informal education. Part of the goal of this education should be to eliminate superstition.

The focus groups discussed in detail the kind of information they wish to have. They expressed a wish to know about innovations, about what is happening in the world, and national and local news. They also want help on dealing with issues about their own lives and that of their family members, issues regarding the income of the family, family life, education, health and hygiene of the children, agricultural techniques and how to live a religious and moral life. These are the types of information focus group participants feel they need for their day to day life.

The main sources of information in rural areas are radio, television and newspapers. These allow respondents to know what is going on in the world and within the country. The most popular way of getting information in the rural areas is word of mouth. Even those who are illiterate ask other people who can read to tell them the latest on current issues, like the “war in Iraq”. People who meet others at the local

market or on their way receive current local, national and international news while talking with other people. On agricultural issues farmers get advice from their experienced fellow farmers, fertilizer shop owners and agriculture extension workers. Women seek information from their husbands, adult children, neighbours, elders of the community and NGO workers, and the same are their sources for getting new ideas.

Within the community people normally seek advice from those dwellers who are wise, old, honest, well educated and well informed. A good number of focus group participants stated that they choose the person who has the knowledge and experience in relation to the problem they have. Local school teachers and the chairman and members of the local Union Council are also considered as trustworthy persons for seeking advice.

The local market is a good source of information for male adults in the rural community. People coming from the city or the sub-district or other places usually share the latest happenings with the people who are in the market and this way they get information. In rural areas news about events spreads very quickly. As well as this, rural male residents receive news from neighbours, other colleagues and visitors. For rural women, family members, neighbours and visitors are the only sources of receiving news of local happenings.

Many focus group participants stated that they received information from agricultural extension workers, health and family planning workers, and field level staff of NGOs. However, the younger participants seemed not happy with the level of assistance they received from different categories of extension workers.

Participants felt that they are facing problems in getting better health services, more employment, help with solving land disputes and access to finance in their local community. Slow government procedures are also a big problem for the rural populace. For better health services, they usually go to the city and are happy with the services they received there. But land related disputes take a long time to solve in rural Bangladesh due to slow legal procedures.

A good number of the focus group participants read newspapers almost daily. The rest said that they did not read newspapers either because of lack of time or because of illiteracy. Only a few were found to be interested in other types of reading. Though most of them have a television in their house or have the opportunity to watch television at a neighbouring house, a good number of participants still listen to radio programs for news and discussions. Nevertheless, television has become one of the major sources of current information for them, as well as being an important medium for recreation. News, drama, movies and other entertainment programs were the most popular television programs for most of the participants. Television programs are the opportunity for recreation in their hard life and a source changing culture. For many rural women, television is the only source of information which gives them the news of the outside world and the country. For them it is a very important medium for recreation in their own homes.

## **Chapter VIII: Summary and conclusion**

This study starts with the assumption that empowerment of the people is the basis of all development. Such empowerment may be achieved in various ways, for example through development of civil society organizations, mass literacy and re-structuring services provided by the government. The present study argues that information is a key determinant of community empowerment. With the help of information technology, the remotest village has the possibility of tapping a global store of information more quickly and cheaply. Tolero & Gaudette (1996: 14) suggest that satellite networks, wireless communication, public telephones, and community information centres are effective channels of information. Community information centres can extend the reach of information services to under-served rural and urban areas.

The objective of the research is to identify how information can influence development in the developing countries, especially in Bangladesh. Two main objectives of this study were to a) determine the influence of information on development and the functioning of a knowledge community in selected rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh, and b) examine the structural, economic and social contexts of existing information services which contribute to their success or lack of success. The study also examines the problem areas of accessing information encountered by those residents. This study considers primarily the demand side, focusing on the information needs of residents in rural and poor urban settlements, and the sources they use in accessing that information.

At the heart of this investigation was a desire to elucidate the information needs of community residents and how they used information. The major findings of this part of the research are summarised below.

It is clear that the economic condition of the participants can affect their information needs and information-seeking habits. In the rural areas most of the participants had more than one occupation. Women usually work as housewives. But now more and

more women are involved with various income generating activities such as domestic gardening, poultry and small cottage industries. In the urban areas most of the participants, both men and women, had an occupation as the living expenses are comparatively high compared to rural areas. Some of the male participants had more than one occupation.

Interviewees were asked what were the main problems they face presently in earning an adequate income. It is understood from their responses that both in rural and poor urban areas lack of money for living is a major problem. In the rural areas, some informants stated that insufficient money for investing in agriculture or in business prevents them from having a better life. However, a surprisingly large number of rural interviewees said that they have no problem in earning an adequate income. In the case of the poor urban slum residents, high living costs and low incomes mean that living in the city is a problem.

Some families in both the rural and urban areas have only one member with an income. Work is also seasonal which can cause difficulties. In the cropping season most of the rural dwellers had insufficient working-age individuals within the family. As a consequence of this shortage, there may be a need to employ labour at busy times, but costs for this are high because of demand. However, in the monsoon there is no work at all for many rural residents. One interviewee identified flood, excessive rainfall in the monsoon, drought and shortage of working personnel as the problems of earning an adequate income in the rural areas.

Informants expressed mixed opinions regarding improving their ability to earn more income. Many believed that they needed an additional job to increase their family income. It would be beneficial for a family which obtains most of its income from rice farming to create a small business or raise some livestock. A small businessman might boost income by taking up some agricultural land and producing some farm produce. A considerable number of interviewees believed that extra investment in their business or farming could increase their income and they were interested in new sources of credit. Female respondents often stated that they could add to the family income by setting up a small business, such as poultry farming, fish farming, home vegetable growing and making handicrafts. One of the

interviewees in the slums said that if he could go to any Middle-Eastern country, he could hope to earn more money. Nevertheless, there were a number of respondents who had found no way to improve their present level of income or felt that they did not know what to do to change their current economic condition. They could see that something better was possible but could not achieve it without help.

That there is a great desire for improvement in personal lives is obvious from the responses. Community members were asked what they feel people in their areas should know in order to develop themselves and their communities. There was a strong voice for better education at both primary and secondary level. In most of the rural primary schools in Bangladesh the student-teacher ratio is more than 1:100, which the informants found not to be a good environment for learning. Many felt that their children are not achieving the level of literacy that their parents used to attain at year 1 or year 2 at the primary school. During the fieldwork in the rural village in Sylhet district, the researcher also observed that there is a positive attitude among the villagers who send their children to the BRAC Primary School where they have to pay a considerable amount of school fees. Even a poor farmer in that village believed that it is worth spending for his child's education at the BRAC school. This strong belief in education appears to be based not only on a desire to earn more money but also on a genuine desire to develop their individual lives and the collective life of the community.

The Bangladeshi government have placed great emphasis on the need to disseminate information about good agricultural practices throughout the country. The respondents in rural areas agreed with this need. They identified training in modern agricultural methods, knowledge of how to face critical situations in crop growing and rapid diffusion of agricultural innovations as being important in developing community strength. However, they were also clear that they needed training in other forms of small farming such as raising poultry and livestock, other trades outside agriculture and in small business practice. These were measures which they thought would ultimately develop rural areas in Bangladesh.

Community members believed that community life could be improved through greater understanding of issues outside employment and income-generation.

Mention was made of the need to build awareness of topics such as women's rights, general health issues and environmental problems. One of the slum interviewees commented: "We are living in a very unhygienic environment in this slum and people should make an effort to change the environment". Some also expressed their concern about social problems such as drug addiction which they think could be stopped if they made joint efforts with their neighbours.

One constant finding was that both rural and urban slum residents saw information channels as a source not just of immediately useful information but also of entertainment, news and knowledge of the world outside their normal lives. This question of the need for wider involvement and recreation will be discussed later in a section on the "small world" theory of the information needs of the poor.

Inhabitants in both rural areas and urban slum communities considered their major information source to be friends, relatives and neighbours. This is not unexpected as it has been a theme of information use studies in all cultures. However, radio, TV and newspapers are also mentioned as important sources. Newspapers were found to be particularly important in rural areas where one copy might be read by a number of different people and the information passed on to those who are illiterate. A greater number of urban participants consider their own experience as a source of information compared to their rural counter parts.

It is generally believed in Bangladesh that local tea-stalls and markets are the places where people gather and exchange information. Urban dwellers mention shops and tea-stalls as places where information can be gathered and rural dwellers especially mentioned markets. The information originates in places like the market and then the receiver disseminates the information to his or her neighbours. The market and tea-stalls are where people meet the friends and neighbours who are such an important source of information.

There are some people in both rural areas and in urban slums, whether government staff or NGO workers, whose job is to give information to and help the community people at the grassroots level. These include local government officers, agriculture extension workers, family planning workers, health assistants and community

development workers. A comparison between rural and urban slum communities shows that rural people had as sources of information a variety of people and agencies which they believed to be reliable. These included both extension workers and local government staff. It is also notable that school teachers were cited as useful and reliable sources of information by respondents in rural areas. In comparison with this, those living in the urban slums did not feel that they had as good a selection of services to choose from. However, local politicians were cited as trustworthy people in both rural and urban slum communities.

Despite positive responses to the services offered, observations from the field work and the responses of the participants lead to the conclusion that a full range of extension services is not given to a minimum satisfactory level in either rural or slum areas. The situation is worst in the urban slum areas specifically in services in health and hygiene, education, housing and employment.

Participants in the survey were asked if they had experienced a major specific information need and how they had dealt with this. Most of the problems which were identified were either connected with finance or health. Some rural participants also mentioned legal and unemployment problems. A very wide range of sources were consulted for help with the problem, including both friends and relatives and a range of the available officials and information workers. The majority of the participants received satisfactory information or services from the source consulted. A very small number of participants did not get anyone to solve the problem they had or did not seek for advice to anyone as they thought nobody could help solving their problem. One-third of participants felt that they had had no specific information problem in the last year prior to the interview date.

The use of the mass media in the study areas was also investigated. The majority of the participants in both rural and urban slum areas did not read newspapers and magazines regularly for obtaining current information either because they were illiterate or because of a lack of interest or access. Even so, a reasonable proportion did mention that they read a newspaper regularly and, as has been seen, the information in the newspaper typically reaches a wider audience. Moreover, a small proportion mentioned reading books, especially religious books, textbooks and

recreational literature. A comparison between rural and urban slum participants' responses also shows that the level of reading activity among rural dwellers was higher for most types of material. Perhaps what the available data reveals is that while the reading habit is not totally absent in the communities studied, it is still at an early stage of being formed, and cannot be depended upon to serve as a tool for information seeking by the majority of rural and poor urban people.

The data shows that seventy% of the participants had a working radio during the period of interview. However, there were variations in reporting the availability of having radio; it was found that radio ownership is somewhat higher in the rural study areas. The data might not be representative as the participants were chosen purposively from different groups and according the last national survey only 23% of the total population of Bangladesh have a working radio in their household. Among the radio programmes, news and entertainment programmes and discussions on agriculture and family planning were of some importance to the participants. The strong rating of news, entertainment programmes and discussions is common to responses about all the available mass media.

Radio continues to play a major role in mass communication in countries like Bangladesh compared with television. The rate of ownership of televisions is lower than that of radios. However, a large number of participants who had no TV in their household were found to have access to TV either in neighbouring houses or in markets. As with radio, news and entertainment programmes are the most liked television programmes.

Much of the research on user studies concentrates on the use of libraries as sources of information. There is obviously this potential in Bangladesh with a number of organisations involved in the creation of libraries. However, only one library was available to the communities chosen for this research. According to the National Book Centre of Bangladesh and other sources, the country has 4000 libraries in the rural areas. But the number is insufficient compared with 90,000 villages. Despite the targeting of rural areas by a number of organisations, their resources are not sufficient to offer a comprehensive service. From my own experience it is clear that poor urban areas have never been considered as a component of library planning and

services, and are still being neglected and overlooked in government policy and decision-making. The survey results and close observation reveal that the rural library is a place for literate youths and the consciously educated and better-off people of that area.

### *Local and indigenous knowledge*

As mentioned earlier in the literature review chapter, Bangladesh possesses a rich heritage of indigenous knowledge through which people try to manage their production systems on the floodplain, exploiting land, fisheries, livestock and forests, to earn their livelihoods. Mallick states that that much of this knowledge has been lost with the “modernization” of agriculture and the rapid spread of new technology (Mallick, 2000). But it is safe to say Bangladesh is a country where indigenous knowledge and exogenous or scientific knowledge are working together and the benefits of modern methods should not be overlooked. Statistics from the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) show that rice production in Bangladesh has increased 157.55% in the last three decades. This is due to the introduction of high yielding varieties of rice by the scientists of the BRRI and the IRRI (International Rice Research Institute). One farmer stated that his family has been producing almost double the amount of rice per hectare in recent years due to the high yielding varieties. He felt that the replacement of low-yielding traditional varieties and abandonment of older production practices had been beneficial.

During the interview sessions and focus groups, a number of interviewees expressed the view that their knowledge of different issues should be shared and that the knowledge transfer system should be two-way. It is true that more effective and creative interaction between indigenous and exogenous knowledge systems should be established by taking into consideration their strengths and weaknesses. That is why the New Agricultural Extension Policy (1996) states that: “It is recognized that farmers’ own indigenous technical knowledge is often environmentally sustainable, and efforts should be made to support and learn from farmers, as well as the formal research system”.

A close observation and comparison between past and present methods of livelihood would reveal that rural and even a few urban residents are practicing a number of indigenous techniques and such technologies are still being used in agriculture, healthcare, community development, conflict resolution and many other aspects of life. It is also worth mentioning again that there are a number of rhymes and proverbs in the Bengali language that describe how people traditionally cultivated their land, their cropping patterns, how seeds were selected and preserved, and how people responded to natural events.

However, it is also important to understand that the traditional way of life was harsh and difficult. One of the interviewees remembered that, forty or fifty years ago, cholera was a very devastating epidemic disease in Bangladesh. He identified unhygienic food habits, poor patterns of food intake and insufficient knowledge of health and hygiene among many rural and urban communities as being responsible for the spread of disease. Another example is the introduction of bread in the breakfast diet in Bangladesh. A government campaign in the 1960s was used to promote the use of bread to alleviate poor nutrition caused by rice shortages and a lack of variety in the diet. However, it took many years to change the habit of eating rice at every meal. Many rural and urban residents had the idea that only very poor people needed to eat bread in the breakfast as they do not have the money to buy enough rice. On the contrary, traditional conflict resolution practices in Bangladesh especially in the rural areas, are most acceptable, widely practiced and affordable to the population compared with formal court systems.

### ***Fit between information services and needs***

The fieldwork undertaken by the researcher has shown that there have been some major changes in the economic and social life of people who live in the rural and informal urban settlements due to the influence of information in the last few decades. There are a number of agents involved in dissemination of information and knowledge and these agents are doing a good job on the whole. Despite this, people in these areas question the relevance and appropriateness of some of the services offered, because such services do not always satisfy the demand for information by

the local residents. As a result, the information sources and knowledge developed by these services has often not been widely disseminated nor taken up by the target audience.

The country's large population and illiteracy are the two major factors which contribute to poor dissemination of information. There are an impressive number of government and non-government organisations which have been working for a long time in disseminating information on topics such as agriculture, family planning and health care and community development. The media are playing a great role in disseminating information too. But still no specific organisation can claim that they reach the majority of the population on a specific issue. Besides information services are often planned and provided in anticipation of demand, not in response to known demand. It is difficult for the poor to make their information needs known.

On the other hand, the evidence from the current research is that respondents do use such services when they are available and immediate family friends and neighbours cannot help, and that they do appreciate them. This finding contradicts some influential theories about the relationship between poverty and information access and use, among which Chatman's "small world" theories take prominence. It is true that in some respects these theories are borne out by this research study. For example, many respondents approached family members, friends and neighbours first to obtain desired information which does fit with Chatman's (1991) third proposition of the way poor people satisfy their information needs. However, in other respects this theory is not borne out by the current research project.

The type of knowledge sought by the poor is characterised by Chatman and Pendleton as first-level knowledge (Chatman & Pendleton, 1995). They stated that first-level knowledge is most important to small world lives. They defined "first-level knowledge" as "knowledge of things. ... These things are readily accessible and sources have immediate verifiability. We simply check it out for ourselves or ask others until a collective assessment of the situation satisfies us" (Chatman & Pendleton, 1995, p. 143).

This dependence on immediate satisfaction of need is not borne out by the findings of this research. When the immediately-available friends and neighbours failed to satisfy the inquirer, there were sufficient information services for it to be possible to find someone whose objective is to provide information or refer the inquirer to another agency which might satisfy the need. During the interview sessions there were very few instances where the interviewee responded that it was not possible to find anyone or any organisation who could help.

The findings also show that there is strong belief among the participants that it is possible to improve their way of life especially for their children. Their expectations were not low nor did they believe that only luck could change their status. This disagrees with Chatman's (1991) second proposition of information poverty theory.

The scenario in rural areas of Bangladesh is not same as Chatman's "small world" situation. Chatman and Pendleton (1998) define the term "small world lives" as "lives that are played out on a small stage. The everyday reality of such lives is characterised by commonness or routineness. The small world lacks sweeping surprises or catastrophic problems, at least as these are commonly defined. One conducts the business of living in such an uneventful way that few aspects are worth important discussion". In the same paper they attempted an explanation of the concept of information behaviour and expected that the conclusions are generalisable to any "small world" situation. In fact, in most rural villages in Bangladesh there are people of different classes or income groups and, as has been seen, many have aspirations. That is why their information behaviour is somewhat different than that found in a "small world".

Chatman (1991) concluded her information poverty theory by saying that the information worlds of specialized populations are very localized. Outsiders are usually not sought for information and advice, and insider norms and mores define what information is important. The use of outsiders such as the health and family planning assistants, agriculture extension workers and other government NGO officials as sources of information and advice contradicts this and show that efforts to provide information services have been appreciated even though the coverage is

unsatisfactory. In addition, it is wrong to assume the poor have no interest in the outside world.

### *Differences between rural and urban poor information needs*

Observation shows that people who live in slum areas in the cities are more vulnerable than any rural community. Rural people who are the victims of natural calamities such as cyclone, flood, river erosion and social injustice are migrating to cities in quest of a livelihood. These people usually end up living in slums, squatter settlements, or on streets and pavements. Most of these slums and squatter settlements have been established illegally on government and non- government land. As a result there is no basic infrastructure for electricity, sanitation and water supply and little provision for education or primary health care in these localities. Though there are initiatives from many non-government organisations to provide basic education and health care, supply electricity and build a safe water supply system in some slums, the situation suggests more collaborative efforts between government and non-government agencies are needed to eradicate these problems.

The findings reveal that urban slum people have a greater dependence on their friends and neighbours and their own experience as sources of information than is true of rural people. Moreover, a comparison between rural and urban slum communities shows that urban slum people have fewer categories of reliable or trustworthy people acting as sources of information within their community, such as extension workers and local government staff. Only 30% of urban slum participants have had contact with family planning extension workers in the past one year before the interview date and 85% of the urban slum participants had not been contacted by any health assistants in the past year. All these facts helps us to characterise the urban slum residents in Bangladesh as living in Chatman's "small world". Any of these slums could be a good study area for researching Chatman's concept of small worlds and her information poverty theories of information seeking.

### *Contribution of the media and information agencies*

Media, especially radio and television, are playing a role in disseminating knowledge and information in rural and poor urban areas in Bangladesh. The findings do support previous researchers' observations that poor people consider television as a way "to pass time and as a source of diversion" (Chatman, 1991), that it "is used for escape and distraction" (Eastman, 1979; Kline, 1971) and "as a reliever of anxiety and stress" (Pearlin, 1959, Dervin & Greenberg, 1972). However, although the findings show that radio and television are seen as a media of getting local and world news, and entertainment, these channels of communication have also been very successful in campaigning on many important issues connected with health, nutrition and family planning.

As has been seen, many of those surveyed gathered knowledge on new ideas from field-level workers of various government and non- government organisations and found this information or knowledge useful to improve their quality of life. Unfortunately organisations cannot always commit to keeping a service going for the long-term. When organisations close their programs, local people find themselves in a difficult situation, unable to continue. If they fail, they find themselves back where they started, having gained very little. A good example of this is the withdrawal of services of the Association of Social Advancement's (ASA), one of the big NGOs in Bangladesh, from the Chokoria area in Cox's Bazar district. One of interviewees said that this marked the end of the domestic vegetation program in the area as there was no one to give support and technical advice.

It appears that a combination of field level support and media campaigns can claim a number of successes. These include reducing the population growth rate in the last two decades, an average five% increase per year in real GDP between 1991 and 2000, robust economic growth in the industrial sector from 21 to 26 percent of GDP and self-sufficiency in food grain production in 2000 (Asian Development Bank, 2002). Moreover, the rate of extreme poverty declined from 43% in 1991-92 to 34% in 2000, there was increased food consumption of all major food groups (with a exception of rice and wheat) and there was good progress on child nutrition, significant improvement of both child and infant mortality rates, and increased

enrolment in school. Primary and reproductive health care among the poor also improved. It would be difficult to argue that these changes do not partially depend on better information management.

### ***Relationship between information and national development***

Today it is widely believed that stronger economies are built not only with the help of physical capital and human skills but also on a foundation of knowledge and information, and also ability to learn and adapt. Though there is no empirical, in particular quantitative, evidence to support the assertion that “[i]nformation is an essential resource for the social and economic development of third world countries”, it is generally accepted that “[i]nformation is the most critical resource and plays a fundamental role in development” (Menou, 1993, p. ix). It is safe to say if information or an information services can help develop the livelihood of an individual person that must ultimately contribute to national development. The statistics from the Asian Development Bank in the previous section support the view that the developments achieved by Bangladesh in the last few decades are partially the outcome of an emphasis on efficient information services and better knowledge management.

During the interview sessions and focus group discussions respondents and participants provided evidence of getting benefits from various information services which ultimately increased their living standard or help them to solve their information problems. A good number of them believe that better education and training could increase their individual livelihood as well as the community in which they live. They want to see more investment and initiatives in this area whether by the government or non-government organisations. It is true that rural and poor urban people in Bangladesh still use first-level knowledge to satisfy their information needs and as the first step in solving their information problems. However, they understand the need for second-level knowledge and seek this out where possible when first-level knowledge fails. What we need now are better mechanisms and practices which could disseminate the second-level knowledge efficiently and with better coverage as this would ultimately contribute to national development.

### ***Recommendations***

The major conclusion of this research is that it would be more realistic to design a community information centre which could be a common place for disseminating information from government and non-government agencies than to continue as at present. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in a country like Bangladesh it is not cost-effective to disseminate different types of information from various organizations or departments through a multitude of different services at the grassroots level. It is the researchers' argument that a multipurpose community information resource centre supplied with a telephone, fax, photocopier and computer internet connection could become the centre for all kinds of information services (such as health and family planning information dissemination and agriculture information services) and all types of field workers (such as Health Assistants, Family Planning Extension Workers and Block Supervisors from the Agriculture Extension Department) working at that level. This will save both money and labour, and will more readily attract the attention of the target population.

It is the researcher's opinion, derived from his direct observation during the fieldtrips and also supported by many rural interviewees, that agriculture extension services are non-accessible to many rural dwellers, even sometimes not visible at all in many rural villages. The interview findings indicate that only a very few rural interviewees think extension workers are playing a major role in disseminating agricultural information in rural areas. Despite government and a few non-government efforts in providing agricultural information through electronic media (mainly radio), print media, agricultural information services and agricultural extension services, many rural farm families are not getting their desired information. One possible reason would be non-availability of an easily-accessible place where people know they can reach the local agricultural extension worker at set times as these are the only grassroots level staff responsible for the diffusion of agricultural innovations and for advice to farmers about critical situations which may affect their crops. The lack of an office at the local village makes it very difficult to find the block supervisor for help or advice.

Moreover, the huge population of the country makes it very difficult for the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) of Bangladesh to disseminate information through any single extension method. Until recently the Training and Visit (T & V) Approach formed the backbone of DAE's extension practices. To increase its effectiveness and efficiency, DAE has sought to develop its own more pertinent extension approach – a combination of several recognised extension approaches (Agricultural Extension Manual, 1999). But the fact is that the department is still struggling to reach a maximum number of farmers and block supervisors are the only grassroots level staff who can do so. Hence it is the researcher's argument that if the rural farmers can access the block supervisor at a common place that will help them more and will ultimately help the department to achieve its goal.

During the 1990s “Health for all” was a slogan for Bangladeshi governments. With that objective, the health department expanded its services up to the *Union* level. Before that health assistants and family planning workers were the only providers of health information and advice for rural and poor urban residents. Once the new *Union* health and family planning complexes were established, the health department stopped sending these grassroot-level workers to people's doors assuming that people would come to get health and family planning service from the new establishment in their area. However, a shortage of medical professionals, proper health treatment facilities and a lack of supplies such as drugs hindered the goal of providing health services at that level. Health workers also lost their contact with community people. Moreover, the foreign aid which financed the government program to distribute free contraceptives came to an end. As a result the country is in under threat of losing its achievement on population control. Many poor rural residents and slum dwellers of the cities do not have the funds to buy contraceptives with their own money as they are struggling to earn enough to have three meals a day.

Non-existence of financial institutions is a common feature in many areas of Bangladesh. The situation is worst when there is no micro-credit facility (such as that offered by the *Grameen* Bank) in those rural and poor urban areas. Individual money lenders are the only source of money and they charge much higher interest

rates. Geographical distance, administrative bureaucracy and corruption deter rural and slum residents from government banking systems. NGO's involved with micro-credit are the one of few sources which could provide loan assistance and advice, but it is necessary that there should be a trusted centre where advice about finance can be sought.

A community information centre could deal with one of the greatest problems; that information technology and media products do not reach many in the population because of poverty and poor coverage. Comments made by different executives of media and information service providers in Bangladesh support the view that, at the current level, their services are incapable of reaching the mass of the population. It is worth repeating of some of those comments and statistics. In an informal interview with the current researcher, Dr. Shaikh Abdus Salam calculated that the total number of newspaper readers of Bangladesh would be around 5 to 6% of the total population (which is 140 million). He also stated that "circulation is higher in big cities and towns but lower in the rural areas. According to statistics more than 50 percent of the total circulation is distributed in 7/8 cities and the remaining are distributed in all over the country". It can be concluded that newspaper readers in Bangladesh are mostly the urban-based middle class. Buying a daily newspaper is a luxury to many rural and urban slum residents.

The coverage of radio and television is somewhat better. There are 234,000 sets of licensed radios (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999) and 600,000 TV set in the country with a government license (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999). However, it is assumed that there are near about 1 million radio sets and approximately 2 million TV sets exist in the country when unlicensed sets are included. A total of 17.68% of households have a working radio set and 93 percent of geographical area of Bangladesh is now under the state television transmission.

Better Internet connections are dependent on improved communication networks. Bangladesh as a whole struggles on the darker side of the digital divide, but it is also fighting the divide within the divide. Residents of Dhaka city alone occupied 49% of the country's total telephone capacity. It has 5.05 telephones per one hundred inhabitants while the rest of the country has 0.39. About half of the villages in

Bangladesh still do not have a telephone. Most of the network is still running with old CB and Magneto exchanges, now an obsolete technology. However, exchanges in 242 *Thana* have so far either been converted to digital or under the process of digitalisation, and a project to cover rest the rest of the country is expected to be completed by 2004.

Large rural areas have obtained access to telephones with the advent of cellular mobile telephone networks in. *Grameen* Phone alone has covered more than 18,000 villages and, with services from Citycell and Aktel more than 25,000 villages have been covered. But most of the villages have been covered incidentally, not so much as a planned target. If the transmission link goes across a village the company makes the service available there. Although all the mobile telephone companies have been given a license for the whole of the country, they are focusing their business on large cities. Hossain and Uddin (2002) suggest that to bring the telecom operators to the villages, two things are necessary: to put in place a binding Universal Service Obligation (USO) and offering incentives to expand the network in rural areas. So “access to and delivery of a full range of modern, sophisticated, efficient and cost effective [telecommunication] services”, which is one of the policy objectives of the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board, is still far away for most rural areas.

Hossain and Uddin (2002) also state that there has not been enough effort to expand Internet connectivity. There are only 1.53 Internet users per 1000 inhabitants in Bangladesh which is second lowest in South Asian region after Myanmar. They claim that the use of the Internet is increasing. Both public and private sector initiatives in the field are also encouraging. A landmark job has been done by BTTB by extending Internet facilities to 64 districts and all the digitalized *Thana*. However, BTTB can only build the infrastructure, not awareness. Out of 111 *Thana* BTTB received only a few application from 5 *Thana* for Internet connection. This suggests that other stakeholders must come forward for developing content, implementing applications and increasing the effectiveness of the Internet for users. In addition methods have to be found to bring the Internet to a wider range of the community who may not be able to afford the necessary infrastructure to obtain a connection..

Lack of access to the telephone is a serious problem for those who live in poverty. Dr. Mohammed Yunus, the founder of *Grameen* Bank and better known for his micro-credit loan system, came up with a unique idea of a “village phone” to extend the benefits of the information revolution amongst rural residents and formed the *Grameen* Phone Company. A *Grameen* Bank member, who must be a woman, obtains ownership of a mobile phone under the lease financing program of the Bank and provides the services to the people in the adjoining area. The phone lady collects call charges for both incoming and outgoing calls according to a prescribed rate. The average net income (USD 50 to 100) of the phone lady is quite attractive when compared with other village occupations (*Grameen* Bank Homepage, 2002).

Despite good networks and initiatives from different government and non-government organisations there are deficiencies in providing information services in the rural and poor urban areas in Bangladesh. Notably, diffusing new agricultural innovations and technologies through the agricultural extension service; providing health assistance and family planning information on different methods; non-availability of telecommunication facilities in 50 percent rural areas; lack of network facilities in most of the rural areas; and non-existence of financial institutions in many rural areas. Moreover, the huge population of the country is another big problem for those organisations which are responsible for the services discussed above. Merely providing infrastructure in an uncoordinated fashion is not enough.

The findings indicate that currently rural and poor urban areas would not get much benefit from a western style library and information centre for disseminating a wide range of knowledge and information. High illiteracy rates, especially in urban slum areas also indicate that a traditional library is not the answer. The interview responses clearly show that rural and poor urban residents do not consider a library or information centre when they have an information need or when they look for an answer to their information problems.

Currently there are few public library services at the grassroots’ level even at the *Thana* (sub-district) headquarters. NGOs and individual initiatives have so far established four thousand libraries in rural areas, but the number is insufficient for

the 90,000 villages in Bangladesh. Moreover many of them are very tiny and have very small collections. The entire scenario represents a vacuum in the dissemination of information in rural as well as poor urban areas of Bangladesh.

The basic aim of the proposed community information centres is to disseminate information. A library collection would contribute to this aim and could be the nucleus of the centre's information service, supplemented by the centre acting as a base for other information dissemination services in area. There is a need to develop the reading habit in communities as this contributes to better literacy and more effective self-education. It is easy for people to lose the literacy they acquired at school, especially those who leave school at an early age. Making reading materials available would be one way of countering this.

In planning such a community information centre there are a number of barriers. The first one is to bring people to the centre when they are used to consulting friends, family members and neighbours first and, if that fails, consulting an expert who could be an outsider of that community. But it is logical to believe that these people would change their attitude towards getting information from such a centre if it could satisfy their demands for information and knowledge. For that it is necessary to include community gatekeepers (such as school teachers and local politicians) in the process of information dissemination by such a centre. Furthermore, the information centre should offer information services based on demand from the local community not based on the prior beliefs of those responsible for it.

It will be necessary that government and non-government organisations use the information centre as an additional channel for dissemination of their information. If such a centre could coordinate local community gatekeepers and government and non-government organisations, and match this expertise and these services with the demands of local residents, there is no reason to believe that it will not a more cost-effective and efficient way to disseminate knowledge and information in the rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh.

The other challenge is making information and communication technologies user-friendly for rural and poor urban people. There is a strong belief that ICT could play

a strong role in the growth of developing countries but barriers that prevent ICT from playing this desired role remain, notably language, electricity and connectivity. Moreover, basic needs, including schools, healthcare centres, balanced nutrition, gender equity, employment, and transportation are also lacking, and these needs compete for funding. (Sood, 2002). Furthermore, ICTs are creating a divide within these communities benefiting the rich but not the poor, and enhancing the lives of those who are literate but not those lacking literacy skills. It is the author's argument that ICT projects for the developing countries should consider these problems and determine how ICT can assist in improvement in areas such as health, education, employment and business. Sood (2002) also states that despite the criticism of "put[ting] the cart before the horse... developing societies simply cannot sit back and wait, but must take charge today, and find ways to use these technologies for the benefit of their own people". Access to these technologies at widely available local centres could begin this process.

That ICT entrepreneurship can work successfully in Bangladeshi conditions is demonstrated by users of the *Grameen* Telephone Company in Bangladesh. Rural people are using its services and mobile phones are also creating employment. Women who are often the most disadvantaged in rural communities in Bangladesh have been given mobile telephones to service the local village population (Bayes et al., 1999). Armed with a GSM mobile phone and a list of useful numbers *Grameen* telephone-ladies can make a comfortable living from charging users a small fee for making and receiving phone calls (Chapman & Slaymaker, 2002). This is local solution to a local problem.

There are already a number of information services at every level in Bangladesh. But what is happening now is that there is little match between the demand and the supply. A great deal of time and money is being invested in improving information services to all parts of the Bangladeshi population but there needs to be more coordination and planning to ensure that this investment provides the best return.

The vision of community information centres presented in this chapter can not be fulfilled without funding. However, as has been seen, not all the information services which have been funded in the past have been totally effective nor are some

of those currently attracting investment. The need for information can be demonstrated as can the positive effects of information. The challenge is to spend the money wisely.

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## Appendix I

### Information Service Client Questionnaire

#### Section A: Demographic Data.

Division:

District:

Thana:

Union:

Village:

1.a) What is your age?

15 - 25 years

26 - 35 years

36 - 45 years

46 - 55 years

above 55 years

1.b) Gender: Male  Female

1.c) Marital status:

Single

Married

Widowed

Separated

2.a) What is your highest level of education?

- None/illiterate
- National literacy Programme
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Higher secondary school
- Graduate
- Other (specify)...

2.b) What is your profession?

2.c) How many adults do you have in your household?

2.d) How many people in your household above 15 years are not literate?

3) If illiterate who reads/writes for you?

**Section B: Income Generation Activities.**

4) Which tasks/activities do you normally perform in the household?

5) What are the main sources of cash income in your household?

6) What are the main problems facing you in the present ways of earning an

adequate income?

7) How do you think you can improve your ability to earn more income?

8) Are there any subjects/topics you feel people in the village should know in order to develop themselves and their community better?

**Section C: Information Need**

9.a) I am going to read out a list of information. Which ones do you need for your day-to-day life? **[Read out list]**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about farming                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Health related information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family planning information               | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge about the world  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flood control/natural disaster management | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial/loan assistance  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others ( please specify).....             | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment              |

9.b) Which of the following sources of information meet your demand? **[Read out**

**list]**

- your own experience
- Friend, relative or neighbour
- Radio
- TV
- Newspaper
- Library/information centre/reading centre
- Others (please specify)...

10) Who are the reliable and wise people to talk to in this community if you want to get new ideas? **[Ask question-Prompt, if necessary]**

- Local government staff
- Professional such as a doctor or lawyer
- School teachers
- Religious leaders
- Local politicians
- Women leaders
- NGO workers
- Extension workers
- Others (please specify)...

11) If you want to get news of what is happening in this village or from other places, where would you normally go? **[Ask question-Prompt, if necessary]**



14.b) If yes, can you tell briefly about it?

14.c) Can you remember where you went to seek advises or to whom you mentioned the problem to get the answer/information?

14.d) Did you get the answer you needed?

Yes       No

15) Why did you choose the source to get the answer/information? Did you go there because:

a) you were referred to?  Yes

No

b) to prior experience of knowledge?  Yes

No

c) it was nearby and easy to get to?  Yes

No

d) it just happened to be there?  Yes

No

Were there any other reasons?  Yes

No

If yes, what were they?

16) How satisfied were you with the source?

Very satisfied  Somewhat dissatisfied

Somewhat satisfied  Very dissatisfied

Don't know

17) Was there anything about the source you did not like?

No

Yes.

If yes, what was it?

18) Would you go back to the source for an answer to a similar problem?

No  Don't know

Yes.

If yes, what was that?

## **Section E: Reading, Listening and Viewing**

19) Can mention any magazines/newspapers you know?

20) Which publications do you read regularly?

21.a) Do you have a radio in the household?

Yes  No

21.b) If yes, what type or types of program do you like to listen to?

21.c) What are your normal listening times?

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

22.a) Do you have a TV in the household?

Yes  No

If no, do you watch TV programs in other neighbouring house or in market?

Yes  No

22.b) If yes, what type or types of program do you like to listen to?

22.c) What are your normal watching times?

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

23.a) Is there any library in your village?

Yes     No

23.b) If yes, how often do you go there?

Daily

Once in a week

Once in a fortnight

Once in a month

Never

23.c) What kinds of reading materials do you want in the library? Please specify.

23.d) Does the library have the materials to meet your demand?

## **Appendix II**

### **Informal interview Questionnaire**

What type or types of information services is/are given by your organization in rural and poor urban areas of Bangladesh?

What types of user are benefited from these services?

What are your duties in this regard?

Do you believe that what you do is a success or are there problems? Do you have any evidence?

Do you publish reports, how do they disseminate?

Do you think something more should be done for providing much better information services for the rural and poor urban people of Bangladesh? If yes, what are your suggestions?

### Appendix III

#### Questionnaire results – Rural areas

##### Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16-25 years	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
	26-35 years	13	32.5	32.5	62.5
	36-45 years	6	15.0	15.0	77.5
	46-55 years	5	12.5	12.5	90.0
	Above 55 years	4	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

##### Marital status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	12	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Married	28	70.0	70.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

##### Highest Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Illiterate	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Primary School	4	10.0	10.0	35.0
	Secondary School	16	40.0	40.0	75.0
	Higher Secondary School	4	10.0	10.0	85.0
	Graduate	4	10.0	10.0	95.0
	Master's	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Profession**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Farmer	7	17.5	17.5	25.0
	Housewife	13	32.5	32.5	57.5
	Service	6	15.0	15.0	72.5
	Student	7	17.5	17.5	90.0
	Lobour/Worker	3	7.5	7.5	97.5
	Others	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Number of Adult Member in the Household**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	3	5	12.5	12.5	40.0
	4	7	17.5	17.5	57.5
	5	6	15.0	15.0	72.5
	6	4	10.0	10.0	82.5
	7	5	12.5	12.5	95.0
	8	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Number of Illiterate Member in the Household**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
	1	10	25.0	25.0	67.5
	2	7	17.5	17.5	85.0
	3	5	12.5	12.5	97.5
	4	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Who Reads/Writes for the Informant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Children	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Husband	2	5.0	5.0	10.0
	Wife	1	2.5	2.5	12.5
	Neighbours	2	5.0	5.0	17.5
	Other relatives	3	7.5	7.5	25.0
	Not applicable	30	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Performed Activities in the Household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
	Normal Family Activities	19	47.5	47.5	70.0
	Normal Family Activities plus some Income Generating Activities	9	22.5	22.5	92.5
	Domestic farming	3	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Main Sources of Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business	4	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Farming	14	35.0	35.0	45.0
	Labour	5	12.5	12.5	57.5
	Service	4	10.0	10.0	67.5
	Multi Sources	13	32.5	32.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Sources of Getting Local Information

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Local Shop/Local Tea Stall	4	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Market	6	15.0	15.0	25.0
	Neighbours	17	42.5	42.5	67.5
	Neighbours & Other Family Members	2	5.0	5.0	72.5
	Other Family Member	3	7.5	7.5	80.0
	Others	8	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Recall the Discussion**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	31	77.5	77.5	77.5
	Don't remember	2	5.0	5.0	82.5
	Not applicable	7	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Major Information Problem**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	27	67.5	67.5	67.5
	No	13	32.5	32.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Type of Information Problem**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Financial	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Health	11	27.5	27.5	55.0
	Judicial	1	2.5	2.5	57.5
	Land related problem	3	7.5	7.5	65.0
	Unemployment	1	2.5	2.5	67.5
	Not applicable	13	32.5	32.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Information Provider**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Doctors/Hospital	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	All other sources	13	32.5	32.5	60.0
	Don't get anyone to solve the problem	1	2.5	2.5	62.5
	Don't seek for advice	2	5.0	5.0	67.5
	Not applicable	13	32.5	32.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Satisfactory answer**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	52.5	52.5	52.5
	No	3	7.5	7.5	60.0
	Not applicable	16	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Reasons for choosing the source**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I was refered	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	From Prior experience of Knowledge	18	45.0	45.0	50.0
	It was nearby and easy to go	3	7.5	7.5	57.5
	Others	1	2.5	2.5	60.0
	Not applicable	16	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Level of Satisfaction**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Satisfied	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Somewhat Satisfied	9	22.5	22.5	50.0
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	2.5	2.5	52.5
	Very Dissatisfied	2	5.0	5.0	57.5
	Don't Know	1	2.5	2.5	60.0
	Not applicable	16	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Likeness about the source**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Liked the source	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
	Didn't like the source	7	17.5	17.5	60.0
	Not applicable	16	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Intention of seeking help again for the same**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
	No	6	15.0	15.0	57.5
	Don't Know	1	2.5	2.5	60.0
	Not applicable	16	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Newspaper and Magazines**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mentioned only Newspaper	18	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Mentioned only Magazine	1	2.5	2.5	47.5
	Both Newspapers and Magazine	3	7.5	7.5	55.0
	None	18	45.0	45.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Type of Materials Read**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Only Literature	4	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Only Textbooks	5	12.5	12.5	22.5
	Both	6	15.0	15.0	37.5
	None	6	15.0	15.0	52.5
	Other type/types of Books	11	27.5	27.5	80.0
	Not applicable	8	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Availability of Radio in the Household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Have Radio	29	72.5	72.5	72.5
	Don't have any Radio	11	27.5	27.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Type of Radio Programme liked by the Informant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Songs	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Songs & Discussions on Health and Family Planning	2	5.0	5.0	17.5
	News	3	7.5	7.5	25.0
	News & Agriculral Programs	1	2.5	2.5	27.5
	Not applibcable	10	25.0	25.0	52.5
	Don't listen radio	3	7.5	7.5	60.0
	Songs, news & discussions	4	10.0	10.0	70.0
	News & Songs	3	7.5	7.5	77.5
	News & entertainment programs	1	2.5	2.5	80.0
	News & discussions on Farming, Health & Family Planning	1	2.5	2.5	82.5
	Sports	1	2.5	2.5	85.0
	News, drama & agricural programmes	1	2.5	2.5	87.5
	Discussions & magazine/entertainment programmes	2	5.0	5.0	92.5
	Agricultural programmes	1	2.5	2.5	95.0
	Songs & sports	1	2.5	2.5	97.5
	News, drama, songs & discussions	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Availability of Television in the Household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Have Television	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
	Don't have any Television	23	57.5	57.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Watched TV in Neighbouring house or in Market**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	15	37.5	37.5	37.5
	No	8	20.0	20.0	57.5
	Not applicable	17	42.5	42.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Type of Television Programme liked by the informant**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	News	1	2.5	2.6	2.6
	News, Film & Drama	6	15.0	15.4	17.9
	News & sports	2	5.0	5.1	23.1
	News and Discussions	1	2.5	2.6	25.6
	Not applicable	8	20.0	20.5	46.2
	Drama	2	5.0	5.1	51.3
	Drama & film show	2	5.0	5.1	56.4
	Filmshow	2	5.0	5.1	61.5
	News & Drama	5	12.5	12.8	74.4
	Any	3	7.5	7.7	82.1
	Magazine/ Entertainment program	1	2.5	2.6	84.6
	News, drama & discussions	3	7.5	7.7	92.3
	News & magazine/entertainment programmes	1	2.5	2.6	94.9
	News & filmshow	1	2.5	2.6	97.4
	None	1	2.5	2.6	100.0
	Total	39	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.5		
Total		40	100.0		

**Existence of a Library in the Area**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	22.5	22.5	22.5
	No	30	75.0	75.0	97.5
	Don't know	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Frequency of Library Use

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Once in a week	4	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Once in a month	1	2.5	2.5	12.5
	Never	3	7.5	7.5	20.0
	Not applicable	32	80.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Library Materials Desired

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Literature	3	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Literature & Newspapers	1	2.5	2.5	10.0
	Various	1	2.5	2.5	12.5
	Not applicable	35	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Does the Library Meet Your Demand?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
	No	3	7.5	7.5	12.5
	Not applicable	35	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

### Information needs of rural informants

		Cases	Col Response %
Information need	Information about farming	30	75.0%
	Family Planning information	26	65.0%
	Flood Control/Natural Disaster Management	34	85.0%
	Health Related Information	36	90.0%
	Knowledge about the World	38	95.0%
	Financial/Loan Assistance	26	65.0%
	Entertainment	28	70.0%
	Education	4	10.0%
Total	40	555.0%	

## Tables

**Reliable people in the rural community**

		Cases	Col Response %
Reliable people in the Community	Extension Workers	2	5.1%
	Husband?Wife	4	10.3%
	Local Government Staff	1	2.6%
	Local Politicians	12	30.8%
	Professional (Doctor/Lawyer/so on)	2	5.1%
	Religious Leaders		
	School Teachers	11	28.2%
	Women Leaders		
	Depends on problem	4	10.3%
	NGO Workers		
	Other sources - Friend, Relative & Neighbour	13	33.3%
Total	39	125.6%	

## Tables

**Sources of information - rural**

		Cases	Col Response %
Sources of Information	Friends, Relatives & Neighbours	36	90.0%
	Library/Information Centre/Reading centre	2	5.0%
	Newspaper	23	57.5%
	Own Experience	29	72.5%
	Radio	31	77.5%
	Television	30	75.0%
	Total	40	377.5%

## Tables

**Radio listening time - rural**

		Cases	Col Response %
Radio-Listening time	Morning	9	34.6%
	Afternoon	15	57.7%
	Evening	17	65.4%
Total	26	157.7%	

## Tables

**Normal watching patterns of TV in rural areas**

		Cases	Col Response %
Normal watching time	Morning		
	Afternoon	4	13.3%
	Evening	28	93.3%
Total		30	106.7%

**Tables**

Categories of people	Never or very rarely		At least once in this year	
Agriculture/Veterinary Extension Workers	23	57.5%	17	28.3%
Community Development Worker	25	62.5%	22	36.7%
Family Planning Worker	16	40.0%	30	50.0%
Health Assistant	24	60.0%	19	31.7%
Library/Information Services Staff	39	97.5%	1	1.7%
Other Category of Govt. Staff	39	97.5%	1	1.7%

## Appendix IV

### Questionnaire results – urban areas

#### Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 16-25 years	5	25.0	25.0	25.0
26-35 years	8	40.0	40.0	65.0
36-45 years	3	15.0	15.0	80.0
46-55 years	4	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

#### Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	10	50.0	50.0	50.0
Female	10	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

#### Marital status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Single	5	25.0	25.0	25.0
Married	15	75.0	75.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

#### Highest Level of Education

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Illiterate	11	55.0	55.0	55.0
Literacy Program Completed	2	10.0	10.0	65.0
Primary School	2	10.0	10.0	75.0
Secondary School	2	10.0	10.0	85.0
Graduate	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Profession

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business	4	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Service	2	10.0	10.0	30.0
	Student	1	5.0	5.0	35.0
	Lobour/Worker	12	60.0	60.0	95.0
	Others	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Number of Adult Member in the Household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
	2	8	40.0	40.0	50.0
	3	2	10.0	10.0	60.0
	4	3	15.0	15.0	75.0
	5	2	10.0	10.0	85.0
	6	2	10.0	10.0	95.0
	12	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Number of Illiterate Member in the Household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	7	35.0	35.0	35.0
	1	2	10.0	10.0	45.0
	2	5	25.0	25.0	70.0
	3	4	20.0	20.0	90.0
	4	1	5.0	5.0	95.0
	6	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Who Reads/Writes for the Informant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Brother	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Children	2	10.0	10.0	15.0
	Husband	1	5.0	5.0	20.0
	Wife	1	5.0	5.0	25.0
	Neighbours	6	30.0	30.0	55.0
	Other relatives	1	5.0	5.0	60.0
	Not applicable	8	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Performed Activities in the Household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	9	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Normal Family Activities	9	45.0	45.0	90.0
	Normal Family Activities plus some Income Generating Activities	2	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Main Sources of Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business	4	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Labour	6	30.0	30.0	50.0
	Service	5	25.0	25.0	75.0
	Multi Sources	4	20.0	20.0	95.0
	Others	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Sources of Getting Local Information

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Local Shop/Local Tea Stall	5	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Neighbours	9	45.0	45.0	70.0
	Neighbours & Other Family Members	5	25.0	25.0	95.0
	Others	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Recall the Discussion**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Not applicable	10	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Major Information Problem**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	12	60.0	60.0	60.0
	No	8	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Type of Information Problem**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Financial	5	25.0	26.3	26.3
	Health	5	25.0	26.3	52.6
	Land related problem	1	5.0	5.3	57.9
	Not applicable	8	40.0	42.1	100.0
	Total	19	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	5.0		
Total		20	100.0		

**Information Provider**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Doctors/Hospital	5	25.0	26.3	26.3
	All other sources	3	15.0	15.8	42.1
	Don't get anyone to solve the problem	2	10.0	10.5	52.6
	Don't seek for advice	1	5.0	5.3	57.9
	Not applicable	8	40.0	42.1	100.0
	Total	19	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	5.0		
Total		20	100.0		

### Satisfactory answer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	35.0	36.8	36.8
	No	1	5.0	5.3	42.1
	Not applicable	11	55.0	57.9	100.0
	Total	19	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	5.0		
Total		20	100.0		

### Reasons for choosing the source

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I was refered	2	10.0	10.5	10.5
	From Prior experience of Knowledge	4	20.0	21.1	31.6
	It just happened to be there	1	5.0	5.3	36.8
	Others	1	5.0	5.3	42.1
	Not applicable	11	55.0	57.9	100.0
	Total	19	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	5.0		
Total		20	100.0		

### Level of Satisfaction

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Satisfied	2	10.0	11.1	11.1
	Somewhat Satisfied	3	15.0	16.7	27.8
	Very Dissatisfied	2	10.0	11.1	38.9
	Not applicable	11	55.0	61.1	100.0
	Total	18	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	10.0		
Total		20	100.0		

**Likeness about the source**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Liked the source	3	15.0	16.7	16.7
	Didn't like the source	4	20.0	22.2	38.9
	Not applicable	11	55.0	61.1	100.0
	Total	18	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	10.0		
Total		20	100.0		

**Intention of seeking help again for the same**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	2	10.0	11.1	11.1
	No	4	20.0	22.2	33.3
	Not applicable	12	60.0	66.7	100.0
	Total	18	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	10.0		
Total		20	100.0		

**Newspaper and Magazines**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mentioned only Newspaper	5	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Both Newspapers and Magazine	1	5.0	5.0	30.0
	None	14	70.0	70.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Type of Materials Read**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Only Literature	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Only Textbooks	1	5.0	5.0	10.0
	Both	2	10.0	10.0	20.0
	None	2	10.0	10.0	30.0
	Other type/types of Book	3	15.0	15.0	45.0
	Not applicable	11	55.0	55.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Availability of Radio in the Household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Have Radio	13	65.0	65.0	65.0
	Don't have any Radio	7	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Type of Radio Programme liked by the Informant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Song & Drama	1	5.0	5.3	5.3
	News	2	10.0	10.5	15.8
	Not appliccable	7	35.0	36.8	52.6
	News & Songs	1	5.0	5.3	57.9
	News & entertainment programs	1	5.0	5.3	63.2
	Family palnning programme	1	5.0	5.3	68.4
	Any programme	2	10.0	10.5	78.9
	News & drama	1	5.0	5.3	84.2
	Religious programmes	1	5.0	5.3	89.5
	News, songs & drama	1	5.0	5.3	94.7
	Drama	1	5.0	5.3	100.0
	Total	19	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	5.0		
Total		20	100.0		

### Availability of Television in the Household

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Have Television	10	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Don't have any Televisio	10	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

### Watched TV in Neighbouring house or in Market

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	30.0	30.0	30.0
	No	4	20.0	20.0	50.0
	Not applicable	10	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Type of Television Programme liked by the informant**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid News	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
News, Film & Drama	4	20.0	20.0	30.0
News & sports	1	5.0	5.0	35.0
Not applicable	4	20.0	20.0	55.0
Filmshow	2	10.0	10.0	65.0
News & Drama	4	20.0	20.0	85.0
News, drama & magazine programme	1	5.0	5.0	90.0
News, filmshow, drama & sports	1	5.0	5.0	95.0
News & filmshow	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Information needs of the poor urban informants**

	Cases	Col Response %	
Information need	Information about farming	5	25.0%
	Family Planning information	11	55.0%
	Flood Control/Natural Disaster Management	16	80.0%
	Health Related Information	19	95.0%
	Knowledge about the World	18	90.0%
	Financial/Loan Assistance	14	70.0%
	Entertainment	10	50.0%
	Education		
Total	20	465.0%	

### Reliable people in the community

		Cases	Col Response %
Reliable people in the Community	Extension Workers		
	Husband/Wife		
	Local Government Staff		
	Local Politicians	5	29.4%
	Professional (Doctor/ Lawyer/so on)	1	5.9%
	Religious Leaders	2	11.8%
	School Teachers	1	5.9%
	Women Leaders		
	Depends on problem	1	5.9%
	NGO Workers		
	Other sources - Friend, Relative & Neighbour	8	47.1%
Total	17	105.9%	

### Sources of Information

		Cases	Col Response %
Sources of Information	Friends, Relatives & Neighbours	20	100.0%
	Library/Information Centre/Reading centre		
	Newspaper	7	35.0%
	Own Experience	19	95.0%
	Radio	15	75.0%
	Television	14	70.0%
Total	20	375.0%	

### Radio listening time

		Cases	Col Response %
Radio-Listening time	Morning	2	15.4%
	Afternoon	6	46.2%
	Evening	11	84.6%
Total		13	146.2%

### Tables

### Normal watching time of TV

		Cases	Col Response %
Normal watching time	Morning		
	Afternoon	5	31.3%
	Evening	14	87.5%
Total		16	118.8%

Categories of people	Never or very rarely		At least once in this year	
	Agriculture/Veterinary Extension Workers	20	100.0%	--
Community Development Worker	13	65.0%	7	35.0%
Family Planning Worker	14	70.0%	6	30.0%
Health Assistant	17	85.0%	3	15.0%
Library/Information Services Staff	20	100.0%	--	--
Other Category of Govt. Staff	20	100.0%	--	--