

THE NORTH WEST INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

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GO-INTERFISH PROJECT

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ACRONYMS

ACR	Annual confidential report
ADC	Additional Deputy Commissioner
ADP	Annual development programme
ANRP	Agriculture and Natural Resources Programme
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CCO	Conciliation courts ordinance
CEEDAW	Cttee. on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women
CTW	Come to work
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DFID	Department for International Development
DRICC	District rural infrastructure coordination committee
DPHE	Department of Public Health Engineering
FFS	Farmer field school
FFW	Food for work
FT	Field trainer
GDP	Gross domestic product
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GO-IF	Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice-fish Production
HYV	High Yielding Variety
IFSP	Integrated Food Security Programme
IP	Influential person
LMP	Livelihoods monitoring project
MP	Member of Parliament
PDO	Programme development officer
PIC	Project implementation committee
PM	Project manager
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
PRO	Project implementation office
RBA	Rights based approach
RMP	Rural maintenance programme
SLF	Sustainable livelihoods framework
STW	Shallow tubewell
TDCC	Thana development coordination committee
TO	Technical officer
TR	Test relief
UDCC	Upazilla Development Coordination Committee
UE	Upazilla Engineer
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNO	Upazilla Nirbahi Officer
URICC	Upazilla rural infrastructure coordination committee
VAT	Value added tax
VDP	Village defence party
VGD	Vulnerable group development
VGf	Vulnerable group fund
WATSAN	Water and sanitation

GLOSSARY

Ain	Law
Amon	Main monsoon rice crop
Ansar	Village police force
Bari	Homestead
Barolok	Person of consequence, giver of charitable donations
Bigha	0.33 acres
Boro	Irrigated winter rice crop
Chowkidar	Village policeman
Dafadar	Village police supervisor
Dalit	Thug
Dapit	Hindu barber caste
Dharma	Hindu religious law
Dighi	Tank
Dulopoti	Local VDP commander
Eid	Main Muslim festival
Ejaradar	Toll collector
Gain	Power
Gono shika	Compulsory adult education programme
Gram adalat	Village court
Gushti	Patrilineage
Hartal	General strike
Haat	Periodic market
Izzat	Honour
Jama't	Muslim Congregation
Jatra	Hindu fair
Jatyo Sangsad	National assembly (parliament)
Jotedar	Rich peasants controlling land and revenue collection for Zamindar
Kacca	Poor, unsurfaced
Khas	Government owned
Khatria	Hindu farmer caste
Latial	Thug acting on behalf of a powerful person
Madrassah	Muslim school
Masjad	Mosque
Matabar	Leading figure in village, somaj, or gushti
Mondir	Temple
Nirbahi officer	Officer in charge of upazilla
Pakka	Good, surfaced
Para	Neighbourhood
Pir	A spiritual leader
Poti	Hindu congregation
Poura sabha	Urban council
Puja	Hindu festival
Purdah	Seclusion
Sadayassya	Secondary, supporting VDP members
Salish	Local adjudication
Salishkar	Member of salish bench
Samaj	Literally "society". In practice a collectivity of jama't
Sanyasi	A Hindu who has abandoned the material life
Shah	Honorific title assumed by large landowner
Shuri	Miser
Sorkari	Government

Glossary (contd.)

Sufi	A form of worship common to both Muslims and Hindus
Tehsildar	Grass roots land administration functionary
Thana	Sub-district. Now known as upazilla

Upazilla	Sub-district. Formerly known as thana
Waqfs	A trust managing religious property
Zamindar	Landlord/ revenue collector in colonial period
Zakhat	Charitable gifts
Zila	District

SUMMARY

1. An Overview of the Study

CARE Bangladesh is embarking on a transition from a service delivery to a more rights based approach (RBA), where increasing emphasis will be given to raising awareness of basic entitlements and to improving the access to services enjoyed by impoverished groups and women. GO-Interfish (GO-IF) is one of a number of projects that are beginning to explore how this might be accomplished. This study is designed to assist by providing an analysis of the possibilities and constraints presented by key institutions within GO-IF's current area of operations in the North-western part of the country.

As originally conceived, the study was to explore:

1. the formal rights of the target group, as expressed through various laws and policy statements (i.e. what they are entitled to expect from the state and other service providers);
2. the capacity of government organisations at sub-national level - as reflected in the resources available and the practices and attitudes of staff - to deliver various types of service;
3. the responsibilities of private sector and NGO agencies operating locally and their capacity to complement or augment public provision;
4. the role of the local government system, and of more informal institutions such as salish, gushti and samaj, in determining who is able to access available services;
5. the impact of present patterns of provision and access upon the livelihoods of target group members.

To make the task more manageable, it was decided to confine attention to a small number of sectors that GO-IF group members saw as being of particularly high priority, and to focus on a single "slice" of reality that started at national level, and then ran down through a single district, one Upazilla, one Union, and two residential para, to a handful of households.

An extensive literature review was undertaken, and Dinajpur district, where GO-IF has its headquarters, was selected for the field based part of the investigation. Separate teams were formed for each level of the study, and in total some 20 people were involved at some point or another. A series of methods were used, including critical incident analysis, PRA mapping and ranking exercises, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and household and enterprise case studies.

PART I: THE WIDER INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Part I of the report contains two chapters that draw primarily on the literature to set a context for the remainder of the discussion. The first provides a brief account of the most significant national level institutions that affect the way in which resources are allocated and services delivered, and the second looks in more detail at local government and administration.

2. Governance and the State

Major Institutions

The area that is now Bangladesh was under British rule from 1757-1947 and formed part of Pakistan from 1947-1971. Present structures and procedures reflect these legacies, but are also a function of a more recent history where a succession of civilian and military regimes, has been followed by an extended period of parliamentary rule. The country now has a unitary system of government, which in principle embodies a clear separation of powers between executive, legislature and judiciary, and a constitution that promises to ensure a wide range of fundamental and democratic rights.

Government is conducted by 36 Ministries and 17 Divisions, that together are known as the Secretariat and constitute the focus of the administration. Below lie 254 departments, and a further 173 directorates, boards, corporations and other statutory bodies dealing with the different aspects of implementation. The Civil service as a whole currently employs approximately 950,000 staff, of whom some 10% are women, and has four main grades. Government departments are funded through two lines. The Revenue Budget is used for institutionalised recurring expenditure. The Development Budget, which in recent years has tended to be slightly larger, supports expenditure to carry out specific projects, and comes in roughly equal proportions from Government and donors. The capacity to raise revenue internally is dependent mainly on various import duties, that together account for 61% of all domestically generated funds.

Territorially, the country is divided into six Divisions, 64 Zilas (Districts), 464 Upazillas (Sub-districts), 4422 Unions and more than 87,000 villages. Central government functionaries from many ministries and departments are placed at the Upazilla, but several ministries are also represented at Union level. Chains of command run downwards within ministries and departments, but there is also formal provision for co-ordination across sectors at each intervening level.

Parliament comprises 300 members directly elected from territorial constituencies, plus 30 women members selected by the elected MPs, and has powers to initiate revisions to the constitution and to decide on the budget. Local government is guaranteed under the Constitution, but in rural areas presently operates only at Union Level, where there is Parishad with a directly elected chairman, plus nine male and three female members.

An Assessment of Performance

In practice it has proved very difficult to make the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, and to a more modern system of administration where, in addition to familiar regulatory functions, the more complex issues posed by development must also be addressed. The political system exhibits a number of flaws. Power is heavily concentrated in the hands of Prime Ministers and their immediate associates. The dependence by parties on major firms for funding and the lack of transparency and accountability encourages corruption. At constituency level, many votes are effectively purchased and the large sums required to secure election distort the democratic process.

For a combination of reasons, government also exhibits serious deficiencies. The functions and roles of public agencies are not sufficiently clearly defined. Decision making is highly centralised. The system remains “bottom heavy” and strongly hierarchical in nature. Real salaries, especially those of more senior officials, have declined since independence, and provide a strong motive for corruption in a system where opportunity is already amply available. Advancement is increasingly determined by personal contacts rather than performance. Frequent transfers at more senior levels mean that there is often insufficient understanding of problems.

3. Local Governance: Structures, Resources and Roles

The primary formal institutions at sub-national level are the Union Parishad (UP), and the Upazilla and District administrations.

The Union Parishad

The population at large only has a limited understanding of the functions that the UP is supposed to perform, is rarely consulted in the course of its deliberations, and has learnt not to expect it to accomplish very much on their behalf. Councillors themselves are only partially aware of their formally prescribed responsibilities, and in many cases lack the skills and resources required to discharge those functions of which they are aware. This naturally limits

the scope for effective action, but the UP does still have a significant role to play in awarding of contracts for the management of hats and bazaars, in the management of local infrastructure projects, and in the distribution of relief goods.

The Chairman enjoys a relatively powerful position and often takes decisions which are formally the prerogative of the UP as a whole in conjunction with a small inner circle of associates, from which women councillors, in particular, are likely to be excluded. But his freedom for manoeuvre may, in turn, be limited by local officials wishing to extend their own control, or by MPs seeking to exert an influence. The UP, in any case, has a very limited capacity to raise revenue and is therefore highly dependent upon resources flowing down to it through various official channels. Government officials based at union level are primarily answerable to their own departmental line managers and tend neither to communicate very much with each other, nor to consult local representatives. Overall coordination of activities is therefore poor.

The Upazilla and the District

A wider range of agencies, which perform both developmental and regulatory functions, are located at the Upazilla, and this now forms the primary focus for local administration. The Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO) has formal powers of coordination, but can exert little practical control over many of the activities undertaken by line departments. The District, which was formerly pre-eminent, has now receded in importance, and is confined to a largely supervisory role.

UP Chairmen sit on the Upazilla Development Coordination Committee (UDCC) and are able to use this and more informal contacts to lobby for resources, but their formal connections with the Upazilla administration are quite limited and their overall influence over its deliberations only slight. The relationship between local officials and elected representatives is in general characterised by a degree of mutual suspicion and hostility, but this does not preclude collusion where this is in the mutual interest of the parties concerned. Although, from the formal point of view, MPs are only expected to perform a relatively minor and advisory role at Upazilla and District levels, their actual influence, from the Union upwards, is much more extensive. Their views normally outweigh those of other actors, although the UNO may sometimes be able to exert a restraining influence.

PART II: LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

The core of the study is based primarily on our own field investigations in the Union that we have called Panchgram and comprises three chapters. The first explores the “net” of relationships between powerful actors operating at the local level, and shows how these shape a number of significant resource allocation processes. The second examines institutions and resource flows in two contrasting communities, whilst the third looks at the diversity of individual livelihoods and draws out some more general lessons about the uses of social capital.

4. The Union and the Net of Power Relations

Social and Economic Institutions

The investigation of the union begins with an overview of major social institutions – including the gushti (patrilineage), jamat (religious congregation) and samaj (residential brotherhood) - and an introduction to the dominant factors shaping the evolution of economic opportunities.

Control of land, often combined with usurious money lending and trading in agricultural commodities, has traditionally been central to the capacity to accumulate, and differential access to this fundamental resource has underscored a primarily exploitative system of patron-client relations. At the same time, however, moral values, rooted in religion and kin-based social institutions, have served to partially constrain the rich; obliging them to engage in re-distributive activities and to provide minimal social safety nets if they wish to command respect and secure sustained political support.

Leaders broadly fulfilling these conditions have been able to control informal local courts (salish). These, within limits, can be used as a further source of accumulation and social control, but also provide space within which poorer people and women may secure a degree of redress for wrongs they have suffered. The poor also have recourse to a limited range of further devices, but have not been able to create class-based organizations to represent their distinctive interests.

Developments in the Modern Era

Access to land is still the major individual factor in determining who can exercise power in contemporary local society, but the increasing flow of resources from the state in the post-colonial era has somewhat diminished its overall importance. Some of these new resources, like tubewells, have been privately appropriated by the “net” of powerful and inter-connected local actors, whilst others have been utilized to extend their patronage. Some, however, have proved too “lumpy” to be captured by local elites in the first instance, but may still afford them significant opportunities once established and operational. Others, typically those supplied by NGOs, have been either too troublesome or too small to be caught by the union level net, and have freely passed through it to the level below.

The modern period has also seen the superimposition of formal political structures on earlier local institutions. As a result some, like the samaj, now play a less important role than hitherto, but more frequently the later arrivals have been infiltrated and adapted from below by the pre-existing bodies. Former elites, with their established resource bases, extensive kinship networks and wider political connections, have generally been well placed to reproduce themselves in these new circumstances; sometimes consolidating their position through directly competing for political office, and gaining access to key committees, but often being content to exercise their authority more quietly from behind the scenes.

The shifting horizons of economic opportunity and the new political landscape have also opened up opportunities for able individuals from rather humbler backgrounds. Those starting from lower positions or seeking to accumulate most rapidly have, however, often resorted to strategies that contravene moral norms and make it difficult to convert economic wealth into social respect or political office.

Until recently, union politics has remained at least partially insulated from its national counterpart, making it possible to construct local alliances across both party and ethnic lines, and this has contributed to the maintenance of good Muslim-Hindu relations. These, however, have been placed in some jeopardy by the recent national election, as a new MP seeks to remove Hindus from positions of influence and replace them with his own supporters. This, in turn, threatens to drive a wedge between moderate Muslim opinion and the Hindu minority, and to force them into an alliance with the more hardline and aggressive faction associated with the MP as it seeks to gain further ground.

5. The Intra-communal Allocation of Resources and the Role of NGOS

This chapter reviews the experience of two contrasting communities (para): one poor, poorly connected to the local power structure and Hindu, and the other much better-off, much better connected and Muslim. The system devised by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) – that distinguishes between large farm families (operating more than 7.5 acres), medium farms (with 2.5 – 7.5 acres), small farms (0.5 – 2.5 acres), marginal households (0.05 – 0.5), and the landless (<0.05 acres) – is used to explore the influence of class, kinship and the mediation of influential people on the allocation of goods and services provided by government and NGOs.

The Hindu Para

The Hindu para has a population of about 300 and comprises a majority farmer (khatria) caste, and a minority of low caste barbers (napit). The napits all belong to a single lineage, whilst among the khatria there is one large cluster, made up of separate lineages linked together by marriage, and four separate smaller lineages. The class structure is relatively un-

differentiated. There are only two large farm and a handful of landless households, and half of the population fall into the small farmer category. The community as a whole takes in more land from others to operate than it gives out, with mortgage arrangements being more common than either share-cropping or cash rent.

Neither of the big farms, nor any of the other households, are regarded by people beyond the para as being influential, and nobody from the para has ever been elected to sit on the Union Council. As a consequence, it has only attracted a few official resources. Small numbers of Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Vulnerable Group Fund (VGF) cards, government pensions, and opportunities to work on Food for Work Programmes have been distributed, and only a handful of households have been able to benefit. These are all drawn from the khatria caste, and all come from the three poorest classes.

Three NGOs – BRAC, Come to Work (CTW) and CARE itself – have recently been active in the para. Almost all lineages have benefited to some extent, but there is a marked tendency a) for the khatria as a whole to dominate; b) for the largest kinship cluster to secure more its fair share and c) for a sub-set of predominantly small farm to seize the largest number of opportunities. There is also a tendency for members, on average, to be marginally better off than the population as a whole.

The Muslim Para

The Muslim para is of comparable size, but per capita land holdings are almost twice as large. The structure of the community is also much much more polarized, with a powerful group of eight big farm households at one extreme, 18 landless households at the other, and far fewer small farms. Where holdings are too large for household members to work themselves, labour is hired from among the landless and marginal with some small farmers also working for others from time to time. The para is also a net supplier of land to others through mortgage and other arrangements.

All households are Muslim, and most belong to a single patrilineage. This is divided into three sub-sections, one of which contains most of the large farm households. This, in turn, forms the dominant power block within the para and is related by marriage to the current UP member for the ward. Although the overall volume of official resources coming to the para is not very large, the presence of key influential people means that it receives substantially more than its Hindu counterpart. Within the para, it is the small, the marginal and especially the landless who benefit.

Among the NGOs operating locally, only Caritas and CARE have established a significant presence. As in the other para, it is the small farm households that tend to dominate membership, although the marginal and landless are also quite well represented here. Questions of kinship appear to play a rather less significant part in determining access in this instance, although households from a small satellite community are largely excluded. The tendency of a small number of households to capture the bulk of NGO resources is, however, again present, although in somewhat more diluted form.

Brief enquiries conducted in the wider union revealed little evidence of either powerful local people or government officials influencing where NGO activities took place. Neither could any systematic bias in favour of either richer or poorer communities be detected, although the behaviour of individual organisations did differ quite markedly in this regard, influenced in part by the types of activities in which they were engaged. There was, on the other hand, an overall tendency to cluster work in more accessible locations, which coincided with the largest concentrations of population.

6. Livelihoods and Social Capital

The Diversity of Livelihoods

A survey conducted in the two para suggests that a little more than 50% of all households pursued one of four main livelihood strategies. Starting with those characteristic of the better-off households and then moving downwards, these were: agricultural production combined with business; exclusive dependence upon agricultural production; the combination of agricultural production on land under the household's own management with day labouring for other households; and labouring as a sole occupation. Remaining households fell into no fewer than 16 different categories, none of which individually covered more than a small percentage of the total. When account is also taken of differences in access to land via share-cropping, rental and mortgaging arrangements, even the broader categories begin to fragment. Even before one considers the different trajectories of households occupying similar positions at any particular point in time, it is clear, therefore, that the strategies pursued are both diverse and quite complex in nature.

The individual case studies presented in the box, which are drawn from the four lower classes in the BBS framework, help to illustrate this point. They also help to explain how social capital is accumulated and deployed, and thus to draw together some important themes which run through the whole of part II of the paper.

Forms of Internal Social Capital

Internal social capital may be conceived as a series of concentric circles moving outwards from the household, the boundary of which itself may be either relatively

Box: The Household Case Studies

The Middle Farm Household: Moving Upwards through Land Mortgage and Labour

Ishaq is a Muslim in his late 60s. His father was landless and worked as a labourer, and as a young adult, Ishaq followed in his footsteps. His circumstances began to improve in the post-independence period when a local matbar (leader), whom he had been able to help, offered him land in share-crop and a loan to cover the initial cost of inputs. Seizing the opportunity and working hard, Ishaq was able to generate a modest surplus that he then used to start to acquiring land of his own via a series of mortgage arrangements. Supported by his sons, who work for other households and generate sufficient income to cover the household's basic living expenses, he has subsequently been able to build up a holding of almost four acres. His sons have now married and had children of their own, but for the present, they continue to live in the parental compound. The joint family now numbers 10 people, and is able to function as an effective and largely free-standing economic unit. The immediate future of the household seems assured, but it remains to be seen how well the sons will be able to manage as Ishaq enters more advanced old age, and a critical point will be reached when he dies and a decision has to be taken as to whether the joint arrangement will continue or whether the assets should be divided.

The Small Farm Household: Towards a Largely Self-sufficient Land Based Approach

Ranjit is a Khatria Hindu aged 32. He was raised by his aunt, and took over the responsibility for running the farm when his uncle died. His share of the proceeds were then used to build up a herd of cattle, which in turn made it possible to hire out his services as a ploughman and earn income by selling milk. Later, he acquired his first piece of land through a dowry provided by his wife's family, and then inherited further plots from his aunt and his own parents. Most recently, as it has become more difficult to raise and work with cattle, he has run down his herd, using part of the revenue generated to purchase more land. He now owns 1.8 acres, the cultivation of which provides the mainstay of his household's livelihood. Their strategy is fairly self-sufficient but a significant network of relationships is maintained that can be drawn on for a variety of purposes. For the present, this all appears to work quite well, but like most small farm families, the household enjoys few reserves and could be placed in quite serious difficulties if a major crop were to be lost or an animal or two to die. In the slightly longer term, the problem of providing dowries for his three daughters looms.

The Marginal Household: Accumulation and Diversification from a Business Base

Habibur is a Muslim aged 28. His own family is quite poor but is related to some of the richest households in the para. A few years ago, his parents helped him to set up a small shop, which he now stocks through a credit arrangement entered into with a merchant from a local bazaar. This continues to provide his major livelihood, although some additional income is now earned from two cows purchased out of profits from the original business. Some time later, when he married, he was able to use the dowry provided by his wife to take two small plots in mortgage, and more recently he has been able to purchase a small additional plot of his own. A year ago,

with further help from his parents, who provided a small area of land for a home and another plot in sharecrop, he established his own independent household. In addition to links with the most powerful households, which comprise the most important individual source of social capital, the new household also engages in regular, tiding over exchanges with Habibur's brothers and their wives. The future looks reasonably secure, with a diversified strategy providing some insurance against the short term failure of any individual component, and wealthier co-lineage members at hand to provide at least some support if circumstances take a turn for the worse.

The Landless household: Bare Survival as a Rickshaw Puller

Nishikanto is a 32 year old Khatria Hindu. His father, who came originally another village, had been able to acquire a little land, but this was subsequently lost. He then died while Nishikanto was still small, leaving the family with few material resources and no education. When he was old enough, Nishikanto began to work as an agricultural labourer. Later, he was able to raise a loan to purchase a rickshaw van that he then used to transport goods and people backwards and forwards from the local bazaar, and this now provides his primary source of income. Subsequently, he married Sumithra. For a time, the couple lived in another household's compound, and during this period, the first of their three children was born. Three or four years ago, they were able to use a loan Sumithra received from BRAC to buy a tiny plot of land and construct their own house. With the income from the rickshaw and small amounts Sumithra earned working for other households, and some small relief payments, the family was just about able to make ends meet. Some support is available from a small circle of siblings and other neighbours, but whilst valued and reciprocated where possible, this is inevitably limited in extent since most of the other households are little better off themselves. Most recently, the household's circumstances have taken a major turn for the worse, when the rickshaw van was stolen. Nishikanto has now had to go to the local supplier for a replacement, repayments for which will place further strain on already stretched family finances. In the future, much will depend upon Nishikanto and Sumitra's continued good health, since in the absence of any reserves, the family could hardly survive for any period if either were unable to carry on working.

narrowly or more broadly drawn. The link between brothers (and to a lesser extent between brother's wives, and between sisters) is generally the most immediate and direct, often providing a medium for on-going and periodic reciprocal labour exchange and the circulation of small cash loans. This, however, only defines one pole in the continuum of possibilities provided by siblings, who may equally - if less frequently - opt not to treat these relationships as social capital at all. Individuals may also enter into close reciprocal relations where friendship rather than kinship provides the underlying bond.

Around the immediate support group lies a wider inner circle that may be delineated either by lineage or physical community and normally entails some combination of the two. This broadly defines the area within which people collectively participate in and assist with ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, and often has its own common place of worship. It is also the lowest level at which a salish may sit in judgement over disputes and has traditionally marked the outer boundary of the area in which small and short-term tiding over loans of food and cash may be made without any expectation of interest. Finally, it defines the space within which reciprocal labour exchanges may take place, although these are generally less frequent than those occurring between close kin.

Beyond lies a third circle, the outer limits of which are defined broadly by the Union, which is neither clearly "internal" nor "external", where relations become progressively more single-stranded and contractual in nature, but within which share-cropping, mortgages and other arrangements that demand an element of mutual trust, will tend to be conducted.

From the perspective of the individual poorer household much will depend on the nature of the individual relationship enjoyed with the relatively wealthy minority with land surplus to their own subsistence requirements. A close, or at least an identifiable kinship connection may help to secure access to employment or land, but other factors, such as perceived aptitude to perform a task and command of a certain minimum level of resources, are also likely to enter into the equation. Access to other forms of social capital, as expressed for example through the right to play some part in salish or local committees, may, in turn, rest upon the access to land that a relationship with the local influentials may afford.

Access to External Social Capital

The same individuals who control the dominant share of internal resources also mediate access to the external social capital represented by government agencies, and may exploit this position either for their own direct material advantage or to divert resources to their own kin or associates. This can limit, but does not preclude access on the part of poorer households, but as a group they tend to do better from NGO activities that largely avoid “filtering” by elites.

NGOs thus become potentially important sources of external capital for the poor, who will seek to continue any relationships contracted with them for as long as possible. This may be overlooked by agencies who seek to help build new forms of internal social capital benefiting women and the poor, and who frequently over-estimate the practical difference which such new arrangements can make. But it is perhaps in the private sector where it is easiest for the relatively poorly connected to access, and hence internalise, external capital, for example, through entering into a credit arrangement with a local trader, although such options are unlikely to be available on favourable terms.

Three key conclusions may ultimately be drawn. Firstly, social capital appears in many different forms that may often, but by no means always complement one another. Secondly, whilst it may be possible to identify certain general tendencies regarding its distribution among different types of household, there is a good deal of variability in the way in which these work their way out in actual situations on the ground. From this it follows, thirdly, that whilst certain categories of actor (the poor, women, the minorities) find themselves more heavily constrained than others, everyone retains some freedom for manoeuvre or individual agency. Identifying these spaces and determining how they may be sustainably extended should be central to the agenda of any agency that seeks to intervene on their behalf.

PART III: KEY SECTORS

Part III combines a literature review with findings from primary investigations to explore how access to resources and services are structured in the key sectors of water and sanitation and law and order.

7. Access to Clean Drinking Water and Sanitation

Until the 1960s, most domestic water was drawn from readily accessible surface sources, and there was little use of sanitary latrines. The possibility of a connection between the practices pursued and ill health was at best only dimly perceived by the rural population, and as a consequence, diarrhoeal and related diseases were widespread.

Key Interventions

Official attempts to address these issues may be traced back at least 70 years. The most significant intervention to date has been the introduction of No6 handpumps to tap groundwater for drinking purposes; and although there have been some complaints regarding the quality of the water provided, the convenience of the device, coupled with a growing awareness of its health advantages, has meant that most people have been happy to use it.

The first generation of sets were supplied and installed free of charge under programmes run by the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), working in conjunction with UNICEF and other agencies. Most, however, fell into hands of the better off, and a limited production and supply capacity meant that only a minority of potential users were able to benefit. Efforts in the area of sanitation, where the most widely promoted model was a slab set above a pit lined with three concrete rings, were to fall even further short of what was ideally required.

Driven in part by a change in official policy that now emphasises the need to ensure the availability of water to all elements of society, recent years have seen a growing involvement of other agencies in the sector. NGOs have been active, raising awareness and offering subsidised pumps sets and latrines to facilitate use by poorer households, but the major

breakthrough has come as a result of increased pump production and distribution by the private sector. Sets typically now cost 1200 tk. to install, and the numbers have risen rapidly, with an estimated 4-5 mn. now in use, giving access to more than 90% of the population. Basic sanitary latrines are considerably cheaper at 400 – 800 tk., but these do not meet an equally strongly perceived need or provide the same degree of direct convenience as pumps, and use has thus continued to lag a good way behind. Uptake has, however, increased quite sharply of late and an estimated 40% of households have now adopted.

Improving Access

Investigations conducted in the two study para indicated that ownership or control of a pumpset remains very closely correlated with economic status, but that poorer households are allowed access, although on somewhat restricted terms. Women, who invariably took the major responsibility for drawing and carrying water, suffered to a disproportionate degree where problems arose. Following the national pattern, the number of latrines adopted was much smaller. Those that had been installed were again found in the better off-households, but by contrast with pumpsets, access by other households was not generally permitted. A rather higher level of use was found in the Muslim para, and this could not entirely be accounted for by its greater wealth. Explanatory factors appeared to include the influence of an NGO awareness programme, and a greater concern to maintain female seclusion and modesty. It also seemed to be the case that uptake had accelerated here once a certain critical level of adoption had been arrived at.

In the light of the analysis presented, a number of options would seem, in principle, to be open to GO-IF if it decides to intervene. Consumer information could be provided to improve the functioning of markets and drive down prices. Soft loans could be made available and the supply of credit increased to increase adoption by poorer households. Contractual arrangements with pump owners to provide better access for users could be piloted. New technologies could be tested and introduced. Efforts could be made to understand local attitudes to sanitation more clearly and to devise appropriate messages encouraging adoption of latrines.

8. Law and Order

This chapter reviews law and order, an issue that is clearly central both to rights and to questions of poverty alleviation and development more generally.

The Judiciary

The formal judicial system comprises a supreme court with High Court and Appellate Divisions, and District Courts sitting under magistrates and judges. There is also provision for village courts where more minor cases may be heard, but these have never proved very effective and are now largely defunct.

The Supreme Court continues to command widespread support, but District Courts exhibit major shortcomings and are generally held in low regard. An antiquated structure makes it difficult for the judiciary to plan effectively, and successive governments have exacerbated an already difficult situation by meddling in its affairs. Judges have to perform many administrative functions, and together with other factors, this contributes to serious delays, and to an ever-growing back-log of cases. Poor remuneration provides a fertile breeding ground for corrupt practices, and these, in turn, raise the cost of access to a level that is prohibitive for all but the relatively well-off.

The failure of village courts has left the administration of justice at the local level almost entirely in the hands of traditional salish that offer informal adjudication of petty civil and criminal disputes. Most commonly these will be convened within the

immediate neighbourhood, but larger issues may be taken to village or union level, where elected representatives play a central role.

Like their formal counterparts, salish are characterised by a range of deficiencies. Bench members exhibit widespread ignorance of the law, and may decree harsh and inhumane punishment. They are also rich, powerful and male, and normally rule in favour of their peers. Once again, there is frequent recourse to bribery. But despite these difficulties, the institution continues to be valued, providing the only forum in which poorer people in general, and women in particular, are able to present their grievances and obtain at least limited redress.

Policing

The professional police establishment only numbers around 50,000 and the ratio per head of population is amongst the lowest in the world. Some support is provided at the most local level by Chowkidars, and the Ansars and Village Defence Party (VDP), but their role is relatively minor and insignificant.

The official police force suffers from a variety of problems. It has been formed from disparate elements and lacks an effective esprit de corps. The service is headed by a small group of relatively well-trained and remunerated gazetted officers, but among the lower grades, who man the local thana police stations and make up more than 90% of the total, levels of education and training are much lower and remuneration is poor. Further difficulties arise from the low general level of resources, the weakness of administrative supervisory mechanisms, and a growing tendency for political interference and control. As with the judiciary, corruption is endemic, starting at the higher levels and becoming especially pervasive lower down, and for poor people who lack the necessary resources, it is almost impossible to initiate or pursue a case. As a result, a large amount of criminal activity goes unreported, with certain powerful elements in rural society able to act with impunity in pursuing their interests at the direct expense of the weak and poor, or through protected illegal activities including smuggling and fraud.

What might be done

The present state of affairs thus leaves much to be desired. Ordinary people regard both the judiciary and police as remote and oppressive, but retain strong beliefs, rooted in traditional notions of morality, regarding their rights. This sense of how things ought to be has provided a useful starting point for a series of recent NGO interventions aimed primarily at the bolstering of the salish and making it more responsive to the needs of the poor and women. Key initiatives to date have included: re-organising existing salish committees or forming new ones in order to increase the representation from target groups; training salishkars in basic principles of justice and relevant laws; facilitating the salish process by recording complaints, initiating proceedings, issuing notices to relevant parties, monitoring decisions and follow up actions and providing venues; and maintaining panels of lawyers at the district level to file and fight cases in the formal courts if salish decisions are defied or violated. Coverage, however, is very limited and there would be ample opportunity for GO-IF to become involved should it wish to do so.

Various initiatives are also being undertaken to reform more formal structures and systems. These include programmes to promote legal literacy and raise public awareness. This is potentially something in which NGOs could also be involved, but for the time being, the prospects for effective intervention appear to lie to a much greater extent with more informal initiatives.

PART IV: TOWARDS A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

9. Taking Stock and Moving Forward

The concluding section starts by taking stock of what has been learnt about the extent to which present institutions allow the poor in general, and poor women in particular, to enjoy their rights. Next an attempt is made to summarise the RBAs

currently being undertaken in CARE and other organisations, and to identify those that appear most promising for a future programme. The way in which the study has been conducted is then reviewed, and suggestions made about how it might be strengthened and extended to support future RBAs.

The Position of Women

Major differences are evident in the roles and opportunities open to men and women at every level in society, and in aggregate these place women at a marked structural advantage. The rigid gender division of labour within the household leaves them with relatively little opportunity to engage in income generating activities and hence to handle cash, whilst deeply entrenched patriarchy relegates them to a secondary role in domestic decision making. The patrilineage (gushti) and the patrilocal system of residence mean that relationships beyond the household are mediated by men, and in combination with other factors, this enables them to dominate local institutions. The closely related institution of dowry re-enforces other disadvantages and is a frequent source of both conflict and marital breakdown, from which women suffer to a disproportionate degree. All of this is reflected in a wider society, where women play hardly any part in the net of power relations, feature very little on salish or key making decision bodies, and enjoy only restricted access to government employment (which in itself constrains women more generally from accessing official services).

But although women find themselves in a highly constrained position, some grounds for optimism remain. Force of economic circumstance is already re-defining many of their roles, and beginning to afford them a greater measure of independence. Official attitudes towards women are in a state of evolution and recognition of their specific requirements is growing. Major NGOs have mounted large-scale programmes addressing key practical needs and promising initiatives have been taken, by smaller players in particular, to promote women's organisations. It appears, however, that success can only be achieved when the external agency is in a position to offer flexible support over an extended period of time, and where a critical mass of members can be created within a confined geographical area.

Prospects for the Poor

The poor, like women, suffer from multiple and mutually reinforcing forms of disadvantage. The majority, with little or no arable land of their own, are generally obliged to rely, individually or in combination, upon self-employment, (with little to fall back on in the event of the loss of a key asset), agricultural labour (with long slack periods), or the taking of land in some form of tenancy (which offers poor returns and an increasing exposure to risk). Their capacity to engage in wider networks of social support is constrained both by their lack of resources and a higher propensity towards spatial mobility, and it is only in rare instances that they have been in a position to form class-based organisations in defence of their own interests. Power has traditionally resided with the large landowners who have been able to consolidate their position by seizing most of the development resources coming on stream in the post-independence era. This system is not entirely self-perpetuating, but for the poor, there remain rather few alternatives to forming dependent bonds with the wealthy in order to secure access to employment or land, or to the official programmes offering relief or off-farm employment.

For all these difficulties, there is, however, still some space in which the poor, and those who seek to promote their interests, may manoeuvre. The powerful do exploit them, but also feel some responsibility and moral obligation, and where present in measurable degree, such sentiments may provide an effective building block in a wider anti-poverty strategy. The reduction of poverty is also firmly enshrined as a central objective in national plans and sectoral policy statements, and provides some evidence of serious intent in the higher reaches of government. Over and above this, the votes of the poor ultimately determine the outcome of elections, who thus cannot

therefore be entirely disregarded either at local or national level. NGOs, whilst focussing primarily on the needs of poor women, and whilst generally more concerned with affording practical assistance than with directly challenging underlying structures, constitute powerful allies for the moderately poor at least, and some have started to go further, helping to build genuine poor people's organisations with a capacity to lobby actively in pursuit of their rights. But once again here, experience suggests that the countervailing institutional pressures of society at large mean that such bodies can only survive and flourish where external support is flexible in nature, geographically concentrated so as to secure critical mass, and sustained over extended periods of time.

The strategic options arising

Action at various levels will ultimately be required in order to address the powerful inter-locking institutions that currently deny the poor and women access to their rights.

At national level, the existing framework of laws and policies provides a generally sound foundation and the main concern here will therefore lie in improving implementation. Advocacy to this end will normally best be pursued in concert with other agencies, but perhaps with CARE as a whole taking a lead in the provision of technical support in campaigning, drawing on insights derived from the wider experience of the international organisation. For GO-IF itself, efforts to strengthen the hand of the poor and women are probably best directed at the local level, where the effects of current injustices are immediately experienced, and where the relative efficacy of remedial action can be most directly perceived.

The project must start here from a point where its core activity is the promotion of rice fish cultivation, and RBAs have only recently been added to the package. It is also important to recognise they must currently be pursued under circumstances where staff have only received limited training, where time is limited by other responsibilities, and where the engagement with any particular group of rural people is limited to a single 18 month cycle. In addition, the nature of the central activity means that participating households have tended, on average, to be slightly better off than the rural norm, and that men have figured quite prominently among the target group.

Thus far, Field trainers (FT) have been given their head in experimenting with different RBAs, and the most successful to date have involved helping members to access inputs or other goods and services. Other types of RBA are likely to be more difficult to pursue in an effective and sustainable fashion within the current 18 month time-frame. Given the high degree of variability in conditions between locations it is, however, staff with local knowledge who will ultimately often be the best judges of what may be attempted. Under these circumstances, it would therefore seem worthwhile to expose a wider range of staff to the type of study that has been described here, and for a limited period at least, to then continue with the present policy of letting "a thousand flowers bloom".

At the same time, a good deal of rights work is already being undertaken elsewhere in CARE, and this creates various possibilities for collaborative initiatives. These could most readily be effected in the immediate circle of sister projects in the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) sector, which share an interest in the same type of input procurement rights, as well as in land and common property rights. The latter raise rather more complex issues, but might jointly be pursued in conjunction with external agencies (see below). Beyond the immediate sector, are other major projects that are centrally concerned with issues of local capacity building and

planning, and hence dependent for their effectiveness upon an understanding of the central issues raised in the main body of this study. This makes them strong partners in the more innovative possibilities explored below.

Beyond the organisation itself, CARE projects have already forged a number of links with other agencies that might be strengthened or extended in pursuit of a common rights agenda. Perhaps the most promising for GO-IF are those presented by organisations addressing tenants' rights and access to khas (public) land and water bodies. Prospects for collaboration in the re-orientation of salish might also be explored, not least because so much of the business of this institution relates directly to land disputes. Such arrangements are not, however, without their potential difficulties, and in view of the complexities arising and of the degree of departure from the project's current *modus operandi* that would be entailed, simple pilots, conducted with individual partners in single locations, would be recommended in the first instance.

Looking further afield, India in recent years has proved a fertile breeding ground for a range of RBAs, and those concerned with raising citizen's "voice" to improve service delivery and access to rights appear especially relevant for Bangladesh. Two complementary possibilities arising out of this experience might warrant particular consideration here: an initiative, employing a combination of computers and non-electronic media, to improve information through local administration and local government bodies; and the establishment of "one-stop shops" at union and upazilla levels; where ordinary people and women in particular, could come for advice and assistance. There are many other things of a similar nature that might potentially also be tried, although ultimate success here may depend upon the construction of a broader infrastructure of basic education initiatives.

The study process re-visited

The possibilities explored above derive in part from a reading of the available literature, but are also suggested by our own direct field investigations. Before proceeding with some of the possible initiatives that have been outlined, it should be recalled that the study was conducted in a fairly short period of time by relatively inexperienced staff, most of whom had never worked with the lead facilitators before. This meant that some things were not done very well. In addition, defects in some of the methods selected emerged in the course of data collection and analysis, and when the work was finished it became apparent that significant gaps remained.

GO-IF will need to consider how far it should seek to address these lacunae before laying future plans. In addition, it will have to decide to what extent it can afford to rely upon insights generated from a single location, which inevitably has certain particular characteristics. Beyond all this lie a series of further questions concerning how, or whether versions of the study might be employed in selecting future project locations; whether, or to what extent, FT's might be expected to study institutions before selecting and embarking on future RBA's; and how far other projects might be encouraged to go down a similar path, either individually, or as a part of some joint initiative with GO-IF.

Keeping all this in mind, a number of measures might first of all be taken to consolidate the present study in the original location. These would include: conducting a more extensive exploration of the functioning and inter-relations of key Upazilla and district level committees; looking in more detail at Union parishad budgets and planning procedures; exploring the mesa-level of the village with

particular emphasis on the interface between second order influential people, business leaders, local committees and samaj; conducting an extended study of social capital; and looking in greater depth at land administration.

Beyond this, it could be important to devise simplified and codified versions of the union and para studies and to revise, develop and further codify the approach followed in the household livelihood cases. With these basic elements in place, further steps might then include replicating a simplified version of the study in new Unions with contrasting characteristics; and training further GO-IF field staff in its implementation so that it could be used to select those unions and communities for future inclusion in the programme offering the best prospects for an RBA. Consideration might also be given to the formation of an action research and training unit with a core of permanent specialists and a rotating membership of field/operational staff that could be used to conduct further basic institutional analysis, to refine methods, and to disseminate appropriate practice more widely in the organisation.

Conclusion

These recommendations should convey the sense that there are strict limits to what can be accomplished easily, or taken to scale quickly by way of an RBA in the context of the current GO-IF programme. There are, however, a considerable number of exciting possibilities which, if first explored and refined in pilot mode and accompanied by significant changes in the parameters within GO-IF currently operates, could lead to substantial and replicable advances within perhaps a three year time scale.

1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Scope

CARE works internationally to improve the conditions of men and women living below or close to the poverty line. Its current programme in Bangladesh is organised into five broad sectors covering agriculture and natural resources, integrated food security, rural infrastructure maintenance, health and population, and education. Each, in turn, comprises a series of discrete projects that operate largely in a service delivery mode. Further details appear in the annex at the end of the report.

Whilst its work continues to enjoy a good reputation in the wider development community, concerns have increasingly been raised within the organisation about both the cost-effectiveness of this approach, and the extent to which it is attuned to the real priorities of target group members. These have culminated in a recent decision to shift, by degrees, to a more broadly focussed rights based approach (RBA) that will seek to raise awareness of basic entitlements rights among impoverished groups, and to improve access to services more generally on their behalf.

GO-Interfish (GO-IF) is one of a number of CARE projects that are now beginning to explore how this transition might be accomplished, and has commissioned this study to help it arrive at a better understanding of the possibilities and constraints for an RBA presented by the existing configuration of institutions¹ within the country.

As originally conceived, the study was required to explore:

6. the formal rights of the target group, as expressed through various laws and policy statements (i.e. what they are entitled to expect from the state and other service providers)
7. the actual capacity of government organisations at sub-national level - as reflected in the resources available and the practices and attitudes of staff - to deliver various types of service
8. the responsibilities and capacities of private sector and NGO agencies operating locally to complement or augment public provision
9. the role of the local government system, and of more informal institutions such as *salish*, *gushti* and *samaj*, in determining who is able to access available services
10. the impact of present patterns of provision and access upon the livelihoods of target group members.

From the outset, it was clear that this was going to be a very large undertaking, and the time available to complete it, whilst generous by the standards of consultancy, was relatively short. To make the task more manageable, a decision was therefore taken at an early stage to confine attention to three sectors that GO-IF group members saw of particularly high priority, namely: land administration and rights; justice, law and order; and access to drinking water and sanitation. In an attempt to further delimit the field of investigation, and to show how various institutions related to each other, it was also decided to focus on a single "slice" of reality that started at national level, and then ran down through a single district, one *Upazilla*, one Union, and two residential *para*, to a handful of households.

¹ There are many different ways of defining institutions, none of which is inherently superior to the alternatives. Here following, Uphoff 1986: p8-9, they will be understood as "complexes of norms and behaviours that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes".

Dinajpur district, where GO-IF has its headquarters, was selected for the field based part of the study. This enabled key staff to provide regular inputs whilst continuing to devote a part of their time to other activities, whilst allowing the team to draw on the computer and other support facilities available at the office. For similar reasons, an Upazilla lying close to the office was chosen. The Union selected was one of a handful where several GO-IF Farmer Field Schools (FFS) were already in operation and where staff already had some prior knowledge of the issues to be investigated that could be used as a foundation. Two para with established FFS, where a relation of trust had already been established with the local people, were chosen with similar considerations in mind. Finally, the case study households were drawn from each of the four lower levels of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) categories that together corresponded broadly to the CARE target group (see *table 5.2*), with the advice of people from the para being sought as to which would be most appropriate.

In order to preserve confidentiality, fictional names have been created for the Upazilla, the Union and para where work took place, and for leading individuals.

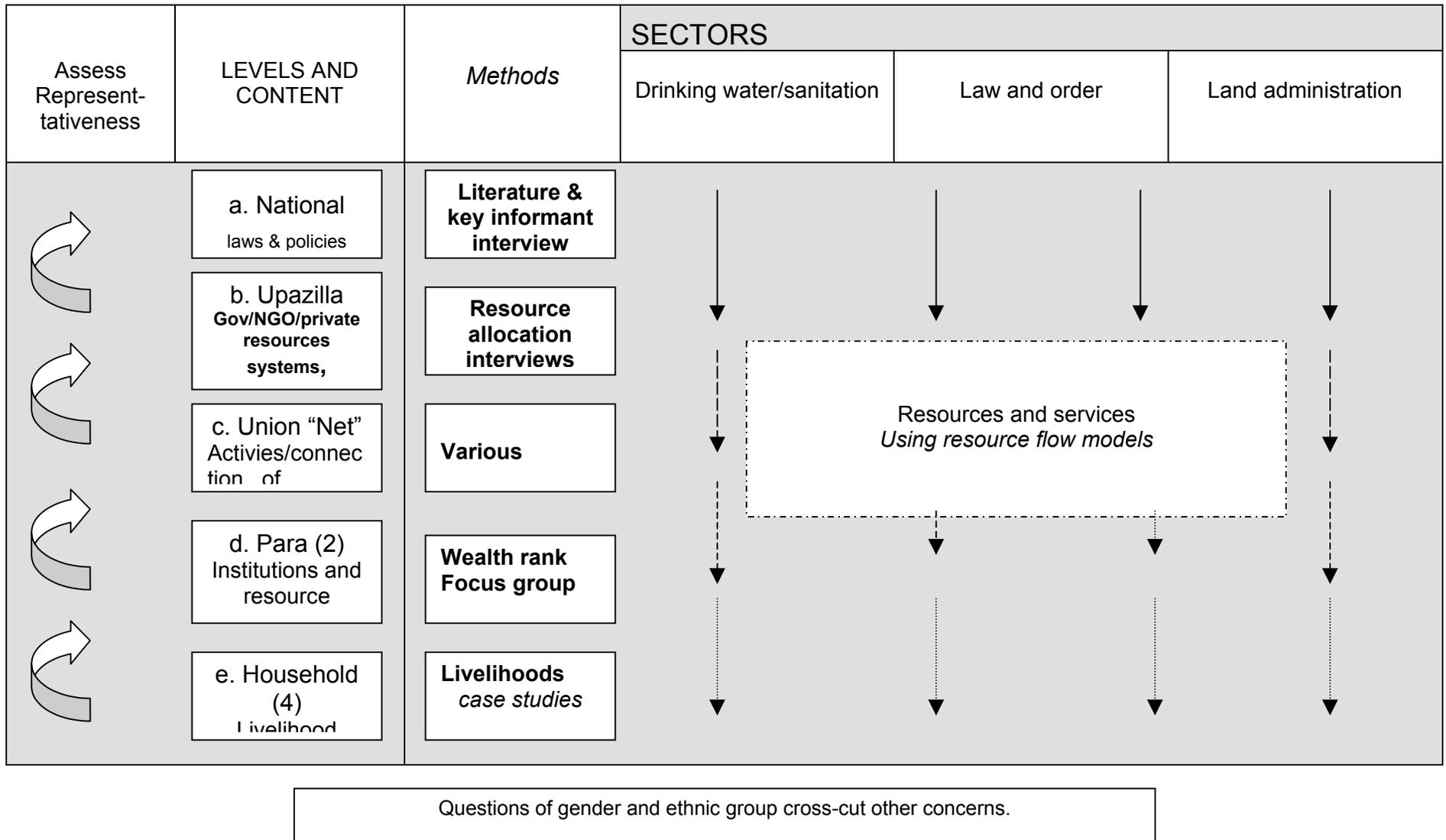
The manner in which the various foci of the study were chosen may sometimes have introduced elements of bias. In particular, some of the practical considerations that have been described have led to the selection of relatively accessible, and hence perhaps atypically well resourced locations. Over and above this, it will be clear that such a narrow “slice” of reality cannot possibly hope to convey an entirely representative picture of the situation in the immediate vicinity, let alone the wider region or the country as a whole. In an attempt to compensate for this potential problem, meetings or workshops were held at the completion of each stage of the study to report back and to seek feedback on the extent to which these might reflect wider realities. Where possible, official statistics were also consulted to provide additional perspective on how the chosen locations fitted into the wider local picture.

1.2 Methodology

The overall structure of the study is summarised in figure 1.1, whilst a more detailed picture of the methods employed appears in the concluding chapter in figure 9.2. In outline:

- National laws, policies and rights were explored through a literature review and a series of key informant interviews conducted in the early part of the research in Dhaka, whilst more contextual information, relating e.g. to budgets, was derived from the internet.
- Investigations of resource availability and use at the District and Upazilla levels again drew primarily upon the available literature to establish a context and build a qualitative picture, but in these instances greater reliance was placed upon questionnaire survey techniques, and the analysis of official records, together with semi-structured interviews with officials, NGO representatives and private sector entrepreneurs.
- The union level component took the approach developed by BRAC in “The Net” (BRAC, 1983) as its starting point, using semi-structured interviews to identify influential people, to show how they accumulated resources, to explore their mutual relations, and to build a picture of more and less formal institutions. This was complemented by critical incident analysis, a market survey (that helped to build a clearer picture of how economic power was wielded), and a card based exercise (to outline the key internal characteristics and external linkages of individual residential para).

Figure 1.1: Northwest institutional analysis – scope and structure



- The two para studies drew heavily on PRA methods, including maps (to identify key resources) and wealth ranking cards (to explore social differentiation and differential resource access). In addition, a mini-survey was conducted to look into land based relations; critical incident analysis was used to delve into law and order; and a series of other key informant and focus group discussions were organised to probe more deeply into the factors underlying the results obtained elsewhere.
- The four household livelihood case studies relied mainly on card matrices to re-construct activities, asset holdings, production, consumption, income and expenditure patterns, whilst genealogies were used to explore social capital and semi-structured interviews to form an overall understanding of strategies and trajectories.

Brigitta Bode (Social Development Coordinator) took overall responsibility for the pivotal “Net” part of the study, whilst Mick Howes (consultant) oversaw each of the other elements. Mahmudun Nabi Khan (Project Manager), assisted by Nazrul Islam (PDO) organised the survey elements of the government and NGO studies and played an important supporting role throughout the Upazilla and Union studies. Anowarul Haque (PDO) conducted the market study and processed the pictures and diagrams used in powerpoint presentations. The “Net” team comprised: Aatur Rahman, Arjuman Ara, Shoheda Khatun, Shamsul Huda, Lotifa Zannat and Faruq Hossain all of whom are field trainers (FT), together with Abu Md. Hena (PM), Kuntal Barman Mondol (PDO), Nurul Kabir (PDO), Moslem Uddin (TO) and Nazrul Islam . A team comprising Nazrul Islam, Sabita Chowdhury (PDOs), Bipul Chandra Dev, Ashim Kumar Karmaker, Debashish Kumar Shaha and Hamidul Islam (all TOs) executed the para studies. Abdul Malek and Nazim U. A. Chowdhury (TOs) worked on the household cases. Finally, Anowar Hossain (driver) filled a number of important gaps in the government and Net studies.

Data collection and preliminary analysis extended over the period from mid-February to the end of May 2002, although none of the individuals involved worked continuously throughout this period, and some were only involved for fairly short periods. Further analysis and the final writing of the report took an additional two and a half months.

Although the feedback received at the meetings and workshops that have been described proved valuable and served to strengthen the study considerably, a number of important limitations remain. In considering what follows, the reader is, in particular, asked to bear the following three important caveats in mind:

- There was insufficient time to cross-check the accuracy of much of the data, most of which was collected and analysed by staff with little previous experience of conducting exercises of this type. It is fairly unlikely to contain major errors, but a number of smaller inaccuracies have almost certainly crept in at various points.
- Difficulties in delegation led to progress being slower than anticipated when the leading researchers were not present. This, in turn, meant that the intended scope of the primary investigation had to be cut back, especially at the District and Upazilla levels, which were investigated last, when time was running out. As a result, a number of general propositions found in the literature could not be subjected to proper testing from primary sources.
- The lack of time to consult widely in the planning of the study meant that key gaps, relating for example to the linkages between official resource distribution procedures and the local structure of committees, or to the

important “mezzanine” level of the ward/village, were only identified at a relatively late stage when it was too late to do much about them.

For all of these reasons it would be a mistake to treat anything appearing in the pages that follow as definitive. Gaps will need to be filled, methods revised and augmented, and studies re-run in a range of situations before a proper foundation for planning and action can be established. How this might be accomplished without placing the implementation of a rights based approach on extended “hold” is addressed in the concluding chapter.

PART I: THE WIDER INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

2. GOVERNANCE AND THE STATE

This short introductory chapter sets the context for the more detailed discussions that follow by describing the key structures of the state and the processes of governance with which they are associated. The first part deals with how things operate in principle, whilst the second starts to open up the subject of what actually happens in practice. The analysis draws on Bene (2001 pp10-11); Public Administration Reform Commission (2000 executive summary); Shammunay (2000 pp57-66, 217-221); UNDP (1993); World Bank (2000 pp 11-15,19-20), and especially on Siddiqui (1996 pp1-7), some of whose very clear explanations are used below with only minor modifications to the original text. We have also benefited from discussions with key informants inside CARE and beyond who know who prefer that their contributions remain anonymous.

2.1 Formal Structures and Processes

The area that is now Bangladesh was under British rule from 1757-1947 and formed part of Pakistan from 1947-1971. Present structures and procedures reflect these legacies, but are also a function of the more recent political history of the post-independence period that has seen a succession of civilian and military regimes, followed by an extended period of parliamentary rule, under which power has now changed twice without serious disruption (*see figure 2.1 for further details*).

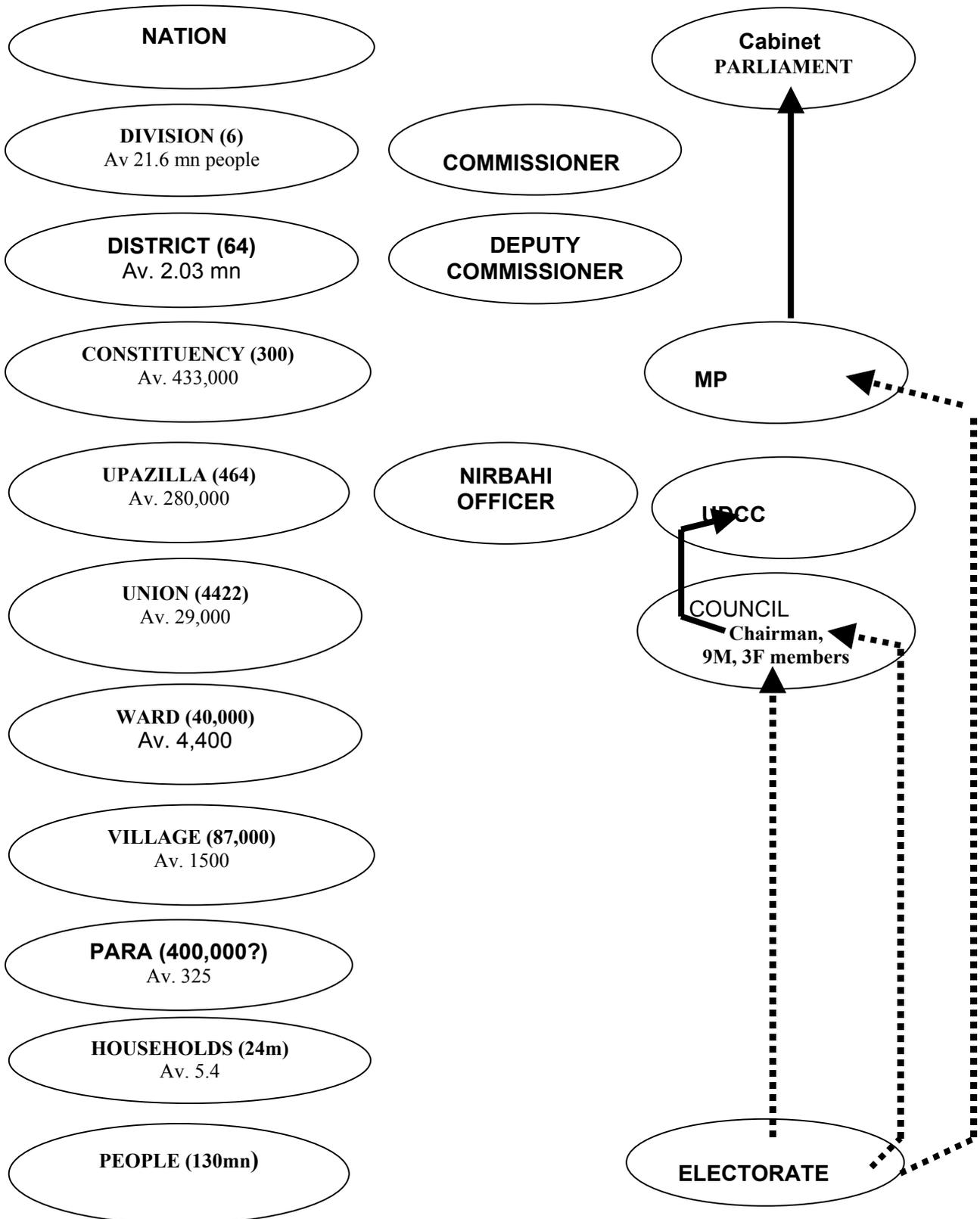
Fig. 2.1: Main political developments in the Bangladesh period

1971	Parliamentary government under Awami League (AL) with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as Prime Minister
1975 early	Awami League opts for presidential system and single-party state
1975 Aug	Mujib assassinated and government overthrown in military coup
1975 Nov	General Zia Rahman comes to power in popular uprising
1976	Multi-party system is restored. Zia is elected President, whilst his Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) wins a majority in parliament.
1981-2	Zia is assassinated by a group of military officers and a new President is elected. Ershad, the army chief of staff, then ousts the elected government and seizes power in military coup. Nine years of autocratic rule ensue.
1990 late	Ershad resigns in face of mounting popular pressure for the restoration of democracy. An interim government is formed to oversee elections.
1991 early	BNP wins an overall majority and returns to power under Khaleda (Zia's widow). A Westminster model parliamentary system (but with a single chamber) is then restored.
1996	Awami League defeats the BNP at the election and Hasina (Mujib's daughter) becomes Prime Minister
2001	BNP under Khaleda wins the election and again assumes power.

The country now has a unitary system of government, which in principle embodies a clear separation of powers between executive, legislature and judiciary, and a constitution that promises to ensure a wide range of fundamental and democratic rights, including the right to vote and take part in elections, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, individual liberty, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of movement, freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom of religious belief.

INSERT FIG. 2.2: LEVELS OF ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNMENT

Fig. 2.2: Levels of administration and government



2.1.1 The executive

The Prime Minister is the head of government and the President the constitutional head of state. The PM presides over a cabinet that is collectively responsible to the Parliament (*Jatiyo Sangsad*). Government is conducted by 36 Ministries and 17 Divisions which together are known as the Secretariat and constitute the focus of the Country's administration. Each Ministry is headed by a Minister or State Minister, who is assisted by a senior civil servant known as a Secretary, and a small team responsible for making and monitoring policy. Below the ministries lie various government agencies dealing with the different aspects of implementation. These include 254 departments, and a further 173 directorates, boards, corporations and other statutory bodies.

Territorially, the country is divided into six Divisions, 64 *Zilas* (Districts), 464 Upazillas (Sub-districts), 4422 Unions and more than 87,000 villages (see figure 2.2). Central government functionaries from many ministries and departments are placed at the Upazilla, but several ministries, including Agriculture, Education Health and Family Welfare, and Land are also represented at Union level or below. There are vertical and horizontal coordinating mechanisms. Divisions are headed by Commissioners, who co-ordinate the functions of the districts under their jurisdiction, with similar roles being played by the Deputy Commissioner at District and the *Nirbahi* officer (UNO) at Upazilla level. Most departments are represented at each level, although some skip the division, and the Department of Agricultural extension has found it convenient to sub-divide its operations into 10 regions.

The Civil service currently employs approximately 950,000 staff, of whom some 10% are women (see table 2.1). There are four main grades, with 87% of all posts at levels III and IV, which cover clerical and other more junior positions. Staff from classes I and II are open to transfer to any part of the country, and most postings at these levels are for a maximum of three years. Bangladesh largely follows a closed entry system where Class I officials are recruited directly at the entry level through

Class	No	%	Women	%
I	78,685	8.3	6,718	8.5
II	36,858	3.9	3,047	8.3
III	579,842	61.2	72,725	12.5
IV	251,364	26.6	14,029	5.6
TOTAL	946,749	100.0	96,519	10.2

open competitive examinations into 29 cadres and other services, and there is only limited scope for promotion to this level from below. A system of District quotas based on place of birth and designed to secure equality of access is in place. Consideration for promotion rests on Annual

Confidential Reports (ACR) prepared by those in supervisory positions.

2.1.2 The legislature

Parliament comprises 300 members directly elected from territorial constituencies, plus 30 women members selected by the elected MPs. It has powers to initiate revisions to the constitution and to decide on the budget. All prospective laws must be placed before it in the form of a Bill, and when passed, proceed to the President for assent. A large number of cross-party committees dealing with various areas of government activity have been set up and provide opportunities for parliamentary insight over matters of national importance.

Local government covers urban and rural areas and is guaranteed under the Constitution. In rural areas it presently operates only at Union Level, where there is a

directly elected chairman, plus nine male and three female members. At the Upazilla level, there is a co-ordinating body, known as the Development Coordination Committee (UDCC), that comprises the elected chairman and local officials and oversees development activities.

2.1.3 The judiciary

There is a Supreme Court in Dhaka with High Court and appeals divisions, whilst local courts, including magistrates courts, are located at district level (*for a more detailed discussion see chapter 9 and figure 9.1 below*).

2.1.4 Budget and Revenue

Government departments are funded through two lines. The Revenue Budget is used for institutionalised recurring expenditure, including staff costs, office rental, and specific essential activities, and is met entirely through domestically generated revenues. The Development Budget, which in recent years has tended to be slightly larger than its Revenue counterpart, supports expenditure to carry out specific projects, and comes in roughly equal proportions from Government and donor sources (*see table 2.2*). Uncertainties attaching to the latter can make planning a hazardous process. Together the two budgets account for some 20% of GDP.

Individual projects may be donor funded with a supporting GoB contribution, or entirely GoB financed. They include costs of all materials for the activities concerned, plus any additional staff, office space, transport facilities, or other requirements. When donor funding finishes, it is quite common for government to continue the activities, and to keep on the staff and facilities, by continuing its contribution to the development budget, and sometimes the staff positions can be transferred to the revenue budget, thereby conferring permanent employment on the incumbent. The amount of activity funded under the revenue budget is small, so if a department does not have many projects in a certain area, its staff there will not be able to do very much. This has the effect of placing project activities before strategic management, and of reducing the flexibility of local officers to respond rapidly to locally identified problems

The capacity to raise revenue internally is dependent mainly on various import duties that together account for 61% of all funds. Domestic VAT (12%), income tax (13%) and Domestic Stamp duties (12%) make up virtually all of the remainder. Agriculture, which accounts for about 25% of GDP, and in principle might contribute a similar proportion of tax, in fact provides hardly anything.

2.2 How Things Work in Practice

In practice it has proved very difficult to make the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, and to a more modern system of administration, where the complexities of development have been added to the more familiar and long standing regulatory functions.

2.2.1 The debasing of politics

Whilst the establishment and maintenance of formal democratic institutions, almost unique in a nation at such a low level of development, is a justifiable source of national pride, the political system exhibits a number of serious flaws. Power is heavily concentrated in the hands of Prime Ministers and their immediate associates

Ministry/Department	Mn taka	%	mn tk/ thana	Mn tk/ union	tk/capita
Local Government Department	32797.5	17.52	70.53	7.29	252.29
Roads and Railways Dept.	32169.9	17.18	69.18	7.15	247.46
Power Development Board	21200.0	11.32	45.59	4.71	163.08
Primary and Mass Education Dept.	13765.8	7.35	29.60	3.06	105.89
Water Resources Ministry	12122.3	6.47	26.07	2.69	93.25
Education Ministry	8780.9	4.69	18.88	1.95	67.55
Disaster Management and Relief	7858.1	4.20	16.90	1.75	60.45
Post and Telecommunications Ministry	5459.7	2.92	11.74	1.21	42.00
Agriculture Ministry	4678.1	2.50	10.06	1.04	35.99
Industries Ministry	4437.6	2.37	9.54	0.99	34.14
Energy and Mineral Resources Dept.	4400.2	2.35	9.46	0.98	33.85
Fisheries and Livestock Ministry	2410.5	1.29	5.18	0.54	18.54
Civil Aviation and Tourism	2089.3	1.12	4.49	0.46	16.07
Prime Minister's Office	1991.3	1.06	4.28	0.44	15.32
Environment and Forestry Ministry	1825.0	0.97	3.92	0.41	14.04
Housing and Public Works	1607.6	0.86	3.46	0.36	12.37
Youth and Sports Ministry	1338.7	0.72	2.88	0.30	10.30
Rural Development & Co-ops. Dept.	1117.5	0.63	2.52	0.26	9.01
Hill Tracks Affairs Ministry	1140.5	0.61	2.45	0.25	8.77
Jamuna Bridge Dept.	1000.0	0.53	2.15	0.22	7.69
Science and Technology Department	987.0	0.53	2.12	0.22	7.59
Statistics Dept.	744.2	0.40	1.60	0.17	5.72
Social Welfare Ministry	693.1	0.37	1.49	0.15	5.33
Establishment Ministry	626.2	0.33	1.35	0.14	4.82
Land Ministry	614.2	0.33	1.32	0.14	4.72
Home Ministry	613.4	0.33	1.32	0.14	4.72
Shipping Ministry	502.3	0.27	1.08	0.11	3.86
Women and Child Affairs Ministry	495.5	0.26	1.07	0.11	3.81
Cultural Affairs Ministry	473.4	0.25	1.02	0.11	3.64
Textiles Ministry	440.2	0.24	0.95	0.10	3.39
Information Ministry	427.5	0.23	0.92	0.10	3.29
Food Ministry	404.0	0.22	0.87	0.09	3.11
Commerce Ministry	379.4	0.20	0.82	0.08	2.92
Finance Dept.	362.9	0.19	0.78	0.08	2.79
Planning Dept.	323.4	0.17	0.70	0.07	2.49
Religious Affairs Ministry	250.1	0.13	0.54	0.06	1.92
Internal Resources Dept.	229.6	0.12	0.49	0.05	1.77
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs	220.0	0.12	0.47	0.05	1.69
Labour and Manpower Ministry	188.8	0.10	0.41	0.04	1.45
Ministry Affairs Dept.	154.9	0.08	0.33	0.03	1.19
Election Commission	110.1	0.06	0.24	0.02	0.85
Defence Ministry	96.6	0.05	0.21	0.02	0.74
Foreign Ministry	95.0	0.05	0.20	0.02	0.73
Jute Ministry	63.9	0.03	0.14	0.01	0.49
Special Affairs Dept	50.0	0.03	0.11	0.01	0.38
National Assembly	18.6	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.14
Implementation M&E Dept.	5.7	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.04
TOTAL	187221.7	100.00	402.63	41.60	1440.17

and a capacity to get things done tends rather to flow, in patrimonial fashion, from personal connections with this inner circle, rather than from formal position in government or civil service as such. The weakness of financial and management controls within government means that the information presented to parliament is inadequate, inaccurate and late, and does not provide a proper basis for accountability; whilst successive Comptroller and Auditor General reports have simply been ignored. Opposition parties have abandoned parliament as a means of holding the government to account, choosing instead to pursue politics through national strikes (*hartal*) and other forms of muscle and street based protest, and in the process have reduced it largely to a rubber stamping role.

Further difficulties arise from the manner in which parties are funded, with major firms providing large sums in an attempt to buy influence and secure contracts. The lack of transparency and accountability makes it easy for favours to be sold by governments to private parties and for the proceeds then to be fed back into party coffers. In a situation where power can quite easily change hands at the next election, opposition parties also benefit, using the resources secured to under-write the costs of political processions, motorcades and hartal.

At constituency level, the average contestant in parliamentary elections spends in excess of 10,000,000 tk., which is greatly in excess of the officially imposed ceiling. 60-70% of the money goes on “invisible” expenditures, with candidates illegally but routinely trying to win votes by spending on neighbourhood schools and mosque building, or entering into arrangements with touts who promise to deliver votes in return for cash payments. An estimated 10-15% of votes can be bought in this way, whilst others may be offered inducements not to vote, or deterred from doing so by the threat of violence at polling booths. The increasing trend for elections to be secured by such means plays into the hands of those with business connections, and businessmen themselves now hold more than half of all parliamentary seats. It also inevitably fuels corruption as victorious parties seek to re-coup and capitalise upon their sizeable “investments” in the months and years that follow.

2.2.2 Problems of administration

For a combination of reasons, including the weak external accountability discussed above, government exhibits a number of serious deficiencies.

There is a lack of operational definitions of public agencies’ missions, functions and roles; whilst a culture of secrecy in public service ensures that such definitions as do exist are not available to the public.

There is a high degree of centralisation of decision making. Officials at all levels are unwilling to take responsibility and files are routinely passed upwards on minor matters, especially those involving personnel - such as posting, transfer, promotion, discipline - or finances – especially purchase of supplies and equipment. A similar tendency is observed with decisions of a programmatic nature like the approval of loan applications and dispersal. Policy making and communication functions, which are the proper business of senior management, are squeezed by matters of house keeping that would ideally be discharged at lower levels in the system. And everything proceeds much more slowly than it otherwise might, in turn creating the circumstances in which bribery can flourish.

Reflecting its colonial predecessor, which found it convenient to maintain a large clerical cadre, the present system remains “bottom heavy” with 12-13 support staff for each grade I officer. This may appeal to the hierarchical instincts of those at the

top, and provide a constant supply of help to discharge tasks of a personal nature, but is now widely seen as surplus to what is required for the efficient execution of official business. Any streamlining will, however, be difficult to implement in the face of a heavily unionised and effectively led workforce.

The power of the junior cadres has already led to a compression in the highest to lowest pay ratios from 15.2:1 in 1972 to 10:1 by 1997, and has contributed to a 70-75% decline in the real salaries of senior officials since independence. Myriad allowances, primarily covering housing, cars, phones and domestic help have been introduced in compensation, and now amount to 2-3 times the value of actual salaries. These are highly inefficient and very complex to administer, but allow great opportunities for patronage by those who administer them and so again will prove difficult to reform. Furthermore, the allowances do not compensate for the 4-6 times increase in salary that mid to senior level officials could normally expect to obtain by moving to the private sector, and leave most well short of the income required to meet normal family expenses. This provides the motive for corruption in a system where opportunity is already amply available. Many officials are involved in some shape or form, with the amounts accruing ranging from as little as 10% to as much 500% of official payment, according to levels of seniority and the specific functions that any branch of government performs.

A related problem is that compensation packages and practices are not linked to performance. Annual Confidential Reports are supposed to be used to assess work but are often influenced by lobbying or personal considerations and frequently give an unduly positive assessment. Advancement, in any case, in practice rests more upon seniority and quotas, which perversely favour those from larger districts at the expense of smaller.

Finally, there is the problem of frequent transfers. Only 10% of deputy secretaries, joint secretaries, and additional secretaries complete two years in one post, and 80% stay in post for less than a year; whilst 50% of secretaries move on within 2 years. This inevitably comes at some cost, with a significant part of management related to substantive issues, each organisation having its own a history and culture that can only be learned in the job, and everyone having their own leadership style to which others must adjust. With such a rapid succession of learning curves to be negotiated, officers often do not have a clear idea of the problems existing, and no institutional memory of the programmes being undertaken. Frequently it is the more junior staff, that do not often get posted, who know better what is going on, but for the reasons indicated above they may be unwilling or unable to act upon their knowledge.

These problems have been extensively documented in the course of no fewer than 16 different major reviews, and are widely recognised and understood, but little has so far been forthcoming by way of solutions.

3. LOCAL GOVERNANCE: STRUCTURES, RESOURCES AND ROLES

This chapter outlines the various dimensions of local governance, and explores how they are related to each other. It relies mainly on secondary sources (especially: Blair 1989 p36-45; Hobley 2002; Khan *et al* 2002; Mahmud 2002 p98-100; Oakley 1999 p81-85; Rahman 2002; Shammunay 2000 p87-89, 185-193, 224-5; Kamal Siddique 1995 p33-76, 124-136, 189-91 and 2000, p22-36, 67-70; Kaniz Siddique 2001; and UNDP 1993 p43-7) to paint a general picture of the situation obtaining in the country as a whole, and draws to a more limited extent on key informant interviews with officials and elected representatives in our study area. The chapter has also benefited from the helpful comments and suggestions provided by Prof. Aminuzaduddin of Dhaka University and Abdul Bashir of CARE.

The first section lays out the structure of the District and Upazilla administrations and the Union *parishad* (council). The second describes some of the most important resources flowing through these structures and outlines the key procedures affecting the ways in which they are allocated. The third takes stock by summarising the roles of the key actors involved and the nature of the relations existing between them.

These are large subjects and comprehensive coverage will not be attempted. Important areas such as health care provision, education and agriculture, where key decisions about resource allocation are taken at a central level, with little or no local intervention, will not be considered at all, whilst the important topic of law and order will be considered separately later in the report.

3.1 Structures

During the colonial era, the District (Zila) provided the main focus for local administration, and the first element of local government arrived in the 1870's when representatives with limited powers were appointed at Union level. The years that followed saw the introduction of direct Union Council elections, and the creation of sub-district (thana) and district bodies, where appointed government officials sat alongside representatives selected by their peers from the Union councils. A similar system continued under the "Basic Democracy" of the Pakistan period, although with the balance shifting somewhat in favour towards officials, and away from indirectly elected representatives at higher levels.

The period since independence has seen a succession of further changes, with the only constant feature being the retention of the union council (or *parishad* as it is now known). But none of the reforms has done much to shift real control away from the national centre into the hands of local representatives or administrators. (*For further details of the various developments taking place over the last 130 years appear in figure 3.1.*) . The major features of the modern system may now be outlined.

3.1.1 The District Administration

The District remains of some importance, and there is still a Zila *parishad*, but this has been shorn of all directly and indirectly elected representatives and is of less significance than hitherto.

The administration has a mainly regulatory role. It is headed by a Deputy Commissioner (DC) and divided into three main components. The first, under an Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) and with about 100 staff, carries out a series of general administrative functions. The second, under another ADC and with some

Fig. 3.1: Major Developments in the history of local government

Colonial era (1757-1947)
1870 Bengal Village Chowkidari Act creates Union Panchayats, appointed by District Magistrates, as an ancillary of its administrative machinery for maintaining law and order with power to collect taxes from all houses to pay for local police force
1885 Bengal Local Self-Government Act introduces elected union committees (with responsibility for a number of functions, including managing and maintaining primary schools, roads, tanks, drains, sanitation, and registration of births and deaths), partially elected sub-divisional boards with supervisory powers, and partly appointed, partly indirectly elected boards at District level.
1919 Village Self-Government Act merges the Union committees and chowkhidary panchayats in to Union boards, extends some of their law and order, public service and regulatory functions, and gives some new judicial responsibilities.
Pakistan (1947-71)
1959 Basic Democracies Order modifies colonial system by creating directly elected union councils (who then appointed their own chairman); thana councils comprising union chairs and appointed officials; district councils with representatives elected by the chairman and appointed officials; and divisional councils with appointed officials and representatives elected by the district bodies. The District and the Union were granted limited revenue raising powers and had executive powers, whilst the thana and divisional councils had only co-ordination and consultative functions. Some additional functions were added to those already performed at Union level. The overall effect of the legislation was, however, to increase central government control. In the years that followed, the system was under-resourced, with no regular provision of central government grants.
Awami League (1971-75)
Previous bodies disbanded. The Union Councils were re-constituted as nine member elected bodies and renamed as Union panchayets (a name they have retained ever since), but the chairman was now directly elected. The District and Thana councils continued to be indirectly elected under the control of the Deputy Commissioner and Nirbahi officers respectively but were renamed the thana development committee and the Zila Board respectively.
BNP (1976-81)
1976 Local Government Ordinance renamed the thana council as parishads, and established direct elections for the representative positions on what now became zila parishads at district level. Directly elected chairmen were retained at Union level, and the UP was entrusted with some additional functions, given more petty judicial powers, and empowered to raise revenue from new sources. Union Plan Books, covering a five-year period, and dealing with public works (and later irrigation) were introduced.
1980 Swanirvar Gram Sarkar (elected village government) established with responsibility to prepare plans (that would in turn feed into union and thana level plans).
Ershad Martial Law (1982-91)
1982 Village level government is abolished. The thana is made the focus of local government with a directly elected parishad chairman and is renamed the Upazila. Functions are transferred down from the zila, which loses most of its former importance. The role of the Union is also diminished, but 3 nominated women are added to the elected members.
1983 Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance provides for the creation of a Union fund for each UP and establishes shape of UP that has continued largely unaltered until the present.
BNP (1991-95)
1991 The Upazilla system - which had occasioned widespread corruption - is abolished, and leaves the UP as the only directly elected level of local government. But the thana remains the focus of local administration with a Thana Development and Coordination Committee, comprising Union Parishad Chairmen and officials under the Thana officer replacing the parishad. The role of the zila is further downgraded.
Awami League (1996-01)
1997 Local Government Commission suggests four-tier local government system: <i>gram parishad</i> (ward level), <i>union parishad</i> , <i>upazilla parishad</i> , <i>zila parishad</i> (district level). Enabling legislation is passed, but only the Union Parishad that continues much as before, but with women members now elected, is in place by the end of the parliament.

80 employees, is concerned mainly with questions of land and revenue administration. The third, under the Additional District Magistrate, is much smaller, with only about 20 staff, and performs a mainly judicial function.

As noted in Chapter 2, major government departments concerned with development (including agriculture, livestock, fisheries, co-operatives, the Rural Development Board, health and family planning, and education) also have district offices. Their representatives are formally answerable to the CD through various committees that he chairs, and all sit together on the monthly District Development Committee. In practice, however, individual agencies tend to preserve their own internal chains of command and seek to maintain a high degree of autonomy over resource allocation, leaving the DC as a rather marginal figure.

With the exception of a few projects that are too large to be run from the Upazillas, the departmental officials at this level themselves play little part in planning the allocation of resources, and are left only with monitoring and control functions, that are taken with varying degrees of seriousness. They do, however, retain responsibility for making appointments and deciding transfers; and in a similar fashion, the DC has ultimate authority over the Upazilla Nirbahi Officers (UNOs) who are in charge of the sub-districts.

3.1.2 The Upazilla

Following the changes introduced by Ershad under his martial law regime in the early 1980's, the Upazilla has moved to the centre of the stage in local administration.

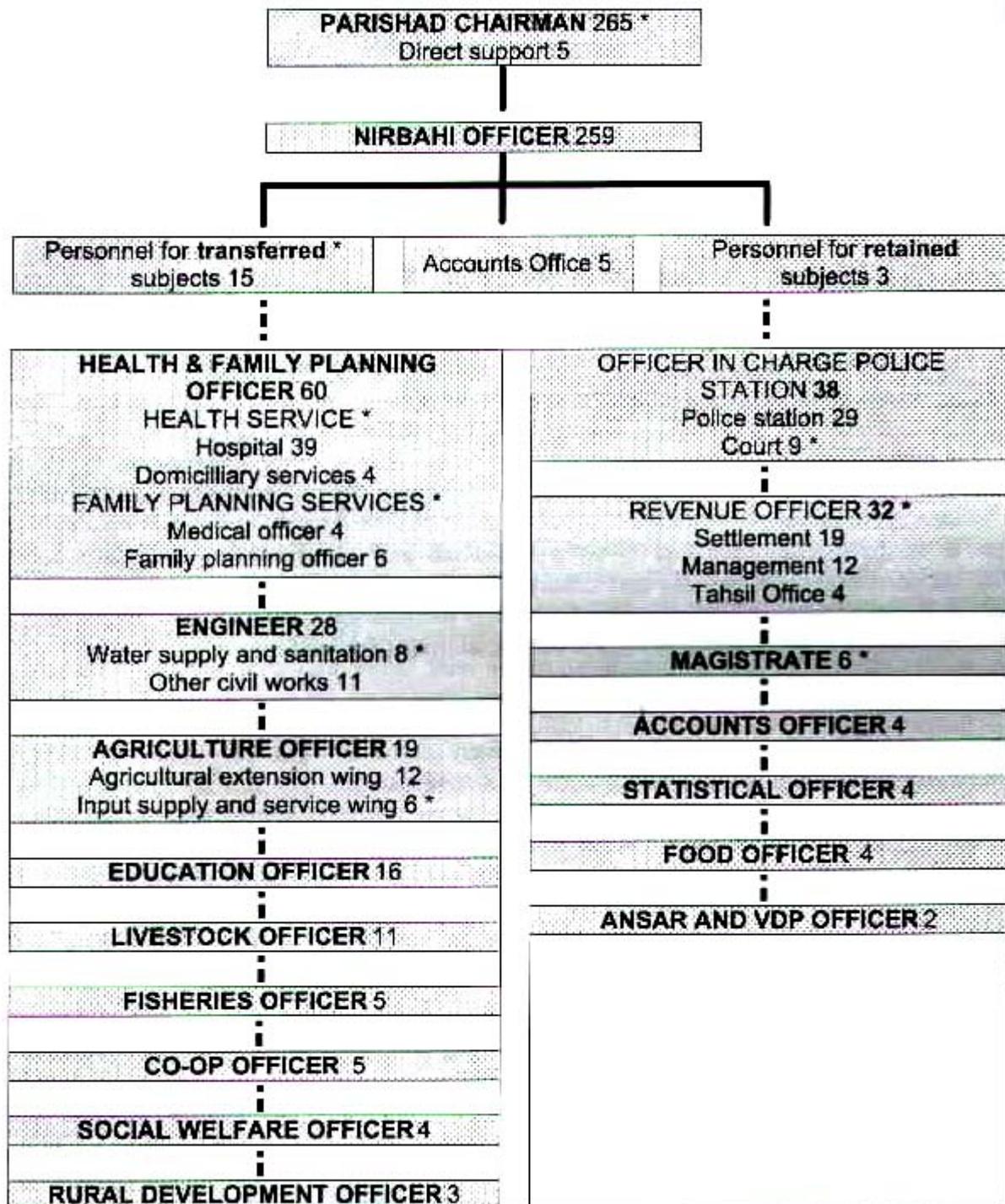
Initially, authority here was vested in a directly elected chairman, who headed an Upazilla parishad, comprising the union chairman and senior local administration officials, with the UNO acting as vice chair. A simplified organogram, summarising the position at this time, is presented in figure 3.2.

The total establishment amounted to some 265 positions and divided into two cadres: those involved in largely developmental activities for which responsibility had been *transferred* from central government under the new regime, and those performing regulatory functions that had been *retained* from the previous system. The former covered nine departments, the most important of which were health and family planning (with some 60 staff), engineering with 28, agriculture with 19, and education with 16. The latter were dominated by the police with 38, and the Revenue Office with 32, and also included the magistrate and supporting staff.

The new system opened the door to widespread corruption, and was unpopular with officials, who resented their traditional authority being usurped by what they regarded as professionally unqualified and relatively uneducated local representatives. With the restoration of parliamentary democracy in the early 1990's, it was also opposed by MPs, who saw the chairman as a threat to their own local power base.

All of this was quickly to result in the abolition of the role of elected chair, and the replacement of the parishad with a much less powerful Thana Development Coordination Committee (TDCC). Thenceforth this was chaired in rotation by the elected Union Council Chairman, with the UNO serving as secretary. This effectively handed control over the Annual Development Plan (ADP) (discussed later in the chapter) to the UNO and placed him in a strong position in relation to the chairmen and other elected UP members.

Fig. 3.2 Upazilla organogram showing key positions and staff numbers (1985)



* indicates that a significant change has taken place since 1985

At the same time, the UNO assumed the chairmanship of a large number of co-ordinating committees, the most important of which currently include law and order, social welfare, agricultural loans, youth development, women's development, primary education, food for work, and test relief. He also took on the formal role of financial controller, which meant that resources coming down through line agencies could only be released on his signature. In reality, however, as at district level, this carried with it little actual power in the face of line departments seeking to maintain firm control over their own budgets and activities.

The overall administrative structure of the contemporary Upazilla still remains clearly recognisable from that established in the 1980s, and no updated organogram has been produced since that time. The abolition of the parishad has, however, subsequently been followed by a number of other significant changes. In particular:

- domicilliary health services have been terminated and health and family planning merged under new local health centres
- water and sanitation, which was previously under the Upazilla engineer, has now upgraded and assumed a separate identity
- agricultural input supply has now largely been privatised, crop credit has been terminated, and a new seed department has been created
- the Magistrates Court has been closed and transferred to the district level
- the Revenue Office has been renamed the Land Office, but continues to perform similar functions
- a Youth Department has been established and officers appointed with special responsibilities for women and children
- a Project Implementation office has been established to administer the increasing number of food based and infrastructural activities (considered in more detail below).

3.1.3 The Union Parishad

Beneath the Upazilla comes the Union, which currently has the only elected local government body – the Union Parishad (UP). As noted earlier, this now comprises a directly elected chairman, nine general members elected from individual wards, and three additional women members, each of whom is elected from a constituency defined by three general ward. In addition, the parishad has a full-time administrative secretary, who is appointed by the district administration and is responsible for keeping all records. There are also a number of local police (*chowkhidars*) which the parishad appoints but which the District must approve. They guard the union, maintain law and order, and may assist in collecting revenue (*for more details again see chapter 8*).

The assigned role of the parishad and its various predecessors has changed considerably over time. Obligatory functions presently include:

Law and order

- Maintenance of law and order in its own right and by assisting the administration
- Adopting measures to prevent disorder and smuggling

Economic and social development

- Adopting and implementing schemes in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, livestock, education, health, cottage industries, communication, irrigation and flood protection
- Development and use of local resources

- Protection and maintenance of public property such as roads, bridges, canals, embankments, telephones and electricity lines
- Implementing development schemes assigned to it by the Upazilla
- Review of development activities undertaken by different agencies at union level and submission of recommendations to Upazilla
- Promoting of family planning
- Motivation of people to install sanitary latrines

Regulatory

- Registration of births, deaths, blind people, beggars and destitutes
- Conducting censuses

There are also 38 optional functions. In addition, and in principle, the UP is supposed to prepare five year plans covering road development, drainage and embankments, irrigation, and land use. In practice it lacks the required technical skills, or the necessary command of resources to do so.

In reality, far less is done. Members are frequently not even aware of all their official responsibilities and many of the standing committees through which responsibilities are supposed to be discharged are never established. To some extent this reflects a lack of training, and to some extent a lack of incentives, with members only receiving small honoraria that do not provide sufficient encouragement.

There is also a tendency for the chairman and one or two favoured associates to maintain close control over key areas of resources, and women members, in particular, complain that they are denied the opportunity to chair committees and exert an influence. The UP as an institution is further weakened by a general unwillingness on the part of union based government officials to involve it in decisions about the delivery of services and resource allocation, and by the desire of Upazilla based officials (especially in the Engineers office) to usurp its project planning role. All of this, in turn, means that very little coordination takes place between activities at the most local level.

3.2 Resources

Despite the strongly centralised nature of the system that has been described there are, however, still some resources available for local development and related purposes. These may now be explored, starting with those raised and directly disposed at the lowest level by the Union Parishad, and then proceeding to the various funds flowing down from national level via the District and Upazilla.

3.2.1 The Union Parishad Budget

UPs are obliged to produce an annual budget indicating how they will cover their establishment costs (see *table 3.1*) and any planned development expenditures. To enable them to do this they are empowered under the 1993 Ordinance to raise their own revenue in a number of different ways. These include:

- a. a tax on the annual value of buildings and lands (sometimes still known by its historical name of the chowkhidari tax)
- b. fees from specified *hats*, bazaars and ferries
- c. a tax on professions and trades
- d. a tax on cinemas, dramatic and theatrical shows and other entertainments
- e. fees for licences and permits
- f. fees from water bodies used for fishing

Category	No.	Monthly rate (tk)	Annual Cost (tk)
Chairman	1	2000	24000
Members	12	800	115200
Secretary	1	6143	73710
Dafadar	1	1000	12000
Chowkhidar	9	700	75600
Total	24		300510

They are also supported by three types of general purpose government grants; one for development, one which provides a 50% contribution to staff salaries and allowances, and one which is intended to contribute to any budget deficit arising as a result of shortfalls elsewhere.

Practical considerations made it difficult to determine with precision how the budget

was actually administered in Panchgram, where we studied. In common with what has been found elsewhere, it was clear that the process was not very well understood by the actors involved and that it was to some extent treated as a paper exercise conducted to satisfy an official requirement, where the recorded figures bore only an imprecise relationship to the reality on the ground. On the basis of what is already established in the literature and what we were able to determine from the primary materials supplied, some general conclusions can, however, still be confidently stated.

In the first place, the capacity to collect revenue is very weak. Only the auctioning of hat and bazaar rights, bringing in 115,000 tk. in the most recent year for which figures were available, raised a significant sum, accounting for 63% of the total raised. The chowkhidari tax, which on paper was supposed to be the largest contributor, in fact only raised 44,000 tk. or 27% of the target, reflecting a situation where UP officials are loathe to exert pressure on peers on whose votes they must depend to remain in power. The amounts raised elsewhere were too small to warrant discussion, and the overall total was barely sufficient to cover the Union's own 50% share of salary and related costs, leaving virtually nothing for development activities. The overall amount contributed by the government is unclear, but once again here it appears likely that staff costs will have absorbed the greater proportion. Certainly the development expenditures that could be ascertained with some confidence looked very small, with roads as the largest item accounting for only 52,000 tk, and the next largest item – a literacy programme – only 15,000.

Altogether it seems unlikely that the UP budget could account for more than 10% of all official resources spent in the area over which local people have some influence

Item	'000 taka	%
Test relief (a)	1500	37.4
Food for work (b)(c)	950	23.7
Vulnerable group fund (b)	700	17.5
Union budget	350	8.7
Vulnerable group dev	280	7.0
Annual dev plan	165	4.1
Rural maintenance prog	60	1.5
a) assumes 200+ tons of wheat and rice b) 100 tons of grain (700,000 taka) c) bridges (250,000 taka)		

(see table 3.2). The very limited capacity to generate its own income makes local government heavily reliant upon a number of different types of central government grants for revenue.

These fall into a number of categories. Some, like Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and the Vulnerable Group Fund (VGF) are primarily relief oriented, and at most contain only a secondary developmental component. Others, like Food for Work (FFW), Test Relief (TR), and the Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) combine relief and public works, whilst the Annual

Development Programme (ADP) is more purely developmental in nature. An overall

effect of this mode of finance is to limit UP's autonomy and to make it difficult for them to set their own priorities.

3.2.2 Relief Programmes

Vulnerable Group Development Programme (VGDP)

The VGDP started as a pure relief programme run by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation (MRR) and the Women's Affairs Department, but has now been extended in scope. It targets various categories of impoverished women, including the destitute, widowed and divorced, plus those with undernourished and/or lactating children or handicapped husbands. The numbers supported at any particular time range from 4-500,000 with at least 30 in each union. There were 107 in the Union in which we worked at the time the research was carried out.

Participants are given cards that entitle them to 31.5 kgs. of wheat a month for 18 months. At the same time, wheat to the value of 25 tk. each month is monetised and the sum then deposited in an account operated by the chairman and the UNO. Whilst in the scheme, women attend basic literacy and numeracy classes, and receive training in sewing, knitting, rearing of livestock and poultry, or other income generating activities. With the accumulated savings and an additional infusion of credit, they are then ideally in a position to support themselves and their families when the period draws to an end.

The central administration decides how many cards will be allocated to each District. Districts then allocate to Upazillas and Upazillas to Unions, using the relative degree of destitution as the official criterion. Next the Unions consult in the different wards (which sometimes form their own committees for the purpose) and draw up lists of candidates. These are then checked and approved by the Upazilla Committee (with the MP as adviser) and transmitted to the district. Allocation is directly from the District to the Union, with the latter responsible for distributing cards and rations. This takes place on a fixed day each month from the union or the ward with an official in attendance to ensure that things proceed as intended. (*Further details on how this and other programmes discussed below actually work "on the ground" appear in Chapter 4 – see especially box 4.1*)

Vulnerable Group Fund (VGF)

In addition, the Relief Ministry operates a VGF that provides support for poor and vulnerable households during times of scarcity and natural disaster. Allocations vary according to the extent of the problem encountered, but typically would be of the order of 500 cards per union, each of which entitles the recipient to 5-10 kgs. of wheat. The decision making and allocation procedure is similar to VGD.

Further cards are allocated to enable the poor to celebrate eid or puza, with 100-500 tons per union typically being made available each year. In the year of our study, 900 people in our union got 5kgs. of wheat and 5 kgs. of rice for eid; with a similar number being helped when food prices reached unusually high levels in October.

The wheat flowing through VGD and VGF has been assumed by some observers to reach the target group and to succeed in its objective. Coverage may not be very great but does appear to reach many women who are normally excluded from other NGO and government programmes, and one study found that the income of those taking part increases on average by 23%. There is, however, considerable evidence of misappropriation, with table 3.3 indicating that almost half of those receiving cards have to make an initial payment to a UP representative, and with more than 16% of all subsequent wheat allocations not actually reaching the card holders. The table

also provides clear evidence of a substantial number of cards falling into the hands of households not belonging to the lowest income group, many of whom are likely to be the supporters of the elected representatives.

Table 3.3: Corruption in the distribution and use of VGF/VGD cards				
	Monthly income group (tk)			Overall
	<1000	1-3000	>3000	
% of households with VGF/VGD cards	17.3	5.4	2.2	7.1
% of card holders paying bribes to obtain	48.5	48.1	50.0	48.4
Average size of bribe (tk)	172	186	200	180
% of allocation misappropriated	15.5	17.7	10.7	16.2
Monthly value of sum misappropriated/holder (tk)	48	54	36	50
Kaneez Siddique 2001 p29-30				

3.2.3 Relief with Public Works

Food for Work

This is a relief oriented nationwide programme designed to provide employment opportunities and income for the poor, and to keep food prices stable during the agricultural slack season, especially from November to February. Launched in the wake of floods and famines in the early 1970s, it has been financed by the World Food Programme, USAID (with CARE acting as the implementing agency) and the GoB (using a combination of domestic and other donor resources).

The programme is implemented through small local earth-work projects intended to develop physical infrastructure and contribute to increased food production. Typically these will include the completion or maintenance of *kacca* link roads; the construction of embankments; the installation of culverts, and the digging or re-excavation of ponds and canals. There is also provision, under a separate budget head, for the construction of *pakka* (concrete) bridges that is allocated on a rotating basis between upazilla, and under which the area in which we studied received 3mn. tk. to construct three bridges last year.

The procedure for allocating resources involves various parties and is quite complex, and we received varying accounts of how it operates. In outline the steps that should be gone through appear to be as follows:

- The Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation (MRR) allocates resources between upazillas on the basis of population
- The decision is communicated to a Standing Committee at District level known as the Rural Infrastructure and Construction Committee (DRICC) that is headed by the DC with the Minister and MPs as advisors,
- ... and via them to an Upazilla Rural Infrastructure Coordination Committee (URICC), comprising the UNO, the Project Implementation Officer (PIO), the Upazilla Engineer (UE), all other Department Heads, the UP chairmen and with the MP as advisor
- The Upazilla Committee informs Union level committees who then submit a priority list of possible schemes to the PIO
- For each scheme a Project Implementation Committee (PIC) is formed to oversee the work, comprising the Chairman or UP members, one VDG

- leader, one school teacher, one *imam*, one member of the local elite, one female member, and one labour representative
- The PIO visits the proposed schemes, prepares final versions, and submits to URICC.
 - URICC checks the PIC membership, makes a final determination as to how much wheat and/or rice will be provided, and approves the scheme (*although according to one observer the decision is in practice taken by the MP in conjunction with the UE, with the former also free to add projects of his own to the list if he wishes*).
 - The URICC informs the DRICC
 - The allocation is released, and work begins, with the PIO monitoring progress, assisted by staff from other departments if necessary. The executing agencies are formally required to place a notice board at each site giving the number of workers and their wheat entitlement, but this rarely happens.

Workers are organised into gangs with leaders, and receive 45 kgs. of wheat for each 1000 square feet of earth cut. The leader receives an additional 2.5 kgs. and a supervisor selected by the UP a further 0.5 kgs for the same amount of earth. It is stipulated that the allocation for individual road projects must not be less than 10 tons, and 10% of the allocation must be used for community clinics, school development, and maintenance of UP complex.

Typically some 450,000 metric tons of wheat and rice, with a value of about 900 mn. tk. (in 1989-90 constant prices) would be distributed each year under the programme (although this might rise to 500,000 tons in years of particular hardship like 1991-2) . This was equivalent to 104 tons, with a value of 704,000 tk. per union. Most of the food is believed to reach the target group and to play a positive role in providing employment, although site selection is often inappropriate. Some, however, goes astray, with the absence of transparency and effective scrutiny allowing considerable scope for inspectors to act in collusion with committee members to misappropriate a part of the wheat for their own purposes. One study found that as much as 25-30% did not reach the intended beneficiaries.

Test Relief

A second programme, known as Test Relief, runs along fairly similar lines to Food for Work, but with some significant differences. Firstly, the range of schemes supported is somewhat smaller, with the focus mainly on the repair and maintenance of recently constructed roads and culverts and earth cutting projects for school, *madrassah* and college fields. Secondly, individual activities are on a smaller scale, with a maximum allocation of 6 tons of rice and wheat. Thirdly, payment is time based, with workers receiving 4 kgs. of rice or 6 kgs. of wheat for a six hour day. Fourthly, the administration of the scheme is more flexible, with the standard annual allocation made to each union being complemented with an additional and rather larger component that can be earmarked for locations encountering greater than normal difficulties at particular points in time. Fifthly, activities tend to be confined to the period between July and September. Finally the overall scale of activity differs, with total national budgets typically amounting to 25-40% of those available for FFW from 1990-95. Our own sources indicate, however, that Test may now actually outstrip FFW, with 100-110 tons being provided to each union each year under the regular allowance, and 100-200 tons under the need based component.

The Rural Maintenance Programme (an example of a matching grant approach)

In addition to FFWP and Test, matching grant programmes have also been used to create employment and develop local infrastructure, although in practice the local contribution has been set at a very low level, and even then, Union Parishads have tended to find to use other external sources of finance, such as the Rural Works Programme or the Annual Development Programme (ADP) (*see below*) to cover their obligations.

The CARE supported Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) is a leading example of this type of arrangement. Starting in 7 unions in 1983, it has now spread across almost the entire country. In each case, RMP employs 10 usually divorced or destitute women to maintain 10 miles of important earthen roads with a view to keeping them in a passable condition and facilitating access to markets from all homes throughout the year.

CARE first conducts a survey to determine which roads will be included. The UP then puts forward a list of names for candidates for CARE to interview and selections are duly made, with a reserve list being drawn up to cover drop-outs. Those chosen elect their own spokesperson and deputy, and open a bank account in their joint names into which payments are then made every 14 days. The crew are trained in road maintenance techniques, with the UP providing baskets and CARE the necessary tools and replacements.

90% of all payments come from the government using the monetised proceeds of Canadian wheat, whilst the UPs raise the remainder and must pay the sum into the local bank account to trigger the government's contribution. The UP assigns work targets, and contract with the responsibilities of both parties agreed are then signed. Each woman receives 16tk/day (1984) and the UP jointly monitors performance with CARE staff, who pay monthly visits to check maintenance, provide extra training and make sure payments are being made.

For the last decade crews have been encouraged to save and provided with support enabling them to diversify into other income generating activities. A health education programme has also been introduced which, among other things, promotes the use of safe drinking water and sanitary latrines. More recently CARE has embarked upon the process of handing over responsibility to LGRDC and initial training is now conducted jointly with LGED.

3.2.4 Annual Development Programme (ADP) Block grant

The ADP, administered by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under on the Local Government Department (LGD), provides a further source of resources for local infrastructure development. The sum made available varies somewhat from one year to another. In the Upazilla where we worked in 2000-2001 it was about 3 mn. tk., but was said to have been approximately 5mn. tk., two to three years earlier. It has been suggested that MPs of the ruling party are able to ensure that most of the funds available under this head will flow to their own constituencies.

The way in which the money is used once it arrives at the Upazilla is supposed to be determined by two formulae that have been designed to lessen the scope for corruption. The first governs allocations between sectors, stipulating that communications should receive 25-60%, irrigation and agriculture 15-30%, education 10-25% and "infrastructure" (i.e. drinking water and sanitation) 10-15%. The second guides distribution between unions, with population determining 40% of the weighting, physical area 30%, and level of development (that is itself determined by a number of more and less objective considerations) a further 30%.

Formal procedures for submitting proposals and releasing funds parallel those described above in relation to FFW, with LGED taking the place of MRR, the Upazilla Engineer occupying the role of the PIO and the UDCC acting in the capacity of the URICC. Money is released in three annual instalments. Where the sum available is less than anticipated all projects are supposed to be cut in proportion, and where there is a surplus additional applications may be entertained. Once again the MP plays a key role in determining outcomes, with one source suggesting that his view can prevail over those of the chairmen in the event of any disagreement, and that funds can only be released upon his signature. Others suggest this is not the case, although the divergence in views may reflect a recent change in policy of which not everybody has yet been made aware.

In the absence of effective monitoring systems, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how things actually work in practice. Records we obtained for the most recent period from our study Upazilla suggested that the budget remained within the approved sectoral boundaries, although this would not have been difficult given the considerable degree of latitude these allowed. The figures also, however, show that the percentage of allowed resources allocated to each sector in each union was identical, which scarcely seems credible. With regard to the absolute level of allocation between unions, the complexity of the formula makes it difficult to determine with any certainty what has happened, but there is little evidence to suggest that those regarded as least developed have been favoured, although there is clearly a tendency for those with larger populations and areas to receive more.

Informal enquiries appeared to confirm that the figures could not have painted an entirely accurate picture of actual allocations, however, which is what one would expect given the “lumpiness” of the types of activities undertaken and hence the impossibility of adhering rigidly to rules for allocation within any particular accounting period. In overall terms it may not be unreasonable to conclude that the system ensures that all areas get an amount corresponding very broadly to their entitlement, but with considerable scope for influence to be exerted by key individuals and interest groups at the margins. In the Upazilla where we worked, for example, the MP had apparently decided entirely by himself how the third of the three tranches of funds available in the previous financial year would be allocated. This was perhaps a fairly predictable outcome, but more surprising was the reported allegation of one senior district official that, in some instances, as much as 50% of the ADP was never released to unions at all, but was re-directed by the TNO through the budgets of line departments.

3.3 Roles and relationships

The roles performed by key actors in the processes described will already to some extent be clear from the preceding discussion. But in conclusion it will be useful to summarise and expand upon what has been learnt, and then to use this as a basis on which to delve further into some of the central relationships upon which local governance ultimately rests.

3.3.1 The MP

All the written sources consulted agree that the primary role of the MP is as a national level legislator, but all accept that there is a secondary part to be played out at the local level within the constituency. The critical issue is how far the secondary role should extend. Formally it would seem to be confined to advising committees dealing mainly with relief and public works activities at Upazilla and District levels

(and in addition, according to some sources, to signing off for the release of resources). Informally, it tends to reach much further, encompassing involvement with and domination of decisions about the allocation of resources and the detailed implementation of activities.

Indeed, an increasingly sceptical and jaundiced electorate seems often to elect their representatives with precisely this expectation in mind. The control of the delivery of public services thus becomes a means of fostering patron-client relations and maintaining vote banks. This explains much of the leakage taking place through the various programmes that have been described. It is also partly responsible for a weakness in the implementation of local programmes, where more money is routinely allocated for the construction of new roads (which is perceived as a service rendered by the MP) than for the maintenance of existing ones (which is seen only as the routine work of the concerned public agencies).

The MP may also exert influence upon the allocation of contracts relating to the operation of haats and bazaars, as an incident reported by the UNO from our own Upazilla illustrated. Formally, contracts are supposed to be awarded to the highest bidder in an auction, but on a recent occasion a party associated with the MP was out-bid and lost. Rather than accept the outcome, the MP brought pressure to bear for a re-run, from which the original winner was eliminated, thus clearing the way for his own preferred candidate.

A further, and sometimes very important dimension of the MP's local role, that has not yet been considered, concerns their capacity to attract other larger resources into the constituency. Although others also played their part (*see next chapter*), the previous local MP from the then ruling Awami League party, was, for example, instrumental in securing a number of important projects including a regional agricultural services centre, a dam that would provide water to irrigate an area of 1000 acres, a large auditorium for the Upazilla, and one of only two digital telephone services in the rural areas of Bangladesh. The individual in question was a whip, and hence only a relatively junior member of the government, but was able to draw on a close personal relationship with the Prime Minister to get what he wanted (in the process illustrating the kind of patrimonialism referred to in Chapter 2.) Contracts for the big infrastructural projects went to outside companies with the necessary technical skills, but the presence of both facilities will generate major additional income flows users, and hence for those in a position to determine who has access and who does not.

3.3.2 The Upazilla Nibhari Officer

The UNO is the second most important actor after the MP and is a pivotal figure. Among other things, he:

- Sits on the DDCC
- Acts as secretary, and enjoys a powerful position on the UDCC, that approves the ADP and meets monthly to supervise the implementation of the projects included in it
- Chairs the URICC that decides on the local allocation of relief resources,
- Chairs some 18 other committees, including those dealing with law and order, khas land distribution, smuggling, foods procurement, health and revenue
- Supervises UP elections, and on behalf of the DC, inspects UP offices, enquiring into and reporting on suspected abuses
- Scrutinises UP budgets and checks minutes, before these are sent on to the DC for approval

Over and above these specific tasks, he has the overall role of co-ordinating the work of all development and regulatory departments located at Upazilla level. His power in this respect is, however, considerably less than would have been true of his colonial predecessors. Although he enjoys the respect of departmental heads, who recognise his formal status, he must ultimately rely upon persuasion rather than command under circumstances where other officers now increasingly look to their own departmental superiors as the ultimate source of authority. The kind of personal relations that can be established with the Upazilla Engineer (UE), who also sits on most of the key committees and has a central role in relation to most of the critical public works programmes discussed earlier, are of particular significance.

The UNO must generally, in turn, also defer to the authority of the MP, whilst seeking to use his normally superior understanding of government regulations as a means of restraining some of the latter's more extreme infractions.

3.3.3 The Union Parishad Chairman

As the next chapter will make clear, and partly by virtue of the superior official contacts and access to information they enjoy, UP chairs occupy a powerful position within their unions. But in the wider arena of the Upazilla, where they lack the full time salaries, the education and technical qualifications, and the wider contacts to the central levels of the government system of the other key actors, they must generally play second fiddle.

As with the MPs, their relations with officials are complicated by a lack of shared understanding regarding the laws, rules, regulations and circulars relating to the working procedures of local government bodies, especially as these relate to relief goods, procurement, tender and financial arrangements. Elected representatives may try to insist on going ahead with procedures without any regard for the procedures, whilst officials may interpret these as negatively as possible in order to avoid doing any work. This is symptomatic of an underlying situation where:

“..the perceptions of ...elected functionaries and bureaucrats regarding their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis each other are not ... conducive to cooperative relations. ... The bureaucrats generally regard the functionaries as ..semi-literate rural rich, given to corruption and self-seeking and always looking upwards for doles, [whilst] the functionaries find the bureaucrats high handed, inefficient, power hungry and corrupt. Each group thinks that the other creates bottlenecks [and] both feel that they alone should have the final say in important matters. There are, however, many instances of unholy alliances between the two... particularly when it comes to indulging in corruption.”

(Siddique 2000 p27-28)

Partly because of their complicated relationship with the bureaucrats, Chairman are beholden to MPs who they must frequently ask to intercede on their behalf if the desired access to external resources is to be secured.

3.4 Taking stock

The key features emerging from the discussion of the system of governance at the local level may be summarised as follows:

- The population at large only has a limited understanding of the functions that the UP is supposed to perform, is rarely consulted in the course of its deliberations, and has learnt not to expect it to accomplish very much on their behalf.
- UP members are, themselves, only partially aware of their formally prescribed responsibilities, and in many cases lack the skills and resources required to discharge those functions of which they are aware.
- The main areas where the UP can have a significant role to play include the awarding of contracts for the management of hats and bazaars, the management of local infrastructure projects, and the distribution of relief goods; but even here, freedom for manoeuvre can be limited by local officials seeking to extend their own control or by MPs seeking to exert an influence.
- Simple UP membership does not itself provide any guarantee of influence over the activities in which the body engages. By virtue of being directly elected, the Chairman is placed in a relatively powerful position, and often takes decisions in conjunction with a small inner circle of associates, from which women councillors, in particular, are likely to be excluded.
- The UP has a very limited capacity to raise revenue and is therefore highly dependent upon resources flowing down to it through various official channels.
- A number of different Government officials are based at union level, but are answerable to their own departmental line managers and tend neither to communicate very much with each other, nor to consult local representatives. Coordination of activities is therefore poor.
- Chairmen sit on the UDCC and are able to use this and more informal contacts to lobby for resources, but their formal connections with the Upazilla administration are quite limited and their influence over its deliberations only slight.
- The relationship between local officials and elected representatives is in general characterised by a degree of mutual suspicion and hostility, but this does not preclude collusion where this is in the mutual interest of the parties concerned.
- A range of agencies, which perform both developmental and regulatory functions, are located at the Upazilla, and this now forms the primary focus for local administration. The UNO has formal powers of coordination, but can exert little practical control over most of the activities undertaken by line departments.
- The District, which was formerly pre-eminent, has now receded in importance, and is confined to a largely supervisory role.
- From the formal point of view, MPs are only expected to perform a relatively minor and advisory role at Upazilla and District levels. In practice their influence, from the Union upwards, is much more extensive, and their views tend to outweigh those of other actors, although the UNO may be able to exert a restraining influence.

PART II: LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

4. THE UNION AND THE NET OF POWER RELATIONS

This chapter is the first of three that are based primarily on our own field investigations. It explores the “net” of relationships between powerful actors operating at the local level, and shows how these shape a number of significant resource allocation processes. The analysis derives mainly from work carried out in the Union that will here be referred to as Panchgram, and draws heavily on the separate paper by Brigitta Bode entitled “In Pursuit of Power: Local Level Elites and Union Level Governance in Rural Northwestern Bangladesh”.

A central theme running through much of what follows will be the way in which informal grass roots social institutions interact with and permeate the more formal political and administrative structures extending downwards from the state. Part of the context necessary to understand how this takes place has already been set by the introduction to local governance structures presented in Chapter 3. In addition, and before proceeding further, it will be useful to provide a brief introduction to the fabric of social institutions, and to highlight some of the key points arising from the literature concerning the role of the state in shaping the local economy. With this accomplished, the next section of the chapter introduces the major actors in the recent history of the Union; exploring the diverse strategies they have employed to accumulate resources, and the alliances they have formed in pursuit of their political ambitions. The analysis is then deepened through an account of the competition developing around a strategically significant waterbody (dighi), and an exploration of the operations of a number of important Union Parishad (UP) committees. A final section takes stock, showing how the informal institutional base has been reproduced and re-shaped through its interaction with wider economic and political forces to produce a more complicated contemporary picture.

The primary investigation took the approach developed in “The Net” (BRAC, 1983) as its starting point. Semi-structured interviews were used to identify influential people, to show how they accumulated resources, to explore their mutual relations, and to build a picture of more and less formal institutions. Other methods employed included critical incident analysis, a market survey (that helped to build a clearer picture of how economic power was wielded), and a card based exercise (to outline the key internal characteristics and external linkages of individual residential para). Data collection and preliminary analysis extended over five weeks, using a research team of 14 GO-IF staff, with a core team of 8 people working full time on data collection. A great deal of the analysis emerged through lengthy discussion with the field-trainers who formed the core team and made a tremendous contribution, going about their business with enthusiasm and dedication, despite the many challenges and obstacles faced along the way. A fuller account of their work and the methods employed appears as an annex to the Bode paper.

4.1 Informal institutions and the shaping of economic activity

4.1.1 The foundation of social institutions

Three types of social institution are of particular significance to what follows. Each is rooted in principles of moral obligation and reciprocity and may serve to ameliorate some of the effects of the countervailing economic forces that will be elaborated below.

Kinship

The first and perhaps most fundamental building block in the wider social order is kinship. This is primarily expressed through the medium of the patrilineage (*gushti*), through which descent is traced, and which commonly finds physical expression in the residential neighbourhood (*para*), (*but see figure 4.1 for possible variations to this and the other relationships discussed in the paragraphs that follow*).

Both Muslims and Hindus generally avoid marriage within the patrilineage (ie they treat it as exogamous). To the extent that the residential community (*para*) corresponds to the *gushti*, there is therefore also a strong tendency for marriages to be contracted beyond its boundaries, and typically from communities several kilometres removed. With Hindus there is a strong presumption that marriages will take place within the same caste (ie of caste endogamy). With Muslims, somewhat looser considerations of social status and class normally determine whom it may be acceptable to marry and who is excluded.

Patterns of residence are strongly patrilocal. That is to say women nearly always move to their husband's family compound (*bari*) on marriage, and that when a separate household is subsequently formed this will invariably also be in the husband's birth community. The poorer a household is, the more likely it is that it will fragment and assume a simple nuclear structure (confined to parents and their children) soon after more marriage takes place. Big farm households, by contrast, are more likely to retain a joint structure (with parents, children and the children's spouses and children) all continuing to live together, at least until the death of the male head.

Patrilocal residence combined with the tendency for marriage outside the *para* means that men retain a much stronger network of kinship relations around them and that much of a married woman's social capital is defined by her husband's network. Contacts will normally also be maintained with their own birth *para*, and especially with their siblings and parents where still alive, but the lack of physical proximity means that regular support (e.g. in child care or other domestic work) will generally not be available, and that help tends to be confined to instances where distance is not a constraint (eg the provision of financial support in times of difficulty).

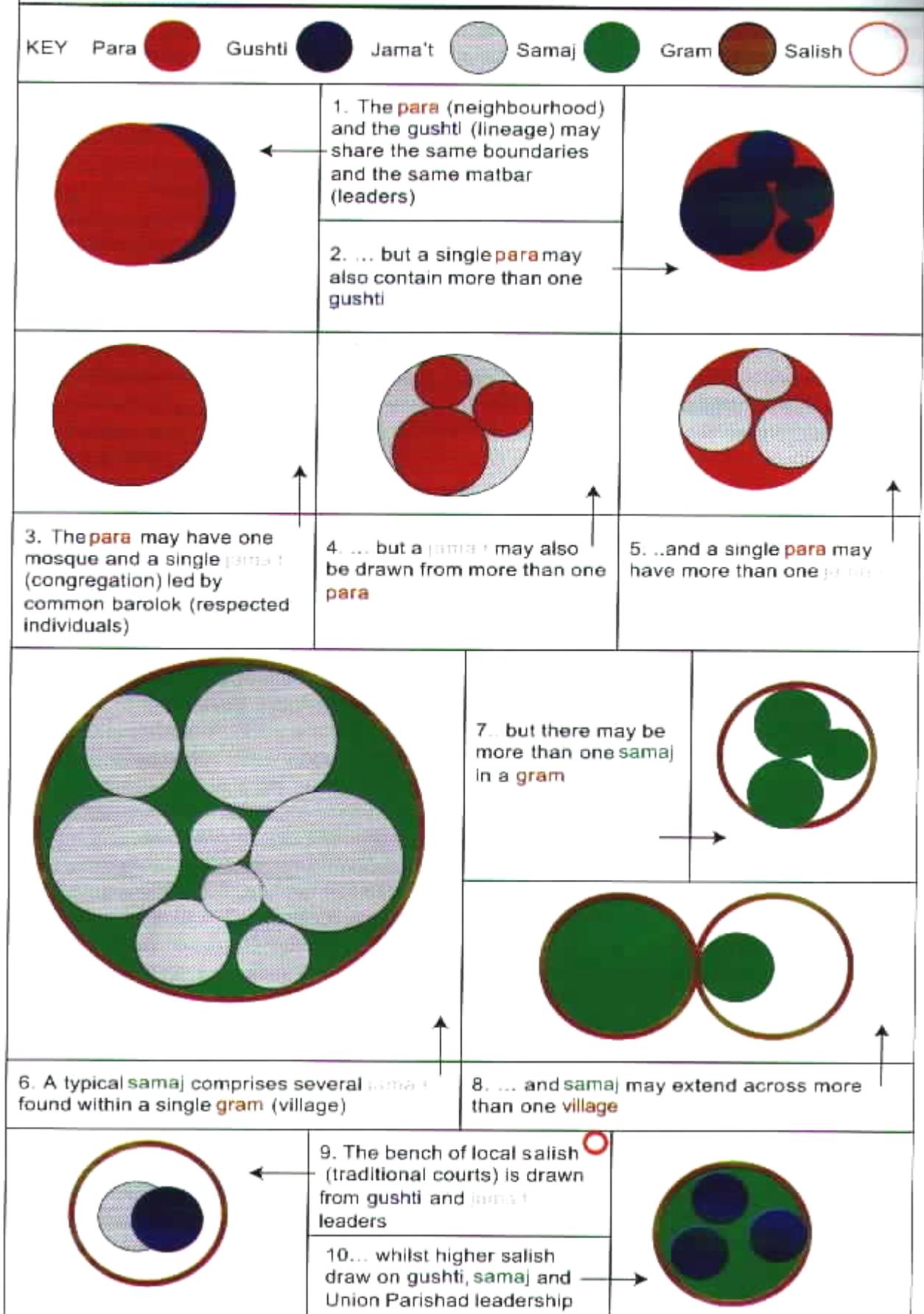
From time to time women may, however, marry within their own birth communities; and more exceptionally the normal rule of patrilocal residence may be reversed with the husband coming to reside in the wife's *bari*. In the first instance, the woman and her household may draw both on her own and her husband's kinship networks. In the second, her own network will be the one that must be relied upon.

Hindu women do not inherit land from their fathers, but take a dowry with them at marriage – a custom that has recently been adopted by Muslims also, with a number of undesirable consequences (*see Bode 2002, Appendix II*). In principle, Muslim women are entitled to an individual inheritance, although the share is smaller than their brothers' and is, in practice, often surrendered. Brothers, in exchange, normally recognise an obligation to support their sisters in the event of divorce or the death of a husband.

Mosques and temples

Muslim mosques (*masjid*), Hindu temples (*mandirsi*), and the congregations they attract (known respectively as *jama't* and *poti*) represent another ubiquitous feature of communal life. In contrast with other more conservative parts of the country, the *Imam* is confined to a purely religious role and exerts little influence in wider community affairs. Effective leadership resides rather in a secular committee, the

Figure 4.1: Relations between social institutions



4.1.2 The evolving economic framework

Much of the social fabric that has been described would have been recognisable a century or more ago, and may therefore with some justification be described as traditional. The framework within which access to resources is shaped and economic relationships conducted has, by contrast, been subject to much more rapid evolution, although with the question of land and its control remaining of central importance.

Economic exploitation and social relations under the Zamindars

The central institution during the colonial period was the Zamindari system. This was an adaptation of an earlier regime introduced by the Moghuls, and was itself to undergo further significant changes as the nature of the wider colonial regime developed. In its final state, arising out of the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, the Zamindars, who previously had operated primarily as estate administrators and revenue collectors, were now granted proprietorial rights in return for the payment of revenues that were to be fixed in perpetuity. It was intended that this should provide them with an incentive to transform themselves into a class of capitalist farmers who would invest in their land and increase agricultural productivity. The actual effect, however, was the exact opposite, with the zamindars instead casting themselves in the role of feudal overlords, who farmed out their rights to a sub-class of jotedars, who then let on to others, who might themselves then opt to sub-let yet again. The end result was a system that combined low productivity with high degrees of exploitation, and led inevitably to the impoverishment of the great bulk of the rural population.

Zamindars claimed for themselves the de facto power of punishing their tenants through fines and corporal punishments. For an extended period, little was done to check this extralegal authority, and tenants, by virtue of their weak position, were in little position to resist. But because the role had no formal legitimacy, a certain leniency was expected in cases of arrears of rent resulting from genuine hardship, and the rare zamindar who functioned as a usurer forfeited much of his social respect. Most also organized some philanthropic activity, founding schools and charitable dispensaries or maintaining water tanks.

The Pakistan period

The end of colonialism and the creation of Pakistan brought with it the abolition of the Zamindari and the imposition of land holding ceilings that were formally intended to usher in a major redistribution of land. These and similarly motivated land reforms taking place subsequently in the Bangladesh period were, however, to prove largely ineffective, with holdings being re-registered in the names of different family members and other devices being resorted to in order to avoid seizure. The former pattern of large land holdings concentrated in the hands of a small number of families that had characterized the North-western region under colonialism was therefore largely reproduced into the modern era. At the same time, the dominance of the western wing of the country and the strategy that it pursued of extracting surpluses from agriculture in the east to finance its own industrialization, left relatively little scope for development in that part of the country.

The modern era

All of this began to change, with the eventual emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971 ushering in a new phase where more external resources became available, and where the modest local level political and administrative reforms already discussed in chapter 3 began to come on stream. As the account that follows will make clear, many of the former elite were still able to recreate themselves and move forward as external circumstances changed, but the more fluid

situation that now arose also provided opportunities for others of more modest means to start to make their mark.

The Green Revolution, which enabled landholders to benefit from public-sector investment in irrigation and state-subsidised high-yielding varieties, was of critical importance, whilst the flow of official credit (relatively little of which got repaid) provided an additional boost to their fortunes. Previously, production was limited to the *amon* season, with average paddy yields at 460 kg per acre, but these now increased to as much as 1400 kg per acre. In addition, the use of irrigation equipment made it possible to cultivate a dry (*boro*) season crop, with outputs averaging 1800 kg per acre, making agriculture far more lucrative than had previously been the case.

During the mid-1970s, under donor pressure, the GoB reduced the subsidies on inputs and privatized the ownership of Deep tubewells (DTW), which were then sold off to cooperatives or individuals at subsidized rates. Most, as a result, passed into the hands of elites, who were then able to sell water at market prices and earn substantial additional income. At the same time, to offset the impact of the declining input subsidies and provide incentives for farmers to maintain paddy production, the government also instituted a procurement system that was designed to provide stable remunerative prices for paddy producers. This again generally worked to the advantage of large farmers. As one observer notes:

“...the concerned dealers and public functionaries have entered into collusive arrangements with gave discriminatory preference to buying rice from rich peasants and large traders, while denying effective access to producers from the ranks of the poor and middle peasantry. The margin between the procurement price ‘guaranteed’ by the state and the lower prices prevailing in the open market served to provide the source of covert gains encouraging such collusion between public and private sector agents.”

(Adnan 1999, p201)

Small and medium farmers, always in need of cash and generally selling their crops at harvest time, were forced to sell at the lower market rate, whilst elites, who had by now substantially improved their cash flow, could profit further by providing production loans for these households to finance the inputs for the next planting season. Over and above these opportunities arising in agricultural production, those with resources have been able to diversify into agro-processing, which in turn has been boosted by the increasing electrification of rural areas, and into a variety of business and professional activities beyond their immediate villages.

4.1.3 The interaction of the social and the economic

The traditional primacy of land as a resource, coupled with the marked inequalities in access that have been described, has led to the predominance of vertically structured relations whereby the poor (as clients) must seek to attach themselves to the rich (as patrons) - whether as labourers, tenants, borrowers, or in some other capacity - in order to guarantee their survival. Common membership of a *gushti*, *jama't* or *samaj* may be utilized as a means of establishing or maintaining such relations, whilst the moral values and obligations with which these institutions are associated help to ensure that they do not become purely exploitative in nature. The situation is to some extent reminiscent of the Malaysian peasantry where:

“...expectations and preferences about relations between the well-to-do and the poor....are cast in the idioms of assistance, consideration and helpfulness. They apply to employment, tenancy, charity, feast giving, and the conduct of daily social encounter. They imply that those who meet those expectations will be treated with respect, loyalty and social recognition. What is involved to put it crudely, is a kind of ‘politics of reputation’ in which a good name is conferred in exchange for adherence to a certain code of conduct.

(Scott 1987, p184-5)

Social institutions may also provide a basis for the construction of various forms of horizontal economic relations. These, however, are of secondary importance, and are much more commonly encountered among the rich than the poor.

Organized resistance by the poor, in forms such as *gherao* (protests against the illegitimate seizure of state resources) remains quite rare, although they do have limited recourse to other devices in their attempt to pursue their own interests against the rich and powerful. These may include ‘foot-dragging’ (reducing the work output on the landlords field), gossip (character assassinations of elites), and pilfering and petty theft (involving the landlords agricultural plots, state-controlled natural resources, or elites’ personal property). (*For illustrations of how this works elsewhere, see Scott 1985; Peluso 1992; Guha 1989*).

4.1.4 Taking stock

In conclusion, it should be noted that most individual relationships are multi-stranded in nature and hence constructed on a range of different principles. Whilst the institutions that have been described may broadly shape the possibilities open to any particular actor, this still leave considerable space for individual agency. People may choose to utilize the potential offered by certain relationships or allow it to lie dormant. They may either recognize the legitimacy of claims made upon them, or decline to respond, opting instead to take the consequences that follow, and so forth.

Starting with the union and its dominant individuals in this chapter, and moving on to the community and the household in the two that follow, we may now begin to explore the different ways in which these possibilities can be exploited.

4.2 An introduction to Panchgram

4.2.1 Resources and villages

Panchgram is one of 12 unions in the Upzaila and is classified as “averagely developed”. It lies a short distance from the administrative headquarters and is approached by a narrow metalled road that enters the area at its southern extreme and then runs on for a further seven kilometres before reaching the northern boundary. On the way it passes three bazaars, the Union council office, a brickfield, a handful of schools and mosques, several small rice mills, and a large agricultural service centre that is still under construction. A network of smaller unsurfaced roads wind their way off some four or five kilometres to either side, linking together the 135 residential *para* as they go (*see figure 4.2*).

The area to the east of the main road is of slightly higher elevation and subdivides into two parts. The first is the poorer, more sparsely occupied zone to the north, that

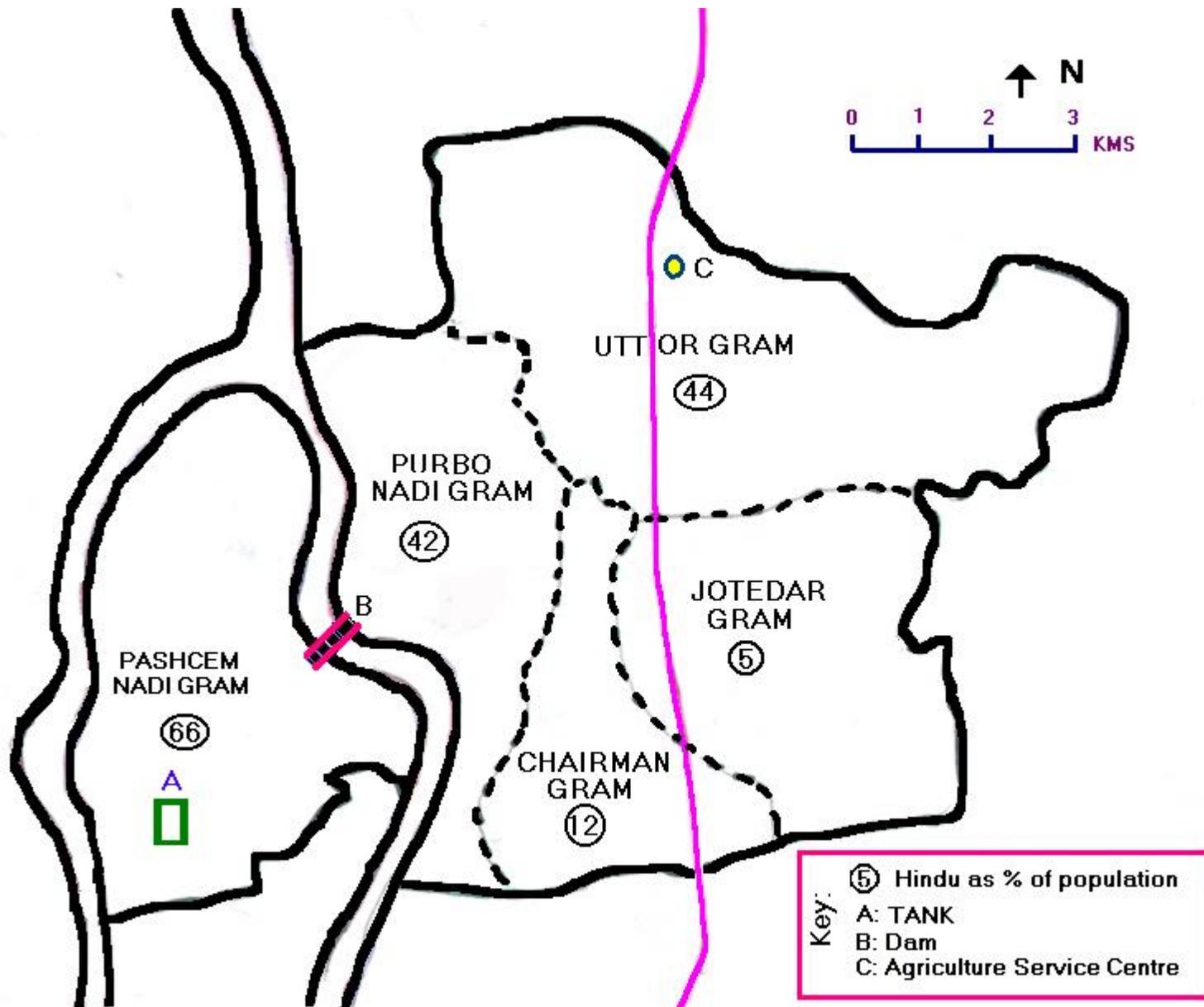


Figure 4.2
PANCHGRAM UNION

also extends a short distance to the west of the road, and is broadly defined by the boundaries of the northern village (Uttorgram). The second is the rather more fertile, prosperous and densely populated portion to the south, which more or less corresponds to the village of Jotedargram.

Immediately opposite, to the west of the road, the land starts to fall away gently through the small and rather poor village of Chairmangram, and the larger and somewhat better off community of Purbonadigram beyond. The western boundary of this village is formed by a large north-south flowing river that forks as it enters the union, creating a sizeable, especially low lying and cut-off area to the extreme west. This, in turn, forms the fifth and final village of Paschimnadigram.

Currently this area can only be accessed via an entirely separate and as yet unmade road that enters from the extreme south, and for much of its course then follows the high earthen embankments by which almost the entire village is protected. A dam has, however, recently been constructed across the eastern branch of the river, and this is accompanied by a maintenance bridge, which, when completed, will offer much better access to the rest of the Union. Ultimately the dam will open an area of 1000 acres to surface irrigation, but at the time of writing the distribution channels were still to be constructed, and no effect had yet been observed. The village also contains a number of water bodies (*dighi*), the largest of which is of particular local significance, and will figure in the account of social and political relationships developed later in the chapter.

4.2.2 Population, land holding and politics

In 1991, at the last published census, Panchgram had just over 4000 households and a population of some 23,000 - a figure that has probably grown by a further 20% in the intervening period. There was an overall average of 1.87 acres of land per household, with Jotedargram (1.12 acres) having the lowest and Paschimnadigram (2.59 acres) the highest holdings among the villages; although as we shall see shortly, these figures disguise a high degree of inequality at individual household level. Two thirds of the population, and more than 90% of all households in Jotedargram and Chairmangram are Muslim; with Hindus making up a little more than 40% of Uttorgram and Purbonadigram, and only forming a majority in Paschimnadigram, where they account for 66% of the total.

Key indicators for the Union appear in tables 4.1 and 4.2. These suggest that is a little poorer than the average for Dinajpur District, but significantly more developed than most other parts of the North-western region as a whole. They also show that land holdings in the Union are more than usually polarised, with a relatively high percentage of large holdings accompanied by a large number of very small marginal farms.

The Union forms part of a parliamentary constituency comprising the upazilla to which it belongs and its immediate neighbour. Until 2001 the seat had been held by an Awami League (MP) who had served as a whip in the government and had been instrumental in attracting a number of important resources to the area. Despite this, the individual in question lost his seat to a representative of the BNP, who figures prominently in the later parts of the chapter.

Table 4.1: Panchgram: key indicators

	Village					Union	Thana	District	Nwest
	Jotedar -gram	Chairman -gram	Uttogram	Paschim -nadiagram	Purbo -nadiagram				
No. of para	29	7	49	31	20	135			
% Muslim	95	88	56	34	58	67	75	77	85

Area (acres)	1391	839	2309	1757	1331	7627	76275		
Households	1233	296	1258	677	619	4083	42790		
Acres/household	1.12	2.80	1.84	2.59	2.15	1.87	1.78		

Population									
Male	3411	792	3374	2014	1696	11287	119524		
Female	3118	743	3125	1891	1639	10516	112885		
Total	6529	1535	6499	3905	3335	21803	232409		

Male literacy (%)	42.1	31.0	39.9	39.9	39.4	40.0	37.1	32	29
Female literacy (%)	26.0	12.7	20.0	15.5	17.9	20.2	19.5	17	15

% tubewell	66	75	71	76	74	71	72	78	66
% sanitary latrine	8	4	4	1	2	4	4	8	6
% electricity	18	5	8	7	4	10	9	11	7
% own land	68	63	70	68	73	69	53		

Main income (%)									
Cultivate/sharecrop	63	45	61	67	55	61	44		
Agriculture labour	22	44	30	26	36	28	33		
Other	15	10	9	7	9	11	23		
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100		

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 1994

% of para									
Rich	55	14	16	19	40	29			
Middle	31	43	31	39	35	34			
Poor	14	43	53	42	25	37			
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100		

Source: Exercise based on perceptions of CARE field staff

Table 4.2: Panchgram: structure of land holdings in comparative perspective (%)

Size group (acres)	Panchgram union		Pakiganj upazilla		Dinajpur District		NorthWest	
	Holdings	Area	Holdings	Area	Holdings	Area	Holdings	Area
Marginal (0.05 – 0.49)	33	1	28	5	18	2	23	4
Small (0.5 – 2.49)	32	12	28	19	50	27	52	34
Medium (2.5 – 7.49)	28	58	35	42	27	45	22	43
Large (7.5 +)	7	29	9	34	5	26	3	19
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Sources: Union and Upazilla data from block supervisors; District and region from BBS 1999

4.3 Accumulating power and resources

4.3.1 The traditionally powerful jotedars

Power in Panchgram has resided for generations with a single gushti that has its centre in a para in the most densely populated and fertile part of the union. This community lies 2-300 metres to the east of the main road and is markedly different in appearance from any other in the area. The track by which it is approached leaves the road at the only privately owned bazaar in the Union, which belongs to the gushti, and immediately passes between two rice mills which they also own. These facilities benefit from an electric power line passing directly overhead, which then runs into the interior, where it was once used to supply the two deep tubewells the gushti also formerly controlled. Entering the residential area, the visitor passes a sizeable mosque that is still under construction, and two or three large ponds. Beyond lie a number of white painted two story brick built houses, each surrounded by high walls. Dotted among the houses are several large haystacks, and wandering between them are a good number of well-fed cattle. A short distance away across the surrounding fields, nearly all of which the gushti also owns, lies the main secondary school in the area that is built on land they donated, and slightly beyond that is its only brickfield.

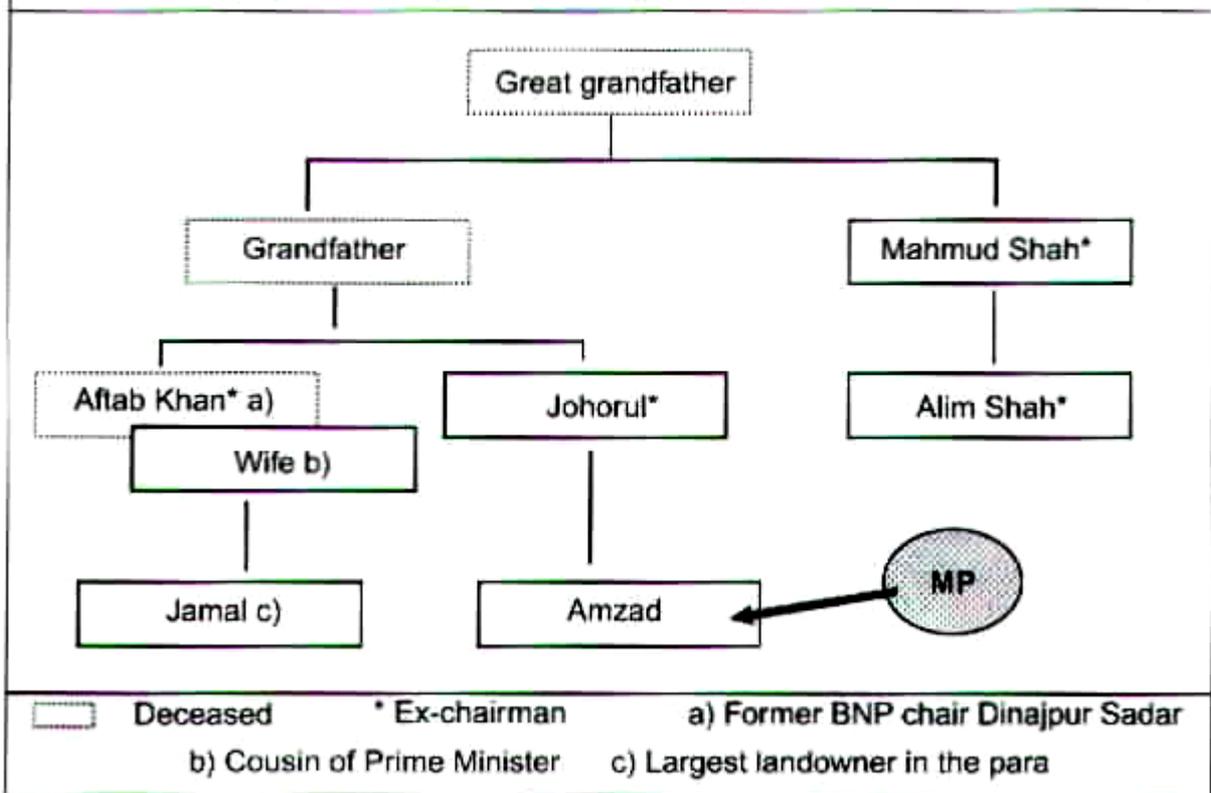
The source of this evident wealth lies in control over land passed down to the present inhabitants from earlier generations of jotedars – who were the immediate tenants of the Zamindar created by the colonial authority. By following the strategy described earlier, gushti members were easily able to circumvent the land reform legislation of the immediate post-independence period and to maintain their status as major owners. Fragmentation through inheritance has inevitably taken its toll on individual holdings since that time, but dominant gushti members still together hold in excess of 200 bighas, with other local households, to whom they are closely allied, maintaining estates of a similar magnitude.

The original holdings have been augmented, and the effects of sub-division partially negated, by the successful application of various land-seizing stratagems. Some have operated via money lending and mortgage, others through various forms of legal manoeuvre, and others still through the use of force. But such devices, which are especially characteristic of some of the secondary actors discussed later, have only played a comparatively minor part in this instance.

Of greater significance has been the capacity to exploit a range of wider and often more lucrative possibilities arising since the 1970s. As will already be apparent, the gushti has been well placed to benefit from the burgeoning developmental programmes and new technologies which independence brought in its wake; among other things, acquiring irrigation equipment and access to electricity, and moving into agricultural processing and trading and stock businesses. It has also sought to diversify its activities beyond the immediate area. Some members have attended university, and then gone on to establish themselves as lawyers and in other professions. Some have become successful business operatives in local towns and beyond. Two female members have married into families with business interests in the Middle East and emigrated.

The ability of the gushti to accumulate and prosper has rested in part on its internal unity (although, as will shortly become apparent, this has not always been maintained). Its capacity to forge wider alliances and secure political office has also been of key importance. Over the years, at least four members have become Union Parishad chairmen, and in the parliamentary election held in 2001, in the greatest

Figure 4.3: Stitting MP's family tree showing leading individuals and relationships



success to be achieved to date, on of its number, Amzad Khan, was elected BNP MP for the constituency of which Panchgram forms a part.

A simplified genealogy (*see figure 4.3*) will serve to introduce some of the key individuals from the lineage and show how they are related. This should be read in conjunction with figure 4.4 (that traces the inter-relationship of key political events at national and local levels in the post-independence period) and figure 4.5 (which provides a summary introduction to all of the key actors in the Union and beyond).

Amzad the MP is 46 and the son of Johorul, a former UP chair who died 15 years ago under circumstances to which he shall return later. He has inherited a substantial amount of land, and has business interests in rice and livestock. His political career began in a flirtation with a communist party whilst he was at university, but under the mentorship of his uncle Aftab Khan, this has long since been set aside in favour of the more hospitable waters of the BNP. Aftab was a former UP chairman himself and the party president in Dinajpur Sadar, as well as being distantly related to Begum Zia through marriage. Under his tutelage, Amzad became active in the party from the mid-1990s, and quickly secured the position of Upazilla secretary, thus gaining his first direct experience of grass-roots politics. (*The significance of this role is further elaborated in the discussion of the local committee system in section 4.5 below*). For a time an incident that escalated into a court case, in which Amzad had attempted to force a woman into marriage against her family's wishes, threatened to halt his progress, but with high level intervention his behalf, this was ultimately resolved without serious damage to his reputation.

His selection to contest the parliamentary election owed much to the link with Khaleda and to the friendship he had formed with her son, who publicly endorsed his candidacy. To finance his campaign, which is estimated to have cost the unusually large amount of 60 lakh tk., he sold some land of his own, and also received support from his relations in the Middle East. His capacity to run effectively was, however, critically dependent upon the contribution an important cloth merchant from a neighbouring Union.

The large expenditure was considered necessary to defeat the popular sitting MP, who, as noted earlier, had been instrumental in bringing many resources to the area, but in the event, reflecting the national trend, Amzad secured a comfortable majority. In the aftermath of the campaign there are, however, now substantial debts to settle and a large investment to recoup. The way in which Amzad has set about doing this provides a key element in the long running story of the dighi and in other local resource allocation processes, both of which are reviewed below.

Other key actors in the MP's dynasty include his great Uncle Mahmud Shah, who like Aftab was chairman at a critical juncture in the evolution of the dispute over the dighi, and his son Alim, Amzad's second cousin, who fifteen years ago was a the centre of events that have continued to reverberate through local right up until the present.

Alim had himself been elected chairman in 1983, thus continuing a gushti tradition stretching back over many years, but had proved unpopular. Voters from elsewhere in the union held him responsible for channeling an excessive share of resources to his home village, and his standing was also being undermined by a growing reputation as a drunkard and a womanizer. Neither of the factors might by themselves have been sufficient to secure his defeat, but in combination with an internal split arising at that time in the gushti, they were to prove fatal. This arose out of a land dispute with Johorul, the MP's father, which was to lead eventually to the

Figure 4.4: National and local politics 1971-2002							
Yr	National	Local			Yr		
	Leader & Party	MP & Party	Council Chair	Paschimnadigram			
71	Mujibur Rahman Awami League	AL			71		
72					72		
73						73	
74						74	
75					Aftab Khan (Jotedar)	X	75
76	Zia Rahman Bangladesh National Party	AL			76		
77						77	
78						78	
79					Godinda (Hindu)	X	79
80						80	
81	Ershad Military rule	None			81		
82						82	
83					Alim Shah (Jotedar)	X	83
84						84	
85						85	
86	Khaleda BNP	Md Amin AL			86		
87						87	
88					Samsuddin Mondol	X	88
89						89	
90						90	
91	Hasina AL	Md Amin AL			91		
92						92	
93					Samsuddin Mondol	Abdul Hossain	93
94						94	
95						95	
96	Khaleda BNP	Amzad Khan BNP			96		
97						97	
98					Samsuddin Mondol	Bachchu	98
99						99	
00						00	
01					01		
02					02		

X: Not known/unimportant for purposes of account

latter withdrawing his support in the 1988 UP election, and throwing in his lot with a rival candidate, who was then able to secure victory (see the discussion of the Chairman in 4.3.3 below).

Perhaps depressed by what he had to do, Johorul died almost immediately afterwards. Thereafter the rift deepened further, with Alim establishing his own mosque, and effectively cutting himself off from the other branch of the family. Tensions, however, lessened over the course of time, leading to an eventual reconciliation. As a result, the re-united gushti will once again offer its collective support to Alim as he seeks to return to office in the election to be conducted later in 2002.

4.3.2 The leading Hindus and their Muslim allies

A second traditional power centre, focussing on a dominant Hindu gushti in the western part of the union, is found in the largely cut-off village of Paschimnadigram. Its present leader, Ramen Das, and his aged father, Kuma Shah, have both figured prominently in the recent history of the union. Like their Muslim counterparts in the east, the ancestors of the current generations controlled large areas of land during colonial times and father and son have been able to retain holdings in excess of 100 bighas. But in other respects their role in local society has been rather different. Whilst the Muslim jotedars (*henceforth simply "the jotedars"*) recognised some redistributive responsibilities, as evidenced in contributions to build schools and mosques, the primary theme in their recent history has been one of accumulation for personal gain, an objective to which even their ostensibly more charitable activities often ultimately appear to be harnessed.

Ramen, and Kuma before him, have also sought to accumulate where they can, but have at the same time built a reputation for promoting social welfare among both their Hindu compatriots, and the wider Muslim society beyond. This has secured them the support of the great majority of Hindus both in the "heartland" of Paschimnadigram itself, where they are in a majority, and in the neighbouring villages to the north and immediate east, where Muslims predominate. Conscious of the potentially precarious nature of their position as an ethnic minority in a Muslim dominated state, they have also worked assiduously to build alliances maintaining the historically amicable relations obtaining between the two groups.

Following the stance adopted by almost all Bangladeshi Hindus, they have aligned themselves in national elections with the Awami League, and enjoyed close relations with the recently defeated MP, for whom they provided an important vote bank. Locally their stance has been more complex. For the past fifteen years their strategy has been under-pinned by an alliance with the moderate BNP chairman, Samsuddin Mondol (*see section 4.3.3 below*), who they first backed in his successful campaign to defeat Alim Shah in 1987. Their initial and continuing support have effectively kept Mondol power in the face of opposition from the now re-united jotedar faction. In exchange for the votes that they can deliver, the chairman has been instrumental in channelling various resources - including roads, electricity and funds for temples (*mondir*) and masjid - to their village, and always seeks their views before taking decisions on important matters.

Although playing the central role expected of matbars in local salish, Ramen and Kuma have, for the most part, not directly sought office themselves, choosing rather to promote Muslim allies from the village for the member positions on the Union Parishad. The reasoning behind this appears to be that if an informal Hindu leader were to be elected, their position might then become untenable in the eyes of their own core support in the event of some unforeseen and negative turn of wider events over which they had no control. By avoiding direct political exposure, they can remain insulated against such an eventuality, whilst simultaneously generating support among the local Muslim minority.

By and large, this approach of influencing things from behind the scenes has served them quite well, although it has not been without its difficulties. An alliance formed with Mohammad Hossain, a leading Muslim with 30-40 bighas, which was maintained in the early years of the present chairmanship, served as an initial illustration of how things could go wrong. Hossain and Kuma at first regarded each other as friends, but relations were placed under strain when both sought to secure the same teaching

post for their sons at the local school, but Kuma, by exploiting his superior contacts, was ultimately able to prevail.

Things then took a further turn for the worse when Hossain was found (in an incident discussed further in section 4.4. below) to have abused a position of responsibility on the dighi trust for personal gain, in the process incurring the opprobrium of the local Hindu community. Subsequently, when Hossain's son, Abdul, sought election to the UP council, Kuma supported an alternative Muslim candidate, Bachchu, who otherwise would have stood no chance, but was now able to win. Furious at this humiliation, Mohammad Hossain and Abdul have now become the bitter of opponents of Ramen Das, and have formed an alliance with the jotedars, in an attempt to undermine Das' position. This has already led to an attempt to obstruct a major fair with which Das was associated, and to sporadic violent confrontations, which if allowed to develop further, could potentially cause permanent damage to inter-communal relations (*again see 4.4 below*).

Bachchu's earlier history, and his subsequent relationship with Kuma and Das is also instructive. 20 years ago, he was a day labourer when, with the help of an influential Dinajpur family, with whom he had been employed, he managed to illegally acquire 25 bighas of *khas* land that had been surrendered during land reform. With a small subsequent inheritance and through engaging in money lending this has enabled him to secure a much better material status, but the methods he had employed meant that he commanded little respect beyond his immediate community before receiving Das' endorsement. Bachchu was naturally grateful for this support, but the wisdom of putting this trust in him has now been placed in question by the 2001 election, where he publicly supported Amzad Khan, the present MP, while his constituency overwhelmingly backed the AL incumbent. This has incurred the wrath of the Ramen's Hindu constituency and potentially threatens relations between the two men. Other, more minor illustrations have also been observed of Kuma and Das' willingness to associate themselves with Muslims with similarly tainted land grabbing records, where they see some pragmatic advantage in so doing.

4.3.3 The Chairman

We now turn to the chairman Samsuddin Mondol, a man in his 50s from the small and comparatively poor village of "Chairmangram", and the central character in the recent history of the Union.

As noted earlier, he was first elected in the 1987, relying upon a coalition which he has been able to hold together ever since, comprising the Hindu supporters of Kuma Shah/Ramen Das and Muslims from outside Jotedargram who had become disillusioned with the previously dominant faction.

Mondol's background is very comfortable but rather more modest than those of the other gushtis that have so far been discussed. Whilst not enjoying the jotedar status of the other gushti, his grandfather had farmed approximately 100 acres, and even after this was sub-divided, his own father was left with a holding of some 22 acres, of which 10 were eventually to come to the chairman himself.

His father, an Awami league supporter who played no direct role in politics himself, died shortly after liberation, when Mondol was still quite young, leaving him with the responsibility of supporting and bringing up five younger brothers. This he did, by managing the cultivation of all of the family land, taking advantage of the new inputs becoming available from the late 1970s onwards, securing one of the nine tubewells to come to the union, and acquiring interests in agri-business along the way. During

this period he also married a woman from another moderately large land holding family, who like his father, were Awami League supporters.

The proceeds from the farm and business were used to support his brothers' education, and all were subsequently able to secure professional employment. One became a sub-inspector of police, a second a banker, and the others teachers. Mondol's six children have more recently embarked upon similar paths. Three sons have been to university and the oldest has already (unsuccessfully) sought the nomination for parliamentary candidate. One daughter is a teacher, another has married a businessman and a third is still studying. This diversification into external forms of employment has been central to the strategy employed by the extended family from the 1980s onwards.

Unusually for a person in a local position of power, Mondol has not sought to engage in land seizing activities as a means of consolidating his wealth, and he does not lend money. These characteristics have contributed to his local reputation as a good person. His political success has, however, opened other opportunities for personal enrichment.

Like many others, and probably for largely pragmatic reasons, Mondol switched his support to the BNP shortly after it was formed by Zia Rahman in the late 1970's. His first official role came as a Relief Convener during this period, and he then went on to represent his local ward as a UP member, before finally securing the chairmanship a decade later.

Throughout this period he has maintained a formal allegiance to the BNP, but unlike the jotedars, he enjoys no special relationship with the party elite. His style, and the secret of his local success to date, has been characterized by the adoption of a relatively neutral, almost independent stance. Even within his own immediate family, two brothers continue to support AL, and as noted earlier, both his wife's family and the Hindu allies who have been critical to maintaining him in power, are both firmly in the AL camp. The ultimate expression of this ability to reach out across formal party lines came during the 1990's, when he was able to form an amicable and mutually beneficial relationship with the sitting AL MP. It should, however, be recognized that this has only been possible in a wider context where the local situation remained, to a degree at, insulated from the wider world of party politics; although as we shall later, this now seems to be starting to change.

During his period in office, Mondol has become a widely popular and respected figure, ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources between the different villages making up the union, and forging good relations with local samaj leaders, who have been happy to offer their vote banks in return for construction projects and relief cards distributed through his office. The political alliances he has created to maintain his position have also fostered an atmosphere of communal tolerance and cooperation in the area.

The flow of resources from the UP to the local influentials is mediated through a series of committees. These are too important as a topic to be compressed into an introduction to the key actors and will be dealt with separately later in the chapter, as will the story of the tank, in which Mondol has also had an important part to play.

Although Mondol has been quite active in development activities, these have always come say way behind the local administration of law and order in his list of priorities. It is in this area - which he has been able to preserve as an independent domain by paying off the police in return for their non-intervention - that his primary reputation

has been built. He is widely referred to as a person who likes *ain* (law) and *gain* (power) and devotes much of his time to the business of salish, between 50 and 70 are said to take place in the union in a typical month. Nearly half involve land disputes, and another 20 concern sexual affairs, whilst the remainder deal with petty theft and quarrels.

Mondol uses the authority deriving from his elected position to dominate the institution and to maintain his network of potential electoral supporters among secondary or tertiary local leaders. Although some cases come directly before the matbars, the aggrieved party generally first files a case with the Union Parishad to request a hearing, with the Chairman then referring it on to influential people residing in or near the location of the crime or incident. Often he will also send a UP member to oversee the ruling. The Chairman's overall stature in the union serves to affirm the leadership position of the persons selected within their para or village, and places them in his obligation. This is, in turn, underscored by the opportunities that hearings invariably provide for personal enrichment through the extraction of bribes from the protagonists, and the imposition of levies on any awards eventually made.

More difficult cases, with attract the highest pay-offs, are settled by the Chairman himself. These typically involve local leaders, and may number about ten in any particular month. People frequently complain that his rulings in these instances are biased towards the wealthy, but concede that when it comes to sexual transgression against women, his settlements do provide some compensation. This may not be proportionate to the wrong suffered, but the judgments are of great interest to the community at large, representing both a form of public humiliation of the violators, and a sanction against the worst excesses of elite behaviour. The capacity to keep things within the union, and thus out of the hands of a predatory police force and legal profession, are also valued, and is only on comparatively rare occasions that the formal requirement that judgements should be recorded with the Upazilla is actually observed. From time to time, however, the involvement of the wider authorities cannot be avoided.

Finally, the chairman has also established a reputation for recourse to "rough justice" in the case of petty theft and other offences, often himself administering severe physical beatings to those found guilty. This lack of 'due process' allows no recourse on the part of the assumed wrong doer, but appears to go unchallenged by a wider community, that remains grateful for the low level at which criminal activity has been maintained during Mondol's time in office.

(An extended discussion of law and order issues is presented in chapter 8 below).

4.3.4 The land-grabbing miser

The last of the leading local actors to be considered here is a very different character and a long standing rival of the present chairman. Popularly known as *shuri* (miser), and a man of relatively humble origins, he has accumulated a substantial personal fortune and now owns some 300 bighas, the largest individual landholding in the Union.

The miser lives in the relatively poorer village of Uttorgram in the north of the Union in a para that now carries his name. He has an imposing compound lying immediately besides the main road and closely adjacent to one of the larger markets, to which he moved several decades ago from a para in the interior. His father had a modest landholding but died when the miser was very young. A maternal uncle, from

whom he was later to inherit 7 bighas, initially took some responsibility for him, but it appears that he was left largely to fend for himself.

From an early age, he has employed a combination of cunning and ruthlessness to augment his small inheritance and build his current estate; with the process starting slowly, and then gathering momentum as his power and influence have grown. A well-developed and widely resented capacity for “land-grabbing”, harnessed to a sophisticated knowledge of land law and an alliance with another uncle who is a lawyer in Dinajpur, has been central to his strategy. Often this has been deployed to wrest land by subterfuge from the protagonists in the land disputes that abound in the area (*an illustration of which is provided in the case presented in box 8.2 in the chapter on law and order below*) and he is said only ever to have lost one land case in his life. Sometimes it has been used in combination with money lending, in which Shuri has also built an extensive interest. On other occasions, he has relied upon the simple expedient of brute force, mobilising *latials* (thugs) recruited from among the burgeoning ranks of his tenants and their families, to terrorise protagonists into submission. He is even believed to have obtained land by deception from his maternal grandmother.

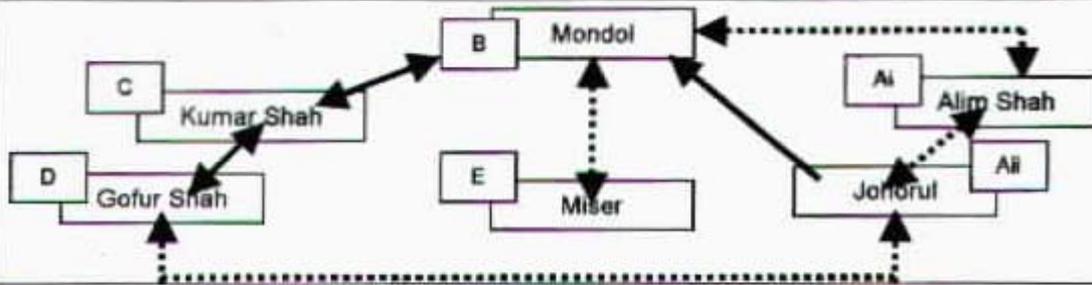
The central planks of land acquisition and money lending have more recently been augmented by a move into rice milling and other forms of business activity. It is also evident that Shuri has been able to build close contacts with officials at the Upazilla, where he is a frequent visitor, but in the limited time available we were unable to determine how these have been utilized.

Attempts to gain respectability and to consolidate his power base via the electoral system and public office have, however, so far failed to bear fruit. He has contested the last three elections for UP chair, but has been heavily defeated on each occasion. In the northern area a combination of patronage, economic dependence and simple fear has been sufficient to secure a limited electoral base, but in the wider context of the union his reputation as a cheat and a manipulator have deterred others from supporting him. Other powerful actors, who are generally reticent to criticize their peers, can be quite open in their hostility towards the miser, and as a result, his attempt to build alliances with the jotedars and other more minor players have thus far been rebuffed. Recent tensions in Paschimnadirgram arising around the tank have, however, provided him with a possible entry point, and he is now openly aligning himself with Abdul Hossain and the anti-Das faction, who for their own part appear willing to accept his support. This may ultimately be used to build an axis to the MP, and to a joint attempt to overthrow Mondol. The growing tendency for national politics to intrude into local contests (*discussed in more detail in 4.5*) is also something that he may be able to exploit.

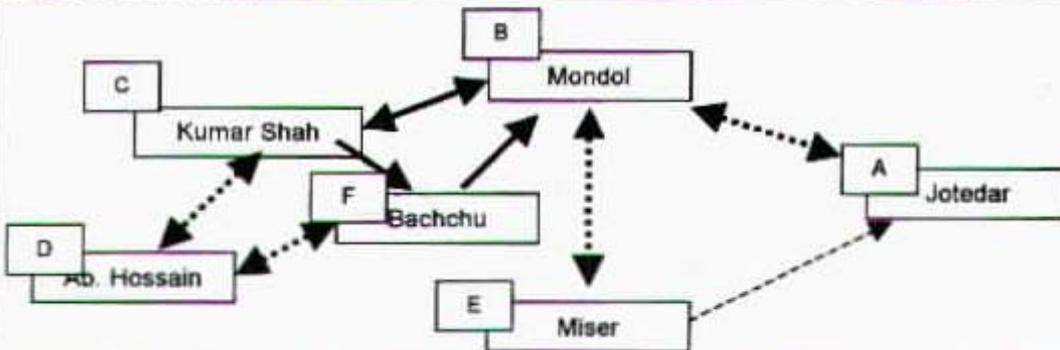
4.4 The waterbody: competition for a major resource

This section deals with the heavily flagged story of the dighi (water body), a critical common property resource that has played an important part in shaping and re-shaping relations between the various factions over the years, and which has assumed even greater significance in the light of recent developments in the Union. The sequence of events is somewhat complex, resting as it does open a sequence of shifting alliances between the more major and minor groups and actors laid out in sections 4.3. To assist the reader, a simplified version of the changes taking place over the last 20 years is presented in figure 4.6.

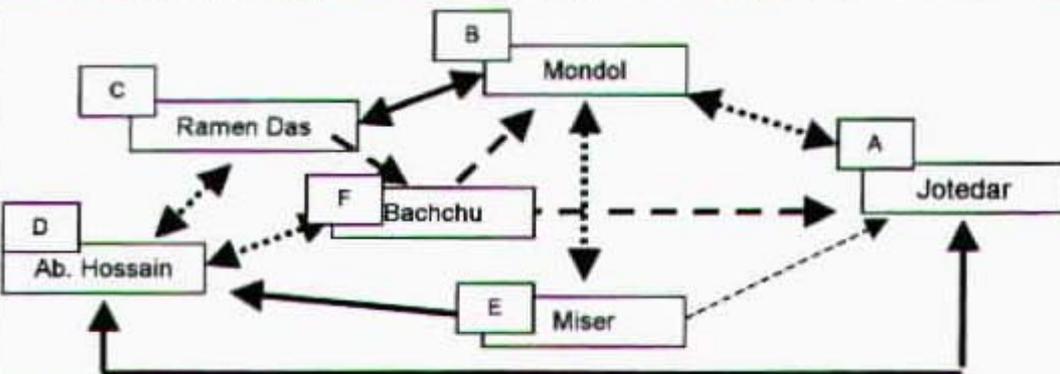
Figure 4.6: The evolving pattern of political alliances 1988-2002



C1988. Developments take place against a background where the jotedar group (A) had previously sought to wrest control of the dighi from the trustees led by Gofur (D). At this point the jotedar Alim Shah (Ai) held the UP chairmanship, but a split over a land issue with his cousin Johorul (Aii) led the latter to support Mondol (B) in the 1987 election. In combination with the support from the dominant Hindu leader Kumar Shah (C) and his Muslim ally Gofur (D), this enables Mondol to secure victory. The Miser (E) also stands, but lacks powerful allies and does not do well.



1990s. The Jotedars (A) eventually re-unite and oppose Mondol (B). Mondol's Hindu ally Kumar (C) has a dispute with his former Muslim ally (D) and the two split. Abdul Hossain (D), subsequently assumes the role of his aging father and seeks a seat on the UP, but at the election, C supports Bachchu (F), a Muslim protégé, who defeats Abdul Hossain (D) and takes his seat. The Miser (E) attempts to form an alliance with the Jotedars (A) but is rebuffed. He continues to contest UP chair elections, but cannot command sufficient general support to win. Although now faced by more powerful opponents, his retention of the Hindu vote and his acquired popularity with many Muslims allows Mondol (B) to hold onto his position.



2000-. Tensions between the Hindu leader's son Ramen Das (who assumes his father's role) (C) and the former ally (D) intensify over control of the tank. Both the jotedars (A) and the miser (E) align themselves with D, but A continues to resist E's move to forge a direct alliance with them. Pressure on the Hindu-Muslim alliance, built on the axis between the Das (D) and the Chairman (B), intensifies as a candidate from the Jotedar group comes to power in the 2001 parliamentary election. He in turn attracts support from the Hindu leader's new Muslim protégé Bachchu (F), incurring the anger of C and his mainly Hindu constituency.

The dighi covers some 11 acres in the predominantly Hindu village of Paschimnadiagram in the south-western corner of the Union. Together with an adjacent area of 20 acres of cultivable land, it was donated to the community several decades ago by Sri Krishna, a wealthy Hindu landowner and devotee of a local *sufi* saint (*pir*), who sought to immortalize the *pir's* memory for both Hindus and Muslims living nearby. The combined area now has a value of nearly 1.5 million tk., but far from engendering the sense of inter-communal harmony originally intended, it has, over the past two decades, become a source of increasing conflict.

On one level this is simply about control of resources. The land in question and the fishing rights are, in themselves, valuable and are especially coveted by people coming from the far more densely populated jotedar power base in the south-eastern part of Panchgram. In addition, their worth may well increase further in future as the completion of the bridge under the dam project improves accessibility and opens up the possibility of developing the tank as a picnic and tourist area. But of perhaps greater importance is the symbolic significance of control over the site as an expression both of who holds power locally, and how it will be exercised.

The dispute that has arisen originates from a lack of a clear understanding among local people as to the precise status of the area in question. Exploiting this uncertainty, a man named Abdul Quddus, who had inherited the role of caretaker of the resource from his father, was able to sell off some of the land and pocket the proceeds. Learning of what had happened, a sister claimed a share in what she believed to be her inheritance, but this was refused. The matter dragged on for some time, but eventually, having made no progress, she embarked on the process of preparing a case against Quddus, in the course of which the true position then emerged.

Angered by what she had discovered, she made the matter public. Quddus was duly dismissed from his position, and responsibility for the area now passed into the hands of a seven man committee comprising the most powerful Muslim and Hindu leaders in the village. The committee duly proposed a complicated deal to the purchasers, under which they would arrange for the sharecropping of the land, with the inputs and outputs being equally divided, and the profits then being saved and eventually used to re-purchase it, but the buyers, who had by then been cultivating the area for some years, declined. In the meantime, faced by an increasingly angry local reaction, Quddus had turned for assistance to Mahmud Shah, the patriarch of the jotedar *gushti* from the far side of the Union, and the uncle of Aftab Khan, who was then UP chairman.

The jotedars duly proposed an equally complicated arrangement whereby the land would formally be donated to a Jotedargram school. In return, under guarantee from Aftab, the buyers could continue to cultivate and enjoy the profits from the land, and should they wish to sell, they would be able to sell it off at the current market value. The jotedars, however, had established the school in question through a land donation and thus controlled its committee. The proposed arrangement would therefore place them in *de facto* control of the disputed land, but the buyers, feeling this was the offer they were likely to receive, agreed.

The dighi committee, however, rejected the proposal, in turn prompting the jotedar family to initiate a lawsuit against them. With the case underway, the committee responded to this move by disbanding and re-constituting itself as a religious property trust (*waqf*) with three new members added in order to insulate itself from any repercussions. Following the laid down procedures governing such affairs, the new body was registered with the government, and the Upazilla Nirbahi Officer

(UNO) became president, whilst Mohammad Hossain, who was at that time the most influential Muslim leader of Paschim Nadi Gram, was appointed secretary. While this was going on, the case continued, and some time after the manoeuvre had been completed, the court eventually ruled in favour of the original committee. As soon as this happened, the headmaster of the Jotedargram school filed an appeal considerably prolonging the legal resolution of the *dighi* issue. Eventually, however, Mondol, in his capacity as UP Chairman, was able to persuade the jotedars to honour the initial court decision.

Shortly after this settlement, Mohammad Hossain, the secretary, was accused of having misappropriated funds from land and fishing right contracts. As a result, in an incident that has already been described earlier (see section 4.3.2) Ramen Das, the Hindu leader, withdrew his support from Hossain's son Abdul, when the latter stood in the most recent UP election held in 1997, backing another Muslim, Bachchu instead.

In the most recent development, Abdul Hossain (the defeated UP member candidate), whose daughter has subsequently married into the jotedar *gushti*, is now, with the help of the new MP, mobilizing an Anti-Das faction to oppose the *dighi* trustees. Their proposal is that there should be a division of the property that would give Muslims control of 2/3 of the area, and leave Hindus only with the southern 1/3. At the same time, the MP is pressuring the UNO to dissolve the trust committee, that currently comprises 7 Muslims and 3 Hindus, to make way for the formation of a new exclusively Muslim body, but the UNO, who strongly opposes the move, has so far been able to resist.

In an organized strategy to resist the MP and the anti-Hindu faction, the trust is seeking to assert ownership rights by erecting important structures near the *dighi*. These include a *madrassah*, on land donated by the "adopted son" of Ramon Das, (who doubtless hopes that the position on the committee that this will automatically secure can later be used to capture some of the resources the new institution will attract). At the same time, funds generated from the sale of land and fishing rights have been used to begin constructing an elaborate grave for the saint, and a home has been built for a Hindu *sanyasi* (a respected person who has divorced himself from the pleasures of material life).

At present, the faction that opposes the present administration of the *dighi* is small in number. Ultimately, the ability of Hindu and Muslim leaders to maintain control over the *dighi* depends on the outcome of the next union parishad election and the ability of the UNO to continue to withstand the pressure from the MP.

4.5 How other key resources are administered

As the discussion of the *dighi* has illustrated, the MP is attempting to assert his influence to obtain control over a key local resource by placing pressure on Upazilla level bureaucrats and through alliance building with a local opposition group. Other key resources are administered by the Union Parishad (UP), and have been subject to similar pressures.

As we have already seen in Chapter 3 this is an elected body, consisting of 13 members. It has a committee structure that, in principle, is intended to provide forums in which matters of education, law and order, and rural development may be democratically decided. In an attempt to ensure a fair and equitable allocation of resources, individual committees typically have a diversity of members that, in addition to UP members themselves, include Upazilla-level representatives from

Box 4.1: Union Parishad committees and their role in the political process

Project implementation

Kaccha road and public works initiatives require the establishment of a project implementation committee (PIC) (see sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4). Local BNP party workers, many of whom are closely related to formal and informal leaders, have become heavily involved in the allocation of the various funds since the victory of their party in the 2001 national election. A former UP member and local leader who presides over all the salish in his village, revealed how he and other older influentials were using these bodies to groom their sons in the procedures of resource control and distribution. By sitting on road committees, for example, they would learn how to work with labor contractors, local government officials (such as the Upazilla engineer), and business people (like the grain merchant responsible for the release of payments). This helped to build networks and opened up the prospect of future mutually advantageous exchanges. The visibility of the leaders' sons in these public-service oriented activities served, at the same time build a reputation for leadership, and a profile within the constituency.

Hats and Bazaars

Most hats and bazaars, following the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1951, are controlled by the state. Those earning in excess of 1 lakh tk. should officially be supervised by the Upazilla Nirbahi Officer, with the remainder falling under the control of local-level committees. Given the significance of these resources in the wider context of UP finances (see section 3.2.1 above), attempts will, however, often be made to depress the recorded value in order to retain control. This is what appears to have happened with one bazaar that was observed, where a bid just inside the ceiling was accepted under circumstances where the true revenue stream was perhaps twice as large. This served to reduce the proceeds, that are distributed between the high school (which receives 50%); and mosques and temples (which each get 25%).

It is difficult to determine exactly how the auction process works or the identity of the auctioneers, with participants unwilling to discuss the details. In addition, the primary toll collector (*ejaradar*) tends to subcontract the toll collection, further complicating the process. The composition of the committee that makes the decision is, on the other hand, clear and is of interest as a further illustration of how political influence can be brought to bear. It includes the UP Chairman, the UP secretary, the *tehsildar* (land revenue collector), 3 local business people, and representatives from the local high school, temple and mosque. It is re-formed at the beginning of each Bangla new year, and at the time of our research, it was possible to witness such a transition taking place in a bazaar where most of the shopkeepers were Hindus and hence AL supporters. Reflecting the party of the former MP, the previous committee had been dominated by representatives of a similar persuasion. Its replacement, by contrast, included a cousin of MP's wife, and was dominated by a man who had supported the MP during his election campaign. One AL supporter was allowed to remain but now only enjoyed little effective influence. It may be hypothesized that the contract normally goes to a person with close ties to the sitting MP.

Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Vulnerable Group Fund (VGF)

The VGF (Vulnerable Group Funds) committee consists of all UP members, the UP Secretary, two block supervisors, one Bangladesh Rural Development Supervisor, a Family Planning worker and 3 members from the community. In the present committee the community members include a cousin of the MP, and a Hindu business man who supports the BNP. The union obtains 185 VGD cards each six months. These provide the recipients with subsidized food rations and are officially intended for female-headed households from marginalized groups. Here, as in the other committees, the community members are from the ruling party and ensure that a high percentage of the cards are distributed to either active party workers and other supporters. Where Samaj leaders are not themselves committee members they must be consulted before the allocation is finalized.

various government branches, representatives from local schools and other influential people from the community.

The chairman presides over both UP and UP committee meetings, and in combination with the substantial authority conferred by his directly elected role, this gives him a strong say in the process through which resources are negotiated. Ultimately, however, his influence on council members and the representatives on the various committees is determined in large measure by his ability to maintain support among the local informal leaders. Local-level 'democracy' thus assumes the form of a power-sharing arrangement between informal and elected leadership, where Union Parishad members have to channel resources and benefits to key individuals, who in return publicly support their decisions and mobilize votes.

It is also important to recognize that this is an environment in which female members are generally marginalized, with male members colluding to take advantage of the cultural difficulties experienced by women attempting to operate in male-dominated public space. They may simply not be called to important meetings; and if present, they are not encouraged to join in the discussion.

The functioning of the UP has been further complicated by the fact that influential local party members of the ruling party use their connections with the MP to gain membership of committees. Prior to the 2001 election, when the AL was in power at national level, resource allocating committees were heavily influenced by its local representatives, although the Chairman, by virtue of the close relations maintained with AL formal and informal leaders, was still able to retain a large measure of control.

In a neighboring union, under the same parliamentary constituency, the dynamic has, however, taken a different form, with BNP party workers essentially controlling the Union Parishad and the key committees, and the elected members stripped of all effective power. The use of threats and the understanding that police and magistrates have been 'captured' by ruling party workers who are backed by the MP, precludes any effective response. Preliminary enquiries conducted elsewhere, suggest that such hijacking behaviour is becoming increasingly common.

Examples of how some of the more important committees work and the various political influences to which they are subject appear in box 4.1

4.6 Taking stock

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the account that has been presented:

- Control of land, often combined with usurious money lending and trading in agricultural commodities, has traditionally been central to the capacity to accumulate; and continues to play a major, though somewhat diminished role today. Differential access to this fundamental resource has underscored a primarily exploitative system of patron-client relations.
- At the same time, moral values rooted in a parallel system of religion and kin-based social institutions have served to constrain the rich, obliging them to engage in re-distributive activities, and the provision of minimal social safety nets, if they wish to command respect and secure sustained political support. The poor also have recourse to a limited range of further devices, but have not been able to create class based organizations to represent their distinctive interests.

- Moral leadership by elites secures control of salish which can be used (within limits) as a further source of accumulation and social control, but also provide space within which poorer people and women may secure a degree of redress for wrongs they have suffered.
- The post-colonial period has offered additional prospects for accumulation in the form of development resources, some of which may be privately appropriated and others of which may be utilized by the powerful to extend their patronage. Some of these, however, (like the dam and the agricultural service center) are too large (or “lumpy”) to be captured by local elites in the first instance (but may still afford significant opportunities once established and operational). Others, typically those supplied by NGOs, are generally either too troublesome or too small to be captured by the net, and freely pass through it to the level below.
- The modern period has also seen the superimposition of formal local political structures on earlier institutions. This has sometimes served to diminish the significance of predecessors such as the samaj, but more frequently the later arrivals have been infiltrated and adapted from below by the pre-existing informal institutions.
- Former elites, with their established resource bases, extensive kinship networks and wider political connections, have generally been well placed to re-create themselves in these new circumstances. Sometimes they have sought to consolidate their position through directly competing for political office, but often they have been content to exercise their authority more quietly from behind the scenes. From this it follows that political position cannot directly and automatically be equated with possession of power in all instances.
- The shifting horizons of economic opportunity and the new political landscape have also opened up opportunities for able individuals from rather humbler backgrounds. Those starting from lower positions or seeking to accumulate most rapidly have, however, often had to resort to strategies that contravene moral norms and make it difficult to convert economic wealth into social respect or political office. Ostensibly more moral actors tend to take a pragmatic view as to whether to ally themselves with such people under different circumstances.
- Until recently, union politics has remained at least partially insulated from its national counterpart, making it possible to construct local alliances across both party and ethnic lines, and this has contributed to the maintenance of good Muslim-Hindu relations. These, however, have been placed in some jeopardy by the recent national election, as the new MP seeks to remove Hindus from positions of influence and replace them with his own supporters. This, in turn, threatens to drive a wedge between moderate Muslim opinion and the Hindu minority, and to force them into an alliance with the more hardline and aggressive faction associated with the MP as it seeks to gain further ground.

All of this will clearly have implications for GO-IF and CARE as they seek to expand the limited room for maneuver that poor people and women currently enjoy – a subject to which we shall return after other levels in the analysis have been traversed.

5. THE INTRA-COMMUNAL ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND THE ROLE OF NGOS

This chapter explores access to resources in two contrasting communities (para). One is poor, poorly connected to the Net and Hindu, and the other much better-off, much better connected and Muslim. Following an account of how the study was conducted, an attempt is made to explore the influence of class, kinship and the mediation of influential people on the allocation of goods and services provided respectively by government and NGOs. A concluding section then goes on to review the factors shaping the distribution of NGO resources at the higher levels of the Union and the Upazilla.

5.1 Approach

5.1.1 Data collection

Few secondary sources were used in this part of the study, which depended primarily upon the input of a small team which worked together for a period of 10 days. Enquiries began with the preparation of resource and social maps and a wealth ranking exercise to classify households.

In the wealth ranking, a small group of informants were first asked to use their own criteria to place households in rank order. Next, land owned, and given out or taken in under various sharecropping, renting and mortgaging arrangements, was recorded. The total area operated by different household could then be calculated and used to place each into one of the five categories – large, medium, small, marginal and landless - employed by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (*for definitions see below and table 5.1*). The results of the two exercises were then compared and it was found that, in all but in a small minority of cases, the ranking produced was consistent. A decision was then made to continue with the BBS system, since this would make it possible to compare our own results with those from official surveys, and thus ultimately to arrive at an approximate sense of how representative the study para were.

The wealth ranking cards also provided a foundation for the identification of kinship structures, and for exploring who had access to government and NGO resources. Finally, a series of mini-surveys, key informant and focus group discussions were used to extend the scope of the investigation and to delve further into the underlying significance of other findings.

Most of the data collected is presented and reviewed here, but some is retained for the more specialist sectoral chapters on justice, and water and sanitation that follow.

5.1.2 Household classification

The BBS classification is fundamental to much of what follows and should be considered before proceeding further. In outline, this distinguishes between:

- **large farmers**, who own much more than they require for their own subsistence and may let some or all of their land out to others under sharing arrangements, the most common of which has traditionally involved a 50/50 division of the crop;
- **middle farmers**, with more modest holdings, who are more actively engaged in the management of their own land, and mainly rely on hired labour to cultivate it;

- ❑ **small farmers**, conforming broadly to the stereo-typical peasant farmer who depend primarily on their own labour to work their own land, and generally do not hire their own labour out to others;
- ❑ **marginal farmers** who might own a little land themselves, but depend primarily upon land taken in share-crop, possibly in combination with some hiring out of their labour;
- ❑ **the landless**, who have little or no arable land of their own or under tenancy, and depend primarily on selling their labour to others for their livelihoods.

The BBS broadly follows these categories, but offers a precise definition of each category in terms of the area of land operated. The classification does not allow for differences in soil fertility or household size, and neither does it account for non-farm livelihoods. As such, it is not entirely satisfactory as a means of distinguishing wealthier from poorer households, but in very broad terms, most households in the lower two categories and the lower portion of the small farmer group will normally fall below the poverty line. Some of these deficiencies will be addressed and a more differentiated set of categories introduced at the beginning of the chapter on livelihoods that follows.

5.2 The Hindu Para

5.2.1 Location and population

The Hindu para lies five kilometres to the west of the main road in the relatively poor village of Uttargram. It is approached by a narrow mud (*kacca*) road which winds between the fields and passes over a number of culverts, some of which have been installed under an earlier CARE programme. At the edge of the community, where the road takes a sharp turn to the right, a path runs down to an imposing temple, which seems rather out of place among the simple mud wall and tin-roofed houses. This was opened a short time ago by an outside mission and serves Hindus coming from a wide area around. Next to it stands a school with four classrooms that the mission has also opened.

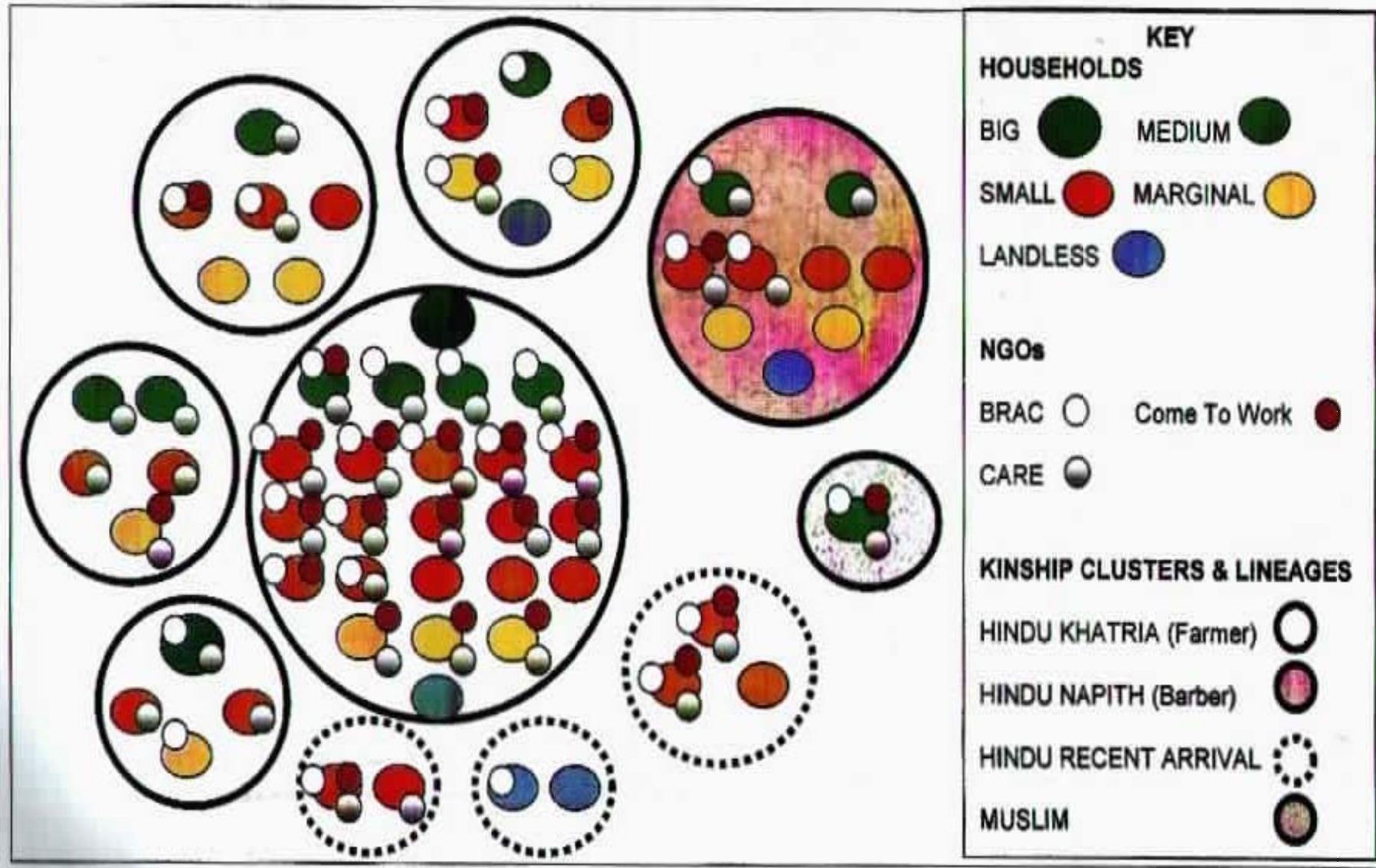
Most of the houses in the para are strung out in clusters over a distance of 400-500 metres to either side of the road as it continues onwards. An electricity line runs close by, but only two households have been able to afford the connection. A number of small ponds are found between the homesteads, and immediately beyond lie the fields, which cover an area of some 75 acres. Most are double-cropped with *boro* and *t.amon*.

There are 62 households, of which 61 are Hindu, and the population is 298. The Hindus sub-divide into a majority farmer (*khatria*) caste with 52 households, and a minority of low caste barbers (*napit*) with 9 households in all. The napits all belong to a single lineage. Among the khatria there is one large cluster, comprising 24 households, made up of four separate lineages linked together by marriage. In addition, there are four smaller lineages with between 4 and 6 households each, and three small clusters of households who have settled in the area comparatively recently (see figure 5.1 and table 5.2, and for a further discussion of the lineage and its significance see section 4.1.1 above).

5.2.2 Class and access to land

The para has a relatively un-differentiated class structure, with only two big and five landless households, and more than half of all households belong to the small farmer

Fig. 5.1 Kinship, class and access to NGO resources: Hindu para



category. There are also significant numbers of relatively better off middle, and relatively worse off marginal farmers (*see table 5.2*). The *napits* are, on average, poorer than the *khatris*, but the majority have been able to transcend their traditional class status and acquire some land, and in material terms, the difference between the two castes is now only marginal. There are slightly larger, but still quite small variations in wealth between the various long-term resident *khatris* groupings. But it is noticeable that the recent arrivals, who may be presumed to have attached themselves to the community because of the lack of opportunities elsewhere, are significantly poorer than the norm.

Relations tend to live together in clusters, but richer and poorer households are spread fairly evenly throughout the *para*. Big farm households generally have joint structures and are therefore on average a good deal larger than others, where nuclear structures are more common.

The small number of large farm households means that relatively little land is available for others to operate within the *para*, and of the total area that resident's own, only 14% is given out, in some shape or form, for others to cultivate (*see table 5.3*). A number of households, have, however, been able to secure land to operate from surrounding Muslim and Hindu communities, and as a result, the area farmed exceeds the area owned by 18%.

Such figures would generally be expected to indicate that poorer (land deficit) people were farming land from their richer (land surplus) peers under share-cropping arrangements, but interviews conducted with a small number of households appeared to suggest that this was not normally the case here. Whilst a few such examples were found, these were out-numbered by instances where land was being farmed on a cash-rental basis, with full payment being made in advance. This, in itself, was not especially surprising, but what was more unexpected was the fact that the amount of land operated under mortgage arrangements exceeded, by a wide margin, all land given in share-crop and rental combined. More surprising still, in view of the long established pattern whereby the wealthy acquire the land of the small and marginal through such arrangements, was the finding that in most instances, the people taking the land in were actually poorer than the owners. Situations where the better off might find themselves falling on hard times, or temporarily in need of a lump sum (perhaps to meet a dowry payment) would not be especially unusual, and may well have increased through time. The capacity of poorer households to raise the money is, on the other hand, harder to explain, but appears to reflect a strategy of acquiring land at all costs by selling any other available assets.

It should, however, be emphasised that the number of interviews from which these findings derive was rather small, and that proportions of share-cropped and cash rented land appear to have been much higher in other parts of the union, especially in communities where very large land owners were found. But even if they represent no more than a local anomaly, they are of interest as an example of how some poorer households may have been able to counter the trend towards creeping landlessness, and are suggestive of a rural scene characterised by a great deal more upwards and downwards mobility, much of it perhaps of a cyclical nature, than has popularly been supposed.

5.2.3 Influential people and access to official resources

Neither of the big farms, nor any of the other households, are regarded by people beyond the *para*, as being influential, and nobody from the *para* has ever been elected to sit on the Union Council. Significant actors from beyond the *para* include the present UP member for the ward and two of his predecessors. All are Hindus, and all command a degree of respect within the *para*. They sit on the *salish*, and are said to play a constructive role when, for example, issues arise around the distribution of land among sons following the death of a father, or the demarcation of neighbour's plots. The female UP member for the area is, on the other hand, seen as relatively inactive and ineffective in securing VGD cards for distribution. Another key actor is a wealthy Hindu who owns a substantial amount of land within the *para* boundaries, some of which is let out to local households. He is related by marriage to the small farmer case study household described in the next chapter and may be called upon to help where local people find their interests threatened by powerful individuals from further afield. On more than one occasion his assistance has been sought in attempts to fend off the land grabbing tactics of the most powerful person in the village – the unscrupulous Muslim, known locally as “miser”, who has already been described in section 4.3.4 above (*in particular, see also the case study in box 8.2*).

The lack of influential people and the relatively poor connections to the local power structure have meant that only a few official resources have come to the *para* (see *table 5.5*). A few Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Vulnerable Group Fund (VGF) cards, government pensions, and opportunities to work on Food for Work Programmes, have been distributed, but only a handful of households have been able to benefit. These are all drawn from the *khatria* caste, but the numbers involved are so small that it is difficult to determine whether this is significant or not. None have gone to large or medium households, but some from the middle farmer group have benefited. Most households have, by contrast, benefited from the relief and educational assistance provided by the mission. Members of both castes have received help, with the *napits* getting a little more than their fair share, and virtually all landless and marginal households have been included, together with a majority of the small and middle farmers (see *table 5.6*).

5.2.4 Access to NGO resources

A total of seven NGOs had worked in the *para* at some time in the past, but of these only three – BRAC, Come to Work (CTW) and CARE itself – had recruited a significant number of members, and for the purpose of this analysis, the others will therefore be disregarded (see *table 5.7*). Although the situation varies to some extent from one organisation to another, a clear overall pattern of access emerges. In the first place, it is clear that no one faction within the *para* has captured any of the individual interventions. Almost all lineages, together with the clusters of households that have arrived most recently, have at least some members of each organisation. Within this overall picture, there is, however, a fairly marked tendency both for the numerically dominant *khatria* to enjoy a relatively greater proportion of opportunities than the minority *napit*; and within the *khatria*, for members of the numerically dominant cluster of lineages to exhibit a considerably higher level of access than would be anticipated on the basis of their presence in the population alone. At the general level it appears, in other words, that whilst no one is totally excluded on the basis of kinship status, there is some bias towards the more powerful factions, although the precise mechanisms responsible for this outcome could not be uncovered in the course of a brief investigation.

At the same time, NGO members tend, on average, to be marginally better off than the population as a whole. At one extreme, one of the two large farm households have engaged in NGO activities, whilst the level of landless involvement is generally very low. This is not surprising with CARE-GO IF, where some land is required to participate, but shows a somewhat stronger tendency for membership to “drift” upwards from the intended target group than has generally been encountered elsewhere.

The data presented in Figure 5.1 make it possible to delve a little further into the combined effects of kinship and class by showing the situation of individual families. This reveals a core of about a dozen predominantly small farm households from the major cluster who figure as members of each of the three organisations, and who appear to have actively pursued membership as a key element in their livelihood strategies. Other lineages also include some cases of this type but they generally represent a smaller proportion of the whole. There are, of course, some households who for various reasons, including a fear of being unable to repay loans, who do not wish to get involved with NGOs, but these are probably fairly evenly distributed across the population as a whole and are therefore unlikely to have influenced the outcome.

5.3 The Muslim Para

5.3.1 Location and resources

The Muslim para lies two to three kilometres to the west of the main road in the rather more prosperous village of Purbonodigram, and again is approached by a narrow kacca road. Nearby, a new and rather larger road is currently under construction by a CARE supported project which, when completed, will significantly improve local communications.

The greater prosperity of the community is immediately evident as one enters the para. A large rice mill lies immediately next to the road, with a two story house to one side and a small mosque – one of three built by members of the wealthier households – immediately to the other. There are several large ponds and a power line runs nearby which provides the energy source for a number of shallow tubewells, and to which 14 households already have connections. The main part of the para occupies a higher area of land that extends back two or three hundred metres at right angles from the road. Moving to the interior, the houses become smaller and are crowded together on less spacious plots of land.

Three more minor clusters of homesteads have been established as smaller satellite *para* within a radius of 100-200 metres. One of these is very closely connected to the Muslim para itself, and was therefore included in our investigation. The para’s agricultural land, which totals 134 acres, stretches in a large semi-circle around the residential area, and is bounded to one side by a small river. Again, it is mainly double cropped with *boro* and *t.amon*.

5.3.2 Class and economic relationships

Taken together with its immediate satellite, the community has almost exactly the same number of households and population as the Hindu *para*, and per capita land holdings are almost twice as large (see table 5.1). Land, however, is very unevenly distributed, and the structure of the community much more polarised. At one extreme are a powerful group of eight big farm households, who between them own more than 80 acres, which by itself exceeds the total holding of the Hindu para, and

accounts for more than 60% of all holdings here. At the other there are 18 landless households, who by themselves comprise almost a third of the total. The picture is completed by 10 medium, 18 small and 3 marginal households.

By the standards of the union, where some farms reach 100 acres or more, none of the individual land holdings are very big. The largest farm is only 14 acres and the average large farm size is about 10 acres. Most households in this position have opted to directly manage their own land and only about 5% of all land owned is given under various arrangements to others to work. A small amount of this is either rented or share-cropped, but once again the number of plots falling into these categories are substantially outnumbered by those under mortgage. Most land transactions take place with other Muslims, since this is a predominantly Muslim area, but some cases of land being given to Hindu families to work were again encountered, and again did not appear to raise any difficulties for the parties concerned.

Where holdings are too large for household members to work themselves, labour is hired from among the landless and marginal with some small farmers also working for others from time to time. Workers are generally hired individually. Outside the peak seasons, they are typically paid 30 taka plus a simple breakfast for a 6-8 hour day with a 1 hour break, with the rate rising to 40-45 taka at harvest time. Increasingly, however, harvesting work is now organised on a contract basis. The going rate is 350 taka for 50 decimals, which 4-5 people can normally manage in a day.

5.3.3. Kinship relations and social influence

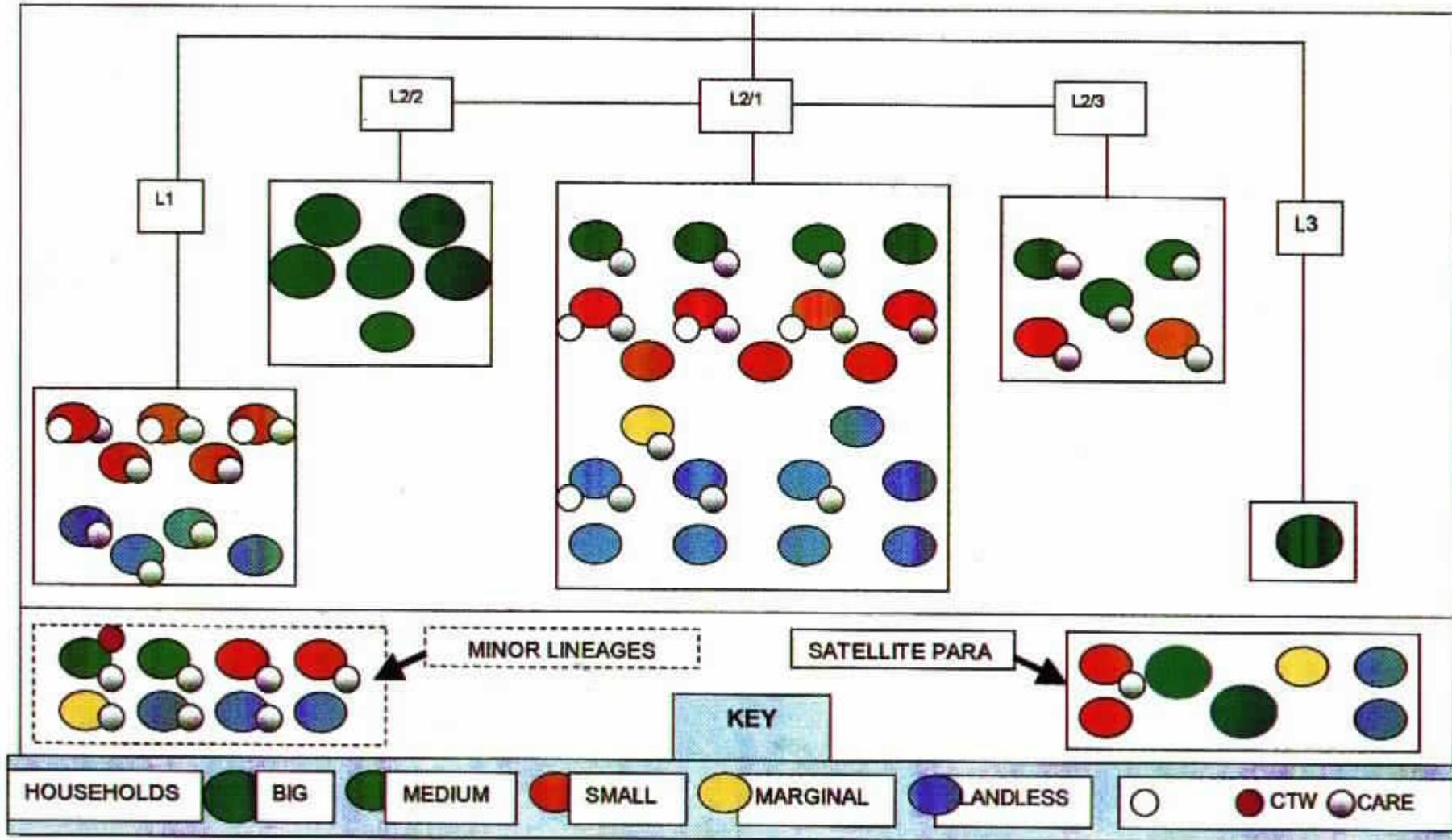
All 57 households are Muslim, and the population is 288. The seven households in the satellite para form their own lineage, and within the main para area there are a further eight households who also belong to small lineages of their own. The remaining 42 households are all related, although one must go back seven generations to establish the original common ancestor, and it is doubtful that many of the members are clear about the precise nature of their connections with all of the others. The lineage divides into three sub-lineages (L1,2,3) and the second of these, which includes the majority of households, then sub-divides into a further three units (L21,22,23) (*see figure 5.2*).

Two big farm households are found in the satellite para, and one in L3, but the remaining five are all clustered together in L22, and form the dominant power block within the para. Following the pattern noted in the Hindu para, all tend to have atypically large joint households (*see table 5.1*). This enables them to pursue more diverse strategies that offer wider possibilities for accumulation and a greater element of insurance in the event of any activity failing to produce a return at a particular point in time. They are also better equipped to survive the temporary loss of a key member through illness or long term incapacity or death without recourse to the sale of key productive assets.

All are directly be linked to Manzur, an old man of 90, after whom the para is now named. Together with a few other individuals, with whom they are more distantly related or connected, they form an effective localised version of the net that enables them to control key aspects of local life. The inner circle is considered first and comprises three individuals:

- Aziz is Manzur's nephew, and owns about 10 acres of land and a rice mill. He sits on the salish, plays an influential role in formulating its decisions, and is often approached for more informal advice by local residents. He is also a

Fig. 5.2 lineage (L), class and access to NGO resources: Muslim para



member of the local high school and bazaar committees, and enjoys close relations with the MP and the UP Chairman, both of whom seek his opinion on matters arising within his part of the Union.

- Murshed is the first of Mansur's sons, and the richest person in the para, with a substantial area of land and his own rice mill. He plays a more minor role than Aziz on the shalish and again sits on the bazaar committee. He is chairman of the Ansar VDP club (see *chapter 9*), and had been able to use his position, and his strong connections with the chairman to illegally secure access to a *khas* pond. He also has a close relationship with the MP, who together with the chairman, can be expected to inform him of any government development projects likely to take place in the area.
- Akhtar is Murshed's brother and a former Union Council member. He is secretary of the madrassa in the para, and like his cousin Aziz, plays an influential role on the shalish.

The current UP member for the ward within which the para lies lives close by and is Manzur's brother in law. He also plays a strong part in the shalish, and is the key person for the allocation of road repair contracts and the distribution of resources such as wheat to the madrassahs. The remaining members of the shalish are not directly related to the core group, but live locally and maintain good relations with them. They include the father of a school teacher, a shop-keeper from the bazaar (who is the brother in law of the CO of the GO-IF group), and a Hindu who is a good friend of Manzur, and a friend of the shop-keeper.

5.3.4 Access to resources

Although the overall volume of official resources coming to the para is again quite small in absolute terms and by comparison with those emanating from NGOs, the presence of key influential people means that substantially more is received than in the case of the Hindu community (see *table 5.4*). The disparity is particularly noticeable with regard to VGD cards and the Muslim para also secures more Food For Work opportunities. Within the para, it is the small, the marginal and especially the landless who benefit. No resources are siphoned off for the direct benefit of the large or medium farm families, and allocations appear to be concentrated where the greatest numbers of poorer people are found, and not to be distributed on the basis of proximity of kinship relationship to the power centre. It is, however, to be assumed that in addition to the patronage exercised and the internal obligations accordingly created through the distribution process, the most powerful households will have been able to benefit, at supra-para level, in some of the ways discussed earlier in the discussion of the net.

Among the NGOs operating locally, only Caritas and CARE have established a significant presence. In neither case have any of the large farm households become members, but there has been substantial participation by medium farms. Once again it is, however, the small farm households that tend to dominate membership, both in absolute terms, and relative to their proportion in the population at large, although the marginal and landless are also quite well represented here. With CARE GO-IF, there are rather more members from the poorer classes than would generally be expected, which apparently reflects the enthusiasm of several landless households to get involved as "buddy" (i.e. associate) members (see *table 5.7*). Questions of kinship appear to play a rather less significant part in determining access in this *para*, although it is noticeable that households from the small satellite community are largely excluded. Otherwise opportunities tend to follow the distribution of middle range and poorer households (see *table 5.6*). The tendency of a small number of predominantly small farm households to capture the bulk of NGO resources is,

however, again present here, although in somewhat more diluted form (see *figure 5.2*).

5.4 Wider Access to NGO Resources

This concludes the discussion of intra-para access to resources, where NGO emerge clearly as the main external providers. But before proceeding, it will be useful to look briefly at how NGO resources are allocated at Union and Upazilla level, since these may also have a critical bearing upon who is able to benefit and who is not.

Altogether there were four international, four national, one regional, and 13 local NGOs operating in the Upazilla, giving a total of 22 in all. Most were contacted in the course of the study, but a number were very small and did not warrant serious consideration in the limited time available. More detailed investigations were confined to the 12 largest and most active, with further follow up of the nine that had some presence in the selected union. The activities undertaken were fairly predictable, with most involved in credit and savings, often coupled with some form of educational or awareness raising initiative. Agriculture and fisheries and rights awareness related work were undertaken by a significant minority, whilst smaller numbers were engaged in homestead gardening, sanitation, health and nutrition, poultry rearing and voter education. The largest, Come to Work (CTW) employed 70 staff locally, whilst a number of others had 25-35 staff operating in the Upazilla.

When questioned about their engagement with the local administration and power structure, the NGOs mainly tended to state that contact was limited. Generally, they explained that they would try to inform the administration and local leadership when activities were about to get underway, and might sometimes solicit their help in drawing up lists of names of people, for example, for the distribution of relief goods. They would not, however, tend to seek more general advice about how interventions might be structured or located, and reported no instances of being “lobbied” to intervene in specific places or ways. A broadly similar picture emerged from consultations with the administrators and leaders themselves, who expressed a degree of frustration with the lack of close contact, and the unwillingness of NGOs either to co-ordinate activities either among themselves or with other actors. A more specific criticism was that, despite persistent requests to the contrary, NGOs continued to focus their activities in the more accessible and highly developed areas, whilst leaving official agencies to try to do something for those that were more remote and poorer. Three separate investigations were conducted to explore the validity of these claims and perceptions, and more generally to explore how NGO resources were being allocated.

In the first, research staff who knew the area well were asked to divide para into rich, middle and poorer groups, and then to note the names of the NGOs operating in each. The data was then analysed to see if any bias existed towards wealthier communities (see *table 5.8*). In the case of CTS and PTS there did appear to be a clear tendency emerged to favour better off (probably more accessible) locations. Caritas by contrast, and perhaps not surprisingly given its strong emphasis on relief activities, showed a very strong tendency to favour the poorest. Other agencies, especially BRAC and Grameen, showed a less pronounced bias towards the poor, and largely as a result of their influence, this also emerged as the final overall pattern. Taken as a whole, this suggested that within our Union at least, the charge that NGOs worked in the easier (and generally better off) locations, did not therefore generally stand up.

The second exercise tested the proposition that powerful individuals had not been able to draw NGO resources into their own para. For this purpose, a list of para containing influential people (IPs) was first of all drawn up, and then compared to the distribution of NGO activities (see *table 5.9*). Once again here the picture to emerge varies somewhat. In three of the five villages, there did appear to be a slight bias towards communities with IPs, but the situation was reversed in the other two villages, and overall the average level of NGO engagement in places with no IPs were marginally higher than in those where they were present. The analysis, in other words, appears to confirm what NGOs had said about their resource allocation decisions not being subject to significant external influence.

A final exercise looked at the wider situation in the Upazilla, with NGO programmes being plotted on a map, and the concentration of activities being compared with the official classification of developed, average and less developed unions. The mapping appeared to offer strong confirmation of the complaint that most NGO liked to work in the most accessible areas, with a clear tendency for most to cluster in the areas to the north and centre of the Upazilla that were closest to the district town and to avoid the more remote southern areas.

The statistics (see *table 5.10*) point to a similar but less clear-cut conclusion. When the picture is disaggregated by NGO, it is apparent that BRAC and Grameen have established a presence in all of the Unions, whilst other organisations have mainly clustered their work in a smaller number of locations adjacent to an office located either in the Upazilla itself, or in another centre of significant size. This gives the most developed locations a marginally greater NGO presence than those of average development, whilst the two least developed unions have significantly but not dramatically lower levels of coverage. Some allowance must, however, be made for the fact that concentrations of population are higher in the more prosperous locations, and that in per capita terms the poorer unions therefore do better than the raw figures suggest. There seemed, in conclusion, to be some substance to the original complaint, but the situation on the ground was perhaps rather less distorted than had been believed to be the case.

Table 5.1: Households and Population by BBS Land Operating Categories

BBS category		Big	Medium	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Acres operated		>7.5	2.51 - 7.5	0.5 - 2.5	0.05 - 0.49	<0.05	
No. of households	<i>Hindu</i>	2	11	33	11	5	62
	<i>Muslim</i>	8	10	18	3	18	57
% of households	<i>Hindu</i>	3	18	53	18	8	100
	<i>Muslim</i>	14	18	32	5	32	100
Population	<i>Hindu</i>	23	64	143	51	17	298
	<i>Muslim</i>	64	52	77	16	79	288
Average	<i>Hindu</i>	11.5	5.8	4.3	4.6	3.4	4.8
Household size	<i>Muslim</i>	8.0	5.2	4.3	5.3	4.4	5.1

Table 5. 2: Number of Households by kinship clusters & BBS land operating categories

BBS categories		Big	Middle	Small	Marg	Lless	Total	%
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Hindu para

Hindus

Barber (<i>napit</i>) caste (a)			2	4	2	1	9	15
Farmer (<i>khatria</i>) caste *								
Lineage f		1		2	1		4	6
Lineage b		1	4	15	3	1	24	39
Lineage e			2	2	1		5	8
Lineage c			1	3	2		6	10
Lineage d			1	2	2	1	6	10
combined minor lineages g				5		2	7	11
<i>Khatria sub-total</i>		2	8	29	9	4	52	84
Muslim (h)			1				1	2
Total		2	11	33	11	5	62	100

Muslim para

Main section *

Sublineage 3		1					1	2
Sublineage 22		5	1				6	11
Sublineage 23			3	2			5	9
Sublineage 21			4	7	1	9	21	37
Sublineage 1				5		4	9	16
Sub-total		6	8	14	1	13	42	74
Satellite para		2		2	1	2	7	12
Combined minor lineages			2	2	1	3	8	14
Total		8	10	18	3	18	57	100

Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding
wealth order

* Groups in these subsections listed in

Table 5.3: Land transactions

		Big	Medium	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
% giving land (a)	<i>Hindu para</i>	100	9	3			6
	<i>Muslim para</i>	38	20				9
% taking land (b)	<i>Hindu para</i>		27	61	64		48
	<i>Muslim para</i>		20	33			14

(a) Land given to others to operate under mortgage, cash rent or sharecrop arrangements

(b) Land taken from others and operated under mortgage, cash rent or sharecrop

Table 5.4: Number of households accessing other resources by caste & kinship cluster

<i>Hindu para</i>	% of Households	Government				Other
		VGD	FFW	Pension	VGf	
Hindus						
a. Barber caste	15					8
Farmer caste (+)						
F	6	1	1			3
B	39		1	1		15
E	8		1			4
C	10					5
D	10			1		6
G	11				2	6
Sub-total	84	1	3	2	2	39
Muslim (h)	2					
Total	100	2	3	2	2	47

Muslim para

Main section *

<i>Sublineage 3</i>	2					
Sublineage 22	11					
Sublineage 23	9	1				
Sublineage 21	37	5	1			
Sublineage 1	16	1	1			
Sub-total	74	7	2			
Satellite para	12	2	2			
Combined minor lineages		2	1			
Total	100	11	5			

Table 5.5: Number of households accessing other resources by BBS Categories

BBS category	Big	Medium	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Acres operated	>7.5	2.51 - 7.5	0.5 - 2.5	0.05 - 0.49	<0.05	

Hindu para						
<i>Government</i>						
VGD			1		1	2
FFW			1	2		3
Pension			1		1	2
VGF					1	1
<i>Other</i>						
RKM	1	7	24	10	5	47
Total households	2	11	33	11	5	62

Muslim para						
<i>Government</i>						
VGD			3	2	6	11
FFW				2	3	5
Total households	8	10	18	3	18	57

Table 5.6. Percentage of NGO members by caste and kinship cluster

<i>Hindu para</i>	% of House-Holds	% of NGO members						
		BRAC	Caritas	CARE	CTW	Hope	SDS	BJYKS
Hindus								
a. Barber caste	15	10		12	3			
Farmer caste (+)								
F	6	6		9				
B	39	52	37	41	55		40	100
E	8		13	15	10			
C	10	6		6	3		20	
D	10	13	13	3	14		40	
G	11	13	37	12	10			
Sub-total	84	90	100	86	92		100	100
Muslim (h)	2			3	3	100		
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n =)	62	31	8	34	29	1	5	1

Muslim para

Main section *					
Sublineage 3	2				
Sublineage 22	11				
Sublineage 23	9		9	17	
Sublineage 21	37		52	33	100
Sublineage 1	16		29	27	
Sub-total	74		90	77	100
Satellite para	12			3	
Combined minor lineages			9	20	
Total	100		100	100	100
(n =)	57		21	30	1

Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding

* Kin groups in these subsections are listed in wealth order

Table 5.7: Percentage of households belonging to NGOs by BBS Categories

BBS category	Big	Medium	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Acres operated	>7.5	2.51 - 7.5	0.5 - 2.5	0.05 - 0.49	<0.05	

Hindu para

BRAC	(n = 31)	3	20	57	20		100
Caritas	(n = 8)			88		12	100
CARE	(n = 34)	3	23	63	11		100
CTW	(n = 29)		20	63	13	3	100
Hope	(n = 1)		100				100
SDS	(n = 5)			33	67		100
BJYKS	(n = 1)			50	50		100

<i>n</i> =	2	11	33	11	5	62
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Muslim para

Caritas	(n = 21)		10	62	5	24	100
CARE	(n = 30)		27	40	7	27	100
CTW	(n = 1)			100			100

<i>n</i> =	8	10	18	3	18	57
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Not all totals may add up to 100% due to rounding

Table 5.8 NGO Presence by Relative Wealth of Para

NGO	No. of para covered				Percentage			
	Rich	Middle	Poor	Total	Rich	Middle	Poor	Total
BRAC	16	16	19	51	31	31	37	100
Grameen	7	8	11	26	27	31	42	100
Caritas	4	7	10	21	19	33	48	100
Come to work	5	4	2	11	45	36	18	100
Care	2	4	1	7	29	57	14	100
PTS	3	1	2	6	50	17	33	100
JSKS	1	2	2	5	20	40	40	100
Plan		3	1	4		75	25	100
Polli Sree		1	3	4		25	75	100
TOTAL	38	46	51	135	28	34	38	100

Table 5.9: NGOs and the Presence of Influential People (IP) by Para

Village	No. of para			No of NGO ctivities(a)			NGO activities/para		
	With IP	No IP	Total	With IP	No IP	Total	With IP	No IP	Total
Uttorgram	16	8	24	27	23	50	1.69	2.88	2.08
Jotdargram	9	9	18	16	12	28	1.78	1.33	1.56
Poscimn'gram	5	9	14	9	20	29	1.80	2.22	2.07
Purbon'gram	6	4	10	16	7	23	2.67	1.75	2.30
Chairmangram	2	2	4	4	3	7	2.00	1.50	1.75
TOTAL	38	32	70	72	65	137	1.89	2.03	1.96

(a) If one NGO operates in a para that is defined as 1 NGO activity. 2 NGOs would be 2 activities and so forth.

Table 5.10: Distribution of main NGO programmes in the Upazilla

Union				NGO								
Type	Name	Popn.	No. NGOs	CARE	BRAC	PTS	Grameen	NISCO	Caritas	SSS	CTW	Pollisree
More developed	A	29775	7	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
	B	22536	5		X		X	X	X		X	
	C	18082	6	X	X	X	X			X	X	
	D	11973	6	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Average/Total		20592	6.0	3	4	2	4	1	3	2	4	1
Average developed	E	22352	8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	F	21979	6		X		X	X	X	X	X	
	G	21666	4		X		X			X		X
	H	19882	6		X		X		X	X	X	X
	I	12777	7		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	J	9833	4		X		X			X	X	
Average/Total		16415	5.8	1	6	2	6	3	4	6	5	3
Less developed	K	19817	5	X	X		X		X			X
	L	18250	4		X		X		X		X	X
Average/Total		19034	4.5	1	2	-	2	-	2	-	1	2
Overall Av/Total		19077	5.7	5	12	4	12	4	9	8	10	6

6. LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

This chapter draws on DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) (see box 6.1) to explore the different ways in which households access and manage resources. Following a brief overview of the wider situation obtaining in the two study para, a set of four individual case studies drawn from different levels in the economic hierarchy are presented, and then used as a basis for a more general exploration of how social capital is accumulated and deployed.

6.1 Research Methods

The para-wide analysis is developed out of the wealth ranking exercise described in Chapter 5, and involved the collection of household level data on all major economic activities to build a more comprehensive and differentiated picture of the livelihood strategies being pursued across the two communities.

The case studies were prepared by two team members, with individual interviews conducted over a period of two to three days, and each taking between four and six hours to complete. Card matrices were used to re-construct the activities of key individuals, asset holdings, production activities, consumption, income and expenditure patterns over the past twelve months; with data subsequently being transferred to spreadsheets for further analysis and presentation. An attempt was also made to see how the present situation differed from that five years ago in order form some impression of how livelihoods evolve. In addition, genealogies were used to explore social capital, and semi-structured interviews to form an overall understanding of strategies and trajectories. Finally, photographs were taken of family members and compounds, copies of which were then given to informants as a mark of appreciation of the time they had made available.

Whilst much valuable data was collected and some important insights arrived at, a number of problems were encountered. In particular:

- Informants often had difficulty in recalling key facts with sufficient clarity, and a simplified approach with alternative methods of collection needs to be developed for dealing with certain aspects.
- The degree of change encountered even over a twelve month period in the structure of asset holdings and activities made it far more difficult to balance income and consumption with output and expenditure than had been anticipated.
- The differences between households made it hard to develop a common format that could be used across all cases, and there was insufficient time to bring team members, who were inexperienced in conducting this type of work, to the level where they could make the necessary adaptations as they went along.
- Rather stronger basic spreadsheet skills were required to successfully negotiate the data analysis stage.
- Ideally a second round of investigations would have been conducted to delve more deeply into apparent inconsistencies that only became apparent after the original data sets were cleaned and compared.

If CARE decides to undertake more work of this kind, the potential benefits of which are considerable, then each of these issues will need to be addressed. We return to this issue in the context of the wider discussion of capacity building in chapter 9.

Box 6.1: Sustainable Livelihoods Analysis

SLA builds, in the first instance on the idea that rural households have five types of **capital** at their disposal:

- *human capital*: which includes skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health
- *social capital*: which incorporates the formal organisations, the more informal networks or connections, and the reciprocal and exchange relationships in which people engage
- *natural capital*: which covers both intangible public goods (e.g. atmosphere or biodiversity), and divisible assets used directly in the production process (e.g. land, trees or water)
- *physical capital*: which takes in both infrastructure (e.g. roads) and producer goods (e.g. tools)
- *financial capital*: including both stocks (e.g. bank deposits, jewellery or livestock) and flows (e.g. regular earned income or remittances)

Individual households may be comparatively rich in certain types of capital and poor in others, and there may be considerable variations in the overall levels of capital available to different households.

The way in which a household uses the various types of capital at its disposal is described as its **livelihood strategy**, and the effects of that strategy are known as **livelihood outcomes**. Outcomes may appear in a number of forms, including: increased income or well-being; reduced vulnerability; improved food security or more sustainable use of the natural resource base. All of this, in turn, may create the pre-conditions for the accumulation of additional capital.

The circuit running from capital, through strategy and outcomes back to capital does not, however operate in isolation. In the first instance it is affected by the **vulnerability context**, which is made up of seasonal variations (e.g. in the availability of food or employment opportunities), more periodic shocks (e.g. flood or drought), and longer terms trends (e.g. declining land availability or soil fertility). Secondly it is subject to the influence of **transforming structures** (i.e. government or the private sector) and the various **processes** (e.g. policy or laws) with which these are associated. The transforming structures and processes may also affect the vulnerability context.

Interventions of the type under investigation in this case form a part of the transforming structure. They seek to provide rural households with the means to modify their livelihood strategies, improve their livelihood outcomes, and build their capital base.

(Derived from DFID, 2001, part 2)

6.2 The diversity of livelihoods

The variety of livelihoods pursued in the two study *para* are summarised in table 6.1 that shows activities and activity combinations for the five basic household farm type categories described in the previous chapter. Four broad strategies, listed here in descending frequency, are seen to predominate:

- exclusive dependence upon agricultural production (that accounts for 29% of all households in the Hindu, and 23% in the Muslim *para*)

- the combination of agricultural production on land under the household's own management with day labouring for other households (Hindu 23%, Muslim 11%)
- day labouring as a sole occupation (Muslim 16%)
- agricultural production combined with business (Muslim 13%).

Together, these frequently occurring types account for 52% of all cases in the Hindu, and 63% in the Muslim para, but the remaining households fall into no fewer than 16 and 10 different categories respectively, none of which individually account for more than a small percentage of the total. At the upper end of the spectrum, some households combine agriculture with service occupations such as teaching. In the middle wealth range, covering smaller land owners and operators, some combine agriculture with various forms of employment (for example as tubewell mechanics or maid-servants), whilst others pursue it alongside self-employment (as barbers, carpenters, petty business people or traders). Finally, among the landless and near landless, day labouring may be undertaken in tandem with employment (e.g. as a truck assistant) or self-employment (e.g. as a rickshaw van puller), and each of these possibilities may also be pursued individually, or in combination with each other.

Closer inspection of the possibilities laid out on the right hand side of the table reveals that even the broader categories are less homogenous than they initially appear. Some wealthier land owners may give out a part of their land for others to operate under various arrangements, whilst others operate the entire area owned themselves. Further down the spectrum, some small farmers may take land in, whilst others, for various reasons, give out a part of their area for others to cultivate. In the lower reaches there are those who depend mainly on taking some land in under tenancy arrangements and others who exploit this possibility in combination with employment or self-employment.

Further diversity would become apparent if some of the activities undertaken by women, such as poultry rearing, were to be taken into account. And finally, as some of the individual case studies to be considered later make clear, the types of "snapshot" image presented conceal a diversity of underlying dynamics or trajectories, fuelled in part by transitions in household composition. A household with a preponderance of daughters, and a heavy series of dowry payment of dowry payments to meet, will, for example, find itself in a very different position from one where the proportions are reversed. Similarly, a young household moving into a phase with an increasing number of dependent small children is likely to find itself on a downwards economic trajectory, but this may then start to reverse as the children start to grow up and are able to contribute to the family economy, and so forth.

The implications of this diversity for CARE's work will be explored in the final part of the chapter.

6.3 The Individual Household Case Studies

The individual cases may now be considered, starting with the middle farm household, and then moving downwards through the small to the marginal and the landless.

6.3.1 The Middle Farmer

Ishaq is a Muslim whose family have lived in the same para for many generations. He is now 65. Although distantly related to some of the powerful and wealthiest local

Table 6.1: Para Livelihoods Summary

Hindu para								Land					
	A	B	C	D	E	Tot	%	Out	Out	Out		In	In
	A	B	C	D	E	Tot	%	A	B	C		C	D
Only agriculture	1	7	10			18	29%	1	2	1		4	
Agriculture/service (a)	1	2				3	5%	1	1				
Agriculture/sell milk		1				1	2%						
Agriculture/barber		1				1	2%						
Agriculture/day labour			11	3		14	23%					10	2
Agriculture/barber			3	1		4	6%					1	1
Agriculture/petty trade (b)			3			3	5%					3	
Agriculture/STW mechanic			2			2	3%					1	
Agriculture/carpenter			2			2	3%						
Agriculture/service/labour			1			1	2%					1	
Agriculture/business			1			1	2%						
Agriculture/truck assistant				2		2	3%						2
Agriculture/rickshaw van				1		1	2%						
Agriculture/jellapi ferry				1		1	2%						1
Day labour/barber				1	4	5	8%						1
Construction worker				1		1	2%						
Clothes hawker				1		1	2%						
Rickshaw van					1	1	2%						
Total	2	11	33	11	5	62	100	2	3	1		20	8

Muslim Para								Land				
	A	B	C	D	E	Tot	%	Out	Out		In	In
	A	B	C	D	E	Tot	%	A	B		B	C
Only agriculture	4	6	4			14	23%	2	1		1	3
Agriculture/business	3	1	4			8	13%	1			1	
Agriculture/service (a)	1	1				2	3%					
Agriculture/STW mechanic		1	1			2	3%					
Retired		1				1	2%		1			
Agriculture/day labour			6	1		7	11%					3
Agriculture/rickshaw van			2			2	3%					
Agriculture/maid servant			1			1	2%					
Day labour/business				2	2	4	6%					
Day labour					10	10	16%					
Business					2	2	3%					
Garment worker					2	2	3%					
Rickshaw van					1	1	2%					
Day labour/rickshaw					1	1	2%					
Total	8	10	18	3	17	56	100	3	2		2	6

A = Large farm; B = Medium; C = Small; D = Marginal; E = Landless
a) Types of service: school teacher b) Types of petty trade: vegetable/vegetable+turmeric+chilli/muri+galapi)

households, his father was landless and worked as a labourer, and could not afford to send Ishaq or his brother Mozammel to school. When they were old enough to start work, the brothers also found employment as labourers, and Ishaq continued to work in this capacity until beyond his 30th birthday.

In the meantime in 1967, when he was 27, he married Marium Nessa, an uneducated woman who lived near the MP's para on the other side of the Union. A daughter and a son were born in the next two to three years, with another daughter and two more sons arriving some years later when the situation had stabilised following the uncertainties of the immediate post-independence period. As they grew up, all the children were sent to school, most attending for five years.

The war of liberation, beginning in 1970, was to prove an important watershed in the family fortunes. Much hinged upon a particular incident, where Ishaq saved a matbar, the most influential person in the para, by concealing his weapons during a search of all of the larger houses by the Pakistan army. When the war was over, the matbar expressed his gratitude by allowing Ishaq to share-crop 12 bighas (approximately 4 acres) of his own land, and by helping to arrange a 5000 tk loan with the Krishi Bank to cover the initial cost of inputs.

Ishaq seized this opportunity and, by working hard, was able to generate a modest surplus that he then used to start to accumulate resources of his own. His strategy rested mainly on taking poor sloping plots under mortgage arrangements. When, as was generally the case, the owner was then unable to redeem the land, Ishaq would negotiate to buy it outright at a favourable rate, normally paying by instalments over a period of time. Once a plot was in his possession, he would then level it, thus increasing its productivity and value.

On one occasion, he acquired a five bigha area jointly with his brother, Mozammel, but Mozammel subsequently claimed sole ownership. An interim settlement has now been arrived under which Ishaq has secured control of two of the five bighas, but Mozammel has not accepted this and continues to press for the entire area. Discouraged by this experience, Ishaq has subsequently opted to work by and for himself.

During the years that have followed, he has accumulated further land through his favoured method, enabling him to build up a substantial holding. He has also been able to acquire a number of cattle, some of which have been used for ploughing. At one point, a substantial sum had to be found for his eldest daughter's dowry, but by then the eldest son, Moinuddin, was old enough to start work, helping out on the family land, and also contributing to the family income by undertaking wage labour for other households. This was an unusual approach for a family with a significant land holding of its own, but proved very successful. With a second son joining the work force a few years later, and bringing in quite a good income as a power tiller operator, and another added shortly afterwards, who again worked both on and off the farm, finances became progressively stronger and additional land was acquired with increasing regularity.

The household now has 18 plots in all, although three, which are some distance from the homestead and inconvenient to manage, have been mortgaged out in order to raise money to mortgage in three others that are easier to operate. The total area owned now amounts to 3.86 acres, including a 20 decimal homestead, and a six decimal pond. The homestead is spacious with several residential rooms, together with stalls for the livestock a washing area with a handpump. Outside by the pond is a latrine and a further area where a number of trees, some bamboo and some cotton

plants are grown. The land, which is worth approximately 690,000 taka, accounts for more than 90% of all assets by value. Livestock, primarily in the form of seven cattle, contribute a further 2.3%, with the house itself and its contents being worth a similar amount. Other significant items include a bicycle and a small stock of jewellery. The picture is completed by a shop at the local bazaar which the eldest son has recently opened using a 5000 tk. loan from Caritas, which must be repaid at an annual rate of interest of 12%.

These assets must now support a joint family comprising ten individuals. The two daughters have married and left, but both of the elder sons have also married and brought their wives to the compound, and in addition there are now three grandchildren. Ishaq and Mariam continue to contribute actively, although the sons now do most of the work on the family fields and all of the outside labour, while the daughter in laws handle the bulk of the regular domestic tasks.

An aman rice is cultivated on all of the farm land, most frequently in rotation with boro. Some wheat, potato, mustard and vegetables are also grown in the winter season and a small area is set aside for jute. Three quarters of all output is sold, raising about 60% of the household's total cash income of 58,000 tk., whilst the remainder is directly consumed. The proceeds of the aman crop are used mainly to buy new land, whilst the income from the sons' labour provides another 10,000 tk (equal to a further 17%) and covers most of the families' remaining routine expenditure. Smaller contributions come from the tree and perennial crops and livestock products, and it is anticipated that the store will begin to make a significant contribution in years to come.

Routine expenditure divides almost evenly between production and consumption items and totals just over 35,000 tk. Fertiliser accounts for nearly 60% of the former, followed by irrigation (30%), with smaller amounts going on seeds and insecticide, and no labour at all being hired. Food and clothes account for a third each of the consumption budget, followed by cigarettes and tea (8%), education (7%) and medicine (6%). This leaves an annual balance of around 22,000 tk., that would generally be available for investment and capital expenditure, although in the year immediately preceding the investigation, most of this was absorbed by dowry payments and wedding expenditure.

The joint family currently functions as a very effective and largely free-standing economic unit. Ishaq has taken a conscious decision not to engage in lending or borrowing from close kin on either his own or his wife's side, preferring to keep his business to himself; whilst the combined internal resources mean that there is no need to engage in reciprocal labour exchanges with kin or neighbours. The relationship with the matbar's family, which was so important in setting Ishaq on his way, has however been maintained. Although the old man himself has now died. Ishaq is able to go to his small circle of surviving and wealthy relations on those occasions where loans of food or cash are required to tide him over periods of short term difficulty.

The immediate future of the household seems assured. Both daughters are now married and it appears likely that further accumulation of assets, perhaps accompanied by more diversification, should be possible in the years ahead, whilst reserves are more than sufficient to meet any short term difficulties that may arise. It, however, remains to be seen how well the sons will be able to manage as Ishaq enters more advanced old age, and a critical point will be reached when he dies and a decision has to be taken as to whether the joint arrangement will continue or whether the assets should be divided.

Fig. 6.1: Livelihoods case study summary chart

Household/para	Middle	Muslim	Small	Hindu	Marginal	Muslim	L'less	Hindu
Strategy	Crop production + labour + shop		Crop production + livestock		Shop + livestock + crop production		Rickshaw + Labour	
Trajectory	Up		Stable/down		Up		Down	
Household structure	Joint		Nuclear		Nuclear		Nuclear	
Adult male	4		1		1		1	
Adult female	3		1		1		1	
Boys	2		4		1		2	
Girls	1		1		1		1	
Adult equiv. units	8.5		4.5		3		3.5	
Land acres								
Owned	3.863		1.790		0.250		0.020	
Taken in	0.850				0.690			
Given out	0.525							
Operated	4.188		1.790		0.940		0.020	
Asset Values	tk	%	tk	%	tk	%	tk	%
<i>Productive</i>								
Land	690000	92.1	284360	81.8	31000	25.7	3000	31.0
Livestock	17150	2.3	25700	7.4	34000	28.2	660	6.8
Trees	11000	1.5	9200	2.6				
Equipment			4000	1.2			4000	41.3
Other					45000	37.4		
<i>Non-productive</i>								
House and contents	16100	2.1	19000	5.5	10350	8.6	1920	19.8
Pump/Latrine	1300	0.2	2000	0.6				
Other	14000	1.9	3400	1.0	100	0.1	100	1.0
Total	749550	100	347660	100	120450	100	9680	100
<i>Per adult unit</i>	88182		77258		40150		2766	

6.3.2 The Small Farmer

Ranjit is 32. He is a Hindu and a small farmer with ten years of education. Twelve years ago he married Dhoya, who is now 27. She came from a para six kilometres away and did not go to school. They have four daughters, ranging in age from 9-13, and an 8 year old son, all of whom are still at school.

The family occupies a rectangular compound some 10 decimals in area. To one side are two rooms with mud walls, a tin roof and an external platform where they live and sleep. Opposite, across the narrow central area, is a shed where some cattle and goats are kept, and a small coup in which Dhoya raises a few chickens. The third side comprises a kitchen, a bathing area with a handpump, and a small shrine, whilst the fourth side is a mud wall with an entrance that connects to a similar compound belonging to one of Ranjit's brothers. Beyond the homestead walls lies a small area where vegetables are cultivated, where animals may be tethered during the day, and

where a few mango, jack and nim trees, together with some banana and peanut plants, are grown. A little beyond this lies a shared family pond.

For reasons that we did not have time to go into, Ranjit was raised from a small age by his aunt, whilst his younger brothers and sisters remained with his natural parents. His aunt also had children of her own, but they were considerably younger, and when his uncle died, it was Ranjit who took over the responsibility for running the farm. Assuming that all of the land would eventually pass to his cousins, he used part of the proceeds to acquire cattle, and was slowly able to build up a herd, which at its peak numbered some 20 animals. This, in turn, enabled Ranjit to work as a ploughman, helping other farmers to prepare their land, and he was also able to make additional income by producing and selling milk.

At a slightly later stage, he then acquired the first piece of land of his own, a plot of 42 decimals, in the form a dowry provided by his wife's family. At the same time, he was given the small area described above from his father's compound to establish a homestead. Subsequently, when his aunt died some seven or eight years ago, and contrary to his earlier expectations, he was then left a part of her land amounting to a further 57 decimals.

In the years which have followed the progressive reduction in the area of land available locally for grazing and the growing tendency for power tillers to displace draught animals in land preparation have made it increasingly difficult to maintain his herd. He has therefore run it down to four animals. Most of the proceeds have been used to buy several small additional plots of land, that together amount to 58 decimals, whilst a smaller portion has covered the purchase of a cheap shallow tubewell and some ongoing household expenses.

During the same period, his own father has died, but his former holding is currently being run by Ranjit's younger brothers and also helps to support a younger sister who has not yet married. The precise position with regard to the division of this land remains unclear. It is anticipated that a portion will subsequently be used to cover the cost of the sister's dowry, but the allocation of what then remains has yet to be determined. For the present, Ranjit is able to cut some bamboo from one area, and sometimes gets a share of the fish from the 12 decimal family pond.

If the pond is included, this gives Ranjit a total holding of 1.79 acres with a value of approximately 284,000 tk. This accounts for some 82% of total household assets of 348,000 tk. by value. The cattle, together with the goats and the poultry make up a further 7%, the buildings and contents 6%, the trees 3%, and the remaining items, including the STW, a bicycle, and some jewellery, a further 3%

The two main plots and one of the more minor ones are used to grow a rotation of boro and t.amon. Chilli, spices and a few vegetables are cultivated on the remaining area of higher land, whilst smaller areas of low land are devoted to amon in rotation with wheat and jute, and to further vegetables. A little more than 40% of output by value is directly consumed, whilst the remainder is sold, yielding an annual income slightly in excess of 14,000 tk., or approximately 50% of the family total 28,500. The remainder comes from livestock products (26%), ploughing (18%), and tree/perennial crops (6%). With the exception of some poultry products, nearly all of this derives from work undertaken by Ranjit himself, with Dhoya's time being mainly taken with a wide range of domestic and child care activities.

Expenditure over the last year amounted to 32,500 tk., with the deficit being made good from savings arising from the earlier sale of livestock. 23% of the total was

accounted for by production activities, with fertilisers the largest individual item, followed by seed, irrigation and a comparatively small amount to hire labour at harvest time, with Ranjit doing most of the work by himself. Of the 77% spent on domestic items, food (including some rice) made up almost half, clothing a quarter, schooling 10% and medical treatment 6%.

Ranjit's current livelihood strategy is fairly self-sufficient and he says that he prefers not to engage in extensive interaction with other households, with the potential complications that this might entail. The household never-the-less maintains a significant network of relationships that it is able to draw on for a variety of purposes (see figure 6.2). These all tend to be confined either to the extended lineage of which he is a part or to his wife's siblings. Lineage members, who are all close at hand within the community, help each other out when there are tasks to perform, like house building or bund raising, when a large amount of labour is required for a short period of time. They also borrow and lend money. Ranjit's wife siblings, who live at some distance, also lend and borrow cash among each other, and will in addition make small term loans on kind where these are required, but are too far away to engage in labour exchange. Among an inner circle comprising his brother and some of their immediate relations by marriage who live locally, all of the types of exchange noted already will take place. Over and above this, they may also help each other by sharing the STW, by looking after each others' cattle, and by pooling labour for ploughing. The household's closest relationship of all is with Ranjit's younger brother, who is a village doctor and helps to treat any member who falls sick.

Fig. 6.2: Ranjit's household: forms of social capital

Form of support eg Relation	Medical	Regular economic help <i>(STW share, cattle care, ploughing)</i>	Food/Petty commodity exchange <i>(Rice, oil, soap, chilli, salt)</i>	Money lending	Short term economic help <i>(Harvesting, build house, raise bund)</i>
Younger brother					
Other brothers					
Wife's siblings					
Distantly related large lineage					
Other lineages, Barbers, Muslims					

This all appears to work quite well for the time being, and Ranjit has not so far found himself in circumstances where he needs to seek the assistance of powerful and influential people from beyond his para. Like most small farm families, the household, however, enjoys few reserves and could be placed in quite serious difficulties if a major crop were to be lost or an animal or two to die.

In the longer term, the strategy of educating all of his children above the basic level may help them to gain employment and provide an additional source of income. But the fact that the eldest four are all girls, for whom dowry payments will have to be raised over the next decade, poses a severe longer term challenge, and the prospect that land will have to be sold, leaving Ranjit and Dhoya to survive their later years with a much smaller holding than they have now. Much of their hope is pinned on their only son.

6.3.3 The Marginal Household

Habibur is a Muslim and is 28. His family have lived in the para for many generations and he has a large number of close and more distant relations close at hand, who include the wealthiest and most powerful households. His parents are both still alive but his father, who is a small farmer and part time mechanic, is now quite old and becoming less economically active.

Habibur was the third of eight children, and has four brothers and three sisters, all of whom, with the exception of the youngest brother, have now married. None of them were sent to school. His elder brother and his elder sister's husband both work as rickshaw van pullers. Two of his younger brothers run small businesses, whilst the other remains at home with his parents. His two younger sisters both work in the garments industry.

For reasons that we were unable to go into in the time available, Habibur appears to have enjoyed disproportionate access to the limited resources at his parents' disposal, and also to have received considerable support in the form of loans from some of the wealthiest households in the village. This has enabled him to build up quite a strong asset base, whilst his elder siblings in particular appear to be in a much more precarious position.

The process began in his early twenties, when he was helped to establish a shop that has continued to provide his major source of income ever since. At this point, he was still single and living in the parental home, and paying 50 tk a day for his keep, which could easily be managed with the proceeds, and left a substantial surplus. Some of this was used to purchase a hybrid and an ordinary cow, which produced milk that was then sold. He also began to acquire land, buying two plots with a combined area of 23 decimals.

Four years ago, he married Momena, a woman of 16 who, like Habibur, had received no education. Momena brought with her a small dowry, and this was used to take on two further plots of land, with a combined area of 19 decimals, under mortgage arrangements. One belonged to one of her uncles, whilst the other was owned by a small shop-keeper in the para.

For a time, the couple continued to live as a part of Habibur's parents' family, and during this period they had a daughter and a son. About a year ago, it was decided that the time had come for them to establish an independent household. Their parents helped by providing a tiny parcel of land from their own homestead on which a simple house could be built. At the same time, they were given 50 decimals of family land to sharecrop.

Their total assets now amount to 120,000 tk. The shop and contents are the most valuable individual item, accounting for 37% of the total. Next comes the livestock (28%) and the owned land (26%); with the remaining 9% being made up mainly of

the house itself and the contents. This, however, somewhat understates the importance of land, since it is likely that most of the area currently held in mortgage will eventually be acquired for a relatively modest sum².

With the household still in the process of separating from the parental home and engaged in a rather complex sets of loan arrangements, that could not entirely be unravelled in the time available, we were unable to construct a proper balance sheet. In outline, however, it appears that annual income is in excess of 50,000 tk, and expenditure a little more than 40,000 leaving a substantial balance for debt servicing and further investment.

Habibur has an arrangement with a merchant at the nearby bazaar to supply goods for the shop, which currently offers a net return of 29,000 tk/year. His next most important expense comes in the form of feed for his cattle, which costs almost 11,000 tk/year and by itself accounts for a quarter of total family expenditure. Income data was not collected in this instance but has been assumed to amount to 13,000 tk, giving a net return of 2,000 tk.

The land will mainly be used to cultivate a summer monsoon and a winter wheat, but analysis here is complicated by the fact that a full annual cycle has not yet been completed across the total present land holding. Fertiliser, advanced on credit by a local business, is the largest individual expense, and accounts for about a third of all purchased inputs by value. Other inputs: irrigation (17%), labour – most of which is hired in (15%) and seed and seedlings (13%) are mainly covered by a loan from Habibur's parents. Altogether some 6,400 taka must be found. Crop sales currently bring in 5,500 tk per year, with some output being retained for household consumption. A final illegitimate source of income is provided by a VDG card Habibur has been able to obtain through his connections. 58% of all expenditure goes on domestic consumption, of which food (primarily rice and fish) accounts for more than half. Other major items include clothing and medicine, each of which takes 12.5 % of the total.

In addition to the important links with the most powerful households that have already been described, which comprise the most important individual source of social capital, the household also engages in regular, tiding over exchanges of a rice and a range of more minor food items with Habibur's brothers and their wives. By contrast with some of the other cases that have been considered, this arrangement does not, however, extend to Momena's relations, who are said to be too poor to enter into this form of exchange.

The future looks reasonably secure with a diversified strategy providing some insurance against the short term failure of any individual component, and wealthier co-lineage members at hand to provide at least some support if circumstances take a turn for the worse. It appears highly likely that the stock of land currently owned will be augmented by plots currently held in mortgage, and further acquisitions through mortgage are also in prospect. Together these factors should outweigh the decline in support from parents that is likely to set in as they become older and increasingly dependent.

² When sharecropped land is also taken into account, the household just crosses the boundary from the marginal to the small farmer category. If the full details had been available in advance it would therefore not have been chosen to represent the marginal category, although in practice it shares key features with this group.

6.3.4 Landless household

Nishikanto is a 32 year old Hindu from the khatria caste. He has one brother and four sisters, all of whom are now married. His parents came originally from another village, but moved to the area before he was born. His father was able to acquire nearly two acres of land, making him a small farmer, but within a short time he had lost all of it and become landless. Shortly afterwards, when Nishikanto was still small, he died, leaving the family with few material resources with which to survive and no education.

When he was old enough, Nishikanto began to work as an agricultural labourer. Later, he was able to raise a loan to purchase a rickshaw van that he then used to transport goods and people backwards and forwards from the local bazaar. Eight years ago he married Sumithra, who was 16 and also uneducated.

Initially they lacked the resources to establish their own home, but they were able to arrive at an arrangement with Ranjit (*see small farm case*) that allowed them to live without payment in his homestead. In the years that followed, they had three children: a daughter who is now eight and in year three at school, a son now aged six who is in his first year, and another son aged three.

Sumithra belongs to BRAC, and two years ago was able to raise a loan of 4000 tk. This was used to buy some land and build a house, and had to be repaid at 80 tk/week. The land formed part of a parcel of 3 decimals from the homestead of one of Nishikanto's sisters whose husband had died and needed the money to support herself. It was purchased jointly with one of his half sisters and then divided into two equal 1.5 decimal parcels. The money that remained from the loan was used to purchase construction materials.

Nishikanto built the house himself, with unpaid assistance from Horish, a childhood friend with whom he has a close and mutually supportive relationship. The structure is no more than five metres by four, with small rooms laid out to three sides of a tiny central open area. The walls are made of mud, whilst one of the roofs is straw and the other tin. This takes up nearly all of the plot, but outside there has just been enough room to plant a single jackfruit tree. In addition to the homestead, the meagre contents of their home (which together value no more than 700 tk) and the rickshaw van, the family owns a goat and one or two chickens. The total value of their assets amounts to little more than 10,000 tk.

An already very difficult situation was made even worse a few weeks ago before our interview, when the rickshaw van was stolen. Ranjit and other villagers tried to help Nishikanto to identify the thief, but their efforts were to no avail, and the van has not been recovered. Nishikanto has now been obliged to go to the local supplier for a replacement. This has cost 4000 tk and has been supplied on credit, with repayments of 100 tk/week. This has placed further strain on already over-stretched family finances.

Nishikanto is already working as hard as he can. On average, he plies his rickshaw six days a week and makes about 75 tk per day, which gives an annual income of some 23,000 tk. This is supplemented by occasional agricultural labouring at the lower rate of 25 tk., which raises another 1000 tk/year. Sumithra contributes a further 1200 tk by threshing rice and performing other domestic tasks, but is otherwise confined to her own extensive domestic and subsistence activities. The only other income comes in the form of an allowance of 30 kgs. of wheat under a vulnerable

mother benefit scheme administered locally by the Union chairman. In total the family must therefore manage on some 26,000 tk./year or about 70 tk./day.

Inevitably by far the greater share of this, amounting to more than 80%, goes on food, with rice by itself accounting for almost half of the sum available. Clothes, at 1500, tk take up a further 6%, smoking 4%, other domestic items 3%, van maintenance 2%, medicine 2% and education less than 1%.

The family has a small circle of siblings and other neighbours, which together number about 10 households, which can be turned to in times of particular hardship. Most will make small cash loans and some will help out with food items – including rice, wheat, chilli, oil and salt – when the need arises. But whilst this support is valued and reciprocated where possible, it is inevitable limited in extent since most of the other households are little better off themselves.

Repayments on the new loan, which had only just been taken on and therefore did not figure in the accounts discussed above, will pose a heavy additional burden. Much will depend upon Nishikanta and Sumitra's continued good health, since in the absence of any reserves to fall back on, it is difficult to see how the family could continue to survive for any period if either were unable to carry on working and significant income were to be lost.

6.4 Social Capital

Taken together, the four cases that have been discussed provide a basis upon which to advance some preliminary ideas on the important but rather complicated topic of social capital.

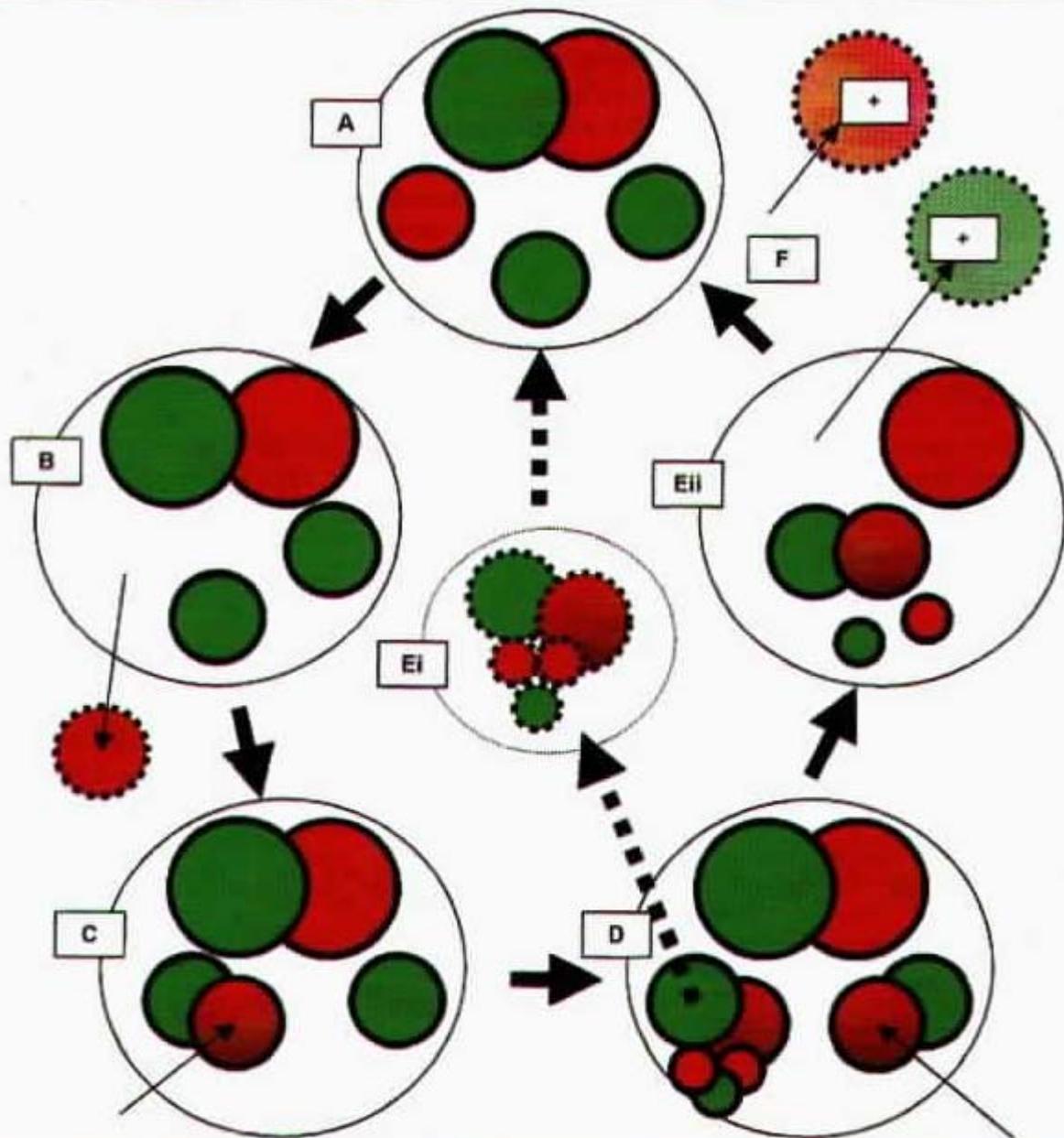
It will be recalled that this is one of the five types of capital identified in the livelihoods framework, and its principal function may be represented as providing access to the other forms of capital located beyond the household itself. Some of these channels are "internal", ie they take place among a local circle of people with whom an individual actor enjoys regular and multi-dimensional "face to face" contact. Others extend more widely, can generally only be accessed through some form of intermediation, and are hence described as "external". The linkages that together comprise a particular household's internal social capital are established from the wider range of possibilities presented either by relations of kinship with and/or physical proximity to other households, and are defined by the transaction of various types of resources and services.

6.4.1 The Evolving Structure of the Household

To understand how this works it is first of all necessary to look at the household itself, how it evolves over time, and the various forms in which it can appear.

A large number of permutations may arise, but in practise these may be grouped into a relatively small number of types. As a starting point, a commonly encountered pattern, based loosely on the case of the marginal household discussed above, is presented in figure 6.3. (For the purposes of the analysis that follows, it will be assumed that the household may be treated as an internally undifferentiated entity. The limitations of this position are sketched in box 6.2).

Figure 6.3: The Evolving Household. Illustration Based Loosely on the Marginal Case



A	A simple nuclear family with father (green), mother (red), daughter (small red) and two sons (small green)
B	The daughter marries and leaves the household
C	The eldest son marries and the new daughter-law comes to live in the compound, transforming the structure from nuclear to joint
D	The newly married couple have children of their own. The second son marries and his wife joins the compound
Ei	The eldest son and his family split from his parents to form their own nuclear unit (which reverts to situation A)
Eii	The second son and his wife have children. His father dies and his mother remains with him in the original family compound
F	His mother dies and his family then also reverts to nuclear type A

Here the key individual, Habibur, may be identified as the central small green circle in circle A, which shows his parental household. This comprises his mother, his father, his elder sister, himself and a younger brother. In stage B, the sister marries and leaves, and in stage C, Habibur takes a wife himself who then joins the household (which in the process ceases to be nuclear and assumes a joint status). In stage D, Habibur and his wife start their own family, and his younger brother brings in a wife of his own. Shortly afterwards (stage Ei) Habibur breaks away to form an independent household which then completes a cycle by returning to the nuclear structure built around his own parents in stage A. As this happens, his brother and sister-in-law start to have children, and a little later Habibur's father dies, leaving the brother to support the widowed mother (Eii). When she subsequently dies (stage F), his brother's household also then returns to the original state A.

Box 6.2: Differentiation within the household

The household is not an entirely co-operative entity where what is good for the whole may automatically be assumed to be equally good for each of the component parts. It is also, in some measure, contested space where the interests of different members may be set against each other.

Within an overall context of patriarchy, women enjoy a degree of autonomy in deciding both how to utilise their time, and over the management, control and ownership of material resources which they may utilise in seeking to advance their own interests (and more especially the interests of their children). Sons may compete with each other (or in extreme cases with their fathers) over the control of key assets and the enjoyment of the benefits following from their use. In joint families, a surviving mother will have control over the time of her son's wife that she may exert in the pursuit of some personal agenda (although the balance will change, when the son's wife herself has a son and change again when the mother is widowed and her son becomes the new household head).

Ignoring these elements, and treating the household as if it were an internally undifferentiated entity, runs the risk of equating the interest of the whole with those of the dominant internal individual or individuals (which in practice will generally mean the older adult males).

Whilst a circuit like this is fairly typical, and in some senses ideal, various factors may conspire to prevent it from actually being completed. One or both parents may die whilst the children are still small (as with the father of Nishikanto, the landless case, who ended up attached to Ranjit's household). Alternatively, parents may be unable, to raise all of the children by themselves (as with Ranjit, the small farmer, himself, who was sent to live with an aunt). Women become especially vulnerable to such forms of detachment at a later stage in the cycle, either through divorce or becoming widowed.

Next it should be noted that the process by which new households are formed may proceed in different ways. Our middle farm case, for example, in a pattern more commonly associated with big farm households, had delayed the transition $D \rightarrow Ei$, opting rather to evolve into a more complex joint structure that enabled it to pursue its land accumulation and diversification strategy. In the actual marginal case reviewed above, where formal separation ($D \rightarrow Ei$) did take place, this in practice was only partial, with parents and son in effect jointly operating a major piece of land, and the former advancing the latter some of the inputs required to sustain agricultural production more generally. Again, under the rather different circumstances obtaining with the small farmer, we saw how a similar joint interest in former parental land and a pond was maintained well beyond the point of apparent separation.

6.4.2 Forms of Internal Social Capital

Where separation has taken place, and certainly after the father has died, the link between brothers generally provides the most immediate form of internal social capital. A detailed example of how this could be activated through the medium of ongoing and periodic reciprocal labour exchange and the circulation of small cash loans, was documented in the small farmer case (see *figure 6.2*). The same case also showed a secondary circuit of small food items operating between brothers' wives, and evidence from elsewhere suggests that this sub-set of social capital will also come into play when assistance is required to negotiate periods of illness. Looser or more partial versions of this women's circuit can also arise between married sisters, although these are normally limited in intensity and extent by the lack of immediate physical proximity. Where, on the other hand, an individual woman happens to marry close to the parental home (as with the wife of the small farmers' younger brother), she and her husband are potentially able to participate simultaneously in two separate networks of relationships.

This situation defines one pole in the continuum of possibilities provided by siblings, but at the other a conscious decision may be taken *not* to treat these relationships as social capital at all – as with the middle farmer who effectively suspended his relationship with his brother following a dispute over the ownership of a jointly acquired piece of land. By the same token, individuals like our landless case may enter into close reciprocal relations where friendship rather than kinship provides the underlying bond.

Around the immediate group of siblings and husbands' in-laws, that most usually provide the inner ring of social capital, lies a wider inner circle (see *figure 6.4*). In practice this may be expressed by either lineage or physical community and invariably entails some combination of both. The two study para, - with a Muslim case where para and lineage were virtually the same, and a Hindu para, containing multiple lineages as well as two castes – come close to defining the extreme possibilities that are likely to be encountered in practice. Beyond lies a third circle, the outer limits of which are defined broadly by the Union, which is neither clearly "internal" nor "external", where relations become progressively more single-stranded and contractual in nature.

The second (lineage/community) circle is significant in a number of ways. It broadly defines the area within which people attend and assist with ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, and often has its own common place of worship; although certain forms of ritual observance, including eid prayers, or those revolving around the *dighi* (see *chapter 4*), or the Hindu Mission (see *chapter 5*), may extend more widely. It is the lowest level at which a *salish* may sit in judgement over disputes and other legal matters, with higher bodies running up to Union level where resolution cannot be achieved lower down (see *chapter 8*).

In economic terms, it has traditionally tended to mark the boundary around the area in which small and short-term tiding over loans of food and cash may be made without any expectation of interest, although it is now increasingly likely that interest will be exacted on cash loans. It also delineates the space within which reciprocal labour exchanges may take place, although these are generally less frequent than those occurring between close kin, and individual wage labour or labour gang contracts now start to dominate - a tendency that has grown even stronger as market based relations have progressively asserted themselves at the expense of an earlier, and in some respects more mutualistic social order.

Fig. 6.4: The boundaries of internal social capital

	Household	Other Siblings	Lineage and community	Village And Union	Beyond Union
Internal social capital	Within			Marginal	Beyond
Land and property	Collectively owned	Commercially transacted			
Ceremonies	Collectively celebrated				
Salish		Practiced			
Petty commodities		Reciprocal exchange			
Labour	Pooled	Reciprocal exchange High	Lower		
				Wage payment or contract	
Loans		No interest	Interest charged		
Land transactions		Share-crop and mortgage			
		Rent and purchase			
Internal social capital	Within			Marginal	Beyond

Finally, a similar trend may be observed in the case of land, with share-cropping - which requires both parties to trust each other with regard to the disposition of the final output and therefore tends to take place within the internal social capital zone – being increasingly displaced by cash arrangements, where this consideration does not apply. Further evidence to this effect would be provided by a shortening in the average duration of those share-cropping arrangements that remained, but there was insufficient time to determine whether this was actually the case in the study communities. At the same time, however, there may also be an increase in the proportion of land under mortgage, which again requires trust and is thus at least semi-internal, where simple land sales may, at least in principle, be transacted between parties who hardly know each other.

From the perspective of the individual household from the poorer end of the economic spectrum much, in practice, is likely to depend on the nature of the individual relationship enjoyed with the relatively wealthy minority with land surplus to their own subsistence requirements. A close, or at least an identifiable kinship connection may help to secure access to employment or land, but other factors, such as perceived aptitude to perform a task and command of a certain minimum level of resources are also likely to enter into the equation. Access to other forms of social capital, for example to play some part in salish or local committees, may, in turn, rest upon the access to land that a relationship with the local influentials may afford (see *box 6.3*).

Box 6.3: The interaction of physical, financial and social capital and the implications for vulnerability

A landless man eked out a bare but relatively reliable and predictable livelihood for his household through agricultural labour. His status in the para where he lived was very low and he was excluded from the meetings at which decisions were made about maintaining the *kacca* road and other community infrastructure. In an attempt to improve his position, he borrowed a small amount of money from a wealthier neighbour that he then used to rent a plot of land for a season. As an operator of land his status immediately improved and he was now able to take part in meetings and offer his opinion. But whilst enabling him in this way to augment his store of social capital, the loan he had taken also increased his vulnerability to adverse weather conditions. Subsequently, when the crop he was cultivating failed, he was unable to repay. He cannot now raise another loan and has thus been forced to revert to labouring, but with the additional burden of the debt he still has to pay off. If he ultimately fails to do this, his only option will be to escape his creditor by leaving the area altogether. In the process, he would then have to abandon most of the small store of social capital he still retains.

Example provided by Livelihoods Monitoring Project

6.4.3 Accessing External Social Capital

Government resources

The same individuals who control the dominant share of internal resources and tend to sit on the bench of the *salish* have a third important function as gate-keepers to the external resources flowing from official agencies. It is they, in other words, who mediate access to this important source of external social capital either directly, or through their own connections to higher levels in the supply chain (represented for example by the Union Council Chairman). This position may be exploited to their own direct and immediate material advantage. Alternatively it may be deployed to divert resources to their own kin or associates in order to repay debts of various kinds, or to secure their future support. This does not mean that nothing is left for the poor and “un-connected”. We saw, for example, how a landless household from the Hindu para of the type for which the facility was intended, was able to enjoy the benefits of a VGD card without any particular relationship to the group of influentials. It does, however, tend to mean that this category as a whole enjoys substantially less than their proper share. This is less likely to happen with resources flowing from NGOs, where influentials are largely by-passed, although those most closely associated with them at community level, who typically come from the largest and most powerful lineages, can sometimes draw off rather more than might ideally be the case.

NGOs and Social Capital Building

NGOs often see their interventions as short term measures that will help poor group members forge mutual linkages and achieve sustainable reductions in their dependence upon more powerful patrons. This approximates to what GO-IF has been attempting, but probably over-estimates the degree to which new social capital can be generated, and former (partially exploitative) relations displaced within a limited period of time. Members themselves typically have a different perspective. They have no great expectations regarding the enduring support they may receive from other participants, but are happy to take part in the group as a means of forming a relationship (which they hope will endure) with the external social capital the NGO represents.

Organisations like Proshika, recognise that a longer period of support is required, and additionally seeks to build a series of federal structures which enable members to mobilise and pursue their interests in wider forums up to Upazilla level (and sometimes beyond). This, in effect, begins to build a new form of external social capital umbrella and improves the prospect of eventual dis-engagement from earlier sets of vertically structured and exploitative relations upon which the poor depended for their survival.

The Private Sector

But it is perhaps in the private sector that it is easiest for the relatively poorly connected to access, and hence in a sense internalise, external capital. The poor farmer, for example, may be able to enter into an arrangement based on mutual trust with a trader at the local market whereby seed of good quality will be supplied on credit at the start of the season, and then repaid at harvest time. Credit may also be obtained for other capital items such as rickshaws (as in the landless case) or for important equipment like handpumps (*see chapter 7*). This, is not, however, to say that the desired access will always be easy or available on favourable terms. The poorer a household is, the more difficult it becomes to secure a credit facility.

What, in conclusion, does all this say about social capital? Firstly, it appears in many different forms that may often, but by no means always complement one another. Secondly, whilst it may be possible to identify certain general tendencies regarding its distribution among different types of household, there is a good deal of variability in the way in which these work their way out in actual situations on the ground. From this it follows, thirdly, that whilst certain categories of actor (the poor, women, the minorities) find themselves more heavily constrained than others, everyone retains some freedom for manoeuvre or individual agency. Identifying these spaces and determining how they may be sustainably extended should be central to the agenda of any agency that seeks to intervene on their behalf.

PART III: KEY SECTORS

7. ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION

This chapter asks who has access to clean drinking water and good sanitation and what might be done to extend the range of people currently enjoying these rights. A context for what follows is provided through a discussion of how rural people themselves have traditionally viewed these matters, the practices they have followed, and the consequences arising. Next, the process whereby new ideas and technologies have been introduced is re-constructed. The implications for the study communities and rural areas more generally are then explored, and the elements of a possible future CARE approach outlined.

The contextual analysis draws heavily on BRAC (1984) and Unnayan Shamannay Vol. I (2001, p109-116). The evolution of the water and sanitation (WATSAN) sector at the national level has been re-constructed from key informant interviews with Dr. Mushtaque Chowdhury of BRAC and Dr. Ziya Uddin from CARE's, and from a range of secondary sources, including: Ahmed and Rahman (2001); Government of Bangladesh; Local Government Division (1998); Saddeque (1999). Surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore how supply is now organised at the local level. The para data derives from card based and mini-surveys developed out of the initial wealth ranking exercise, supplemented by focus group discussions conducted with local women.

7.1 Water and Sanitation from a Rural Perspective

The interventions to be considered are underpinned by western scientific notions originating from germ theory, and may be characterised as an "asepsis" approach. The problem, as defined from this point of view, is to prevent pathogens entering the human body by excluding them from the environment. In practise this means ensuring that faecal matter must be isolated and/or treated, and that the water consumed is not contaminated.

Germ theory, relying as it does on a capacity for microscopic observation, lies beyond the experience of rural people. Their traditional perceptions and practices have been shaped by a world view based on notions of cleanliness, and rooted in more fundamental moral concepts of purity and impurity. This is seen most graphically in the ablutions performed before Muslim prayers and in the Hindu practice of ritual bathing (that ideally takes place in the holy waters of the Ganges).

From this perspective, there has been no need for excreta to be entirely isolated from the human environment. It was sufficient that defecation should be performed beyond the zone of purity that people sought to maintain around their residences; although the need for water, considerations of privacy, and respect for the zones of others, would also play their part in determining exactly where it took place. With regard to water - whether used for drinking, cooking, cleaning of utensils and clothing or bathing - the primary consideration was that it should *appear* clean, although taste was also a factor where it was directly consumed.

Until the 1960s, most domestic water was drawn from ponds, rivers or other readily accessible surface sources, and although sometimes muddy in appearance, was otherwise regarded as satisfactory. The possibility of a connection between the sanitary practices pursued, the sources from which water was obtained, and ill health was at best only dimly perceived, and as a consequence, diarrhoeal diseases,

dysentery, typhoid cholera and hepatitis presented an ever present threat. Some attempts were, however, made to maintain water quality in ponds by restricting animal bathing and clothes washing, and by not using the same ponds for drinking water and fish culture.

7.2 Key Interventions

7.2.1 Early Government Programmes

Official attempts to address these issues may be traced back at least 70 years. The most important development to date has involved the tapping of groundwater for drinking purposes.

By far the greater part of the country sits on extensive aquifers that are re-charged each summer, and most of these are shallow (i.e. between 1 and 100 metres in depth) and hence relatively accessible. The absence of oxygen means that water from these sources are free of pathogens, whilst deposits of sand, through which the water must pass, serve to filter out other impurities.

Working in conjunction with UNICEF and other agencies, the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), which has an office in each Upazilla, has promoted the use of pumpsets. These can draw water from a depth of up to 7 metres and comprise No.6 a handpumps, a filter, and a length of piping, which in earlier years was made of metal but is now plastic. All components are now manufactured in Bangladesh, mainly by private sector enterprises operating at national and regional level. Cost varies according to the quality of pump and the number of pipes required, but is typically of the order of 1,200 tk. (see box 7.1 for more details). Although there have been complaints that the pump water was less palatable than traditional sources and contains iron which discolours food prepared in it, the convenience of the pump, and the growing awareness of its health advantages, mean that most people, given the opportunity, have been happy to use it.

The first generation of sets were supposed to be supplied and installed free of charge, although unofficial "installation charges" may have been levied by the Upazilla officials responsible, who may also have misappropriated pipes and other materials. UP committees were given the initial power to decide how sets should be distributed at the local level, whilst more informally constituted bodies, generally comprising the members of village school and temple committees, would often take the final decision about where they would be sited.

Pumps were supposed to be located in public places where large numbers of people could access them, but, in practice, they tended to end up in the bari of well-connected individuals, who would then treat them *de facto* as their own private property. The fact that the pumps formally remained public property was, however, significant, since this meant that people were unwilling to maintain them by themselves, and this led to a situation where many fell into disrepair. For these and related reasons, it was eventually to become apparent that the public sector, by itself, was never going to be able to come close to satisfying existing needs.

Its efforts in the area of sanitation, where the pay-offs of adoption were much less readily perceptible, were to fall even further short of what was ideally required. The most widely promoted model here was the slab set above a pit lined with three concrete rings. This currently costs 400 – 800 tk. installed, (although superior versions, incorporating a concrete floor, brick or concrete walls and a septic tank,

might require as much as 12,000 tk.) – an investment which most households have still not been prepared to make.

A final difficulty, affecting both drinking water and sanitation initiatives in the public sector, lay in the division of responsibility for technical input supply and motivation, and in the fact that motivation work was divided between so many different Ministries.

7.2.2 The Growing Involvement of Other Actors

Due in part by these shortcomings, and in part to the more general economic liberalisation taking place from the 1980s onwards, recent years have seen a growing involvement of other agencies in the sector. Official policy is now:

“to ensure the availability of water to all elements of ... society, including the poor and the underprivileged, and to take into account the particular needs of women and children”

(GoB 1998, Objectives [section 3])

In order to achieve this, it has been recognised that a broader approach must be employed (GoB p416), involving greater focus on behavioural change; cost sharing; and attempts to promote sustainability through user participation in planning, implementation and management.

As a result, the number of handtubewells has increased rapidly. 4-5 mn. sets are presently in use, of which probably no more than 25% have been supplied through official channels, and access (of a kind) is now almost universal in most parts of the country. For the cultural reasons discussed earlier and further elaborated below, sanitation has lagged a good way behind, although uptake of sanitary latrines has increased sharply of late and nationally now hovers around the 40% mark (Ahmed and Rahman 2001, p84). The parts played by different actors in bringing about this state of affairs, may now be explored, using the example of the Upazilla and the Union on which our own study focussed.

In the public sector, DPHE has some retained responsibility for the technical aspects of service delivery, although this is now run as an independent operation, where formerly it was under the direct control of the Thana engineer. In the study Upazilla, which is probably typical, a sub-assistant engineer is in charge and is supported by a team of five mechanics and a handful of office and auxiliary staff. In addition, there are three masons and three labourers who are employed on a casual basis under a development project.

The unit provides a small number of handpumps and a handful of tara pumps, which are installed at a subsidised rate (see *table 7.1*). It also offers one days training in maintenance for 10 men and 10 women for each pump supplied. In addition, some users are given a free wrench and a set of spare parts. More emphasis is, however, now placed on latrines. These are again subsidised, and an attempt is made to target poorer households, with some motivation work accompanying the technical aspects of delivery.

At the same time, a few NGOs have become involved, each seeking in slightly different ways to improve access by the poorer households who have largely been by-passed by official channels.

Caritas is the most important, and supplies a few pumps manufactured in its own factory. These were formerly given free, but the full cost is now levied, although group members are allowed to pay in instalments. The agency is also involved in promoting and supplying latrines.

Table 7.1: Estimated supply of pumps and sanitary latrines 2001 in Upazilla

	No. sold	%	Cost (tk)	Price (tk)	Subsidy (%)
Handpumps					
DPHE [a]	20	4	1000	1200	17
Caritas [b]	?	?	1200	1200	-
Private [c]	500	96	1220	1220	0
Total	520	100			
Latrines					
DPHE	328	31	400	341	15
NGOs					
- Caritas	107		650	300	54
- PTS	15		410	310	24
<i>Sub-total</i>	122	11			
Private [c]	500	47	800	800	0
Total	1062	100			

[a] Previously there was no charge at all. Installation is still provided free over and above the subsidy on parts indicated here. In addition, 5 tara pumps were supplied.

[b] Numbers not known but believed to be small

[c] Assumes 5 producers operating at same level as case study informant

promoting and supplying latrines.

In principle, the fact that technical and motivation work are combined within the same organisation would appear to offer an advantage over the public sector supplier, but considerable resistance has still been encountered, and a substantial element of subsidy has therefore been retained.

PTS is also marginally involved in latrine supply and offers a similar subsidy. Finally, BRAC

has provided support by training producers in technical and business skills and by offering credit to help them set up, whilst awareness raising activities in schools (see *next section*) and the provision of credit to purchasers have both helped to strengthen demand. Over and above the specific services they provide, NGOs now also sit on the Union committee that decides upon the allocation of public pumps and latrines.

The overall contribution of NGOs has, however, remained fairly modest in this area at least, and the private sector has played a much more prominent part. This is especially the case with pump supply, where it has emerged as the clear leader. Five or six businesses operate out of the Upazilla and between them probably now account for the majority of pumps supplied locally. An impression of how they operate can be formed from the case study presented in box 7.1. The private sector plays its part in latrine supply as well, but largely as a result of the large subsidies that competitors continue to offer, its role to date has been much less significant.

7.3 Access to Facilities at Community Level

7.3.1 Drinking Water

The pattern observed in the two study para reflects the situation obtaining more generally in the Upazilla as a whole, with most users depending upon privately procured and operated handpumps. The only exceptions are provided by two households that continue to use wells, and by a handful of government supplied handpumps – which have now, to all practical intents and purposes, become the property of the households where they are located.

Box 7.1: An entrepreneur supplying pumps and sanitary latrines

Hossain has a shop in the main bazaar near the Upazilla offices. He sells handpumps and latrines, and also deals in galvanised iron, cement, rods and tin. He supplies customers from throughout the upazilla in competition with 4-5 other similar enterprises.

Drinking water

He purchases pumps from companies based in Dhaka, Bogra and Rangpur, all of whom deliver directly to his store. Perhaps 1% are defective. Some suppliers are willing to take these back, but others are not. He takes no responsibility for installing the sets. This work is carried out by a small number of independent operators who live nearby.

The most basic pumps are sold for 240 tk and the best quality for 900 tk. Plastic pipes, each of which are 15' long, retail at 100 tk.. At least three are required with each set, with the number sometimes rising to eight, according to the depth of the water table. Users also require a filter, which costs a further 100 tk. (or 80 if they pay cash). The total cost of an average set would therefore be approximately 1220 tk.

With a profit margin of 4% and some 300 sets sold each year, this part of the business in principle yields a net income of 14,640 tk. The actual figure is somewhat lower since poorer customers, who can only afford to buy on credit, sometimes fail to repay on time. The typical arrangement is 40% down, with the remainder to be repaid at the next harvest.

Hossain has attended two training sessions run by the German agency International Development Enterprises (IDE), each of which lasted for a day. The topics covered included: advice on who were the most reliable suppliers; standard tubewell fitting, use and repair; treadle pumps; what to do when water tables fell; and arsenic testing.

Sanitation

Hossain manufactures his own sanitary ware. He employs a technician at 100 tk/day and a labourer at 50 tk./day when weather conditions are suitable and there is sufficient demand. Sets, comprising a single slab and three rings, retail for 800 tk. 6 sets can typically be produced in a single day and his annual production runs to about 100. Annual turnover would therefore be approximately 80,000 tk. yielding a profit of 4% or 3,200 tk..

Finances

In recent years, he has taken two bank loans to help finance his business. The first, in 1998, was for 150,000 tk. from the Sonali Bank, and in 2000 he borrowed a further 80,000 tk. from the Janata Bank. Both attracted an interest rate of 16% and had to be repaid after one year.

Whilst the relationship is not perfect, table 7.2 shows that ownership or control of a source providing easy and direct access to safe drinking water is very closely correlated with economic status. All big farmer households, and more than 70% of all middle households, have their own facilities, whilst the great majority of landless and marginal households are left without direct access.

Households with their own pumps feel some obligation to allow access to others. Sometimes such arrangements work amicably and well, but more frequently, there is a tendency for difficulties to arise. On rainy days it may prove hard to carry water across muddy and slippery ground from somebody else's house. Most people close their gates at night and do not allow anybody else in after they have done so, which means that water can only be obtained during the hours of daylight. Priority must be given to members of the owner's household, which further restricts ease of access by others. Owners may impose further conditions and restrictions upon the way in which the pump is used and tend to blame the other user for any breakdowns that

may occur. Finally, when there is a breakdown, repairs are conducted at the owner's convenience with the other user having no control over the period of time for which their normal source is not available. Over and above all of the other difficulties, non-owner users are placed in a position of obligation towards owners that may leave them open to exploitation, or otherwise restrict their freedom of manoeuvre.

Table 7.2: Households with access to different sources of drinking water (%)						
	Big	Medium	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Hindu para						
Private tubewell	100	45	42	36		40
Government tubewell		18	3			5
NGO tubewell		9				2
Ring well			3			2
Use other people's		27	52	64	100	52
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Muslim para						
Private tubewell	75	70	78		6	49
Government tubewell	13					2
Govt & private t'well	13					2
Use other people's		30	22	100	94	47
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Not all totals may add up to 100% due to rounding</i>						

Women, who invariably carry the major responsibility for drawing and carrying water, suffer to a disproportionate degree where problems arise, and considerations of modesty mean that having to use somebody else's pump to bathe is a particular problem. The fact that they have less influence than their husbands over how money is spent means that investing in a pump tends to enjoy lower priority than might otherwise be the case.

7.3.2 Sanitary Latrines

Following the national pattern reported earlier, the overall level of access to sanitary latrines is much lower (see table 7.3). Latrines do not meet a traditional and perceived need or provide the same degree of direct convenience as pumps. Whilst not discounting the messages about the benefits of good sanitation that government and others have been spreading, this makes people less inclined to spend money on them, even though the amounts involved are substantially less. In addition, those who do have latrines are much less likely to let others use them than is the case with pumps.

This, however, does not explain why levels of uptake have been much higher in the Muslim para, where 25% of households have installed their own facilities, than in the Hindu para, where the corresponding figure is only 5%. To some extent this reflects the fact that the Muslims are a little richer and that better off people are more likely to adopt than their poorer counterparts, but when adoption levels are compared within individual classes a considerable gap still remains.

When asked to account for the divergence, local people offered several explanations. In the first place, it appeared that Hindus were less inclined to adopt because women

were allowed greater mobility, making it easier and less embarrassing for them to defecate outside the homestead. Even if convinced of the value of a latrine, Hindu women were, in other words, less inclined to pressure their husbands to buy one than their Muslim counterparts. Secondly, there was a BRAC school in the Muslim village where children had been taught about the value of latrines, and had apparently then succeeded in persuading to their parents in a number of cases. Thirdly, once a significant proportion of households had adopted, it was reported that there had been a tendency for others to feel some pressure to follow, for fear of being thought backward or unsophisticated, causing most of those with the resources to adopt to go ahead and do so. A similar critical threshold appeared not to have been crossed in the Hindu case.

Table 7.3: Percentage of households with different types of latrine							
		Big	Medium	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Hindu para							
Pukka [a]		50					2
Ring Slab [b]			9	3			3
Kacca [c]				3			2
None		50	91	94	100	100	93
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100
Muslim para							
Pukka [a]		38	20	6			11
Ring Slab [b]		38	40	6			14
Kacca [c]				6			2
None		25	40	83	100	100	74
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100
[a] As for [b] but with concrete floor, brick, concrete wall and (possibly) septic tank							
[b] Usually 2-3 underground concrete rings plus surface slab with foot rests and hole							
[c] Leaf walls or jute mat surround hole in ground							
<i>Not all totals may add up to 100% due to rounding</i>							

7.4 What CARE Could Do

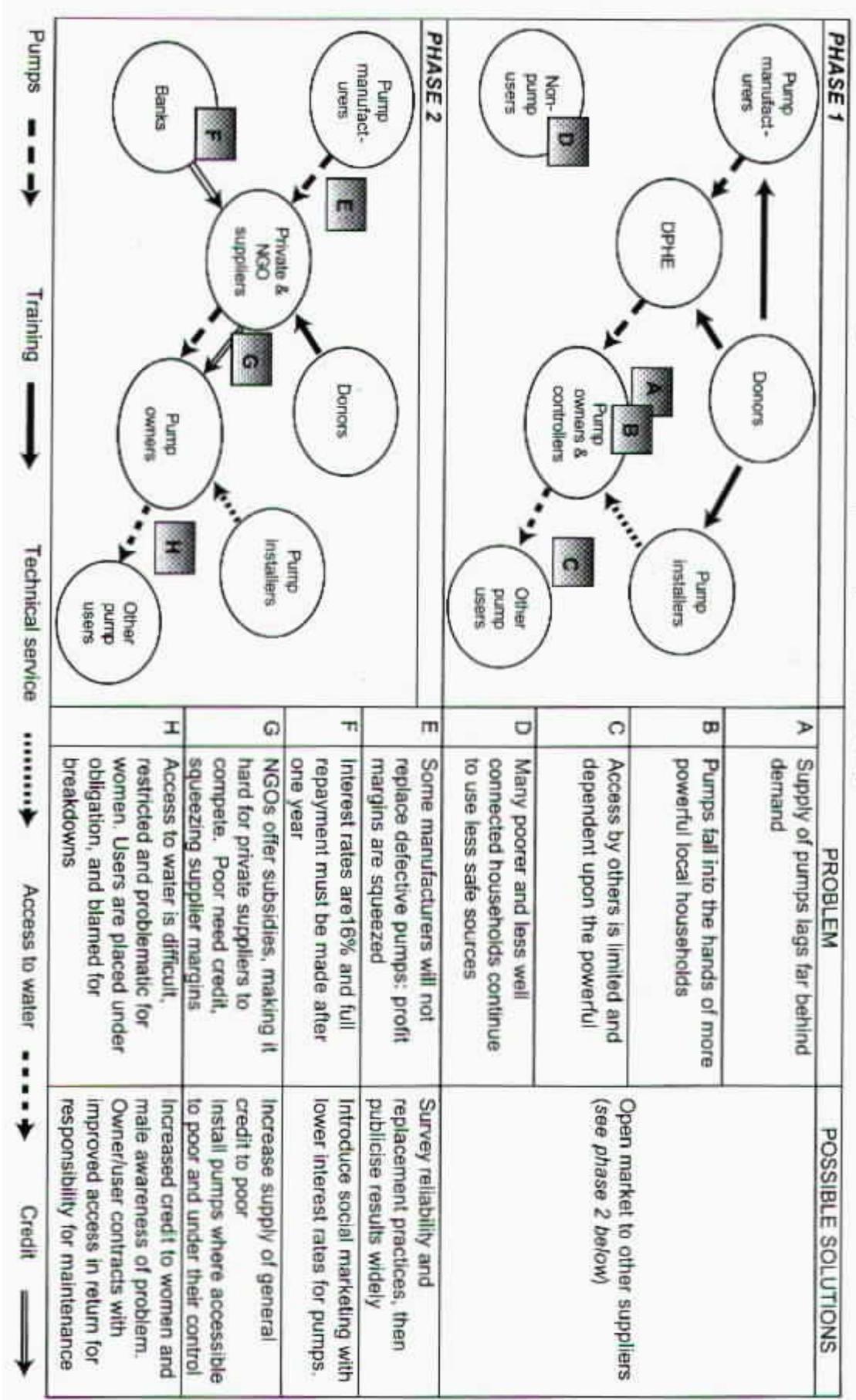
To take stock, in the case of drinking water the key problems are the expense of the facility in relation to the capacity of poor people to pay, and the unfavourable terms on which access is thus available to them. This, in turn is partially linked to bottlenecks further up the supply chain, although these are much less serious than hitherto. With latrines, financial constraints also arise, and are re-enforced by traditional views and practices that lead people to attach lower priority to adoption.

A number of options would seem to be open to GO-IF if it decides to intervene. An exercise conducted with staff at the final national workshop helped to identify what some of these might be in relation to drinking water, and is summarised in figure 7.1. Taking this as a foundation it might, in principle, be possible:

- to reduce costs to retailers, and hence prices to buyers, by gathering and summarising, in an accessible form, information on the quality of the pumpsets supplied by manufacturers and of their back-up services

- to reduce costs and improve pump performance by providing similar information at local level about pump retailers to prospective purchasers
- to offer soft loans to retailers, official provision for which already exists

Fig. 7.1: Access to drinking water (an example of a problem flow chart)



to organise poor people to lobby for and improve access to pumps supplied through official channels

- to increase the supply of subsidised pumps to poorer households through NGOs and official sources, although this might have an adverse effect on private sector suppliers and ultimately undermine sustainability
- to increase the supply of credit offered by entrepreneurs, NGOs or government to poorer households, and especially to poorer women, so as to make it easier for them to afford pumps
- to pilot and institutionalise contractual arrangements between pump owners and users, where the latter were offered improved access in return for the provision of maintenance services
- to experiment with and introduce alternative technologies, such as rainwater harvesting, which could circumvent some of the difficulties currently encountered with handpumps.

Similar options exist with regard to sanitary latrines, where in addition, efforts would need to be made to understand local attitudes more clearly and then to devise appropriate messages encouraging adoption. In both cases, further exercises would need to be carried out with staff and potential adopters to assess the feasibility and likely impact of the various possibilities, to select the most promising possibilities, and to see how they might be packaged together in an overall approach.

7.5 The Wider National Picture: a Post-script

This concludes the main part of the discussion, but before proceeding, it is important to recognise that conditions in the north-west, where GO-IF currently operates, differ in certain significant respects from those obtaining in other parts of the country. In particular, these areas enjoy three benefits that are not always present elsewhere. Firstly they have near universal access to shallow aquifers. Secondly, they have not yet encountered the problem of draw-down, where competition from far more powerful irrigation pumps leads to handpumps drying up during the winter season. Thirdly, the proportion of pumps where the water contains arsenic concentrations that exceed safety levels is, by national standards, extremely low.

Where these favourable conditions do not exist, people are often obliged to turn to more powerful tara pumps. These can extract water from greater depths that remain unaffected by drawdown or arsenic contamination, but cost perhaps 5-6 times as much as the No.6 handpumps.

Although donors have made a lot of resources available to deal with the arsenic problem in particular, government has so far maintained a near monopoly of supply. The participation of major NGOs has been blocked, and only a few of their smaller counterparts, with very limited delivery capacity, have been allowed to take part. The available supply thus fails to address the level of need and demand, in turn creating easy opportunities for rent seeking behaviour by officials. This situation also serves to re-create the circumstances encountered earlier with handpumps, where a small number of powerful people at the local level gain control of a scarce and important resource.

Where arsenic is a problem, ordinary people may simply opt to go on drinking the contaminated water. In the case of draw-down, they may be obliged to go to the owner of a shallow or deep tubewell for their water. Apart from the time they must take and the inconvenience involved, users will then be expected to provide an equivalent amount of water from a surface source in compensation, thus running the risk of contaminating the vessel in which the water drawn will subsequently be

carried. The only alternative is to place themselves in a position of dependence upon the controller of the tara pump, and subject themselves to an intensified version of the types of difficulties noted earlier in relation to the users of other people's handpumps.

Were GO-IF to start operating beyond the north-west, or if the underlying difficulties noted here were starting to appear in its current area, then a number of options might be explored. Clearly these might include lobbying to break the current monopoly. Attempts might also be made to address the problem of draw-down by pressing for the re-instatement of suspended legislation from the mid-1980s which sought to regulate the spacing of irrigation pumps and hence their capacity to lower the water table. The possibility of alternative technologies could again be considered. Finally, efforts could be made to help people organise and negotiate arrangements for access in ways that were consistent with local circumstances and needs.

8. LAW AND ORDER

This chapter reviews law and order, an issue that is clearly central both to rights and to questions of poverty alleviation and development more generally.

The first section (drawing mainly on Centre for Policy Dialogue 2001, p5; Kamal Siddiqui 2000, p140-153; Siddiqui 1995, p279-286; World Bank 2000 p15-17) deals with the formal judiciary and the more informal local level processes of the *salish*. The second (*with key sources indicated in brackets*) considers the police and auxiliary law enforcement agencies (Kamal Siddiqui 1996, p145-8; Kaniz Siddique 2001, p22-3, 27-9; World Bank 2000, p17-19) and how corruption affects the overall administration of justice at the local level. Boxed case studies from our own research are then used to illustrate and draw together some of the general points arising in the earlier account. These, in turn, pave the way for a concluding discussion of how ordinary rural people perceive issues of rights and justice (BRAC 1983, p74-80; BRAC 1995) and what might be done to make things better from their point of view (Kamal Siddiqui 2000, World Bank 2000 *op cit*).

8.1 The Judiciary

The overall shape of the judicial system - with its four different levels, the specialist tasks assigned to each, and the processes of appeal whereby cases from below are referred upwards or laterally for re-examination - is laid out in Figure 8.1, which should be largely self-explanatory. The way the system has evolved over time is outlined in Figure 8.2.

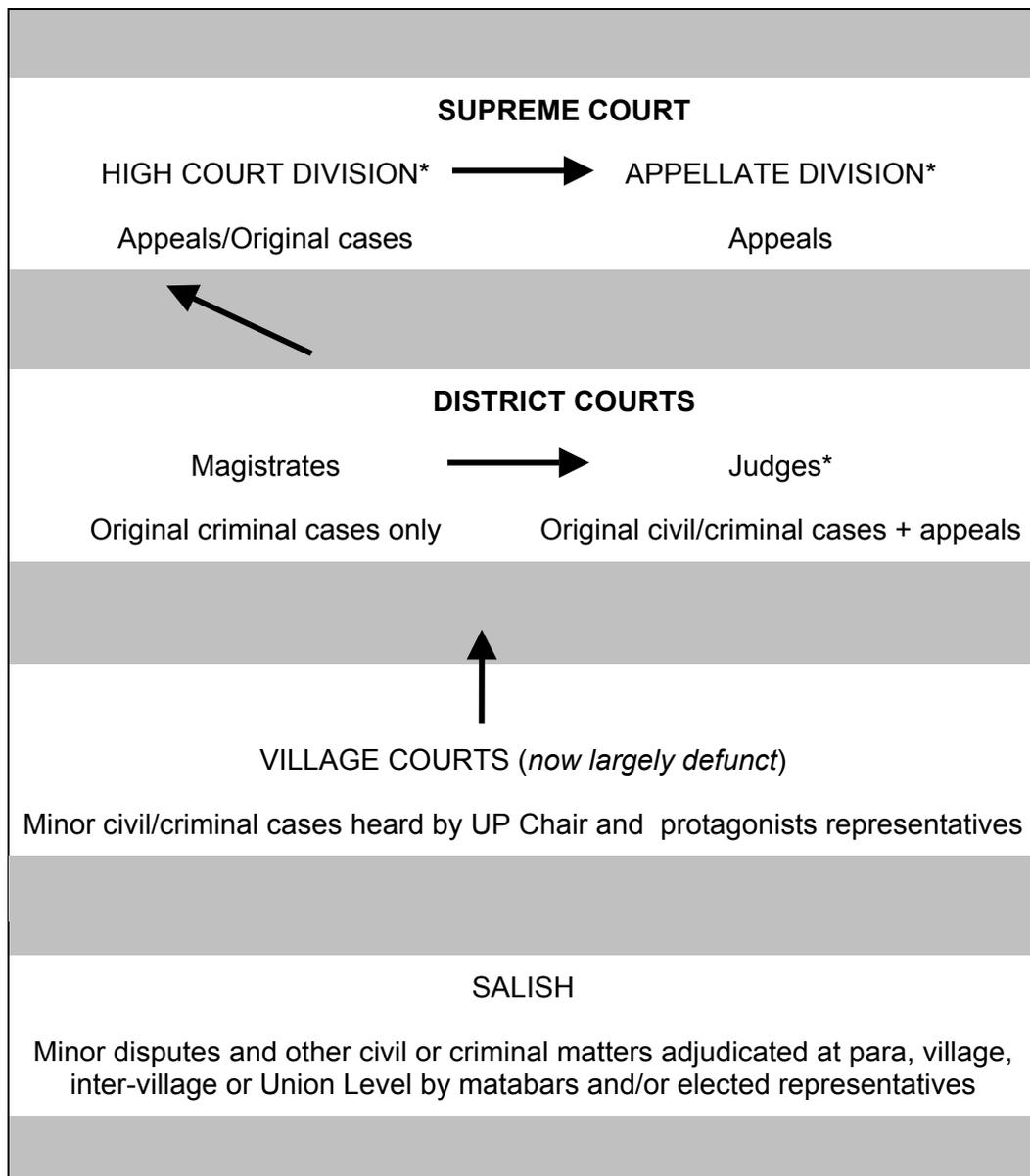
8.1.1 District Courts

The Supreme Court, comprising the High Court and the Court of Appeal, sits at the apex and continues to command widespread support, but following decades of neglect, courts at District level exhibit major shortcomings and are held in low regard. A number of difficulties stand out.

In the first place, although there is constitutional provision for the separation of executive and judiciary, this is yet to be implemented in practice, and the old colonial system, which sought to maintain control by retaining these functions under the executive, remains in place. An antiquated administrative structure makes it difficult for the judiciary to plan its own affairs, and it does not prepare its own budget, the task instead being performed by the Ministry of Law. Judicial appointments fall within the civil service, with recruitment done through tests conducted by the Public Service Commission. Over and above this, certain constitutional provisions require collaboration between the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and the Supreme Court with regard to the personnel management of judges. Interference of the executive here hampers judicial independence, and successive governments have meddled more generally with the affairs of the judiciary to their own ends, seriously eroding public confidence in the process.

Apart from adjudicating cases, judges have to perform many administrative functions, and together with other factors, this contributes to serious delays. On average, a civil case takes five years from filing a case to getting a hearing at a District Court, and waits of 15-20 years are not unheard of. In principle, civil procedural rules set limits for each stage of a trial, but these are generally flouted. 84,609 cases remained unresolved in the High Court and 429,810 in the subordinate courts at end of 1997, and with clear up rates running at only 80% of the annual addition, backlogs continue to grow.

Fig 8.1: The judicial system



*Judges appointed by President on advice of PM and Minister of Law

→ Course of appeals process

Judges salaries range from 5000 tk. a month for an assistant, to 20,000 tk. for the Chief Justice, with housing and other benefits adding a further 50% to the package. In combination with the expectation of serious delays, such low levels of remuneration provide a fertile breeding ground for corrupt practices, and files can be made to appear and disappear at the whim of officials.

Fig. 8.2: Local law and order timeline

Regime	Year	Event
Colonial	C19	Petty disputes relating mainly to social matters are resolved through neighbourhood salish. In the earlier period, land related and inter-neighbourhood or village disputes are dealt with by Zamindars or their agents, but this practice gradually withers away as the formal court system starts to assume greater importance.
	1870	The Chowkidari Panchayet Act empowers magistrates to appoint a 5 person council at Union level to maintain law and order with the assistance of chowkidars, and to collect tax to pay their salaries.
	1885	The Bengal Local Self-Government Act introduces tiers of local government at District, local Sub-Division and Union levels, but local police remain under the Chowkhidari Panchayet.
	1919	The Village Self-Government Act amalgamates the two Union bodies to form Boards. These are required to maintain a number of chowkidars and dafadars with powers of arrest and responsibility to report suspicious people to the police station. The Board President is authorised to adjudicate minor disputes and to try petty civil and criminal cases.
Pakistan	1948	Ansars (lit. helpers) are formed to assist the police in maintaining law and order, participate in civic action projects in rural areas, and support the army in time of war
	1959	Most senior police posts are held by officers from the Western wing of the country. The Basic Democracies Order introduces a 4 tier system with Union, Thana, District and Divisional Councils. At Union level existing law, order and judicial functions are retained. Right to try petty cases is re-affirmed by the Conciliation Courts Ordinance (CCO), and responsibility for the Muslim Family Law Ordinance is added, together with a number of other new functions.
Mujib	1972	The Union Council is renamed Union Panchayet, and then Union Parishad, but the previous system remains in place. The ansars are suspected of disloyalty and run down.
Zia	1976	The Local Government Ordinance proposes a 3 tier – district, thana and union – structure. This includes a provision for government to establish a police force in rural areas with rules governing appointment, training, discipline and terms and conditions of service. The ansars are revived, designated a People’s Defence Force and placed under the direction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. A new Village Defence Party (VDP) is formed to carry out routine village security duties in addition to its primary duty of promoting rural improvement projects such as digging canals.
	1976	The CCO is repealed. Another Ordinance establishes Village Courts - comprising UP Chairman, two other members, and one representative of each party to the dispute - with power to try petty civil and criminal cases and impose fines of up to 5000 tk, but not to imprison.
Ershad	1983	The Upazilla system is introduced followed by Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance 1983 but little is changed from 1976.
Khaleda	1993	With the abolition of the Upazilla system, sub-district magistrates courts are closed, making the district the lowest level of the formal judicial system.

A 1996 Transparency International survey found that 89% of respondents agreed that without money or influence it was almost impossible to get quick and fair judgements, whilst 71% of those directly involved in cases admitted making illegal payments to court officials, and 16% acknowledged that they had bribed their opponents’ lawyers. These figures are consistent with Kaniz Siddique’s findings.

Further details on the number and types of people affected and the average costs involved – that are prohibitive for the poorer household - appear in table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Corruption and related costs from going to court in in last year

	Monthly income group			Overall
	< 1000 tk	1-3000 tk	> 3000 tk	
Households in survey	595	1981	541	3117
%	19.1	63.6	17.4	100.0
Households going to court [a]	21	125	66	212
as % of all households	3.5	6.3	12.2	6.8
Households paying bribes	14	78	47	139
as % of those going to court	66.7	62.4	71.2	65.6
Amount paid in bribes (tk)	48014	302331	359167	709512
average size of bribe (tk)	3430	3876	7642	5104

[a] Either to pursue a case or defend a case opened against them

Source: Kaneez Siddique 2001 p22-3

8.1.2 More Local Courts

Deficiencies at the District Level have prompted periodic reforms designed to make the formal justice system more accessible. Local Magistrates Courts were established as a part of the Upazilla system in 1983, but faced considerable resistance from the legal establishment, and were finally abandoned alongside devolved local government institutions in the early 1990's. There has also been provision for Village Courts (*Gram Adalat*), although these actually sit at Union level.

The present system here originated in the repeal of the previous Conciliation Courts Ordinance in 1976 and its replacement by the Village Courts Ordinance. This established a bench that could sit in judgement on both civil and criminal matters of a relatively petty nature and consisted of the Union Council Chairman, plus two representatives of each of the parties involved, one of whom had to be a UP member. The underlying intention was not so much to punish any wrong doer as to allow affected parties to arrive at amicable solutions to any issues that might arise, but fines of up to 5000 tk. could be imposed where necessary.

In principle this seemed sensible, but in practice a number of difficulties have been encountered:

- The concept was never made very clear to Council representatives and functionaries or to the population at large, with key documents never being translated from the original English.
- The court had insufficient power to summon the accused or enforce verdicts.
- Proceedings were characterised by corruption or undermined by a lack of co-operation between board members.
- UP Chairmen were afraid of losing popularity by imposing financial penalties. The decisions arrived at could always be challenged in a higher court.

Ultimately, for all of these reasons, the Village Courts have virtually ceased to function and now play little significant role.

8.1.3 Informal Salish

This has left the administration of justice at the local level almost entirely in the hands of traditional salish that offer informal adjudication of petty civil and criminal disputes by a group of influential people. Formerly these would always have been unelected faction and lineage heads (matbars), but as noted in Chapter 4, there is now a tendency for the role to be appropriated by local government representatives, although in practise these are often the same people. By contrast with the formal courts, the salish are voluntary, controlled by the parties themselves, and designed to arrive at decisions quickly and at minimal cost. Typically the process will begin with the salikdars interrogating the disputants to determine the facts. Solutions are then proposed and the views of those concerned sought before a final decision is offered. Ideally, this should lead to conciliation between the conflicting parties. Although land is the most common source of disputes, some of which are addressed here (see *box8.2*), much salish business revolves around matters of a domestic or sexual nature. Typically these might concern dowry, divorce, or the resolution of issues arising in relation to extra-marital or other illicit male/female relationships.

Salish may operate at different levels. Most commonly they will be convened within the immediate neighbourhood. Larger issues may, however, go to the village, although it has been reported from different sources that entrenched factionalism can often lead to a breakdown of the institution here. There may also sometimes be inter-village salish, and a proportion are held at the level of the union itself, where they act as an informal alternative to the now largely defunct village court. As noted earlier, in the Union where we worked, it was reported that there were about 70 salish each month, of which perhaps 10 would be dealt with at Union level with the Chairman in charge, and with most of the remainder sitting in individual neighbourhoods.

Salish tend, however, to exhibit a number of limitations, although the precise degree to which these arise can differ from one place to another. Bench members are rich, powerful and male, and invariably tilt judgements in favour of their peers. When the plaintiff is poor and the offender rich, the latter gets off lightly or can ignore the decision altogether; but where the roles are reversed, the punishment will be appropriate and will invariably be executed. Where both protagonists are rich, on the other hand, salish generally arrive at an amicable settlement. Where a poor person has committed an offence at the instigation of a richer party it is only the former that will be punished. In sexual matters, women are invariably treated more harshly than men. Bribery is frequent and is sometimes facilitated by hearing respondents separately and extracting payments from both, especially where local government representatives, not the matbars, sit in judgement. Shalikshars exhibit widespread ignorance of the law, and may decree harsh and inhumane punishment. Finally, the dominance of orthodox religious views can be a problem in certain areas, although this appeared not to be the case in our own primary study.

Despite these difficulties, the institution continues to be valued. It remains the only forum in which poorer people in general, and women in particular, are able to present their grievances and although judgements will normally be biased against them, limited redress against more powerful transgressors can often be obtained, especially in matters of a personal and sexual nature.

Fig. 8.3: Police administration

Class	Grade	Level	Position	Reports to (a)
Gazetted	1	National	Inspector General	Minister of Home Affairs
		Division/Range	Deputy Inspector General (b)	Commissioner
		District	Superintendent of Police	Deputy Commissioner (c)
			Assistant Superintendent	
Upper Subordinate	2	Upazilla	Inspector of Police (d)	Nirbahi Officer
Lower Subordinate	3		Sub-inspector	
			Assistant Sub-inspector	
			Head Constable	
			Constable	
Local appointees		Union	Ansars (e) and Village Defence Party	Upazilla & VDP Officer
			<i>Chowkidars</i>	Union Parishad Chairman

(a) Formal position. In practice civilian control is resisted (other than at highest level?)

(b) Commissioner of Police in urban areas

(c) In charge of tax collection, law and order, and administration of justice

(d) Otherwise known as Officer in Charge or Station House Officer

(e) *Arabic* "helper"

8.2 Policing

8.2.1 The Official Police

The police force was one of the first bodies to be established during colonial times, when it formed an important element in the overall structure of control, and still operates today under the 1861 Police Act. During the Pakistan period, the force was run mainly by senior officers from the western wing of the country, which in turn left a large vacuum to be filled after independence had been achieved. The present service is formed of remnants from the previous Police Service of Pakistan, former Army Officers, recruits from the immediate post-1972 period, and those arriving more recently through public service commission examination. It has proved difficult to form an effective *esprit de corps* from these rather disparate elements.

The establishment now numbers around 50,000 (1988 figure), and the ratio of officer per head of population is amongst the lowest in the world. The service is headed by a small group of relatively well-trained and remunerated gazetted officers (*see figure 8.3*). But among the lower grades, who man the local thana police stations and make up more than 90% of the total, levels of education and training are much lower, total remuneration packages are generally only in the range of 5000-7000 taka/month, and prospects for advancement are poor. Further difficulties arise from the low general level of resources, the weakness in practice of administrative supervisory mechanisms, and a growing tendency for political interference and control.

As with the judiciary, corruption is endemic, starting at the higher levels and becoming especially pervasive lower down. There is a tendency not to take any initiative, even in very serious cases, unless actually summoned, and it is then normal for payment to be extracted before the "First Information Report" can be filed. The World Bank, for example, reports such payments in 67% of all cases, and this figure rises to almost 90% in other research (*see table 8.2*) where the average sum

Table 8.2: Corruption and related costs from dealings with police in last year

	Monthly income group			Overall
	< 1000 tk	1-3000 tk	> 3000 tk	
Households in survey	595	1981	541	3117
%	19.1	63.6	17.4	100.0
Households going to police	17	202	62	281
<i>as % of all households</i>	2.9	10.2	11.5	9.0
Households paying bribes to file case	15	176	53	244
<i>as % of those going to police</i>	88.2	87.1	85.5	86.8
Amount paid to file cases (tk)	15040	47536	74869	137445
average size of bribe (tk)	1003	270	1413	563
Households paying bribes to resolve case	4	38	18	60
<i>as % of those going to police</i>	23.5	18.8	29.0	21.4
Amount paid to resolve cases (tk)	15800	80000	248600	344400
average size of bribe (tk)	3950	2105	13811	5740
Total cost of bribes (tk)	30840	127536	323469	481845
average cost/household going to police (tk)	1814	631	5217	1715

Source: Kaneez Siddique 2001 p27-8

involved is said to exceed 500 tk. The same source indicates that much larger payments are normally required to get a case pursued, which the wealthier households are clearly far better placed to do than their poorer counterparts. It is also a comparatively simple matter for the better-off to pay for false cases to be filed in their interest, and for charges against them to be dropped or delayed – all of which provoke a particularly strong sense of resentment amongst the population at large (see boxes 8.1 and 8.2 for illustrations of this and many of the other more general points that have been made).

Some weeding out of offenders has taken place in recent years, but this has mainly been confined to the upper levels of the service, and much remains to be done in identifying and dealing with corrupt and inefficient elements at thana and district level – where public perceptions of the service are primarily formed.

A large amount of criminal activity goes unreported, with certain powerful elements in rural society able to act with impunity in pursuing their interests at the direct expense of the weak and poor, or through protected illegal activities including smuggling and fraud (for examples see, in particular, BRAC 1983, pp74-79; and BRAC 1990, pp 26-31,41-44). Reported crime is increasing rapidly, rising by 60% from 1976-1996, with crimes against women (including rape, acid throwing, and various dowry related offences) increasing at an even more alarming rate (see box 8.1).

Box 8.1: A domestic murder

Nazim Ali is the son of Md. Masud, a big landowner, and is 28 years old. Three years ago he got married, but the relationship with his wife proved to be unhappy. He wanted to marry again, but she would not agree, and the relationship declined further.

After some time, she became pregnant, and as is the custom, returned to her father's house to be cared for in the period leading up to the birth. It was at this point that Nazim decided to kill her. Travelling to her father's house, and finding her alone in a room, he shut the door and turned up the volume of the radio in an attempt to drown out the sound of her screams. He then knocked her unconscious and injected her with poison.

The sound of the blaring radio aroused the suspicions of people nearby. Entering the room, they found Nazim and the prostrate body of his wife. When he could offer no convincing explanation of what had happened, they rushed her to hospital, but she was found to be dead on arrival. Abdul Rahman, her father, who is also an influential person, then arranged for a post mortem. This quickly established the cause of her death, and he then filed a case against Nazim with the thana police.

Nazim was duly arrested and remains in custody. In the meantime, the case has been put before the district criminal court and is proceeding. Md. Masud is attempting to arrange his son's release, but Abdul Rahman has demanded a payment of 600,000 tk. for the matter to be resolved. Masud has so far refused to pay and bargaining between the parties continues.

(Names have been changed)

Box 8.2: An Escalating Land Dispute

Parmesh Shah, a Hindu, was the wealthiest person in his para. He had a daughter but no sons, and as he grew older he relied increasingly upon his sister's son, Arwin, to look after his seven acre holding for him. This led Arwin to expect that he would inherit at least a part of the land. In the meantime, however, Parmesh's daughter had a son, Biplab, and Parmesh decided that he, not Arwin, should be the recipient.

When Parmesh eventually died and the land duly passed to Biplab, Arwin felt a strong sense of injustice. He approached Parmesh's widow (his aunt) who expressed sympathy with his position, and encouraged by her support, he obtained a document that falsely registered ownership of the land in his own name. Next, in an attempt to legitimise his position locally, he called a salish, made up of local influential people, to make a ruling on the matter. In an attempt to affect a compromise, the salish determined that he should receive three of the seven acres. Biplab, however, refused to accept the ruling and proceeded to sell all the land to a third party, another Hindu named Mohan; the transaction duly being registered at the land office.

Arwin countered by drawing in the largest landowner in the area, a Muslim who was known colloquially as "Shuri" (miser). Aided by a relation who was a lawyer, Shuri had built up considerable expertise in matters of land administration that he had then employed to effect a series of "land grabs", by intervening in precisely these types of intra-familial conflict (for more details see chapter 4). Drawing on his expertise, Shuri now entered into a compact with Arwin, where further false registration documents for the land were first obtained in the latter's name, on the basis of which the land could then be sold on to Shuri himself (presumably at considerably less than the going market rate).

With the original protagonists removed from the stage, the scene was now set for a showdown between Mohan and Shuri, the two new claimants to the land. Shuri first attempted to take possession of the area by force, using a gang of *dalit* (thugs) who were indebted to him. Mohan was able to mobilise some supporters of his own to offer resistance, but in the ensuing fight a number of them were injured, one of them seriously.

Mohan now filed a case with the criminal court and the police embarked upon an investigation. Shuri was able to stall the process for a time by paying the police off, but eventually a trial was called. As a result he was found guilty and sentenced to three months in prison, but after a month he was able to bail himself out by paying a further bribe.

In an attempt to formalise their claims to the land, both Shuri and Mohan now filed cases at the civil court. These dragged on for several years, but eventually Mohan died. With their father gone, the sons were then unable to pursue the case further, and having obtained a further set of papers conforming his "ownership", undisputed control has now passed into Shuri's hands.

The conclusion of the affair comes at a time when the traditionally good communal relations in the area have been coming under increasing strain, and is widely seen as a further example of a new, more aggressive and anti-Hindu posture on the part of powerful Muslims.

(Names have been changed)

8.2.2 Auxiliary Bodies

Below Upazilla level are two bodies that perform support functions for the professional police as a part of a wider range of functions. The first are the

chowkidars, who are the direct descendants of a force initially established to provide local security by the British in 1870 under the Chowkidar Panchayet Act, which itself paved the way for the contemporary local government system (see *figure 8.2*). There is one chowkidar for each ward, giving nine in all, plus a dafadar (leader). The force is supervised by the Union Parishad and seemed in the case studied at least to form a kind of personal bodyguard for the Chairman.

Their more and less formal responsibilities include; making arrests and detaining offenders; assisting the police to track down and prepare cases against offenders; keeping suspects under observation; patrolling and dealing with problems at bazaars and festivals; providing security and protecting polling booths during elections; providing security and assisting in arrangements for visits from the MP; distributing notices and warrants from the court, the land office, the DC office; summoning people to attend salish; delivering messages from the chairman to the members; assisting in government relief programmes; and chasing up older people to attend their compulsory literacy classes under the *gono shika* programme. For this, the chowkidars each receive 700 tk/month whilst the dafadar is paid 1000 tk. Half of the salaries come directly from the Council and the other half from the Deputy Commissioners Office.

The other body are the Ansars and Village Defence Party (VDP). The ansars (literally “helpers”) were formed immediately after the creation of Pakistan as an additional force to assist the police in maintaining law and order, to participate in civic action projects in rural areas, and to support the army in time of war. The VDP was formed after independence in 1976 during the early stages of military rule. Initially, its primary function was to promote rural development projects such as the digging of canals, but it was also expected to carry out certain routine security functions. When Ershad replaced Zia, however, its development responsibilities were downgraded, and with little reason for continuing as a separate entity, it was duly merged with the ansars.

The combined force is now organised under a class 2 officer at Upazilla level who is, in turn, assisted by a male and female instructor, both of whom are class 3. Each Union has its own corps, comprising 12 male and 12 female volunteers, and organised under a single commander (*dulopoti*). In addition, there is a body of 32 men and 32 women ordinary members (*sadayssya*) who participate on a more limited basis. Commanders select volunteers for drill and rifle training at the Upazilla, who are then available to help the police maintain law and order if the need should arise. In a partial continuation of the former VDP role, they are also expected to be able to offer limited help in local development activities such as tree planting, family planning and the promotion of sanitation. In addition, they may sometimes be called upon to assist on a casual paid basis during examinations or elections, at festivals, or when a dignitary visits the area.

Volunteers receive a basic allowance of 250 tk./month and a uniform. Over and above this, 10% of government vacancies are reserved for those who have been trained, and preferential access is provided to other training, as provided, for example, by the Departments of Youth Development and Fisheries. Taken as a whole, the package does not appear very attractive, and it is reported that, as a result, the force is difficult to mobilise and does not play a significant role in local affairs. Membership of the Ansar/VDP club may, however, confer certain benefits in gaining access to resources such as fishing rights in *khas* ponds and in some cases members operate savings and small loan schemes.

8.3 What might be done

8.3.1 Moral expectations and the strengthening of local institutions

As our account has indicated, the present state of affairs with regard to law and order leaves much to be desired. Ordinary people regard both the judiciary and police - that together they refer to a *sorkari* (government) law – as at best largely inaccessible and at worst as another instrument of their oppression by the powerful and better off. Whilst these institutions cannot be disregarded, and have for pragmatic reasons to be treated with a certain amount of respect, they enjoy little moral foundation in popular perception. Local ideas of justice are rooted more in notions of *dharma* (religious law) and *somaj* (social custom), and are concretely concerned with the underwriting of legitimate claims – to payment for work performed, to the ownership of land that has been paid for, and so forth. This is coupled with the expectation that the rural elite should “play by the rules”, provide a fair hearing where these are broken, and afford at least an element of protection from the predatory incursions of the wider world.

Whilst hardly supported by current realities, these strongly held beliefs about what *ought* to obtain, have provided a useful starting point for a series of recent interventions aimed primarily at the bolstering of the *salish*. A number of local NGOs are currently engaged in attempts to strengthen it as an institution and make it more responsive to the needs of the poor and women. The leading agency in this field is the Madaripur Legal Aid Association. Other important actors (and their areas of operation) include: Ain-o-Salish (Dhaka), Blast (Barisal), Samata (Pabna), Palashipara Samaj Kalyan Samity (Meherpur), Kabi Sukanto Seba Sangha (Goplaganj), Nagorik Uddog (Tangail), Palli Shishu Foundation (Sylhet and Rangpur), Samaj Unnoyon Proshikhan Kendra (Dinajpur) and Banchte Shekha (Jessore).

Key initiatives to date have included: re-organising existing *salish* committees or forming new ones in order to increase the representation from target groups; training *salishkars* in basic principles of justice and relevant laws; facilitating the *salish* process by recording complaints, initiating proceedings, issuing notices to relevant parties, monitoring decisions and follow up actions and providing venues; and maintaining panels of lawyers at the district level to file and fight cases in the formal courts if *salish* decisions are defied or violated. In 2000, however, only about 1000 of the country's 90,000 villages were covered by such interventions and a great deal more might potentially be done. Further possibilities for building on this work in future are elaborated in Siddique (2000 p153-4).

8.3.2 Prospects for Macro-level Reform

Various initiatives are also being contemplated, and in some instances actually undertaken, to reform more formal structures and systems. Morale and the reasonable expectation of higher and more acceptable levels of performance in both police and judiciary could clearly be increased by the improvement of wages and working conditions, by providing better equipment, and by the opening up of greater opportunities for career advancement for those in junior positions. Merit and integrity need to be upheld in matters of recruitment, promotion, posting, transfer, training, and deputation abroad, and attempts to weed out those who oppose such measures continued. Police could improve relations with the public at large by increasing their involvement in development and welfare work. Co-operation between the police and magistracy would ideally be extended, especially through the medium of joint inspections and reviews where problems have arisen.

A GoB/World Bank programme is currently seeking to address some of these issues, whilst another programme, is being developed to promote legal literacy and raise public awareness. The latter is clearly something in which NGOs could be involved, but for the time being, the prospects for effective intervention appear to lie to a much greater extent with the types of informal initiatives outlined above.

PART IV: TOWARDS A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

9. TAKING STOCK AND MOVING FORWARD

Our study seems to have aroused considerable interest within other CARE projects and programmes, and more generally beyond the organisation. This was one of our original objectives and is, in itself, pleasing. It is, however, important to recognise that what we have so far been able to achieve is only a first step on a longer journey. A good deal more needs to be done in order to arrive at an adequate understanding of institutions and to map out a viable Rights Based Approach (RBA), even within the relatively limited context of GO-IF itself.

Keeping this in mind, this concluding chapter asks where GO-IF might go next, and falls into four parts.

- Section 1 takes stock of what has been learnt about the extent to which present institutions allow the poor in general and poor women in particular to enjoy their rights.
- Section 2 first outlines GO-IF's current approach to rights based work; and then looks briefly at some of the rights work currently going on elsewhere in CARE, Bangladesh and the region, and suggests how some of the possibilities arising might be exploited in the project's future work. A key issue here is the extent to which an independent path will be pursued, or to which new working partnerships will be contracted either within or beyond the wider organisation.
- Section 3 reviews the way in which the study has been conducted, and outlines how it might be strengthened and extended to support future RBAs.
- Section 4 then crystallises the main ideas presented into a series of recommendations that are intended to provide a basis for more detailed reflection within the project.

9.1 Taking stock

CARE prioritises working with women and the poor, and it is their interests that will lie at the centre of any RBA. This section sets the context for what follows by summarising what has been learnt from earlier chapters about gender differences and relations, and the reproduction of poverty.

9.1.1 Gender differences and relations

Major differences are evident in the roles and opportunities open to men and women at every level in society. In aggregate these place women at a marked structural advantage, although the existence of significant variations between ethnic groups, social classes and age categories should not be overlooked. The emphasis in what follows will be primarily on the situation obtaining amongst the Muslim majority (who comprise more than 90% of the total population) and on the rural situation, with significant variations from these norms being noted where relevant.

The story begins in the household, with its marked internal division of labour. Women are almost exclusively responsible for child care, cleaning, washing, cooking, gathering of fuel and care of the sick. They also take on most of the agricultural tasks, such as raising small stock; cultivating climbing vegetables; selecting and storing seeds; and post harvest processing, which can be carried out in the immediate vicinity of the homestead. Men and women both play a part in rearing

larger livestock, whilst men are almost entirely responsible for the conduct of field based operations taking place away from the *bari*. Men also took responsibility for marketing all but the smallest items which household members produced for sale, and for purchasing all domestic requirements from the market. The heavy burden of domestic work which they carry leaves women with relatively little opportunity to engage in income generating activities and hence to handle cash. Decision within households might be to a degree mutual, and women can certainly exert some influence on budgeting, but the final word will generally lie with the husband. Items women might value, such as drinking water pumps and latrines, may be passed over where resources are limited because they enjoy lower priority in the eyes of men. When death or divorce breaks apart the basic family unit, it is women who face the most serious consequences, and it is widely recognised that female-headed households figure prominently among the most destitute in society.

Beyond the immediate household lies the patrilineage (*gushti*) and its accompanying patrilocal system of residence. The former is defined by descent through men and places them in a powerful position vis-a-vis the inheritance of property, whilst the latter dictates that the woman resides in the husband's household on marriage. Women's immediate social contacts and support networks are therefore constructed through their relationships with men, and it is men who enjoy the positions of leadership in the *gushti* and broader *somaj* into which these coalesce. The closely related institution of dowry re-enforces other structural disadvantages and is a frequent source of conflict, from which women suffer most.

All of this is reflected in the wider local society. Women play little role in the net of power relations, other than as a passive medium for the creation of alliances between men through marriage, and they feature very little on key making decision bodies, despite some formal provision to the contrary. We encountered no women *salishkars*, although women do participate to a limited degree in the *ansar* village police force. No women were employed by the Union Parishad or in the *thana* police force, and very few in the *Upazilla*. Things are a little better elsewhere, but in total women account for only 10% of all civil service posts, with the policy of frequent transfers making it especially difficult for them to hold higher positions.

The electoral system follows a similar pattern. Reserved positions by election (at Union level) and by appointment (in Parliament) formally guarantee a minimum level of inclusion, but women's true position in these institutions is marginal and uncomfortable in what remains pre-eminently male space. There are hardly any women Union Parishad chairs or cabinet ministers, and the succession of women Prime Ministers, whilst perhaps having a certain value as a role model, is ultimately more indicative of the dynastic nature of politics than of any significant shift in the underlying gender balance of power. On the positive side, the mere fact that women sit in elected bodies does represent an advance on the situation obtaining in the recent past, and moves are afoot to address the existing imbalance by offering various forms of training and support, but these remain at an early stage of development.

In combination with *purdah*, which to varying degrees continues to constrain the mobility of most Muslim women, the shortage of women in official and representative positions makes it difficult for others to access resources flowing through government channels. Women are seldom seen at the Union office and even elected women representatives are often disinclined to attend committees and other meetings. The same applies at the *Upazilla*, where the only real exception is the hospital, which is typically located beyond the main government compound. In the absence of special provision for their circumstances, it is difficult for women even to register a land

transaction on their own behalf, and active lobbying of the type routinely undertaken by influential men is almost entirely out of the question.

With anti-female crime on the rise, the operation of the justice system is a particular area of concern. Women must rely on men to report and pursue serious cases on their behalf at the police station, and if they are unfortunate enough to be arrested themselves they run the risk of being sexually assaulted whilst in custody. They do fare rather better at local salish where traditional moral values are still recognised, and it is at least possible to obtain some redress for misdeeds committed against them. The compensation offered is, however, generally not proportionate to the wrong suffered, and where women themselves are found guilty of some offence, their penalty is generally more severe than that imposed upon a man in a similar position.

All of this demonstrates how severely women are constrained, but there are still some grounds for optimism, and limited signs that things are changing for the better. Force of economic circumstance is already re-defining many of women's roles, and opening up opportunities to engage in new occupations that afford a greater measure of independence. Official attitudes towards gender relations and women's position are clearly also in a state of evolution. A specialist Ministry of Women and Child Affairs has been created, although this currently enjoys only a small share of the national budget (see *table 2.2*). Government documents like the National Water Policy now routinely recognise and work through the implications of the distinctive nature of women's position; and opportunities to take part in training programmes, that would previously have been confined to men, are now opening up. Programmes like VGD specifically target the poorest and most vulnerable women, and whilst subject to considerable leakage, clearly still do a considerable amount of good. Activities like RMP go a significant step further in taking women into formerly male space and encouraging them to begin to establish their own groups.

The pioneering and more extensive role of NGOs in opening up and pursuing such possibilities is already well known and requires little elaboration here, although the advances achieved have tended to address practical more than strategic needs, and have often benefited men, in their capacity for example as the ultimate users of credit, as much as women. The most significant developments from an RBA perspective do not, however, concern the characteristic credit, training, and livelihood enhancing packages that have been promoted, but reside rather in the less common attempts associated with NGOs like Saptagram and Proshika, to help women develop their own organisations. A number of points of potential significance for GO-IF arise from these experiences.

In the first place, women's high degree of dependence upon men makes it hard for them to confront the status quo. Time is required to build the necessary confidence, and provision must also be made for the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills, without which rights cannot readily be understood. Secondly, groups existing in isolation can only operate in the most local arena, and in relation to the least contentious issues. A capacity to pursue rights in wider fora, or when confronted by more determined opposition, will normally depend upon the emergence of higher level umbrella bodies, which in turn require greater organisational skills and easily slip into a relation of dependence upon the facilitating NGO if pushed to evolve rapidly. All of this means that success can only be achieved when the external agency is in a position to offer flexible support over an extended period of time, and where a critical mass of members can be created within a confined geographical area.

9.1.2 Socio-economic class and the reproduction of poverty

The poor, like women, suffer from multiple and mutually reinforcing forms of disadvantage, but again cannot be treated as an entirely homogeneous category.

The slightly better off sub-category, who typically subsist from a little land, may opt to pursue a largely self-sufficient strategy, but have few reserves to protect against a poor harvest or the ill health of a key family member, and remain vulnerable to the predation by more powerful households seeking to augment their own land base. Those without arable land of their own are generally obliged to rely, individually or in combination, upon self-employment, (with little to fall back on in the event of the loss of a key asset), agricultural labour (with long slack periods), or the taking of land in some form of tenancy (which offers poor returns and an increasing exposure to risk).

Poor households are nearly always small, and have little to fall back on if a key member falls sick, or is in some other way indisposed. At the same time, their capacity to engage in wider networks of social support is constrained both by their lack of resources and a higher propensity towards spatial mobility, which isolates them from kin. Again like women, it is only in rare instances that they have been in a position to form class-based organisations in defence of their own interests. Leaving aside some sporadic attempts to mobilise around tenants' rights in the 1970's, peasant movements have been almost entirely absent in the Bangladesh period.

Power has traditionally resided with the large landowners. As a class, they have been able to augment their income from directly managed agricultural operations and rent through engaging in trade and money-lending, and have buttressed their position through the formation of large mutually supportive households. They have also dominated *salish*, which have provided a convenient means of resolving disputes arising between themselves and of ensuring that any claims that may arise against them by poorer people are diverted or simply resisted. Where issues have not been possible to resolve locally, they have been able to pay the bribes required to initiate and successfully pursue cases through the official system of justice, which the poor have had little opportunity to access.

In the post-independence period, they have further consolidated their position by assuming control of local government. Sitting on committees, from which the poor are almost entirely excluded, and utilising official contacts, it has been possible for them to capture key resources, whilst exacting tolls and building vote banks through the distribution of relief goods and employment opportunities. Their resources have also provided access to education and the consequent opportunities to diversify into various forms of bureaucratic and professional employment, and to the additional possibilities for accumulation presented by the developing private sector. They have captured higher level political office, with parliament being dominated first by the professions and more recently by business interests, and offering no place for those from poorer backgrounds or their representatives. This, in turn, has provided access to other aid and official resources and provided further chances for misappropriation, rent-seeking, and patronage.

This system is not, however, entirely self-perpetuating. The study has provided illustrations of how politically astute and ruthless operators from among the ranks of the moderately well-off can also rise to positions of prominence. But for the poor, there remain few alternatives to forming dependent bonds with the wealthy in order to secure access to employment or land, or to the official programmes offering relief or off-farm employment. For a fortunate minority, such relationships may serve as a means of accumulating resources of their own and significantly improving their

condition, but for the majority they offer only the prospects of minimal security and the continuation of their lowly status.

But for all these difficulties, there is still some space in which the poor, and those who seek to promote their interests, may manoeuvre. The powerful do exploit them, but also feel some responsibility and moral obligation, examples of which are provided by the distribution of food at eid and allowing poorer households access to handpumps. This sense is more highly developed among some people than others, and, where present in measurable degree, may provide an effective building block in a wider anti-poverty strategy.

The reduction of poverty is also firmly enshrined as a central objective in national plans and sectoral policy statements, and programmes like VGD and FFW, for all their limitations in practice, provide some evidence of serious intent in the higher reaches of government. On a more pragmatic level, the votes of the poor ultimately determine the outcome of elections and their voice cannot therefore be entirely disregarded either at local or national level.

NGOs, whilst focussing primarily on the needs of poor women, and whilst generally more concerned with affording practical assistance than with directly challenging underlying structures, constitute powerful allies for the moderately poor at least. And some, like Samata Nijera Kori and Proshika, have started to go further, helping to build genuine poor people's organisations with a capacity to lobby actively in pursuit of their rights. But as with the women's organisations mentioned earlier, experience suggests that the countervailing institutional pressures of society at large mean that such bodies can only survive and flourish where external support is flexible in nature, geographically concentrated so as to secure critical mass, and sustained over extended periods of time.

9.1.3 The strategic options arising

Action at various levels will ultimately be required in order to address the powerful inter-locking institutions that currently deny the poor and women access to their rights.

In a national context, although there is some scope for improvement, the existing framework of laws and policies provides a generally sound foundation for the promotion of rights. The main concern here will therefore lie much more with implementation than with any additional legislation or policy formulation as such.

Advocacy to this end may sometimes be pursued by individual organisations, and an NGO like CARE may be well placed to bring quiet indirect influence to bear via its good donor relations. But more often, it will be most effective to act in concert with others and, as a foreign NGO, to play a secondary role in support of national actors. In part, this might involve offering technical campaigning support drawing on insights derived from the wider experience of the CARE international body (*for example, see CARE Atlanta 2001*).

Figure 9.1 indicates which current CARE Bangladesh projects already engage in advocacy work, and a review of their experiences would provide a logical starting point for any future action. These, however, are issues which it will mainly be appropriate for CARE Bangladesh rather than GO-IF by itself to deal with, and will therefore receive no further attention here.

A second, and more compelling reason for focussing most attention on other aspects of rights is found in the widely held view that initiatives to strengthen the hand of the poor and women are best directed at the local level, where the effects of current injustices are immediately experienced, and where the relative efficacy of remedial action can be most directly perceived (*for an elaboration of this argument, see Mahmud 2002 p98*).

9.2 The field of possible interventions

The potential scope for RBAs here is quite wide. This section touches briefly on what is already happening in GO-IF and elsewhere in order to identify possible ways forward. It draws on:

- brief discussions with GO-IF staff;
- a preliminary report provided by Pauline Wilson on RBAs in CARE
- a similar report by Neelam Singh on RBAs elsewhere in Bangladesh;
- a hastily assembled summary of CARE project literature (*see annex*);
- brief interviews conducted with ActionAid, Oxfam, Nijera Kori and Samata;
- a quick review of the Indian experience (*as summarised in Goetz and Gaventa 2001*);
- two short exercises conducted with senior CARE staff in our final country workshop.

None of this fell within the original terms of reference for the study, and it should be made clear that a good deal more will need to be done by way of reviewing other experiences of RBA before possible routes forward can be elaborated with confidence. This is reflected in the recommendations that follow later.

9.2.1 Starting points in present GO-IF activities

The core activity of GO-IF is the promotion of rice fish cultivation, and RBAs have only recently been added to the package. They are pursued under circumstances where staff have only limited training in institutional analysis or rights based work, where time is limited by other responsibilities, and where the engagement with any particular group of rural people is limited to a single 18 month cycle. In addition, the nature of the central activity means that participating households have tended, on average, to be slightly better off than the rural norm, and that men have figured quite prominently among the target group. Finally, it should be noted that some work is undertaken directly with groups, but that an increasing element involves working through partner NGOs, and hence at one remove from direct contact with the client population.

Field trainers (FT) have been given their head in experimenting with different RBAs, but the most successful to date have been those where staff help members to access inputs or other goods and services. Assistance, for example, has been afforded in negotiating suitable credit arrangements with suppliers of latrines. Such initiatives appear wholly appropriate to the project as presently configured and have a good prospect of sustainability and wider, perhaps even spontaneous, replication. In principle, they might be extended by the introduction of the types of consumer surveys discussed in relation to water and sanitation in Chapter 7, which could serve simultaneously to increase awareness of the best value available in any particular locality and to increase competition between suppliers. Experimentation with new arrangements between pump owners and users might also be considered. The

Figure 9.1: Present and possible rights based activities in CARE – overview based on workshop exercise conducted with senior CARE staff

Rights area (a)			Empowerment through groups (b)	Increased participn. in local govtment ©	Women's rights©	Creating public opinion	Capacity strengthening ©	Advocacy to establish rights ©	Land and common property rights ©	Legal aid for rights violations victims ©
Priority	<i>In present CARE projects</i>		1	2=	2=	4	5	6	7	8
	<i>Anticipated in future</i>		High	High	High	Med	High	High	High	Med
Types of RBA in present CARE Projects	IFSP	Build	X	X		X				
		Shahar	X	X		X	X	X	X	
	RMP	RMP	X	X	X					X
	ANRP	Go-IF	X			X			X	
		Life-Nopest	X		X	X			X	
		Shabge (d)	X		X				X	
		RVCC	X			X			X	
	HPP	HIV (e)	X		X			X		
		Safe mother	X		X			X		X
Leading Bangladesh agencies with whom CARE works now or would like to work in future in different rights areas	Samata		X						X	
	Proshika		X			X		X		
	Nijera Kori		X		X				X	
	Manchte Seka		X							
	Khan Foundation			X						
	B'desh Nari Progoti Sangstha			X						
	International Voluntary Service			X						
	Democracy Watch			X						
	Power/Ptcpn. Research Centre			X						
	Asia Foundation			X						
	Nari Pokko				X					
	BNLWA				X					X
	Women for women				X					
	Banchte Seka				X					
	Jatio Mohila Parisad				X					
	ESDO					X				
	PRIP Trust						X			
	Oxfam						X	X		
	Action Aid						X	X		
	CUP							X	X	
	Amnesty International							X		
	ASK							X		
	Blast							X	X	
	ALRD								X	
	Coast								X	
	Madaripur Legal Aid								X	
	Uttoron								X	
	Ain-O-Shalish Kendra									X
	NGOs working for Aids vicitims									X

[a] As defined in recent consultancy by Neelam Singh [b] All projects support including those not listed
 [c] Included in HUGO project [d] DFID and SDC
 [e] Includes Rasta Bandor, Shakti, HIV/Aids

possibility of introducing such initiatives to other areas of input supply could be enhanced by training staff in the execution of resource flow charts of the type illustrated in figure 7.1.

Other types of RBA are likely to be more difficult to pursue in an effective and ultimately sustainable fashion within the current 18 month time-frame. Given the high degree of variability in conditions between, for example, the villages considered in Chapter 4, and the communities discussed in Chapter 5, it is however important that staff with local knowledge should be the final judges of what may or may not be attempted. An encouraging feature of the initial institutional study was the way in which, when it was completed, the FT team decided by itself to explore the possibility of assisting in the establishment of poor people's salish. In the light of this, it would seem worthwhile to expose a wider range of staff to the study, and for a limited period at least, to then "let a thousand flowers bloom".

9.2.2 Current rights based activities in CARE and the prospects for collaboration

The national study by Neelam Singh mentioned earlier classifies RBAs in Bangladesh as a whole into seven broad areas (see figure 9.1) and an exercise carried out with staff suggests that CARE already has some work going on in each category. In descending order of current priority these are:

- 1 Empowerment through group formation
- 2= Increased participation in local government
- 2= Women's rights
- 4 Creating public opinion
- 5 Capacity strengthening
- 6 Advocacy to establish rights
- 7 Land and common property rights
- 8 Legal Aid for rights violation victims

The figure also shows areas staff expect to be important in future, and it was only with considerable reluctance that it was conceded that all might not enjoy equally high priority status. These existing patterns of work and stated future intentions would appear, in principle at least, to allow considerable scope for GO-IF to start exploring a number of potential bi-lateral linkages in the RBA field.

These could most readily be effected in the immediate circle of sister projects in the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) sector, most of which have similar structures, and some of which already operate in the same region (see annex parts 1-4). A link with SHABGHE would help to increase the amount of work undertaken with women and poorer households, and connections with most other ANR projects could readily be built around input procurement rights and procedures of the type already discussed in the previous section. Figure 9.1 also indicates a strong common interest in land and common property rights. These raise more complex issues, but might jointly be pursued in conjunction with external agencies - a possibility that is explored further in 9.2.3 below.

Moving beyond the immediate sector, Building Union Infrastructure for Local Development (BUILD) (under the Integrated Food Security Programme (IFSP)) and the Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) are both centrally concerned with issues of local capacity building and planning, and hence heavily dependent upon an understanding of the central issues raised in the main body of this study. If the study is to be replicated in further locations (as will be proposed in section 9.3 below) then

either would prove valuable partners. Both would also be strong potential collaborators in the more innovative possibilities explored in section 9.2.4 below.

Elsewhere in IFSP, Shahar is already heavily involved in RBAs and might also benefit from participating in a collaborative study, although research in an urban location poses different problems to a rural study, and substantial reworking of the methodology would probably be needed. Many of the health projects have a similarly strong record in pursuing RBA, but there seems to be rather less overlap in the key issues here, and it is more difficult to see direct potential for collaboration.

Exploring the types of bilateral links indicated - especially if thus could take place within the framework provided by CARE's intended future pattern of geographical concentration (*see CARE 2001 (c) p15*) - should offer important insights as to how a more integrated RBA might be developed within the organisation in the slightly longer term. The significant changes in GO-IF's current modus operandi that would be required in order to pursue such possibilities suggests, however, that they should only be explored on a pilot scale – perhaps within a single union or upazilla - in the first instance.

9.2.3 Working with other agencies in Bangladesh

Figure 9.1 indicates that there 29 agencies with which a CARE project either already interacts, or with which a future relationship might potentially be built in pursuit of an RBA agenda. A minority of these organisations, like CARE itself, span several of the seven Singh categories, but more appear to specialise in particular types of activity.

There is therefore already a platform on which a future portfolio of RBA partnerships might be built, and a wide range of possibilities exists. Perhaps the most promising for GO-IF, in terms both of synergy with present activities and the prospect for the more comprehensive incorporation of poor people, are those presented by tenants' land rights and the question of access to khas (public) land and water bodies. A number of agencies are already active in these quite complex areas (*again see figure 9.1*), gathering and collating relevant information, raising awareness of rights, facilitating the development of local organisations through which access can be secured and maintained, and providing legal support where needed. Interviews already conducted with leading exponents indicate a clear willingness to explore collaborative links, and to place their acquired expertise at CARE's disposal in the context of pilot initiatives.

A further and related issue is how to underpin the retention of land ownership rights by small and marginal farmers in the face of powerful predators. This is addressed in the context of the second possible area of work that may now be discussed. This concerns ways in which the institution of the salish can be made to work more effectively in pursuit of the interests of women and the poor. Since much of the business of this institution is bound up with land matters, involvement here would represent a logical extension of any initiative in that area.

In other respects the terrain covered by salish is less organically linked to GO-IF's present core activities. It is, however, of central concern to the target groups, and represents "space" that they already partially claim as their own. This suggests that an intervention here should be given consideration. What more precisely this might entail, and the specialist agencies with the requisite knowledge and skills that GO-IF might seek to collaborate with, have already been indicated in the previous Chapter (*see section 8.3.1*) and need not be repeated here.

Engagement in either land issues or salish will draw GO-IF into situations where it is may find itself in direct confrontation with wealthier and more powerful interests. The arguments presented in sections 9.1.1 and 9.1.2 above make it clear that such a role could not realistically be performed within the 18 month time frame of current project interventions, and that a longer term and more flexible form of engagement would be required. Over and above this, it would clearly be difficult for an international NGO to be drawn into conflicts, or to appear to be acting in a political capacity. For this reason it might be better to address such issues through partner agencies, and to exclude them from the part of the programme where staff work directly with the client group. It would also be helpful if work in these areas could form part of wider packages containing counterweight elements with direct appeal to elite interests (see 9.2.4 below).

In seeking to explore the possibilities raised in this section, it would, in principle, be possible for GO-IF to collaborate simultaneously with more than one external agency. Triangular arrangements, involving both internal and external partners might also be envisaged in the longer term. But in view of the complexities arising and of the degree of departure from the project's current modus operandi, simple pilots, conducted with individual partners in single locations, would again be recommended in the first instance. This would help the organisation to build a body of technical expertise and knowledge that might then serve as a basis for more extensive future initiatives.

Finally here, the experience of a small number of other international agencies working in Bangladesh that have either been engaged for some time in RBA (like Oxfam) or have recently switched to this mode of operation from a more operational approach (like ActionAid) would ideally be reviewed in order to determine where GO-IF's comparative advantage might lie and how its own transition might most effectively be negotiated.

9.2.4 Learning from international experience

Looking further afield, India in recent years has proved a fertile breeding ground for RBAs. Not everything that has worked there could automatically be expected to transfer effectively to Bangladesh, but a shared cultural heritage and common historical experience make it the most promising source of external ideas. A selection of the more interesting and exciting possibilities has been drawn together in box 9.1. These include broad policy initiatives (items f, l, k, l); specific means of raising awareness (m); innovative examples of how citizen's voice can be articulated to improve service delivery and access to rights (a, b, c, d, e, j, n); and some specific examples drawn from the natural resources sector (g,h).

Taking into account the analysis offered in the main body of the report, at least two linked possibilities, that build more or less directly on these Indian experiences, suggest themselves.

An information initiative

One might take the form of a multi-stranded information initiative. Computers could be provided for key Upazilla offices and Union parishads, information systems developed, operators trained, and advice given on the presentation of data in user-friendly formats. Such a package would appeal strongly to elite interests, and being involved in setting it up would allow CARE staff to form an "insider" view of current systems and practices that would be difficult to arrive at in any other way.

Box 9.1: Some examples of rights based approaches from India

a) Report Cards

Surveys of client satisfaction with public services in urban neighbourhoods of the quality of a range of services to put pressure on elected officials and heighten public awareness.

b) People's charter – Lok Satta

Reverses normal procedures where government inform citizens of their entitlements by having citizens evaluate quality of a range of government services and articulate what they regard as minimum standards.

c) Monitoring of PDS (RKS) Mumbai

Informal vigilance committees of women consumers monitor the flow, quality and leakage of incoming food grains, etc. under basic commodity programs.

d) Low-cost housing in urban communities (SPARK) Mumbai

Surveys of low-income communities, planning for amenities such as water points and toilets, building models of cheap housing and developing savings collectives to finance construction.

e) People's Hearings, NKSS Rajasthan

Officially recognized audit method involving extensive research into discrepancies between amounts sanctioned and actually spent on poverty-focused development projects, leading to repayment of misappropriated funds.

f) Education Guarantee Scheme, MP

Guarantees the establishment of a school and funding for learning materials and teacher salaries within 90 days if the community can show demand and provide land.

g) Forest Protection Committees, West Bengal

An arrangement whereby state and community share the management of and profits from timber and non-timber forest resources.

h) Watershed Management

A federation of community-based watershed associations which coordinate environmentally-friendly practices and negotiate funds and appropriate watershed management projects with the responsible district agencies.

i) One-Stop Shops

A state-level legislative enactment directing local-level bureaucrats (e.g. land administration) to hold weekly sessions in rural areas, aggregating numerous bureaucratic functions into one locale, leading to transparency and greater accessibility to officials.

j) Transparency Innovation

'One-window' signboards on district, block and village level office structures detailing the cost of services and time it should take to process applications, as well as highlighting annual funds received for local level development initiatives.

k) Employment Guarantee Scheme, Maharashtra

Gives statutory rights to a state service by obliging the state to pay unemployment benefits to unemployed workers, unless opportunities are provided through public works programs.

l) Right to Information Laws, Goa and Rajasthan

An Act enables citizens to gain access to government files, allowing citizens or citizens groups to investigate decisions pertaining to service delivery, thereby facilitating redress.

m) Panchayat Waves – community radio

Use of local characters and story lines to provide information about the roles, responsibilities and functions of local governance institutions.

n) People's Planning Campaign, Kerala

A participatory village-based planning process with neighborhood groups, state, district, and local level officials undergoing training to facilitate cooperation. Availability of funds assured through state budgeting.

Source: Goetz and Gaventa 2001

The simple use of computers would, by itself, be likely to increase the flow of information between agencies and downwards to the population at large. But to ensure that this happened, recipients might be required to sign up to a transparency charter, whereby certain types of information would have to be placed in the public domain in specified formats and at predetermined intervals. Ongoing technical support, which would clearly be required, could be made dependent upon these conditions being met.

Training could also be provided in non-electronic forms of information gathering, analysis and presentation; such as maps and simple tables. Notice boards could be set up at Upazilla and UP offices, markets, schools, mosques and other public places with information posted about the allocation of VGD cards or local plans. The photographs of relevant officials or representatives could be displayed, accompanied by brief explanations of their responsibilities. The approach could be extended to public work sites (where notice boards are already supposed by law to be maintained) and training again offered in how they should be kept. If such possibilities were explored and found successful, more ambitious attempts to support the preparation of various local plans might then be contemplated. Further options might include support for the publication of local newspapers or the development of relevant radio programmes.

One-stop UP and Upazilla Centres

A second initiative could entail the provision of support for the building of improved UP offices. These might include space for locally based government officials, in order to encourage more local coordination of activities. There could also be a one stop-shop citizens' advice bureau centre for men, and another for women. Staff could be trained to operate the centres and provided with materials emerging from the information initiative or ongoing institutional studies. Additional studies could be conducted in response to new issues arising and needs identified, and pamphlets prepared dealing with commonly raised issues. The computer could be used with an operator to help people look up things for themselves. Similar advice bureau could be set up at Upazilla with separate entrances for women that were accessible without entering the main compound.

Like the information initiative, this would offer facilities that would prove popular with the official and local representative elite, in exchange for which greater transparency could then be demanded. Unions or Upazillas might be asked to apply for inclusion in the programme, with opportunities being offered to those able to demonstrate the best existing record in supporting the rights of women and the poor.

These ideas are offered by way of illustration. As the Indian examples indicate, there are many other things that might potentially be tried. It is, however, important to recognise that information supply initiatives can only bear fruit where there is effective demand. This suggests that they should be accompanied by some basic education initiatives for illiterates, with graduates from classes then being encouraged, for example, to take responsibility for activities such as the collective monitoring of notice boards.

9.3 The study process re-visited

The possibilities explored above derive in part from a reading of the available literature, but are also suggested by our own field investigations. Before proceeding with some of the possible initiatives that have been outlined, it should be recalled that the study was conducted in a fairly short period of time by relatively inexperienced

staff, most of whom had never worked with the lead facilitators before. This meant that some things were not done very well. Over and above this, defects in some of the methods selected emerged in the course of data collection and analysis, and when the work was finished it became apparent that significant gaps remained. GO-IF will need to consider how far it should seek to address these lacunae before laying concrete future plans. In addition, it will have to decide how far it can afford to rely upon insights generated from a single location, which inevitably has certain particular, perhaps even peculiar, characteristics. Issues may also arise about the sectors in which an RBA is to be explored, and what additional work might be required to back-stop any such choices.

Beyond all this lie a series of further questions. These concern:

- how, or whether, versions of the study might be employed in selecting future project locations;
- whether, or to what extent, FT's might be expected to study institutions before selecting and embarking on future RBA's;
- how far other projects might be encouraged to go down a similar path, either individually, or as a part of some joint initiative with GO-IF.

This section of the chapter re-visits the study process with these issues in mind.

A starting point is provided by Figure 9.2 which outlines the specific topics covered at each level in the study and the methods that have been used to explore them. It also indicates how much further refinement the methods require, estimates the capacity which would be needed within the organisation to employ them successfully over the next 1-2 years, and offers an assessment of what will be required to put that capacity in place. Each level will now be reviewed from these perspectives and in terms of the contribution that it might potentially make to the future development of RBA.

9.3.1 National laws, policies and structures

The importance of this aspect of the work for RBA is self-evident and needs no elaboration. Basically, it requires the capacity to identify and précis literature relating to the sectors in which GO-IF decides to work. The process of identification will naturally differ to some extent from one sector to another, but from the work that has already been done the most important general sources of information are already fairly clear.

The level of skill required is high relative to other aspects, but the time needed for any particular sector would not be very great and no serious logistical issues arise. A few days work by a senior member of the organisation, ideally the Social Development Coordinator, or by a similarly qualified consultant, should normally prove sufficient.

9.3.2 District and Upazilla level enquiries

The district administration emerges from the study as being of relatively little significance. The operation of a handful of committees may warrant further investigation, but these aside, little more need be done. The Upazilla by contrast, as the local point of release of critical resources flowing from central government, is of key importance, and would be likely to figure centrally in a range of potential RBA initiatives.

Figure 9.2: An overview of the study process showing approaches employed and adequacy of methods

<i>Issues by level</i>	<i>Study methods</i>	<i>Progress</i>			<i>Capacity required and explanatory note</i>	In place
		A	B	C		
National						
Laws, policies, structures	Literature review/Key informant	X			1 senior	Yes
<i>District and Upazilla</i>					2/3PO/TO (+PM to supervise)	
Government Structures	Secondary/Survey/Key informant	X				Yes
Resources/allocation systems	Secondary/Budgets/Key inf/resource flow		X		Analysis to be extended to other sectors	Partly
NGO sector	Survey/Key informant	X				Yes
Private sector	Key informant		X		Small sectoral surveys to be developed	Partly
Inter-sectoral linkages	Survey		X		Semi-structured interviews to be developed	Partly
Union					N Field trainers (+ 2/3 PMs to supervise)	
Identify influential people (IP)	UP/Key resources/Committees	X			Satisfactory semi-structured procedures devised. Extent to which FTs can collect/analyse by themselves to be tested	Partly
How IPs accumulate resources	Case histories/focus group	X				
Relations between IPs	Key inform/card/critical incident	X				
Formal institutns/resource access	Secondary (<i>otherwise gap in study</i>)			X	Method to be devised and tested	No
Informal institutions	Key informant/focus group		X		Extension to village/para level advised	Partly
Para anatomy/resource access	Para cards/maps/tables	X			Original team can collect but not analyse	Partly
Village and Ward						
<i>(Largely as for union)</i>	<i>(Gap in present study)</i>					
Para (soc capital to be added)					N Field trainers (+ 2/3 PMs to supervise)	
Resource identification	Mapping	X				Yes
Class/resource access	Wealth rank/card analysis/tables	X			Basic skills acquired by some team members but all require further coaching (especially in cross-checking)	Partly
Social relations	Card analysis/genealogy/tables	X				
Land access/relations	Mini-survey/plot histories	X				
Law & order	Critical incident analysis	X				Yes
Implications/explanations of above	Semi-structured interviews		X		Develop probing skills	Partly
Livelihood strategies/impact	Depth household case studies				2/3 PO/TO (initially)	
Division of labour	Card matrix	X				Yes
Asset holdings	Card matrix/spreadsheets		X		Basis spreadsheet skills/capacity to adapt	Partly
Production, consumption, budget	Card matrix/spreadsheets		X		Ditto	Partly
Social capital (<i>now moves to para</i>)	Genealogy/support matrix			X	Devise/implement survey in 1-2 pilot para	No
Dynamics/trajectories	Semi-structured interview		X		Devise semi-structured interview/practice	Partly
Sectors						
Key activities	Semi-structured interviews	X			2/3 PO/TO (initially)	Partly
Resource and decision streams	Resource flow charts	X				Partly

A: Fine tuning/minor adaptation of methods for new situations required

B: Significant additional work needed

C: Major additional work needed

Investigations to date here have drawn on a combination of secondary sources and primary data collection, but neither has proved wholly satisfactory. Strong literature is available from the 1980's, when the Upazilla Parishad attracted a good deal of attention, but this is now seriously out of date, and little more recent material of a comparable standard has been unearthed. A little more work is required to flesh out current formal structures, but once completed this would not need to be repeated since the situation would not vary greatly from one place to another. Somewhat more time would ideally be devoted to mapping formal resource flows and decision processes, especially if a decision were to be made to embark upon initiatives in sectors that have not yet been addressed. But again here, it would only be necessary for the work to be done once (and not repeated in different locations), so the time requirement would be relatively small. A small team comprising 2-3 staff at PO/TO/or PM level working under the close supervision of a senior staff member, and provided with brief initial training, would be needed to complete this task.

Far more demanding – since by their nature the processes involved are concealed from the public gaze - would be the question of how resource allocation processes *actually* work. Rather than devise a separate procedure, it is proposed that this issue be approached tangentially as a part of the wider information initiative discussed above (see section 9.4.2).

The NGO sector at District or Upazilla level exhibits a somewhat higher degree of local variability than its official counterpart, but set against this are the simpler structures of the component organisations. Formats for basic surveys and key informant interviews have been developed in the course of the study and applied, with a reasonable measure of success, by staff at PO and PM level. Only a small amount of work has so far been carried out with private sector bodies, but these will generally be on a small scale and of a relatively uncomplicated nature. The semi-structured interviews that have been developed for this purpose require a little more refinement, but could then be successfully applied with minimal prior instruction.

9.3.3 The net of relationships at Union level

Influential people at Union level control land and other key resources that are central to the livelihoods of many poorer households, whilst the “net” of relationships between them plays a critical part in directing the flow of official resources and services from the Upazilla. As such, they were central to the study, and are likely to figure prominently in any subsequent RBA work.

Versions of the study might potentially be employed at an initial stage to determine whether to work in a union or not (e.g. by seeking to determine whether there were relatively benevolent actors on the Union Parishad who might champion a possible initiative, or at least not stand in its way). By the same token, once a decision has been made to go ahead, key exercises could be used to decide which communities or areas to target, which initiatives to focus on, and how these might be pursued in order to maximise the prospect of a successful outcome.

As figure 9.2 indicates, a battery of techniques have been developed for this purpose, most of which appear quite robust and straightforward, although some additional work is probably required on the functioning of informal institutions and their formal counterparts (*for which again see the information initiative*). A critical difference between this and higher levels of the study, however, is the greater scale on which data collection and analysis will have to be conducted and the accordant need to involve larger numbers and more junior levels of staff. Some field supervision will be essential here, but for this to be confined within manageable

limits, prior work designed to simplify and codify data collection and analysis techniques will be required, followed up by carefully structured introductory training programmes (which would ideally draw on the original study for the development of materials).

Before moving on from the net it is also important to recall a comment made at the concluding workshop to the effect that the significant “sub-nets” that exist at the village level that had been excluded from the study. This may well also be the most appropriate level at which to explore informal institutions (such as the samaj) and how these interface with their more formal counterparts. Time permitting, a supplementary “mesa” investigation might be conducted to fill this potentially significant gap.

9.3.4 The Community (para) study

The para level of the study serves a number of closely related purposes. By revealing the socio-economic status of individual households it provides a foundation for targeting certain categories, and by mapping their mutual relations it provides insights into the potential sustainability of different groupings. It also offers a convenient means of determining who enjoys access to different resources and services and for assessing ex-post the impact that an intervention has had. From the methodological point of view, this is all relatively well-trodden turf, although the development of additional tools facilitating the investigation of the distribution of different forms of social capital would be very helpful in forming a better understanding of the precise content, intensity and significance of kinship and other social ties.

Once again here, the main issue would be how to build a relative extensive capacity to conduct such investigations, and once again the need for an element of further codification of approach followed by a short intensive training process is indicated. Ideally a more refined capacity to interpret primary data sets, to triangulate between them, and to probe for underlying explanations would also be developed among a smaller circle of supervisory staff.

9.3.5 Household livelihood strategies

Detailed individual household livelihood case studies help to understand the diversity that exists – both within as well as between broad socio-economic strata - in the ways in which resources are accessed and managed. In combination with studies of social capital, they can also provide important insights into how people cope with different types of vulnerability. They are thus potentially valuable as a means of anticipating who may or may not be in a position to take advantage of any proposed external intervention, and how much flexibility may need to be built into an intended approach in order to reach the maximum number of people. Repeated over time, they can offer additional insights into inadequately understood phenomena such as the way in which evolving family composition and dependency ratios effect livelihoods and response capacities, as well as providing an additional dimension to any impact assessment. In the wider context of CARE as a whole, the qualitative micro-level insights arising could provide a useful complement to the more macro and quantitatively oriented data collection systems that have been designed under the Livelihoods Monitoring Project (LMP).

As will be clear from the preliminary discussion in Chapter 6, some additional work to develop appropriate and replicable methods would be required before that potential could be realised, and some quite intensive capacity building would then be required.

But given that the number of case studies required would be quite small – perhaps 30 to 40 in all in an initial period – it would only be necessary to induct two or three staff (at PO/TO level) for the work to be able to go ahead. Whether this would ultimately be worthwhile would depend upon how much importance GO-IF and CARE attached to sustainable livelihoods under any new RBA programme.

9.3.6 Sectoral studies

In the course of the present exercise, sectoral studies were carried out in relation to water and sanitation, law and order (*see chapters 7 and 8*), and land (although time constraints have meant that this has not actually been written up). The approaches employed have, to some extent, been tailored to the particular topics under investigation, and it is therefore difficult to be precise about what might be entailed in exploring additional areas in future. In outline, however, requirements are likely to include a senior person or consultant to conduct a literature review (as already notes above); and a core team of two or three PO/TOs who would then need training in the execution of semi-structured interviews and the use of resource flow chart (*an example of which appears in figure 7.1*).

9.3.7 Over-arching issues and logistical considerations

Given time and resources, capacity to collect and analyse the data necessary to conduct all of these types of investigation could be built within GO-IF and/or CARE. Taken individually, and keeping in mind the indicative numbers of staff to be involved (*see figure 9.2*), some could be dealt with in a few days, whilst the more demanding might require a month or more. The logistics of attempting to conduct all or most of them simultaneously (or even in close proximity) would, however, add a considerable additional degree of complexity. Added to this is the problem, graphically illustrated by the long delays in completing this report, of pulling diverse sets of data together in a written-up form, from which useful suggestions for future action can then be drawn. Taken together, these considerations suggest the need a) to keep the whole process as simple as possible; b) to ensure that sufficient staff time is available at senior level to oversee and coordinate the process; c) to seek ways of short-circuiting the process running from data analysis to the taking of decisions about future action.

Before proceeding, one further issue should be flagged. This concerns the extent to which it will be possible to continue the practice of drawing staff away from other work on a short-term basis to conduct studies. There will always be a need for some general staff involvement since, among other things, this will provide the necessary local knowledge and contacts. But progress would be greatly facilitated if a core of perhaps six or seven specialist researcher/trainers could be created who could master the basic skills and contribute to the refinement and development of techniques over time. Whether this might be formed within GO-IF, or at a more general level within the organisation, would need to be discussed, but it is difficult to see how progress towards an RBA can be accomplished without the establishment of such a unit in some shape or form.

9.4 Recommendations

There are a large number of things that would ideally be done to refine and build on the understanding of how institutions and resource allocations processes work and to flesh out the options for moving forward with an RBA. These are listed below, and are intended as a maximalist agenda that GO-IF can prune and reshape in the light of resources, staff time availability, and any other considerations.

No attempt is made either to prioritise possible actions, or to indicate the sequence in which they might ideally be conducted - not least because some of them may already have been adequately undertaken elsewhere in the organisation in exercises that it has not been possible to access or review in the time available to carry out this work. Neither have we sought to draw precise distinctions in all instances between what it would be appropriate for GO-IF to attempt to do by itself, what it might undertake in concert with others, or what might best be left to be dealt with at a broader organisational level. These are issues that can only be resolved through further internal discussion. For similar reasons, no attempt has been made to indicate how individual elements might best be packaged together in an overall approach.

The sets in the first subsection (9.4.1) cover options that could be contemplated within GO-IF's current practice of limiting its engagement with any individual group of people to an 18-month period. The remainder (9.4.2) would require the selection of a small number of groups, unions, upazillas and partner organisations where GO-IF would commit to a much longer term (perhaps 3 year) pilot engagement. In these instances, it might also be necessary to revisit the current policy of only working with small local NGOs as partners, and explore the possibility of forming new alliances with other organisations, where a foundation of women's and poor people's institutions is already in place.

9.4.1 Options within the current GO-IF framework

a. Consolidating the present study in the original location

- Conduct a more extensive exploration of the functioning and inter-relations of key Upazilla and district level committees (especially DDCC/UDCC, DRICC/URICC).
- Review literature and conduct additional primary investigations into Union parishad budgets and union planning procedures (if any).
- Complement the existing union study with a single mesa-level village enquiry with particular emphasis on the interface between second order IP's, business leaders, local committees and somaj.
- Conduct an extended study of social capital in one or both of the present study para to systematically test and assess the importance of relationships indicated in the present livelihood case studies.
- Complete a chapter on the land sector, drawing on available secondary and already collected primary data.
- Identify any additional sectors relevant to a future RBA and investigate these in the original study location. Give particular emphasis to the development of resource flow charts.
- Submit each of the chapters in the report to review by one CARE member of staff and one external specialist. Collect their feedback and revise accordingly.

b. Strengthening the study methods

- Devise simplified and codified versions of the union and para studies
- Revise, develop and codify the household livelihood study

c. Extending the study to new locations and using it for new purposes

- Replicate a simplified version of the net study (and possibly the para and upazilla level investigations) in two new Unions with different ethnic mixes, contrasting configurations of political allegiances, and varying degrees of access to official and NGO resources. Use these studies, and the one already completed, as a foundation for the pilot experiments indicated below.

- Devise a simplified version of the net study, train trainers, and then train an extended number of GO-IF field staff in its implementation so that it can be used to select unions and communities for future inclusion in the programme offering the best prospects for an RBA.
- Encourage these FTs to develop and pursue their own ideas about advocacy initiatives (the “1000 flowers” approach). Then conduct workshops to review experiences and identify promising ideas for more widespread application. Compare the quality of RBA initiatives undertaken in study and non-study areas in order to assess how much difference the study itself makes.
- Involve staff from other projects in the new studies and seek their ideas about future RBAs. Alternatively, encourage them to conduct their own studies.
- Form an action research and training unit with a core of permanent specialists and a rotating membership of field/operational staff to conduct further basic institutional analysis, to refine methods, and to disseminate appropriate practice more widely in the organisation.

9.4.2 More radical departures

d. Advocacy

- Document the advocacy activities already undertaken by CARE Bangladesh and assess their effectiveness.
- Repeat the exercise for any other national networks or fora operating within the broad area of CARE’s current concerns.
- Review the techniques summarised in CARE, Atlanta (2001) and identify which, in addition to those already being utilised, might have some useful part to play in Bangladesh.
- Feed each of the items above into a workshop to determine the broad future direction of the organisation’s advocacy work.

e. Review and experimentation for innovative local level initiatives

- Review other rights based work in CARE and identify synergisms with the GO-IF approach.
- Establish a joint input supply initiative with another ANR project.
- Review the work of the Khan Foundation on local government, Madirupur Legal Aid Association and Palli Shishu Foundation on Shalish and the various agencies indicated in figure 9.1 on khas land access, with a view to establishing collaborative pilot experiments with selected GO-IF groups.
- Review the experience of other international agencies working in Bangladesh that have either been engaged for some time in RBA (like Oxfam) or have recently switched to this mode of operation from a more operational approach (like ActionAid) to determine where GO-IF’s comparative advantage might lie and how its own transition might most effectively be negotiated.
- Review the Indian experiences of RBA. Conduct a study tour of those that appear most promising. Organise a workshop to assess which might work best in Bangladesh and how they could be explored.
- Launch individual or collaborative pilot information and one-stop shop initiatives at Union and Upazilla levels.

9.5 Conclusion

These recommendations should convey the sense that there are strict limits to what can be accomplished easily, or taken to scale quickly by way of an RBA in the context of the current GO-IF programme. There are, however, a considerable number of exciting possibilities which, if first explored and refined in pilot mode and accompanied by significant changes in the parameters within GO-IF currently operates, could lead to substantial and replicable advances within perhaps a three to five year time scale.

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ANNEX: THE CARE ORGANISATION

1. Care project names and acronyms

Sector	Acronym	Full name
Agriculture and natural resources	GO-Interfish	Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice and Fish Production System
	LIFE-NOPEST	Locally Intensified Farming Enterprises & New Options for Pest Management Project
	LIFT	Local Initiatives for Farmer's Training Projects
	SHABGE DFID	Strengthening Household Access to Bari Gardening Extension Project, DFID
	SHABGE SDC	Strengthening Household Access to Bari Gardening Extension Project, SDC
	LMP	Livelihood Monitoring Project
	RVCC	Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change Project
Integrated Food Security	BUILD	Building Union Infrastructure for Local Development
	DMP	Disaster Management Project
	SHAHAR	Supporting Household Activities for Hygiene, Assets and Revenue
	FPP	Flood Proofing Project
RMP	RMP	Rural Maintenance Program
Health and Population	SAFER	Sanitation and Family Education Resource Project
	BINP	Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Project
	PEI	Polio Eradication Initiative Project
	RASTA BANDOR	Intervention for Transport Workers and Other At Risk Population
	SHAKTI	Stopping HIV/AIDS through Knowledge and Training Initiatives
	SAFE MOTHER	New Initiatives for Reproductive Health and Healthy Pregnancies And Deliveries
	HIV/ AIDS	HIV (Human Immune Deficiency Virus) Program
Education	CHOLEN	CHT Children's Opportunities for Learning
	INCOME III	Increasing the Capacity of Organizations in Micro Finance

2. PROJECT SUMMARIES

***Warning:** These materials have been difficult to assemble and almost certainly contain minor errors and misinterpretations.*

Agricultural and Natural Resources Sector (ANR)

Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice and Fish Production (GO-INTERFISH)

Based on initiatives starting in the early 1990s, the project aims to improve the capacity of **poor and vulnerable farmers** to manage diversified and integrated rice and field production. It uses a Farmer Field School approach at community level, with strong emphasis on monitoring and evaluation; new initiatives in advocacy and marketing; and NGO capacity building and government linkages. It is geographically concentrated in the Northwest and funded by DFID.

Life-NoPest

Building on earlier work in integrated pest management, the project aims to strengthen capacity for increasing productivity among **food-insecure households** primarily dependent on agriculture, with 50 percent women participation. The ultimate goal to achieve sustainable improvements in livelihoods. It covers greater Rajshahi, Mymensingh and Comilla districts and is funded by EC.

Strengthening Household Access to Bari Gardening Projects (SHABGE)

Building on earlier initiatives to improve the productivity of horticultural and agro-forestry homestead gardening practices, the project aims to enhance the ability to access information, inputs and services and to strengthen the capacity of **poor men and women** in innovative ecologically sound and profitable homestead management. There is an emphasis on networking of service providers to insure availability of inputs. Activities are funded under separate projects by DFID (Northwest and Southeast) and SDC (Northwest).

Local Initiatives for Farmers Training Project (LIFT)

This project is in many respects similar to SHABGE, but places stronger emphasis on nutrition, **poor women farmers** and the interaction with government and other service providers. It is concentrated in greater Noakhali and funded by Danida.

Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change Project (RVCC)

A newly established project located in Khulna which builds capacity of **farmers** to deal with environmental implications of climate change, and for the first time focuses exclusively on working through Partner NGOs. It is funded by CIDA.

Livelihood Monitoring Project (LMP)

This is a new project growing out of the SHABGE and GO-Interfish experiences. It seeks to identify and quantify livelihood changes of **vulnerable farmers** to analyse their wider livelihood context and to develop guidelines for livelihood monitoring. It is funded by DFID.

Integrated Food Security Program (IFSP)

Building Union Infrastructure for Local Development (BUILD)

This project works in an action research mode to improve management of community infrastructural resources and the food and livelihood security of **vulnerable households in food insecure rural areas**. Particular emphasis is given to road

improvement and tree plantation activities. BUILD seeks to develop capacity of local government, especially Union Parishads, to plan and co-ordinate local initiatives with community participation; to foster accountability; and build commitment to democratic principles. It aims to create effective and institutional support mechanisms through collaboration with Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development Co-operatives, and the Local Engineering Department (LGED). Emphasis is also given to the development of M&E and Management Information Systems, together with advocacy and networking. It is funded by USAID and works in 34 districts throughout the country.

Disaster Management Project (DMP)

This project works with local government bodies and Partner NGOs to develop capacity for an effective disaster response supporting **vulnerable households** in high risk prone areas. Particular emphasis is placed on the reactivation of local level action plan. It works in nearly 30 district throughout the country and is funded by USAID (OFDA)

Flood Proofing Projects (FPP)

The project promotes flood-proofing measures for **vulnerable households**. This is combined with the provision of refuge areas or flood shelters, together with support for water supplies and health related facilities. It also promotes institutional mechanisms to co-ordinate development activities in flood plains. Activities are confined to 8 upazillas of Kishoganj, Netrokona, Kurigram and Gaibanda and undertaken in partnership with local government (LGED, Union Parishad, local project societies) and NGOs. It is funded by USAID.

Supporting Household Activities for Hygiene, Assets and Revenue (SHAHAR)

The project works with **slum dwellers in secondary cities** to promote and protect household income and community resources; to improve hygiene and maternal child care practices; and to create effective and sustainable institutional support mechanism. It is funded by USAID and works in Tongi, Jessore, Mymensingh and Dinajpur.

Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP)

This is a programme and a project and by far the largest individual activity currently undertaken by CARE Bangladesh. It seeks to improve the socio-economic status of **destitute women** through the development of a cost-effective rural road maintenance programme. Key components include empowerment through employment creation, life management education, and organisation development. Underpinning other activities is an attempt to strengthen the capacity of local government institutions through the provision of training, the formation of management committees, leadership training, and policy advocacy for pro-development policy formation, refinement and implementation. It works in 32 districts in Bangladesh and is funded by CIDA.

Health and Population Sector (H & P)

Sanitation and Family Education Resource Project (SAFER)

Targeted on **children less than 5 years old**, the project seeks to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs and local government bodies to introduce improved health and hygiene to beneficiaries in the Cox's Bazaar and Chittagong Hill Tract areas.

Environmental health pilots in urban slums are also included. It is funded by JFS, EC, UNICEF, CARE USA.

Bangladesh Integrated Nutritional Project (BINP)

The project support the GoB in its attempt to work through NGOs in order to achieve change in food habits, intra-household food distribution, pregnancies and child caring practices, and pre-natal health care. It targets **malnourished pregnant women and malnourished children under 2**. The major individual area of concern is community-based nutrition, which includes poultry keeping, homestead gardening and extension. It works in 10 Upazillas Shariatpur, Chittagong, Narshingdi, and Panchagar and is funded by World Bank.

Polio Eradication Initiative Project (PEI)

The purpose of this project is to strengthen polio eradication activities of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and focuses in particular on **children under 5 and adolescents under 15**. Its main activities include supplementing routine vaccination by national immunisation days, establishing an effective system for case reporting, organising mop up campaigns for high incidence areas, and activities to maintain high routine immunisation coverage. Attempts are made to establish linkages between partners, including NGOs. Funding is provided by USAID, CORE, SCF-USA, AUSAID and activities are confined to 35 Upazillas in Jessore, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Sathkira, Rajshahi, Nawabganj, Sylhet districts.

Intervention for Transport Workers and Other at Risk Population (RASTA BANDOR)

The purpose of the project is to reduce risk of STD and HIV among **transport workers and associated sex workers** through interventions undertaken in partnership with government and NGOs. Activities include baseline surveys, peer education training and outreach, establishment of drop-in centres, advocacy sessions, marketing of condoms, orientation of local medical practitioners, and capacity development among Partner NGOs and transport unions. It is funded by DFID and works in Chittagong.

Stopping HIV / AIDS through Knowledge and Training Initiatives (SHAKTI II)

The project is targeting **sex workers, injecting drug users, needle sharers, professional blood donors and the community in general**. It supports the development of an effective national HIV /AIDS strategy and programs designed to raise awareness and encourage safe practices. Emphasis is placed on developing support networks for **people vulnerable to HIV infection**. Funding is provide by DFID and work takes place in Dhaka, Tongi and Khulna.

HIV Programme (HIV / AIDS)

The project aims to broaden the scope of existing HIV / AIDS interventions with **brothel based sex workers, intravenous drug users, and trans-sexuals** and seeks to strengthen the capacity of NGOs/ CBOs to implement interventions with high-risk populations. It is funded by DFID and works in Chittagong, Dhaka, Tongi, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Sylhet.

New Initiatives for Reproductive Health and Healthy Pregnancies and Deliveries (NIRALIPAD MA) also Safemother

The project is promoting a range of activities designed to promote women's reproductive and more general health. These include engagement at community level, improvement of facilities, the design and adaptation of leaning materials, and the development of service provider skills, together with the implementation of a gender and partnership strategy and advocacy with a wide range of stakeholders.

The primary target group includes **all women of reproductive age** in 16 upazillas in Sylhet division. It is funded by CIDA.

Education Sector

Chittagong Children's Opportunities for Learning (CHOLEN)

Cholen is a new project designed to enhance CARE's and PNGOs institutional capacity in education programming. Specifically it aims to improve access to and quality of basic education for **tribal and indigenous children, especially girls** in the Chittagong and hill tract region. It is funded by CARE USA.

No Sector

Increasing the Capacity of Organizations in Micro Finance (INCOME 3)

The projects works with **poor and very poor households living or squatting in urban and peri-urban slum (especially those that are female-headed)**. It aims to improve the policy environment; to strengthen the institutional capacity of partner organisations; and to diversify the variety and increase the volume of financial service made available. It also engages in research and policy advocacy. It is funded by DFID and works in Chittagong, Hill Tracts, Jessore and Rajshahi.

3. Project Resources

Sector	Project	Donor	Current phase			Staff numbers
			Duration	Budget (Mn \$)		
				Phase	Per year	
				Multiyear	Average	
RMP	RMP	CIDA	1994-2004	78.6	13.0	556
IFSP	IFSP	USAID				17
	BUILD	USAID	DO	47.9	9.6	317
	FPP	USAID	2000-2004	27.9	5.6	154
	SHAHAR	USAID	DO	13.6	2.7	66
	DMP	USAID	DO	2.9	0.6	27
ANR	GO-Interfish	DFID	1999-2004	18.2	3.7	278
	SHABGE	DFID	1999-2005	15.1	2.2	300
	LIFE NOPEST	EC	2001-2003	4.0	2.0	177
	LIFT	DANIDA	1998- 2003	3.4	0.7	51
	SHABGEE	SDC	1999-2002	3.2	1.1	44
	RVCC	CIDA	2002-2004	1.1	0.4	8
	LMP	DFID	2000-2005	0.6	1.2	18
Health & Population	NIRAPAD	CIDA	1999-2003	4.7	0.1	79
	SHAKTI -2	DFID	2001-2003	3.6	0.6	
	RASTA BANDOR	DFID	2000-2003	2.9	1.0	112
	SAFER	(a)	1997-2002	1.9	0.4	7
	PEI	(b)	2000-2001	0.5	0.2	21
Education	CHOLEN	CARE USA	2002-2003	0.2	0.2	11
	INCOME III	DFID	2001-2005	5.0	1.0	25

(a) JFS, EC, UNICEF, CARE

(b) USAID, CORE, SCF-USA, AUSAID

CARE is committed to working with those who struggle against forces in society that produce and reinforce poverty. As we see the poor continue to strive-not infrequently with little progress to show for it-to gain access to the assets and services they need to sustain themselves, the nature of our work is changing. Increasingly we find we must use approaches that empower the poor to assert their rights and claim their entitlements. This involves understanding how to work with inequitable power structures, and how to help mediate poor people's access to critical recourses and services from which they have been excluded.

To be successful in this complex arena it is essential that we understand how those social structures operate, the policies, institutions and social processes that shape the pattern of everyday life and that often determine the livelihood options of millions of people. We must strengthen our ability to collect, analyze and contextualise information about hidden power structures and coalitions of interest that act against the interests of the poor. Only with this information will we be able to identify entry points and pathways, allies and adversaries, opportunities and obstacles to our collective goal of eliminating poverty.

The Northwest Institutional Analysis is a good example of the kind of analysis that is needed if we are to be effective in rights-based programming. Presented here is a compelling depiction of the interconnected nature of formal and informal institutions, showing how power and resources are concentrated in the hands of certain key individuals, families and institutions, and graphically demonstrating the complexity of programming required to change the status quo.

I encourage development practitioners, policy makers and other professionals interested in reducing poverty in Bangladesh to use this document to inform their own work. I hope that this will also stimulate other studies and experiments that seek to understand and address the root causes of poverty and social injustice.

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