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# Role of Social Capital in Governance of Gram Committee: The Case of Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP) In Bangladesh

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## ABSTRACT

*The study was undertaken with the objective of identifying the institutional mechanisms for promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities under PRDP link model that emanated from creation of social capital in rural society; and to test a research question i.e. Does formation of social capital contribute to better implementation of GC activities under PRDP link model? To fulfill the objectives and address the research question mainly qualitative analysis was followed, which was supported by content analysis, in-depth case studies, FGD, SSI, informal discussion and consultation covering diverse respondents like general villagers, GC leaders, office bearers of GC, GC male and female members, UP representatives, NBD staff, project officials, field staff, NGO representatives etc. Researcher's personal observation, knowledge and experience gained through institutional attachment were also utilized to enrich the empirical findings. The study revealed that the prolonged intervention of PRDP link model helped formation of social capital in the study area through imbuement and better internalization of a sense of cooperation; togetherness; mutual trust, communication and network; solidarity, developing relationship and interactions among the community activities performed by the GC, which was in fact the pivotal institution of PRDP for ushering development and transformation at the grassroots It was appeared that formation of social capital contributed to becoming GC a relatively effective and socially viable institution for local development that demanded better governance in GC, which ultimately facilitated better implementation of PRDP model in the project villages. It was found that the institutional mechanisms of promoting transparency, accountability to the villagers and community participation in GC are embedded in the process of formation of GC; organizing special, general, AGM, para meeting; preparation of social map and cost estimation of the*

*scheme; sharing of information through GC meeting, GC resolution, para meeting, GC notice board, display board; provision of obtaining tax clearance certificates from UP as a precondition of getting scheme; cost sharing system in undertaking GC scheme by cash or serving as voluntary labour in earth work, giving soil and land for construction of road; organizing inaugural and concluding ceremony during the starting and ending of the scheme; supervision and monitoring of the scheme implementation; giving scheme completion report to the authority etc. During its long time implementation GC has found a sustainable process of local development through donor's support. But in Bangladesh it has become a common phenomenon that such donor supported best practices end with the withdrawal of donor support and termination of implementation phase. Although overtime GC developed social capital in the project villages but withdrawal support from the donor may inhibit its self-sustaining strength due to lack of matching grant system and its other unique mechanism of PRDP model. Most of the time experiences and lessons learnt from such donor's support based best practices cannot be properly utilized due to lack of strong advocacy and adopting appropriate means for mainstreaming it nation-wide as such project experiments suffer from the basic problem of sustainability. The institutional mechanisms of GC and the lessons learnt from the PRDP intervention can immensely be useful for strengthening the role of proposed "gram sava" system enunciated by the present government. GC mechanisms have enormous potential that can help undertake a pro-people and participatory development planning for grassroots development and its lessons can also be useful for other similar type future interventions.*

**Keywords**: Social Capital, Governance, Participatory Rural Development, Nation Building Departments, Gram Committee, Union Development Officer.

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

It is one of the mandated duties of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) to test contemporary theories and approaches of development in order to develop suitable models for rural development (RD) and thus to suggest policy guidelines to the government. From its inception in 1959 to till date BARD has experimented and also developed quite considerable number of RD models. In its wake it developed a RD model entitled Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP) through research and action research during the time frame of 1986-1995 in cooperation with a number of academic institutions under the auspices of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). After that, the implementation responsibility of PRDP- popularly known as PRDP link

model - was assigned to Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), which completed its first phase in 2000-2004 and the second phase commencing from 2005 will end in 2010.

PRDP link model, through its two phases, developed unique institutional arrangements of a two-tier committee system. Its institutional arrangement embodies formation of Gram Committee (GC) at the base or village level and Union Coordination Committee (UCC) at the Union level. As per the system of PRDP model, in every village one Gram Committee (GC) is formed comprising 15-20 members on consensus of all the household and representing people from all paras(sub-village) and gushties. A GC representative, chosen on consensus, needs to attend the UCC meeting (UCCM) to inform the decisions of the GC meeting (GCM) for getting required services from the UCC. Addressing the common interest of the villagers, both GC and UCC are empowered to undertake minor schemes up to 50,000 Tk. following a pre-determined system of cost sharing method. According to GC and UCC scheme guidelines (BRDB/JICA: 2008) of the PRDP model, GC can undertake development schemes relating to para road, small culverts, drain, hat/bazar, bridge, school repair, arsenic free tube well, public library, sanitation etc. based on a matching grant system and fulfilling condition of clearing hundred percent UP tax in that village.

In a traditional society like Bangladesh through the long implementation period in two phases of the PRDP link model - GC helped formation of social capital in the rural society, which eased/facilitated promote some essential conditions of good governance in its entire working procedures. Formation of social capital evolved over a long time amidst social solidarity, interactions and network among diverse groups and people in the community; mutual trust, reciprocity and belongingness; collective actions, shared visions and sense of responsibility based on common interests and mutual benefits among the villagers. All these attributions of social capital resulted in establishment of some basic features of good governance like transparency, accountability and villagers' participation through some institutional mechanisms of GC activities in the community setting. But there is lack of empirical evidence on how such social capital contributes to GC governance; therefore the study was undertaken with a view to identifying those institutional mechanisms for promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in the gram committee system of PRDP link model.

## Objectives of the Study

In line with the stated research problem, the following research objective and research question are set to identify the institutional mechanisms for ensuring

governance that emanated from social capital formation in rural society through Gram Committee of PRDP link model.

*Specific Objective*

- The specific objective was to identify the institutional mechanisms for promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities under PRDP link model that emanated from creation of social capital in rural society;

*Research Question*

- Does formation of social capital contribute to better implementation of GC activities under PRDP link model?

## Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to some particular issues of governance in GC of PRDP link model. A few questions were asked to the GC members, UP representatives, NBDs and NGO field agents and the villagers to know the institutional mechanisms of promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities of PRDP link model which resulted from formation of social capital in rural communities due to prolonged period of implementation of that project. To answer the research question attempts were made to analyze whether formation of social capital in rural society contribute to better implementation of GC activities under PRDP link model.

## Significance of the Study

The study will be of great significance to the policy makers as building social capital in the village level organization (GC) and its consequence helps ensure a sustainable and cost effective development process at the grassroots. The long time implementation of PRDP model helped develop social capital formation through establishing a good network, relationship, communication, mutual trust, cooperation and togetherness in the rural society/ community people, which that in turn calls for instilling some features of good governance in GC activities through its institutional mechanisms to promote transparency, accountability and increased villagers' participation. Due to the creation of social capital at the grassroots with improved transparency, accountability and increased level of community participation, GC was able to fulfill its mandated functions effectively, which in turn facilitated better implementation of the PRDP link

model. The study will also help generate a policy directives and debates on the issue of social capital and its relevance for the rural society. The formation of social capital enables the community people especially the poor to exercise their innovative ideas, local wisdom, exert their voice to influence better and effective service provision using cooperation, support, trust and network, interactions among the villagers themselves. It would also help improve planning and management of local development projects, preparation scheme and proper utilization of resources, etc., which in turn contribute immensely to better implementation of PRDP link model.

## Study Methods

The study was primarily based on qualitative analysis. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from Chairman, Vice-Chairman, secretary, male and female members of GCs, NBDs extension agents, UP representatives and secretaries, general villagers and project officials. Secondary data were collected by applying content analysis method through looking into project documents, brochures, research reports, GC and UCC resolution, GC guidelines, scheme preparation and approval documents, scheme application form, declaration from for giving soil and land by the land owners for GC scheme, attendance register of GC and relevant books were consulted.

To gather primary data, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) composed of 20-25 respondents and three in-depth case studies of 3 GCs were done. Two FGDs comprising of different types of respondents/stakeholders *i.e.* GC members (including Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Male and Female members), NBDs extension agents, UP representatives and general villagers were done in *Narandia* and *Sahadevpur* UPs. In *Narandia* UP, representatives from *Mdhokpara Nagarbari, Jadurpara, Prashna, Palima, Char Nagarbari* GC were present. In *Sahadevpur* UP, representatives from *South Chamuria, Baniafair, Akuya, Powjan* were present in the FGD. To have an in-depth understanding about social capital and its aftermath *i.e.* ensuring good governance in GC through its institutional mechanism for promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities, three case studies - one in Jadurpara GC, one in *Modhokpara Nagrbari* GC and the other in *Char Nagarbari* GC in *Narandia* UP were done.

In both FGDs and Case Studies, few questions containing a short checklist in congruence with the research objective and research question were followed. General villagers' perceptions/opinions were also tapped using informal discussion and SSI (Semi Structured Interview) regarding formation of social

capital in rural society and institutional mechanism for enhancing transparency, accountability and villagers' participation through GC activities. In addition to that, consultation with the project officials (DD, AD, Research Officers etc.) and project personnel/staff/field workers were also done. In fine, researchers' personal observation, knowledge and experience gained through institutional attachments were also used to enrich the findings obtained through FGDs, Case Studies, consultations with project personnel and villagers.

### Limitations of the Study

The findings of the study were the outcome of a specifically designed purpose and hence these were not necessarily expected confirmed results of the researcher obtained in different contexts. The study was confined only to social capital formation and GC governance of the PRDP-2 link model and hence other aspects were not considered.

The study was mainly based on qualitative analysis and data were collected using FGD, interview and case study method. Due to time and resource constraints the GCs were chosen as per convenience of the researchers. The study would be more fruitful if qualitative analysis could be supported with some quantitative analysis. But given all the limitations, the findings of the study will definitely help the policy makers to draw conclusion and suggest some policy options, which could be enormously useful for undertaking future rural development models in Bangladesh.

## THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

### Theoretical

The concept of social capital occupies a remarkable place in the filed of social science literature over the last few decades. Social capital refers to the resources such as trust and solidarity, social networks, information and communication, association, ideas, supports that individuals are able to obtain by virtue of their relationship and interactions with other people. These "resources" or "capital" are social meaning that they are only accessible in and through these relationships, unlike physical (tool, technology) and human capital (education, knowledge and skill), which are essentially the properties of individuals (Grootaert et al., 2004). Scholars were in the opinions that building social capital in the society can help solve many critical problems. Formation of social capital takes place in a given society through interactions, relationship, network and cooperation among human beings. It does not grow overnight rather it grows over

a long time through its social customs and traditions, norms and values, culture and religions. In the following paragraphs the evolution of the concept, some definitions, types and sources of social capital are explained below.

*The Evolution of the Concept of Social Capital*

The concept of social capital is not a new concept. The origins and the intellectual history of the concept can be traced back to thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has deep and diverse roots in philosophy, economics, sociology, anthropology and political science literature (Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002a; Healy & Hampshire, 2002; Adam & Roncevic, 2003). Most authors dealing with social capital argues that L. J. Hanifan, a social reformer, first coined the term, "social capital" in 1916. The basic essence of social capital can be found in the writings of many great scholars/philosophers such as Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Durkheim, Marx, Tocqueville, J. S. Mill, Toennies, Weber, Simmel, Adam Smith, Hofsteed and so on (Watson & Papamarcos, 2002; Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Brewer, 2003; Lazega & Pattison, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Putnam, 1995; Trigilia, 2001; Portes & Landolt, 1996; Winter, 2000a; Winter, 2000b; Heffron, 2000; Knack, 2002). In modern time, the concept of social capital has received unprecedented acceptance and application to diverse areas after publication of the landmark book by Robert Putnam in 1993, *i.e. Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.*

*Definition of the Concept of Social Capital*

Unlike other concepts, different authors tried to define social capital from different perspectives and approaches. In the recent time, Robert Putnam, Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Fukuyama, Grootaert, Woolcock, Deepa Narayan and World Bank have contributed significantly to the development of theoretical constructs of social capital. Some of the major definitions of social capital were portrayed below:

Robert Putnam defined social capital in a broader framework. According to Putnam (2000), "Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue". The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense of network of reciprocal social relations. A society composed of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital". Putnam underscores the importance of social capital many ways. Firstly, "social capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems easily. People often might be better

off if they cooperate with each other". Secondly, "social capital greases the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly. Where people are trusting and trustworthy, and where they are subject to repeated interactions with fellow citizens, everyday business and social transactions are less costly". Thirdly, "social capital improves people's lot by widening their awareness many ways in which their fates are linked. When people lack connection to others, they are unable to test the veracity of their own views, whether in the give or take of casual conversation or in more formal deliberation. Without such an opportunity, people are more likely to be swayed by their worse impulses".

Bourdieu (1983) elaborates that social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition". Bourdieu wrote from within a broadly Marxist framework. He tried to distinguish three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social. A basic concern of Bourdieu was to explore the processes making for unequal access to resources and differentials in power - and the ways in which these fedinto class formation and the creation of elites. The possession of social capital did not necessarily run alongside that of economic capital, but it still was, in his view, an attribute of elites, a means by particular networks held onto power and advantage.

Coleman (1994) defines social capital by its function. He opines that "social capital is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities, having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure". Coleman's (1988) refuting the views of Bourdieu argues that people living in marginalized communities or belonging to working class could also benefit from its possession. Drawing upon a base of rational choice theory, Coleman (1990, 1994) views social capital as part of a wider exploration of the nature of social structures. He highlighted that the possibility that different institutions and social structures were better suited to the cultivation of reciprocity, trust and individual action than others. He underscores the role of the family and kinship networks, and religious institutions in the creation of social capital.

The World Bank (1999) has explained social capital in a very simple but significant manner that denotes that "social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together".

Fukuyama (1995) explains social capital as "the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups and organizations". Social capital can be defined simply as "the existence of a certain set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permit cooperation among them"

(Fukuyama, 1997). Woolcock (1998) terms social capital as "the information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks".

Burt (1992) finds that social capital grow in "friends, colleagues, and more general contacts through whom people receive opportunities to use their financial and human capital". According to Brehm and Rahn (1997), social capital forms through "the web of cooperative relationships between citizens that facilitate resolution of collective action problems". Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) dub social capital as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network". Schiff (1992) defines social capital as "the set of elements of the social structure that affects relations among people and are inputs or arguments of the production and/or utility function".

Very broadly, social capital refers to the social relationships between people that enable productive outcomes (Szreter, 2000). The term social capital refers to those stocks of social trust, norms, and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems. The creation of social capital has been embraced as a solution for social problems as diverse as urban poverty and crime, economic underdevelopment and inefficient government (Boix & Posner, 1998). Social capital is about the value of social networks, bonding similar people and bridging between diverse people, with norms of reciprocity. Social capital is fundamentally about how people interact with each other (Dekker & Uslaner, 2001; Uslaner, 2001). Adler and Kwon (2002) define social capital as "the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor".

The above literature review reveals that social capital is an admixture of a wide range of issues and it is multi-dimensional, which have a bearing on history and culture, social structures, family, education, environment, mobility, economics, social class, civil society, consumption, values, networks, associations, political society, institutions, policy, and social norms at various levels. Social capital does not have a clear, undisputed meaning, for substantive and ideological reasons (Dolfsma & Dannreuther, 2003; Foley & Edwards, 1997). For this reason there is no set and commonly agreed upon definition of social capital and the particular definition adopted by a study will depend on the discipline and level of investigation (Robison et al., 2002). Based on the above definitions, it can be summarized that the concept of social capital embodies a huge range of social resources such bridging, bonding, linking diverse people getting together by virtue of mutual sense of trust, network, reciprocity, cooperation, relationship, friendship, interactions, solidarity, inclusion, empowerment, participation,

information and communication, groups and association. Social capital fosters a sense of togetherness among human beings in a given society towards solving myriad socio-economic problems, bringing change and transformation, and ensuring mutual benefits each other.

Different authors approach the subject from different disciplines and from different points of view. These studies do not take into account that whether formation of social capital can contribute to ensuring better governance, especially improving transparency, accountability and participation of the community members. There is dearth of literature on formation of social capital and its consequence for promoting transparency, accountability and participation of the community people, which is the particular focus of this study.

*Types of Social Capital*

Michael Woolcock (2001), a social scientist from Harvard and the World Bank and Aldridge, Halpern et al. (2002) have made distinction among different types of social capital. According to them there are 3 types of social capital with different meanings and implications, which include bonding social capital, bridging social capital and linking social capital. Bonding social capital denotes ties between people in similar situations, such as immediate family, close friends and neighbours (Woolcock, 2001). Bonding is horizontal, among equals within a community whereas bridging is vertical between communities (Dolfsma & Dannreuther, 2003; Narayan, 2002; Narayan & Pritchett, 1999). Bonding social capital is localized and it is found among people who live in the same or adjacent communities (Wallis, 1998; Wallis et al., 1998).

On the other hand, bridging social capital encompasses more distant ties of like persons, such as loose friendships and workmates (Woolcock, 2001). Bridging social capital refers to that social capital, which extends to individuals and organizations that are more removed and bridging social capital is closely related to thin trust, as opposed to the bonding (splitting) social capital of thick trust (Wallis, 1998; Wallis et al., 1998; Anheier & Kendall, 2002). Linking social capital reaches out to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community, thus enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community (Woolcock, 2001). Putnam did not really concern about linking social capital nor did he come to grips with the implications of different forms of social capital rather he opines that different combinations of the three types of social capital will produce different outcomes (Field, 2003). Putnam looked in to whether social capital is bonding (or exclusive) and/or bridging (or inclusive). Putnam suggested that the former might be more inward looking and have a tendency to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. The latter may be more outward looking and

encompass people across different social divides (Putnam, 2000). Bonding capital is good for under-girding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion. Moreover, bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves. Bonding social capital constitutes one kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological (Putnam, 2000).

The other important distinction of social capital, developed by Uphoff and Wijayaratna (2000) spans the range from structural manifestations of social capital to cognitive ones (Grootaert & Bastelaer, 2002a). Structural social capital facilitates mutually beneficial collective action through established roles and social networks supplemented by rules, procedures and precedents (Hitt et al., 2002). Cognitive social capital, which includes shared norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs, predisposes people towards mutually beneficial collective action (Krishna & Uphoff, 2002; Uphoff, 1999). Cognitive and structural forms of social capital are commonly connected and mutually reinforcing (Uphoff & Wijayaratna, 2000).

**Analytical Framework**

Through the long implementation period of PRDP link model aiming at grassroots development, social capital formation occurred in the project villages, which in turn calls for ensuring good governance in the activities of GC. Here in this study "social capital" refers to relationship, fellow feelings, trust and solidarity, groups and network, collective action and cooperation, information and communication, social cohesion and inclusion, norms, values and practices followed by the villagers, empowerment and participation of the villagers, which is developed through various institutional mechanisms in managing the entire development process/activities of GC under PRDP link model. Using an analytical framework, how formation of social capital helps promote transparency, accountability and villagers' participation and better implementation of PRDP model is explained. The main argument of this analytical framework is based on the premise that through the interventions of the PRDP model, some forms of social capital is formed at the community level. Such formation and accumulation of the social capital result in demand for and practice of transparency, accountability and participation at the community level. These features of good governance ultimately made the PRDP model relatively successful and effective in terms of its project indicators. The analytical framework can be well understood in the following diagram:

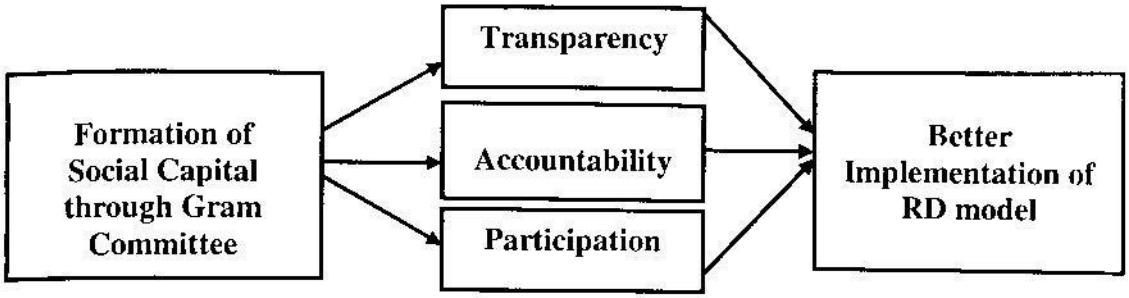



Figure – 1: Diagram of Analytical Framework

## CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATORY RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT-2

BARD through it heuristic research and action research experiments developed a RD model named Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP). The project has innovated a vertical and horizontal linkage among the village organization, LGIs, NBDs and the community people through establishing an informal type traditional organizational structure at the village level named Gram Committee (GC) and Union Coordination Committee (UCC) at the Union level. Through the prolonged intervention period of the PRDP model, social capital formation occurs in development process of GC operation at the grassroots. This formation of social capital takes place through GC activities which necessitates follow some important features of good governancein the institutional mechanisms of GC. These features of good governance in GC are promoting transparency, accountability and community participation, which in fact, help better implementation of the model. This chapter contains a brief background, concept, institutional arrangement, formation process and activities of Gram Committee of the of the PRDP link model, which end with a brief conclusion of PRDP link model.

### Background of the PRDP Link Model-2

Since its inception Bangladesh Rural Development Academy (BARD), in line with its mandated functions and responsibilities, have been engaged in experimenting and testing theories and concepts of development through which it strives to develop suitable models of development and provide policy guidelines to the government.

In the wake of BARD's experimentations with rural development, "Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP)" was devolved through two research projects namely "Joint Study on Agriculture and Rural Development (JSARD)" and "Joint Study on Rural Development Experiment (JSRDE), which were conducted under the sponsorship of JICA. JSARD, basically a research project, was conducted from 1986

to 1990 under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Objectives and approaches of the JSARD were i) to find out methodologies for linking "village studies" with studies for development planning" of rural areas; ii) to identify the "key indicators" or "factors" for agricultural and rural development; iii) to short out from the key indicators some workable basic issues for implementing the second phase of the project, which concentrated on an action oriented research in the field of rural development (Kaida, *et. al.*, 1996). The research phase of this JSARD project was piloted in 8 villages of 5 districts namely Dakshin Chamuria village in Tangail district; Jawar village in Kishorgong district; Gobarchitra, Fanishair villages in Chandpur district; Panchkitta, Kamairbag, Austodona villages in Comilla district and Tetulia village in Bogra district. After successful completion of the project, JSARD concluded, among other findings related to agriculture, that i) gaps in concepts, motivations and strategies of the development plans among the different administrative organizations and the villages seemed to have unfavorable effects on the implementations of development programmes; ii) Government endeavors to extend development efforts to the villages tend to be blocked because of administrative desalinates between the Upazila, the Union and the village. The lowest social unit appropriate to handle the development projects has not yet been identified.

On completion of the above project, the second phase entitled JSRDE having action research component was sponsored by the Ministry of local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives and JICA, whereas the executive agency was BARD with other participating organizations such as Kyoto University, Japan; Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh; Rural Development Academy, Bogra and Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Dhaka. The basic concepts and approaches of JSRDE project were to i) organize villagers in the village institutions in its entirety and its leaders selected in the smallest cohesive social groups in the village; ii) establish the institutional linkage between village and the local administrative institutions i.e. Thana and Unions; iii) enhance complex land use systems by applying need-based appropriate technologies; and iv) creation of off-farm job opportunities by bringing closer cooperation between rural and urban agencies. JSRDE project was implemented in 5 villages of four districts taking one village from each of Bogra, Tangail, Chandpur districts and 2 villages from Comilla district during 1992 to 1995.

Based on the findings of those studies the first phase of the PRDP was implemented during 2000-2004 by Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) in 4 Unions of Kalihati Upazila in Tangail District and after successful completion of the first phase, second phase of the PRDP was started in 2005, which would continue up to 2010. With a view to replicating the model nationwide the project is now being implemented by BRDB in 11 Unions of Kalihati Upazila of Tangail District, 2 Unions of Titas Upazila of Comilla District and 2 Unions of Meherpur Sadar Upazila of Meherpur District.

## The Concept of the PRDP Link Model

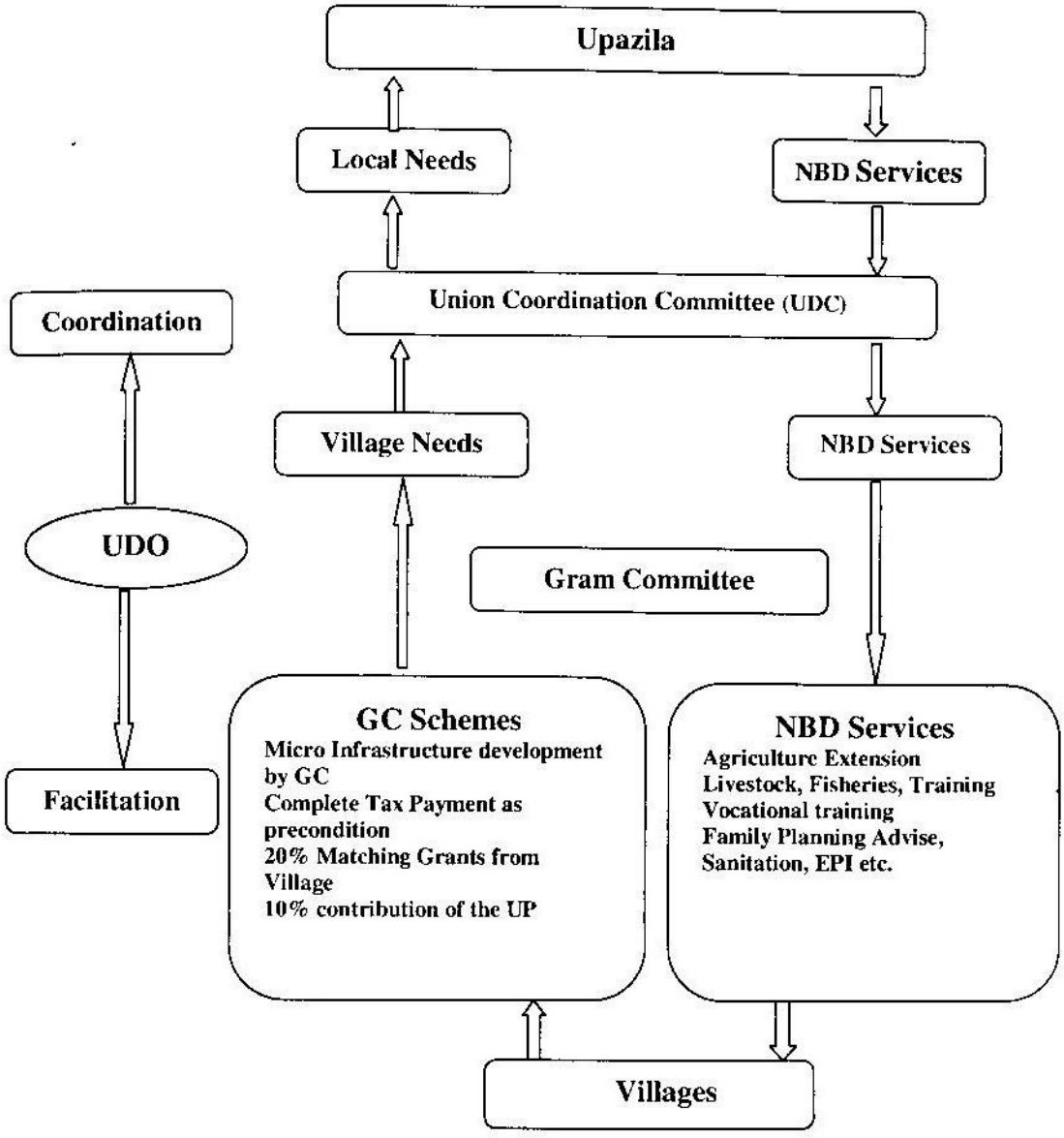
PRDP is one of the interventions of the BRDB, that aims at developing a mechanism of coordination among Union Parishad (UP), Nation Building Departments (NBDs) and NGOs for ensuring effective service delivery by the NBDs and NGOs at the grassroots level. PRDP, popularly known as link model, has devised an institutional framework to address real needs and problems of development of the rural population following a vertical linkage among villages, Union and Upazila and horizontal linkage among villagers, extension agents or field workers of the government institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders concerning rural development at Union level. The objective of the PRDP link model is to bring a comprehensive rural development at Union and Village level through a participatory governance mechanism, ensure effective service delivery of NBDs-NGOs extension agents, building micro infrastructure towards improving socio-economic condition of the villagers using local resources and its proper utilization, develop human resources, strengthen UP by developing a mechanism of coordination of all development organizations and promote accountability and transparency among all stake holders in the Union.

## The Institutional Arrangement of the Link Model

PRDP link model is a unique institutional arrangement of **PRDP** a two-tier committee system through which participatory bottom-up planning process has been practicing to incorporate the unheard voices, real choices and needs of the community people/villagers. At the base or village level there is Gram (Village) Committee (GC) and at the Union level there is Union Coordination Committee (UCC). In every village one Gram Committee (GC) is formed comprising 15-20 members on consensus of all the house hold and representing people from all paras(sub-village). A VC representative is chosen on consensus, who needs to attend the UCC meeting (UCCM) to inform the decisions of the GC meeting (GCM) for getting required services from the UCC. In the upper tier there is Union Coordination Committee (UCC) at the Union level headed by the UP Chairman comprising of all UP members, extension agents of all NBD functionaries as well as NGOs working at the Union level and representatives of the village committees including women groups. Both GC and UCC meet once a month regularly to discuss their various development agenda. NBD workers need to present their village visit schedules, work plans and programs in the UCC meeting. In UCCM thus review of work performance of NBDs and NGOs, discussions and decisions revolve and evolve, which help improve service delivery by the service providers and ensuring their transparency and accountability to the villagers and the Parishad. In UCCM, NBD functionaries and NGO extension workers are requested to pay regular visits to the GC meeting in order to extend required support and provide their inputs and expertise to the villagers.

Addressing the common interest of the villagers, GC and UCC are empowered to undertake minor schemes up to 50,000 Tk. following a pre-determined system of cost sharing method. According to GC and UCC scheme guidelines (BRDB/JICA: 2008) of the PRDP model, GC can undertake development schemes relating to para road, small culverts, drain, hat/bazar, bridge, school repair, arsenic free tube well, public library, sanitation etc. sharing 20% cost by the villagers, 10% cost by the UP and 70% cost by the PRDP on condition that 100% UP tax are realized in that village. The GC schemes should have to be single village oriented. In case of UCC scheme 30% cost should be shared by UP and other stakeholders that include NBDs, NGOs and GCs, and the rest 70% cost is to be borne by the PRDP. UCC can take schemes concerning educational/environmental event (such as organizing tree fair, book fair), cultural event (like pitha mela, observation of mother language day, victory day and independence day), procurement (such as purchasing of sewing machine, arsenic test kit, pesticide spray machine, etc.) and flood rehabilitation (*i.e.* bamboo bridge construction, seed distribution, earth filling work, etc.). For both GC and UCC schemes, notice boards should be installed in prominent locations of the villages to disseminate vital information to the villagers about the schemes and important decisions of the GCM and UCCM to ensure transparency and accountability of all concerned.

In PRDP a new position was created called Union Development Officer (UDO). UDO is deployed at the Union level and he needs to work as a catalyst keeping contact among all concerned for organizing villagers, coordinating development activities by establishing linkage between villagers and government and NGO extension workers, helping the villagers in preparing plan, implementation and monitoring of schemes. UDO also acts as a member secretary of the UCC. GCM is a unique platform of villagers to discuss about their problems, and decide upon issues of common interest and implement whatever is decided with ownership and cost sharing. In the UCCM, GC representatives, UP members, NBD functionaries, NGO representatives of the locality exchange information and opinion freely and take necessary decisions with UP Chairperson in the Chair. The institutional arrangement is explained in the following diagram:




Source: Salahuddin (2010)

Figure – 2: Diagram of Institutional Mechanism of PRDP Link Model

## Formation Process and Activities of Gram Committee of PRDP Model A

A Gram Committee is formed at village level including the respected persons of the village with villagers consent. It is an informal forum formed in presence of the villagers taking the proposals from each para and clan (family) and supports from all. Needs are be placed on priority basis identifying the problems of the village. In GC opportunities are created for the villagers to be organized together. Villagers get necessary advice from the govt. and non-govt. workers in the GCM. The main objectives are to adopt necessary measures for village development oriented discussions. GCM is primarily a media at village level, which assembles the villagers to be univocal and communicate the service providers. Gram Committee (GC) is formed by the support of villagers with a view to playing its role in comprehensive village development. One representative from the GC will be the member of Union Coordination Committee Meeting (UCCM). The meeting is held in presence of at least one person from each household of the village. It is known as General Meeting. To form GC, general meeting should be arranged first. Meeting is held with the elected members of the GC. It is known as Gram Committee Meeting (GCM). General meeting is called, if necessary, discussing in the GCM.

*Method of GC Formation*

- GC is formed through discussions in the General meeting. At least one person from each household should be present. Attendance rate must be above 60% in proportion to the total number of household in the village.
- GC members are selected by suggestions and support by all the participants at the General meeting. GC members must be above 18 years old. Only the persons who are living permanently in the village is eligible to be a GC member of the village can be a member of the GC. In this procedure, consent of all the villagers can be ensured in selecting GC members.
- GC consists of 15-30 members, which need to be proportional to the numbers of paras and households in the village. There must be at least one woman as GC member from each para.
- One chairman, one vice chairman, one secretary, and one assistant secretary is selected based on the consensus of all GC members.

*Activities of GC*

- To organize meeting: Gram committee meeting is held at least once in every month on the fixed date, time and venue. GCM will achieve a quorum when at least 50% of GC members are present in the meeting.

The GC secretary records the discussions in a register. Any villager who is interested in the GCM can attend the meeting. Government/NGO field workers can attend the meeting and keep communication with the villagers. UP members can also attend the meeting to understand villagers' needs and problems. They can give suggestions about the problems. It is an open forum where villagers discuss their problems in a way according to the customs and practices in rural Bangladesh.

- To present the discussions of the UCCM;
- To identify the problems in the village and plan out for the solution on priority basis;
- To have advice from government/NGO field workers, discuss advice, and take decisions on the next course of action by GC in accordance with advice;
- To monitor and evaluate various development activities/programs in the village;
- GC representative can attend UCCM and place the discussions made at GCM, which are recorded in the register. The progress of activities and programs supported by government/NGO extension workers are also be placed;
- GC members need to convey the gist of the discussions in the GCM and the UCCM, to all the villagers in the para meeting and also through personal communications. Similarly, GC representative place villagers' problems of each para. GC should know and monitor rural development activities in the village. GC motivates villagers and take initiative so that all the villagers are united in development endeavour;
- GC should cooperate with government/NGO programs for rural development through discussion in GCM and UCCM;

## SOCIAL CAPITAL FORMATION AND FEATURES OF GC GOVERNENCE IN PRDP MODEL

Formation of social capital has a bearing on GC governance. Social capital in GC occurs through creating sense of trust, network, communication, relationship, cooperation and interactions among the villagers of different paras and gushties, GC members and other stakeholders such as UP representatives and NBD extension agents. Through this study an attempt was taken to look into institutional mechanisms for promoting some essential features of GC governance under PRDP link model, which is basically the end product of social capital

formation through the GC and other project interventions at the grassroots. The formation of social capital has created demand and urge for practicing governance in GC. This study tries to unravel the institutional mechanisms of GC governance in three core areas of governance such as transparency, accountability and participation of the villagers in the GC. In order to ensure that several methods were adopted that included FGD with GC members, NBDs agents, UP functionaries, project officials and the general villagers, case studies on GC, consultations with the villagers and project officials. In this chapter, a brief three case studies were elaborated to understand the issues of ensuring transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities in the PRDP link model.

## Empirical Evidence by Other Studies

In the filed of governance and especially on GC of PRDP link model, much literature is non-existent. However, few empirical findings of those research studies were consulted here to validate the findings of the present studies. JICA and BRDP (2010) jointly conducted a comparative survey on Union Coordination Committee Meeting (UCCM), which was introduced by PRDP-2 project and traditional Union Coordination Meeting (UCM). In this study it was found that indices of transparency, accountability, participation and integrity were the highest in those Unions where there were practices of UCCM in comparison to traditional UCM. Even the good governance indices were also higher in UCCM practicing Unions than those of UCM practicing Unions. The study opined that the reasons behind the better indices of transparency, accountability, participation and integrity as well as good governance in UCCM Unions were that in UCCM Unions the villagers had more opportunity to get enough information about the LGSP schemes thorough their the Gram Committees.

Dasgupta (2008) looked into mechanism of transparency, accountability and participation in coordinating the development activities of the various services provided by field level nation building departments under PRDP model. Dasgupta (2008) found that the Gram Committee (GC) was an effective mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability of extension agents of the grassroots level nation building service delivery departments. This study also revealed that Gram Committee (GC) and Union Coordination Committee (UCC) helped increase participation of different stakeholders including the villagers in decision making process through sharing of relevant information regarding available services from the NBDs and thus due to better coordination service delivery in the villages by the NBDs extension agents improved through transparency and accountability of the extension workers.

Another study on PRDP was conducted by PPRC (2010). In this study a comparison of the performance of service delivery during the base line time, 2005 and in the second phase in 2009 between the PRDP programme villages and non-programme villages was done. Studying 60 villages out of 84 programme villages and 24 non-programme villages, PPRC found that service delivery performances of the six nation building departments, namely agriculture, livestock, fisheries, DPHE (Department of Public Health Engineering), health and family planning in the PRDP programme villages had significantly increased. The same study revealed that the PRDP link model contributed to increase peoples' understanding and recognition of the NBDs services and provided effective demand based service delivery. PPRC study also revealed that due to better implementation of the PRDP link model, the knowledge level of the villagers about ADP, UP budget and UP tax payment status had increased from the base line period (2005) till the study period (2009). This might happen so due to following transparent accountable and participatory management system through GC and UCCM of PRDP link model.

In a seminar report by Rahman, Majibar and Yajima, Kichiji (2002) organised by BRDP and JICA it was opined that PRDP intervention promoted social capital in the community through self-help and mutual help and capacity of the community people in local level planning, designing, estimating costs and implementing the micro schemes were enhanced substantially. The report also portrayed that attitude to evade UP taxes has remarkably dwindled and the matching contribution system helped mobilise massive community resources and its economic and efficient uses. In that report it was opined that UCC emerged as a mini parliament to the members of UP, villagers and extension agents of NBDs and NGOs. In PRDP, "an atmosphere of good governance was promoted through peoples' participation, decision making, responsiveness, consensus building, accountability and transparency in the project areas" the report added.

## Transparency in GC

Social capital formation through GC, calls for practicing more transparency in GC activities Transparency means openness in every activities of an organization or institution. Transparency is a process and an end itself that implies making relevant information available to all who are interested and whose interests are involved in any action or decision taken for them in order to enable them to make or to participate or to help that act. There are differences of meaning of transparency at national and local level. At local level transparency refers to the provision of relevant and reliable information to all the members involved (Manasan et al., 1999). In other words, transparency means making all

information available to the members. In this study, transparency means "maintaining openness" and "sharing of GC activities and decisions with the villagers".

*Case Study on Judurpara GC, Narandia UP, Kalihati Upazila, Tangail*

The people of the Narandia village came to know about PRDP-2 project of BRDP while PRDP was erecting the Union Development Complex of Narandia UP with the financial assistance of Japan International Cooperative Agency (JICA) during sometime around January 2002. The villagers also got idea about it from JOCV (Japan Overseas Cooperative Volunteers) members and UDO as they did some groundwork in the village to make aware the villagers about PRDP, JICA and the system of formation of GC. This prompted the villagers to contact with the then UP Chairman and members, relevant Union Development Officer (UDO) and other concerned in the Narandia UP through which the villagers come to know about PRDP model. Knowing everything about PRDP project the villagers vowed to form a Gram Committee (GC) in their village, Jadurpara. In order to form a new GC, the first job from the project side is to make a household survey to collect some vital information of the household in that village that includes information containing name of the household head, fathers' name, age, occupation, educational status, gusti (clan)/para, areas of own land, socio-economic status and number of sons and daughters and total number of family members etc. After completion of the household survey report of the village, the UDO and village organizer organizes para level meeting at different para or gusti to discuss about the objectives and advantages of GC formation in the village. At this stage, the interested rural elites in consultation with the general villagers fix a date for formation of GC and its chairpersons and members. On this scheduled date in presence of villagers not less than 60% inhabitants of the total household representing members of different households of paras and gushtis, the GC Chairman, Vice-chairman, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary were chosen first on consensus by the villagers present in this preliminary general meeting and thereafter these office bears chose the general members having one third women members representing from each para/gushti. Thus GC was composed of 15

to 20 villagers representing members of all paras and gusties within the village. In Jadurpara GC there were 19 members of whom the numbers of male and female members were 9 and 10 respectively. Jadurpara GC was formed with a view to undertaking micro infrastructures and ensuring NBDs and NGOs services in their village on 27th April 2002. Among the total 19 members, Jadurpara GC was composed of members representing five paras/gustis in this village such as 4 members were from Modhopara, Notun para, Purbo para each, 5 from Pashchim para and 2 were from Uttar para. Since its inception from April 2002 up to April 2010, Jadurpara GC conducted 101 meetings. If requested NBD the extension agents and NGO representatives and general villagers attended GC meetings but when any important scheme would be undertaken, general villagers were invited to participate in that meeting and thereby attendance of the general villagers, especially the villagers of the concerned paras where the intended scheme would be undertaken increased. After formation of this GC up to 2005, it constructed some schemes. Among those projects this GC implemented a very important project, which was a long stranded desire of the entire village community. There was no approached/feeder road from the highways to go to Modha para. Before GC attempt, years after years, before and after liberation, many UP chairmen made repeated commitments to the villagers to erect this feeder road of utmost need to the villagers but nobody constructed this road. Then it was the onerous responsibility on the shoulder of GC to erect this road. In 2002 through a sense of shared responsibility by the PRDP-2, UP and villagers' contribution GC became successful in building this exigently essential infrastructure. Before erecting this road, the villagers used to pass this road amidst villager's houses using boat or floating device made of banana tree stack in the month of Jaistha to Poush. After construction of this approached road, general villagers became extremely happy as they could maintain communication between the main road and the Modhapra village easily.For construction of these micro infrastructures GC had to prepare a project proposal including its expenditure budget by the P. Here GC needed to follow a cost sharing method. Out of the total cost Union Parishad, villagers and PRDP/JICA had to incur 10%, 20% and the 70% cost respectively. The total scheme cost was 48,710/-, of which PRDP's financial support was 35,000/-, UP gave 5,000/-

and the rest amount 8,710/- was given by the villagers. The villagers had the prerogative to pay their contributory amount in cash taka or worked as daily labour. For collecting the cost shared by the villagers' part, GC convening a special meeting, fixed contribution per households. In such way GC collected 5,100/- from household and the rest amount equals to taka 3,610/- was paid by 35 villagers through working as one-day voluntary labour in the project. In order to maintain the quality and monitor the progress of the work, GC formed a five member Scheme Implementation Team (SIT) comprising concerned ward member of the UP as Adviser, the GC Chairman as convener, one GC male member as members secretary, one GC female member and respective UDO as members. The GC started the scheme on 8th march 2005 and completed the scheme within one month successfully with the cooperation of the villagers. In undertaking this project GC needed to record the decision of this scheme in its resolution first, which were approved by the UCCM. After that, UP started collecting taxes from the villagers/household by its employed tax collector(s). UP's part was thus shared from the tax collected form the villagers/household. For getting PRDP's cost i.e. 35000/- GC sent the project proposal to the concerned PRDP authority with some documents that included a certificate from the UP certifying that 100% tax was cleared by the villagers, copies of GC and UCCM resolutions, master roll of labour payment, declaration form by the land owner for providing soil and land for the intended construction work, copy of the villagers contribution dully signed with name of the villagers. Finally, before staring the scheme GC had to set up a display signboard containing information about the total cost of the scheme, cost shared which was supported and seconded by other members present in that meeting. The decision was recoded in GC resolution. After that it was sent to UCCM for discussions and getting preliminary approval with GC resolution. Immediately after getting the preliminary approval from UCCM, a Scheme Implementation Team was also formed composed of 5 members. This was followed by a meeting of SIT on 5th November 2009. Latter on the RDP, cost given by UP and cost contributed by the villagers at the starting and ending point of the of the scheme. Again GC had to set up several notice boards in the important public places such as entry and exit point of village, in hut/bazar, school building, UP

office, importing turning point in/of the villages etc. though which all important and necessary information were shared with the general villagers. These information included date and venue of GC meeting, GC and UCCM resolutions, all relevant scheme related information and so on. The institutional mechanisms for ensuring transparency, accountability and participation of the villagers included formation of GC and SIT; organizing GC meeting, para meeting and inaugural ceremony; setting of notice board and display board; cost sharing method; system of providing land and soil and serving as voluntary labour; sharing of GC and UCC resolution; preparation of scheme map and cost etc.

**Accountability in GC**

Social capital formation in the rural society can buttress argument for promoting accountability in the GC affairs. Accountability entails an obligation to report its activities, role and performance to an agreed authority or set of people. According to Manasan et al. (1999), accountability refers "the ability of the villagers to exert pressure on the field workers to serve. In this study accountability refers to the answerability of the members of GC to the villagers for their actions, inactions and decisions.

*Case Study on Char Nagarbari GC, Narandia UP, Kalihati Upazila, Tangail*

In the Char Nagarbari village there was no pucca road between the southern and western parts of village. Therefore the inhabitants of the villagers had to suffer much in carrying their goods, agricultural products, farming animal from one part to another part. To solve this problem there was a long felt need to erect a pucca road to ease communication of the villagers of that village. With a view to undertaking that scheme one GC member in its 94$^{th}$ meeting, dated 4$^{th}$ November 2009, proposed a scheme for construction of that scheme SIT members prepared the detailed estimation, rate of earthwork, land and number of villagers supposed to contribute their part as day labour. Then visiting the scheme area they finalized estimated cost of the scheme. The total length of that proposed road was 1600 ft, length- 8 ft and height-2 ft. and total cost would be Tk. 50,280/ among which the villagers contribution would be Tk.10, 280/- at the rate of 20%, UP's share

Tk. 5000/- at the rate of 10% and the PRDP's share would be Tk. 35,000/- at the rate of 70% of the total cost of the project. At the same time a social map/measurement of the project areas was also prepared by the SIT in cooperation with UDO and the villagers of that locality. Then GC convened a para meeting in the vicinity of the scheme. In this meeting the attendance of the villagers was properly recorded with their names and signatures. After coming positive signal from the UCCM, GC tried to obtain a certificate from UP certifying that 100% tax of the villagers were paid. When detected that there remained some unpaid tax by the villagers, UP provided that certificates on assurance that the remaining dues would be paid by the members of that GC. At this stage GC convened a para meeting inviting all villagers to inform the scheme and request the villagers to pay their contribution. Here some poor villagers promised to pay their contribution in way of employing them in earthen work, instead of giving cash contribution. On the basis of the decisions taken in this meeting, a list of villagers and their committed amount to be paid was recoded in a pre fixed format. At the same time another list of villagers who would pay their contribution by employing them as day labour in the scheme was also recoded in a pre fixed format. As per the commitment given in the meeting, GC started collecting the villagers' contribution. After that the final project document was prepared in support with all necessary documents, such as i) GC resolution, ii) list of SIT with signature, iii) copy of the social measurement/map of the scheme, iv) copy of the cost estimation, v) copy of the tax clearance certificate, vi) UCCM resolution, vii) list of villagers' contribution; viii) list of villagers employed as labour, ix) a list of villagers attended in the para meeting with signature; x) a filled-up scheme application form dully signed by competent office bearers; xi) a list of the villagers who would provide soil and land in the scheme in a pre designed declaration format, which was then sent to PD through URDO to get the cost shared by the PRDP. On receipt of the project cost GC started the scheme on 25$^{th}$ December and completed the work with one month on 25$^{th}$ January 2010. Through a long time intervention of PRDP model, GC was able to build social capital in the rural society that necessitated practice of accountability in its activities. Such social capital helped develop a sense of belongingness, togetherness, mutual help and cooperation, constant communication and network among people of different

paras and gusties; instill trust and ownership, participation and empowerment among the villagers; increase interactions, solidarity, fellow feelings among the villagers. That in turn calls for practicing accountability through its myriad institutional mechanisms. Thus GC became an effective organization for the development at the grassroots.

## Villagers' Participation in GC

Formation of social capital through GC facilitated villagers' participation in different activities of GC Participation is a very wide and complex concept. Participation refers to the close involvement of the people from all walks of life irrespective of sex, race, group, caste, colour and religion in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making process of an area (UNDP, 1993). According to the World Bank (2002), participation is the process through which stakeholders' influence and share control over priority setting, policy making, resource allocation and access to public goods and services. Cohen and Uphoff (1977 quoted in Oakley et al., 1991) viewed participation with regard to rural development as "people's involvement in decision making processes, in implementing program, their sharing in the benefits of development programs" and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such program.

Thus participation may be described as a vibrant collective activity of people in decision-making, making contribution to or implementing their plans/programs and projects and sharing benefits from the development process. Participation can be defined as the active involvement of the local people in the planning and implementation of development projects/programs. Pearse and Stiefel (1979) define participation as organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institution in given social situation, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control (Chowdhury, 1980). The value of participation lies in the fact that it allows the people to decide upon and to take actions, which they believe are necessary for their own development (Siddiquee, 1997). Since early seventies different international organizations, scholars of public administration, sociology, political science and so on tried to define it and put emphasis on participation from various perspectives but the meaning of participation is still blurred and ambiguous (Ahmed, 1987; Quddus, 1994). In a country like Bangladesh participation is top-down, not bottom-up and it is leader/power dominated or centered. In the local level the meaning of participation ideally should be "a continuous process of mutual learning". In this study "participation" means the villagers' involvement in any activities undertaken by GC for the interest of the villagers.

*Case Study on Modokpara Nagarbai GC, Narandia UP, Kalihati, Tangail*

Modokpara Nagarbai village is one of the villages in Narandia Union Parishad of Kalihati Upazila of Tagail district. Knowing everything about GC from UDO, JOCV, field workers of PRDP, villagers became enthusiastic to form a GC in their village. After that the villagers, sharing views and discussing among themselves and consulting with the social leaders of the village, they fixed a date and venue for a preliminary meeting, which was shared with the villagers through miking and affixing posters in the important public places in the village. On 28th May 2005 the Modkpara Nagarbai GC was formed. The villagers presented in the GC formation meeting chose a 65 old Chairman having HSC level education, an eight passed 48 years Vice-Chairman, a female secretary of 45 years old with SSC degree. The villagers also selected an Assistant Secretary, age 32, HSC, who is involved in doing clerical job of the GC. This GC was composed of total 19 members, of which 11 female and 8 male. The Secretary of this GC was a potential and very active lady. She was directly involved in Mohila Awami League, who had a wide linkage with many other socio-cultural organizations. Before joining here as a GC secretary, she was involved in NGO and BRDB cooperatives. Now UP also involved her as one of the members in 100 days programme. In course of discussion with Ratna Rani Sarker, Secretary, Modokpara Nagarbari GC cited that "GC is like battery and UP is like torch". Both GC and UP were playing mutually supportive roles for grassroots development. She informed that some UP representatives had less interest in such endeavour of grassroots development program because UP members had little roles in scheme implementation of GC. In the GC meeting the villagers discussed their own problem including issues like, how to develop the village, sanitation, women's problems, law and order, problems and performance of school going children, safe drinking water, pressing problems of the villages, agricultural problems, livestock and fisheries problems, petty quasi-judicial matters, needs of NBD services and scheme to be undertaken by the GC etc. Unlike other GC here the participation of the general villagers was phenomenal. The main reason of this fact was that here the number of women members were higher than those of other GCs. The women members were well convinced and internalized the

role and functions of the GC. Their higher commitment to their social responsibilities could also contribute higher presence of general villagers. The villagers used to extend their supports to GC as and when required. The GC has earned the trust and confidence of the villagers as GC maintains a transparent and accountable system of all activities undertaken by the GC. By using the sense of villagers' ownership and trust, thus GC used to organize various special programs in line with cultural tradition and practices in our national and rural life. Since 2005, among several initiatives, Modokpara Nagarbai GC hitherto conducted 3 micro-infrastructural projects for the villagers. At first, it jointly with Narandia GC undertook a scheme for setting up a tin shed village library hall near the entry point of the village in 2006-07. Among the total cost (Tk. 1,00,575/-) of the scheme, PRDP provided 70% (Tk. 70,000/-) of the total cost, and 10% cost (Tk.10,000/-) was supported by the UP and the rest 20% (Tk.20,503/-) cost was borne by the general villagers through cash and employed as labour. Again in the fiscal year 2008-09 to equip the library hall with books and necessary furniture, another scheme was prepared and implemented by the Modokpara Nagarbari GC at the total cost of Tk. 49,943/- which was shared by the villagers' 20% contribution (Tk. 9995/-), 10% UP tax (Tk. 5000/-) and PRDP's support of Tk. 34,950/-. Immediately after construction of the library, people of all walks of life in the village i.e. tiny tots, adolescent students, youngsters and aged people began to rush into the library, which has become a hub of gathering extra-curricular knowledge that could help the new generation build good habits and moral character. The library remained open from 3-6 pm with an occasional/irregular opening in the morning. Due to better imbuement and acceptance of the cost sharing method, this GC was able to undertake another project relating to earthen road in 2007-08. During sometime in 2008, this GC submitted a scheme for construction of a feeder road approaching to village from the main road. At the implementation stage, it encountered a severe problem with one of the landowners who promised to provide some portion of his land for the proposed road. He also signed a declaration form but at the final stage when the GC attempted to start the scheme, he turned a back and disowned his earlier commitment, which caused to cease that scheme and thereafter it undertook the scheme of setting up library in the village. In order

to help the poor women engaging them in some income earning activities, this GC, with the assistance of PRDP organized some practical training during 2006 to 2010 for GC members and women villagers. These training programs included tailoring, embroidery, kitchen gardening, cow fattening, health and nutrition, seed preservation, livestock and agriculture etc. In these training programs NBDs extension agents acted as trainers, where male-female villagers, farmers, GC members, fishermen, and other concerned participated. Villagers' participation in various GC activities helped general villagers develop communication, solidarity, network, trust, mutual support, relationship and interactions for overall development of the community, which in turn contributed to better implementation of GC activities in the village.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

Social capital grows in a society over a long time through established norms, socio-cultural values and practices, legal laws and institutional arrangements/mechanism. Unlike human and physical capital, social capital is one of the greatest resources of a society which is formed through developing a sense of collective cooperation, mutual trust and reciprocity, groups and associations, unity and solidarity, communication and network, relationship and constant interactions that act as a glue for bonding, bridging and linking diverse people together. Formation of social capital developed through long duration of the project that helped instill a sense of mutual cooperation, trust and network, social cohesion, solidarity, communication and interactions among the villagers. Such formation of social capital through GC created space for practicing good governance in the realm of GC activities. In promoting GC governance, three core issues of good governance such as ensuring transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities were emphasized.

Transparency, accountability and participation are interrelated concepts, which are so intricately enmeshed together that cannot be isolated each other. Some mechanisms of GC cover three issues simultaneously, whereas transparency and accountability also intermingled together. Therefore, these issues are discussed altogether. On the basis of FGD, case study, SSI and interview with general villagers the following findings were derived regarding formation of social capital through ensuring mechanism of transparency, accountability and enhancing community participation in the GC activities.

## Institutional Mechanisms of Promoting Transparency, Accountability and Villagers' Participation in GC

The following institutional mechanisms of GC, has helped promote transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities, which in fact emanated from formation of social capital in the rural society through GC:

- *Formation of GC:* In the formative stage attempts were made to ensure transparency in GC. Before formation of GC, Japan Overseas Cooperative Volunteers (JOCVs) along with other project personnel helped motivate the villagers through motivation, video presentation to form GC in a village. At this stage a comprehensive base line survey was conducted to record the socio-economic status and number of total household. On the basis of that survey, attempts are made to organize some Para-based meeting and after a massive consultation with the inhabitants of all *Paras* and *Gushties* of that village, a general meeting is convened representing representatives of all house-hold/people from all *Paras* and *Gushties.* In this general meeting (GM) on the presence of at least 60% HH, GC Chairman, Vice-chairman, members are chosen on consensus. Sometimes at first only members (15-20) are chosen, then they choose their leaders. In this body one-third women's participation is maintained. After that, this entire body of GC is to be approved by the GM. The formation process of GC ensured transparency, accountability and enhanced villagers' participation in GC activities.
- *Organizing GC Meeting in Every Month:* All village based GC used to organize a monthly meeting at a suitable date. Some GC maintains a particular day/date of every month. It was found that all the GCs do that GCM on regular basis. In monthly meeting any villager can participate. During undertaking any scheme more villagers participates in GCM. Regular meeting helps ensure transparency, accountability and participation of the villagers in GC activities.

- *Use of Registered Khata:* In order to record the attendance of the general villagers, GC members and other concerned, and also issues and decisions discussed and finalized, a registered *khata* is used in GC. Any villager has more or access to it. This mechanism helps in promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities.
- *Distribution of resolution to share important decisions of the GC:* Major important decisions of GC are shared with the common villagers and other stakeholders *i.e.* UP, NBDs, UDO, UCC, through distribution of GC resolution. Such sharing information with the villagers helps ensure

responsible behaviour, transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities.

- *Provision of Obtaining Certificate from up Regarding Tax Clearance:* Following a decision taken by the GC meeting and getting approval from the UCC and PRDP-2 authority, GC needs to obtain a certificate of clearance of 100% tax from the UP before undertaking any scheme by GC. In doing so GC members requires making approach to the villagers in order to convince the villagers to pay taxes fixed upon them. Therefore GC needs to maintain transparency and accountability in selecting or choosing a project that serves the villagers common interest. In collecting such taxes, UP needs to give a receipt/voucher to the taxpayers, thus every taxpayer is aware of the schemes to be taken. Although in some cases it is not possible to get 100% tax from the villagers. In such case, UP gives a certificates taking guarantees that the remaining part will have to be collected later on, otherwise GC has to bear the additional cost of the project. This provision helps the villagers feel a stake from their own to maintain the performance and record the progress of the work through supervision and monitoring the GC scheme. This has significantly contributed to promoting of transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC affairs.
- *Cost Sharing/Matching Grant System:* According to matching grant system undertaking any project needs to be shared by the villagers, UP and the PRDP. In implementation of any GC scheme general villagers need to bear 20% cost from their own. In taking such schemes GC needs to obtain commitment from the villagers/households regarding the amount to be paid by them as contribution, which is fixed in an urgent/special meeting by the GC. In such a situation a list of the household and their committed amount to be paid as contribution is recorded and signed by the villagers. Here in this meeting poor people who are unable to pay their contribution in cash, can share their contribution by employing them as voluntary labour in the scheme, which is also recorded with name and signature. Thus the general villagers can be well aware about the schemes to be taken for the villagers. As the villagers pay contribution for the GC scheme, so all GC members are very much concerned about the scheme performance. The villagers' opined that in GC scheme 90-100% work is done whereas in case of UP work it is reported that at best 50% work is done. The GC members do not go out of truck in fear of loosing of getting future scheme. Matching grant system of GC helped enhancing transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities.
- *Formation of Scheme Implementation Team (SIT):* For implementation of any development undertaking by the GC, a Scheme Implementation Team is formed comprising of 5-7 villagers representing different stakeholders such as GC Chairperson, one female GC member, UDO, GC secretary, concerned

NBD members, teachers, any relevant villagers having UP member as its adviser. The formation of SIT helps to maintain transparency, accountability and enhancing the scope of participation of the villagers in GC scheme.

- *Introduction of Notice Board and Display Board:* In the PRDP-2 link model, GC is in the practice to use the notice board widely. Important decisions made in the GC resolutions, scheme related decisions, any important messages of the UP and NBDs, NBDs posters and scheme budget, procurement/expenditure statement of the scheme etc. are generally affixed in the notice board, which needs to be set up at the important places of the villages. In every GC, a demonstration/display signboard containing information regarding name and other details of the scheme such as total budget of the scheme, amount of cost shared by UP, cost contributed by the villagers and PRDP-2 and whole composition of SIT is prepared and set up in a display board at the staring and ending point of the scheme. Through these notice boards and display boards accountability and transparency are maintained in the GC to the villagers. Sharing relevant information through notice and display boards also encourage villagers' participation in GC affairs.
- *Organization of Inauguration Ceremony:* Overtime it has become a general practice for the GC that at the start of the project and after successful completion of the GC scheme, each and every GC organizes an inaugural ceremony to inaugurate the scheme, where rural elites and general villagers are invited to participate in it. Thus GC ensured social accountability, transparency and participation of the villagers.
- *Preparation of Social Map/Measurement and Cost Estimation:* After formation of the SIT, it needs to prepare a social map/measurement and estimated budget of the proposed scheme. Being physically present at the project site, SIT prepares this measurement and budget in consultation with the villagers of that locality/para, which helps promoting transparency, accountability and increase participation of villagers in GC affairs.
- *Organization of Para Meeting:* After getting preliminary approval from the UCCM, GC needs to organize a para meeting to share the information with the people of the scheme area. Through detailed discussion with the villagers it is finally chosen and in this meeting commitment of cost sharing amount by the villagers is recorded with their signatures. This also helps in ensuring transparency, accountability and participation in GC activities. Organizing para meeting for scheme undertaking help the villagers bonding together for mutual help, support and common interest/purpose.
- *Organization of Annual General Meeting at the End of the Year:* Every GC organises an annual meeting (AGM) at the end of the year to review their last year's performance to the invitees that includes UP representatives, rural

elites, GC members, school teachers and the general villagers. This AGM performs a system of social audit in the GC, which helps ensure transparency, accountability and participation in GC.

- *Scheme Initiation, Selection, Preparation and Approval Process:* In the whole process of scheme initiation, selection, preparation and approval of a GC scheme, transparency and accountability is maintained in the PRDP-2 project. When a bottom-up, need based scheme is finally decided to be undertaken, a SIT is formed. The SIT needs to prepare the detailed cost estimation of that scheme after filed observation and consultation with the villagers of that area. Then SIT needs to finalize the total cost of the scheme and fix the cost shared by the general villagers, UP and PRDP-2. In fixing the cost shared by the villagers, GC should convene a para meeting in that project area in order to share every details of the scheme and shared contribution by the villagers. Then scheme needs to be approved by the UCCM, provided that all document containing the minutes of SIT meet with signature, a map indicating the project site, detailed design of the scheme, participants' list with signature or thumb impression of the para meeting, tax clearance certificates, signing a declaration form for providing soil and land by the land owners (if needed), list and amount of cost shared/contributed by the villagers are given with the filled up application format of the scheme. Then it is sent to project office for final approval. Thus transparency and accountability is maintained in the entire process of scheme selection to finalization in GC.
- *Submission of Completion Report by the SIT:* After completion of the scheme, SIT needs to prepare a detailed completion report containing total expenditure statement, all original vouchers and master roll payment along with other related documents as per need of the completion report format. This report should have to be approved by the GCM and in such meeting if objections or complains are received by the villagers, the SIT are to be fully responsible to remedy the loss or redress the fault/negligence done in the scheme. If any GC fails to complete the scheme within the stipulated time (June), no new scheme is not given/allocated to that GC. Thus transparency and accountability in GC scheme is properly maintained.
- *Signing in a Declaration form by the Landowners for Providing Soil and Land for Construction of Earthen Road:* The landowners, who need to provide either soil or land for erecting earthen road, need to be prefixed in consultation with the landowners and villagers, which is being recorded and signed by the respective landowners in a format provided by the project authority. Here GC needs to sit and negotiate with the landowners several times as in some cases it is found that at the eleventh hour some landowners sometime fail to keep their previous commitment. This mechanism of GC helped develop transparency, accountability and participation of the villagers.

- *GC Maintains a Cost Effective Mechanism of Labor Payment System:* Instead of daily payment system for the labour employed in earthen work in GC scheme, GC introduced a new system of labor payment, which is based on performance. Instead of daily payment system followed by KABIKHA, TR or KABITA in UP earthen work/project, GC measures the labourers' work by cubic feet, so that no labour can avoid work. In presence of general villagers, UDO and SIT members measure the work and prepares the master roll, thus a participatory, transparent and cost effective project implementation is ensured in GC.
- *Areas of Villagers' Participation in GC:* It is learnt from the informal discussion with the villagers in the different studied GCs, general villagers have participation in paying taxes, sharing contribution of scheme, attendance in GC meeting, giving soil and land for construction of road. Villagers' increased participation is observed when important schemes are to be taken by the GC, especially concerned villagers of that para or gushti took part being previously informed about the meeting. The villagers also take part in local rally, local cultural activities, inauguration of any scheme, in annual general meeting.

In the following matrix, mechanisms of GC to ensure transparency, accountability and participation of the villagers are explained in the summary form:

*Table I: Summary of Matrix on Types of Governance Occur in GC Activities*

| Sl. No. | Activities/ Mechanism of Ensuring Governance | Types/Nature of Governance Occur | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Transparency | Accountability | Participation |
| 1. | GC Formation | √ | - | √ |
| 2. | Household survey | √ | - | √ |
| 3. | Monthly meeting | √ | √ | √ |
| 4. | Attendance in GC meeting | √ | √ | √ |
| 5. | Decision making | √ | √ | √ |
| 6. | Selection of scheme | √ | - | √ |
| 7. | Scheme preparation | √ | √ | √ |
| 8. | Scheme implementation | √ | √ | √ |
| 9. | Scheme supervision and monitoring | √ | √ | √ |
| 10. | Formation of Scheme Implementation Team | √ | - | √ |

| Sl. No. | Activities/ Mechanism of Ensuring Governance | Types/Nature of Governance Occur | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Transparency | Accountability | Participation |
| 11. | Matching grant system | √ | √ | √ |
| 12. | Clearance of UP tax | √ | √ | √ |
| 13. | Collection of tax clearance certificate from the UP | - | - | - |
| 14. | Paying contribution for scheme implementation | √ | √ | √ |
| 15. | Completion report of scheme | - | √ | - |
| 16. | Notice board | √ | √ | - |
| 17. | Display board | √ | √ | - |
| 18. | GC resolution | √ | √ | - |
| 19. | Fixing of GC resolution in notice board | √ | √ | - |
| 20. | Maintaining of registry khata for recoding attendance and decisions | √ | √ | - |
| 21. | Choosing of leader of GC | - | - | √ |
| 22. | Maintain democratic system in GC | √ | √ | √ |
| 23. | Bottom up planning process | √ | √ | √ |
| 24. | Role of NGOs | √ | √ | √ |
| 25. | Attendance of NBDs agent in GC meeting | √ | √ | √ |
| 26. | Attendance of villagers | √ | √ | √ |
| 27. | Employed as labour in scheme | √ | √ | √ |
| 28. | Giving land for the scheme | √ | √ | √ |
| 29. | Signing an MOU between GC and Land owner | √ | √ | √ |
| 30. | Maintenance of the scheme | - | - | √ |

## Lesson Learnt from this Study

The lesson learnt from the study might be useful for the policy planners, which are alluded below

- *GC Introduced a Bottom-Up Participatory Planning Process at the Grassroots:* GC undertakes schemes in line with the villagers' needs, demands and whishes. In ensuring this most the demands comes to GC meeting from amongst the representatives of different *Paras* and *Gushties* ensuing an inclusive strategy. Here general villagers' unheard voices and choices are articulated/ reflected through the GC scheme. GC in its wide range of activities such as formation of GC, scheme identification, taking contribution from the villagers, employing them in project implementation as voluntary labour, taking soil and land from the villagers, preparing social map/measurement and cost estimation of the project, involvement of general villagers in measuring the earthen work in scheme, organizing of para based meeting after selection of a proposed scheme, GC has initiate a process of participatory bottom up planning, which also helps them promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities. Thus a sense of ownership and belongingness of the villagers have been instilled within the general villagers, which in turn helps them become ever vigilant and watchful for their own scheme.
- *General Villagers Participation are Higher in Women Dominated GC:* In both *Mohila Dal (MD)* and the GCs where the number of women members are higher than their stipulated number, participation of general villagers, specially women villagers is higher than those of other male dominated GCs. One women member of GC opined that if women can understand their role and can learn required knowledge and skill, they can convince others easily. According to that woman, more interventions should be given to the women members in order to accelerate the pace of development in rural areas. Women are more honest and trustworthy than men and women can build relationship, network and cooperation with other very easily.
- *GC Established a Horizontal and Vertical Accountability:* Amidst its long time implementation of the PRDP, GC was able to develop a vertical accountability with UCCM and UP. At the community level GC though its regular meeting, special meeting, formation of SIT for implementation and monitoring of GC scheme, taking contribution from the community people for scheme implementation, organizing para meeting with the community people at the vicinity of the concerned scheme, taking soil and land from the villagers, employing community people as labour in the undertaken schemes, sharing all relevant information of the GC with the villagers through notice board and display signboard, involving community people in preparing scheme cost and social measurement etc., GC has firmly established a horizontal accountability to the villagers.

- *GC Introduced Social Accountability:* GC has introduced a system of social responsibility system in the village through its myriad tools and techniques. Unlike hierarchical relationship, social accountability and responsibility are built on horizontal responsibilities between GC and the villagers. Social accountability helps contribute improved governance and efficient use of resources with shared vision, ownership and empowerment. GC's initiatives are people-centered and demand-driven, and it follows a participatory bottom-up process, though which social responsibility has become well grounded in the link model. GC has developed some tools of demand driven accountabilities, which is getting operationalized through a bottom us mechanism. GC's social accountability lies with the villagers' active participation and voluntarily engagements in its wide ranging activities that help them (community people/villagers) to exert accountability and transparency in the GC's operations and development undertakings in the villages. Such social accountabilities can be found in GC's mechanism of community engagement in sharing partial cost of the scheme, forming SIT for implementation and monitoring of GC scheme, involving UP as a partner for providing scheme cost, organizing para meeting with the community people at the vicinity of the concerned scheme, taking soil and land from the villagers, employing community people as labour in the undertaken schemes, sharing all relevant information of the GC with the villagers through notice board and display signboard, involving community people in preparing scheme cost and social measurement. As villagers' have a stake for its own development, therefore they keep a vigilance watch for all activities in GC, so that their contribution can be optimally utilized.
- *GC Introduced a Social Audit System:* As community people have been sharing partial cost of the scheme either in cash or by serving as voluntary labour, they have keen interest to look into the performance and progress of the scheme. As part of social audit rural elites including UP Chairman and members, GC members, SIT members, religious leaders, school teachers and villagers from all walks of life are invited in the inaugural ceremony of the scheme through which GC starts the scheme and again at the end of the scheme, GC organises another ceremony to inform them that the scheme has been successfully completed. Organising para meeting and year ending Annual General Meeting to review the performance of the overall activities and to prepare plan for the forthcoming year are two mechanisms through which social audit of GCs accomplished by the villagers themselves.

- *GC Leaders are Socially Acceptable to the Community People:* Development is basically a value-laden concept, where existing value system plays an important role in ushering change and transformation of the society. From global and Bangladesh perspective this has become an axiomatic reality that bypassing the indigenous values, norms, rituals and practices a sustainable system of governance cannot be developed at national level, let alone at the grassroots level, where value systems are deeply engrained in the socio-economic and cultural milieus. It was quite evident that externally imposed ideas face more challenges which ultimately turned in to an abortive and quixotic exercise. Under such a grounded reality, GC opted the best alternative for using the socially acceptable ascriptive leaders to run the GC. In PRDP project, most of the GC leaders are traditional indigenous leaders, who are basically maintaining the prevailing social values and ethics with pious sincerity. This is another important factor for being successful of this village organization. Due to the social obligation of the sarders/matbars to the community, they fell honored to sustain their socio-cultural leadership with integrity, transparency, accountability and participatory management in GC activities taking villagers' involvement as a topmost concern in their mind.
- *GC Follows an Inclusive Strategy:* Incorporating representatives from all para, sub-groups and gushties within the village GC is formed. In its composition one thirds women members were integrated. Women members are also incorporated in its other forums such as SIT formation and GC management body. Involvement of UP, NBDs and NGOs is also ensured in its working pattern. Thus GC is following an inclusive strategy, through which GC facilitates transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in village development.
- *Villagers Ownership:* System of matching grant, formation of SIT, proving soil and land and serving as voluntary labour in the scheme, preparing social measurement and cost estimation and organizing para meeting in the scheme area, sharing of GC resolution and scheme cost etc. helped the villagers instill a sense of keen ownership of the GC in the village, which in turn helps GC promote transparency, accountability and community participation in GC activities.
- *NDB Service Delivery Improved:* Through GC, services provided by the NBDs have improved a lot and they have to be answerable to the GC and UCC for violating any promised services to the people. But despite all that, NBDs service providers find the system useful for them because their

workload has substantially reduced through GC and UCC system, although their accountability has increased a lot.

- *Income Generating Activities Improved:* PRDP imparted some training to the GC members and the general villagers. These training programs included embroidery, tailoring, fisheries, agriculture, livestock, poultry, nutrition, sanitation, income generating activities, cow fattening, reproductive health etc. In these training courses along with some GC members and the villagers took part. Attending these courses, some women members involved themselves in tailoring, embroidery, small business and kitchen gardening activities etc. through which most of the women members' socio-economic condition has improved a lot.
- *Women Development and Empowerment:* Improved skill and knowledge gained through training organized by PRDP, JOCV, NBD extension agents coupled with enhanced socio-economic status helped empowering the women community with improved sense of conscientization and right.
- *Mitigation of Court Cases:* The socio-religious leaders of the GC played an important role in mitigating litigation in the village as most of the GC leaders were chosen from sardars/matbars group, who were performing a quasi-judicial role effectively in the rural society. Thus the tendency to suit cases in the formal judicial system dwindled immensely.
- *Villagers' Tax Payment Tendency Improved:* In the PRDP unions it was observed that a tendency for paying tax by the villagers to the Union Parishad increased a lot. Due to the matching grant system of the GC, village people were accustomed to pay taxes to the UP, which was really phenomenal achievement for the grassroots development as people of Bangladesh have habitually tax evading.
- *Integrity of GC Leaders Matters:* The matching grant system has compelled the GC leaders to maintain integrity in its operation. Due to direct involvement of the community people and the UP to share the project cost coupled with other mechanisms of ensuring transparency, accountability and villagers' participation GC leaders needed to maintain honesty and integrity in its activities. It was evident that in one GC (Pichutia) of Bangra Union, general villagers and the GC members raised voice against the GC Chairman due to failure to meet up the villagers' request. It was known that in that GC, some amount of money (*i.e.* 17000/-) was saved after completion of the GC scheme in one para. Then the villagers requested the GC Chairman to increase the thickness of that para road by one inch but the Chairman did not comply with the villagers' request. Rather the GC Chairman personally took away the amount in connivance with the UP Chairman by giving fake signatures of the

villagers in a master roll. This caused a serious protest against that GC Chairman. Knowing everything about it from the UP, the villagers and the GC members got united against the Chairman. They made complain against VC Chairman to the UP Chairman but due to having a good relationship between the GC Chairman and the UP Chairman, no action was taken against that GC Chairman. As a result that GC became inactive. This incident testified the fact that maintaining integrity of the GC leaders played a supportive role for grassroots development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

On the basis of the study findings, following recommendations and conclusions are made:

### Recommendations

*UP's Role Should be Enhanced in GC*

UP's role in GC should be expanded more so that UP can extend all out supports to GC activities, which in turn help develop a sense of ownership of the GC. Primarily, on test case women UP members should be included in GC as members. They should be involved in entire activities of GC. UP as a legitimate local government institution at the grassroots, should not be bypassed rather role of UP should be enhanced because GC in the long run may face problem to achieve sustainability and ownership. Moreover, as the present government has enacted a new UP Act in 2009, which has made provision to form ward shava in order to engage villagers in participatory planning and local development. Here the initiatives should be taken to convince the government about replication of GC system at the ward level. As GC has some built-in mechanism for ensuring social accountability/social audit and social capital in the project villages and its matching grant system is one of the best practices in the field of grassroots development, therefore proper steps should be taken by the executive agency so that GC system should be introduced in the field of local government.

*Encourage Forming Separate Women GC*

In our society, especially the condition of rural women flock is not satisfactory and they are still lagging behind in all aspects comparing to man. In rural life women have to suffer from malnutrition, unemployment, violence and they are lacking of modern knowledge and technology. That's why women should be brought into the mainstream of development. Therefore, more intervention and

some affirmative action should be provided to women. In a bid to overcome those above problems, effort should be taken to form or to organise women in separate GC as it is evident that women have enormous potentiality to motivate and encourage others and thus to build relationship, interaction, solidarity, network, trust with flexible attitude, shared responsibility and engrained integrity and trustworthiness. In fact there are unique ways in which women organize and motivate others. Women can involve others by various informal and formal networks. Women can engage in social movement activities than in traditional means. Women can also organize themselves in less hierarchical ways and focus on creating consensus.

*Making Provision of Publishing an Annual Report by GC*

To record all the development undertakings and activities performed in the last year by the GCs, an annual report can be introduced. This report can be prepared covering the activities of 5-10 GCs altogether. This report may contain some basic socio-economic information of the villages, profiles of GCs, details of GC members and description of their development activities done in the last year. This report can help recording the achievement and failures of the GC, which can help create better social capital with improved transparency, accountability and responsibility of the GC leadership.

*NGO's Role Should be Enhanced in GC Activities*

To increase the civil engagement and social capital formation in GC, NGO representatives should be involved in the Scheme Implementation Team. In the co.mposition of GC, provision should be made to involve NGO representative in the GC, which can help establish more transparency, accountability and participation of the villagers. This can also help building better coordination, cooperation, support, communication, network, trust and interactions among the different stakeholder for overall change and transformation in the local development process.

*Limit of GC Scheme Allocation Should be Enhanced*

For initiating micro- infrasture in the village level, the financial support provided from the PRDP/JICA is to some extent insufficient in the context of present day. Therefore, the ceiling of total cost should be increased on rational basis.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on empirical evidence gained it was appeared that formation of social capital contributed to becoming GC a relatively effective and socially viable institution for local development that demanded better governance in GC, which ultimately facilitated better implementation of PRDP model in the project villages. It was found that the institutional mechanisms of promoting transparency, accountability to the villagers and community participation in GC are embedded in the process of formation of GC and SIT; organizing special, general, AGM, para meeting; preparation of social map and cost estimation of the scheme; sharing of information through GC meeting, GC resolution, para meeting, GC notice board, display board; provision of obtaining tax clearance certificates from UP as a precondition of getting scheme; cost sharing system in undertaking GC scheme by cash or serving as voluntary labour in earth work, giving soil and land for construction of road; organizing inaugural and concluding ceremony during the starting and ending of the scheme; supervision and monitoring of the scheme implementation; giving scheme completion report to the authority etc. During its long time implementation GC has found a sustainable process of local development through donor's support. But in Bangladesh it has become a common phenomenon that such donor supported best practices end with the withdrawal of donor support and termination of implementation phase. Although overtime GC developed social capital in the project villages but withdrawal support from the donor may inhibit its self-sustaining strength due to lack of matching grant system and its other unique mechanism of PRDP model. Most of the time experiences and lessons learnt from such donor's support based best practices cannot be properly utilized due to lack of strong advocacy and adopting appropriate means for mainstreaming it nation-wide as such project experiments suffer from the basic problem of sustainability. The institutional mechanisms of GC and the lessons learnt from the PRDP intervention can immensely be useful for strengthening the role of proposed "gram sava" system enunciated by the present government. GC mechanisms have enormous potential that can help undertake a pro-people and participatory development planning for grassroots development and its lessons can also be useful for other similar type future interventions.

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