



BANGLADESH RURAL
ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

3, NEW CIRCULAR ROAD, MAGHBAZAR
DACCA-17 BANGLADESH

SULLA PROJECT

PHASE II

INTERIM REPORT

*Sulla Project
(Phase - II) 1974.*

April, 1974

BANGLADESH RURAL ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

3, New Circular Road, Magbazar, Dacca.

B R A C

SULLA PROJECT

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GENESIS:

BRAC was formed in February, 1972 in response to the widespread devastations during the 1971 liberation struggle. Sulla Thana and 3 Unions of Dirai Thana together with 7 devastated villages in Ajmeriganj and Baniyachung Thanas of Sylhet district were taken within a project area for post war relief and rehabilitation work. Phase I of the rehabilitation programme covered a period from February to October 1972, it consisted of a large housing programme to replace war destroyed houses (10,200 units) and to repair those in dilapidated condition (3,900 units). C.I. sheets were imported from Japan, and bamboo and timber from India. BRAC also constructed 169 fishing boats and imported 4,500 lbs. of nylon twines for distribution to Fishermen's Cooperatives. To rehabilitate the returning agricultural refugees, seeds, fertilisers and cash loans were given. 1,000 acres of land was ploughed by BRAC hired power tillers in order to partially meet the loss of livestock during the Civil war. In addition, BRAC provided medical care from 4 medical centres for a token fee and organised a Child Feeding programme in cooperation with UNICEF to improve the nutrition condition then prevailing in the project area.

INTERIM REPORT - PHASE II

(Covering period November 1, 1972 to December 31, 1973)

INTRODUCTION:

On completion of Phase I rehabilitation programme, BRAC decided to launch a Phase II integrated development programme in the same area, being November 1, 1972. Minor adjustments in the project area were made, for example, 4 villages of Ajmeriganj Thana were excluded and 2 Unions of Baniyachung Thanas were included. The project area presently comprised of the whole of Sulla Thana, 3 Unions of Dirai Thana and 2 Unions of Baniyachung Thana, having a population of approximately 150,000 within an area of about 160 square miles. The area is a part of the great ~~and~~ north eastern topographical depressions which undergoes annual inundation during the monsoon. The village clusters are on mounds of land 15 to 20 feet higher than the land mass.

The objective of Phase II development programme is to create and develop the **human and institutional infrastructure** in the project area to make development activity self generating and self sustaining. BRAC feels that the key to the success of any development activity is the awareness and participation of its beneficiaries. Education and training programmes, promotion and support of cooperatives form the twin pillars of BRAC Phase II programme.

The transition from Phase I to Phase II proved more difficult than was anticipated. The people nurturing a relief agency inside of the organisation were slow to participate as equal partners in the development activities. Some of the BRAC workers of Phase I period were found wanting when confronted with the multidisciplinary approach and broader understanding required of a development worker.

The law and order situation in the country deteriorated substantially after the election in March 1973. For a brief period in Summer 1973, a number of villages in our project area were attacked by armed gangs looting everything the villagers possessed. Although BRAC did not directly suffer any losses, the atmosphere of terror generated by these robberies proved demoralising for our workers as well as the villagers in the project area. Fortunately, this situation did not last long.

Bangladesh itself is going through critical times. The low level of production coupled with substantial expenditure on relief and rehabilitation in the post war period led to inflationary pressures in the economy. The prices of essential commodities at least tripled during the past two years with no sign of stabilisation in sight. The Fixed income groups and salaried persons are the main sufferers. Although lower paid almost 70% more than that of a year and half ago, the salary level barely covers the basic cost of food and ~~and~~ clothing.

ORGANISATION AND PERSONNEL:

Substantial changes have been made in the BRAC field organisation to make it a more effective tool for development. The P.A.s (Field Assistants) and S.P.A.s (Senior Field Assistants) have been merged into one village level cadre renamed F.M. (Field Motivator) who report to an Area Manager. It was felt that the quality of the village level workers had to be upgraded to give mature leadership to the villages and to transfer decision making to the grass root level. A substantial number of P.A.s of Phase I were found wanting in leadership qualities and mental discipline to play the vital role adequately. 20 P.A.s were therefore retrenched in June, 73 to make way for University graduates. Some non-graduate P.A.s have, however, been retained as F.M.s in view of their performance.

To ensure proper supervision of village level worker, the project area has been divided into 10 sectors (in place of 4 previously), each headed by an Area Manager. Due to extremely poor communications, much time and energy was being wasted in travelling from the field camps to the distant villages. Now with ten field camps, one in each sector, the travel time for field motivators has been substantially reduced since the ~~transit~~ furthest village is no more than 4 miles from the camps. There is now an average of 21 villages in each sector.

The position of functional coordinators such as Coordinator Fishermen's Cooperatives, Coordinator Agricultural Extension etc. have been abolished and these experts have been posted at the training centre.

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The need for adequate training of (a) all levels of ERAC field workers and (b) programme personnel such ~~functional~~ functional literacy teachers, para medical workers, Lady Family Planning Organisers etc. were thought to be paramount. The quality of the worker will determine the quality of our programmes on the ground. ERAC decided to establish a training centre in the project area to take on this important task. Presently, the training centre is operating from our Field Camp at Markuli, and will be transferred to Dhali as soon as construction has been ~~was~~ ~~administration~~ completed. Five representative villages adjacent to Dhali have been selected as demonstration villages, where training centre experts are working to develop them on model lines. These will form the practical training ground for those attending the courses at the training centre. In addition an 8 acres of farmland adjacent to the proposed training centre site has been acquired from the Government, this will serve as a model farm for agricultural training and for demonstration.

PHASE II- PERIOD

Phase II development programme was allowed a period of 20 months from November 72 to June 74, to attain the objectives set out therein. The wider and deeper experience of the development process now convinces us that the time we allowed ourselves, is too short for the far reaching changes in ideas, attitudes and priorities we hoped bring about in the project area. We have, therefore, constantly guarded ourselves from attaining the physical target too quickly without commensurate advance in building human infra-structure - the cooperative organisations, the village institutions, the youth organisations etc. We have, therefore, deliberately postponed expenditures on budgeted items we thought to be premature or cancelled items we considered unnecessary. We presently feel that extension of 18 months to December 1975 will be necessary to do full justice to the Phase II programme. In Appendix I the actual expenditures for 14 months to December 1973 against the Phase II budgets together with a revised budget for 24 months from 1st January 74 to December '75 have been set out. The extension of the Phase II period by 18 months results in an additional funding requirement of Tk.467,706 due mainly to an increase in the programme ~~management~~ management expenses. We are making a request to our principal donor, Oxfam, Oxford, for a grant of this additional sum.

Income and Expenditure Account -	Appendix II
Details of Expenditure -	Appendix III
Details of budget -	Appendix IV

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GONOKENDRA (Community Centre)

The programme for Phase II was the construction of 175 Gonokendras in the larger villages of the project area, the villagers participated in this programme by donating land, labour and part cost of materials. During the early months of Phase II the field personnel were too concerned with attaining the construction targets, without giving adequate thought to the purpose and objectives of the Gonokendra ~~Committees were organised and construction work was undertaken too~~ ~~hurriedly. As a result, some of the committees were found not to have the full confidence of the villages and several of the construction sites were selected by the committees without due regard to the convenience of the majority of the village. The field staff were, therefore, instructed not to be target oriented, but to first develop participation with the entire village in the Gonokendra programme before construction was undertaken. The construction programme consequently slowed down. The number constructed and in use at the end of December 1974 was 129. An additional 30 Gonokendras are now in course of construction.~~

The Gonokendra Committees were organised and construction work was undertaken too hurriedly. As a result, some of the committees were found not to have the full confidence of the villages and several of the construction sites were selected by the committees without due regard to the convenience of the majority of the village. The field staff were, therefore, instructed not to be target oriented, but to first develop participation with the entire village in the Gonokendra programme before construction was undertaken. The construction programme consequently slowed down. The number constructed and in use at the end of December 1974 was 129. An additional 30 Gonokendras are now in course of construction.

The high price of timber (Tk.80/- per cft) forced BRAC and the villagers to construct a majority of the Gonokendras temporarily with bamboo and C.I. sheets. One of the BRAC staff spent two months in New Delhi during August to October 1973 to obtain permission from the Government of India for duty free exportation of timber to Bangladesh.

The Indian timber cost Tk.15/- per cft, less than one fifth the local cost. The timber has been procured and floated from Assam to the project area. The logs have been cut to predetermined sizes and are ready for reconstruction of the existing Gonokendras and for use in the construction of the additional Gonokendra structures. By the end of 1974 all 175 Gonokendras will be permanently built with timber and corrugated iron sheets and are expected to be the hub of village activities in the project area.

The experience of Gonokendra construction in each village was an exciting one for our field workers and was quite an eye opener on social structures and forces in rural areas of Bangladesh. In most cases, traditional grouping within the village had to be encouraged to work together for the common goal of Gonokendra construction in order to have the widest possible village support. In some instances, age old feuds between groups had to be settled before Gonokendra construction could be undertaken in the village. As a result Gonokendra construction was followed by an upsurge of community spirit in most villages, which is considered to be a precondition for any concerted action for development.

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FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

This programme is considered by BRAC to be one of the most crucial elements in its overall development programme. BRAC is presently operating 255 Functional Literacy Centres within the project area. At the end of December 1973, 2826 males and 2096 females were regularly attending classes at varying stages of progress. A total of 293 teachers have been trained, out of whom 214 are now teaching adults regularly, the others have either dropped out or have failed to motivate potential ~~learners~~ students to join a functional literacy class. The minimum educational level of the functional literacy teachers had to be lowered to class V (particularly among the female teachers) because of non-availability of matriculates. Consequently, the training of teachers had to be redesigned, the refresher ~~ex~~ course for teachers had to be given more frequently and a complete syllabus for 24 weeks with all the lecture notes made available to teachers for guidance. Supervision by Field ~~M~~otivators has been made more stringent. Most of BRAC P.K.s have been given the Functional Literacy teachers training and have been asked to take classes to supplement the teachers whenever possible.

Despite the tremendous efforts made by our field workers and training staff to make this programme a total success, we were generally dissatisfied with the ~~r~~ results. Most teachers are unable to impart functional education to the learners and are concentrating on mere alphabetisation. As a result the initial enthusiasm of the students quickly diminished and it became a routine job for our Field ~~M~~otivators and Teachers to devise new approaches to keep the students from dropping out of class. In some villages, house to house persuasion was necessary. Statistics given at the end of this chapter will indicate the actual status of this programme.

In order to rejuvenate this programme, we felt that immediate steps had to be taken to develop (a) new teachers methodology, (b) new curricula, and (c) an evaluation method. We, therefore, invited World Education, New York, who have had wide experience of developing non-formal education programmes in many other developing countries, to cooperate with us. A joint project proposal for 'Development of Innovative Methodology in Functional Education for Bangladesh' has been prepared and has now been approved by the Bangladesh Planning Commission and the Ministry of Education. The project will supplement and strengthen existing functional ~~literacy~~ literacy programmes in our area.

'The Gonokendra', a monthly journal for use in our Functional Literacy classes and ~~as~~ an extension journal for all rural people, made its appearance on the first of Bengali calendar year, 1380 B.S. (15th April, 1973). 'The Gonokendra' is read in every functional literacy centre as a part of the curriculum and

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is widely distributed in the project area and other areas of Bangladesh. Although, only 3,000 copies are printed, the readership is estimated to about 12,000. The journal as a vehicle for extension education was considered to be so useful that the Ministry of Education felt that all the Primary and Secondary school teachers should regularly read it. UNICEF has agreed to finance free distribution of the 'Gonokendra' to all Primary and Secondary schools in the country. The 'Gonokendra' will be going 'national' from June 1974 with 50,000 copies per month and looks poised for unlimited possibilities.

POSITION OF FUNCTIONAL LITERACY CENTRES AT THE END OF DECEMBER, 1973

1. Total No. of Centres:	Male	- 136	
	Female	- 119	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>255</u>	
2. Total No. of Teachers:	Male (Trained)	115	
	Male (Untrained)	21	
	Female (Trained)	99	
	Female (Untrained)	20	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>255</u>	
3. No. of weeks actually in operation:	<u>Male Centres</u>		<u>Female Centres</u>
1 to 4 weeks	6		9
5 to 8 weeks	12		8
9 to 16 weeks	51		39
17 to 24 weeks	54		51
Above 24 weeks	15		12
	<u>Total</u>	<u>136</u>	<u>119</u>

	PRIMER - I		PRIMER - II		PRIMER - III	
	Conti- nued	Discont- inued	Conti- nued	Discont- inued	Conti- nued	Discont- inued
No. of male students	1,445	575	880	217	501	82
No. of female students	1,022	586	744	114	330	27
Total	2,467	1,161	1,624	331	831	109

1. Total No. of males attending classes	-	2826	<u>12</u>
2. Total No. of Females attending classes	-	2096	<u>8</u>
		<u>4922</u>	<u>20</u>

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COOPERATIVES

Great strides have been made in the formation and development of Cooperative Societies in our project area during Phase II. By the end of December 1973, 51 Agricultural Cooperatives, 25 Fishermen's Cooperatives and 9 sundry trade cooperatives had been formed and were being regularly assisted by ERAC workers. The main emphasis of cooperatives programmes is to ensure direct participation of the membership in the activities of the societies in order to democratise the cooperative institutions, which traditionally fall prey to powerful interest groups to the detriment of the members at large.

The ERAC method is to organise weekly meetings of the members of the primary societies to discuss the affairs of the societies and to collect weekly thrift deposit from the members. Individual F.N/s who are responsible for the development of particular societies attend all the weekly meetings of the society. They also assist the societies members in planning the cooperative's activities, act as a liaison between the society and the Government to obtain loans and other inputs, and help the member with the proper allocation and use of their inputs in order that all the members receive the maximum benefit.

Our emphasis, we think, has rightly been on the quality rather than quantity. The regularity of the weekly meetings, the rising level of savings within the society (over Tk.90,000 at the end of December) and wide participation of the members in the societies activities indicate their progress. As a result of this work the Cooperative Societies in Sulla Thana decided to form the Sulla Thana Central Cooperative Association (STCCA). The application for registration of the proposed STCCA has been lodged with the Registrar Cooperative Societies of Bangladesh. One of ERAC's F.N.s has been elected as the Secretary of STCCA ~~with his duties with ERAC~~ and he has been released from his duties with ERAC.

Initially, the STCCA will have to be guided and assisted to increasingly take over the function of providing supervision to the primary societies, which is presently being done by ERAC workers, and to provide the services such as inputs, storing and marketing facilities etc. to the primary societies. We propose to do this during the Phase II, after which our development programme in Sulla Thana is expected to be entirely implemented by the STCCA itself.

The proposed STCCA intends to establish a sub centre in each of the four Unions of Sulla Thana to facilitate grass root supervision of the primary societies. ERAC will depute four of its locally recruited F.N.s to act as Secretaries in the four Union Centres. In addition ERAC proposes to grant funds for four

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country boats and four grain stores to the STCCA to enable them to provide marketing services to the primary societies.

Four HRAC Field Camps/Cooperative Offices have been constructed and are now in use. A separate office for the proposed STCCA will be required in Ghungiargaon. Land has been donated by the community and estimated land development cost of Tk.20,000 has already been raised locally. HRAC proposes to donate building materials and construction cost to the STCCA.

During Phase II, one to three day training on cooperative society management have been given to 154 cooperative Chairmen and Directors in our field camps. HRAC field workers have been given training on cooperative accounting, planning, and management to equip them to guide and supervise the primary societies.

In order to ensure continuous inflow of good leadership material with managerial abilities into the cooperative societies, two other parallel bodies are being organized in the project area. The Gonokendra committees are being strengthened and encouraged to take on community welfare schemes such as Tubewell sinking etc. in addition to the management of Gonokendra activities.

The second group are youth of the village who are now being organized in Youth Clubs and drawn into community service activities such as village upkeep, maintenance of village roads, bridges and culverts, and nutrition and child welfare activities. 36 Youth clubs have already been organized and our F.M.s are constantly providing guidance in Youth Club activities. Apart from field workers guidance, HRAC proposes to impart one week training to selected youth club members on the 'Role of Youth in Rural Development' in our Field Training Centre.

AGRICULTURE:

Agriculture provides the livelihood for 82% of the population of Bangladesh, creates most of the National Income and provides almost all its exports. Agriculture holds similar importance in our project area. HRAC efforts, therefore, in the past two agricultural seasons were tremendous. The objectives of our agricultural programme in Phase II remains in the multiplication of agricultural production by introducing hybrid varieties of rice, double and relay cropping. The disastrous nutrition condition of the country forces us to add a further dimension to our programme, that of growing nutritionally advantageous food for humans as well as animals.

In the Boro season of 1972-73 our efforts were centred around 30 agricultural cooperative blocks of approximately 100 acres each. The farmers within these blocks

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received day to day supervision in the field from our extension workers and were advised on the proper use of fertilisers, water and pest control. These blocks were planted with IRRI-8 and the production increased substantially. 10 ERAC power tillers helped to bring 400 acres of fallow land within the cooperative blocks.

Winter vegetable seeds imported by Mennonite Central Committee were distributed to selected villagers in most of the villages in the project area. The vegetable crop was excellent in most villages, and great interest was shown in some vegetables which were introduced in the area for the first time.

ERAC workers continued to provide extension services during the slack monsoon season of 1973, mainly on horticulture. Papaya seedlings were grown in ERAC camps and some selected villages and were distributed throughout the project area together with instructions on the best method of plantation and care of the plants. Seedlings of banana, lemon and coconut were purchased from agriculture farms around Dacca and transported to the project area for distribution to farmers who had already prepared suitable homestead sites for these plants.

ERAC workers have made door to door campaign on preservation of cowdung manure and making of compost pits in most of the farming villages. Compost and cowdung pits with a covering on top are now a common sight in every farming village in our project area. During the slack season, 22 ERAC workers were sent to India for training in agricultural extension for three months. The training was completed in October, in time for an assault on the main agricultural season of 73-74. ERAC also recruited two local agriculture graduates and one volunteer agronomist from Germany to supervise and guide the field activities.

An eight acre farm land has been acquired from the Government for training and demonstration purposes. This farmland could not be put into production during the last dry season. However, each of the ten ERAC field camps took up innovative programmes for development of agriculture in their respective areas.

The main features of this 73-74 Boro season's activities included:-

- (1) 20 Agricultural Support Blocks - 466 block cultivators received day to day support from our Field Motivators on procurement, dosage and application of fertiliser and insecticide, supply of hybrid varieties of seeds and constant supervision of their field activities. The support blocks are intended to have a demonstration effect on the best practices in rice growing by the cultivators themselves with equipment and input within their means. Most of the cultivators were able to procure their own fertilisers and

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only 1,279 maunds had to be given by ERAC on half credit. The support block farms are hoping to produce substantially larger than the usual yield of HYV (high yielding varieties) in our project area.

(2) Camp Demonstration Plots - Nine rice demonstration plots of approximately two acres each were leased from local farmers and four varieties of HYV of rice - IRRATON 24 and 38; IRRI 176 (Chandina) and IRRI 8 were being grown. These demonstration plots are fully cultivated by ERAC field staff, which has created quite a sensation in our project area. The sight of University graduates ploughing and transplanting brought laughter and sarcasm from local villagers observing them. The seriousness and persistence of our workers soon changed the villagers attitude to one of respect. When the plants stood out as the best they had seen grown in the area, the cultivators started asking for advice, requesting the ERAC workers to visit their fields.

(3) Vegetable Demonstration - Ten vegetable demonstration plots adjacent to the ERAC field camps of approximately 20 acres each fully worked by ERAC workers. This was done (a) to demonstrate seedbed preparation and care of plants, (b) to give all ERAC field staff including the Doctors a chance to work with their hands and (c) to grow vegetables for own consumption.

(4) Vegetable Cultivation - Vegetable seeds imported by Mennonite Central Committee were distributed to approximately 10,000 families. We estimate that 10,000 kitchen gardens comprising a land area of approximately 500 acres were put under vegetable cultivation this year by men, women and children in our project area. New vegetables such as carrots, chinese cabbage sweet corn, broccoli were grown with tremendous success alongside the traditionally grown vegetables, i.e. cauliflower, tomato, radishes etc. Besides having an impact on the nutritional status of the population, the vegetables provided a supplementary income to the growers. ERAC field staff assisted the growers in selling their produce by organising marketing operations in some selected areas.

(5) New nutritionally advantageous cash crops introduced in the area include- wheat, rapeseeds, soybeans, sorghum.

(6) For the first time cultivation of guinea grass, AlfaAlfa, chalia (a local variety) were undertaken by farmers to solve the crisis of livestock feed in our area. There have been only been eight such plots in the project area, but we feel this is a positive beginning.

(7) Three dams to protect Boro fields from the early onrush of water were constructed with local volunteer labour organised by ERAC workers. Similar effort are being taken wherever opportunities exist for small scale irrigation protection projects.

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The original agriculture budgets had provided for 90 power pumps of varying capacities and 20 power tillers. Apart from the 20 power pumps on order from Japan, the budget allocation for the remaining 70 power pumps and 20 power tillers have been provided for in the revised budget. This had been done because of two reasons.

(1) The Government has a large number of power pumps available on a seasonal rental basis, at heavily subsidised rates, which fall far short of demand. The rental charge does not even cover the repair and maintenance costs of the pumps for the season, not to mention depreciation etc. In this situation BRAC or the Central Cooperative Association charging a realistic rent would create adverse reaction from cultivators. We felt that the government policy on power pumps rental is mistaken and BRAC certainly does not wish to support this policy by following it.

(2) Spare parts for pumps and power tillers are not readily available in Bangladesh, due to acute shortage of foreign exchange. General import permits for spare are presently not being issued. The Government owns more than 90% of the pumps in Bangladesh and imports parts for their own requirements, but do not provide facilities for others to obtain parts for their pump maintenance. Therefore, power pumps and power tillers donated by BRAC to any cooperative Association would soon be idle due to the lack of spare parts.

If this situation changes in the near future, the programme could be revived in Phase III.

FISHERIES:

Fishing is the livelihood of 20% of the people in our project area, which abounds in lakes, Haors (flood plains) and rivers. The programme for Phase II was to provide 10,000 lbs. of nylon twines for fishing nets and 200 fishing boats as donation to the Fishermen's Cooperatives for hire to member fishing groups.

BRAC imported 10,000 lbs. of nylon twines from Korea in January, 1974. The purchase price of nylon twine in Bangladesh is exorbitant, Tk.40 to Tk.60 for a lb. The BRAC cost of Tk.12.50^{per}/lb has already been superseded by an international price escalation in the order of 60%. In view of this, BRAC has decided to sell the nylon twines at cost to the cooperative societies instead of donating them. The Fishermen's Cooperative Societies agree that this would be a substantial assistance to them.

Fishermen as a group are one of the most exploited communities in Bangladesh, with money lenders and local landlords claiming astronomical rates of interest and share of catch on money borrowed by the fishermen for acquiring fishing rights. But

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the fishermen, in their turn, exploit their womenfolk by paying them a pittance for net making and for their labour for curing and drying the fish. BRAC feels strongly about exploitation of any kind, exploitation by an exploited group cannot be condoned. To assist the women in earning subsistence wage for 8-10 hours labour a day BRAC has organised Women's Cooperative for net making and will channelling the nylon twine to the Fishermen's Cooperative through the Women's net making cooperatives. The rates for net making are being fixed by BRAC. The Fishermen's Cooperatives will pay the cost of nylon twines to BRAC, the net making charge to the Women's Cooperative, before taking delivery of their nets.

The pressure of population and consequent increased demand on fishery has encouraged the fishermen to increase their catch. The lack of fisheries development and pisciculture constitute a grave threat to the future from progressive depopulation of the fisheries. BRAC has, therefore, cut down its boat building programme from 200 to 100 and allocated Tk.50,000 to pond and tank rehabilitation and pisciculture. Extension education among the fishermen communities is already underway and a beginning will be made in pisciculture during Phase II.

TRAINING PROGRAMMES:

Vocational Training Centres for Women: The BRAC programme was to establish four Vocational Training Centres for training destitute women (especially widows) in a suitable skill to enable them to earn a subsistence income for herself and her family. In a society where purdah (keeping women confined in the house or its immediate vicinity) is a prevalent practice, women traditionally play no active economic role. With the loss of the bread earners - the husband or a son spells disaster for most women reducing a substantial number of them to destitution. This programme is an attempt to find a solution to the problems of destitute women.

A Vocational Training Centre was established in Dirai in January, 1973 to teach women tailoring and embroidery. Three batches of women numbering 89 have received training in the centre. UNICEF donated cloth for making children's garments, and the trainees were able to utilise the cloth by making clothing while they learnt. The children's clothing were sold at subsidised prices to children within the project area.

Another Vocational Training Centre in weaving is planned in Phase II. The hand-locus have already been delivered to our field stores, but due to the scarcity of raw materials (cotton yarns and dyes) in Bangladesh, the V. T. C. has not yet been opened.

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Presently, the dependance of the women on male organisers for raw materials procurement and marketing of finished products is likely to be so complete that it would almost invariably lead to exploitation. BRAC has, therefore, concentrated its attention to developing social consciousness of women through functional literacy and formation of women's cooperatives and working groups. Miss Lynn Edmunds, writing in London Daily Telegraph of March 29, 1974 had the following to say about BRAC's work with the women in Sulla Project area.

"... It was in north-eastern Sylhet, where the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee works, that I saw the seeds of the quiet revolution starting in village women's lives. At the meeting houses, BRAC has built, the wives, young and old, are learning to read and write. Forbidden from doing shopping, they now at least can keep the accounts.

At community centres, I saw destitute widows, war victims, and wives of the landless, the poorest farmers and fishermen, learning skills like sewing, mat-making, and vegetable growing that will give them some security.

"Most of the men were very surprised at the idea at the beginning, but few object now", said a young BRAC field worker.

In one fishing village, the women have even become the bankers, saving over £100 and lending it to their men to buy better equipment. It started in the simplest way - they collected a handful of rice a week from each family, stored it and sold it in the market.

About 50 villages in the area have thriving women's cooperatives, investing in new power-pumps or seed, and winning new respect for their members."

Hopefully the programmes to organise the women will have a major effect in activating women's role in the economy. BRAC has postponed for the time being the construction of two V. T. C.s out of four planned. Establishment of more V.T. C.s for women will be ~~be~~ taken up in Phase III, when the necessary organisational infrastructure run by women will have been developed.

Field Training Centre: As mentioned in an earlier paragraph, the need for adequate training of (a) all levels of BRAC field workers, (b) programme ~~training~~ ~~organisers~~ ~~thought~~ ~~personnel~~ such as functional literacy teachers, paramedical workers, Lady Family Planning Organisers are thought to be paramount.

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The quality of the workers will determine the quality of our programme on the ground. Since training facilities did not exist in Bangladesh to meet our needs, we decided to establish a Field Training Centre in our project area to take on this important task. Presently, the training centre is operating from our field camps at Markuli and Dirai, and will be transferred to Dhali as soon as construction has been completed.

The cost of training of the programme personnel has been shown under individual programmes. The training centre recurring expenses in the revised budget includes the salaries of the Instructors and Assistants, and food expenses for 400 youth club members who will receive a one week's training in community development in our training centre.

MEDICAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH:

Four BRAC medical centres continued to operate in the project area till June, 1973 providing medical care to outpatients for a token fee of Tk.0.30 per visit and partial cost of medicines. From July, Dirai Thana Health Centre, run by the government started operation and our medical centre at Dirai was closed down.

In March 1973, 72 candidates applied for paramedical training. All the 72 applicants worked alongside our field workers on a scabies eradication programme. 155 villages were covered in a successful programme against scabbies. Selection of paramedical trainees was made on the basis of aptitude, attitude, integrity etc. as observed during the scabbies eradication campaign.

Despite this, out of 21 trainees so selected only 11 could complete our paramedical course in December 1973. The paramedics were given theoretical and practical training on diagnosis and treatment of diseases prevalent in Bangladesh and received thorough grounding on nutrition, child care, public health and family planning. Whenever possible the paramedical trainees were used in BRAC programmes in the areas of agriculture, functional literacy, cooperatives etc. in order to develop their social consciousness and a wider understanding of their role in society.

The first batch of paramedics took nine months to complete their theoretical and practical training including two weeks training in the Cholera Research Laboratories, Dhaka on cholera and diarrhoeal diseases. Their training included the diagnosis and treatment of the following diseases (1) Diarrhoea, Cholera (2) Dysentery - amoebic, bacillary (3) Worms (4) Typhoid - paratyphoid (5) Ulcer (6) Tetanus (7) Pneumonia (8) Leprosy (9) Tuberculosis (10) Scabbies (11) Malaria (12) Menstrual (13) Small pox and chicken pox. A comprehensive curricula for paramedical training has been printed.

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These are now available to other organisations conducting similar programmes.

The first batch of 11 paramedics have already begun work. Initially each paramedic has been allotted responsibilities for only five villages with an average of 4,000 people. As they gain proficiency in their work, they will be given responsibility for about seven villages with approximately 5,500 people.

A paramedic's work presently consists of visiting each village once a week. During the visit they call at each house in the village and treat the sick people. They also instruct the patients as to the cause of the disease and how to prevent its recurrence. At the end of their home visits they sit for a period in their village Gonakendra (Community centre) for those who might wish to consult them from the nearby villages within their five village units. They are also required to give occasional lectures on public health, nutrition, family planning etc. in functional literacy centres and cooperative society meetings.

The dispensing of medicines has been restricted to a selected number of non dangerous drugs with clear instructions on their applications. For ailments beyond a paramedic's competence and medicines outside their approved list, the paramedic is to refer the patient to a BRAC doctor. The paramedics have been placed under the Area Managers for supervision of their work and assessing their competence. They report to the A.M. once a week and receive their medical supplies maintained on an imprest system. They also report to the doctors once a month for a one day refresher course on topics selected by the doctor after he has examined the paramedics' patient register.

It has been found that the paramedics refer on the average only one patient out of ten and are capable of treating nine patients themselves. This indicates a 90% coverage by paramedics which is expected to rise to 95% as they become more proficient.

The main features of BRAC programme is to provide a health service for the people which is ~~available~~ presently non-existent and at cost high the people can afford. A short and inexpensive paramedical training and 90% coverage of the people by cheap paramedical services should go a long way in meeting the country's health needs. In accordance with BRAC's practices of not fostering a relief mentality, we have decided to charge full cost of medicine dispensed by the paramedics. Free medicines will, however, be supplied to those special cases where prolonged treatment is required for an ailment beyond the patients means.

BRAC will provide Paramedics' salaries (Taka.250 per month) until the end of Phase II. In order that no opportunity is created for the paramedics to charge exploitative

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rates to their patients after BRAC supervision is withdrawn, the Gonokendra committees are being activated to raise public funds within the village to pay for the regular weekly visits of the paramedics. Each of the seven villages within the paramedics constituency will pay the paramedic Taka.40 per month to remunerate him fully for his services. An additional amount, if raised, could pay for the medicines of those who are generally unable to pay and for such activities as tube well repair etc. An attempt will be made after the Boro (winter) harvest of 1974 to create public fund in each village for this purpose. Once BRAC withdraws from the management of the Rural Health programme, and the responsibility is transferred to the community, some problems will arise in connection with the procurement of ~~mix~~ medicines in bulk. The central cooperative organisations will hopefully provide this service. In view of this, BRAC will organise fund raising campaigns in the villages to raise Tk.2,000 in each village to pay for a base stock of medicines held by the Gonokendra committee. Subsequent replenishment of the base stock to be financed out of the sales proceeds.

A second batch of 42 paramedics began training in February, 1974. 20 of them will be retained to complete the course in July. By August 1974 we expect to have 31 paramedics for coverage of the ~~entire~~ entire project area.

BRAC's paramedical training programme is now on demand by other organisations wishing to follow similar health strategy in their project area, Rowmari Thana project in Rangpur district will be sending 10 of their paramedics for training in May to our field training centre. They decided to adopt the BRAC strategy on rural health.

BRAC's public health programme originally planned for sinking 200 tubewells and the repair and resinking of 100 existing tubewells. This programme has been revised to include sinking of 15 tubewells and repair and resinking of 100 existing tubewells. So far, 30 tubewells have been repaired with contributions from the villages and more repair work financed by the village contribution will be carried out during Phase II.

A joint venture by UNICEF and BRAC was prepared for sinking 500 tubewells in the project area with village participation. UNICEF was to donate the pipes and pumps (valued at Tk.1200) the villagers were to provide part of the sinking cost (Tk.1000) BRAC was to provide part of this sinking cost, cost of material transportation and logistical support (Tk.700). BRAC workers completed the PH and Iron test of the water in existing tubewells in the project area to determine the depth of a good water source of the new tubewells to be sunk. BRAC also charted maps of all the villages in the project area siting the proposed tubewells in order that the influential villagers could not change the locations at the time of sinking. This scheme had to be abandoned

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at the last moment because of reported problems with UNICEF fibre glass tubes when these are sunk to a depth of more than 300 ft. Average depth of good water source in our project area is 450 ft. Sinking tubewells, therefore, has been left to the Bangladesh Public Health Engineering department who are likely to take up this programme in our project area in 1975. All village maps prepared by BRAC workers will be handed over to the authorities for use in site selection.

FAMILY PLANNING:

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Bangladesh is a country of 55,000 square miles and an estimated population of 76 millions. This makes it the seventh largest country in the world and one of the most densely populated with 1400 people per square mile. The rate of population increase is believed to be something over 3% per annum while half the population is under 15. In this situation, the importance of family planning cannot be over emphasised.

BRAC programmes on Family Planning consist of three Mother and Child Health/Family Planning clinics and two hundred and twenty locally recruited and trained Lady Family Planning Organisers (LEPO), one in each village of the project area.

38 LEPOs have so far far been trained and are now working in their home villages. More LEPOs have not as yet received training due to the continuous involvement of our training staff with Paramedical training. LFPO training will begin again in May 1974 when the present batch of paramedics complete their theoretical classes, and leave the training centre for practical training.

A complete curricula for the LFPO training has been compiled. The training includes the following:- (1) Human reproductive system (2) All methods of contraception (3) Antinatal and post natal care (4) Child care and nutrition (5) Care of children's diseases. The period of training is 2 weeks and a six monthly refresher course of 3 days duration.

The LFPOs report to the F.M. in charge of the village. She has been given a target of achieving 30 acceptors at the end of the first six months work in her village. The LFPO's work includes registration of all couples of reproductive age range in her village. She would gain confidence of her potential clients by giving advise on antinatal and post natal care including child care and minor treatment of siling children. If she thinks that consultation/motivation is necessary of her client/potential clients husbands, she reports to the F.M. who interviews the husband for Family Planning motivation.

BRAC's experience is that females are direct sufferers of unplanned births more

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readily accept family planning than the males. But frequently, male concurrence is required for the wife to practice contraception. The F.M.s work with close liaison with the LFPOs, besides motivating individual males, he also delivers lectures in Functional Literacy centres, cooperative meetings and any other suitable forums within his five village units.

Supplies of contraceptives are held by the LFPOs. In the village where LFPO services are not yet available, F.M/s act as the supply agents. Before prescribing pills for the first time, the client is sent to the nearest BRAC ~~xxxx~~ doctor for a check up.

Four doctors are presently operating from our field camps at Dirai, Dhall, Daudpur and Ghungiargaen. Their functions are to treat patients referred by the paramedics training of paramedics and LFPOs, and providing Family Planning clinical services. Two out of three MCH/FP clinics are now under construction and are expected to be completed by 1974. The third clinic is scheduled to begin construction during the dry season 74-75 and is expected to begin operation in April, 1975.

The operation of MCH/FP clinics will add child care to the doctors' present functions. ~~if~~ A full immunisation programme for children under two years ~~is~~ is planned ~~xxxx~~ for implementation as the MCH/FP clinics are established. The clinics routine is planned to be mother and children in the morning hours and summed up by lectures and films on child care and family planning around midday. Clinic hours in the afternoon will reserved for paramedics' referral cases and male F.P. clients.

A comprehensive Family Planning programme could not be started until the end of 1973 due to the lead time required for training personnel and organising supporting facilities. Activities, therefore, were limited to providing supplies to clients motivated by the F.M.s in course of their duties. With 38 LFPOs now in the field and approximately 200 expected to be trained and deployed in the project area, coupled with two MCH/FP clinics in operation by the end of 1974, the programme will attain the major importance it deserves.

Consultancy services are being arranged for vital outstanding matters such as incentive plans for acceptors and agents, a vital statistics registration system and the MCH/FP clinic record system. Consultants are expected to start work by August 1974.

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LOOKING AHEAD:

With over 100 full time workers now in the field and part time programme personnel (F.L. teachers, Lady Family Planning Organisers) expected to number more than 400 at the end of this year, ERAC is providing an unique opportunity to the young educated people to serve their country and develop their leadership potentials. When ERAC begins withdrawal at the end of Phase II, leaving less than half time staff to implement a short Phase III programme, to consolidate the achievements of Phase II, it is expected that non project area recruits (workers recruited from other parts of Bangladesh) will be withdrawn and will be available for work in rural development in other parts of the country.

ERAC feels that these young experienced and motivated people should not be lost to rural development in Bangladesh where skilled personnel is the biggest constraint to development. ERAC, therefore, plans to take up a number of smaller rural development projects in different parts of Bangladesh. Experienced ERAC workers from the Sulla Project will form the nucleus of ERAC personnel in the new projects. The expansion in the new projects will coincide the phased withdrawal of personnel in the Sulla project. More young people will be recruited for the new projects locally and from other parts of Bangladesh to extend still further the number of people experienced in rural development. This expansion could continue indefinitely.

ERAC believes that well conceived development programmes achieving their stated objectives can always attract funding, and ERAC is confident that funding will not be the limiting factor in ERAC programmes for expansion. In order not to continue to be totally dependant on foreign funding, ERAC is presently developing schemes for generation of substantial funds locally.

NEWSLETTER

BRAC BANGLADESH RURAL
ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

3, NEW CIRCULAR ROAD, MAGHBAZAR, DACCA-17 BANGLADESH

VOLUME II NUMBER VI

November-December, 1977

BRAC'S WOMEN'S PROGRAMME

Imagine. Fifteen women transplanting paddy seedlings (they have purchased) to the fields (they have leased and tilled) under the watchful eye of two men (they have contracted to instruct them how to transplant). Three women on the veranda of a mud house weaving mathali (peaked hats to protect against rain and sun): a layer of leaves sandwiched between two layers of intricately woven strips of bamboo, capped by a cone of tin, and reinforced by wire bindings. Sixteen women, recently trained in pickle and vinegar preparation, arranging 77 bottles of pickles in neat rows to sun in an open courtyard. Ten women kneading, rolling, and cutting dough to make chana-chur (a snack food) in a newly-built central workshop. Six women seated in a small bari (hut) amidst piles of colorful used clothing: remaking some, repairing others for resale at a local market. Fifteen women staking and digging rows of a demonstration plot to sow soybean and ground-nut. Six women lifting / ^{and} carrying earthen pots filled with water to irrigate their plot of cabbages. Twenty women sitting in a semicircle on mats in an open courtyard discussing the cost/benefits of paddy husking. These are but some of the rural women and the economic activities for women supported by BRAC.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN

Women actively participate in all BRAC programmes either as clientele, part-time village-based workers, and/or full-time staff.

Most of BRAC's general programme service rural women: functional education, family planning, health care, agricultural and horticultural extension. Other specialized activities have been developed exclusively for rural women: women's assemblies, women's cooperatives, and the Jamalpur Women's Programme.

But how do BRAC's general programmes reach rural women? The content of BRAC's functional education curriculum attempts to reflect women's needs and interests. Thirty of the 100 lessons are differentiated for men and women. The special lessons for women cover such topics as food processing and preservation; women's agricultural roles; nutritious cooking; women's cooperatives, etc.. BRAC's family planning programme is an attempt to reach rural families (especially the women) with the messages and the services of contraceptive practice. BRAC's health care programme is geared to bring preventive and curative health care measures directly to rural homes. Women and their children constitute a specially vulnerable group in respect of health. Women's assemblies (mohila shobha) are conducted every two weeks in each village. Village women interested in health and nutrition and child care are encouraged to attend. A series of 16 posters with accompanying health-worker manual have been developed by BRAC for these assemblies. Women perform many traditional roles in horticulture, agriculture, and livestock and poultry care. BRAC extension services in these areas serve both men and women. Vegetable seeds, fruit seedlings, improved strains of chicks and ducklings, poultry vaccines, etc. are distributed at cost price in all BRAC project areas.

Through whom do these general services reach rural women? BRAC's staffing pattern shows a broad base of village-based paraprofessionals supervised by a smaller number of professional field workers. Most villages in the project areas have at least one village-based paraprofessional; some have as many as four

average 1 to 5. Village women form the major proportion of BRAC paraprofessionals. Nearly half of the functional education teachers are female, all the front-line family planning workers are women, and nearly all the health healers are women (cf. Newsletter Vol. 1, No. V "BRAC's Village-Based Health and Family Planning Programme"). Ten female paramedics have been hired and trained to join the ranks of the 30 male paramedics. BRAC's full-time professional field workers are predominantly male. But four of BRAC's trainers (two human relations, one sericulture, and one duck-rearing trainer) are women. And the Jamalpur Women's Programme is completely staffed and run by women (14 paid and 10 volunteer staff) and serves only female clientele (cf. Newsletter Vol. 1, No.1. "Jamalpur Women's Programme").

Much can be done to involve women prominently in health, family planning, education, and other social development efforts. But BRAC seeks to improve not only the social but also the economic status of subsistence and below-subsistence women. BRAC, therefore, promotes in its various project areas collective economic projects by disadvantaged women

ECONOMIC SUPPORT SERVICES FOR WOMEN

BRAC's basic criteria in deciding what economic ventures to support are: a) the venture be designed by the poorer women of the village community; and b) the venture be geared to local resources, local skills, and local markets. Once a group of women decide on the economic activity they wish to undertake, BRAC can provide necessary credit, training, logistical and managerial support.

But how actually does a women's cooperative receive BRAC support? Most members of BRAC-supported cooperatives are women who have attended BRAC's functional education classes. BRAC supervisory staff are able to identify homogeneous, interested, working groups of women from those who attend the classes. The

class discussions help the women look creatively upon their own environment and exchange ideas on alternative economic activities. BRAC staff stimulate discussions and ask questions about potential commercial products and services. Once a group of women reach a concensus on their joint economic venture, BRAC staff help them design a production plan. The completed plan is submitted to BRAC Head Office staff to review and fund, if approved.

But the provision of seed money to a women's cooperative is only a first step. Management, supervision, material inputs, training, and other support services are needed. BRAC field staff provide the inital management and supervision to the women's cooperatives. But cooperative management training for cooperative leadership is also required. Sometimes skills training is needed. BRAC's Training and Resource Centre (cf. Newsletter Vol. 1, No. III "TARC: Training and Resource Centre) staff are able to provide management training and certain skills training (agriculture, horticulture, poultry, fishery, ericulture) For additional skills, BRAC turns to other organizations to train BRAC extension workers or female cooperative members. BRAC's Women's Programme Cell and Cooperative Services Cell assist with programme planning, mobilizing inputs, arranging trainings, design and marketing, and monitoring progress for the women's cooperatives.

BRAC is also trying to develop an organizational infrastructure to insure that the women's cooperatives become self-managed and self-sustaining. The basic organizational unit is the women's producer cooperative. BRAC's first principle for its producer cooperatives is a membership in each cooperative of 15-25 women from the most disadvantaged economic class. BRAC also supports the cooperative activities of its village-based female volunteers (functional education teachers or health healers), especially those who come from the same socio-economic

(volunteer cooperatives) have been established. The stipulated principle is that the volunteers, once trained in a profitable skill, must in turn train the village cooperators whom they serve. Two or three members of each women's cooperative must be trained as leaders: in cooperative principles, discipline, and management. Through the cooperative leaders, a federation or inter-village association of women's cooperatives will be established in each BRAC project area. Eventually, an inter-project federation will also be set up.

There are currently about 75 women cooperatives (with an average membership each of 20) in BRAC's three project areas. The list of their economic ventures falls into certain broad categories of activities:

1. Agriculture and Horticulture

cultivation of:	soybeans
paddy	tobacco
sugar cane	groundnuts
onions	pulses
potatoes	wheat
vegetables	
fruit	

2. Food and Grain Processing

preparation and bottling or packaging of:

- pickles
- vinegar
- chana-chur (snack food)
- dahl papadams "
- papri pithas "
- cheera (crushed rice)

paddy-husking

3. Textiles

weaving

spinning

sericulture

block-printing and embroidery

4. Small Industries

biri (cigarette) making

mathali (hat) weaving

net-making

recycling used clothing

5. Poultry

6. Fishery

All of these activities are in an exploratory phase. BRAC is monitoring them for their cost/effectiveness; resource, skill, and market problems; and social and economic impact for the women. To identify and design viable economic projects which can ensure a reasonable return to each member of a group and become self-managed and self-sustaining is no easy task. Particularly in the Bangladesh subsistence economy which does not provide much demand for commercial products and services in the rural sector.

LESSONS AND FUTURE STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN

What lessons has BRAC learnt from its development activities with rural women?

1) Rural women's demand for social and economic alternatives is greater than the supply. BRAC does not need to search for incentives to rural women to work outside their homes. Those women BRAC seeks to serve, the subsistence and below-subsistence women, face a strong financial motivation. Non-economic incentives (prestige and social contact) come later through the joint economic venture.

- 2) Rural women, even those without education or experience, can serve effectively as front-line paraprofessionals. Both rural and semi-urban women, with some education, will assume supervisory and field operation responsibilities. Village women will travel from their homes to attend meetings and form cooperatives.
- 3) BRAC must continue to assist rural women's cooperatives to implement and design joint economic activities which will guarantee at least a supplementary income, if not full-time, year-round employment to their members.
- 4) There appear to be compelling reasons for the joint economic activity to be conducted, where possible, in a central worksite rather than dispersed to the homesites. The enhanced status of "work", a feeling of social solidarity, and usually an efficiency of performance are found with women who work at a central site.
- 5) The most viable cooperative groups seem to be those whose membership reflects an economic class homogeneity.

What future strategies does BRAC plan for its development activities with rural women?

- 1) Continuing search for and experimentation in viable economic ventures for rural women.
- 2) Leadership training for representatives from each women's cooperatives; including credit and cooperative management; principles of cooperation; skills training as required; etc.
- 3) Design and testing of a simplified system of cooperative book-keeping.
- 4) Inter-village federation of women's cooperatives in each BRAC project area; and, eventually inter-project federation of all BRAC-sponsored women's cooperatives.
- 5) Investigation into traditional and appropriate technologies for women; post-harvest technologies including drying, threshing, storage; food processing including vegetable drying and

6) On-going research and evaluation built into all BRAC's programmes for women; research on women's traditional roles in production; on the impact of new roles in production on women; on the basis for rural women's association; etc..