

The Impact of Rural Development Program on Poverty Alleviation: A Case of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Poverty alleviation through rural development programs (RDP) has significant implication for Bangladesh the world's most densely populated country having 71 percent rural inhabitants. Considering the significance, the study examined various rural challenges and poverty reduction strategies of RDP underpinned by a quantitative research technique. 192 poor households were randomly selected from four study villages under Chittagong District. The result indicates that the RDP, housing and agriculture, health and education, significantly improved the poverty situation among poor people through economic capabilities, human capabilities, protective capabilities, and political capabilities of sample households

Index terms— rural development; poverty alleviation; bangladesh

1 I. Introduction

Bangladesh is a densely populated country of 160 millions of population. Bangladesh, with its 40% people living below poverty line and 18% living in absolute poverty, is suffering from acute rural-urban economic disparity along with substantial poverty, inequality, deprivation, illiteracy, lack of proper health and sanitation facilities (BBS, 2014). The economy of the country is basically an agrarian one with vast majority of population living in rural areas. The agriculture sector is unable to generate scope for further employment resulting in entry of rural population towards urban areas. Rural areas are characterized by isolation, lack or inadequate provision of basic amenities, inadequate health and social services, stagnant agriculture and scanty industries. Underemployment and unemployment are ordinary phenomenon particularly in rural Bangladesh. The vast human resources are remained unemployed due to lack of education, proper training and concentrated efforts to help grow the rural economy. As a result, the country is in the problem of uneven distribution of income that causes serious hindrances in balanced geographical growth as well as growth of GDP (Mondal, 2000).

According to Ahmad & Hossain (1983), rural development is one of the most important factors for economic growth in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is primarily an agro-based country. Agriculture contributes nearly one-fifth of the gross domestic product in Bangladesh. In order to increase the growth of agriculture, the Government has planned several programs pertaining to Rural Development in Bangladesh. Rural development aims at improving livelihoods of rural people in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally, through better access to natural, physical, human, technological assets and social capital and services, and control over financial or economic and political productive capital that enable them to improve their livelihoods on a sustainable and equitable fashion. The basic objectives of Rural Development Programs have been alleviation of poverty and unemployment through creation and development of basic social and economic infrastructure, provision of training to rural unemployed youth and providing employment to marginal Farmers/ Laborers to discourage seasonal and permanent migration to urban areas (Taylor, Dyer, & Yunez-Naude, 2005).

The rural economy is an integral part of the overall economy of Bangladesh. As majority of the poor reside in the rural areas, the prime goal of rural development is to improve the quality of life of the rural people by alleviating poverty through the instrument of self-employment and wage employment programs, by providing community infrastructure facilities such as drinking water, electricity, road connectivity, health facilities, rural

2 II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

45 housing and education and promoting decentralization of powers to strengthen the economy of Bangladesh (Sen,
46 2003).

47 There are a number of different approaches to understanding the meaning and relationship of rural development
48 and poverty reduction. Rural development as a concept has following dimensions: poverty alleviation, agricultural
49 development, ruralization of development, and peasantization of development (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2000).
50 Rural development may be defined as the development of regions excluding the urban areas such as the towns
51 and cities. Smaller settlements such as villages, farmsteads, and market towns are normally included within
52 the concept of rural, while most of the land area is expected to be used as agricultural land, forest or in
53 its natural state. Therefore, the promotion of rural development in a sustainable way has the potential of
54 increasing employment opportunities in rural areas, reducing income disparities, stemming pre-mature rural-
55 urban migration, and ultimately reducing poverty at its very source (Anriquez and Stamoulis, 2007). Emerson,
56 Meyer & Maphunye (2000), explains rural development as follows: "Rural development is multi-faceted in nature.
57 It unfolds into a wide array of different and sometimes interconnected practices. Among them are landscape
58 management, the conservation of new nature values, agro-tourism, organic farming and the production of high
59 quality and region-specific products." Poverty reduction and alleviation aims at reducing the negative impact
60 of poverty on the lives of poor people, but in a more sustained and permanent way including using poverty
61 relief programs. It includes the state's social grant programs which could reduce the impact of poverty for many
62 people. It should be noted that poverty reduction programs tend to have longer term goals. Thus the state's
63 social policies both provide immediate relief for poor people, but have also been found to provide a developmental
64 stimulus by empowering people to look for jobs who live in households in which members receive social grants,
65 or start their own small businesses. Basically, poverty reduction refers to strategies and policies that reduce the
66 number or percentage of people living in poverty or the severity of the impact of poverty on the lives of such
67 people. Almost all the developing countries in the world facing the challenge of providing adequate employment
68 and food entitlements to their present population (ILO, 2005). Poverty is multi-faceted (Khan & Ali, 2014). It
69 can be linked with hunger, unemployment, exploitation, and lack of access to clean water, sanitation, health-care
70 or schools. It can also be vulnerability to crisis and homelessness (Woolard, 2002).

71 2 II. Review of Literature

72 The concept of rural development is all encompassing multidimensional facets of rural life. Conceptually
73 rural development is inter-disciplinary relating to economics, political, public health, business management,
74 co-operative, credits, community operation and other fields. The World Bank defines rural development as a
75 strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people. It involves extending
76 benefits of development to the groups who seek a livelihood in the rural areas (RDS, 1999). Rural development
77 refers to improvement in the well being of the people living in rural societies. Rural development encompasses
78 poverty reduction as it improves the livelihood of the people who lack capabilities to meet their basic needs. Since
79 three-quarters of the population and the poor live in rural areas, "impoverished (poverty)" indicates conditions
80 resulting from income poverty. Improvement of well being of the bottom 50 percent of the rural people would
81 contribute substantially to poverty reduction in the country (IBBL, 2008). The term rural development means
82 raising the productivity and the real income of families their levels of livelihood by increasing employment
83 opportunities in farm and non-farm activities, thereby facilitating their levels of physical, social and cultural well
84 being (Veal, 2005).

85 Rural development deals with multi-dimensional issues, such as infrastructure, health care and hygiene,
86 education, environment and governance as well as local income generation. Frequently, the concept of rural
87 development is used confusedly with "agricultural development" or "regional development", however these
88 concepts differ as "agricultural development" mainly aims at increasing agricultural products such as crops,
89 livestock, fish and etc. Human being, land and capital are simply regarded as production of goods and means.
90 On the other hand, "Rural Development" mainly targets on people and institutions. Rural development includes
91 agricultural development activities; however it is one of the means of economic revival for active farmers and
92 targeted rural villages. "Regional" has a wide meaning to describe "area" (i.e. a certain area in country) or
93 "region" (i.e. continent of countries) (Fedderke et al, 2006).

94 Rural development aims to improve sustainable livelihoods by implementing comprehensive development
95 programs for rural areas where a majority of people live in poor conditions. Rural development can also contribute
96 to reduce poverty in urban areas by reducing excessive population influxes from rural areas. The promotion of
97 rural development requires effective external inputs to generate sufficient results and is capable of bringing
98 further improvements. Development issues must therefore be comprehensively and crosssectional understood for
99 this to be realized. Maximum use of human and material resources in rural areas is also necessary to alleviate
100 poverty. It is also important to safeguard the environment through resource management and natural disaster
101 prevention. Moreover, it is essential that governments assist a variety of activities through a cross-sectional
102 approach (Fedderke, Perkins & Luiz, 2006).

103 Rural development issues are often equated with poverty reduction. Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept.
104 Traditionally poverty is viewed as pronounced deprivation in well-being. "To be poor is to be hungry, to lack
105 shelter and clothing, to be sick and not cared for, to be illiterate and not schooled" (World Bank, 2001). Poverty

106 is usually measured with reference to a threshold level of income or expenditure (called poverty line) needed to
107 meet food and non-food basic needs for a person to maintain a healthy and productive life. These

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109 Volume XV Issue IV Version I Year () A measures are called "income poverty". Social scientists and policy
110 makers now agree that low levels of education and health are of concern in their own right. The deprivation in
111 education and healthcare merit special attention when accompany material deprivation (NEDA-WB, 2003).

112 Rural development refers to the improvement in the well being of the rural people. Rural development would
113 encompass poverty reduction, if the livelihood improvement brings into its fold people who lack capabilities to
114 meet the basic needs. Since 75% of the total population in Bangladesh still lives in rural spaces, an extensive
115 rural development that uplifts the well being of rural people would contribute substantially to alleviate poverty
116 in the country. In order to alleviate poverty, rural development requires an increase of consumers, industrial
117 development, and the improvement of infrastructure, and inhabitant's productivity through expansion, education,
118 health care services (Glaeser & Kohlhase, 2003).

119 Balat & Porto (2005), defines rural development as the provision of social and physical infrastructure, the
120 provision of financial services in non urban areas, nonfarm and small-medium enterprises activities in rural
121 communities and market towns that are more closely linked to the rural economy than they are to the economies
122 of the larger urban cities, as well as the development of traditional rural sectors, such as agriculture and natural
123 resource management. The key elements that will facilitate the realization of rural development include social
124 infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and financial services. The dynamics of these three elements will pave the
125 way to uplift the living conditions of rural households. Observing events and issues related to such dynamics can
126 facilitate the measurement of the constructs of rural development.

127 According to World Bank (2001), the rural development strategies are: (i) Deepen and implement key
128 structural reforms to help ensure a sustained, higher, and broad-based growth of agriculture, by removing
129 policy and institutional distortions and making the sector more efficient and internationally more competitive;
130 (ii) Facilitate increased and prioritized strategic public and private investments; (iii) Improve natural resource
131 management; and (iv) Strengthen institutional framework, capacity and performance.

132 Glaeser & Kohlhase (2003), focused on periurban centers; they reported an efficient road system would
133 enable an estimated 90% reduction in the cost of transporting goods. Lowering transportation costs has such
134 implications as: people are no longer tied to natural resources, consumer-related natural advantages become
135 more important, population is increasingly centralized in a few metropolitan regions, people are increasingly
136 decentralized within those regions, highdensity housing and public transportation become increasingly irrelevant,
137 location of manufacturing firms is not driven by proximity to customers or suppliers, and provision of education.

138 **4 a) Rural Development and Poverty Reduction**

139 Rural development process reveals a remarkable policy shift from community development approach to poverty
140 alleviation. Policy makers realized that development planning with local participation is meaningless without
141 reference to the empowerment of the rural poor as possible way out to alleviate poverty (Khan & Ali, 2014).
142 A large portion of the poor lives in rural areas. Rural development must constitute a major part of a
143 development strategy if a large segment of those in greater need are to benefit. The importance of rural
144 development on poverty alleviation in a developing country like Bangladesh is increasingly realized by the
145 policy communities. Development of basic infrastructure is essential to progress towards social development
146 (Hemson et al, 2004). Development of such infrastructure can facilitate rural development and, hence poverty
147 alleviation. Rural development is closely connected with the empowerment of rural communities, which has to
148 include the encouragement of civil society and public participation in decision making in a democratic culture.
149 The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2005) assessed the dynamics between accessibility and poverty.
150 Isolation of poor communities leads to poor access to basic goods like health and education, common risk factors
151 that result initially in deprivation and eventually in poverty. Rural development is seen as a means of facilitating
152 access to such goods. Development of capacity building and rural infrastructure results in lower transportation
153 costs, access to farm inputs, and access to markets. Improved accessibility will minimize poverty. According to
154 Balat and Porto (2005), policies that basically expand opportunities for households to earn higher incomes help in
155 poverty alleviation. To secure higher levels of well being, complementary policies like provision of infrastructure
156 credit and extension services are necessary. Rural development results from the improvement of the economic,
157 social, and environmental conditions of the community. These three aspects complement each other and lead
158 towards the overall improvement of individual and community well being.

159 According to OECD/DAC Guidelines on Poverty Reduction, poverty is described as the lack of the following
160 five capabilities.

161 i. Economic capabilities: to earn an income, to consume, and to have assets ii. Human capabilities: to have
162 access to health care, education, sufficient nutrition, clean water, and hygienic living conditions iii. Political
163 capabilities: human rights, to participate in political and policymaking process, and to be able to have an
164 influence on decision-making.

165 iv. Socio-cultural capabilities: to participate as a valued member of the community with social status and
 166 dignity v. Protective capabilities: to prevent vulnerability from food insecurity, illness, crime, war, and conflict.

167 5 III. Objectives of the Study

168 The main objective of the study is to investigate the impact of rural development on poverty alleviation. In
 169 order to achieve the main objective, following specific objectives have been identified: i. To examine various
 170 dimensions of rural development in terms of their impact on poverty alleviation. ii. To assess the impact of rural
 171 development programs on poverty alleviation and social empowerment. iii. To give some recommendations to
 172 make rural development programs more effective to alleviate poverty from rural Bangladesh.

173 6 IV. Methodology of the Study

174 The study adapted a quantitative approach utilizing survey methodology with associational and field-based
 175 analysis. The data collection exercises were aimed at gathering information about the impact of rural development
 176 programs on poverty alleviation and social empowerment. The study examined the relationship between poverty
 177 alleviation and social empowerment, as the dependent variable, and rural development evaluation dimensions, as
 178 the independent variables.

179 The target population for this study was the poor households of Chittagong District (south) in Bangladesh.
 180 The study was conducted in four villages of four police stations of Chittagong District. Survey questionnaires
 181 were distributed among purposively selected poor households through a group of 4-5 members. 246 questionnaires
 182 were distributed in the sample areas and a total of 212 completed questionnaires were returned. After removing
 183 the ones with missing data, 192 usable questionnaires were analyzed-a 78 percent response rate.

184 The constructed six dimensions of rural development evaluation are represented by 24 items. Four items assess
 185 housing facilities, four items assess literacy and education, five items assess healthcare support, four items assess
 186 employment opportunity, three items assess transportation facility, and four items assess agricultural support.
 187 Poverty alleviation and social empowerment is represented by a constructed six-item scale that measures poverty
 188 alleviation and social empowerment. All items are measured on a 5point Likert-scale, with "1" indicates the
 189 strongly disagree, "5" indicates the strongly agree. ??abakus and Mangold (1992) suggested that five-point Likert
 190 would reduce the "frustration level" of respondents and increase response rate and quality. Six demographic items
 191 namely gender, age, marital status, and occupation of poor household respondents were included in the survey to
 192 facilitate the interpretation of the results. Nardi (2003) defines unit of analysis as 'the element about which you
 193 are observing and collecting data, such as a person responding to a questionnaire, a school, an editorial or local
 194 business'. The study variables were measured at the individual level as this unit of analysis was one integral to
 195 the research design. Each individual and each subject investigated were treated as an individual source (Sekaran
 196 & Bougie, 2010).

197 Three kinds of statistical analysis were conducted for this study using SPSS 19.0. First, factor analysis was
 198 conducted to the construct validity, fit and appropriateness of the instrument (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Second,
 199 internal reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of all scales (Cronbach &
 200 Furby, 1970). Third and finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between
 201 predictor and criterion variables as highlighted in the research framework to test the research hypotheses. The
 202 study examined the following hypotheses: H1: The dimensions of rural development (Housing and agriculture,
 203 health, education, training and development, and communication) have a significant impact on poverty alleviation
 204 and social empowerment. H1a: The rural-housing and agriculture is positively related to poverty alleviation and
 205 social empowerment. H1b: The rural-health dimension is positively related to poverty alleviation and social
 206 empowerment. H1c: The rural-education is positively related to poverty alleviation and social empowerment.
 207 H1d: The rural-training and development is positively related to poverty alleviation and social empowerment.
 208 H1e: The rural-communication is positively related to poverty alleviation and social empowerment.

209 7 V. Analysis of Data a) Demographic Profile of Respondents

210 Out of 192 completed questionnaires 87.5 percent are male and 90.6 percent are married. 34.4 percent respondents
 211 were aged between 36 and 45 years old and 27 percent were aged between 46 and 55 years old, and 72.6 percent
 212 respondents had three or more children. 30 percent and 26.5 percent respondent were qualified with higher
 213 secondary and secondary level respectively. Only 6 percent respondents were uneducated. Out of 192 poor
 214 households, 60 from village one, 40 from village two, 50 from village three, and 42 from village four. In terms of
 215 occupation, 42.3 percent respondents were involved with agricultural 20

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217 Volume XV Issue IV Version I Year () A sector, 32 percent were from small business. Only 6.5 percent respondents
 218 were self employed.

219 9 b) Factor Analysis

220 To conduct the factor analysis to verify the basic structure (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010) as well
221 as dimensionality (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010) of variables of the study principal component factor analysis
222 using the Varimax rotation approach was applied. The factors of independent variables namely housing &
223 agriculture, health, education, training and communication were shown in table two. A five factor solution
224 emerged explaining 66 percent of the total variance in five dimensions of rural development. The KMO value
225 of sampling adequacy is 0.729 indicating sufficient intercorrelations with the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was
226 significant (Chisquare=3308.475, $P < 0.01$).

227 The findings of the analysis of dependent variable (poverty alleviation and social empowerment) are shown in
228 table three. All the items were loaded into one factor explaining a total variance of almost 65 percent. The KMO
229 measure of sampling adequacy is 0.612 indicating a good inter-correlations with a significant Bartlett's Test of
230 Sphericity (Chi square=2634.475, $p < 0.01$). .62 24. There are available public transports in the village.

231 .61

232 The five factors derived are housing & agriculture, health, education, Training and employment, and
233 communication. The content validity ratio of all items in the scale was more than 0.50. This fully confirms
234 the report of Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham (2005) regarding the appropriateness of factor analysis.
235 Finally, the instrument contained 24 items, excluding six dependent variables. The various factors and the
236 corresponding statements, along with their reliability alpha have been incorporated into. The results of the
237 regression analysis, as presented in table 5, showed that there is a significant positive relationship between
238 poverty alleviation and social empowerment, and dimensions of rural development. The resultant output has an
239 adjusted R² of 0.324 ($p = 0.01$) and yielded three significant dimensions namely housing & agriculture, health,
240 and education which concurred with the findings by Ashraque & Nasrullah (2001). This implies that the
241 dimensions "Agriculture & housing", "Health", "Education" contributed significantly. These three dimensions
242 accounted for $\{(0.29+0.23+0.14) \times 2 = 0.43\}$ 43.0 percent of the variance of dependent variable. The other two
243 dimensions training and development, communication did not contribute significantly towards explaining the
244 variance in the overall rating of poverty alleviation and social empowerment. These two dimensions accounted
245 for about only 6 (5.7) percent variance of poverty alleviation and social empowerment. Hence, the hypotheses
246 H1a, H1b, and H1c are accepted, and hypotheses H1d and H1e are not accepted.

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249 11 A

250 12 VI. Conclusion

251 The results of the present study indicate that rural development programs like housing and agriculture, health,
252 and education bring significant results in terms of increasing income and social empowerment which is similar
253 to the study of Ahmed & Hossain (1983). The study suggests that expenditure on rural development programs
254 increases income and socio-economic capacity of rural poor households in Bangladesh.

255 The relationship between rural development dimensions: housing and agriculture, health, education, training,
256 and communication imply that rural poor households experienced positive impacts. This means that rural
257 development programs succeeded to bring a positive impact on the alleviation of poverty and development of
258 socio-economic capacity of rural poor households. The positive impact is consistent with respondents' perception
259 expressed during the survey. The results also indicate that housing and agriculture, health and education have
260 a positive significant relationship with poverty alleviation and social empowerment. The other two dimensions
261 namely training and communication have also a positive but not significant relationship with dependent variable.
262 Housing and agriculture is the best predictor of rural development program dimensions.

263 There is still a dearth of research carried out on measuring the impact of rural development programs on poverty
264 alleviation. Future research might usefully be done on how to make training effective and communication in terms
265 of contribution to alleviate poverty and develop socio economic condition of rural poor of Bangladesh. In order
266 to make the training effective training needs analysis may be conducted to make the training programs effective.
267 So, the country, policy makers, concerned ministry should take necessary steps for proper rural development to
268 alleviate poverty and improve income and quality of life of poor people. ^{1 2 3}

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1

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.729
	Approx. Chi-Square	3308.475***
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	158
	Sig.	.000

** p<0.01

Figure 1: Table 1 :

2

Items	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Now agriculture office ensures distribution of high quality seeds in our village.	.79				
2. Distribution of fertilizer bow becomes smooth.	.77				
3. Most of the time my family members have the supply of electricity.	.76				
4. The agricultural production has been increased in our village	.75				
5. Housing has become more comfortable in our country.	.72				
6. There is a recent development in the farming tools and machines.	.70				
7. Most of my family members use sanitary latrine.	.68				
8. Most of my family members have access to pure drinking water from tube-well piped line etc.	.67				
9. Number of elderly people has increased in our village.	.76				
10. Infant mortality rate has been decreased for the last five years in our village.	.74				
11. Costs of health care facilities are reasonable.	.72				
12. Health care centers are equipped with necessary machines.	.62				
13. People are aware about healthcare services in our village.	.59				
14. Now more of our children can read and write.	.74				
15. The number of educated people has increased in our village.	.72				
16. Rate of school attendance of our children has increased.	.66				
17. Access to school attendance of our children has increased.	.63				
18. Training opportunities are available for agricultural farmers.					.84
19. Income generating training is also available in our village.					.79
20. Livelihood opportunities have been increased in our village.					.76
21. Income generating opportunities have been increased in our village.					.71
22. Now our travel time from village to town is decreased.					.64
23. Travel cost is reasonable.					

Figure 2: Table 2 :

3

Items	Factor
Poverty and Empowerment 1	Poverty Alleviation and Social Empowerment 0.81
Poverty and Empowerment 2	0.83
Poverty and Empowerment 3	0.87
Poverty and Empowerment 4	0.91
Poverty and Empowerment 5	0.74
Poverty and Empowerment 6	0.82
Percentage of Variance	64.87
KMO	0.612
Approximate X 2	2634.542***

* p<0.01

c) Reliability Analysis
 Reliability analysis is the second important criterion after factor analysis that ensures goodness of measures. Reliability analysis using Cronback's alpha was conducted to determine the reliability of the scales as shown in table 4. The reliability coefficients for variables of Independent variables-housing, 0.90; literacy and education, 0.88; healthcare support, 0.83; employment, 0.81, transportation, 0.79; agriculture, 0.84; and poverty alleviation and social empowerment, 0.89, respectively, exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70.

Figure 3: Table 3 :

4

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Housing	4	0.90
Literacy and Education	4	0.88
Healthcare Support	5	0.83
Employment Opportunity	4	0.81
Transportation Facility	3	0.79
Agricultural Support	4	0.84
Poverty Alleviation and Social Empowerment	6	0.89

Figure 4: Table 4 :

5

Measuring Scales	Standardized Coefficients	Significant (p)
Housing & Agriculture	0.29	0.01
Health	0.23	0.03
Education	0.14	0.06
Training and Employment	0.13	0.43
Communication	0.11	0.13
F-Value		17.23
R ²		0.324
Adjusted R ²		0.221

Figure 5: Table 5 :

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