

a) Researcher's Identity

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b) Objectives

The broad objectives of the action programme can be stated as follows:

- i. i. To provide functional education to the Out-Of-School Children and to prepare them for further education;
- ii. To improve the health status of the rural children and mothers through health education and primary health care services;
- iii. To reduce the incidence of intestinal and water borne diseases by providing water sealed latrines and hand tube wells for pure drinking water to the participating families;
- iv. To motivate the children and mothers to grow vegetables and fruits to supplement their nutritional needs and to have some additional income;
- v. To promote group cohesion and problem solving capabilities of the participating families by organizing them into groups and encouraging them for formation of capital through regular thrift savings;
- vi. To raise the income of the participating families by providing credit, inputs and other services to take up possible income generating activities; and
- vii. To motivate the parents to limit their family size through education on population control and to make the contraceptive services easily available.

c) Executive summary

About half of the population in Bangladesh consists of children less than 15 years of age. Most of these children live in rural areas and are surrounded by various problems. They do not have access to the essential minimum of nutrition, health care, schooling opportunities and environmental safety. The infant and child mortality rate in the country are extremely high. It is estimated that the infant mortality is 117 per thousand live births, 30% of the children die before reaching their 5th birth day, 34% suffers from protein caloric malnutrition and 35,000 children go blind every year due to vitamin 'A' deficiency, about 4 out of every 5 children have some form of worm infestation and 1 in 1 children under 5 years of age gets tetanus.

By any definition the housing and sanitary condition of the majority people is far from the minimum accepted level. On an average, a family of six has to share one living room. In the rural areas, only 1% of households have sanitary defecation facilities. About 35% households have pure drinking water supply.

Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world. Over 95 million of people have been squeezed into a land of 1,43,988 Km². At the present population growth rate of about 2.5% the country is likely to have 160 million people by the year 2000.

The level of literacy in Bangladesh is extremely low. The estimated percentage of literacy in 1981 was 25%. The difference of literacy between males and females is glaring. It is about 33% for males and 15% for females. About 40% of the children between 6 to 10 years never go to school and of the 60% enrolled children 70% leave the school before reaching class V. This means that more than 82% of the children either never enter any school or dropout before attaining any useful standard of literacy. There are about 40,000 primary schools in rural Bangladesh and the number of villages is more than 80,000 which means one primary school for every two villages. Most of the villages are neither contiguous nor having connecting roads. Even within the village there are cluster of houses separated from each other by small canals, sloping, bushes and crop fields which the children of primary school age are sometimes not able to walk through. The difference in literacy rate between rural and urban areas is also pronounced. The dropout at primary levels in rural areas is 80% and urban areas 62%. This can be explained by the increase in the absolute number of poverty groups of the population who can not send their children to schools. The opportunity cost of family labour and wage employment is also an important cause for not sending children to schools.

The situation of children in other developing countries is not also very much different. The problems concerned by everybody and there has been serious thinking how these problems can be properly taken care of.

It is against this background the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) sponsored a study in three of its member countries namely Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal in 1982. The following institutions were designated to conduct the study in the respective countries:

1. Rural Development Academy, Bogra, Bangladesh.
2. Post Graduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.
3. Agricultural Project Services Centre, Kathmundo, Nepal.

The survey was followed by a workshop in Nepal in the same year which recommended an action programme to improve the condition of rural children and their families. As follow-up of the recommendations, CIRDAP made requests to the governments of the participating countries to undertake such action programmes and agreed to provide some fund for the purpose. As the Rural Development Academy, Bogra conducted the survey it was selected to undertake the action programme in Bangladesh. Thus the programme comes into being in July 1984 under the title "Integrated Action for Out-of-School Children and their Families."

Bafan Banchhmark Siwanj / Nankastta

