

Evaluating Training Cascade Mechanism: A Methodology and a Case Study

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Abstract

Training has increasingly turned into an important NGO tool for rural development in Asia and Africa. Such an use has made it essential to assess the impact of these training sessions. Again a good portion of these sessions are offered through cascade mechanism. There has been a skepticism on the effectiveness of this mechanism. In response to the above need and skepticism the paper assessed the effectiveness of social development training and the cascade mechanisms under the Human Rights and Legal Education program of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee. A theoretical framework was developed and used for the assessment. The findings show that the training was effective in producing desired changes and the cascade mechanism was an effective training tool.

Introduction

The nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in their efforts to develop the poor usually undertake two strategies (Lewis 1997). Firstly, provide microcredit to low-income household members so that they might generate extra income through small-scale economic activities. Secondly, develop their potentials to challenge structural inequalities and social exploitations through education, organization, mobilization, etc. Most NGOs in Bangladesh are located within a continuum with these two strategies being at two ends. What ever may be the strategy, training has increasingly become an important tool in achieving NGO objectives.

With the proliferation of NGOs, particularly after independence of Bangladesh, professional training cells have been developed in many of them. This was done in response to diverse training needs of the NGOs. In the 1970s the NGO training was mainly directed towards awareness building of its members by following Freire's model of concentration. In the later part of the same decade the NGOs realized that the members, in order to use the microcredit effectively, need income generating skills. As a result the NGOs started catering such training to the members. Subsequently training was also offered to NGO staff to enhance their human capital and skill so that they might better serve the members.

Over course of time training courses were not only diversified and offered more in number, but also underwent qualitative changes. The quality of training was upgraded by adopting effective methods in designing and conducting training. The NGOs also became more skilled and experienced in conducting training. Also where needed the NGOs did not hesitate to change the mode of training to better serve their objectives. For example, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) in 1970s widely used Freire's model of concentration for awareness building of its members. Finding the model not very practical in its application BRAC shifted to Human Rights and Legal Education Training in 1980s for same objective (Rafi 2003).

Training courses offered by the NGOs have an implication on the pedagogical culture of Bangladesh. The culture is highly hierarchical where teachers are revered by believing that

they are next to parents. Higher status of the instructor along with unquestionable authority bestowed upon them develops fear and hesitation among the students towards the trainers. Such a psychic creates a distance between the teachers and the students which in turn impedes effective learning of the latter. To remove this barrier NGO training is designed in such a way so that there can be two-way communication between the trainer and the trainees. Besides, co-curricular activities involving both of them are often made part of the training to break the ice between the two.

Training has turned into a popular means to improve knowledge and skills of the rural population in Asia and Africa. The training offered by NGOs can be grouped into two broad categories. These are member oriented training offered to the NGO members and management training offered mainly to NGO staff to enhance their managerial skill. The member oriented training can further be divided into two – occupational skill development training increasing the productive capacity of the clients and social development training creating the capacity of the clients to fight against social problems.

The importance of training to NGO in turn justifies the need for research on training as it facilitates improving the quality of training and in assessing its impact. The assessment of the impact of training is essential for two important reasons (Newby 1992). Firstly, it helps identify the unsuccessful element of the training thus facilitating in taking necessary measures to make it more effective. Secondly, the assessment of the impact of training justifies the decision of the policy makers whether the training should be continued or not. Thus, the impact assessment of the social development training should receive special attention for its significance and extensive use in NGOs.

Training, particularly the member oriented training, is often offered through cascade mechanism. According to this mechanism a trainer trains a group of trainees who, after graduation, become trainers and conduct training. The cascade mechanism used for rural development usually offers training at three stages – top, middle and bottom. The rural trainees at the bottom-stage and their society are the ultimate targets of the development initiative. Under this mechanism training is transferred from one level to another thus facilitating training to a larger audience at a lower cost and within a shorter period. There are two strategies – one of which is often adopted by NGOs in implementing cascades. In some cases all the training components under a cascade are offered by a single NGO, e.g., BRAC or Proshika, against others where different NGOs partners up to take up the charge of conducting training of a stage each, e.g., PRIP Trust, Inner Force and Aparajeyo Bangladesh. Former strategy provides the scope for effective supervision, thus ensures quality training as all of them are under one NGO, but it needs substantial amount of resources to run the show. Under the latter strategy the training load of the cascade can be managed by small NGOs with limited capacity and resources but that can be at the cost of effective supervision and quality.

In spite of extensive use of the cascade mechanism in training some, particularly the NGO donors, senior management of the NGOs, and even trainers themselves, are skeptic about its effectiveness. The skepticism is based on the premise that training fails to transfer a portion of knowledge and skills intended for to the trainees. Under this mechanism the trainer will not be in a position to transfer the portion of knowledge and skills to the trainees which had not been transferred to themselves in the training when s/he was a trainee. Besides, the

training s/he will offer will also fail to transfer a portion of the knowledge and skills intended for transmission to the trainees. Knowledge and skill not transmitted cumulates over the stages in the cascade mechanism. Thus, a portion of the training content, though intended for transmission to the trainees at the bottom-stage, may not reach them at all.

A significant portion of NGO budget aiming at rural development is spent on training through cascade mechanism. Extensive use of cascade mechanism has necessitated the assessment of its effectiveness. A convincing assessment of the effectiveness of the mechanism also demands the assessment of all the training sessions within the mechanism. Thus, this study has two objectives:

- assess the effectiveness of cascade mechanism used in training for social development; and
- the effectiveness of training therein.

The Human Rights and Legal Education (HRLE) training of BRAC has been used for these assessments. The study was originally conducted by the Research and Evaluation Division an independent unit directly reportable to the Chairperson of BRAC thus being free of any organizational influence, what so ever, in its research activities.

BRAC, Training Division and HRLE Program

BRAC is a national private development organization that strives to bring the poor into the main stream of development by alleviating their poverty and by empowering them. From a modest beginning in 1972 BRAC has now become a multifaceted organization with about 28,000 regular staff and 33,000 part-time teachers working allover Bangladesh (BRAC 2003a).

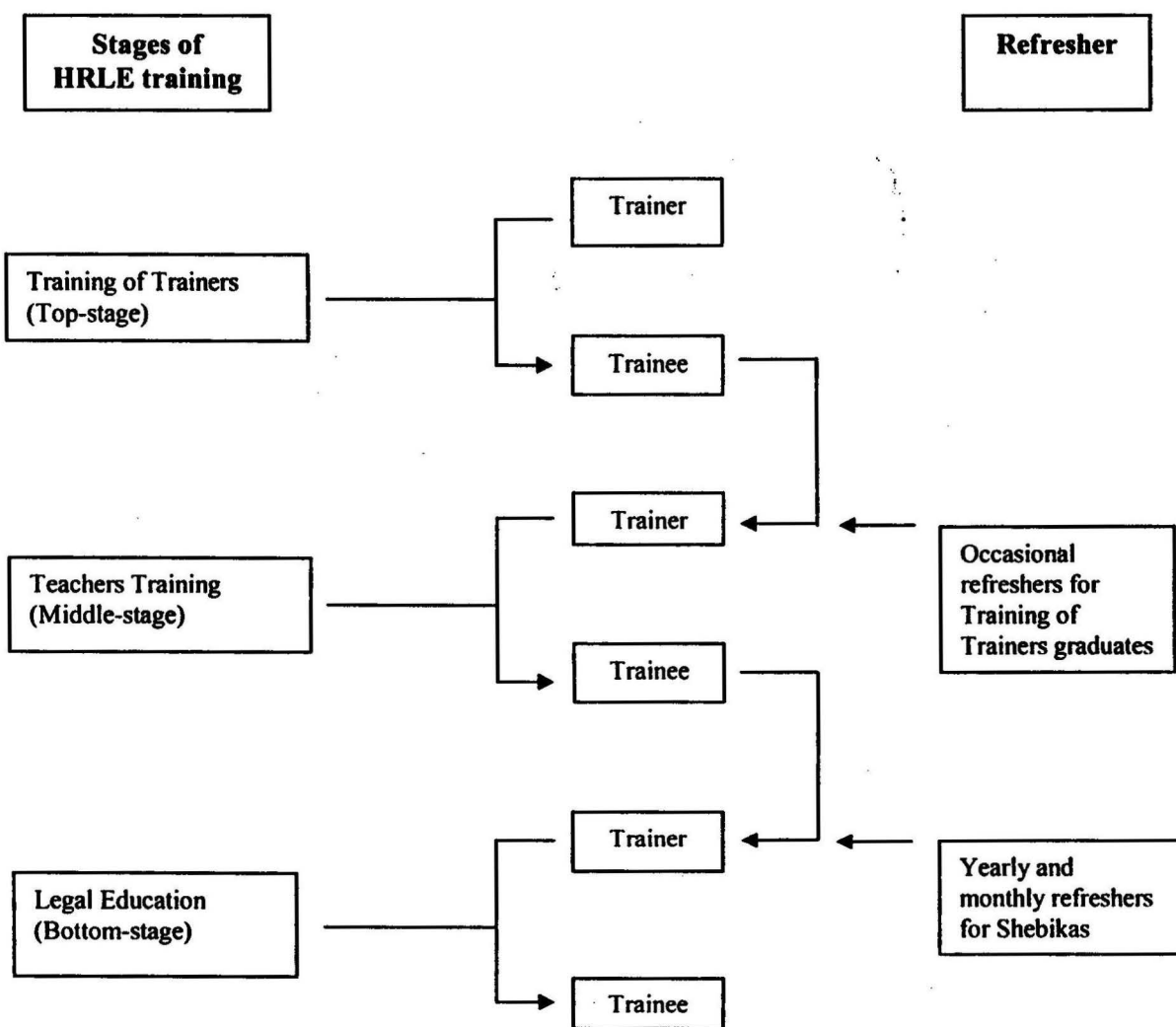
BRAC believes that poverty is a complex syndrome and to overcome it a holistic approach and innovative interventions should be taken. Thus, the major development interventions of BRAC are performed in four broad areas – poverty reduction, education, social development and health care. Accordingly development programs have been set in these areas to empower the poor. The programs are mainly offered to the members of the village organizations (VO). Female villagers whose family owns less than half an acre of land and whose members sell manual labor for at least 100 days a year are eligible to join a VO. A VO consists of 40-50 members. The members themselves form the VO by joining voluntarily but the process is often initiated by BRAC. Presently BRAC has 4.1 million VO members in 74% (65,020) villages all over Bangladesh (BRAC 2003b).

BRAC has pioneered training among the NGOs. It has long acknowledged the importance of capacity building of both staff and members through training in the achievement of its objectives. The primary objectives of BRAC training are to enhance the knowledge, skill and attitude of its VO members and staff. Besides, it is also catering the training needs of other NGOs and GOs both within and outside the country. The courses offered could be divided into three: (1) skill development training, (2) awareness building training and (3) management training.

Presently BRAC has 18 residential Training and Resource centers throughout Bangladesh. The facilities as part of Training Division (TD) have employed 172 trainers. As

a standard policy 10% of any development program budget of BRAC is spent on training. Approximately 70% of the training offered to the VO members in 1999 was through cascade mechanisms and about 36% of these training was on social development (BRAC 2000a, BRAC 2000b). Again major portion of social development training is facilitated by the Human Rights and Legal Education (HRLE) program.

Figure 1
Human Rights and Legal Education Training Cascade



It was widely observed that the poor in Bangladesh were ignorant of their legal rights. Such ignorance allows others to exploit the poor and, in particular, women (White 1992;

Arens and Burden 1995). In response to this reality, BRAC organized the HRLE program in 1989 to empower the VO members through training about their human and legal rights, and on some essential laws so that they may implement such knowledge to their benefit (BRAC 1995). The HRLE program is thought to be a fundamental building blocks for development and promoting civil society in rural Bangladesh.

The HRLE training curriculum can be grouped under four parts: Citizens' Right Protection Law, Muslim Family Law, Muslim Inheritance Law and Land Law. The parts together cover 22 legal issues unequally distributed among the Laws. The training is offered through a cascade mechanism.

The HRLE training courses are offered through a cascade mechanism having three stages (Figure 1). The first stage is Training of Trainers. The senior staff/trainers from HRLE program offer training to BRAC's Training Division staff, who in turn at the Teachers Training stage, offer training to selected VO members. These members are with a higher level of education than their counterparts in the VO. After graduating from the Teachers Training course they are called HRLE Shebika and conduct Legal Education in the village for other VO members.

The Training of Trainers' course runs for six days for a batch of 10-15 trainees. The Teachers Training accommodates a maximum of 25 participants. The training has four parts, each having a six-day duration, conducted with a month's interval at BRAC training centers. The Legal Education comprising of 20-25 trainees runs for 28 days with a two-hour session daily. The training is conducted at the courtyard of a trainee and at a time convenient to the majority participating in the course.

All the three training are conducted by following elaborate and precise training modules providing little chance for training to be affected by instructors personality. The modules besides standardizing the training ensure that the HRLE program objectives is represented and is transferred down uniformly within the cascade mechanism. Presently BRAC has two trainers capable of conducting Training of Trainers, 25 trainers conducting Teachers Training and 2,391 Shebikas offering Legal Education to VO members. As of June 2003, 2.2 million VO members were offered Legal Education (BRAC 2003a).

In order to be effective, cascade often follows a structured top-down approach in training. Such a rigid system of training in a situation where context for which training is offered is changing can quickly place training courses within the cascade out of relevance. This danger can be reduced by making the cascade responsive to bottom-up learning. HRLE cascade addresses the bottom-up approach by tuning itself to the feed-backs of the trainees at each stages of the cascade and the target group on whom the training is finally applied, and the recommendation of research findings. Based on the feedback from these sources the HRLE training cascade is modified when needed.

In context it must be noted that there are several other NGOs offering HRLE to the rural poor, e.g., Proshika. The training modules of these NGOs vary from that of BRAC in number of ways. The duration of BRAC training is more than that offered by other NGOs. Secondly, in spite of considerable similarity of the course content one of BRAC is more intensive. Finally, some of these NGOs, unlike BRAC, do not offer training through cascade thus have much limited capacity in reaching the poor.

Theoretical Framework for Assessment of HRLE Training

There are number of approaches available to evaluate training. Some of these are CIRO Approach (Warr and Rackham 1970), the CIPP Approach (Galvin 1983) and the Kirkpatrick Approach (Kirkpatrick 1983). Although worded differently, there are other approaches very much similar to Kirkpatrick's approach (Jackson and Kulp 1979; Fitz-enz 1987; Gordon 1987). It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss these approaches in detail.

In fact, these approaches were developed to evaluate Human Resource Development training for business or industrial organizations; thus, failed to meet the impact assessment need of the training directed towards social development in the rural setting. For example Kirkpatrick's approach evaluated training at four levels. These are, reaction (the satisfaction with the program), learning (the knowledge and skill gained in the program), behavior (the changes brought in the behavior due to learning), and result (the improvement in the organization mainly expressed in cost saving, improvement in work output and quality of changes resulted in the organization due to training). The assessment of cost saving and improvement in work output as visualized by this approach in result level is not possible or relevant in the case of a training directed to bring change in a village or a society.

To assess the impact of HRLE training courses it was also felt appropriate to do it at four impact levels, appropriate for the courses in hand, i.e., extent of training, execution of training, content of training and result of training. These interrelated impact levels are discussed below.

1. Extent of Training

The extent of training refers to the scope of training. It has two components: duration and execution.

1.1. The duration of training – It is positively associated with the gain in learning both in terms of quality and quantity. A simple assessment of the effectiveness of training may include the evaluation of total time spent in training and its distribution to different training activities.

The HRLE training activities can be divided into two major categories:

- the activities that 'directly' contribute to the gain in knowledge on laws, the development of skills in conducting training and in implementing the laws in relevant situation; and
- the activities that 'indirectly' contribute to the gain in knowledge on laws and to the development of the skills related to conducting training on the same, e.g., the lecture on the objectives and importance of HRLE training. Besides, the activity also includes the development of skills in implementing the laws in the relevant situation.

1.2. The training coverage – The larger is the proportion of people with training within the group (i.e., to whom the training is relevant) more likely it is that there will be a bigger

impact of training on the group provided there exists no constraint to the application of the learning from the training. This will be simply because there will be more people within the group to apply their learning and there will be diffusion of learning from the trained to those not trained. The effectiveness of this component depends on:

- proportion of the reference group who successfully completed the training; and
- proportion of the reference group who partially completed the training.

2. Execution of Training

Evaluation of the execution of training takes into account the effectiveness of the techniques applied in the training and the environment in which the training is conducted. It has two components.

2.1. The training process – It refers to ways that ‘directly’ contribute to learning and gain in skill in training. Based on the following indicators the effectiveness of training process can be assessed.

- Is it participatory? The extent to which the training provides the scope for participation of trainers and trainees in the training process and the nature of participation. The two-way communication is argued to be a more effective training process.
- Is it amiable? The extent to which the training is carried out within a friendly environment. An environment which integrates trainees psychologically with the training process. Amiability is important in training as because under this process the deficiencies of the trainees can easily be detected by the trainer; accordingly the trainer can take necessary measures.
- Is it understandable? The extent to which the training content is understandable.

It was assumed that the effectiveness of training was positively associated with these three indicators of the training process.

2.2. The training environment – It refers to the quality of facilities and the resources available for conducting training. The environment can be grouped into two:

- facilities and resources having direct bearing on training, e.g., sound system in the classroom; and
- facilities and resources having indirect bearing on training, e.g., the quality of meals served to the trainees.

Better quality of facilities and resources are likely to contribute positively to learning and acquisition of skills imparted in training.

3. Content of Training

The content of training, as conceptualized by the trainee, determines the extent to which the training will be put into application – referring to the utility of training. There can be two types of conceptualization related to the content.

3.1. The extent to which the different parts of training was found easy or difficult in understanding and in internalizing (i.e., make part of oneself, through learning and

social adaptation). There will be a tendency in the trained to put that part of the training more in use which was found easy to understand, thus mastered well, than the part found difficult to understand and not mastered well.

- 3.2. The extent to which different parts of training are considered significant by the trained. The part of the training considered more significant will have a higher probability of being applied than those considered less or not significant.

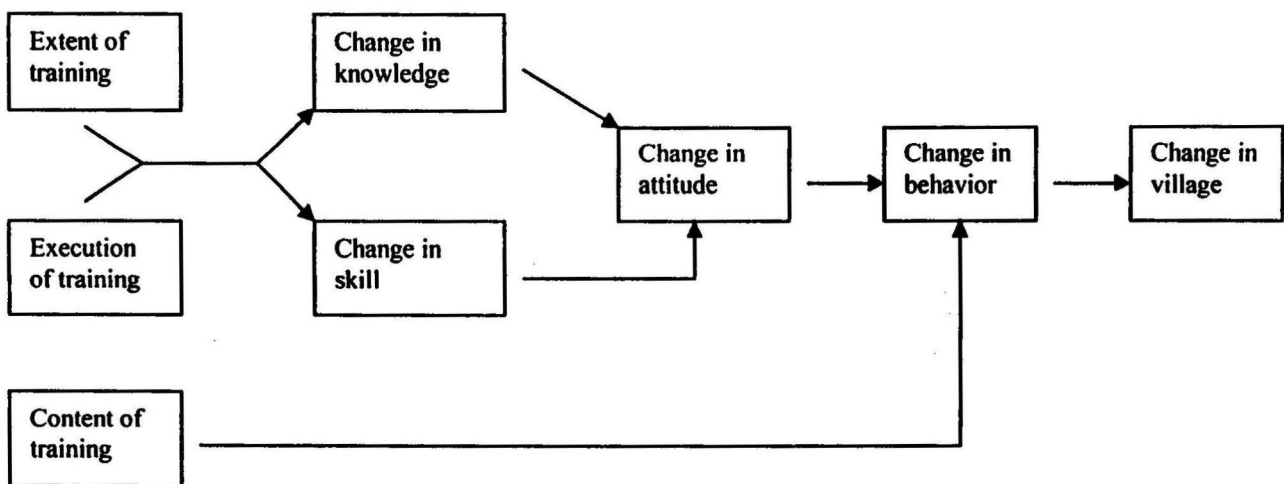
4. Result of Training

Training intends to bring some changes in accordance to the objectives set by it. There are five types of changes based on which the impact of training can be assessed (Phillips 1991; Bhatnagar 1987). These are changes in knowledge, skill, attitude, behavior and organization. Again the impact in relation to the objectives of training can be categorized into three (Bhatnagar 1987).

- 4.1 Positive impact – the training achieves the objective in part or in full.
- 4.2 Neutral impact – there are no signs of impact due to training.
- 4.3 Negative impact – the training producing an impact not desired.

The theoretical framework assumes that the training leads to learning (i.e., gain in knowledge and skill). The trained attaches attitudes to the learning. The learning with positive attitude, in the absence of the constraints, will be implemented in the relevant situations (Ajzen and Fishbein 1977, 1980). Such implementations in turn will lead to the change in the organization/village of the trained. Figure 2 presents the relationships among the impact levels and the changes that HRLE program includes.

Figure 2
Impact Assessment Levels of Training Courses under
Human Rights and Legal Education Program



Methodology

While designing the study HRLE program, Training Division of BRAC and the VO members were discussed so that the study might enrich itself from their insights. As a strategy HRLE training courses were assessed in terms of the HRLE program objectives by following the theoretical framework in hand. Through this process an attempt was made to estimate how much value was added by each stages of the training.

Sampling

Samples used in this study can be divided into two broad categories. Firstly, trainers and trainees – observed mainly to assess knowledge and skills gained in the training. Secondly, the female villagers representing treatment and control groups with different status in relation to HRLE program – observed to assess the effect of HRLE-related knowledge (i.e., knowledge gained in HRLE training) in the real world.

Training sessions: A training session, each for Training of Trainers, Teachers Training and Legal Education, was randomly selected from the list of training scheduled for 1996. Next, all the trainees graduated from these training – 12 from Training of Trainers, 21 from Teachers Training and 20 from Legal Education – were observed.

Treatment group: Included VO members with Legal Education. Altogether 75 VO members who received Legal Education one year back, two years back and three years back (25 members in each group) were selected from three villages under BRAC's field office in Titpallah. They were randomly selected from the list of VO members with Legal Education available at the office.

Control group: Two control groups were taken into consideration. First group included 75 VO members without Legal Education. These VO members were randomly selected from three villages, with the help of a list of such members available at BRAC's field office in Chachua. Although BRAC had its other programs Legal Education was not conducted in these villages. Second group included females from Uluhati in Nandail district, a village without any NGO intervention. These female villagers besides not being member of VO did not receive any training similar to HRLE in the past. In order to select the samples a list of all households along with age, genders, education and economic status of all members therein was made with the help of rapid rural appraisal. Next, 50 female villagers were randomly selected from the list thus prepared. The selection of samples in the control groups was made as such so that they might be comparable with the treatment group in terms of age, education and economic status. The similarities were taken into consideration in selection as because these attributes could lead to the variation in HRLE knowledge other than the training.

Instruments and Assessment Strategy

Data were collected from BRAC documents and by operationalizing three processes or instruments – firsthand observation by the researchers, interview schedules and tests. Separate interview schedules were developed to make those appropriate for impact level

under training courses, and treatment and control groups. The questions in these sets were designed as such to receive structured and semistructured responses, attitudes and opinions. The assessment strategy for each stage is given below.

Extent of Training: Data on coverage and duration of training under this level were derived from BRAC documents. Data, thus derived were matched with actual situation in the training sessions. Opinions of the trainees were taken to fathom how these factors have contributed to learning and development of skills in the trainees.

Execution of Training: Evaluation of the training process and the training environment under this level were done by observing training sessions and interviewing the trainers and the trainees involved therein. The observation was made based on the checklist and by attending all the training sessions throughout their durations. The researchers made detailed notes of the training process, e.g., time spent on group discussion and role-play, to assess the extent the training sessions were participatory, amiable and understandable.

Content and Relevance of Training: At this level, evaluation was done to understand the extent different laws and issues covered in the courses were considered difficult/easy to internalize and the extent those were considered significant by the trainees. The trainees provided structured responses on these issues and the justifications for their responses.

Result: The result was assessed at three stages: gain in knowledge, gain in skill in conducting training and extent HRLE-related action, i.e., action induced by knowledge gained in Legal Education.

It was an oral examination conducted individually. The trainers from Teachers Training and Legal Education courses were tested immediately before starting the courses under observation to find out whether they themselves were competent to conduct the same.

The difference in pre- and post-test scores provided an estimate on the gain in knowledge by the trainees. These tests were a part of Training of Trainers' course. It was a written recall-item test with 18 questions having short answer formats administered in class. The test scores obtained were used in this study. On the other hand, Teachers Training and Legal Education did not include any test; so tests were developed for these two courses. The tests had questions like "What is the lowest age of marriage for a woman?" designed for short categorical responses. The test included one question from each of 22 legal issues covered in the training. Same set of questions was used for both pre- and post-tests. The trainees were not given any hint that they would be tested again at the end of the training.

Number of measures were taken to derive a more accurate test scores from Teachers Training and Legal Education courses. The test scores of the trainers conducting these courses were corrected for guessing (Bramley 1986). To make a correct assessment of the learning from training the influence of the intervening factors on test was controlled. Trainees were asked before the post-test whether they had any learning on content similar to one covered in the training from extra-training sources when it was in progress. In the case of trainees who had learning from such a source on issues covered in the test the pre- and post-tests scores for them were calculated by excluding the point received from the questions on the issues. The differences between pre- and post-test scores were *t*-tested. The percentage

Table 1
Framework for Evaluating Human Rights and Legal Education Training, Experimental and Control Groups

Impact level	Training of Trainers and Teachers Training			Legal Education			Experimental and Control Groups		
	Information required	Source of information	Methods	Information required	Source of information	Methods	Information required	Source of information	Methods
Extent of training	Duration of training 1. Direct contribution; 2. Indirect contribution	Secondary sources: register's input-output matrix	Secondary sources: data collection	Duration of training: 1. Direct contribution; 2. Indirect contribution	Secondary sources: register's input-output matrix; nonparticipants	Secondary sources: data collection	Training coverage: number of courses offered; number of participants;	Secondary sources: register's input-output matrix; non-participants	Secondary sources: data collection
Execution of process and environment	1. Training process: level of participation; amiability; comprehensibility 2. Training environment: training facilities	Training materials; trainers; trainees	Feeling and reaction analysis; semistructured interview; observation by the research team; group discussion	1. Training process: level of participation; amiability; comprehensibility 2. Training environment: training facilities	Training materials; trainers; trainees	Feeling and reaction analysis; semistructured interview; observation by research team			
Content of training				Knowledge and skills provided: significance (importance, relevance); extent difficult	Trainers; trainees	Content analysis; semistructured interview; checklist			
Result of training	Change in the level of relevant knowledge; capacity to explain laws; confidence in providing training	Trainers; trainees	Analysis of pre- and post-tests; semistructured interview; group discussion; observation by the research team	Change in the level of relevant knowledge; capacity to explain laws; willingness in putting training into practice (i.e., attitude towards knowledge and skills)	Trainers; trainees	Analysis of pre-and post-test; semistructured interview; observation by research team	Level of relevant knowledge; capacity to explain laws; willingness in putting training into practice; perception and experience of constraints/capacities in exercising HRL-related action; evidences of changed outcomes	VO member with and without Legal Education; villagers from non-BRAC village; Law Implementation Committee; relevant offices; village representatives; relevant villagers	Analysis of test; semistructured interview; detailed case studies; individual and group reporting of experiences; examination of secondary records and reports; registers; corroboration.

scores and gain ratios were used to assess the changes in the level of knowledge because of the training (Newby 1992, Bramely 1986).

The assessment of the gain in skill in conducting training by the trainees from the Training of Trainers and Teachers Training courses was made by their trainers based on the observation of selected traits considered to have represented the skill in conducting training. These assessments were used in this study. Besides, the self-evaluation of the trainees on their capabilities and confidence in conducting training in future were also considered.

To assess the application of knowledge gained in the training in practical situation the HRLE-related action of the treatment group was compared with the control group. Information on HRLE-related action was tabbed from case studies. The respondents from both the groups reported the HRLE-related actions they conducted in the last 12 months. The reporting was first validated through consistency check of the information provided and through corroboration from other information sources. Next, the validated action was considered to be HRLE-related, provided a clear link could be established between the knowledge provided in Legal Education and action. As a process of establishing the linkage between these two the HRLE-related knowledge of the groups was also tested as the presence of knowledge was a prerequisite for the relevant action.

A framework for assessing the impact of HRLE training courses was formulated indicating the information required in this study, the source from where the information were collected and the techniques followed for their collection (Table 1). Some of the cells in the Table are empty as the assessment in their cases was not relevant or needed.

Findings

The findings of all the three training courses for each of the levels have been presented together. This has been done to avoid repetition in the presentation of same finding for different training courses at each level.

Extent of Training

Although the trainers and trainees were of similar age group they were not of same gender in all courses. On average, the trainees of Training of Trainers' course had 16 years of education compared to 6.5 and 0.1 years in the case of Teachers Training and Legal Education trainees, respectively. The trainees of Training of Trainers were all experienced trainers as they conducted training for other BRAC programs in the past as against none of the trainees from Teachers Training had similar experience. Thus, in order to develop the skill for conducting courses in the Training of Trainers' trainees it was only necessary to tune up their existing skill to the needs of HRLE program but in the case of trainees from Teachers Training course the skill had to be developed from the scratch. Responding to these realities courses were structured for different durations. Similarly, the training activities that 'directly' and 'indirectly' contributed to learning received differential emphasis in terms of time allotted to them in these training courses.

Training of Trainers: Altogether 51 hours distributed over six days were spent in learning and development of skill in the course. The trainees also spent number of hours every evening to prepare the lessons.

About 45% of the training time was spent on the dissemination of information on laws and in their clarification. In contrast, 6.4% of the time was allotted for the development of training skill. Rest of the time was spent on issues 'directly' and 'indirectly' contributing to learning and skill development like review of lessons and pre- and post-tests. The distribution of time to different training activities emphasized a great deal on imparting legal information to the trainees.

Teachers Training: Altogether 192 hours were spent on Teachers Training. Of this, 56% of the time was spent on the activities 'directly' contributing to learning whereas the rest was spent on activities 'indirectly' contributing to the same.

The total training time was evenly allotted among the four laws. Meaning that the distribution of time on four laws were not proportionate to the number of issues the laws contained. For example, Muslim Family Law having seven legal issues was allotted 18.5 hours, whereas Muslim Inheritance Law having six legal issues and Land Law having five issues were allotted 20 and 22 hours, respectively. Similarly time allotted to activities 'directly' and 'indirectly' related to gain in knowledge and skill in conducting training were not same for all the laws.

Legal Education: The Legal Education covering 56 hours was equally divided over a 28 days period. This time period was distributed on two training activities. Those were dissemination of information on laws and the review of these laws. About 79% (44 hours) of the training time was spent on teaching laws. Of this, 18% were allotted to Citizens' Right Protection Law, 32% to Muslim Family Law, 27% to Muslim Inheritance Law and 23% to Land Law. These time allocations to different laws were roughly proportional to the number of legal issues the course covered.

From the classroom observation it appeared that the differential distribution of time in training was logical in response to the time needed in internalizing various training contents, and acquiring skill in conducting training and in taking HRLE-related action by the trainees.

All the trainees and even their trainer from Training of Trainers' course opined that the duration of training was a bit short for covering the course curriculum comfortably. In spite of the time constraints, most trainees (92%) mentioned that they managed to face the pressure and learnt well because of having higher education and for having experience in conducting training from other programs. In the case of Teachers Training and Legal Education 95% and 85% of the trainees respectively were 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the duration of training and with the ways time was allotted to different training activities.

In spite of some reservation of the trainees in Training of Trainers' course it may be concluded that the planning of the duration of training and the distribution of time amongst different training components have contributed positively to the effective learning of the trainees and in the development of their skill in conducting training.

Execution of Training

Training Process

A combination of techniques, i.e., explanation, discussion, answering questions and memorization, were followed to aid in the internalization of knowledge by the trainees. Memorization was done mostly after class in the evening. Skill in conducting training was developed mostly through role playing. The training, particularly on Legal Education, made an effort to develop a positive attitude towards the laws taught. It was done by setting examples indicating the advantages in following the laws and the disadvantages in not following.

Participation: Two-way communication was a characteristic of all the three training under consideration. The research team observed that the trainees' participation helped both the trainers and the trainees to evaluate the extent to which the laws were understood and learnt. The evaluation in turn helped the trainers in taking necessary measures to overcome the deficiencies of the trainer when needed. All trainees indicated that they could ask questions to their trainers without any hesitation, and in turn they were always well responded. The trainees felt that the training was fully participatory and had helped them in learning. It was also reported that the process helped both the trainers and trainees to measure the extent to which the laws were understood and learnt.

Amiability: The trainees' relation with the trainer were congenial and fostered an effective training. The trainers did not impose any of their decision or belief on the trainees. The trainees from Training of Trainers' course found their trainer friendly and cooperative. Consequently, the trainees were at home in discussing issues with the trainer and in asking question for clarification whenever felt necessary. The trainees of Teachers Training and Legal Education courses noted about their respect for trainers. Because of the respect, trainers' instructions were always followed and because of the friendship the trainees were not hesitant in pointing out their problems to the trainers. All these immensely helped the training processes.

Understandability: Although 58% of the trainees of Training of Trainers' course found their course difficult, mainly because of the time constraints, all (92%) except one in the class opined that the course was fully understandable. In the case of Teachers Training and Legal Education, in general, the training was understandable to all, although some 9% of Teachers Training and 17% of Legal Education trainees mentioned about their difficulties in following the class at the initial stage of the course.

On the indicators of quality of training represented by participation, amiability and understandability, at least 90% of the trainees were either 'satisfied' or 'highly satisfied' with these aspects in any of the training under consideration (Table 2).

Training Environment

On average 83% and 90% of the trainees of Training of Trainers and Teachers Training courses, respectively, were satisfied or highly satisfied with the aspects 'directly' affected the training, i.e., 'number of trainers', 'discipline in classroom' and 'training equipments' (Table 2). About 80% of the Legal Education trainees were either 'not satisfied' or 'less satisfied' with the discipline in the classroom (i.e., courtyard). In their evaluation they took into account the trainees' poor attendance in the sessions and the disturbances created by children in the training sessions. Some of them also mentioned that most of the pictures in the flipchart, used as training aid, were not large enough for clear viewing from a distance.

Table 2
Level of Satisfaction with Selected Aspects Related to Execution of Training

Aspects	Not satisfied	Less satisfied	Satisfied	Highly satisfied
Training of Trainers (n=12)				
Quality of training*	-	-	33.4	66.6
Number of trainers	-	16.7	8.3	75.0
Discipline in class	-	-	-	100.0
Training equipment	-	16.7	33.3	50.0
Teachers Training (n=21)				
Quality of training*	-	-	23.9	76.1
Number of trainers	-	9.5	28.6	61.9
Discipline in class	-	4.7	19.1	76.2
Training equipment	-	4.7	14.3	81.0
Legal Education (n=20)				
Quality of training*	-	10.0	30.0	60.0
Number of trainers	-	15.0	40.0	45.0
Discipline in class	35.0	45.0	15.0	5.0
Training equipment	10.0	5.0	40.0	45.0

* Quality of training refers to cumulative score for participatory, amiability and understandability under training process. Rest of the indicators are on training environment.

All trainees of the Training of Trainers and Teachers Training courses were 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the aspects that 'indirectly' affected the quality of training like dining services, housing facilities and auditoriums. The evaluation on these factors however was not relevant for Legal Education course.

It may be concluded that all the aspects of training process considered and training environment in most cases 'directly' and 'indirectly' contributed to the quality of all the training courses under HRLE program.

Content of Training

The Legal Education was evaluated in terms of Content of Training as the same was relevant to this course only. The trainees in Legal Education categorized the laws based on the extent

these were considered useful and found easy to internalize. According to some trainees more than one law was considered easy or difficult in internalization and more or less significant in application.

The Citizens' Right Protection Law was the least significant part of the course to 30% of the trainees. They felt that Citizens' Right Protection Law had a little chance for its application in their cases. In contrast, Muslim Family Law was considered very much relevant to daily life and most significant part of the course to 80% of the trainees. They felt that the implementation of Muslim Family Law (against multiple marriages and child marriages, which were widely practiced in the community) would improve lives of many women. On the other hand, the training on Land Law was significant to some 30% of the trainees as it was felt that the law could come handy in dividing property amongst heirs and in resolving disputes related to inheritance.

The Muslim Family Law was the easiest in conceptualizing to most trainees (95%) as its content was thought to be very much related to their day to day life. On the other hand, Muslim Inheritance Law was most difficult to 40% of the trainees because the proportion of the property that different members in a family might legally inherit was difficult to understand and remember.

Result of Training

Trainers and Trainees Participated in HRLE Training

Change in knowledge

As mentioned earlier, both trainers and trainees were tested on the HRLE curriculum to find out whether trainer contributed to the gain in knowledge of the trainees and to assess the extent to which knowledge and skill of the trainees had changed due to the training.

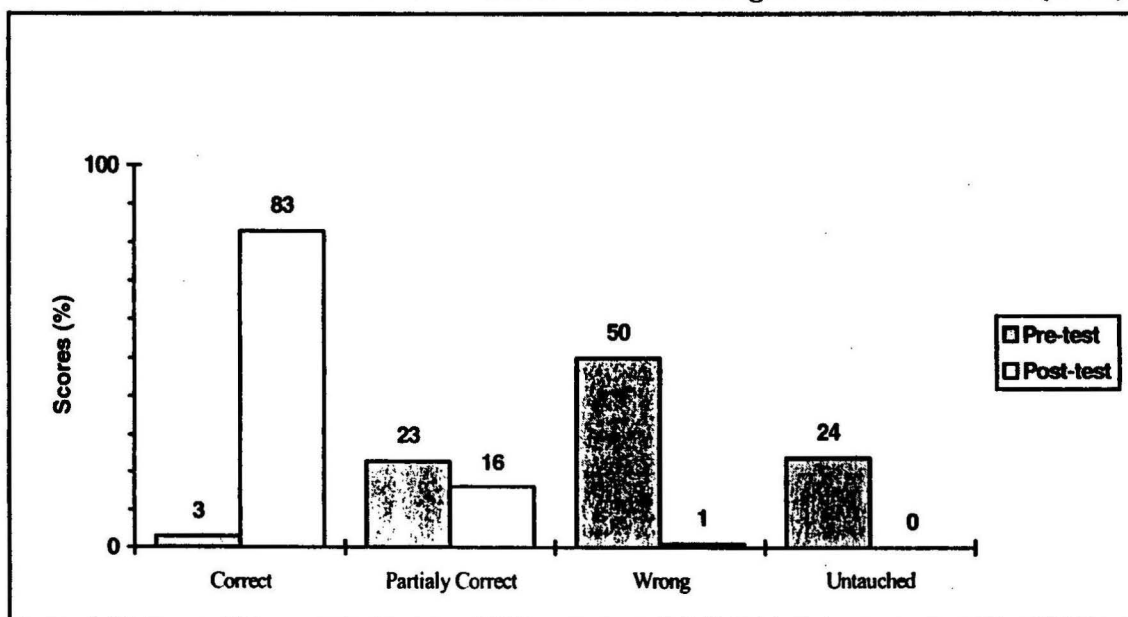
Training of Trainers: On an average trainees scored 16.6 points out of 100 in the pre-test which rose to 90.6 in the post-test. Number of questions answered 'correctly' by the trainees in the post-test was considerably higher than that in the pre-test (Figure 3). In contrast number of questions answered 'wrong' or left 'untouched' decreased in a similar fashion in post-test compared to pre-test. These findings along with the change in average test score between pre- and post-tests indicate that the HRLE-related knowledge of the trainees increased considerably due to training.

Teachers Training: The trainer conducted the Teachers Training scored 97 out of 100, which after the correction for guessing was 94%. On the other hand, the trainees from the same course answered 45% of the questions correctly in the pre-test which rose to 89% in the post-test (t -test, $p < 0.001$). This indicates a net gain of 44% in the score. The overall mean gain ratio between pre- and post-tests was 84%.

Table 3 presents the average pre- and post-test scores of different laws separately. The t -tests on pre- and post-test scores for the laws conducted separately indicate that all the mean scores were different from each other ($p < 0.001$). The trainees made a maximum gain in knowledge of 59% for Muslim Family Law, and minimum gain of 22% for Land Law. It appears that the trainees were well informed about Land Law even before their participation

in the training as they responded 54% of the questions correctly from this part in the pre-test. The mean gain ratios calculated separately for laws indicated that a satisfactory level of learning was achieved in all laws but Land Law as the gain was only 48 out of hundred. Score less than 50% was considered not satisfactory.

Figure 3
Pre- and Post-test Scores of Trainees from Training of Trainers Course (n=12)



Source: Register, Training Division, BRAC

Table 3
Average Test Scores of Trainees from Teachers Training and Legal Education Course

HRLE Laws	Teachers Training (n=21)			Legal Education (n=20)		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain Ratio	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain Ratio
Citizens' Right Protection Law	41	86	75	33	77	66
Muslim Family Law	39	98	96	28	89	81
Muslim Inheritance Law	47	95	91	50	66	46
Land Law	54	76	48	57	82	58

Legal Education: The Legal Education trainer scored 100% in the test, and thus was in an excellent position to train the trainees. On the other hand, her trainees had 39% of the responses correct in the pre-test but they scored 79% in the post-test (*t*-test, $p < 0.001$). The mean gain ratio between pre- and post-test was 68%.

The mean post-test scores were also higher than that of the post-tests for all laws (*t*-test, $p < 0.001$) (Table 3). The net gain in the knowledge due to the training was most for Muslim Family Law and least for Muslim Inheritance Law. The mean gain ratios indicate that

the trainees learnt considerably in all laws except in the case of Muslim Inheritance Law, for which the computed ratio (46%) was slightly under 50%.

The trainees from all courses confirmed that they were not exposed to any source contributing to their learning similar to HRLE training curriculums during training. Thus, the gain in the learning may fully be attributed to the training they received. Although the ratios indicated that the level of learning for Land Law in the case of Teachers Training and Muslim Inheritance Law in the case of Legal Education were a bit less satisfactory, but as a whole, all the training courses were sufficiently effective in bringing changes in the level of HRLE-related knowledge of the trainees.

Change in Skill in Conducting Training

The trainers evaluated the trainees' capacity in conducting training as 'excellent', 'good', 'average' and 'weak' on selected traits – presentation skill, chart demonstration ability, consistency in discussion, participation in discussion and shyness. Other than shyness all the trainees were graded as 'good' or 'excellent' for rest of the traits. In contrast, about 38% (8) of the trainees were considered 'shy' or 'very shy' in Training of Trainers' course. As a whole the trainers felt that the skill acquired by the trainees in conducting training were more than satisfactory. Such an evaluation of training coincided with the self-evaluation of the trainees on their capacity. The Training of Trainers' trainees indicated their confidence in conducting Teachers Training courses effectively in future. The reasons for having such a confidence was that the trainees felt that they had clear understanding and complete internalization of the laws taught in the course. About 76% of the Teachers Training trainees were fully confident in conducting Legal Education. The reasons for having such a confidence was that the trainees' rehearsal in conducting training was satisfactory.

Attitude Developed from Legal Education

The Legal Education graduates expressed a strong desire to apply their learning whenever possible. About 56% of the trainees intended to apply Muslim Family Law most against 19% for Muslim Inheritance Law, 16% for Citizens' Right Protection Law and 9% for Land Law. The application of Laws was intended through three processes: (1) by not violating the laws themselves; (2) in the attempted or actual breach of these laws the person indulging in the same would be informed of the breach; and (3) by applying HRLE-related knowledge in the solution of problems. These tendencies indicated the development of a positive attitude towards issues covered in Legal Education.

Treatment and Control Groups

HRLE-related Knowledge: The mean test score of the VO members received Legal Education 1-3 years back (i.e., two treatment group) was 56%, of VO members without Legal Education was 45% and that of the villagers from non-BRAC village (i.e., control groups) was 39% (*t*-test, $p < 0.0001$). It must be mentioned that the test scores of VO members who received Legal Education 1-3 years back was lower than that of the recent Legal Education

graduates (i.e., 79%); as because the HRLE-related knowledge of the VO members received Legal Education 1-3 years back lapsed with time.

HRLE-related Attitude: The VO members with Legal Education expressed full commitment in making efforts in applying HRLE-related knowledge in the appropriate situations that they would come across. Some even mentioned that they were ready to make such efforts even if they would have to incur losses. These tendencies were in line with the attitude developed in the case of recent Legal Education graduates, discussed earlier. In contrast, similar assertiveness in applying legal knowledge was not observed in the case of VO members without Legal Education and the villagers from non-BRAC village.

HRLE-related Action: The case studies revealed that within a year 61% of the VO members with Legal Education conducted HRLE-related actions as compared to only 12% and 4% by the VO members without Legal Education and the villagers from non-BRAC village, respectively. Altogether 59 HRLE-related actions were conducted by the VO members with Legal Education compared to only nine by the VO members without Legal Education and only two by the villagers from non-BRAC village. Of these actions conducted by the VO members with Legal Education 37 came out successful, i.e., action produced result as desired by the implementers. When the actions conducted were grouped in terms of legal areas in the case of VO members with Legal Education it was observed that 72% of the actions were concerned with Muslim Family Law.

Changes in Respondents' Village: Some 58% (n=69) of the VO members with Legal Education opined that the level of legal knowledge of the villagers substantially increased since the introduction of training (i.e., 1-3 year back from when they were interviewed) in their village. As a result, the respondents believed that there was a decrease in litigation, child marriage, receipt of dowry, divorce and dispute on inheritance in their villages. They also felt that the villagers became more conscious in exercising voting right and was vigilant in not being influenced during election. The presence of knowledge on what were the right actions in day to day life and capacity to resolve dispute by applying knowledge gained in the training was thought to be the main reason for such changes. When respondents were pointed out about the possibility that these social changes in the village could be due to other factors like radio program they categorically mentioned that the change was not but for the Legal Education course conducted in their village.

Extent of Legal Education in Titpallah

According to 1991 census the catchment of Titpallah field office (i.e., roughly 8 miles in radius from the office) had 28,344 people forming 6,079 households in 33 villages (BBS 1992). Although 25 trainees were enrolled for a course, on the average, 23.5 of them completed the training within the catchment area. In between 1990 and 1995, 34 Legal Education courses were offered in Titpallah producing 799 graduates, thus including 96% of the VO members in training. All these in terms of the total population in the catchment area meant that 23% of the households with members eligible to join VO, in fact, had members with Legal Education. In this connection it may be mentioned that the catchment area

included three types of people – villagers join VO, villagers eligible to join VO but did not, and villagers not eligible to join VO. The Legal Education along with a positive attitude towards it inclined them to influence other members of their household with the knowledge they received from the course. These households not only had the potentials to conduct HRLE-related actions for themselves but also were in a position to and, in fact, influencing and extending legal help to others in their village.

Discussion and Conclusion

In assessing the effectiveness of training the study focused into three distinct issues. Firstly, the evaluation of the mechanism that led to the gain in learning and that hinders or facilitates the transfer of learning from one impact level to the next, i.e., the process. Secondly, the assessment of the actual gain in learning from training, being the output. Finally, the assessment of the changes brought about by the application of learning, i.e., the outcome/impact.

Methodology: The study combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data on result of training were quantitative in nature, thus were straightway subject to quantitative analysis. Whereas qualitative data for other levels, in some cases, were rationally represented in scales, thus were also subject to quantitative analysis. These qualitative findings after transformation were comparable across the stages of training.

A portion of the qualitative data used for assessment was derived from the observation of the research team, and attitudes and opinions of the respondents. Data from these two sources were used independently, to complement each other and in triangulation. Conclusion based on such data in this study was not likely to make it less reliable for number of reasons. Firstly, the observation of the researchers matched with attitude/opinion of the trainers and trainees thus confirmed the validity of the data derived from both sources. Secondly, the trainers or trainees were not given any impression that their performances were being evaluated. Thus they did not behave differently due to the presence of researchers in the classroom. As because researchers were present throughout the training courses within a short while they were accepted as part of the class. The trainers neither tried to hide their real form from the researchers nor it was possible on their part to do so through out the training. Thirdly, although the trainees addressed the trainers as brothers or sisters, such reverence did not influence the trainees to become less critical about the course they participated or the performance of their trainers or the training session while responding to the research team. As observed, the trainers who mentioned that they were highly satisfied with the duration of training did not opined similarly about other aspect of the training in all instances, e.g., allocation of time to different training activities. Fourthly, the interviewees provided quality information to this study as because the interviewers were not part of HRLE program and the identity of the interviewees were kept anonymous. Finally, several studies indicate that attitude/opinion reflects reality (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Sherif and Cantril 1947).

No elaborate investigation on how the objectives of the HRLE Program/training was visualized by the trainers and the trainees at different training stages was made. As because VO members effectively implemented the training at the bottom stage of the cascade

mechanism it might be argued that the objectives were viewed uniformly throughout the cascade.

Finding: The Extent and Execution of Training were fully supportive in producing a desired level of learning in the Training of Trainers' course. Consequently compared to pre-test trainees performed considerably better in the post-test. Also they were sufficiently prepared in conducting training at the Teachers Training level. The trainer at Teachers Training level was fully competent to conduct training. The Training Environment and Execution of Training over here were also up to the standard to produce quality graduates. These graduates performed excellent in the test and were also skilled to conduct training at next lower stage – Legal Education. As trainer in the Legal Education course they proved no less competent to their counterparts at higher stages. The Extent and Execution of Training as observed in the course were highly satisfactory in general and produced graduates with excellent performance. These graduates were not only equipped with HRLE-related knowledge but also were sufficiently skilled and positive in attitude to use those in appropriate situation. In a nutshell, one impact level influenced the other in training under HRLE cascade. These training sessions added considerably not only to the knowledge of the trainees but also to their skill in conducting training and applying knowledge in practical life.

In spite of incomparability of the test scores from Training of Trainers with Teachers Training and Legal Education because of the difference in exams it might be mentioned that the observed Training of Trainers' trainer successfully transferred her learning to the trainees. Similarly the observed graduate of the Training of Trainers' course was also successful as a trainer in transferring her knowledge to the trainees of Teachers Training course. Had it not been the case the trainees from Teachers Training would not have performed better in the post-test.

The mean post-test scores for Teachers Training and Legal Education courses were 89% and 79%, respectively. This difference might superficially indicate that there was a loss of learning in the process of transferring the knowledge from Teachers Training to Legal Education. In this connection three observations may be sighted from the findings refuting the ineffectiveness of the HRLE cascade mechanism as might be concluded from above observation.

- The mean gain ratios indicate that trainees of Teachers Training course scored higher than Legal Education trainees for Citizens' Right Protection Law, Muslim Family Law and Muslim Inheritance Law, but reverse was the trend for Land Law. Had there been a loss of learning due to use of cascade mechanism there would have been a uniform trend for all laws between these two groups but that was not the case.
- Had there been a problem in transferring knowledge due to inherent weakness of the cascade mechanism there should also have been some similarities in the case of questions responded correctly and incorrectly by the trainers and their trainees in Teachers Training and Legal Education courses. Such a trend was not observed. The Teachers Training and Legal Education trainees scored considerably lower than their trainers. The observed trainer of the Teachers Training course was a fresh graduate of Training of Trainers but the Legal Education trainer had six years of experience in conducting Legal Education. In

the case of the latter the experience acquired from conducting Legal Education in the past might have contributed to her better performance in the test.

- The trainees of Teachers Training had more schooling (6.5 years) than the Legal Education trainees (0.1 year). It was argued that the higher education of the former group had helped it in internalizing training better and in coming up with a higher scores than the latter in the post-test. From this it may be inferred that performance of both the groups would have become similar if they were with same level of education.

The Legal Education also helped in developing a positive attitude towards the knowledge imparted. Such an attribute had psychologically advanced and encouraged the HRLE graduates to implement learning in available opportunities. In reality this group was prompt in conducting HRLE-related actions. As a whole the training had a positive impacts as it conformed to the objectives of the HRLE program. In this context it must be mentioned that such an implementation by HRLE graduates was not affected by their association with BRAC. As it is BRAC's policy to equip the members with training but not to involve themselves or induce VO members to take HRLE-related action.

The Laws learnt were not applied equally by the VO members with Legal Education. It appears that the trainees' evaluation of the Content of Training had some association with the desire to apply different Laws and the implementation of knowledge in real situation. For example, the Muslim Family Law was considered to be the most relevant and easiest part of the training and was implemented most. It must be mentioned that the poor villagers were infested with problems more related to Family Laws than other Laws.

On Training Coverage, a significant portion of the VO members in the villages received Legal Education thus a tremendous potential for achieving the objectives of the programs was created. The respondents believed that there were changes in their village due to Legal Education offered therein. Such an opinion of the respondents should be accepted with caution. As because the observed changes might be due to factor other than the Legal Education about which the respondent might not have been aware of. Change in the village due to Legal Education can be assessed best in a study exclusively designed for this.

The cascade mechanism appeared to be an effective tool in transferring knowledge and skill gained in one training to another. Two factors inherent in the HRLE cascade mechanism importantly complemented to the success of the training courses. Firstly, courses were conducted based on modules. These modules standardized the training process and facilitated effective transmission of knowledge and skills from the trainer to the trainees. Secondly, regular refresher courses for the trainers kept their knowledge up to date as needed for conducting training (Figure 1). Although cascade mechanism appeared to be quite effective in HRLE program the mechanisms might not be equally effective in all training initiatives. It must be kept in mind that depending upon a variety of factors, e.g., nature of course content, mechanism can be differentially effective in training programs.

To the best of our knowledge an assessment of the effectiveness of cascade dealing with social issues has not been done in the past. Of course investigation of the cascades in other NGOs provided us with insights particularly in relation to their management. Number of cascades jointly managed by NGOs suffered from lack of management and quality control as they were not accountable to each other. Compared to other NGOs BRAC's cascade

appeared to be outstanding in terms of updating its modules based on feedbacks. The HRLE training modules were also found to be more precise and detail aiming at maximum and exact transfer of knowledge and skills from one level to the next.

Problems: The findings indicating that HRLE knowledge of the trainees decreased with time confirm to the allegation that NGO members quickly memorizes and then forget the training (Hashemi 1990). Of course forgetting of the training is a loss of resource and obstacle in achieving the objectives by the NGOs. But, in the case of HRLE training loss of memory is not a big hindrance in the application of the training as the implementation is always done in a group. The group members compensate each others' loss of knowledge; finally the knowledge implemented is complete and correct (Rafi et al. 1997).

Although this study came up with ample evidence of successful application of HRLE training there are also studies indicating acceptance of dowry and child marriage (issues covered in HRLE training) are in the increase. This is probably because these practices have strong economic and long practiced motives overpowering the attitude developed against the practices from the training.

Obstacles in implementation: Conducting of Legal Education course and the application of HRLE-related action are opposed occasionally by the elite of the village due to their misunderstanding about the training and the program. To counter this situation BRAC is arranging Community Leaders Workshop for them. The objective of the workshop is to remove their misunderstanding. Besides, a Law Implementation Committee has been setup in each VO which facilitates collective effort in the implementation of Legal Education in the cases where needed.

Assessment of the impact of training is a difficult research initiative as it is hard to make a precise quantitative assessment of such an impact and differentiate the impact of training from that of the confounding factors (Phillip 1993). This research besides assessing the effectiveness of HRLE training and cascade mechanism indicates that a methodology to assess the impact of the social development training can be developed. The framework developed in this study can be further improved for precise assessment of the impact of training on other aspects of rural development. The demonstration of such techniques is beyond the scope of this paper.

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