

Assessing Operational Status of BRAC *Gonokendra Pathagar*

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June 2000

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. AMR Chowdhury, Director Research for allowing me to undertake this study and I also acknowledge his support in various stages of the study. My profound gratitude is extended to Dr. Shafiqul Islam, Programme Coordinator, BRAC Education Programme, and his other colleagues for providing information related to the *Pathagar* programme. I owe a lot to the Programme Organizers of the Continuing Education Programme at the field level and all the selected librarians of BRAC *pathagars* for their cooperation. My sincere thanks and gratitude are also extended to Samir R. Nath, Team Coordinator, Education Study Group for reviewing the paper and all the colleagues of Education Study Group of Research and Evaluation Division for their valuable suggestions and help in different phases of the study. Finally, I am grateful to Mr. Hasan Shareef Ahmed for his editorial support.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at assessing operational status of the BRAC Gonokendra *pathagars*. Sixty randomly selected *pathagars* were surveyed. Data was collected on the basis of some performance indicators. It was found that the number of male members and their daily attendance in the General and Small type *pathagars* was higher compared to females. The number of female members and their daily attendance in the female type *pathagars* was predominantly higher than males. On average, about 60 users daily attended the *pathagars*, and 183 books were found to be borrowed per month in the General type *pathagars*, followed by 120 and 74 in the female and small type *pathagars* respectively. The *pathagars* had an average of 969 books. On average, the community put forward about Tk.50,000 as a reserve fund for the General type *pathagars*, which was Tk.56,000 and Tk.25,000 for Female and Small type *pathagars* respectively. Sixty-seven percent of the *pathagars* were established in *pacca* buildings, followed by 25% in Tin-shed buildings. The interior space of most of the *pathagars*, and its environmental conditions were found to be satisfactory. The majority of the *pathagars* organized cultural activities on a regular basis but, very few of them organized social activities. The major findings of this study indicate that community participation, especially at the initial stage of the *pathagar's* establishment was satisfactory, but participation of both sexes together in development activities particularly in rural areas seemed to be limited. There still some room for improvement and further measures to achieve higher level performance.

INTRODUCTION

The contribution of community based libraries has a rigorous impact particularly in the context of economic development, instituting required changes in our social system, reducing poverty, strengthening literacy efforts, expanding the educational basis, and in undertaking development initiatives. It can provide necessary support to uplift socio-economic conditions of the people and raise their standard of living to enable them to lead a healthy and better quality life (Khan and Islam, 1997). Rehnema (1976) notes that development of reading skills, its retention is a difficult task, and to achieve these skills various ways have been identified. One of the most common ways is the post-literacy activity as without it neo-literates quickly relapse into illiterates. Malaya (1976) estimated that in the absence of a follow-up of the literacy programmes 60 % to 90 % of the adult learners relapse into illiteracy. The findings of a test given to literacy certificate holders showed that within six to twelve months, hundreds of them forgot almost everything whatever they learnt from the literacy classes. The reason behind this, as Quddus (1963) noted was a lack of post literacy materials.

With consideration of these views, in the mid of 1995, BRAC introduced community based pathagar known as *Gonokendra Pathagar* which were divided into three types; General, Female, and Small *pathagar*.

An overview of BRAC *Pathagar*

BRAC started the *pathagar* programme as part of BRAC's Continuing Education Programme (CEP). It's main focus is to foster a learning environment in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Some of the major objectives of the programme are to (i) create a learning environment for the community especially to provide an opportunity for neo-literates as well as literates to further develop their literacy skills, (ii) develop reading habit among the men and women, (iii) organize discussions and short courses to extend the current knowledge on important issues (such as crops, health, sanitation, etc.) (iv) develop marketable skills and sensitize the rural population to the significance and strength of mass media and to involve the larger population in the learning process.

As has been mentioned above that BRAC operates three types of *pathagars*, e.g. General, Small and Female type *pathagars*. The nomenclature of *pathagars* is mainly based on number of members, the amount of reserve funds generated by the community, and the location of *pathagar* houses. The standard amount of required members is 300-400 and amount of reserve funds to be raised by community contribution is Tk. 50,000 for General and Female type *pathagars*, but is flexible for Small type *pathagars*. It should be mentioned here that there is no maximum membership limit and fund raising for the *pathagars*.

The *pathagars* are mainly equipped with about one thousand books, one daily newspaper, one weekly magazine and some internal journals published by BRAC and are furnished with two reading tables, one small table for the librarian and three book shelves. The libraries are usually set up in a room with adequate space (500 sft.) provided by the community free of cost. The *pathagars* are kept open from 3 to 6 hours a day depending on the funding of the *pathagars* 6 days a week from Saturday to Thursday.

Until December 1999, BRAC was operating 402 *pathagars*, of which 335 were General, 33 were Female and the remaining 34 were Small type *pathagars*. The *pathagars* had a total of 2,61,346 members, of which around 30% were female (Source: BEP, MIS, 1999).

Users of BRAC *pathagar*

The target users of the *pathagars* are the neo-literate, literate, educated and unemployed young, working people, school dropouts and regular students. In other words, the whole community is expected to benefit from the BRAC *pathagars*. Registered members can borrow books but non-members do not get this opportunity.

Operational funds

Operational funds are created mainly by a joint monetary contribution of both BRAC and the concerned community. Initially, when a community shows interest in establishing a *pathagar* and raises a certain amount of funds, BRAC contributes an equal amount of

money to create a reserve fund. BRAC's contribution is given after the formation and registration of a Trustee Board, which is formed within two years of pathagar's establishment. The contribution of the community cannot be less than Tk. 25000 and BRAC contributes an amount equal to the community contribution that cannot be more than Tk. 1,00,000. The total amount (contributions of both) is deposited in a recognized financial institution in the name of the Trustee Board on a fixed term basis. The monthly interest of the reserve fund is used to meet continuous expenses of running the *pathagars* i.e. the librarians' monthly salary, electricity bills, and newspaper bills.

Until December 1999, out of a total of 402 *pathagars*, 243 *pathagars* (62.7%) had formed a Trustee Board and were registered with the government. BRAC paid its contribution to all the registered *pathagars*. It should be mentioned here that the objectives of fund raising are to ensure community participation by monetary contribution and to create reserve funds to meet the operational expenses.

Membership

It has been mentioned earlier that everybody within the community can subscribe for membership. The amount of subscribed is not equal in all membership categories. There are different membership categories in the *pathagars*, such as donor membership, lifelong membership, general membership, student membership, and children's membership. The minimum donation is Tk. 1,000 for donor members, Tk. 500 for lifelong members, Tk. 40 for general members and Tk. 10 for student members. Children are not charged membership fees. The membership for the general and student members is renewable each year.

Management

The daily routine duties within a *pathagar* are performed by a locally recruited part-time librarian and managed by a committee formed by the community to conduct regular routine duties of the *pathagar*. At the initial stage a convenor committee consisting of 11-13 members is formed, which exists until the Trustee Board is formed. The Team In-

charge (TI) of the concerned BEP team is included in the committee as a BRAC representative. The other members of the committee are selected from the community. Within two years of the committee's formation, a Trustee Board should be formed and be registered with the government.

Studies of BRAC *Gonokendra pathagars*

As the *pathagar* programme is a new BRAC project a very limited number of studies has been carried out on the programme. Begum, F. and Akter, S. conducted a study in 1996 which focused on its members' socioeconomic background and some related aspects of the *pathagars* e.g. the age of its users, their educational level and their occupation, where from they came to know about the *pathagar*, and the usefulness of the training provided by the *pathagars*. The study also sought for suggestions from the users to know how the services of the *pathagars* can be improved and how the programme can be made more effective as well as useful.

Another study, entitled, "Analysis of issues and problems of BRAC *Gonokendra pathagar*" has been carried out by Khan and Akter in 1999, which focused on the perception the community towards BRAC *pathagars* and the trend of their participation. It explored the trend and pattern of *pathagar* use, gender pattern in using the *pathagars* and assessed the needs and interest of the users. It may be worthwhile to mention here that before the introduction of this study, some performance indicators were determined that were used in selecting some well functioning and poor functioning *pathagars*. The above studies suggested that further research on different aspects of the *pathagars* should be done. This study is a further attempt to achieve the following objectives.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to highlight the operational status of the BRAC *Gonokendra pathagars* based on some performance indicators. More specifically, this paper highlights some major aspects of BRAC *Pathagars* such as; the number of members, users' attendance records, the number of books available in the *pathagars*, the status of book

lending, the type of pathagar house, its environmental status, the space inside of the house and its own funding position.

METHODOLOGY

Background and sources of the data

Data used in this study was collected by a survey of 60 BRAC pathagars. For the purpose of data collection, a form was used, developed based on some performance indicators. The performance indicators were determined prior to the introduction of an evaluation study entitled "Analysis of issues and problems of BRAC Gonokendra Pathagars." The data was gathered from the records kept in the related registers of the pathagars as well as by applying indirect observation methods.

Study area

The survey covered all the (nine) operational areas of BRAC's Continuing Education Programme (CEP). These areas were: Srimongal, Comilla, Gazipur, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Shirajgonj, Rajshahi, Jessore and Magura.

Sample size and sampling procedure

Sixty *pathagars* out of 402 were selected using stratified and cluster sampling methods. From each type the sampling was done proportionately. The sample size was calculated with respect to a 10.0% error and 90.0% confidence interval. Of the selected pathagars, 46 were General, 7 were Female and the remaining 7 were Small type *pathagars*.

The field activities and quality control of the data

Ten well-trained and experienced investigators who were given a four-day orientation on the data collection techniques collected the data. Two supervisors supervised them. The author himself supervised and guided the whole data collection activities at the field level. The supervisors also cross-checked and scrutinized the collected data immediately. To

The following table (Table- 1) presents a distribution of *pathagars* by number of members grouped into four ranges, which shows that among all the selected *pathagars*, 43.0% had 500 or more members. Distribution of members by types of *pathagar* reveals that 40.0% of the General, 47.0% of the Female and 29.0% of the Small type *pathagars* had 500 or more members. The table also shows that 15.0% of the General, 14.0% of the Female and 14.0% of the Small type *pathagars* had less than 300 members.

Table 1. Distribution of *pathagars* by ranges of its' total member

Number of member (range)	Type of <i>pathagar</i>			
	% General	% Female	% Small	% All
500 +	44.0 (20)	47.0 (4)	29.0 (2)	43.0 (26)
400 – 499	17.0 (8)	15.0 (1)	43.0 (3)	20.0 (12)
300 - 399	24.0 (11)	14 (1)	14.0 (1)	22.0 (13)
<300	15.0 (7)	14.0 (1)	14.0 (1)	15.0 (9)
All	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (60)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of *pathagars*

Attendance of users

The following figures (Charts - 2a, 2b and 2c) present the average daily attendance of the users by sex and by *pathagar* type. The Chart -2a shows that the average daily attendance of male users in the General type *pathagars* was 49.8 which was significantly ($p<.001$) higher than the females (15.1). It should be mentioned here that in calculating users' daily average attendance, daily attendance of the previous three months was considered. The following calculation method was used.

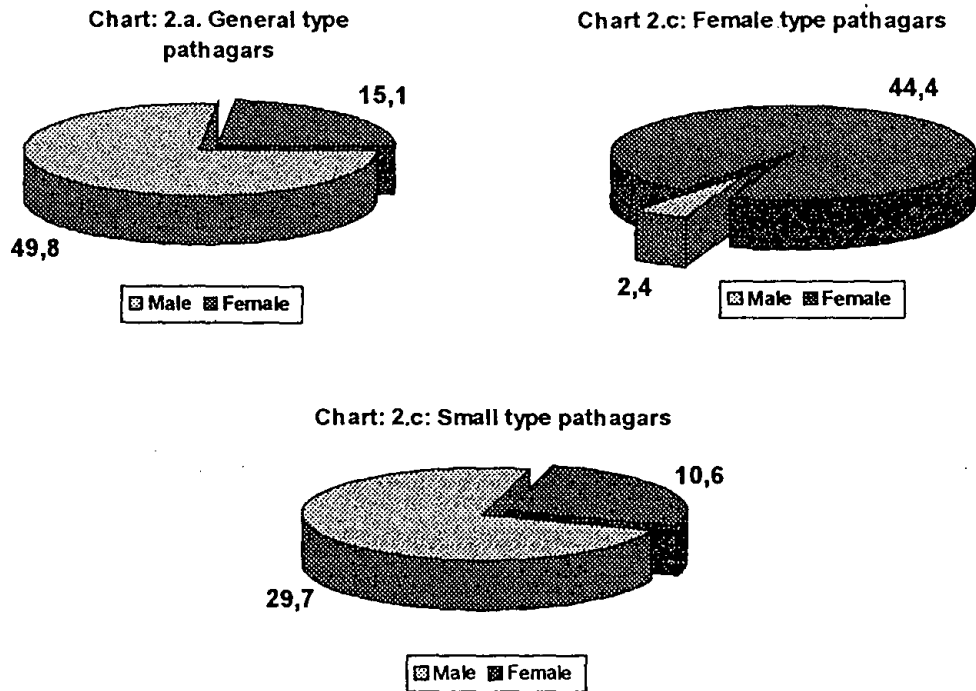
$$\text{Average daily attendance} = \frac{\text{Total number of users attended in the last three months}}{\text{Number of days pathagars opened}}$$

The Chart 2b demonstrates that the average daily attendance of female users in the Female type *pathagars* was 44.4, which was predominately higher than their male counterpart (2.4). The difference was highly significant at $p<.001$.

The chart 2c presents a similar finding of the Small type *pathagars*, which shows that average daily attendance of male users was 29.7, which was higher than the attendance of female counterparts (10.6). The difference was also statistically significant at $p < .001$.

The findings regarding the overall attendance rate of the users in the different types of *pathagars* reveal that the average attendance was 64.9 in the General type *pathagars* which was higher than the attendance in Female (46.8) and Small type *pathagars* (40.3). Although, the locations of the General and Small type *pathagars* were similar (the majority of them were located in high schools (co-education) or in public places, table 1 in Appendices), the average daily attendance of male users of the General type *pathagars* was significantly higher (49.8) compared to the Small type *pathagars* (29.7). The difference was statistically significant at $p < .05$. On the other side, the average daily attendance of female users in the General and Small type *pathagars* was 15.0 and 10.6 respectively, but the difference was not significant. It was observed that the General and Female type *pathagars* were located in comparatively developed areas with respect to high literacy rate and good communication. On the other hand, the Small type *pathagars* were located in remote and backward areas in terms of literacy rate and the economic status of the people. Thus, the number of *pathagar* users was found to be higher in the General and Female type *pathagars* than in the Small type *pathagars*.

Figure 2. Number (average) of users attending daily in different type of pathagars by sex and type of pathagar



Significance level for attendance of users in different type of pathagars

Attendance of male: General pathagars (49.8) vs. Small pathagars (29.7) at $p < .05$

General pathagars (49.8) vs. Female pathagars (2.4) at $p < .001$

Attendance of female: General pathagars (15.1) vs. Small pathagars (10.6) ns

General pathagars (15.1) vs. Female pathagars (44.4) at $p < .001$

Table 2 presents an area-wise distribution of users' attendance, which reveals that on average, 79.0 users attended the pathagars daily in Shirajgonj area which was higher than the attendance in the Rajshahi (77.3) and Gazipur areas (72.1). On the other hand, less than 50 users attended in the pathagars in the Rangpur (43.2), Srimongal (46.4), Maymensingh (49.2) and Comilla (49.3) areas respectively. The differences of the average users' attendance in the pathagars in different areas were not significant. It should be mentioned here that distribution of users' attendance by sex and by area has not been presented here because all types of pathagars were not available in all the areas.

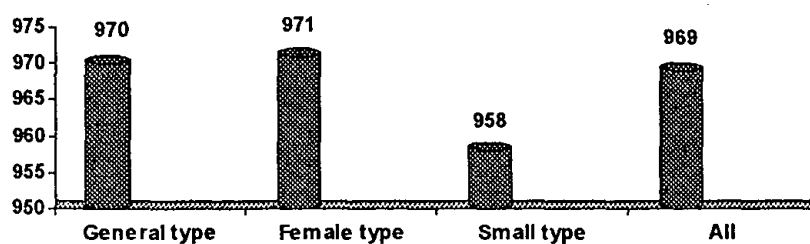
Table 2. Number of members attended in the *pathagar* by area

Area	Daily attendance of users (average)	Standard Deviation
Srimongal	46.4	13.9
Comilla	49.3	9.4
Gazipur	72.1	42.9
Mymensingh	49.2	18.7
Rangpur	43.2	24.2
Shirajgonj	79.0	20.1
Rajshahi	77.3	41.2
Jessore	60.1	16.7
Magura	62.0	27.9
All	59.9	28.3
Level of significance	ns	

Number of books available in the pathagars

The following graph (Graph 3) presents the number of books available in the different types of BRAC *pathagars*. The graph shows that on average, the *pathagars* had more than 950 but less than 1000 books. The figures presented underneath the figure show that the highest number of books in a *pathagar* was 1709 and the lowest number book in a *pathagar* was 577. Normally, the BRAC *pathagars* are equipped with around 1000 to 1200 books but in some *pathagars* the number of books was found to be higher due to donations by the respective community or schools. On the other hand, number of books was found to be limited in the newly established *pathagars* as books in the newly established *pathagars* are given in two installments.

Graph-3. Number of books existing in the pathagars by type



Highest number book in *pathagar* = 1709, Lowest number book in a *pathagar* = 577

Status of book lending

As the main objective of the *pathagar programme* was to develop reading habit among the community people, the extent of book lending is considered one of the most important performance indicators. In the following section, the extent of book lending per month and its trend over the year has been examined.

The Graph - 4 shows that on average, the General type pathagars issued 183 books per month which was higher than Female and Small type pathagars (120 and 74 respectively). The findings indicate that book lending in Small and Female type *pathagars* is far less than in the General type *pathagars*. The reason may be that as mentioned earlier, the Small type *pathagars* are set up in comparatively backward areas in terms of literacy rate and the economic status of the people. Thus, the number of members as well as users was found to be lower in these *pathagars* compared with other types of *pathagars*. On the other hand, the female users have to help their mothers at home in household activities and thus might have little time to read story books or novels along with regular studies. The findings however suggest that an exploratory study may be undertaken to identify ways to increase the number of book lending in the Female type and Small type pathagars.

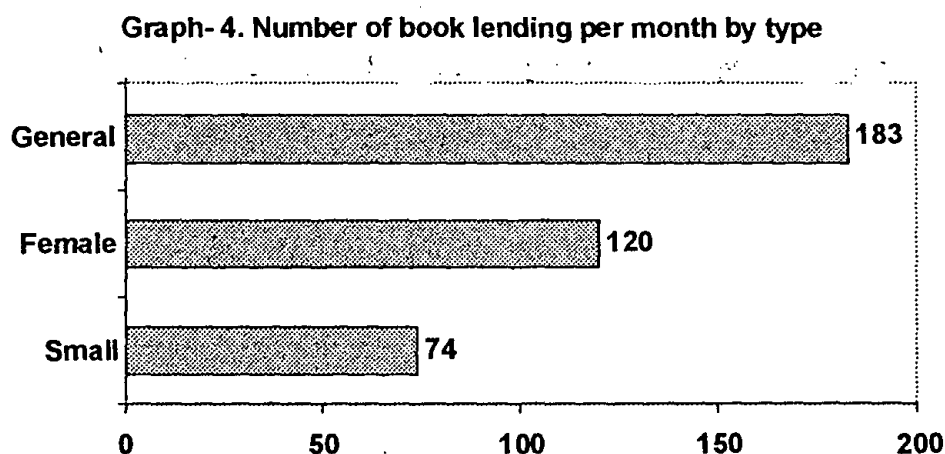


Table 5 demonstrates an area-wise status of book lending per month by types of *pathagar*. The table shows that among the General type *pathagars* the highest number of books was

lent in the Srimongal area (229), followed by Shirajgonj (227), Rajshahi (223) and Comilla area (216). On the contrary, the lowest number of books was lent in the Mymensingh area (126), followed by Rangpur (131) and Gazipur (144).

The table also shows that amongst the Female type *pathagars*, the highest number of books was lent in Mymensingh area (180), followed by Srimongal (145), and the number was lowest in the Gazipur area (42), followed by Comilla (120).

Similarly, among the Small type *pathagars*, the highest number of books was lent in the Rangpur area (132), followed by Maymensingh (86), and the number was lowest in the Comilla area (50) followed by Gazipur (57). The differences of book lending among the areas were not statistically significant.

The findings indicate that although differences of book lending across areas are not statistically significant, necessary measures need to be taken to increase where numbers of book lending are comparatively low.

Table -3. Number of book issued per month by area and by type of *pathagar* (October, 1998 - September, 1999)

Area								
	General	SD	Female	SD	Small	SD	All	SD
Srimongal	229	62.5	145	-	-	-	212	66.0
Comilla	216	171.8	120	24.0	50	36.8	128	108.7
Gazipur	144	82.8	42	-	57	16.2	113	80.4
Mymensingh	126	53.5	180	101.0	86	45.3	128	63.0
Rangpur	131	60.8	-	-	132	-	130	54.4
Shirajgonj	227	103.3	-	-	-	-	227	103.3
Rajshahi	223	128.2	-	-	-	-	223	128.2
Jessore	194	137.7	-	-	-	-	194	137.8
Magura	179	72.7	56	-	-	-	154	83.6
All	183	98.2	120	69.4	74	38.8	163	98.2
Significance	ns		ns		ns		ns	

Highest number of books lending per month in a *pathagar* = 494

Lowest number of books lending per month in a *pathagar* = 24

Table 4 gives a distribution of *pathagars* by number (range) of book lending per month showing that less than 100 books were found to be lent in 22% of the General, 29% of the Female and 71% of the Small type *pathagars*. The Table further shows that 200 or more books were found to lend in 34.7% of the General and 14.3% of the Female type *pathagars*.

Table 4. Distribution of *pathagars* by number of books issued per month

Number of book	Percentages of <i>pathagars</i>		
	General	Female	Small
<100	21.7 (10)	28.6 (2)	71.4 (5)
100 - 199	43.6 (20)	57.1 (4)	28.6 (2)
200 - 299	21.7 (10)	14.3 (1)	-
300 >	13.0 (6)	-	-
All	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of *pathagars*

The Figure 5 presents the trend of book lending over the year in different types of *pathagars*, and reveals that extent of book lending was found to be lower at the beginning and at the end of a year. The reasons behind this fluctuating trend will be thoroughly discussed. Since most of the members of the *pathagars* were school students, very few of them were found to borrow books during school vacations and examinations. According to the book lending policy, the members were issued one book for a duration of one week, thus very few of them borrowed books if schools were closed for longer than that period. An earlier study (Khan and Akter, 1999) showed that a number of student members had had to travel more than three kilometers to attend schools and thus during the long vacations they did not like to travel such a long distance only to return a book.

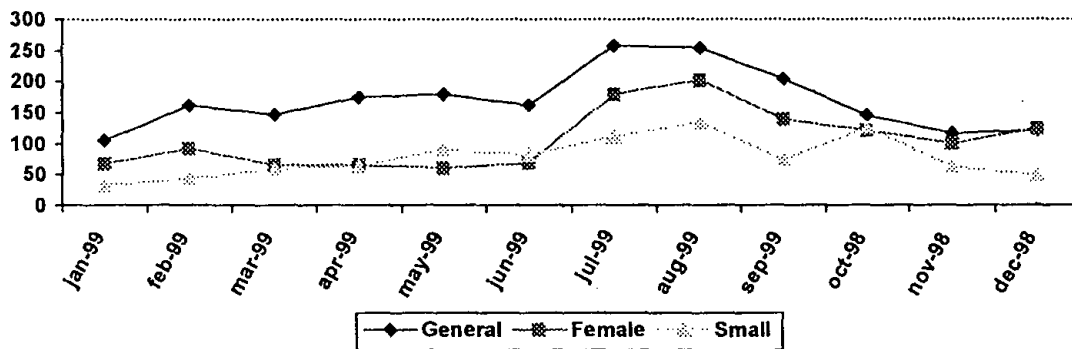
The final school examinations are held at the end of each year and thus the students had to prepare for appearing in examinations. At that time, most of the students did not borrow particularly story books or novels. Even their teachers as well as parents suggested the learners not to borrow story books and/or novels from the *pathagars* as they might hamper with their regular study. It was observed that the final examination was held in the first week of December 1998, and the Ramadan month started on 21 December 1998.

The schools were closed during the whole Ramadan including EID festival, thus frequency of book lending was found to decline sharply from September 1998, continuing until January 1999.

Moreover, in the first two months of the new year, the attendance rate of students seemed to very poor and hence the lending of books in the *pathagars* was also poor this time (Figure 5).

The figure also shows that the number of book lending seemed to be higher in July and August 1999. The reason may be that the school attendance is very high during this time. The correlation coefficient table shows (Table 6, in Appendices), the number of books issued was significantly correlated ($p < .05$ level) with the attendance of the users in the *pathagars*, and it was observed that attendance in the *pathagars* was associated with school attendance (Khan and Akter, 1999). It was further observed that before starting the mid term examination, attendance of the students in schools gradually increased and remained stable until final examinations were held. The pathagar users reported that after the mid term examination, the pressure of their regular study was not as high and thus the number of books issued was found to be higher in these two months (July and August 1999).

Graph - 5. Number of books lending per month by types of pathagars



Type of pathagar house

Type of *pathagar* house was also one of the determined performance indicators (Khan, 1999), as the security of *pathagars'* materials depended on the type of house in many respects. It also indicates the level of community participation as well as their contribution to such an initiative. In the following table (Table 7), the *pathagars* have been distributed by type of house, showing that amongst all the *pathagars*, the majority (66.7%) were accommodated in *pacca* buildings, followed by 25.0 % in tin shed buildings (brick walls and tin roofs), and the remaining 8.3% were in fully tin-made houses. Data by type of *pathagar* shows that more than 85.5% of the Small type *pathagars* were accommodated in *pacca* buildings, which was higher compared to Female (71.4%) and General type *pathagars* (63.0%). The findings indicate that the quality of house of the Small type *pathagars* was comparatively better than the other two types of *pathagars*.

Table -5. Distribution of *pathagar* by type of house

Type of house	Type of <i>pathagar</i>			
	General	Female	Small	All
Fully building	63.0 (29)	71.4 (5)	85.7 (6)	66.7 (40)
Half building	28.3 (13)	14.3 (1)	14.3 (1)	25.0 (15)
Fully tin	8.7 (4)	14.3 (1)	-	8.3 (5)
All	76.7 (46)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (60)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of *pathagars*

Environmental condition

An attempt was made to examine the environmental condition of the *pathagars*. Both inside and outside conditions were considered, and were examined following indirect observation. The conditions were grouped into five categories i.e. very good, good, average, poor and very poor (Table 6). In examining the environmental condition some limited environmental aspects such as cleanliness inside the *pathagars*, keeping the reading materials tidy on the bookshelves, keeping silent inside the *pathagars* and the placements of the *pathagars* were safe from noise and bad smelling conditions. The findings however revealed that amongst all the *pathagars*, the environmental conditions of 85.0% *pathagars* were either good or very good, 11.7% were evaluated as average and the remaining 3.3%

as poor. None of them were categorized as very poor. Type-wise findings revealed that most of all the Female, 52.2% of the General and 28.6% of the Small type *pathagars* were in very good condition. The overall findings regarding the environmental status depict that the respective community was aware enough of the environmental condition of the *pathagars*.

Table 6. Distribution of *pathagars* by its environmental status

Environmental status	Type of <i>pathagar</i>			
	General	Female	Small	All
Very good	52.2 (24)	100.0 (7)	28.6 (2)	55.0 (33)
Good	34.8 (16)	-	28.6 (2)	30.0 (18)
Average	8.7 (4)	-	42.9 (3)	11.7 (7)
Poor	4.3 (2)	-	-	3.3 (2)
Very poor	-	-	-	-
All	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (60)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of *pathagars*

Interior space of the pathagars

Interior space of the *pathagars* was also considered as one of the performance indicators of the BRAC *pathagars*. It was realized that the *pathagars* should have adequate interior space for the convenience of the users. In this paper, the variable was grouped into three categories i.e. adequate (approximately 500 sft.), average and inadequate. Table 7 shows, amongst all the *pathagars*, more than 68.0% had adequate and more than 28.0% had average space inside. It is evident from the table that a proportion of the small type *pathagars* had average or inadequate space compared to the General and Female type *pathagars*. The comparative evaluation revealed that Small type *pathagars* not only had fewer members and less operational funds but also had less space inside the *pathagar* houses compared to the other two types.

Table 7. Distribution of *pathagars* by status of interior space

Status of interior space	Type of <i>pathagar</i>			
	General	Female	Small	All
Adequate	71.7 (33)	85.7 (6)	28.6 (2)	68.3 (41)
Average	28.3 (13)	14.3 (1)	42.8 (3)	28.3 (17)
Inadequate	-	-	28.6 (2)	3.4 (2)
All	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	7 (100.0)	100.0 (60)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of *pathagars*

Fund mobilization (own contribution)

Table 8 gives a distribution of *pathagars* by type and amount of own funds generated by the respective community. The amounts of fund were grouped into four ranges (Table 8), which shows that the majority of the General and Female type *pathagars* (56.5% and 57.1% respectively) generated funds ranging from Tk. 50,000 to Tk.75,000. On the other hand, none of the small type *pathagars* could generate Tk.50,000.

Table 8. Distribution of *pathagars* by amount of fund and type of *pathagar*

Amount of fund (Tk.)	Type of <i>pathagar</i>			
	General	Female	Small	All
75,000 >	6.5 (3)	14.3 (1)	-	6.7 (4)
50,000 – 74,999	56.5 (26)	57.1 (4)	-	50.0 (30)
25,000 – 49,000	34.8 (16)	28.6 (2)	85.7 (6)	40.0 (24)
< 25,000	2.2 (1)	-	14.3 (1)	3.3 (2)
All	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (60)
Average fund (TK.)	49,749	56,407	25,854	47,737

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

Cultural and social activities

The following tables (tables 9 and 10) present a distribution of BRAC *pathagars* by cultural and social activities organized by the *pathagars* over the previous year (as of the month of data collection).

Table 9 shows, more than 91.0% of the General, 71.0% of the Female and about 87.0% of the Small type *pathagars* organized at least one cultural event over the last year. The table

depicts that about 43.0% of the Female type *pathagars* organized more than nine cultural activities, which was higher compared to General (23.9%) and Small type *pathagars* (14.3%). The findings reveal that Female type *pathagars* were more advanced in organizing cultural activities compared to other two types of *pathagars*.

The table 10 shows, 63.0% of the General, 57.1% of the Female and all the Small type *pathagars* did not organize a single social activity over the last year.

Table 9. Distribution of *pathagars* by number of cultural activities organized over a year

Number of Cultural activities	Cultural activities			
	General	Female	Small	All
0	8.7 (4)	28.6 (2)	28.6 (2)	13.3 (8)
1 - 3	19.6 (9)	0 (0)	42.9 (3)	20.0 (12)
4 - 6	30.4 (14)	14.3 (1)	14.3 (1)	26.7 (16)
7 - 9	17.4 (8)	14.3 (1)	0 (0)	15.0 (9)
10+	23.9 (1)	42.9 (3)	14.3 (1)	25.0 (15)
All	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (60)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of pathagars

Table 10. Distribution of *pathagars* by number of social activities organized over a year

No. of social Activities	Social activities			
	General	Female	Small	All
0	63.0 (29)	57.1 (4)	100.0 (7)	(40)
1	23.9 (11)	14.3 (1)	-	(12)
2	4.2 (2)	28.6 (2)	-	(4)
3	6.5 (3)	-	-	(3)
4+	2.2 (1)	-	-	1.7 (1)
All	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (60)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of pathagars

Some additional information

Along with the information collected, some additional information relating to the *pathagars* such as the existence of child corner, the formation and registration of a Trustee Board, the number of monthly meetings held by the Trustee Board in the last six months and the number of books lost over time were gathered. As the information is considered an important aspect of BRAC *pathagars* they are presented below (Table 11);

Children's corner: According to the programme design, each *pathagar* should have a small space inside the *pathagars* for children called 'children's corner' which should be equipped with some items of indoor games, some musical instruments and some reading materials interesting to children. The objective for the provision of a child corner in a *pathagar* is to ensure equal opportunities to the children as are provided to the adolescents and adults. It was found that 87.0% of the General, 85.0% of the Small and in almost all the Female type *pathagars* had a children's corner (Table - 11).

Trustee Board and meetings: As mentioned earlier in this paper, a Trustee Board should be formed and registered at a registration office. The main objective of this policy was to engage community in managing the *pathagars* themselves and to ensure participatory development initiatives. The table 11 shows that 93.5% of the General, almost all the Female and more that 28% of the Small type *pathagars* had formed Trustee board and were registered with the government registration office. The information relating to meetings of the Trustee board indicates that the majority of the boards did not organize monthly meetings regularly.

Number of book missing: Finally, the table shows that not a single book was lost¹ in 37.0% of the General, 42.9% of the Female and 28.5% of the Small type *pathagars*. On

¹ The information considered from the date of establishment of the *pathagars* to date of data collection. Number of book lost means the gap between number of books physically existing in the *pathagars* and the number of books recorded in the stock book register.

the other hand, six or more books were lost in 32.6% of the General, 14.3% of the Female and 43.0% of the Small type *pathagars*.

Table 11. Distribution of *pathagars* by some aspects relating to *pathagars*

Aspects relating to <i>pathagars</i>	Types of <i>pathagars</i>		
	General (46)	Female (7)	Small (7)
<u>Existence of children corner</u>			
Had children corner	87.0 (40)	100.0 (7)	85.0 (4)
Did not have children corner	13.0 (6)	-	15.0 (3)
<u>Formation of trustee board</u>			
Was formed and registered	93.5 (43)	100.0 (7)	28.6 (2)
Was not formed and registered	6.5 (3)	-	71.4 (5)
<u>No. of meetings of the Trustee board</u> (last six months)			
Was not held	6.5 (3)	-	28.6 (2)
1 - 3	34.8 (16)	42.9 (3)	28.6 (2)
4+	58.7 (27)	57.1 (4)	42.8 (3)
<u>No. of books missing</u>			
Did not lose			
1 - 2	37.0 (17)	42.9 (3)	28.6 (2)
3 - 5	13.0 (6)	28.5 (2)	28.6 (2)
6 +	17.4 (8)	14.3 (1)	-
	32.6 (15)	14.3 (1)	42.8 (3)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to assess the operational status of BRAC *Gonokendra pathagars*. The data used in this paper was gathered from 60 *pathagars* located in nine operational areas of BRAC's Continuing Education Programme. The data was generated according to some performance indicators and was used to identify good and poor performing *pathagars* for the purpose of another study.

As the participation of females in the General and Small type *pathagars* is limited compared to men, it reveals that participation of both sexes jointly in such cultural activities especially in rural areas still is limited. The reasons behind this discrimination were reported in a study (Khan and Akter, 1999). The study noted that due to some

socio-cultural factors and/or the effects of patriarchal society men always control women's mobility and women do not have decision-making powers even if they are either literate or illiterate. As most of the General and Small type *pathagars* are located in high schools/colleges or in public places (table 1, in appendices), the majority of the female members feel hesitant to attend such common places.

In response to the question why approximately half of the members in all types of *pathagars* never attend the pathagars and borrow books, one can refer to findings in the previous study of the *pathagars* that books and reading materials available in the pathagars did not fully satisfy the needs and interests of all users (Khan and Akter, 1999). The findings of overall attendance and number of book lending indicate that there is still room for improving the attendance rate and book lending.

As the number of books issued is significantly correlated with number of users' attending the *pathagars*, it can be suggested that necessary measures to increase attendance of users can be taken. The previous study carried out by Khan and Akter, 1999, also showed a similar finding and suggestions were made to strengthen the interaction with potential users, the management committee and the community.

The Trustee Board is considered one of the most important factors of the *pathagars* to make the programme effective and hence their participation needs to be more active. They can sit together more frequently to improve the quality of the services of the *pathagars* in which these can be used more perfectly as the rural based information centers. These centers may be useful to be made sensitize people towards sustainable and autonomous development. Not only the members of the Trustee Board but also all concerned in the community should be engaged with the process of such development initiatives.

Finally, it can be concluded saying that the findings and the analysis of this study may be helpful to the programme in identifying weaknesses and further research issues of the programme. To overcome the weaknesses, the programme personnel may take necessary

actions based on the information presented in this study. It can be suggested that number of book lending and the number of attendance of the users may be considered as the dependent factors of the programme and measures be taken accordingly.

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Appendices

Table 1. Distribution of *pathagar* by location

Location of pathagar	% and numbers of <i>pathagar</i>			
	General (%)	Female (%)	Small (%)	All (%)
Boy's high school or college	80.4 (37)	-	6 (85.7)	43 (71.7)
Girl's high school or girls college	-	100.0 (7)	-	7 (11.6)
Other places: club, UP office and general places	19.6 (9)	-	1 (14.3)	10 (16.7)
Total	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	7 (100.0)	60 (100.0)

Table 2. Distribution member by sex and type of *pathagar*

Sex	Numbers of members by types of <i>pathagars</i>			
	General (46)	Female (7)	Small (7)	All (60)
Male (mean)	339	17	255	292
Female (mean)	204	513	180	237
Total (mean)	545	530	435	531
Level of significance	p<.001	p<.001	p<.01	p<.10

Table 3. Number of members attended daily in the *pathagar* by sex and by type

Sex	Type of <i>pathagar</i>							
	General		Female		Small		All	
Number	46	SD	(7)	SD	(7)	SD	(60)	SD
Male (mean)	49.8	21.5	2.4	4.2	29.7	6.9	41.9	24.7
Female (mean)	15.1	15.1	44.4	18.0	10.6	7.5	18.0	17.5
Total (mean)	64.9	29.2	46.8	21.7	40.3	12.2	59.9	28.2

Figures in parentheses indicate numbers of *pathagars*

Table - 4. Distribution of *pathagars* by range of users' daily attendance

Users attendance (range)	% and number of <i>pathagars</i>			
	General	Female	Small	All
<50	28.3 (13)	57.1 (4)	85.7 (6)	38.3 (23)
51 - 59	23.9 (11)	14.3 (1)	-	20.0 (12)
60 - 79	26.1 (12)	14.3 (1)	14.3 (1)	23.3 (14)
80 +	21.7 (10)	14.3 (1)	-	18.4 (11)
All	100.0 (46)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (7)	100.0 (60)

Figures in parentheses indicate number of *pathagars*

Table 5. Distribution of book issued per month by type of *pathagars*

Type of <i>pathagar</i>	Numbers of books issued to members/month											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
General	105	161	147	174	180	162	257	254	204	145	115	121
Female	67	92	66	66	60	69	180	202	139	120	99	124
Small	33	42	58	64	89	82	111	134	73	125	62	49
All	92	140	126	149	154	142	231	233	181	140	107	112

Table -6 . Correlation coefficients between users' attendance and number of book issued

Users' attendance	Users' daily attendance	Number of book issued/month
Level of significance	1,0000	.3809
Number of book issued/month		p <.05
		1,0000