



OUTREACH ANNUAL REPORT

1982

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)
66, Motakhali Commercial Area
Dhaka-12.

Introduction:

The task as well as the mission of BRAC's Outreach programme is to assist and facilitate the building up of self-reliant people's organisation as a vehicle for their genuine participation which will help for turn them in their fight against injustice and oppression existing in our rural society.

Any attempt to eradicate the poverty of the rural people must deal with the question of 'power'. The poor in the rural areas are virtually powerless and incapable to design and determine their own life. Therefore helping these people means empowering them to confront directly the causes of their poverty and powerlessness.

The mechanism of domination over landless has a long history and a pervasive structure. The web of control of landlords, elite, money-lenders, beauracrates has been through and cruel, forcing the people to submit to it as a fact of life. This has kept the landless in a state of constant fear, immobilizing them into apathy and fatalism. All the beautiful promises of liberation have done little to alter the situation. It seems therefore, that the real question has become how best the fear stricken landless may be helped to build up their power to overcome their passivity.

Unless the people take the initiative, no developmental scheme will be effective. The people have been seen as obstacles and problems, not as the resources for or the actors of development. But they themselves are the greatest resource for development, if they can be freed from the shackles of fear and insecurity that immobilize them.

The important factor is the ^{fair} distribution or democratization of power in society so that genuine people's development will be made possible. Here in lies the necessity for people's Organization, to provide the self awareness and self assertion that the people need to attain genuine democracy. For the latter is not a gift (or a given) it an achievement.

For attaining the objective of Outreach is working with oppressed, powerless, under privileged people (men and women).

The landless can not imagine that the power they await lies with them, and therefore, they lapse into a state of passivity awaiting liberation from heaven or messianic leader.

To overcome the passivity, efforts are being made for shattering "culture of silence". There are a great many pressing problems and issues around which the landless are being organized. Outreach are channelling the people's discontent, suffering and aspiration into a practical effort because the landless are slow in organizing themselves.

In organizing people for power, we aim at establishing participatory and powerful people's organization through which the landless, can enter sphere of decision making. The aim of organizing people for power, them, are twofold : to achieve a liberation of consciousness and the creation of actual instruments of power.

'Power' is not a political romantic word; 'Power' as applied to the present unjust situation is the means by which the people can find redress for their grievances and act against those conditions that oppress and dehumanize them.

Location of the Struggle

The whole course of Outreach activities are being accomplished in different phases and the emphasis of transformation is being located at different vital areas depending upon the circumstances. The poor who are the passive victims of century-old exploitative process should work and struggle for their own emancipation and the revolutionary urge for breaking the shackles of present Socio-economic enslavement should first come in their mind. The second area of locating the struggle of the outreach people is the community around him and the Society in general where the genesis of exploitation reside. The third area is the government offices which are almost restricted for

those who have less and where the right of the dispossessed are always trampled because of their inaccessibility to resources. The fourth area of locating the poor's struggle is the Courts of law which are now for those who have more. And the final area is the national politics itself which alone can accommodate a meaningful change in the lot of the multiplying millions in our rural areas.

The above strategic categorisation of Outreach thrust is not to take place all on a sudden or concomitantly. These are being envisaged and accomplished step by step depending upon the circumstances and organisational maturity.

But with respect to organisation, initial thrust is given on grass root organising and multiple processes which can make a happy infra-structure for organising the poor. While mobilizing and organising the poor is considered to be the short term goal, the long term goal is to build people's institutions capable of bringing desired changes in their present plight.

Some aspects of mobilizing and organising

Mobilizing the people and organising them for achieving group goal in a systematic way occupies a paramount position in the action frame of BRAC's Outreach approach. The people must be made to understand the issues they are confronting and the mechanisms of exploitation and dependency existing around them. They are needed to be extricated from superstition, conservatism and fatalistic views which inhibit their mental development. The people must be made aware of their own strength, courageous to take risk and fearless of change. Such virtues are being continuously inculcated to the outreach people in the process of mobilization and organisation. Efforts to make them non apathetic to serious situations and class conscious continuously takes place in all outreach programmes. They have already developed the critical ability to raise questions, formulate their own ideas, and are resorting to progressive thinking.

There are, of course, some long term goals of such organising and mobilization. These goals include building viable rural institutions increasing the management ability inculcating the ability to spot and develop issues, exercising power, ensuring participation in the local power, gradual politicization of the landless, gathering economic support during the protracted period of the struggle, developing capable and challenging leadership from among them, establishing linkages with the neighbouring progressive elements and such other virtues and qualities which are relevant to the achievement of overall outreach goal.

WORKING AREA

The district of Dhaka, Tangail, Jamalpur, Jessore, and Khulna has initially been selected to be the Target Zones of the outreach programme. Nine thanas of the five aforesaid district constitute the present working area of the programme. The thanas are Mirzapur, Saturia, Dhamrai, Jhinaigati, Sreebordi, Malitabari, Bakshiganj, Kalaroa and Jhikargacha. Upto now 41 unions of nine thanas have come within the coverage of the programme which are being controlled by 64 programme organisers from 16 camps. In December '80 we had decided to establish one camp for covering two unions and appointing two P.O.s for each of the unions. Just to fulfil the present need of the 41 covered unions, a total of 20 camps and 82 programme organisers seem indispensable. Four new camps will soon be started and 18 more P.O.s still remains to be appointed to fulfil the present need.

523 villages of the working area have so far been Targeted. The total No. of household of these villages are 57,577. But out of those only 268 villages have so far been reached with a total household of 34,635. The number of covered household in all is 15,167. The adult population of the 523 Targeted villages are 1,34,210 out of whom 65,665 live in the 168 covered villages. 21,558 persons

involving 14,481 male and 7077 female have already come within the fold of the village organisations.

STRATEGY

Rural institution building and making the rural people conscious and socially active with a view to dynamise their inherent potentialities without any outside aid is an inseparable part of outreach overall strategy. But working experiences were virtually the breeding ground of the operational strategy of outreach programme. While initially working in 12 unions of nine working thanas, it was gathered that working in few unions out of the vast expanse of a thana results in little meaningful and was supposed to have insignificant social implications. Considering the pivotal importance of thana as the nerve-centre of local services and administration it was decided in the year 1980 that intensive works in most of the unions should indispensably be done with a view to exert considerable influence over the areas as envisaged by outreach goal. The operational strategy of outreach may be classified as intensive and extensive. The pioneering goal of the intensive strategy is to ensure the internal vigilance of the landless, making them critically aware and bring qualitative changes in their perception, values and ethical standards. Extensive work can seldom ensure the inculcation of such qualitative transformations among the passive poor of the rural areas. The most pernicious aspect of the hurriedly conducted extensive strategy is that some shrewd and comparatively powerful element make hectic appearance in the leadership scenario dashing the interest of the pauperised poor to the background. This sort of strategy creates unbridgeable gap between the cadres and the Landless. Keeping all these in mind those unions of the thana which will not come within the intensive plan are only being covered by the extensive plan, Upto now out of the 86 unions of nine thanas 41 have been brought under intensive plan with a view

to develop strong organisation and mass Conscientization. The remaining 45 unions were to be covered by the end of 1986.

VILLAGE ORGANISATION

Outreach programme seek to achieve its goal of mobilising the distressed people by invariably forming the village organisations after which a process of Conscientization through functional education personal contacts, orientation, frequent interactions, development of workers and savings generations is initiated. In all the nine thanas in five districts where outreach programme is operating, 41 unions out of 86 unions were Targeted out of which 30 unions have so far been covered. In 268 covered villages 427 village organisations have been formed. Out of those 256 organisations are male 164 are female and the remaining 7 village organisations, have been formed taking both male and female together. The total enrolled member of all the village organisations is 21,558 out of whom 14,481 are male and 7,077 are female.

But much still remains to be done. In all the 41 targeted unions there are 523 villages out of which 268 villages (51%) have been brought within the coverage of the village organisation. But out of 1,214 villages 523 villages have been targeted for the time being and the remaining villages will subsequently be brought within the coverage in phases.

ACTIVITIES OF THE V.O.S

The activities of the village organisation starts with the holding of four weekly meetings where chosen social issues affecting their lives are thrown for discussion. Their needs, burning issues in their surroundings, and the ways and means of getting rid of different problems are spontaneously discussed and deliberated by the participants themselves in the meeting after which consensus decisions are taken on all issues. Scope and opportunities participating in works programme activities, vulnerable group feeding cards, homestead and roadside plantation, raising wages, taking

possession of khasland and derilect ponds, are all discussed in weekly meetings. Such issues as discouraging dowry, maltreatment perpetrated on wives, making new members and covering new villages also come within the agenda of the village organisation. Moreover, activities of the leaders and any possible objection against any leadership actions are also discussed in the meetings. Undertaking social welfare activities in the locality, helping the distressed members, in times of needs, savings generation and undertaking economic programmes by taking money therefrom also form the essential component of group activities. Ensuring the participation in functional education classes, intergroup meeting, social action* and other collective activities are all done by the village organisation.

WORKERS/CADRES

Prominent workers who are locally termed as cadres are considered to be the effective instrument in achieving outreach goal. Spontaneous response to collective works, activism in mobilizing others, regularity in meetings, and savings are considered to be the criteria of regarding anybody as cadre. In all the 427 village organisations, 1,428 persons have been identified to be cadres out of whom 1,122 persons are male and 306 are female. Cadre perform most of the activities at the local level which include organising weekly meetings, inter-village meetings, Cadres meetings, mobilizing people for collective activities and social action, putting the agenda and regulating the course of discussion, making new contacts and forming new village organisations. Programme Organisers simply act as facilitators in such activities. Most often the cadres initiate the work from the village organisation and motivate the target people to be socially active and undertake income and employment generating activities out of their own resources. The village organisations themselves decide as well as assign the

work of the Cadres-and the cadres, in turn, are amenable and answerable to the groups for their activities. When the Cadres give sufficient time for group works during peak employment periods, they are given wages for the mandays lost out of the group fund.

On the basis of a crude estimate made by the programme organisers, cadres in Outreach programme have been classified into five broad categories. While 30% of the cadres have been identified as issue oriented cadres who show activism in all issues, 40% of the cadres have been found to be task oriented. But 10% of the cadres are found to be very much active on certain specific issues and another 15% have got different skill in different trades. Only 5 percent cadres are found to be all around having the versatility of reacting to every situation.

ABILITY OF THE CADRES

Outreach programme continuously tries to inculcate Leadership qualities among the cadres through interaction, different forums and ensuring participation in different activities. Such qualities to be inculcated are multifarious. Leader and cadres should possess the ability to identify burning issues and blazing problems which the poor confront in their near surroundings. They should be capable of galvanizing distressed minds and stir the passive people into action. They should have the mind to listen to and learn from the people and must possess the quality to handle the circumstances during confrontation and conflict situation. He should have the capability to identify the roles and responsibilities, organise support groups and communicate with the people and should be sharp enough to distinguish between powerful and powerless and between the rich and the poor. The programme organisers are desperately trying to instill such qualities among the cadres, and the cadres and leaders have marvellously demonstrated such qualities in the different situations.

Instead of formal and structured leadership with President or Secretary, a policy of ensuring participatory group leadership is followed every where. Adhoc Committees are periodically set up corresponding to needs and such committees are also formed to accomplish certain specific task.

FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION

With a view to achieve conscientization of the Target people along with numeracy and literacy functional education courses invariably follow the formation of the Target groups. DRAC's functional education courses to the landless consist of sixty lessons which are conducted by the specifically trained volunteers (Shebok/Shebika) recruited mainly from among the Target people. All the group members are to undergo such courses after the successful completion of which participants are termed as graduates.

88 Functional Education Centres have so far been opened out of which 60 were male centres and the remaining 28 were female. 1,972 learners including 563 females were enrolled in these centres. Upto December 1982, 72 centres, including 22 female centres have completed the course and 1,270 persons including 349 female participants have so far been graduated from these courses.

Although non-availability of appropriate persons from among the poor to be trained as functional education teachers possess a constant problem, all out effort is made to ensure the quality of teaching by all means. Uptill now, 55 persons including 13 female have been trained as functional education teachers. All of them except two come from the target groups themselves.

But functional education courses have got their own problems. Persons to be trained as functional education teachers need a little prior academic background and hence availability of such persons within the Target people is extremely inadequate. Even if such

persons are available from within the group, their standard often remain inferior and can seldom create interest among the participants. Moreover these hand to mouth people become so exhausted after dawn to dust labour that they sometime fail to gather strength in attending night classes. Consequently, functional education become the victim of frequent drop-outs. Out-migration during slack seasons also hampers the systematic progress of such courses. The total number of drop-outs in all the functional education courses were 702 out of which 214 were female.

Of course, all out efforts are presently being made to reduce the number of drop-outs and make the courses more interesting and effective. One of the possible ways of doing that could have been the selection of teachers from among the non-target people of the rural areas. But the experience of the outreach programme is that the teachers if taken from the non target people, often fail to take the work seriously and for the absence of any monetary incentive they often stop taking classes in the midway. Moreover, such people do never work for the interest of the poor and subsequently try to utilize the groups for their class interest. With a view to overcome multifarious problems associated with functional education programme, Outreach programme conducting functional education classes by the Programme Organisers themselves. So far 34 centres have been completed by the P.O.s and it has been encouragingly observed that such courses have shown greater rate of success in quickly achieving awareness skill, literacy and numeracy.

Moreover, outreach programme adopt another innovative approach for quickly achieving conscientization. In the well-aware groups, instead of strictly adhering to the chalked out format of the text book, a policy of holding discussion on selected subject is adopted. This policy brings consciousness much before bringing numeracy and literacy.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Economic activities in outreach programme are not the end in themselves. Such activities are considered to be the means of achieving broader social goals. When after a well planned process of Conscientization, orientation, functional education and savings generations, the groups reach at a certain stage of organisational development, economic activities start taking place as a natural corollary of social mobilisation. Along with providing income and employment generating opportunities to the distressed participants of the groups, one of the outstanding goal of such activities is to generate fund for financing different social exigencies which the groups confront during the struggle period.

With the exception of some consumption loans given to the distressed members during extreme financial crises, the whole savings of Tk.2,70,368.00 is used as revolving funds for undertaking collective income and employment generating activities. The income and employment generating activities include paddy, wheat, and sugarcane cultivation, horticulture, vegetable production, Cassava cultivation, potato cultivation, small tradings, Paddy Husking, Weaving, Fishing, Cow rearing, Goat rearing, Pisciculture, Handicrafts goods et-

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural schemes are normally undertaken on Khas land or on land mortgaged in exclusively with the funds taken from the generated savings of the groups. In the year 1982, 45 groups including two female groups undertook Paddy cultivation schemes involving 1,445 participants. Out of the participants, 1,311 were male and 135 were female. 11 male groups undertook sugarcane cultivation schemes with 253 participants. 385 people in six groups were involved in wheat cultivation. Another popular scheme massively

participated by the outreach people was vegetable production on fallow-land and the vacant space of the homestead. 2,133 male and 951 female of 100 groups undertook vegetable production scheme during the year 1982. Horticulture scheme was undertaken separately by 405 male and 119 female of 28 groups. Cassava cultivation schemes were also undertaken by 6 male and 4 female groups. Only one group was involved in potato cultivation.

The advantage of these completely self-financed scheme is that it ensures personal stake of the participants and highly efficient management, most often these small schemes become profitable give a lot of assistance to these hand to mouth people. But the obvious constraint of undertaking agriculture schemes by the landless is the non-availability of land. High rental of the mortgaged in land sometimes make the schemes only marginally profitable.

NON-AGRICULTURE SCHEMES

Small trading schemes, though not so much relevant with the stream of development, are very much profitable and widely practised by the outreach people. So, far 37 groups involving 593 participants have undertaken small trading schemes last year. Small scale weaving schemes are run by 4 outreach groups involving 87 participants. 13 groups involving 626 participants resorted to fish culture schemes in derelict ponds, local streams and small ditches earning substantial income. 166 participants of 5 groups provided handicrafts goods.

Paddy husking, cattle rearing and ericulture are the most popular schemes for the womenfolk. 641 women of 25 female groups undertook paddy husking scheme during the last year. Schemes of cow rearing were undertaken by 78 persons of 15 groups. 152 female members are involved in the newly introduced Ericulture scheme of

the outreach programme.

All the economic schemes, before getting sanctions, are to be placed in the meeting of the village organisation and various aspects of such schemes are openly deliberated before granting schemes. The schemes, which do not appear to be viable are rejected by the consensus of the people.

MEETINGS

Landless people of the target area achieve mobilization and communication through different forums like weekly meetings, fortnightly meetings, ward meetings, union meetings inter-union meetings and various workshops held at different levels. During the last year, 7,982 weekly/fortnightly meetings were held in all the 427 groups. 217 Ward meetings were held involving the groups within the Wards. The number of union meetings held were 96. With a view to ensure better coordination between unions, 56 inter-union meetings were held. In emergency situations when immediate strategies for encountering specific situation are needed to be devised, emergency union meetings are held. 74 such meetings were held during last year.

Workshop are held with a view to conscientize the target people on different short term and long term issues. Such workshops are only held for the cadres at ward, union, inter-union and inter-camp level. Last year, 66 ward level workshops, 84 union level workshops and 68 inter-union workshops were held for the cadres. The number of emergency inter-union workshops were 46. Moreover, 23 workshops were held involving the cadres of different camps.

TRAINING

Training is an essential component of IRAC's outreach programme. Along with providing organisational skill to the landless, one of the outstanding goal of training is to produce tools of critical

analysis with a view to enabling them to perceive the mechanism of evils that exist in the society. All the training courses for the landless are so designed as to sharpen the critical perception of the exploited and the downtrodden. Such trainings, are held on a wide range of areas like consciousness raising, leadership development, poultry raising, livestock, ariculture and Pisciculture.

In the year 1982, 1,428 persons have received consciousness raising training out of whom 1,122 are male and 306 are female. Comprehensive orientation about the rural dynamics and exploitative structure is the basic theme of the consciousness raising training courses. Leadership training through intensive courses is also given much emphasis. So far, 68 persons including 3 females have participated in the various Leadership training courses held at Savar. Training given on different trades aims at giving skill to the participants with a view to increase the ability of the groups in the respective field. Last year, 21 persons including 12 female have been given the poultry training. 66 women of the poor families have been trained on Ericulture with a view to facilitate the implementation of an already started extensive Ericulture plan. 14 persons have been trained on pisciculture and another six persons have taken livestock training. With a view to ensure growing involvement of the target in different training courses, outreach programme is now thinking of holding such courses locally.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Mobilization of both economic and social resources for uplifting position of the distressed poor who are being grinded by poverty is one of the prime goal of BRAC's outreach approach. According to Outreach programme mobilisation of resources refers

to both economic and social potentials which can contribute to the upliftment of the people. Outreach programme, along with land and economic resources attach much importance to unity, ability, skill, character and power of man which contribute to the development of valuable human resource of the nation. Outreach is desperately trying to make people resources by bringing about qualitative transition in them.

LAND

This is an accepted thing in Bengladeshi context that disproportionate relationship of man with land is at the root of and responsible for most of the social malices in our rural society. Without bringing radical changes in this relationship, achievement of the goal of establishing a society based on justice and opportunities for all, many remain a far cry. Any effort to restructure this relationship, although long term is being tried upon by outreach and the process have already started.

GOVT. SERVICES

Utilization of locally available government services is being continuously attempted in village organisations of outreach. Because of constant pressure, Govt. officials are being made to come closer to the people and training services are becoming available to the poor. For instance, 4 female members of Mirzapur got poultry vaccination training from livestock department who vaccinated 1,200 poultry bird in their own areas. Another nine persons took same training in Sribordi area while another six persons took livestock training there. Family Planning and primary health care is another potential area of activities. Awareness giving mechanism of the programme is such as to ensure the spontaneous intake of such services by the people. In Mirzapur area the people so heavily pressurised the authority that they were forced to give new family

planning assistant who was made to visit every village every week. The poor there interestingly keep visit register of the local government doctor.

There are other areas of success by the landless. The village organisations in Jhinaigati and Shribordi was able to get a sanction of 31 Tubewells from UNICAF. An insumination centre has also been established in Shribordi as a result of local pressure. Moreover, the groups of Mirzapur got veranda seeds from sericulture board while 14 persons got fisheries training at Jhikargacha.

KHASLAND

Occupation and utilization of Govt. owned khasland is being continuously tried upon by the local organisation of outreach programme. During last year 10.70 acres of land were occupied by the organisation of the landless in the Mirzapur area which were priorly occupied by the elit in an illegal way. In almost similar way, 26 acres of khas land were brought under plough by the groups of Jhenaigati, Dhamrai and Sreebordi area. Along with this, another 32 acres of land was already in the possession of different groups before the Commencement of 1982. The khasland so occupied is used for collective agricultural pursuits and the income generated therefrom is exclusively used for general purposes.

WAGE INCREASES

Social action strategy of the outreach programme generally takes the form of hard collective burgain, creation of pressures and finally the strike. Inspite of the existence of significant unemployment in the operating outreach zone, the groups have shown considerable ability of wage burgain and collective action was invariably taken which brought varied rates of success because of the circumstantial differences between areas. During last year, wages were raised from Tk.8.00 to Tk.11.00 in Jhinaigati, from Tk.10.00 to Tk.16.00 at Sreebordi, from Tk.8.00 to Tk.12.00 at Halitabari,

from Rs. 10.00 to Rs. 16.00 at Mirzapur and from Rs. 8.00 to Rs. 12.00 at Jhikrayashe. The wages of the female workers every where have also increased significantly.

WORKS REPORT

Area of income sensations which are derived by the collective bar and action of the groups over and above the routine sensations are only included in the research mobilization. The quantity of works as mobilized was 9,55- mts. at Jhikrayashe, 176 mts. at Mirzapur, 5,599 mts. at Mirzapur 3,400 mts. at Mirzapur, 260 mts. at Jhikrayashe and 532 mts. at Mirzapur. The work was enjoyed by 6,001 persons out of whom 3,558 persons were female.

PLANTATION

All the groups collectively and individually implemented periodically maintenance plans of homestead and roadside plantation. In Jhikrayashe 30,000 date seedlings and 2,000 jack-fruit plants were planted along the six mile long Jhikrayashe approach road. A roadside plantation programme was massively implemented on a three mile long road in the Mirzapur area.

In Jhikrayashe the landless people fix the price of wheat and rice in the market and their strength is so excellent that the local people have no way out other than to abide by. In the same area ration was sanctioned for 200 landless families by collective pressure.

LAND REFORM

The people of Outreach are undertaking an encouraging step by filling up the questionnaires released by the land reform committee and 1,500 such questionnaires were filled up. Moreover, the government officials arranged meetings with them at Pragal and Jamalpur to elicit their views. The chairman of the land reform committee attended a vast landless gathering at Mirzapur where the party

recommended for eliminating corruption, ensuring the representation of the landless, distributing excess land to the poor groups fixing the minimum wage rates, giving the poor the right to form trade union, giving tenancy right to the share croppers, and disbursing short term loans to the poor. The news of this has been given wide coverage in Bangladesh Television, Radio Bangladesh and national dailies like Ittefaq, Bangladesh Observer and Dainik Bangla.

SAVINGS AND ITS UTILISATION

Most of the group savings in the outreach programme comes out of the individual contribution of the members. The total savings of all the groups were Tk. 2,70,368.00 upto December 1982. Beside this reserves and emergency funds are also there with a view to meet temporary exigencies of the groups.

The utilization of savings is both various and diverse. While most of the funds are used as collective and individual loans for undertaking income and employment generation activities, some consumption loans and distress loans are also given. Any income from the loans and interest therefrom are deposited with the group fund. No interest is taken for distress loan which are given on natural exigencies. The emergency fund is used to finance litigation, Transport, wages of the cadres etc. The fund is periodically raised by carefully assessing the issue-wise need of the group.

SUPPORT GROUP

The concept of support group refers to the formation of such groups which would facilitate the ultimate victory of the landless. Formation of legal aid group, Ganakendro forums, Ganakendro library and small farmers group formed by the direct initiative and facilitation of outreach programme are the steps in this direction.

LEGAL AID

Considering the almost non-existent situation of legal aid for the poor a legal aid group with national goals has already been formed with 21 reknowned advocates of Farrukh, Jamalpur and Mymensingh bar. The purpose of the groups is to provide legal aid services to the poor and the reduction of present helplessness of them by ensuring justice and organising help for them. The group has so far conducted 12 cases in favour of the landless free of cost in most of the cases the poor has become victorious.

GANAKENDRA FORUM & LIBRARY

Upto now 10 Ganakendra forums with 270 members have been formed with the sympathizers of the poor most of whom are teachers, youth clubs members and journalist. The members of the forum get together once in a month where important social issues which are relevant to the local context are discussed. The forum has already undertaken some actions oriented programme like opposing black marketing and BDR excesses, and similar other things.

Six Ganakendra libraries have also been established upto now 18 meetings have already been held where different national and local issues are freely discussed.

Small farmers forums are also being organised with a view to use them as important helping agents for the landless. The small farmers have much in common with the landless and organisations would work for mobilising loans, Tubewells etc.

STATUS OF WOMEN

The extensive and systematic activities undertaken by outreach have already set into motion some forces which are already challenging the time old tradition of dowry, frequency of divorce, male excesses, polygamy, gambling etc. Marriage without dowry are being arranged between the landless families. The members are to take

prior sanction from female group before divorce and the justification of male atrocities are openly debated in the meetings. Things like polygamy and gambling are also similarly treated.

PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Outreach programme continuously attempt to ensure the participation of the landless in the decision making process of the local institutions which surrounds their everyday life. During the last three years, the Outreach groups have considerably improved their position, power and influence or are in total control of the situation in somewhere or other. This local level participation is distinctively, visible specially, in Union Councils, Food for Works Programme Committee, District Development Co-ordination Committee, Model village Committees, local school Committees etc. Besides that the groups are ready to eventually undertake any step which would consolidate their position in local institutions. During the last official notification when new orders were promulgated to form Union Committees dissolving Union Councils, Landless groups of 8 Union Councils submitted separate panels exclusively of their own. But the initiative could not materialise as the order was later annulled.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

"We are poor and ignorant. How can we take the shelter of Law when we have no money to pay the Lawyers, to go to Court or to approach the concerned government agencies? Nevertheless, we know none who have the power to back our demands". That was the initial reaction to us by the outreach people when we started work. But the situation of these psychologically paralysed poor has undergone a noticeable change within a period of three years of outreach operation.

During the last few years of its operation, B.K.C's outreach programme have shown some identifiable positive trend, out of which

the following deserve mention.

1. Because of the organised effort of the landless, the poor of the outreach areas have already emerged as a countervailing force in their respective areas. Organised behaviour of the landless have already suspended most of the century-old exploitative processes and the remaining ones, too, are no longer going on unchallenged.
2. The spirit of self reliance and self confidence have been restored and the poor have already been stirred into action. Passivism and frustration have been replaced by expectations and actions and all are moving forward with a renewed vision of life.
3. Hitherto inaccessible government services have already gone within the reach of the people. Because of the desperate and organised efforts of the poor, such services are everywhere, reaching to those for whom these are meant.
4. Living an organised life and sticking to institutional behaviour is itself a unique achievement in the history of our rural areas. Outreach has virtually become successful in achieving the hitherto unachieved goal of institution building in our rural areas.
5. Human right condition, because of the organised strength of the poor have appreciably improved in the operating areas.
6. Another encouraging aspect is the solidarity and integration of the groups by virtue of which the groups are already surviving in locally emerged conflicts and confrontation. They have already reversed the direction of one way victimisation and living a challenging life in their own environment.
7. Economism invades militancy and outside economic supports sometimes deepens the sense of dependency and act against self reliance. But outreach people are practising self-reliance on strict

autonomy basis unaided by anybody by their own resources. They are undertaking scheme with firm conviction that no one will help them and they will have to help themselves.

3. The people there, have been understanding the perspective of development. Development is being viewed by the people not just as mere generation of some economic benefits but as a larger or case of their own emancipation. Consequently they are trying to remove the socio-political subservience at the very first instance.
4. They have already gathered the strength to compete in local government and rural institutions. They have developed intrinsic ability to plan and implement programmes and already working as pressure group everywhere.

Some Constraints

1. Sometimes, it is found that very much socially active groups, can not keep discipline in routinized activities like meetings, weekly contribution and repayment of loan taken from group fund. Outreach is trying to bring stricter discipline in this regard.
2. Any meaningful structural change must encompass the organisation of the landless all over the country. If such action programmes are not taken up all over the country, even the massive success in nine or ten thanas may be reduced to statistical futility and would not be able to bring about a national change.
3. Organisational experience of outreach programme suggest that militant and emancipation oriented people are sometimes counterbalanced and neutralised by survival oriented people. Survival orientation which, perhaps, originate from family liability and grinding poverty act to the detriment of organised social movements. In such cases, if the womenfolk can be involved in income generating activities, the liability of the male counterparts would, perhaps, be reduced; thereby facilitating the militancy of the male members.