

JAMALPUR WOMEN'S PROGRAMME
1977 ANNUAL REPORT



BANGLADESH RURAL ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
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I. INTRODUCTION

GENESIS:

Jamalpur Sub-Division was severely affected by the flood of July and August 1974. UNICEF's Nutrition Unit responded with a food-for-work scheme in February, 1975, designed to engage in agriculture the large numbers of women observed begging in Jamalpur town. By June, 1975, with the advent of the monsoon rains UNICEF requested BRAC to provide functional education to the 840 women who earlier participated in the agricultural food-for-work. BRAC agreed and trained 15 local Jamalpur women as functional education teachers.

These same teachers, within a few months, expressed their interest not only to continue functional education classes but also to expand into village-based women's development work in the learners' villages. BRAC brought the teachers to Dacca for five days of intensive programme planning. What evolved was a plan of action designed by, directed towards, and to be implemented by women: the BRAC-supported Jamalpur Women's Programme.

PROJECT AREA:

Jamalpur is a Sub-Division town in Mymensingh District, approximately 120 miles north of Dacca, to the east of the Brahmaputra river. The Jamalpur staff have selected 26 villages (two per field staffer) within a radius of 1-5 miles of Jamalpur town, in which large numbers of their original destitute functional education learners lived.¹ The Jamalpur staff set up their office

¹Earlier 30 villages had been selected. But when two staff were dismissed in January, 1977, 4 of the more conservative, least responsive villages were dropped from the programme.

and a dormitory facility (for the Programme Organiser and visitors) in a rented house in Jamalpur town. The field staff all come from Jamalpur and live at home.

ORGANISATION AND PERSONNEL:

The staff came to BRAC as candidates for the teachers' position in the UNICEF-sponsored functional education programme. None had any prior work experience. One of the staff has completed her Intermediate (H.S.C.); seven their Matric (S.S.C.) examinations. Two have completed Class IX, and three other Class VIII. All (with the exception of one woman in her forties) are in their twenties. Eleven are married with children; two are single.

The staff work five days a week in two villages each; conducting or supervising functional education classes and Women's Forums; delivering family planning motivation and services; encouraging and supporting horticulture, poultry raising, joint savings and cooperative activities. They meet as a team one day a week for programme reporting, planning, and review. The staff assume the team leadership on a rotation basis.

A permanent BRAC staffer has been assigned as Programme Organiser in the Jamalpur Women's Programme since its inception in June, 1975. The current Programme Organiser joined the project in September, 1976. The role of the Programme Organiser is to provide guidance, logistical and administrative support to the programme. She lives in the office of the Jamalpur Women's Programme. She files monthly reports to the BRAC H.C., processes materials and training requests, keeps the accounts of the programme, helps conduct cooperative meetings, and supervises all field work.

The Executive Assistant in charge of Women's Programme at BRAC's Head Office in Dacca, assists in programme planning, preparing of budgets and proposals, arranging specialized trainings,

procuring supplies, and overall monitoring of this programme.

A core of volunteer women had been identified and motivated to carry out activities with and for the Jamalpur staff by mid-1977. As envisioned, these volunteers would increasingly be utilized as multipurpose front-line workers. As the year progressed, BRAC's thinking on the use of volunteers in all projects, not just in Jamalpur, changed.

BRAC, as an institution, has decided to concentrate all activities, both social and economic, on its target group: the most disadvantaged third of the village. All programmes will be directed towards and through the disadvantaged. Volunteers (from outside this target group) will no longer be trained as BRAC intermediaries. BRAC will train members from the target group in each village to be the front-line education, health, and family planning workers.

In Jamalpur, existing volunteers will continue to be used as functional education teachers, but family planning and preventive health functions will be assigned to members of the organized target groups in each village. In order not to overlook the needs of the volunteers, a separate cooperative for the volunteer teachers is planned. The volunteer teachers, through this cooperative, can design a joint income generation scheme and receive credit and other support from BRAC.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The target population of the Jamalpur Women's Programme is the most disadvantaged women of productive age (15-45) in 26 villages of Jamalpur municipality. But what criteria do the Jamalpur Women's Programme staff use in selecting out the most disadvantaged women? BRAC's basic criterion for the disadvantaged is those who have no control over the means of production or distribution. More specifically for women, this criterion includes those from: landless families with no assets; fisherman families

with no implements; families whose members sell their manual labour.

The specific objectives of the Jamalpur Women's Programme for the years 1977-79, as decided upon by the Jamalpur staff, are:

FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION

1. To start 26 functional education centers
2. To conduct two cycles of classes (a total of 1,040 learners).
3. To train 26 additional teachers
4. To provide all volunteer teachers with a refresher course every four months.
5. To engage 300 graduates in poultry, horticulture, etc.
5. To arrange 90 cultural functions.
7. To recruit 300 subscribers to Gonokendra.

FAMILY PLANNING

1. To motivate 1,000 new family planning clients
2. To provide necessary medical check-up (blood pressure and history) to each potential client
3. To monitor 100 old clients
4. To arrange training of target group members every three months in family planning
5. To train midwives and engage them in family planning motivation and service delivery.
6. To carefully and regularly monitor the follow-up rate of accepting couples.

MOHILA SOBHA

1. To initiate Mohila Sobhas in each village
2. To hold fortnightly discussions at each Mohila Sobha
3. To provide preventive health services to children under five and pregnant and lactating mothers.

4. To support concrete follow-up actions to these discussions.
5. To provide poultry, composting, horticulture etc., training to interested participants.
6. To engage 300 members in poultry, horticulture, etc .

COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES:

1. To develop and support 52 women's cooperatives.
2. To train and mobilize 1040 members in cooperative income generating projects.
3. To provide training to general members, managing committee members, and programme staff in cooperative management (book-keeping, accounting) etc.

The overall goal of the programme is to raise the consciousness and literacy, health and economic status of the target group women.

But what do these objectives and goals mean in concrete terms? What exactly would the Jamalpur Women's Programme staff like to achieve by the end of 1979? The staff would like to have organised and supported 52 groups of disadvantaged women (two in each of the 26 villages). The staff agree the membership of an ideal group would be:

1. literate graduates of functional education
2. active participants in Mahilla Sabha
3. planning their family size
4. engaged in a joint economic activity
5. guided by strong leadership
6. serviced by members specialized into requisite functions (preventive health, family planning, and functional education)
7. moving toward self-reliance
8. federated with the other 51 groups

Programme and records the progress made during 1977.

FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION:

ERAC's functional education, with its problem-posing methodology, is basic to all ERAC development activities. The methodology is based on learner's participation, through dialogue, facilitated by the teacher. The curriculum centres on real life problems and their possible solutions. The aim of functional education is not only to make each learner critically conscious of her/his environment, but to motivate the learners to take action to beneficially effect her/his environment. Functional education, therefore, provides an excellent forum for target group interaction and motivation.

From the membership of functional education classes, various village -level women's activities and organisations emerged in Jamalpur during 1976: horticulture, poultry raising, Women's Forums, joint savings and cooperative societies. The staff tried to link functional education even more directly into development activities during 1977. They chose for each class a homogeneous group of disadvantaged women. Towards the end of the course, the functional education classes are used for planning group economic ventures. Ideally, each functional education class emerges into a women's cooperative.

Two cycles of functional education classes had been completed by early 1977. The third cycle (in the 15 villages not covered in Cycle II) was completed by late 1977:

<u>Cycle</u>	<u>Centres</u>	<u>Learners</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
I June '75 April - 1976	1	Enrolled -320 Average Attendance-220	Jamalpur town	All Staff

<u>Cycle</u>	<u>Centres</u>	<u>Learners</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
II May '76 - January '77	15	Enrolled-313 Average Attendance-151	15 villages	All Staff
III February 1977	15	Enrolled -203 Average Attendance-148	15 villages	9 volunteers 6 Staff

FAMILY PLANNING:

The Jamalpur Women's Programme staff faced a demand for family planning services from the learners during Phase I (1975). They received two short trainings in family planning (medical check-up, side effects, motivation, methods). A paramedic from BRAC's Sulla project spent four months with the Jamalpur staff in early 1976 to provide further training in family planning and preventive health. Family planning clinical services were received at the Gonoshyastha Kendra clinic in Jamalpur town. The Jamalpur Women's Programme staff provided follow-up on ligation clients and their children under five. By the end of 1976, the results (in 30 villages) of the family planning programme were:

Pills, Current Users	480
Ligation Clients	190
Vasectomy Clients	32
Injection Clients	9
TOTAL:	711

1977 proved a frustrating year for the family planning programme. Some village volunteers had been engaged in family planning motivation and service delivery. Then, in early 1977, the staff decided to involve the traditional midwives, dais, in family planning. A training was conducted with 15 dais in improved delivery techniques and family planning. However, follow-up to this training proved inadequate and the volunteers and dais lost interest. Moreover, clinical services were no

longer readily available. The Gonoshaystha Kendra clinic was shifted across the Old Brahmaputra River to Sherpur thana, and the government clinic in Jamalpur closes down periodically due to a shortage of medicines.

A couple survey conducted in the 26 target villages in early 1978 showed the following results:

Fertile Couples	3,395
Pregnant Mothers	220
Lactating Mothers	2,084
Pill Clients	201
Vesectomy/Tubectomy Clients	187

TOTAL: 388 clients; that is, 11.4% of fertile couples

The staff offer the following reasons for the lack of motivation to available family planning methods:

- mothers' concern over health of existing children
- irregular clinical services at the government clinic
- demand for the injection (currently non-available)
- dissatisfaction with the oral pill

The staff plan, during 1978, to intensify family planning motivation within the target group (to date motivation has been village-wide) and to train a family planning worker from the membership of each organised target group.

WOMEN'S FORUMS:

Women's Forums (fortnightly discussion groups with pregnant and lactating mothers) were initiated in all village during 1976.¹ The objectives of the Women's Forums are:

- to raise the consciousness of village women on health,

¹ Earlier, called Mothers' Clubs and renamed: Mohilla Sobha, which translates as Women's Forums.

- to increase the participation of the disadvantaged women in self-development activities
- to provide services to children under five and pregnant and lactating mothers

The women gather in a village courtyard or home. Mother and child health, food value, sanitation, etc., are discussed. A BRAC-designed poster series and discussion guide are used as visual and communication aides. Certain services - including blood pressure checks and iron supplements for pregnant mothers are also offered. BRAC paramedics, seconded from other BRAC projects, have helped to train the staff in the fortnightly discussion topics; in the use of the Salter scale to weigh children; to record weights on the "road-to-health" cards; to vaccinate children; and to discuss cause and treatment of oral pill side-effects; and to take medical check-ups (blood pressure and histories) on family planning clients.

During 1977, attendance at the 26 fortnightly Mother's Clubs averaged 520. Lack of curative health facilities and back-up remains a substantial problem. The vaccination programme has been suspended for this reason. Village mothers have voiced a suspicion of weighing their children. Despite staff efforts to overcome this suspicion (including the weighing of their own infants) the recording of weights in "road-to-health" cards has also been suspended. In the future, the staff plan to conduct the Women's Forums within the membership of the functional education classes and/or organized cooperative groups. Whenever possible, the trained dais will join this membership and their services to pregnant mothers will be supported and improved.

COOPERATIVES:

The Jamalpur Women's Programme staff initiated women's savings groups among the learners of many functional education classes

during 1976. Some of the savings groups were maturing into cooperative societies with joint production plans by late 1976. With the backing of the staff, and the promise of loans from ERAC, two cooperative economic schemes were launched in early 1977: a weaving cooperative and a paddy husking cooperative. Twelve other cooperative pilot projects received grants, loans, and training from ERAC during the second half of 1977.

TYPE OF COOPERATIVE	MEMBERSHIP
Paddy husking	20
Paddy husking	10
Paddy husking	20
Paddy husking	16
Paddy husking	16
Paddy husking	20
Paddy husking	16
Paddy husking	20
Paddy husking-cum-ericulture	16
Paddy husking-cum-fishery	20
Paddy husking-cum-cheera (rice snack)	9
Poultry	15
Poultry	16
Weaving	16
	230

An additional 18 groups (average 20 members each) had been organised for the fourth cycle of functional education to begin in early 1978.

The Jaalpur Women's Programme staff, plus the Programme Organiser, attend the weekly meeting of cooperatives in their respective villages. During 1977, the staff received successive cooperative management trainings (cf. the training schedule in Appendix II). During 1978, all efforts will be made to train two

members from each of the primary cooperatives in cooperative management and accounting. A Central Cooperative Federation, by the end of 1979, is envisioned. The Federation will be structured in such a way as to allow each primary cooperative the greatest degree of autonomy and, yet, to guarantee that the federation as a whole be self-sustaining and self-managed.

To identify and design viable economic projects (which would ensure a reasonable return to each member of a cooperative) is extremely difficult. To date, paddy husking is the economic venture which best guarantees a reasonable return to each active member of a cooperative. Two women working - one manual husker, dheki, average roughly:

maunds ¹ of paddy processed per week:	5
average rice yield per maund at paddy:	28 seers ²
average rice husk per maund of paddy:	10 seers
average price per maund of paddy:	100 Tk.
average price per maund of rice:	150 Tk.
PROFIT:	35 Tk. per week

Rice husk and bran by-products more or less balance the cost of fuel. The return is reasonable enough in the lives of the disadvantaged women. As expressed by one of the cooperative members: "We can see profit in paddy husking, and are not now willing to risk other ventures."

The Jamalpur Women's Programme staff continue to explore other viable economic ventures. Much can be done to involve women in health, family planning, education, and other social development efforts both as beneficiaries and as staff. However, it is economic

¹A maund equals 82 pounds

²There are forty seers in a maund, each seer equals 2.05 pounds

development activities linked to a strong local institutional base which argue most strongly for and to the disadvantaged rural women.

III. CONCLUSION

The Jamalpur Women's Programme did not progress as well as expected during 1977. The programme did make a shift of emphasis from social service activities to economic support activities, but not at the rate expected. What explanations can be offered? What lessons have been learned?

April-May, 1977, were "low" months in the staff morale. Only a few economic activities had been started; and those had been supported were not as yet viable. Confusion over loan disbursement and management had set in. The Programme Organiser knew most, the staff a little, the cooperative members least about the actual amounts of ERAC loans. The "top-down" process had to be reversed. The volunteers and trained dais faced financial difficulties. Moreover, there was constant rethinking as to how much of a health programme could be introduced and how best to use volunteers in the Jamalpur Women's Programme.

Some of these issues were resolved during the year:

- Certain staff were given exclusive responsibility for specialized economic activities; weaving, poultry, sericulture. These staff handled the loans disbursed to these activities; worked closely with the respective cooperatives; trained the respective Cooperative Committee members in accounts, costing, etc.; and provided the technical training and support needed.

- Despite the demand for health services from the target population, the staff understood and agreed the Jamalpur Women's Programme simply could not provide curative health services. Preventive health messages will continue through the Women's Forums.

- Members of the cooperatives (wherever possible, dais) will be the family planning motivators within their own groups. The staff may continue, as desired, to offer village-wide family planning motivation and services.

- Volunteers will be engaged as functional education teachers only. They will be organized into their own cooperative, along the lines of the Shebika Samity (volunteer teachers' cooperative) in BRAC's Manikganj project. That is, BRAC will provide the credit and assist in the design and marketing for any joint economic ventures undertaken by the volunteer teachers.

All issues were by no means resolved during 1977. The most difficult programme area is the formation of economic cooperatives. Although the staff have received successive trainings on the principles, accounts, and management of cooperatives, the general membership and selected officers of the primary cooperative receive this information only indirectly at best. During 1978-79, a regular schedule for training two members from each primary cooperative will be maintained. And the search for diversified, viable economic schemes will continue. No easy task in a subsistence economy where the demand for services and goods is low and under-employment is high.

ANNUAL ACTIVITIES SUMMARY - 1977

FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION

Cycle III Graduates	203 (15 villages)
Cycle IV Enrolled	360 (18 villages)

FAMILY PLANNING

Pills, Current Users	201
Ligation/Vasectomy Clients	<u>187</u>
TOTAL	388 : 11.4% of fertile couples.

WOMEN'S FORUMS

Forums	26
Average Attendance	520

COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES

Societies	14
Total Membership	230

TRAININGS- 1977

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Type of Training</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Trainees</u>	<u>Trainers</u>
January 10-15	Project Review Workshop	Dacca	All staff	BRAC Trainers; Programme Administrator.
March 6-16	Midwifery	Jamalpur	15 Dais	Dai from Christian Health Care Project; BRAC Doctor; Sub- Divisional Family Planning Officer.
March - April	Sericulture	Faridpur	2 Volun- teers	Trainer from Nijera Kori
April - December	Weaving	Jamalpur	16 Village Women	BRAC hired Weaving Master.
April 11-22	Cooperative Organization	Jamalpur	All staff	Trainers from the Jute Works
June- July	Sericulture	Jamalpur	15 village women	Trainers from Nijera Kori
June 15- August 15	Sericulture Management	Rajshahi	1 staff	Trainers from ESIC
June- 17-22	Staff Development	Jamalpur	All staff	Trainers from the Jute works
July- 17-21	Cooperative Management	Jamalpur	All staff	BRAC Trainer
July- 25-29	Functional Education Refresher	Jamalpur	10 volun- teers	BRAC Trainer
Sept-19- Oct.10	Management	Dacca	Programme Organizer	YWCA Consultant
Oct.24- 28	Poultry Refresher	Jamalpur	10 staff 10 Volun- teers	BRAC Trainer
Dec. 10-14	Groundnut cultivation	Jamalpur	All staff	BARI Farm

SAMARTHA BANU: A CASE HISTORY¹

Samartha Banu's face shows the strain of struggle against poverty. I first met her at a weekly meeting of the Fathalia paddy-husking cooperative. But she was already well-known to others, not only to the destitute women of Jamalpur but also to the sub-divisional officer.

Samartha Banu is now fifty years old. She was first married at age twelve to a farmer. Her first child was a girl. Her husband, not wanting the burden of a dependent daughter, divorced Samartha. Samartha tried to survive on her own, but was forced to remarry. She had seven daughters and then six sons by her second husband. Four of their sons have died.

Samartha and her second husband found it difficult to feed such a large family. They had no land. Samartha would supplement her husband's small earnings by growing vegetables. Despite the social taboos against working outside the home, eventually Samartha took a job with the, then, East Pakistan Family Planning Service.

In the aftermath of the devastating flood of 1974, Samartha and others joined the UNICEF-sponsored food-for-work scheme. She became sardarni, leader of a group of women labourers. She also attended the BEAC functional education classes. Before she could only think about the problems in her life, now she began to think also of solutions. She began to consider which available resources she could use for her own development. She began to save from her her food-for-work earnings and bought herself a calf. Before she used to believe that certain spiritual powers caused the death of her sons. But now she understands that the causes of the deaths were malnutrition and infectious diseases. She says she has

¹This case history was written by the Jamalpur Women's Programme Organiser.

overcome social bondages and that her own daughters are now earning their living by working in the fields.

Samartha's changed thinking led to a remarkable occurrence in Jamalpur in 1975. After discussing the functional education lesson entitled "Relief Chori" (stealing of relief goods), Samartha decided that she and others, who were not getting the full amount of wheat promised, should take action. She and other destitute women surrounded the Sub-Divisional Officer's office demanding their full share.

Samartha Bana is now a member of the paddy husking cooperative in Fathalia. She has also volunteered her services to family planning. She supplies oral pills to the women of her village and follows up on side effects, etc.. I asked her: "Why do you like to work for family planning?" She replied: "As I have suffered from bearing a large family - even my back-bone is curved - I don't like to see other large families suffering poverty".

Jamalpur Women's Programme Phase III
Statement of Receipts & Payments
from January to December 1977

<u>RECEIPTS:</u>	<u>Tk.</u>	<u>Tk.</u>
Balance from Phase II		19,962
Payments outstanding from OXFAM- America		1,75,863
		1,95,825
 <u>PAYMENTS:</u>		
<u>Functional Education:</u>		
Educational materials	3,222	
Teachers Training	4,023	
Supervision salary	12,823	
Travelling & Transport	19	20,087
 <u>Family Planning:</u>		
Cost of medicine	523	
F.P. Supplies	29	
Supervision staff salary	12,463	13,015
 <u>Mohila Shobha</u>		
Cost of medicine	1,045	
Paramedic salary	2,747	
Supervision staff salary	12,463	
Travelling & Transport	206	16,461
 <u>Cooperatives schemes:</u>		
Paddy husking loan for working capital	17,560	
Travelling & Transport	30	
Cooperative equipment	760	18,350
 <u>Agriculture:</u>		
Supervision staff salary	4,020	
Travelling & Transport	306	
Horticulture	12,541	
Pisciculture	653	17,520
 <u>Poultry:</u>		
Loan for poultry	1,300	
Grant for supplies	36	
Supervision staff salary	4,020	
Travelling & Transport	229	5,585
		91,018

b/£.

91,018Weaving:

Loan for working capital	10,397	
Grant for purchase & construction materials (cost)	6,237	
Training-Trainer salary	1,800	
Training Asstt. salary	1,400	
Supervision staff salary	5,220	
Travelling & Transport	256	25,310

Sericulture:

Grant for equipment	1,501	
Sericulture training	900	
Supervision staff salary	4,020	
Training producers	1,903	
Travelling & Transport	262	
Misc. Expenses	84	8,670

Staff Development:

Training	752	752
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Programme Management:

Programme supervision salary	9,120	
Travelling & Transport	3,934	13,054

Rent Utilities & Supply:

Rent & utilities	6,180	
Stationery & supplies	5,679	
Travelling & Transport	252	

Head Office support

42,190	54,311
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Loan & Advances:

Loan to staff	2,710
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1,95,825