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**Jamalpur Women's Programme
Annual Report - 1978**



BANGLADESH RURAL ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

DACCA-17 BANGLADESH

JAMALPUR WOMEN'S PROGRAMME
ANNUAL REPORT - 1978

I. INTRODUCTION

GENESIS:

Jamalpur Sub-Division (recently upgraded to a District) 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 ERAC to provide functional education to the 840 women who earlier participated in the agricultural food-for-work. ERAC 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. What evolved was a plan of action designed by, directed towards, and to be implemented by women: the ERAC supported Jamalpur Women's Programme.

PROJECT AREA:

Jamalpur is a District town, approximately 120 miles north of Dacca, to the east of the Brahmaputra river. The Jamalpur staff have selected 24 villages¹ within a radius of 1-5 miles of Jamalpur town, in which large numbers of their original destitute functional education learners lived. The Jamalpur staff set up their office and dormitory facility in a rented house in Jamalpur town.

¹Earlier 30 villages had been selected. But with staff changes some of the less responsive villages were dropped.

ORGANISATION AND PERSONNEL:

During 1976 and 1977, the Jamalpur Women's Project retained a semi-autonomous status. The field staff came from Jamalpur and lived at home. One permanent BRAC staffer was assigned as Programme Organiser to the Jamalpur Women's Programme. The role of the Programme Organiser was to provide guidance, logistical and administrative support to the programme with support and overall monitoring backup from the Executive Assistant in charge of Women's Programme at BRAC's Head Office in Dacca.

But the local field team did not develop to be as independent or to assume as much responsibility as expected. BRAC was forced to provide increasing long-distance support and monitoring. Eventually BRAC found it difficult to maintain the quality and supervision of the project in its semi-autonomous status. It was felt necessary to change the status of the Jamalpur Women's Programme to that of other BRAC field projects.

Therefore, in January 1978, the original field staff were given temporary appointments as Field Motivators (third tier of field staff in other projects). The other personnel- i.e., Programme Organiser (P.O., second tier) to supervise and the Executive Assistant to monitor the programme - remained in their earlier roles. In February, a new female P.O. was recruited to work alongside and share some of the responsibilities with the P.O. in charge of the programme.

But by June, 1978, a change in administration was necessary. BRAC found itself quite disillusioned with the old P.O. in charge. The trust placed in her had been misfounded (administratively and fiscally.). She was released in June. Another female P.O., who has been with BRAC since 1976, was put temporarily in charge.

In August, a female Project Administrator (P.A., primary tier), was put in charge of the programme. The P.O., who had been temporarily in charge, resumed her previous responsibilities elsewhere with BRAC. The staff strength for the duration of 1978 stood at:

1 Programme Administrator

2 Programme Organisers

12 Field Motivators

A core of the voluntary functional education teachers (15) were utilised to not only conduct the functional education classes but also to assist in cooperative formation.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The target population of the Jamalpur Women's Programme is the most disadvantaged women of productive age (15-45) in 24 villages of Jamalpur municipality. 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.

By the end of 1979, the staff would like to have organised and supported 48 groups of disadvantaged women (two in each of the 24 villages). The staff agree the membership of an ideal group would be:

1. literate graduates of functional education
2. planning their family size
3. engaged in a joint income-generating activity
4. guided by strong leadership
5. serviced by members trained into specialised functions
(preventive health, family planning, and technical skills)

6. moving toward self-reliance and collective social action
7. federated with the other 47 groups

II. 1978 PROGRAMME

This is the fourth annual report of the Jamalpur Women's Programme and records the activities in the following areas during 1978:

FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION:

BRAC's functional education, with its problem-posing methodology, is basic to all BRAC 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 environment, but to motivate the learners to take action to beneficially effect her environment. Functional education, therefore, provides an excellent forum for target group interaction and motivation.

Three cycles of functional education classes had been completed by late 1977; a total of 836 enrolled, roughly 500 graduated. During 1978, 38 centres were open with 676 learners enrolled. Two centres completed the 100 lessons (31 graduates), 6 centres progressed beyond lesson 60, and the remaining were roughly half way through the lessons by the end of 1978. It should be mentioned that some of the weaker learners reenrolled in the 1978 centres; so that the total graduates by end of 1978 will be nearer 1000 than 1200.

COOPERATIVES AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES:

From the membership of functional education classes, women's

cooperatives are formed. By the end of 1978, 25 cooperative groups had accumulated a total of Tk.5625.75 savings and Tk.1149.00 shares. The field staff assist in the maintenance and recording of these funds. Most often the funds are used as a rotating loan to group members, who otherwise are forced to take loans from moneylenders at exorbitant rates of interest. The following activities were also financed by the funds and with loans from BRAC:

2 cooperatives - contracts from a local bidi (hand-rolled cigarette) factory

2 cooperatives - poultry rearing

9 cooperatives - commercial paddy husking

1 cooperative - pond reclamation for pisciculture

1 cooperative - weaving

The pisciculture cooperative leased a pond for a period of 20 years from a local landlord in return for 25% of the profits by 1983. The weaving cooperative consists of 14 members. They have received the largest loan - Tk.17,641.15 - as the capital outlay in looms, building, and materials is high. No additional loans for the weaving cooperative are required as a steady profit is now coming in. The accounts, orders, and marketing are being managed by the group members themselves and wages are distributed equally among all members. The weaving cooperative has been the most successful cooperative to date; its members are able to solve their production and social problems together as a group.

Land, building, and training staff for sericulture (rearing of the castor-bush silk worm) were developed in 1978. Land for castor bush cultivation was donated by the government. Adjacent land on which BRAC's sericulture workshop has been built was leased from the government. And one Field Motivator and one Programme

Organiser received advanced sericulture training from a sericulture farm run by the government's Silk Board.

Much of the second half of 1978 was spent reorganising the programme, reclaiming mismanaged loans, and rebuilding the trust of the cooperative member that had eroded with the earlier mismanagement. Loans had been given before the cooperatives were really prepared to think and act collectively. Staff effort went into building among cooperative members a clearer perception of their position in society and their confidence to change this position.

A total of Tk.45,40 .55 has been disbursed as loans since the Jamalpur Women's Programme first started: Tk.26,710 as cash and the remaining 18,693.55 as materials. The cash loans went to the paddy husking cooperatives. Of this amount, Tk.17,104.25 has been realised. The material loans went to the following cooperative :

- weaving - Tk.17,641.15
- poultry - Tk.200.00
- pisciculture - Tk.852.00

In December 1978, a female P.O. was posted to Jamalpur to look into the economics and benefits of paddy husking (since the majority of the cooperatives were doing paddy husking). She completed a short report on women totally dependent on paddy husking as a means of livelihood. The report has been published in a local agricultural newsletter and is attached as an appendix to this report.

A Dacca - based accounting firm was contracted to help BRAC simplify and consolidate its cooperative book-keeping system. Staff from this firm spent time in the field area of the Jamalpur

Women's Programme discussing with staff and cooperative members the problems related to maintaining cooperative records. As a result of its exposure to BRAC's field operations, the firm has been contracted to rework the entire book-keeping system of the government's cooperative scheme.

HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING:

The preventive health component of the programme has been dropped. Many of the relevant topics are discussed in the functional education courses. Family planning motivation village-wide by the volunteers, staff, and trained cooperative members continued. Total clients for 1978 were slightly lower than for 1977, 355 compared to 388. But some villages were dropped in 1978 and reporting has been more accurate. Of the 355 clients, the following methods were used:

oral pill - 201

ligation - 148

condom - 6

III. CONCLUSION

The Jamalpur Women's Programme suffered major setbacks in 1978: The local field staff did not mature and develop as expected. The Programme Organiser who had served throughout 1977 had mismanaged programmes and funds. Confusion over loan disbursement and management set in not only with cooperative members but with the field staff themselves. But functional education expanded and the original cooperatives remained somehow intact.

Major emphasis during the latter half of 1978 was spent on revitalising the cooperative groups socially and economically.

The staff concentrated on raising the consciousness of the women by discussing their subordinate position in society and seeking new options to help them gain control over their lives. With increased consciousness, the staff envision the women can work to stabilise their position in society through collective action. Economic programmes the staff realised were an essential factor in enabling women to assert themselves as individuals.

PADDY SOAKING¹

Daisy Rubin, a member of IRAC's Jamigur Women's Project, described some of the traditional paddy soaking methods practiced by poor women in the rural areas of Jamigur. She observed six women in three villages in order to find out the differences, if any, between women in different villages. The methods used for processing rice are as follows.

SOAKING

If paddy is soaked immediately after threshing there is no need to soak before parboiling, as the paddy already contains moisture. However, less fuel and time is required if paddy is soaked before boiling. Generally women soak paddy in the afternoon so that it can be boiled the next morning, i.e., soaking takes 10-12 hours. A clay pot, gunny bag, or bucket is used as a soaking container. When the paddy is very dry, 24 hours soaking is required. Those who cannot afford to buy a container boil paddy without soaking. Neither soaking nor boiling is undertaken for 'Ataq' rice, which needs to be dried in the sunlight before cooking.

The vast majority of all paddy produced is parboiled; only a small proportion, usually of the finer varieties, is kept raw for special food preparations. Parboiled paddy stores better, is more nutritious and its cooking characteristics are preferred by most rural consumers.

¹ Adapted from ASAD News, Vol. 7, No. 5, May 1979

BOILING

Husk or wood are generally used for fuel. However, in Pathalia (one of the Project villages,) there are not many trees, so wood has to be bought from the market. The cost of 10 seers of wood varies between Tk.5-6. To boil 10 seers of paddy requires 2.5 seers of wood or 1.5 .. husk is also used. Pots used are 10 seer paddy pots, so one maund of rice (approximately 1.5 maunds of paddy) = 6 pots = 15 seers of wood.

DRYING

In winter, 5-6 hours are required for drying paddy in the sunshine on a cement floor. Drying on bamboo mats and rubber sheets takes 6-8 hours. In summer, less time is required. The quality of paddy (fine grain or thick grain) is also a factor for determining drying time. A variation of drying time from half to one hour was found between fine and thick grain paddy. Normally, the courtyard is covered with a mixture of cowdung and mud to provide a drying surface. However, concrete or cement floors are preferred.

HUSKING

Dheki husking is usually done by poor and landless farmers and by farmers who live a long distance away from a mill. The reason for landless and poor farmers not using a mill is because they never have large enough quantities at one time to be able to use the mill effectively. Most women felt it not worth the effort to either employ extra labour or use the valuable time of the men to carry 10 seers of paddy to the mill. Ten seers of paddy normally take one woman 2.5-3 hours to husk by dheki.

It is not possible for one woman on her own to husk one maund of paddy properly by dheki in one working day. A healthy, adult Bengali woman needs 10-11 hours to husk one maund of paddy in a

choti. The ideal working number is three - one to turn the paddy in the mortar (parh) and two to pound the choti. This would reduce the time to 3-4 hours.

Women who depend on paddy husking as their means of livelihood use the local market for processing paddy and selling rice. Those women who use a millman for milling do not make much profit.

While the paddy is drying, the women usually look what has been dried the previous day or engage themselves in other household work such as net making or stitching quilts in the rear yard, so that they can keep an eye on the paddy.

Every mound of good quality paddy will result in approximately 25 sacks of processed rice. Excluding cost of fuel, the women make a profit of TR. 3-10 on every mound of rice. Each mound takes three days to process. According to the women, it is possible for one woman to process three mounds of paddy per week if she does nothing else.

B R A C
JAMALPUR WOMEN'S PROGRAMME
Statement of Receipts & Payments
from January, 1977 to December, 1978

RECEIPTS:

Balance from Phase II	19,962
Donation from OXFAM-America	7,26,906

Tk. 7,46,868

PAYMENTS

Functional Education:

Educational Materials	14,124	
Teachers' Training	11,039	
Supervision-Salary	22,941	
Travelling & Transportation	872	48,976

Family Planning:

Cost of Medicine	523	
F.P. Supplies	224	
Training	907	
Supervision-staff salary	25,338	
Travelling & Transportation	1,542	28,534

Mohila Shoba:

Cost of Medicine	1,045	
Paramedics' salary	4,497	
Supervision-staff salary	24,897	
Travelling & Transportation	472	30,911

Cooperatives Schemes:

Loan for working capital	7,842	
Grants for Equipment	662	
Travelling & Transportation	210	8,714

Agriculture:

Supervision-staff salary	6,181	
Horticulture	13,720	
Pisciculture	2,208	
Travelling & Transportation	480	25,589

Balance C/O

1,42,724

Balance B/P. 1,42,724

Poultry:

Loan for fowls	502	
Grant for supplies	215	
Training	3,626	
Supervision staff salary	8,365	
Travelling & Transportation	289	12,997

Weaving:

Loan for purchase & raw Materials	17,641	
Grant for Equipment	61	
Training-Trainer salary	14,529	
Training Assistants' salary	1,860	
Supervision-staff salary	8,677	
Rent for weaving centre	2,990	
Travelling & Transportation	1,453	47,411

Sericulture:

Grant to women group	92	
Grants for Equipment	7,890	
Sericulture training	3,870	
Training-Producers	2,173	
Supervision-staff salary	8,786	
Travelling & Transportation	510	
Misc. Expenses	2,488	25,809

Staff Development:

Training		2,490
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Book-keeping system:

26,551

Program Management:

Program management & supervision salary	43,595	
Travelling & Transportation	7,541	51,136

Rent, Utilities & Supply:

Rent & Utilities	21,310	
Stationery & Supplies	8,744	
Travelling & Transportation	2,379	
Furniture & Fixture	602	33,035

Head Office Support:

65,416

Total Expenditure

4,07,564

Balance in hand

7,39,299

Tk.

7,46,868