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<p>A survey of non-formal education programs for women in Bangladesh. The activities of 35 organizations involved in non-formal education are described. Pre-war attempts at non-formal education of educationally and socially disadvantaged women were scattered, uncoordinated, and had little impact. Nevertheless, such attempts represented first steps in generating a movement for women's emancipation in an environment restricted by cultural biases and socioeconomic conditions. The war and its aftermath brought new urgency and new resources into the movement. National and international concern was aroused at the plight of some 300,000 widowed women who lacked the education and skills to support themselves and their children. Social, political, and financial support was generated. The post-war activities have been more organized, more concerted, and more productive. Most important among these new programs is the National Board of Women's Rehabilitation Programs formed by the government of Bangladesh in February, 1972. It opened a large number of centers all over the country, offering clinical programs, vocational and professional training, production centers, marketing facilities, and special student-support projects. In Dacca the Board has arranged for the Women's Career Training Institute and the Polytechnique Institute to create job opportunities and job training facilities for all classes of women. An important program in literacy training is being conducted by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, a voluntary organization begun in 1972. Other organizations conducting important programs include the Integrated Rural Development Program and the Christian Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation, which operates 52 women's centers throughout Bangladesh.</p>			
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**PROGRAM OF STUDIES  
IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION**

Supplementary Paper No. 5

**NON-FORMAL EDUCATION  
FOR WOMEN IN BANGLADESH**

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**Non-formal Education for Women  
In Bangladesh**

**With emphasis on agency and organizational programs  
serving economically disadvantaged women**

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## FOREWORD

The important contributions of women and families to the development of communities, regions and nations have not received the attention they deserve. As the basic unit of all societies, the family's influence in shaping attitudes, values, and economic structures is difficult to overestimate. Yet, until recently, the critical role of women and families in development policy has been neglected. Only now is it starting to be recognized for its true and potential worth.

As a contribution to the advancement of knowledge about these matters, the Program of Studies in Non-Formal Education at Michigan State University is pleased to release two studies for publication. The present study by Naseem Hoque is country specific; it catalogues and analyzes selected non-formal education programs for women in Bangladesh which are designed to assist the poor who are outside the stream of modern educational opportunities. In Bangladesh this group constitutes a very sizable proportion of the population. If education is ever to be available to them it must be through out-of-school means. Naseem Hoque's study describes such programs and points out significant trends for their further development.

The second study deals more broadly with the critical role of women and families in development and how non-formal education can be employed to enhance that role. Authored by Beatrice Paolucci, Margaret Bubolz and colleagues, this study provides a solid conceptual base for considering development in the perspective of women's contributions and the important role which non-formal education can play

In those contributions.

The Program of Studies in Non-Formal Education is supported by the Agency for International Development and is aimed at two central goals: (1) creating new knowledge and helping to systematize current knowledge about non-formal education, and (2) providing technical assistance and consultation in developing nations aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of non-formal education programs. We welcome inquiries from interested persons in respect to either of these functions.

We invite your attention to the complete list of publications in this series, a copy of which is inserted in this study. These publications are available free upon request to interested persons. An order blank is also enclosed for your convenience. We invite you to use it.

Finally, I would like to thank Professors Russell Kleis and David Heenan for their editorial assistance on this manuscript.

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### Introduction

Bangladesh is a small nation in South Asia. It was born in 1971 when it broke away from Pakistan. The new nation emerged after a year-long civil war which was bloody and devastating. Several millions of people were directly affected--through death, war-connected disabilities, and destitution. Millions of homes were destroyed and a vast amount of land was laid waste. The socio-economic fabric of the country was almost totally destroyed. The nation, already poor, was even poorer when the war subsided.

The war was particularly devastating for women. Apart from those who were killed, at least 300,000 women were directly affected by the war--raped, widowed, or lost homes, family members, and economic support. There is no account of exactly how many were left in severe poverty and social distress. Many had no means of support or capacity to earn. Most were housewives with virtually no educational background to use in earning a living.

Although women's conditions in Bangladesh had always been extremely depressing, and little had been done to redress them, the war aftermath suddenly brought them into focus.<sup>1</sup> National as well as international sympathies for the war-affected women led to emergency actions and programs. Public and private agencies, development, social thinkers, politicians/workers and leaders -- all were involved.

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1. The war continued for about 10 months from March 25, 1971 to December, 1971; during which all women's development activities were completely at a stand-still. So far as such activities are concerned, the war divided them into two distinct time periods, pre-war and post-war divisions, observed in this report.

The workers in the women's development movement seized upon this opportunity, and by the time the emergency operations were over, they had established organizational footing and aroused both concern and action in much of the country.

The spectrum of the emancipation effort is broad. It involves every woman with equal concern whether she is rich or poor, literate or illiterate, urban or rural, modern or traditional--all of 35 million women in Bangladesh. It involves all areas of life--social, cultural, economic and political. The crucial element in the emancipation is education.

Formal education in Bangladesh, as in most other traditional societies is considered as a primary means of emancipation, since it provides both economic rewards and social status. However, the overall literacy rate in the country is only about 20 per cent; that among women is much lower--about 11 per cent. The highest concentration of literate women is in the urban areas, and yet, only 32 per cent of urban women are literate. The literacy rates for women in rural areas are obviously much lower.

There are many reasons for such low literacy rates for women in Bangladesh--all inherent in the country's social and economic environment. A strong inhibition against women's education is rooted in social traditionalism. Women are secluded within the house (purdah system) and are frowned upon if they go out. Conservative guardians prohibit their daughters and sisters from going to schools where most of the teachers and co-students are men. The number of schools and colleges exclusively for girls is very limited. Paucity of schools, facilities, funds, teachers and materials make it difficult for women to gain a formal education. Even where educational facilities

are available, little attention is given to functional education to teach women things which would be useful in daily living. In addition, formal education demands heavy investment of time, money and energy which many families cannot or will not afford for female members. But even when women do get schooling, the service sector, where certificates are generally 'cashed' for reward, has limited employment opportunities, even for men.

The need for women to become educated is, however, obvious both from social and economic points of view. It is particularly urgent for the women who are past school age and need training to relieve social and economic distress. This does not mean that the education would have to be through formal literacy programs or even through the school system. Meaningful learning could be provided for them through programs outside the formal school system. Private and public organizations can do more to deliberately plan non-formal educational and developmental efforts for these women. These institutions would have identifiable sponsorship, goals and programs and would use the non-formal approach as a deliberately planned effort to educate women.

A number of organizations or agencies, both public and private, are working already in this area. Most of these are located in Dacca, the capital city. They are using non-formal education to achieve social and economic betterment of distressed women. Although their primary objectives are similar, their clientele, activities and coverages differ. Many of their methods and activities are ingenious, devised in response to the local social and economic conditions and to fulfill the clientele needs.

This study was undertaken in the belief that action research on such programs could serve to identify methodological and organizational

strategies which might contribute to developing generalized models for non-formal education with application in other settings.

Research Objectives and Conceptual Framework

The aim of the study has been to survey voluntary and non-governmental organizations engaged in non-formal education among economically disadvantaged women in Bangladesh, and to identify and document their non-formal education activities. Economically disadvantaged is defined to include women who are semiliterate or illiterate, poor, young or old, and without job skills to support themselves.

The operational objectives of the study were:

1. to identify a preliminary list of agencies and organizations which are engaged in non-formal education for economically disadvantaged women in Bangladesh;
2. to review representative pre-war programs for development of women;
3. to examine the program, content and approach of some selected post-war agencies and organizations that sponsor such non-formal education for economically disadvantaged women;
4. to search for common elements which generally characterize the non-formal education programs;
5. to examine whether such efforts are in the process of, or have the possibility for, institutionalization, or have any prospect of expansion or transfer.

We have employed the conceptual model developed by Kleis, in

his studies of non-formal education.<sup>2</sup> It is believed that a sufficiently detailed picture of institutions carrying on non-formal education programs could be attained by examining the four subsystems propounded by the model.

The conceptual framework emphasizes that every educational enterprise consists of four interacting subsystems. These are:

1. Institutional Subsystem

- A. Mission: The consensually established framework of intention within which particular purposes, goals and objectives are evolved and pursued.
- B. Sponsor: The institutional setting which initiates, supports and governs the enterprise and under whose auspices operating units are established and managed.

2. Participant Subsystem

- A. Mentors: The personnel who teach, counsel, administer, prepare materials, and otherwise staff the enterprise.
- B. Students: The participants whose cognition, competence and/or volition are to be educated.

3. Curricular Subsystem

- A. Content: The body of knowledge (information, competence and/or preference patterns) which students are to learn.

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2. Russell Kleis, Program of Studies in Non-formal Education Study Team Reports, Institute for International Studies in Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1974, p.430.

B. Media: The materials, equipment, and processes by means of which direct or vicarious experiences are provided and communicated to, by, or among participants.

4. Contextual Subsystem

A. Time: The time reference contemporary to which the system makes progress.

B. Place: The environment within which the system impact intended.

Methodology

The case study approach was utilized. Data were generated through field visits, personal interviews, observations and examination of Institutional records and reports. For this purpose the author visited Bangladesh for a period of 10 weeks from November 1974 until mid-January 1975.

In selecting organizations for the study the criteria were fixed as follows:

1. the organization is voluntary or semi-voluntary in nature, i.e., not government operated.
2. it conducts one or more non-formal education programs.
3. the intention of its non-formal education efforts is to help economically disadvantaged women.

Since such organizations have started only very recently and in urban areas, mostly located in and around the capital city, it was decided to do the concentrated portion of the study there in Dacca. In addition, a general study, not as detailed, was made by visits, interviews, discussions and various reports outside Dacca.

Altogether 35 organizations were found to be working in the field

of women's development. Not all of them, however, conformed to our criteria. After discussions with persons conversant with the work there and visits to various agencies, four organizations were selected for preliminary study.

As most of the organizations were new, recorded information was very limited and hard data were very scanty. Thus, it was necessary to gather as much information as possible through interviews and we depended more on them than on recorded data.

Information on the post-war organizations was collected in the following manner:

1. three sets of schedules were prepared. Schedule "A" was used to collect organizational data from their respective administrative officers. Schedule "B" was used in interviewing two staff members of each organization. Schedule "C" was used in interviewing five participants from each organization.
2. personal observation of the organization's activities, examination of books and records and discussion with the staff and participants of the organization.
3. Interview of persons outside the organization but conversant with the work in the general area of women's development.

#### Overview

This chapter has described the background, purposes and procedures of the study. The study report is presented in the following chapters:

Chapter II provides an overview of the women's organizational movement in Bangladesh, with reference to non-formal education programs.

Chapter II contains detailed case studies of 35 organizations that are involved in non-formal education.

Chapter III enumerates the general features of the case studies.

Chapter IV is a discussion on the trends of institutionalization of the programs.

## CHAPTER I

### NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN IN BANGLADESH: AN OVERVIEW

The rather bleak history of women's organizational activities in Bangladesh both before and after the liberation, is largely explained in the cultural norms that prevail in the country. The purdah (seclusion) system is ingrained in the social fabric of the country. This restricts women's ability to participate in many economic activities. Of the acknowledged labor force in the country, roughly 10 per cent are women, and only about 1 per cent are women in modern occupations. As in other developing countries, such as Burma and West Africa, very few women go into business or professions. For uneducated or semi-educated women opportunities are even more limited. These factors hamper organizational efforts as well as participation.

Until recently, there were almost no systematic efforts to organize non-formal education programs for women in Bangladesh. Before liberation, there were a few scattered attempts in the form of social welfare activities. These activities resulted principally from the efforts of middle and upper class women who grouped together and volunteered their time, energy and sometimes money to further the education of women. The primary function in most such ventures was to provide social get-togethers. There was very little emphasis upon developing non-formal education programs. When programs were organized they were formulated from the organizers' point of view and not always in line with the clients' needs or interests. Further, the activities were set up in limited geographical areas, which meant that the most needy women, both urban and rural, remained left out.

Nonetheless, some of these activities, which began soon after the partition of India in 1947, were significant in many ways.<sup>1</sup> Fighting against the existing socio-economic climate, these attempts laid the foundation for a women's organizational movement in the country.

During the next two decades progress was slow, yet very important, because it eventually broke the barrier of social taboos and conservatism. The movement now has activated social toleration, if not full acceptance.

Since the war both the government and general public have become more aware of its existence. Presently, in most of the urban areas, a number of organizations are engaged in activities of economic improvement for women. Thus, although the early programs lacked a sound footing, support and participation, they played an important role as forerunners of the rather extensive programs which were developed during the post-war period.

The aftermath of war put a new dimension to the emerging cause of women's development. There arose a noticeable effort to rehabilitate great numbers of women distressed by the war. With the development of several new organizations in the post-war period, the movement has gained much force and support.

The emergence of women's organizational activities could be considered a continuum had it not been for the war that divided it into two different phases. While the post-war phase has been more active in non-formal education, its development really ascends from the pre-war phase. It is, therefore, necessary that we look closely at both phases in order to understand the evolution of non-formal education in this setting.

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1. The women's emancipation activities began as early as 1910. See Ronney Jakan's report for detail on this early phase.

### Pre-war Programs for Women

In the decades of the fifties and sixties, as noted above, there were only a very few organized women's activities in Bangladesh (East Pakistan). Most important among these few was the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA)-- a branch of the central APWA located in West Pakistan. It was begun by an elite class of women--the wives of prominent administrative and political leaders. It organized social get-togethers, cultural functions and bazaars to collect funds. The members volunteered their time and money. In the field of non-formal education programs it organized adult literacy classes, sewing and handicraft centers and health and nutrition programs for middle- and lower-class women. The APWA had branches all over the country and maintained a visible organizational network. After liberation it was renamed Bangladesh Women's Association (BWA), and while its structural characteristics remained the same, it came to be dominated by wives of the dominant political party, Awami League.

Besides APWA, there were several women's organizations named Mahila Samities (Women's Societies) organized by enlightened middle-class housewives in several communities. Their basic objective generally was to improve the social and economic status of middle- and lower-class women of the neighborhood. They usually ran primary children's schools, sewing centers and adult literacy classes, and they emphasized social welfare work in times of disaster, such as cyclones or floods. These organizations were few in number, but one could find them in some towns and cities of the country. As their activities were organized within separate communities, they did not follow any systematic method or approach. Very seldom did the leaders work with the participants; instead their volunteer activities were confined to

attending meetings, giving directions and other occasional involvement. Unfortunately, because of these factors, the programs had little educational impact upon the population for which they were intended.

An organization of business and career women was formed in Dacca in 1960. It was named Business and Career Women's Club. Its program, in addition to serving social and professional interests of its members, included a hostel, a day care center for the children of working women and training courses for professional occupations. The membership was confined to upper- and middle-class career and professional women and no systematic efforts were made to develop programs for disadvantaged women.

Also in 1960, a group of wives of expatriots, along with some local women, formed the Women's Voluntary Association (WVA). It was organized specifically to help poor women, and programs were established which included sewing and handicraft centers and adult schools. Similar attempts were made by other groups of wives of rich businessmen. However, such efforts did not go deeply into the problems of women's development; rather they appeared to be more like charity organizations.

About 57 centers of Mahila Parishad (Women's Organization) were organized by middle-class women and ex-student leaders. Fourteen of them were located in Dacca. Their major activities included literacy classes for the poor and illiterate women and children in the slum areas. The programs also emphasized health, nutrition, home sanitation and family planning. Volunteers of these organizations donated not only their time but also books and writing materials for those who could not afford them. The organization was run by donations

from its members and from their different fund-raising efforts. No overall plan was followed with regard to content, curriculum or method, and there were no follow-up procedures to keep track of those they had assisted.

In these pre-war efforts, the programs of the organizations, most of which were located in and around Dacca, were at least partially directed to emancipation of women. For the most, however, the development and perpetuation of non-formal education was not the central purpose; and there were few concentrated efforts to conduct such programs. They were generally temporary, isolated and established as offshoots of organizations which concentrated heavily on other purposes.

There were a few organizations which concentrated their efforts on non-formal education programs for women's development. Eventually, however, one was established in Dacca and others began in places away from the capital city. Four of them, described here, have continued and expanded their operation in the post-war period.

The Home Economics College in Dacca began an extension effort in 1960. Along with its formal courses, it has offered non-formal courses in such fields as health, family planning, nutrition, sanitation, sewing, designing, doll making, house planning and gardening. The enrollment has been restricted to community leaders, workers and individuals who have completed secondary school. The courses have been for short terms and the content generally has been borrowed from western countries. This is one reason why they have not been accepted readily by the trainees.

Jahanara Cottage Industry in Comilla has been owned and operated by a middle-class woman named Jahanara. Through her program she

trains poor and middle-class women in different cottage crafts so that they can produce something in their homes and thus earn an income. Courses are run at a center in Comilla. They last two to three weeks and provided training in jute products, bamboo products and sewing. After the brief training at the center, the women take raw materials to their homes and then bring their finished products back to the training center to sell. During the training period they also receive some training allowances. It is a well-managed small industry which serves both commercial and training purposes and accommodates a good number of women. Recently, the government has decided to provide grants to the program so that it can be expanded.

A concentrated effort to understand the problems of rural women was started in 1962 in Comilla by the Women's Home Development and Education Program. This program was sponsored by the Academy for Rural Development as part of its total development efforts for the rural areas. The objective of the program was to improve social and economic conditions of the village women. The program tried to develop an organizational model to improve women's participation in development programs. Programs were established in 100 villages of Comilla Kotwali Thana through the Village Cooperative Association. This work has been resumed in the post-war period.

The basic approach of the program is to select one woman from each village cooperative to work as a change agent and then to give her a continuous education and training in the field of her village's special needs and interests. The content of the program includes cooperatives and savings programs, home improvements, family planning, midwifery, adult literacy, printing, sewing, and weaving and other similar topics. The women thus trained in various fields then engage in holding

Informal classes to teach the other women in their villages. This program has had a significant effect upon the village women, and it is hoped that it can be expanded to reach women in outlying areas of the country.

Another effort to help women to become contributing members of the family and community was initiated by the Ranguina Thana Cooperative Association. The program was modeled after the Comilla Cooperatives but differs in one important way. Unlike Comilla, women have separate cooperatives, which enable them to improve their personal economic conditions by depositing weekly savings in their own name. "This not only allows for development of independent projects but should also give rise to female managers who acquire some commercial maturity and judgment." <sup>2</sup>

At present, there are 10 cooperatives exclusively for women. There are about 100 female adult education centers, of which 85 are working on a voluntary basis. Teachers are recruited from among college students, managers and wives of local leaders who, in turn, are teaching other women. The programs include kitchen gardening, sewing, poultry raising, cooperative savings and fair price consumer organizations. The Cooperative Association also trains women to manufacture chain wire for chicken fencing and helps its trainees with the marketing of their goods. The spirit and main motto which animate the Ranguina Cooperative Association is voluntarism and self-reliance.

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2. Sandra and Laura Leidenstein, "Observations on the Status of Women in Bangladesh." A Periodic Paper in World Education, July, 1974.

### Development in the Post-War Years

After Bangladesh became independent, these isolated approaches were changed and both in the private and public sectors there was a growing awareness of the necessity of the full participation of many more women, particularly the economically disadvantaged women, in the process of national development.

As we have mentioned, during the war, millions of men were killed. Many left behind widows, parents and children who had depended upon their men for support. In addition to the widows whose support was assumed by other family members, it is estimated that as many as 300,000 women were left without families and without means of support.

Both men and women, shocked by the insecurity and helplessness of these women, began to realize the need to develop self-reliance and independence not only among these destitute women but among women generally. "This has enabled the secluded women of Bangladesh to come out of their homes and become part of the social movement of Bangladesh. The women, irrespective of whether they were war affected or not, whether they came from well-to-do families or poor income groups, now have realized how insecure they are without some kind of basic professional or trade skill of their own."<sup>3</sup>

There is a new general awareness that there should be some kind of program for the social, mental and educational advancement of women, so that they can be more independent and self-supportive. In order to achieve these goals, more concerted and determined efforts are being made by the government as well as private organizations. While existing organizations have continued to function with added social,

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3. Sandra and Laura Leidenstein. "Observations on the Status of Women in Bangladesh." A periodic Paper in World Education, July, 1974.

political and financial backing, many new programs are also being initiated through public and private agencies.

Most important among these new programs is the National Board of Women's Rehabilitation Programs (NBWRP) constituted by the Government of Bangladesh in February, 1972. The Board consists of 11 eminent social and political women workers and is presided over by a Justice of the Supreme Court, who has been empowered to function as the chief executive of the program. Widespread support, in terms of money, material and cooperation, has been given to it by the government as well as by many international agencies. Recently, the Board was attached to the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare with the status of an autonomous agency. Its headquarters is in Dacca.

The immediate objective for which the Board was constituted was to rehabilitate the violated, destitute and other war-affected women of the country. To accomplish this purpose it opened a large number of centers all over the country in different regions, cities and towns. As soon as the immediate problems were attended to during the first year, the Board turned its attention to a longer range socio-economic development program for women to be launched through the newly rooted organizational network. A 5-year plan (1973-78) drawn up by the Board and accepted by the government aims to provide:

1. a nation-wide organizational umbrella for women's development and emancipation;
2. clinical programs;
3. training programs--vocational and professional as well as functional literacy;
4. production centers and facilities;
5. marketing facilities for retail, wholesale and export; and

6. special projects, e.g., workshops, poultry, and stipends to students, etc.

The plan calls for Tk140 million to be expended over five years between 1973-78. It is a big program covering many important development areas for women from all walks of life. Already it has started its work and some programs are now functioning. Others are still in the planning stage.

In Dacca, the Board has arranged two institutes -- the Women's Career Training Institute and the Polytechnique Institute, with the purpose of creating job opportunities and job training facilities for all classes of women. The Career Institute provides vocational training on cottage craft and handicrafts for women who have not had primary and secondary schooling, and secretarial science and typing for women who have had such schooling. This program is discussed in detail in Chapter III.

In the Polytechnique Institute training is provided in electrical mechanics, electronics and engineering draftsmanship. It also helps the trainees to complete their formal primary and secondary schooling so that they can qualify for further training. The Board is offering the technical training with the cooperation of the Mirpur Technical Institute (MTI) run by the Directorate of Labour of the Government of Bangladesh. The courses run for six days a week for six months. The first group of 25 trainees completed their training in 1974.

Each center includes a workshop for producing and marketing consumer goods. This provides opportunities for the women to participate in large scale production in a form of cooperative association. The program allows the trainee to improve her skills and also earn wages until she is fully employed in the labor market. About 2,000 trainees

are currently working in 24 production workshops set up by the Board in various parts of Bangladesh.

The Board also offers nursing and nurse-aid training with the help of local hospitals; it has arranged adult education classes on nutrition, family planning, health and first aid for its participants; and it often provides for day care facilities for the children of participants who are engaged in formal education or vocational training.

Besides training for work outside the home, the Board has arranged many types of vocational training on food, clothing and production of home-consumption items in 30 centers throughout the country. About 3,000 illiterate and economically disadvantaged women had completed their training and about 2,000 more women were undertaking training in these centers by the beginning of 1975. Due to the limited space in most of the centers, the Board has not been able to accommodate all of the women who would like training.

The Board has proposed to undertake several more programs to help women. It is trying to set up an automated garment factory in Dacca which will employ only women in both managerial and production functions. A central institute has been proposed for training the trainers employed in the various programs.

For the rural areas the Board intends to arrange supplemental vocational training for midwives. Since income from midwifery jobs is very meager, these women will be given training as paramedics as well so that they can supplement their incomes. The Board has also proposed a scheme whereby women trained in trades may also be trained for participation in population control activities in the rural areas.

The program is designed to create jobs for female workers in these areas and to encourage female leadership both in population control and in commercial and industrial undertakings.

The programs and plans of the Board have a promising future. They promise extensive coverage of the population and a wide variety of training. However, most of the programs are in initial or planning stages, so it is too early to evaluate them.

The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, a voluntary organization, was started in the beginning of 1972 in order to spread literacy and other forms of adult education. Members of this committee believe that "an adult literacy program is critical to the success of all development efforts and that it must be functionally related to the improvement of the occupational skills of the people so that literacy can directly contribute to higher productivity."<sup>4</sup> The program is financed by foreign agencies and is concentrated in three thanas of Sylhet District in Bangladesh.

The approach of the program is to select one male and one female teacher from each cooperating village, who will be trained in short intensive course at the BRAC field camp. After the training, these teachers work in the village center on a volunteer basis for three months, after which the cooperatives of the village are encouraged to pay salaries to them. It is believed that since these teachers are recruited from the villages they can act as better change agents than teachers from outside.

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4. "Women's Work." The National Board of Bangladesh Women's Rehabilitation Program. Dacca, 1974

The content of the training includes, besides basic reading, writing and simple arithmetic, a variety of subjects such as food, nutrition, cooperatives and cottage industries. The courses at the village level usually run for six months, during which time field staff members of BRAC make frequent visits to the villages to follow up the program activities.

Founded by a physician named Dr. Zafarullah Choudhry, the People's Health Center was first started during the war on the India-Bangladesh border and, after independence, its headquarters was transferred to Savar, in the outskirts of Dacca. The program includes family planning, preventive medicine, pre-natal care and post-natal care, general health care, nutrition and kitchen gardening. It has a small mobile field hospital which makes visits to villages in order to provide medical services to the inhabitants of the 56 villages which it covers. It is funded by OXFAM, national and international donations.

A unique feature of the program is that it gives paramedical training to young and unmarried women (15-17 years of age) whom no organization has included in any previous program. Fifty per cent of the paramedics are local girls who assist the doctors in the intensive health program in the villages. The paramedics get six months of theoretical and practical instruction and during this period they receive 200 takas and residential facilities as remuneration. Many young women of this age group are eager to receive this type of training.

These paramedics work in close collaboration with village midwives (Dais). The health center is planning to extend its training services to these midwives, so that they can work in the villages as para-professionals, in the same way as those in the Comilla women's

home-development program.

Recently the Bangladesh government has initiated a women's program for home development and population planning in the rural areas as a part of the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP). The program is in the experimental and exploratory phase. The intention is to create adequate and feasible opportunities for women in rural areas through the cooperative societies. The long-range goals of the program are to train women in different skills required to become economically productive and to create an atmosphere in which they can be productive. During the period of the first 5-year plan (1973-78) the program proposes to cover 30 Thanas. It will develop a model women's program which can be duplicated in other areas of the country.

The organization and content of the IRDP program were developed following the Comilla model of the women's home development program. Like the Comilla model, this women's program will be developed in different villages through the cooperative societies. But unlike the Comilla model, these women will have separate cooperatives of their own and will make their own decisions and run their own cooperatives. This will help them to learn organizational and managerial skills.

The first step of the program is to give orientation and motivation to the village men and women to understand the need and purpose of the program. Once the village women are motivated by the field staff, they will be asked to form a cooperative society in their villages. These cooperatives will be federated into the respective Thana Central Cooperative Associations (TCCA).

Women who are the members of the cooperatives will be given training in health, family planning, home development and different

income producing projects. Adult literacy classes are also included in the programs.

IRDP undertakes a well-coordinated national program of training work projects, family planning and population control. Besides offering training facilities, it provides supporting services to carry on production projects. For instance, a woman will not only learn sewing but, after training, she also will be able to receive a loan to buy a sewing machine to carry on work in her home. Follow-up of trainees has been incorporated in the scheme of the IRDP.

IRDP proposals are quite encouraging, but it has yet to confront some of the basic problems which women's organizations are facing. These include the marketing problem, purdah problem, and competition with men for jobs.

The Christian Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation (CORR) was organized by Christian committees to help needy women through co-operatives. The membership is open to non-Christians too. The organization consists of numerous local groups. Each group selects one woman as its representative. These representatives take training at the center in Dacca and upon completion of training they try to impart the same training in turn to other members of their groups.

In early 1975 there were 52 women's centers throughout Bangladesh. In addition to its training programs, CORR is trying to improve marketing facilities to market the products made by women in these centers. It is planning to explore the possibilities for exporting jute handicraft to foreign markets.

### SUMMARY

In this chapter we have presented an overview of the women's organizational movement in Bangladesh during the pre- and post-war periods. The overview includes representative efforts made in the area; it has not been intended to include all such efforts.

It clearly emerges that the pre-war attempts were scattered, uncoordinated, and had limited impact upon the educationally and socially disadvantaged. Nevertheless, such attempts represented first steps in generating a movement for women's emancipation in an environment which was rather inhibiting due to tradition and socio-economic conditions.

The aftermath of the war brought new urgency and new resources into the movement. Both national and international concern was aroused. Social, political and financial support poured in. The movement was vitalized with new enthusiasm. The post-war activities have been more organized, more concerted and more productive. Although the programs are still very new, the trend projects both extensive and intensive roles for organizations in women's development in future years.

## CHAPTER 11

### ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POST-WAR PROGRAMS CASE STUDIES OF ORGANIZATIONAL PROGRAM

This chapter describes in greater detail the expansion of non-formal education activities in a few women's organizations in the post-war period. As pointed out earlier, the emergence of new programs and educational older ones has been characterized by the urgent need for rehabilitating war-distressed women. In responding to that need, a clear emphasis was put upon non-formal programs and new direction and scope were given to women's development in Bangladesh. It was our belief that analysis of these programs while they were still in the formative stage and had not yet taken full shape, might provide useful insights into the organizations of non-formal education programs in this country and elsewhere.

## WOMEN'S CAREER TRAINING INSTITUTE

The Women's Career Training Institute is one of the several training production units organized by the National Board of Women's Rehabilitation Programs (NBWRP) under its mandate. The Institute started functioning in June 1972 in Dacca as an organized effort to carry out the mandate. Despite the initial difficulties faced in developing this kind of organization, it has maintained steady progress during its first three years of existence. It is now regarded as one of the stable organizations working in the field of women's development, effectively catering to the needs of economically distressed women.

The Institute aims at providing career development programs for economically disadvantaged women. During the war thousands of women lost their homes and all male earning members of their families. This left these women without any means of support for themselves or their children. The Women's Career Training Institute is one of several units of NBWRP which is training these war-affected and other economically disadvantaged women for different careers, so that they may be able to maintain themselves and their families. The objectives, therefore, are directed towards long-term solution of the economic problem, not merely a short-term rehabilitation program for the war-affected women. The program is intended for the women who do not have opportunities to earn because they lack adequate skills or formal education, and they lack avenues to attain them.

The program has both short-term and long-term objectives to solve the economic and social problems of the women. The short-term

objective has been to rehabilitate the war-affected women. This objective has already been largely achieved. Now it is trying to further the economic emancipation on a long-term basis, in order to enhance the role of women so that they can improve educationally, economically and socially. Nor does the Institute encourage women to leave their families and become self-sufficient. It emphasizes the role of women as mothers, and housewives as well as encourages them to share the economic responsibility of the family.

Total upheaval of the society, or complete social change, is not the purpose of the Institute. It aims at planned development through non-formal education so that women can get more opportunities to participate in the economic development of the country.

The Institute is a quasi-governmental organization, sponsored by the National Board of Women's Rehabilitation Programs, an agency of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor. The controlling authority of the Institute rests with a committee constituted by members from NBWRP. The policy decisions concerning the Institute are made by this committee in line with the NBWRP mandate. The Director of the Institute, who is also the Director of Training in NBWRP, serves as the chief executive in carrying out the policies enunciated by the committee. The Institute, therefore, is not an independent organization in terms of policy or planning, nor does it have much flexibility in decision-making.

The funds for the Institute are provided by the government, national and international agencies, and church organization. Since the first year, 1972, the government has allocated 57 per cent of its budget. In addition, different national and international agencies operating in Bangladesh have donated, both in cash and in kind,

about 38 percent of its total financial resources. The Institute receives constant help, including technical guidance from UNICEF, the Planned Parenthood Federation, the Christian Commission for Development, the Ford Foundation, the International Rescue Committee and a few other international agencies. It also has a growing amount of internal revenue generated by its on-going projects.

The Director, who is responsible for the overall functioning of the organization, is assisted by a staff of fifteen inclusive of training and office staff. Seven trainers teach secretarial science, handicraft and jute products, doll making, tailoring and sewing, and adult literacy.

Five staff members are high school graduates; three are college graduates and seven have advanced degrees. All members of the staff have had special training, but only a handful have had previous experience before they joined the Institute. Most of the teaching staff, except those in secretarial science, had not taken formal vocational training. They learned the trades they teach through work-experience. All staff members are salaried except one who works voluntarily. The staff is paid a salary less than taka 500 (\$60-\$70) per month, the model range being paid from taka 300 to 500.

All trainers and important staff are women. A few men were employed when women teachers in particular fields were not available. All staff came from middle-class families. Though they work for financial benefit, they like the work and indicated that it was highly satisfying because they are working for a good cause.

Since its inception, the primary focus of the Institute was on the women who had become destitute or severely affected due to war.

However, as this class of women was accommodated and as the Institute expanded, priority was extended to other distressed and economically disadvantaged women from poor and middle classes. Information about the Institute was circulated through the mass media. Now the program is well publicized. Each applicant is interviewed before admission to determine her needs, interests, suitability and aptitude.

Most of the trainees fall in the broad age group of 20 to 40 years. They have families often of 6 to 10 members, with one or two earning members in the family. Total family earnings range up to taka 400 which, for such a family size and in such an inflation ridden market (rate of inflation is 300 per cent per year), is quite inadequate. As mother and housewives, the women are anxious to be trained to supplement the family income.

There were 167 women receiving training in 1974, and since 1972 more than 300 have been trained.

Some have complained about the insufficiency of the resources, training materials and depth of the program, but none wanted to discontinue it. Participants take their training quite seriously, much more than is usual in formal schooling. Seventy-five per cent of the women completing secretarial science courses have been placed in various organizations, mostly through the efforts of the Institute. Women who are learning tailoring, doll making, and related work are mostly employed in the Institute's own production unit. Ten per cent of them, several who are self-employed, were working outside the Institute.

Lower level vocational training is offered to women who are illiterate or semi-literate; whereas more advanced training is given to literate women. Besides emphasizing vocational training, the Institute

also provides an adult literacy program for the illiterate and semi-literate women. Functional literacy courses provide for acquiring reading and writing ability, along with aspects of family planning, health and sanitation, food and nutrition, and home development.

The total program of the Institute can be classified under three categories: (1) training, (2) production and marketing, and (3) supporting units.

Job training is provided in five areas: (1) secretarial science, (2) tailoring and sewing, (3) embroidery, (4) jute products marketing, (5) doll making and (6) typing (both in English and Bengali). The enrollment for training since establishment of the Institute is as follows:

Clients Enrollment

<u>Classes</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>
Secretarial Science	57	53	68
Typing	--	30	15
Tailoring	45	40	34
Jute	26	25	40
Doll Making	17	10	10

Secretarial Science is a training course provided to women who have completed secondary school. The course is of one year's duration and includes such things as: shorthand, typing, business English, and office practice. At the end of the course the trainees take an examination conducted by the Board of Technical Education. In 1973, all 53 trainees passed the examination. Of the total 17, almost one third, passed with distinction marks. The quality of training is regarded so highly by the prospective employers that not only were clients offered jobs as soon as they completed their training, but also advance requests were placed.

Switching over to Bengali language in the offices after the war has created a heavy demand for Bengali typists who are very few in number. The Institute provides a Bengali typing course of one year duration for semi-literate and literate women. Some of the course work is offered jointly with the Secretarial Science course.

Training in Tailoring and Embroidery, Jute Work and Doll Making is provided for illiterate and semi-literate women. Most of the trainees for these courses come from low-income groups. The courses are work oriented and practical, taught from basics to specialization on the respective subject, and are geared toward helping families to gain sufficient ability to work confidently in their vocation. These courses are also of one year duration. In 1974, 84 trainees were enrolled in these courses, a large number of which were war-affected women.

The production unit was organized in May 1973, with the women who completed their vocational training in different fields of trade at the Institute. They were absorbed as hired workers, wages being paid on a piece rate basis. The workers may work at the unit or at home as they choose. Those who live far away from the unit take weekly assignments and work at home; others work at the unit to use its equipment and tools for completing their daily assignments. Besides working with the unit, they take outside orders which enhance their income. In 1972-73, 57 women were working with the unit. Their combined earnings amounted, that year, to taka 9328.

To support the production unit a marketing center named 'Umesh' has been opened at the Institute. Although it serves all production centers under the NBWRP, it is attached to the Institute as its marketing outlet. In 1972-73, its sale proceeds were Tk 41,185., out of

which 25 percent or Tk 10,296 was the gross profit. In addition, the Institute organizes exhibitions, publicized through various agencies, to market the goods produced by women workers.

To help the women concentrate on their training, two other kinds of programs are provided by the Institute: day care for the children and health care. The programs are jointly organized with four other organizations: EEDB, UNICEF, Government Guides Association and Red Cross. Under this system, food supplements are provided for children of trainees at the day care center, and free medical care is provided for the women and their children at the health care clinic. In addition, the Institute provides job referral services for the participants in getting jobs.

All training courses are of one year duration. The year is divided into four sessions. Each course has two sections, except doll making which has one, to accommodate large numbers of clients. The training classes are held five days a week, five hours a day. Lecturing is little used, giving more emphasis on demonstration. Heavy emphasis is given on practice in which the trainees learn through work. The materials and equipment are supplied by the Institute.

Communication between the trainees and trainers is no problem. Most of the trainees stated that they can fully grasp and follow instructions of the trainer. However, a deficiency was observed, and was confirmed by the trainees: the trainers' lack of experience and knowledge of the subjects they teach. Most of the trainers had no previous job experience before joining the Institute. Neither does the Institute have adequate staff to pay close attention to each and every trainee. Further, the Institute has very limited means to provide further training to these women who might qualify for advanced

placement in their vocations. The Institute, however, expects that quality of work will improve substantially as their staff gains experience and their organization matures.

The Institute is now in its third year. Its programs have expanded substantially since its inception. It has come into existence at a difficult time of the nation's history to deal with tragic and emergency needs. In spite of its initial problems, it has flourished. Now that its building phase is over, it can stabilize its activities. In future years it has plans to expand further so that more clients can be trained. However, its resources are meager whether one is speaking of finances, equipment, office space, teaching staff or to satisfy the need of women. Therefore, although it has demonstrated its usefulness and ability, it seems unlikely that it will be able to meet further demands on it unless more resources are allocated. Most of all, it needs more time to stabilize its programs.

The Institute has had to restrict its efforts to the need for rehabilitating specific groups of clients, i.e., war affected and economically distressed women in and around the city of Dacca. Beyond its short-term goals to help them, its objective is a long-term solution to the problem within the realm of the socio-economic environment present in the country. Its emphasis is to equip women with vocational training so that they are able to gain economic security.

The programs are ingeniously designed and adequately integrated to provide a meaningful approach toward women's development. The integration of training, production, marketing and supporting services, including job referral services, is unique as well as effective. Even though the resources are meager, size and scope are limited, demands are overwhelming and difficulties are many, the Institute presents a

successful model for women's development. The Institute is fortunate to have had total cooperation and backing from inside and outside which has encouraged the efforts. There appears to have been absolute understanding among the staff and the trainees who have worked sincerely for the program. One finds a dedication among them, as if they are working toward a cause, even beyond that of the program's achievements.

#### THE CENTRAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN'S REHABILITATION

The Central Organization for Women's Rehabilitation (COWR) was organized immediately after the emergence of Bangladesh to specifically deal with women war victims. The most immediate need was to locate those victims to provide appropriate medical treatment and to provide shelter to those who were destitute. A second step was to arrange for their rehabilitation. The COWR was formed in 1972. It is a private voluntary organization run by an Executive Committee of 21 founding members. The members are all women, coming from varied walks of life and well-known in their respective professions. Besides the Executive Committee there are 25 general members. Both executive and general members work on a voluntary basis.

The Executive Committee controls the general planning policy and makes administrative decisions. The daily office-making budget and implementation of policy decision lies with the members of the organization, deputed by the social welfare Inservice Training Institute of the Government. The Incharge of the COWR serves as the Secretary of the Executive Committee. The members are divided into several functional groups or subcommittees, i.e., program development, maintenance, health assistance and public relations.

The initial funding was provided by the national and international agencies through cash and contributions. The Serve the Children Federation of Sweden donated taka 1.5 million and International Quaker Service provided five thousand taka. The Bangladesh Red Cross donated nine thousand taka in addition to clothing and food. While the World Council of Churches and SAVE of India provided clothes, sewing machines, goods and other items. In addition, many other organizations and people

offered contributions and cooperation. The Government of Bangladesh provided two houses, transport vehicles and monthly grants of ten thousand taka in addition to personnel deputed to the organization. The initial expenditures were very heavy; however, the costs were reduced when the initial phase was over. At present, the operating expenses of COWR are covered by the monthly grant received from the government, some outside donations and the sale of its products. The different branches which were established by the COWR in the outside districts and subdivisions were later taken over by the National Board of Women's Rehabilitation Programs; that also helped in bringing down the expenditures.

Great amounts of time were consumed and laborious organizational efforts were made to achieve these broad human objectives, which left little scope for emphasizing training programs. Gradually they were able to establish different kinds of educational and training programs suited to their needs and objectives. For more professional and functional programs the COWR turned to other institutions to which it sent its clients to obtain training. Other institutions could dissociate themselves from clients' personal problems and concentrate on training.

Besides 46 voluntary women workers, of which 21 are Executive Committee members, there are six advisors (engineers, doctors, etc.) who help the organization through occasional specialized professional advice. For conducting the mainstream of activities, there are 19 staff members, most of whom are trainees of the Social Welfare In-Service Institute deputed to COWR. Very few permanent workers were appointed by the organization. The staff work is under the super-

vision of the director. Of the 19 staff, 10 have less than high school education, 2 have high school diplomas, 3 have a year or more of college, and 4 have specialized training in social welfare. All but six have less than three years of experience in any job of this nature. The salary of the largest group, which includes 14 staff members, is Taka 100-300. Three received salaries between Taka 300-500 and only one has a salary more than Taka 500. Almost all workers in the organization are women. Whereas the committee members come from very high strata of society, upper class and upper-middle class, the staff are from middle and poor classes. Significantly, the class and voluntary characteristics, along with their sheer number, give the 21 Executive Committee members dominant weight in the organizational decision-making and activities. Their missionary zeal and enthusiasm is looked upon with respect and deference.

The composition of the participants has changed with time. The organization was formed first to render emergency help to the war-affected destitute women. Clientele criteria, therefore, were quite specific. After the emergency phase was over, the organization shifted its focus to other economically destitute women. Such uprooted women are very poor and without anyone to support them. The present way of getting participants is through referrals by other institutions and agencies.

The participants come in all ages, most of them are illiterates. Some are semi-literate, but all are very poor. In 1973, there were 150 clients; in 1974, there were 50. Almost none of the clients had any profession or vocation to provide support for themselves. When they came to the organization, they were given accommodations, food, general education and specialized training for a vocation according

to their aptitude. The clients interviewed invariably expressed frustration and a shakey morale. However, they expressed gratitude for being at the COWR Center, and were enthusiastic about attaining vocational training and becoming self-supporting.

The content of the program was developed according to the needs and interests of the women. Most of the courses center on areas where the women have a background of experience. The courses were divided into two groups -- one for the girls who have preliminary education (education up to matriculation) and another for those who are illiterate.

For the literate group, the program encouraged training in shorthand, typing, nursing and child care. But the organization does not have the facilities for all this technical training, so most often it refers the clients who need to take training in nursing and child care to the local hospitals or maternity centers of either governmental or non-governmental agencies. For the secretarial science courses, it refers the participants to the Career Institute. Its own emphasis is on organizing training courses for the illiterate and poor women who lack any skill or previous training. The training for the illiterate and semi-literate involves:

1. Training in domestic services.

The COWR organizes a domestic service training program for women who are shelterless and extremely poor, so that they can become efficient in good housekeeping. The course does not require much technical skill and can be easily learned by women who wish to accept housekeeping jobs. The COWR also maintains a job referral service to place them in different agencies and private families.

2. Food Service, confectionary and food preservation training

Women are given training on how to run a cafeteria by themselves. They not only manage the cafeteria but also service orders from various public and private

agencies. This is a profit-making program. In addition, women are also taught about simple methods of food preservation, spice grinding and confectionary production.

3. Tailoring, sewing and cloth-cutting training.

Women are encouraged to learn sewing, cloth cutting and tailoring. At the time of the interview by the investigator about 20 women were taking such training under the guidance of a professional teacher. Raw materials for all such training are supplied by the organization. Nominal wages are given to the trainees for producing finished products. The Center, however, needs more sewing machines to accommodate more trainees.

4. Vegetable gardening, poultry farming and flower arranging.

These projects are new and completely on an experimental basis. Furthermore, they cater to a small segment of the participants.

5. Adult functional literacy program.

The COWR conducts adult literacy classes in such functional areas as health, nutrition food habits, and family planning in order to improve the living standards of the individual families. In these classes, simple reading and writing of vernacular are taught to the illiterate and some advanced reading and writing are taught to those who have some formal education. All the women are encouraged to join this program.

6. Handicraft center.

The program also includes handicraft training on different products for which raw materials are available in the local markets: such items as jute products, bamboo products, embroidered bedspreads (Kantha) and other cottage crafts. The trainees in the center make dolls, laces, and jute bags. COWR provides improved designs which result in more marketable products.

7. Children's school.

On the premises of COWR, there is a school for the children of the trainees and those living in a nearby slum area, where 45 children are getting a free education.

#### 8. Sale center.

In order to market the goods produced at the Center by the trainees, COWR has a sales center within its premises. Most of the customers of these shops are either foreigners or middle-class families. Despite the sales through these shops, marketing of products produced at the Center is a big problem for the organization.

The COWR also tries to find jobs for the trained girls on the completion of their vocational training. It extends its boarding facilities to its trainees until they are fully employed by outside organizations.

Demonstration constitutes the major teaching method, although lecture is used frequently. No audio-visual aids are used. Instructional materials include jute and sewing and knitting machines, which are needed for developing practical skills. The courses are taught in the vernacular and almost all the people interviewed mentioned that the instructions are very easy to follow.

The more informal, less structured methods such as personal contacts, demonstrations, small class groups and cooperative work are used with the participants. Trainees get the opportunity for more individualized instruction and are able to learn at their own pace and interest. The participants, during the process of learning, try to share their problems and talk about their experiences and help each other. All of this facilitates a greater sense of community among trainers and trainees. No mass-media or other publicity techniques are used to disseminate information about the program. Hence, many women are not aware that the program exists.

The Central Organization Women's Rehabilitation Committee was started only three years ago and it has passed only the first phase of its program, in which it has tried to rehabilitate the war-affected women on an emergency basis. Since that phase is now over, the

program has begun to put emphasis upon permanent rehabilitation through imparting skills and training to other economically destitute women. The shift to vocational training is still in the beginning stage, but from all indications the response has been encouraging. The participants are aware of the usefulness of what they learn. However, the success of each program can be greatly enhanced if due consideration is given to the particular problems and needs of the participants for which the programs are designed. Family obligations, traditions and social barriers are some of the factors that sometimes prevent women from participating in the programs.

For the future, the program has begun a pilot project at Sonar Gaon, near Dacca, where the government purchased 32.17 acres of land in which another center will be established.

## YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is a world-wide non-government organization with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. It supports various programs throughout the world through funds, advice and materials. It has branches in many countries through which it attempts to advance the well-being of women. Among its major activities it attempts to spread the concept of 'life-long education, help women understand their role in life and help them to attain means of economic self-support.

The YWCA in Bangladesh follows the broad charter of the Central YWCA and derives its major policies. It is involved in some novel programs appropriate to the needs of the local community. A Board of Management makes local policy for the organization and controls the administration. A resident representative of the central YWCA acts as program consultant to the local organization and is a member of the Board of Management. The Director, a local woman, heads the staff and implements the Board's decisions.

The organization files reports to the Board, World YWCA, Ministry of Social Welfare and its donors. It also publicizes its activities through various international publications to raise funds from overseas. The organization's budget is attained mainly through grants and donations. Currently its major funding source is World YWCA which provides a grant every year in cash and kind. In 1972-73 it granted Taka 116,000. During its first years, a German organization called BREAD provided donations of Taka 220,000 annually, to support the activities of the YWCA. Besides that, it has received donations from local patrons and earned income from rent and a craft center. Its annual budget of about

a quarter of a million taka is allocated to different programs and is fully financed through the above sources.

Its purpose is to help women who want to help themselves. It, therefore, offers education, vocational training, spiritual guidance and recreational activities so that they can be self-reliant. It provides residential and medical facilities to uprooted women, arranges training programs for attaining certain skills and helps find jobs for them.

The Director administers the programs and has 12 staff members. One has a high school certificate; the rest have had further special training in their respective vocations. Their salaries range from Taka 100 to Taka 750 per month. Besides the paid staff, there are volunteer workers and a program consultant of the World YWCA, all of whom are foreigners. They provide advice on program design and implementation. While the staff members, in general, have no previous experience of running an organization like this, they are trying to manage it as smoothly as possible. Accounts and records are kept properly and rules are followed strictly. The experience of the program consultant is very helpful.

The trainees are poor and needy women. Sixty per cent of them come from poor families, while the rest are middle class. Participants are accepted through a selection process in which their abilities, experience and needs are judged. Compared to other organizations, the YWCA provides more attention to young and unmarried women.

Most of them are illiterate. They have an average family of five members with an average income of less than Taka 300 per month. They are attracted by the opportunity to earn-while-training. In the long run, they want to learn a vocation so they can earn some income, but

also they are interested in earning something right now.

The participant works as a trainee and is given a nominal wage rate -- less than one Taka per hour. The wage rate increases as she becomes more skilled. These payments are designed to provide incentive for learning as well as to help relieve economic distress.

The program includes the following major components:

1. Nurses aide training
2. Handicraft center
3. Hostel accommodation for working girls
4. Recreational program
5. Children's club
6. Vegetable gardening
7. Poultry raising

The nurses aide program is a one-year training program designed for illiterate or semi-literate women. The syllabus adopted for the training is approved by the government and is taught in cooperation with Holy Family Hospital. Graduates of the program are in demand in hospitals and nursing homes. A group of women, previously trained in mid-wifery but finding fewer job opportunities in that, they have joined the nursing program. Fifty girls have been trained so far.

In the Handicraft Center, they make and sell different hand-made products. As jute is a locally available raw material and the finished products have local and foreign market, the YWCA gives much emphasis to jute work. The economic incentives also create much interest among the participants for seeking training in jute work. Forty participants are receiving training in the center on earn-as-you-train basis. The YWCA has a sales shop in the center which makes retail sales. It also exports to foreign countries.

Vegetable gardening and poultry raising are new programs and are still in the experimental stage. Hostel accommodations, recreational programs and the children's club are facilities normally pro-

vided for members, but they are shared with participants of the special new programs. Hostel facilities have made it possible for the participants to pursue training and work on the job. The organization provides good medical care for the participants and, when necessary, it even provides funds for needy patients.

In addition to the above programs, the participants are offered academic courses, such as language (English and Bengali), religious teachings and general education.

Initially, newspaper advertisements and personal contacts brought the participants to the YWCA. Now that its activities are better known, there is a continual supply of would-be participants. The training is given in a simple manner through the vernacular, with heavy emphasis on demonstration and practice. Lectures are kept to a minimum and are always accompanied by a demonstration. Nurses aide training involves some theoretical lectures, while handicraft training is almost totally practical. Training sessions are held five days with a total of 30 hours a week.

The equipment and materials (e.g., sewing machines, jute, cotton, and thread) are procured locally. The YWCA wants to import some equipment from abroad in order to produce higher quality goods and to increase their export sales.

The program has limited capacity. Thirty girls are trained as nurses aides and 40 are trained in the craft center at a time. All the nurses who have passed the courses have found employment in the hospitals. The trained crafts women are earning commissions on products sold through the center.

This particular YWCA program started only three years ago, but has grown rapidly. The moral, material and personal support that it

is receiving from its parent body has helped it to stabilize. Some of the programs, based upon trial-error experimentation have been phased out because of limited employment opportunities.

The program has been well received, and it is hoped that it will continue to expand. It is anticipated that there will be some shifts in courses offered, as the needs and demands change.

#### THE SRIJANI HANDICRAFT CENTER

The Srijani Handicraft Center was founded in 1972 in Dacca, as a voluntary non-profit organization by a group of concerned women. The organization aimed at helping economically distressed women of poor and middle-class families, through imparting simple skills that would be useful in augmenting their meager family income with extra earning. The center maintained that acquiring such skills would help the women to become less dependent. The organization sought to train women in skills that would not disturb their primary responsibilities as mothers and housewives in the family.

The objectives of the organization are to provide training in making quality handicrafts to promote marketing of the finished products, and to organize workers' cooperatives with other trained groups, so that they can utilize the facilities jointly. The center is operated by a staff of 12 persons, of whom 5 are salaried employees. A Board of Directors make policy decisions and actually help in running the organization. The initial funding of the center was received from an international organization named "War on Wants." Later it received material donations from several other institutions including the government. It was expected that such funds would provide wherewithall

for bearing the training costs, a part of which also could be defrayed from the profits earned by the center. The initial funds have been exhausted, and the sales have not risen as expected. The organization is presently facing a severe financial problem.

The participants in the programs are chosen from women of poor and lower middle-income classes. Most of them have little or no formal education. Many of them are war-affected and have virtually no means of support. The participants come from both urban and rural areas. During 1972, around 500 women received training in various aspects of handicrafts. They earned wages during the training period based upon the number of completed items. After the training period some worked for the center by taking orders at home or made private arrangements to market their products. In most cases, the market demand has not risen enough to keep them busy with sufficient orders. The center has tried to promote the sale of products in and outside the country.

Instead of setting up a central training institute which would offer programs, the center initiated an approach of establishing training in different places. Wherever trainee groups could be organized the center recognized that a centralized institute would demand trainees gather at a place which might be far from home and may upset family responsibilities; besides, there would be commuting costs. This might discourage the needy and interested participant from coming forward and joining in a long-term training program. The center, therefore, organizes a training group in a locality and sends training facilities there. The local organizers selected from the group undertake the responsibilities of organizing the training program. The center provides the training as well as bears the costs of training materials. The training program runs for six months and about 12 to 15

hours a week.

The following skills are taught:

- a. garment stitching and hand-knitting
- b. jute embroidery and jute work
- c. batik work on cloth and leather
- d. other leather work
- e. embroidery
- f. cane and bamboo work

Initially, the trainees learn how to make simple items. When individuals master this level of efficiency they are encouraged to learn more sophisticated and intricate designs and skills. The training is imparted through practical demonstrations using simple equipment.

After the training period, individuals are encouraged to join cooperatives and the other trained members. The cooperatives keep close contact with the center. The center has a big shop to market the products made in the cooperatives. It also exports some products outside the country.

During 1972-73, thirteen new training centers were opened at various places. Of these, four were in the capital city of Dacca and four in villages in the outskirts. Five other training centers have been opened in another district, named Kushtia. In each of these centers a minimum of 20 trainees have received training each year.

The program encourages active participation of the residents of that local community. It works closely with local volunteers and leaders of the community. The teachers are either salaried staff of the Srijani Handicraft Center or volunteer workers.

The programs of the center emphasize the economic improvement of the distressed women, through acquiring skills.

If the funding problem could be solved, the program would expand. Even though it does not completely satisfy needs of educating dis-

ressed women, it has enabled participants to earn extra income. The linkage established between the trainees and the center through workers' cooperatives is a step toward a solution. It is difficult to assess the total worth of these programs, since it has not been in existence long enough to make judgments.

CHAPTER III  
GENERAL FEATURES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION  
IN BANGLADESH

In this chapter attention is focused on the general and universal features that emerge from the case studies just presented. It is not our intention to evaluate or criticize activities of these organizations. Instead an attempt is made simply to understand the conditions under which they work and the approaches they have adopted to achieve their objectives. The purpose here, then, is to describe the pattern that is emerging from the activities of these organizations in the area of non-formal education.

The dominant purpose of each of the post-war programs was, initially, to rescue and rehabilitate war-affected women. In 1972 and 1973, the organizations were mostly concerned with that one mission. However, as the emergency phase passed, the organizations turned to new and more long-range objectives.

The new objectives of the organizations are to uplift the socio-economic status of women, especially those who are most economically and educationally disadvantaged, to provide means of self-reliance and self-confidence and to offer opportunities for becoming economically self-supporting. To achieve these objectives the organizations created centers for training and education. It was apparent that formal schooling would not solve the problems of the women who need immediate economic accommodation. Therefore, these non-formal education programs have been laid out as one means of providing adequate training for useful vocations.

The process of women's emancipation is now being undertaken in a practical, down-to-earth manner by directly attacking the root of the problem.

The objectives set by different organizations are strikingly similar both in purpose and in target. In the process of gaining national liberation the mood of the country was extremely favorable to any effort to alleviate the distress of the war-affected women.

The organizations studied are private or quasi-governmental institutions. In general, each organization has a board or executive committee for developing policy and an administrative officer for running the organization. The board or the committee generally is composed of well-known, eminent persons representing several walks of life. In each case the administrative officer who runs the day-to-day offices of the organization is responsible to the board. The administrative head is a member of the Board and serves as liaison between the Board and the staff.

The boards are independent bodies so far as the organizations are concerned. They may make independent policy decisions in order to achieve their stated objectives. However, the organizational activities are overseen by the financing authorities, some of them located outside the country, and by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare of the government. The sponsoring agencies receive annual reports and statements.

The financing of the organizations comes from grants, donations and, to a very small extent, from sales of products produced in the centers. The government bears a large share of the financial responsibility and other national and international philanthropic agencies make contributions--both in cash and in kind. Private donations are

meager. The contributions from international sources were heavy during the emergency period. This helped substantially to generate the activities. These sources are now providing less support. This has resulted in financial crises in some organizations.

In such cases, either the government is increasing its grants or the programs are being reduced.

Obviously a constant and stable source of funds is needed for the stability of the organizational activities. Without that an organization can neither pursue nor expand its activities, nor can long-term growth be projected. Lack of funds may weed out some organizations and the government alone cannot continue full funding for long.

Besides some volunteer workers, who mainly work on the boards or executive committees, the administrative staffs consist primarily of salaried women. Whereas the committee members come from the high strata of the society--upper and upper-middle class -- the staff generally come from middle and lower classes. Heads of the organization are usually highly qualified. Frequently, they have graduate degrees in some branch of social science and some of them have administrative experience. About half of the staff members have college degrees. The rest, generally, have secondary school education and special training in respective vocations. Many of the staff members do not have any previous experience in the work which they presently do, but they are capable and adapting quite ably. Their salaries are not very high, but are competitive. Many are not happy about their salaries, but most expressed satisfaction in their work which they think is for a good cause.

It is apparent that neither highly educated persons nor certificate holders are essentially required, as many think, for carrying out the non-formal education. Trainers can be non-degree holders and

still be effective. For the kinds of activities that they run, the trainers' ability, experience and soundness are more necessary than the degree.

There is a problem of finding experienced trainers for some of the specialized vocations, especially with new kinds of vocations. In such cases, help is sought from international agencies and foreign consultants.

The profile of such a group has been observed to have the following general characteristics; they fall in the broad age group of 20-35 years; they come from middle or poor class families; they are mostly illiterate or semi-literate; they have, or come from, large families, with few or no earning members; they feel an economic crunch, and they are eager to learn a skill which would help them financially. This clientele group has long been latent due to many socio-economic factors, but are now coming forward to attain means of economic uplift. Although primarily there had been need as well as interest among them, there were no opportunities available to them.

Most of those who have completed their training were able to find employment either in the centers, private industry or piece work at home. They needed help from the organizations for their placement and, in fact, the organizations felt an obligation to find opportunities for the trainees to work. Ready-made markets do not, however, exist for all the fields in which the organizations offered training, and so the organizations have undertaken market promotion programs. The organizations, however, serve only a miniscule part of this newly acknowledged population. The limited resources of these private organizations cannot cope with the emergent demand among the prospective participants. More and more women are now approaching the organ-

izations for training opportunities. The interest has arisen not just for becoming literate, but for learning a vocation which would help them in finding employment. Therefore, it emerges that this group, which represents a very large part of the population and which has not been reached by the formal educational system, has now been motivated for participation in need fulfilling non-formal educational programs.

The programs, in general, include two forms of non-formal education—adult literacy education and vocational training. Only a few organizations, however, attempted to provide both forms of program. All the programs have been designed with the target group in mind, and the selection of the participants generally followed set criteria. Uneducated or semi-literate participants are taken in for the elementary vocational training programs, while semi-literate and educated women are recommended for higher vocational training programs. Adult literacy education is provided to all participants who need it. Criteria for selection of the participants do not emphasize educational background so much as the ability, interest, experience and needs of the participants.

Training fields offered by the organization appear to meet the following criteria: (1) are economy oriented, having effective demand in the market for the training or for the products to be produced; (2) require little further literacy level than the participants presently possess; (3) utilize locally available tools and raw materials; (4) are skill enhancing and simple to grasp; (5) do not conflict directly with existing socio-economic norms; and (6) preserve duality in women's role as earner.

The several programs are strikingly similar in nature and content. This is quite observable in the areas of vocational training, e.g.,

handicraft, cottage crafts, jute products, sewing, gardening, etc. It is also the case with more advanced vocational training, e.g., secretarial practice, typewriting, nurses aides and mechanics. The more elementary vocational programs are more production oriented and home based, while the more advanced programs are employment oriented.

Content of the courses is generally determined by the individual organizations. There are no common syllabi for most vocational training courses. For the advanced vocational fields, approved syllabi are required in order to maintain the certification standards. It should be noted that the courses do not emphasize high skill and advanced methods, which many participants expect and are hoping to get. As a result there is sometimes a discrepancy between what the participants want and what the organizations offer. For as soon as the participants acquire what the organization has to offer, they want more so that they can compete more effectively in the market. However, the organizations are not prepared, at this moment, to offer more advanced training. Instead the organizations advise the participant to learn basics and to practice them at home to attain more skill and efficiency.

Under the functional adult literacy programs, general topics that are taught are family planning, health, nutrition and sanitation, home development and, of course, literacy. They are useful, as well as effective, when offered as a supplement to the vocational training program. It also was observed that participants' interest and attendance drop when adult literacy is provided solely as an individual program without being attached to other kinds of training programs. The content and methods in adult literacy courses tend to be stereotyped and non-exciting. For better performance and effectiveness the content and methods should be improved.

Apart from the training programs, some organizations are involved in some supplementary programs that facilitate women's participation, e.g., medical care, hostel facilities, day care centers, production and sales centers, and placement referral services. Some organizations also pay wages or stipends to the participants.

The organizations are involved in both training and promotional activities, which make their work quite demanding. The most difficult area is that of marketing the products and finding earning opportunities for the trainees without which the total program might be doomed. Many of the products the participants train to produce are non-essential, luxury items for which the local demand is limited. However, promotional activities can substantially increase their demand both in and outside the country.

Simple vernacular is used in the training programs which makes communication easy for the participant. Emphasis is placed on demonstration and practice rather than on lecture, which is kept minimal. The participants indicated complete satisfaction in understanding the teachers and no communication problems were observed.

Since the training has to be imparted through work and demonstration, a variety of equipment, tools and raw materials have to be used. Most of the tools and raw materials were locally produced and purchased. Some have been donated by international agencies. These generally are not very sophisticated, nor very modern. As participants are accustomed to such tools, they feel confident in handling them. The primitive nature of the tools, though, has restricted the efficiency and competition in the market; yet it is not possible to modernize at this stage.

The organizations face problems in supplying the training materials. Due to inflation, materials are costly as well as scarce. The

organizations have to use much of their budgets to procure the materials without which training would suffer. Many organization have had to curtail their supplies and limit the program because of the paucity of money and materials.

#### SUMMARY

The organizations studied are only a few years old. They have not yet fully stabilized. Some programs are still in experimental stages. In spite of all the difficulties the organizations are facing, the interest among the organizers as well as the participants is quite assuring. The participants feel that they are being benefited through the programs, while the organizations find that their objectives are being achieved. Both parties now realize that there are alternatives to formal schooling to help solve problems of distressed women.

Although programs are experimental in nature, limited in scope and size, and crude in methods, the important thing is that a movement has started.

## CHAPTER IV

### TRENDS IN EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This chapter endeavors to examine non-formal education in the light of past and present experiences. The attempt is not to finalize conclusions but to show trends, which we think may help in providing insights into the non-formal education movement in Bangladesh.

The organizational movement for women's development can be delineated by two very precise time periods--pre-war and post-war. During the liberation war in 1971 the movement was at a complete standstill. The pre-war era started from the late fifties during which attempts were made by upper or upper-middle class women to form voluntary organizations. The purpose was mainly to create a base for women's emancipation through get-togethers, social and cultural functions and such other pastime activities. A few attempts were made by these organizations to offer some non-formal education programs for the economically disadvantaged women as part of their total activities. Such programs were generally planned and imposed by the advantaged class of women upon the disadvantaged group, irrespective of their needs and interest, and very frequently for charity purposes. Such efforts were generally isolated, urban based, uncoordinated and relatively insignificant.

Nevertheless, these efforts by organization in the pre-war period had some accomplishments. They were the forerunners of women's emancipation and began the intrusion of women's activities, slowly and steadfastly, into the country's inhibiting socio-political and economic

fabric. They brought in the concepts of self-support, organization and non-formal education. The programs, however, inadequate as they were, instituted a learning process which helped immensely in the latter days. In sum, these efforts prepared a basic structure, thin and inconspicuous yet viable, before the war broke out.

The war was devastating, as war always is. It dealt a severe blow to the women's population in Bangladesh. It was not the economic consequences alone, but also the social consequences, that made the blow especially severe. In an environment where morality of women is assiduously guarded, literally within the four walls, one may understand how it would be affected by the dark side of war in which women are violated, made homeless, supportless and destitute.

At this unfortunate juncture of national history, the people suddenly came face to face with the stark reality that the social norms which had protected women for centuries, could also render them defenseless, dependent and vulnerable. The realization was coupled with an upsurge of conviction that the advantaged should have an interest in helping the disadvantaged to become independent.

We emphasize this aspect of new social consciousness. It engulfed the country's socio-political mood in the post-war era and created a turning point in the women's movement. The efforts started as emergency measures with complete social, political and economic backing to help the war-affected women. But, by the time the emergency phase was over, the organizational network had become deeply rooted and various long-range programs were underway for the rehabilitating of destitute women. The supporting mood was effectively captured by leaders in the women's development movement to launch broadbased programs for the general mass of economically disadvantaged women.

Thus, the post-war period, though very short, to date has produced far more activities, ideas and future plans than the entire pre-war era.

In the post-war period there is clear identification of needful-filling objectives and target groups, and a heavy emphasis upon organization, non-formal education, and economic programs for achieving the objectives. There are concerted efforts by the organizations to consolidate the approaches as well as to expand the programs so as to reach a larger portion of the target population.

More specifically:

1. A shift is taking place in identifying the target groups. Early post-war targets were war-affected women, but targets now include all economically disadvantaged classes of women--irrespective of class, literacy level or other factors. In the process the goals are being specified more objectively. However, the efforts have been mainly urban based, and very little effort has been made to reach rural women who constitute the largest mass of the population. Indications are that increasing attention is now being given to this neglected area.
2. Women's development is increasingly being pursued as a matter of public policy. While the role of voluntary organizations is still considered important, quasi-governmental organizations and agencies are being established or provide more concerted efforts with government backing. Their efforts are extensive, involve wide coverage networks, have big and advanced programs, and provide support to both official and voluntary organizations. Unlike pre-war voluntary organizations, they are well funded and have better facilities and programs. As a result quasi-governmental organizations and agencies have become more prominent in the field than voluntary organizations.

3. An important problem, however, is that of funds and funding sources. As long as funds are substantial, as they were during the emergency phase, the activities were numerous. Now that such funds flow, especially from outside the country, are being dried up, some of the efforts are beginning to subside. The situation is especially serious in the voluntary organizations which depend upon grants and donations. International organizations which received such funding grow quite fast. As such sources withdraw their funding, voluntary organizations will be hard pressed, and the activities will be affected.

Although government is increasing its contribution to such organizations in order to keep them alive, there are limitations as to what the government can do. Quasi-government organizations and agencies are in better shape.

On the other hand, non-formal education programs are costly if the entire cost has to be subsidized. Product sales can contribute to defray the cost of materials required for training and to provide economic incentives to the participants. The organizations are trying to develop business-oriented production centers so that they can be at least partially self-financing. Such models, however, have not been fully developed as yet.

4. There is heavy emphasis upon non-formal education as an approach for women's development. This approach has been found to be effective, particularly for this inhibiting environment. By observing the enthusiasm and program outlay, it appears that this approach will be intensified in the future.

The content and methods, however, tend to be traditional. This is not all bad, because it helps with the whole process of communication and

learning. A few organizations have, very cautiously, started experimentation for alternatives. The basic theme of such experiments is to evolve ways and means that are suitable for the local condition and still efficient. It appears that it will take a long time before such transformation is achieved.

5. There seems to be a lack of coordination among organizations and programs. This permits misuse of resources, duplication of efforts, ineffectiveness and inefficiency. This appears to be more true in cases of voluntary organizations than of quasi-governmental organizations or agencies. No serious move has yet been made to alleviate this problem. Also there is, as yet, no strong evaluation of program effectiveness which is necessary for growth.

In conclusion, the post-war period is one during which major steps have been taken to advance the cause of women's development. The period is too short and evaluations are too few to measure the real value of the programs. Much enthusiasm and major efforts have been put into these programs. Yet considering the deep-rooted problems and severe limitation in resources and approaches, it would be sheer over-optimism to think that a tide of women's development will sweep through the country in the next few years. Very bold steps have been made in this direction by voluntary, official and quasi-governmental agencies. In these efforts it has become apparent that non-formal education is a means of dealing with a complex set of serious social problems, whether those problems are concerned in terms of personal tragedy, post-war national emergency, or long-range requirements for social and economic development.

## CHAPTER V

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