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THE BANGLADESH DEMOCRACY PROGRAM (BDP) ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT

Bureau for Private Enterprise
U.S. Agency for International Development

Prepared for: *USAID/Bangladesh*
and
Bureau for Asia
Democratic Affairs and Special Issues Branch

Prepared by: *Dr. Harry W. Blair*
Prof. Dilara Choudhury
Dr. Raymond D. Gastil (team leader)
Dr. William L. Richter

Sponsored by: *Private Enterprise Development Support Project II*
Project Number 940-2028.03
Contract Number PDC-2028-Z-00-7186-00
Prime Contractor: Coopers & Lybrand

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Executive Summary

The Bangladesh Democracy Program (BDP) should be a Mission-wide effort to support Bangladesh's current democratic opening. The program places primary emphasis on strengthening the central institutions of parliamentary democracy at the national level. Selecting this priority results from an examination of the historical background of recent political events, the nature of the major political actors in the current political scene, and of the performance of the present regime.

Bangladesh has had very limited experience of effective democratic rule. Colonial bureaucratic and military institutions have persisted into the post-colonial period with 'little change. Since the founding of Pakistan, the middle classes of what is now Bangladesh have regarded the inherited parliamentary system as the only legitimate form of government, even though they have not been given the opportunity to live under democratic systems for any significant period of time. Even after achieving independence from Pakistan, the elected government ruled democratically for no more than a short period before it too began denying democratic rights. Subsequent coups and counter-coups produced a semidemocratic period of military rule; the assassination of the military president in 1981 led to yet another period of military rule. But during these periods political party activity continued, and elections were held, albeit not free and fair. After another groundswell of protest, the Ershad regime was finally overthrown in 1990 and another opening for democracy created.

The gulf between the people as a whole and the politically significant population remains very deep even under the new democracy. Numerically, perhaps 80% of Bangladeshis live in rural areas, the vast majority of them at or just above subsistence levels. However, the politically decisive part of the population lives in urban areas. In these areas, only those of the middle and upper classes take an active part in initiating political change or in sustaining regimes once in power. Comparatively well-organized urban lower middle class government employees, workers, and students also play an important political role, but their role is essentially confined to expressing dissent, often in support for other middle class actors.

The primary contenders for political power are the triad of government, bureaucracy, and the military, groups whose upper levels are all recruited from the middle classes. When the democratic system is operating, the elected government is theoretically dominant. This government depends in turn on the operation of the cabinet, the parliament and particularly of its own majority party. Changing electoral fortunes continually alter the composition of the government. The bureaucracy, on the other hand, has had a continuous existence under all regimes. In the absence of strong and decisive action by either of the other primary contenders, it is in de facto control. Unlike the situation in the rest of the subcontinent, the Bangladesh military has come to power less frequently as a corporate institution than through the actions of particular factions.

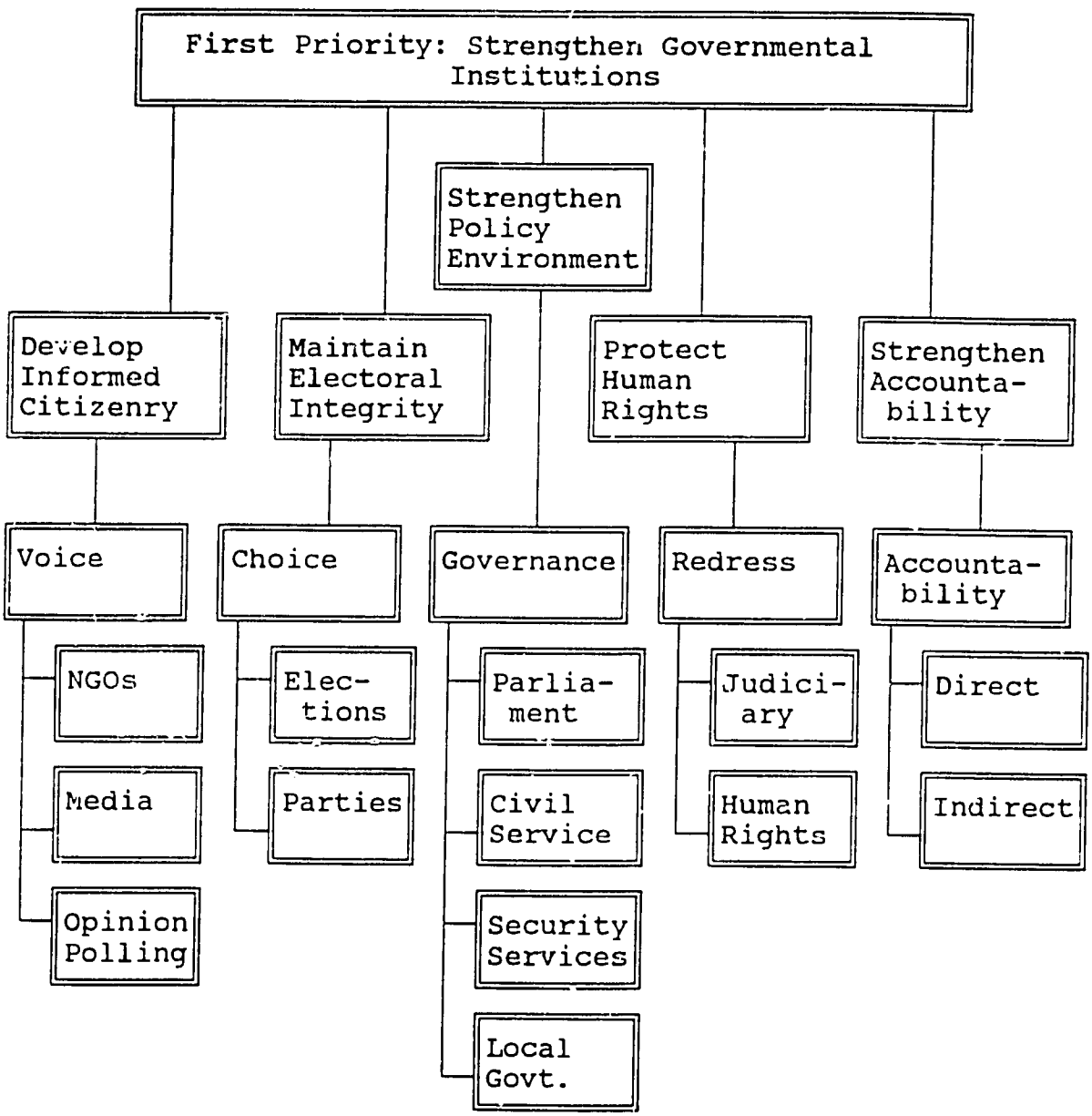
Analysis of the operation of the present political system demonstrates several weaknesses. The political parties, the government, and the bureaucracy seem unable to work together effectively to address common problems. These problems, the past record of political instability, and the still incomplete acceptance of democracy as the only solution for the country's problems, suggest that the democratic institutions of 1992 are a fragile growth that will need to be nurtured if they are to survive.

The team determined that assessing such operational problems at the heart of the national political system is vital. The team also concludes that the major addressable problem was the inexperience of people within the government, legislature, and bureaucracy as they try to operate within the new environment. For this reason two levels of priority are attached to suggested actions. *First priority* concerns include all those actions that will directly contribute to strengthening major national institutions. Chief among these should be efforts to provide training and orientation to legislators and members of government, and to improve the policy-making capability of both government and opposition. *Second priority* actions are those that would address other deficiencies that impact on democratic performance. These include maintaining the integrity of elections, strengthening accountability mechanisms, protecting human rights, and developing a more informed and active citizenry.

The following Figure 1 outlines the BDP strategy. Specific recommendations are included in Part IV of the report and outlined in Figure 2 at the end of that section.

FIGURE 1

BANGLADESH DEMOCRACY PROGRAM



I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 was fought in the name of democracy and self-rule. Bengalis had tried for a long time to achieve a democratic order, and their struggle culminated in the establishment of an independent country. However, democracy remained elusive, for reasons which are rooted in the history and culture of the country.

Bangladesh has been subjected to authoritarian rule longer than any of the other three former British colonies of South Asia. During the Pakistan period between 1947 and 1971 the country was under Generals Ayub and Yahya Khan for 13 of 24 years. Moreover, Pakistani rule came increasingly to be seen as alien as well as authoritarian. After 1971, military rulers continued to dominate the politics of Bangladesh for three-fourths of the period since Independence -- six years under General Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981) and nine under General H. M. Ershad (1982-1990). Even periods of civilian government -- Pakistan in the 1950s and Bangladesh in the early 1970s -- were in many respects more authoritarian than democratic.

Yet Bangladesh continued to be an "anticipatory democracy." Its urban classes firmly believed that the country should be democratic and regarded exceptions to democracy as aberrations. Bangladeshis "knew" themselves to be democratic in a way that other peoples did not. This resolute belief sustained their political understanding of the world through the various authoritarian regimes and facilitated the return to democracy that began with the ouster of General Ershad in late 1990. Even now this faith helps to maintain the honeymoon period that the present government enjoys.

A. An Authoritarian Tradition

The British colonial legacy can be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, the British introduced an imperial authoritarian system which penetrated to the bottom

tier of the society and destroyed whatever rudimentary democratic forms might have existed, such as village panchayats. On the other, British political ideas and representative institutions were introduced, including provincial elections.

British colonial rule had a different impact in Bengal than in the rest of the subcontinent. Due to the land tenure system and socioreligious patterns, the predominantly Muslim people of East Bengal remained politically marginal until the 1930s when economic deprivation at the hands of predominantly Hindu landlords prompted their active support of the Pakistan movement.

Independence from Britain in 1947 brought disappointment. Independent Pakistan was dominated by immigrants from India (Muhajirs) who were based in West Pakistan and were insensitive either to democratic elections or to the interests of the East Pakistanis. The language movement (to make Bengali a second national language alongside Urdu), beginning in 1948, and the East Pakistan provincial election in 1954 registered a growing Bengali consciousness. Pakistan finally adopted a Constitution in 1956, but martial law was imposed in 1958, before democratic national elections could be held. The long "Basic Democracy" reign of Ayub Khan during the 1960s kept the democratic impulse tightly throttled through indirect elections and controlled institutions. In 1970 Pakistan's first open national elections were held, but West Pakistan's leaders refused to accept the electoral victory of the East Pakistan-based Awami League, which would have meant a shift of power from the Western to the Eastern wing. Resulting violence led to vicious army repression, civil war, Indian intervention, and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state.

The Pakistan experience left many psychological and political scars. First, the idea of politics as conspiracy was instilled in the minds of many Bengalis. Building upon the Hindu-Muslim tensions and suspicions of an earlier era, people came to identify anyone who had links with West Pakistan as betraying Bengali interests. In the early post-independence period under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1972-1975), similar suspicions would come into play against anyone associated with India. Second, in the absence of effective political institutions, a politics of rhetoric and personality was

established. Political parties and groups developed skills of opposition but not of governing.

Thirdly, the pattern of bureaucratic and military rule that became firmly established in Pakistan served as a model for later developments in Bangladesh. Military leaders repeatedly portrayed themselves as saviors of the nation in times of peril and, along with the bureaucracy, as the only leaders capable of addressing the country's major economic and social problems. Fourth, in the absence of frequent elections or effective mass-based parties, middle-class urban elites came to see themselves as the only body politic that mattered. As long as their interests were protected, many of them were willing to compromise with autocratic rulers. Such paternalistic attitudes, inherited from the British and reinforced during the Pakistan era, have continued to characterize the thinking of the country's elites.

Independence in December 1971 offered a new start, an emancipation with political, economic, and cultural dimensions. The Awami League claimed the right to form the country's first government on the basis of an overwhelming victory in the 1970 elections, and the new government succeeded in establishing a parliamentary democratic constitution in 1972, the most liberal in the history of the subcontinent. But democracy continued to prove elusive. Unfortunately, these events were followed by years of widespread corruption, assassinations, coups, counter-coups, and periods of martial law separated by weak caretaker governments.

Mujib's assassination on 15 August 1975 at the hands of a group of Army majors was followed by a civilian government under Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed, one of Mujib's former cabinet officials. Mushtaque was overthrown by Brig. Khaled Musharraf in November, but then Musharraf himself was toppled four days later by another coup, in large part because he was seen as too pro-India. Real power now lay primarily with the military service chiefs acting as Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrators. Within a few months later the strongest of these, Army Chief General Ziaur Rahman, assumed full power as CMLA, and in April 1976 he assumed

the presidency. He also postponed the parliamentary elections which the interim government had promised.

During the period of Ziaur Rahman, the Constitution was amended to reintroduce a multiparty system, presidential elections were held in 1978 and parliamentary elections conducted in 1979. Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won two-thirds of the parliamentary seats. After Zia's assassination in 1981 in an abortive military coup, Vice President Sattar won election to the Presidency, but the military remained a major political force. Sattar's attempt to reassert civilian control led to another military intervention, this time under General Hossein Muhammad Ershad, who dismissed Sattar and the parliament, and installed a Supreme Court Justice in the presidency. In December 1983 he took over the presidency himself.

Although Ershad enjoyed some popular support, particularly initially when political parties were in disarray, opposition grew, in the form of several multi-party alliances, all calling for an end to martial law and the restoration of political and civil rights. Ershad attempted to civilianize his regime by holding a plebiscite in March 1985, followed by subdistrict-level (Upazila) elections. In 1986, he formally lifted martial law and held parliamentary elections and a presidential election (won by himself).

Widespread fraud in both elections and subsequent attempts by Ershad to legitimize his previous actions further fueled public protest, culminating in anti-government agitation and a crescendo of massive *hartals* in late 1987. The Ershad regime managed to ride out the storm with the support of the military, and Parliamentary elections were again held in 1988, but boycotts by all the major opposition parties resulted in a very low turnout. Despite his attempts to cloak his authoritarian rule in democratic trappings, Ershad was increasingly unable to contain opposition pressures. Public protest grew in 1989, drawing in ever-widening circles of public support in the latter part of 1990, finally toppling him in December of that year. By this time, the opposition had grown to include virtually all the relevant groups in the country, all of whom were able to claim a share of the credit in his downfall. This solidarity helped

the succeeding interim government under Supreme Court Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed see things through until new parliamentary elections could be held in February 1991.

Government in the 1970s and 1980s was surrounded by a miasma of corruption that leached away much of the resource base available to promote growth in an already thin and vulnerable economy. The "soft statism" that evolved in the early 1970s steadily grew worse as the 1980s progressed. Bangladesh's ineffectual regime endeavored to control the economy as well as the polity through a system that featured a centralized bureaucracy, a heavily subsidized and unproductive state sector, a tightly regulated private sector and what amounted to a one party political system. The statist approach fostered corruption, in which "rent seeking" and "crony capitalism" flourished. Potentially troublesome groups were appeased by wage raises and bloated payrolls for government and industrial workers, patronage and pampering for superannuated gangsters masquerading as university students, and large budgets for the military.

B. The Scene Today

Having been an "anticipatory democracy" for so long gave Bangladesh a useful head start, once a free and fair national election was finally held in February 1991. The major political parties had long been hoping for an election, and had considerable experience at mounting national campaigns from previous if abortive efforts over the years. This reservoir of hope and experience proved instrumental in making possible the present democratic opening.

Several factors lay behind this initial democratic success. First, the major parties had well developed agitational capabilities, honed during the numerous democratic disappointments of the Ershad era. The parties had become most effective in mobilizing demonstrations and strikes, and these same talents for organization served them well in the 1991 elections, enabling them to field slates, conduct campaigns and get out the vote. Second, their long exiles in the political wilderness had given the two major parties ample opportunity for each to project a national leader of

considerable stature that could take them through the elections. Today Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed are the only two nationally known figures in Bangladesh, aside from the deposed former president. Finally, the facts that both the major parties had spent so long out of power and that each saw the other rather than the incumbent regime as its principal long-term rival meant that they had evolved a competitive instinct and ability which stood them well during the election process itself.

A number of serious obstacles remain, however, blocking the way to a sustainable democratic political system, among them the very qualities that so effectively propelled the system to democracy when the window of opportunity opened in 1990-91. Agitational ability is not governing ability, nor is a structure well-suited for electioneering necessarily well-suited for actually managing the affairs of the nation. And the competitive instincts that can energize a campaign can obstruct the development of the kind of comity between parties that is required if a democratic structure is to survive.

Representative government, at least in form, has been reestablished, and the nation has once again opted for parliamentary institutions. How to make the system work remains the challenge.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

A. Major Sociopolitical Forces

This brief review of the current socioeconomic context is meant to accomplish three objectives. First, it provides a classification of the country's population into subgroups. In the long run, any democratic support program must seek to bring into the political system the full spectrum of groups included in this listing. Secondly, it defines and considers those subgroups that will play a major role in the success or failure of democracy in Bangladesh in the short term. Finally, the discussion considers the way in which the current political system, founded upon the support of these major "players", is performing, and the dangers that lie ahead if its performance is inadequate.

Socioeconomic Classes or Population Segments

- Rural Poor
- Rural Small Landowners ("Yeomen")
- Rural Gentry and Businessmen
- Urban poor
- Urban lower middle classes and industrialized workers
- Urban Middle and Upper Classes
- Marginalized groups (Adivasis, Hindus, women)

Rural poor. More than fifty percent of Bangladeshis live outside of an urban environment in families that are either landless or own so little land that they must rely on income from farm labor or share cropping to survive. The exact percentage that falls into this group depends on definitions of sharecropping and survival requirements, but precision is not necessary for our purposes. The percentage of people in this class has been growing as population growth has continued and land prices have risen.

Rural small landowners. In the context of Bangladesh's village society, this group (perhaps 20% of the whole) includes all persons who live in families who have sufficient property that they need not work for others to maintain an acceptable standard of life by village standards -- but not so much property that they no longer farm themselves. At the lowest, face-to-face level of organization, village leadership is often recruited from this class.

Rural Gentry and Businessmen. On larger rural holdings, a traditional class of people exists whose family members do not themselves work on their properties, and who may or may not manage their properties. Persons at this level are often also involved in the buying or selling of agricultural produce or in small industry. Some live in small towns or regional cities where they are joined in this class by small traders or industrialists without rural property. This group probably constitutes less than five percent of Bangladesh's population.

Urban poor. Perhaps five to ten percent of the country's population live alone or in families that have drifted into cities and towns in recent years -- driven by the loss of land and employment in the villages, or, in the case of women, by the desertion of a husband. Many become beggars; others subsist on occasional work.

Urban lower middle classes and industrialized workers. Those in families that have found steady nonprofessional or semiprofessional employment in an urban environment make up perhaps another five to ten percent. Occupations may range from primary school teacher to policemen to factory worker. Unlike the urban poor, people in this class tend to be residentially stable and to belong to unions or associations.

Urban middle and upper classes. University students, professionals, modern small businessmen, and managers are some of the categories that belong in the middle classes. In the very small urban upper class are to be found persons at the pinnacle of their professions, large industrialists and traders. There is no autonomous upper class; the few very wealthy are politically a subgroup within the middle class to which

they are closely tied. Within this broad grouping may be found a wide variety of educational and economic levels. All have in common effective literacy and a consuming interest in the world beyond their immediate circle of relatives and economic interests. The liberation movements of the subcontinent have been led by the middle classes and the political parties that have generally expressed their interests. In political terms, the most important members of this class are those who take active roles in political parties, and in particular the major political parties -- as candidates, party workers, or contributors. After "free and fair" elections, the control of the political system is at least formally in their hands.

Marginalized groups. Crosscutting the foregoing classification, but often concentrated among the poorer classes, are minorities that are excluded from the mainstream of the country's life by custom or prejudice. Chief among these groups are the *Hindus*. Unlike the situation in West Pakistan, a large percentage of the country's Hindu minority remained after partition. However, the violence attending Bangladesh's subsequent war of independence, and continued discrimination has led to a reduction of the country's Hindu population to little more than ten percent. Another one percent of Bangladeshis belong to various groups that exist outside either the Hindu or Islamic worlds; collectively they are known as "tribals" or *Adivasis*. The largest concentration of these peoples is in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where a guerrilla struggle against outside intrusion onto their lands continues. Although not a minority, the *women* of Bangladesh are in many respects marginalized. In spite of the existence of a few women professionals and the acceptance of women as the leaders of the two largest political parties (because of kinship ties to the slain leaders of these parties), women at all levels in society are forced to play a subservient role.

Major organized groups or political players

Within the lower middle classes and industrialized workers:

- unions and occupational associations
- lower level bureaucracy

Within the urban middle and upper classes:

- parliament and government (reflecting the political parties)
- upper level bureaucracy
- military: officer corps
- other major elites

Outside the Bangladesh community:

- major international donors

A review of the history of the political events and processes that have facilitated or impeded democracy since partition suggests that people outside the urban middle and upper classes have played a largely passive role, critical neither in the instigation nor the resolution of crises. Members of the rural gentry and rural business class, often connected by kinship or economic linkages with the urban middle classes, have been drawn into national politics tangentially through the extension of urban-based politics. After the fact, these "silent partners" of the urban movement may claim a major role in the political system that emerges -- as they have in 1991-92. Except possibly at the time of the country's independence struggle in 1970-71, the other rural classes seem to have played little role in national or even subdistrict politics either before or after changes of government. The only effective connection of the rural poor has been through the NGOs. Whatever their class, people in the major cities are able through their presence at the centers of power to play a greater role than rural groups. However, outside the middle classes, only the relatively organized worker groups have played more than episodic roles. This pattern of urban, middle class domination of politics is similar to that in most third world countries -- indeed, of all countries as they evolved toward democracy.

Our analysis suggests that the survival of democracy over the next few years will depend largely on the effective support that is given its institutions by *unionized workers*, *parliament and government*, the *upper bureaucracy*, and the *military*, as well

as more generally the middle and upper classes. It will be useful to describe briefly the relation of these groups to the political process as it exists today in Bangladesh. In describing these groups, it must be remembered that there is a great deal of overlap among them. Relationships also extend beyond these groups. In particular, the latter three groupings have many connections with the rural gentry and rural businessmen. Within the middle and upper classes it is also important to recognize the existence of many organized interest groups, such as the chambers of commerce or the NGOs (at elite levels) that seek to influence the system. Beyond this, the international donor community impacts in many ways on the operation of the political system.

Parliament and government (reflecting the political parties). Historically, the triad of power in Bangladesh has been formed by the government, the upper bureaucracy, and the military. In periods of autocratic rule, the government might consist of little more than the ruler and his personally appointed ministers. Under a parliamentary system the government is formed by a subgroup of the elected parliament -- the prime minister and the cabinet. Only on certain issues, such as the definition of member privileges or the relationship of MPs to local districts, are the members of parliament and the government likely to act together as a cohesive body vis-a-vis the other major political players. At other times, the governing parliamentary party and cabinet is forced to balance the other legs of the triad without this broader backing. The lack of deep support for its MPs between elections may reinforce its isolation.

To understand parliament, and ultimately the government that emerges from it, it is necessary to understand the parties from which the members of parliament are recruited. One of the major ways in which the urban middle and upper classes have organized to defend their interests is through the development of political parties. As a group, these parties have united only briefly to bring down autocratic rule. The parties themselves are, in turn, only likely to be united at election time. Aside from such periods, the parties have repeatedly fractionated into smaller and smaller groupings. Historically the parties represent disparate origins. Of the three largest parties, the Awami League has roots that go back nearly to partition. Originally

intensely nationalist and socialist, it remains the best organized of the parties. The BNP and Jatiyo parties were originally creations of Generals Zia and Ershad during their respective periods in power.

Upper Bureaucracy. This group includes for our purposes the gazetted civil servants and the higher levels of the judiciary. Both before and after the end of British colonialism, the bureaucracy has been a decisive factor in the government of the country. More experienced and better educated than most political or military leaders, the upper bureaucrats have only reluctantly divided power with the other players. Although individually members of this group represent a wide range of political positions, the upper bureaucracy appears to be the most internally coherent and predictable of the major players.

Military. The military includes all the uniformed services, with the exception of the police. The historical record suggests that we should be concerned primarily with the officer corps. During much of the Pakistan and Bangladesh periods, the officer corps has seen itself as responsible for the existence and generally for the governing of the society. in the past, small factions or individuals within the officer corps have made serious bids for power. However, it should be noted that as an institution the army has not seized power during the Bangladesh period.

Elements Common to Parliament, Bureaucracy, and Military. These three groups are distinguishable from others in that they alone contend for national power. People in each of these groupings have in common two conflicting tendencies. On the one hand, they are concerned to protect their individual and group interests. On the other, each has developed either institutional or subgroup ideological assumptions about what is good for the poor or for the country as a whole. Each believes as a group, or a subgroup, that it knows what is best and that its group's success or strengthening will redound to the benefit of the nation as a whole. Neither on its own initiative nor out of a desire to increase political support has any one of these groups made a sustained attempt to discover and represent the interests of the poor majority as the poor might themselves conceive their interests.

Associated or unionized workers and students. Industrial trade union membership in this relatively unindustrialized country remains small, about 1,300,000. For purposes of political analysis this number should be supplemented by the many lower level civil service employees belonging to a number of associations. The associations and unions are frequently affiliated with political parties that may use them to bring pressure on the government as well as to support candidates at election time. Many unions are united with an association of lower level civil servants into a large federation with the acronym SKOP. Although historically and in terms of their relatively broad social concerns, *students* have been seen as in the forefront of middle class activism, recently the activities of their often violent campus organizations play a part in the political scene analogous to that of the associated employees or unions. The most challenging role that the associated workers and students can play is as participants in a *hartal* or general strike, often at the instigation of one or more political parties. However, even a relatively small subgroup can magnify its influence through its ability to strike and demonstrate at critical locations within the socioeconomic system. Unlike the other major players described above, in spite of rhetoric most worker groups restrict their activities largely to the achievement of intensely felt in-group demands. As such, they do not compete for a major role in the direction of the country; on the other hand, the negative pluralism exhibited by this sector can seriously complicate the work of other players.

B. Operation of the Democratic Political System

The present state of the Bangladesh democratic system can be characterized in at least the following two ways:

1. The acceptance of parliamentary rule by major players remains conditional on the extent to which competing ideological and group demands are adequately met.

2. Bangladesh has not yet reached the point where the elites of its dominant social groups have accepted the idea that change of government should *only* come through legitimate constitutional means, although for the time being they are willing to accept this proposition.

Any strategy to build and sustain democracy in the short-term must accordingly concentrate on enhancing the capabilities and effectiveness of the governmental system, and thereby seek to engender both generalized public support and widespread recognition of democratic government as the only legitimate order. The strategy must, in other words, strive to assist the system to meet the first test implied by these characterizations, so that it will be able to meet the second. Eventually, we must hope that it will be possible to change the third characterization of the present situation, but for the time being we must work primarily to help the government change the first two. In doing so we must remember that the tests the characterizations imply are part political and part economic. Freedom from massive corruption, especially at the top, is an important aspect. A willingness to understand and conciliate divergent interests within all power groupings may be as important.

III. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Given the foregoing analysis, a program to achieve sustainable democracy for the next few years *must attempt to address directly the problems of current performance at the national level.* These problems are not due to the failings of particular individuals or parties, but rather to system characteristics that derive from Bangladesh's history, the present situation and inherited leadership styles. Undoubtedly, addressing these problems will be difficult and involve the sensibilities of the Bangladesh government. But the difficulty that the Mission will face in addressing them should not lead it to emphasize less critical aspects of the situation.

We distinguish between two levels of Mission effort with respect to the task of democratic development in Bangladesh. The top level, or first priority, is **strengthening national governmental institutions,** particularly the Parliament and Government. This is not only the most important priority but also the most timely one. Government policy statements need to be made more credible and to be closely coupled with succeeding actions. A second level of effort consists of those activities through which USAID, other US agencies, and other donors would directly build democracy in Bangladesh, but which are neither as central nor as immediate as those of higher priority.

In choosing this first priority, we are suggesting a refocusing of effort, particularly on the part of USAID. Although USAID/Bangladesh has supported and continues to assist central governmental institutions, past efforts to strengthen democracy in Bangladesh through foreign aid programs have largely been by-products of support for overall economic development and improvement in the condition of the poor. The *international donor community* has concentrated its efforts on improving infrastructure and aggregate production throughout the economy. At least in recent years programs have been developed that target improvement in the living standards of the *rural poor* and the position of women. Much of this effort has been mediated through help for the remarkably strong Bangladesh NGO effort concentrated in rural areas. As interest

shifts from purely socioeconomic support to support for democratic development, many in the international donor community will continue to see the task of improving democracy in Bangladesh primarily in terms of helping rural poor and women through internationally-supported NGOs.

While in the long term this effort should engender a higher quality of life and, indirectly, more democracy, in the course of the next few years what happens in the villages is unlikely to have decisive impact on the survival and institutionalization of democracy. The argument for building democracy through empowering the poor at the local level is often based upon a definition of democracy that includes such attributes as freedom from hunger or freedom from economic exploitation. To add such socioeconomic qualifications, however desirable, to our definition of democracy would place its attainment beyond the reach of many poor countries, including India, and thereby ignore the real democratic achievements (commendable in their own right) attained by such countries.

It must be an article of faith in the campaign for democracy in poor countries that the attainment of the more formal political and civil liberties associated with traditional definitions of democracy is a necessary and unavoidable step toward the achievement of that longer list of political and socioeconomic values that are supported by liberal opinion in the West. If its institutions function, a sustained democracy will gradually allow the submerged forces in poor societies to play an ever-increasing role, and, through this, to obtain a larger share of the social product. To a degree this has happened in the older democracies, although the process is by no means complete.

In identifying a first priority area, we do not mean to imply that there are not many other programs and projects supportive of the democratic opening that should be pursued. Consideration of this broader canvas, spelled out in some detail in section IV, is necessary for at least three reasons. First, we must be concerned with building a long-term basis for sustainable democracy in Bangladesh. This will require involving the largely excluded classes, especially the rural poor and women, more fully in the process. For this reason, we recommend NGO support at least at current

levels. Secondly, the educative effort concentrated directly on improving governmental performance needs to be supplemented by developing a more enlightened and involved public opinion. In this effort sustaining and developing more effective and available information media and increasing knowledge of the legal rights of the country's citizenry need to be addressed. Third, the area that we have identified as the first priority is not one in which action will be easy to initiate or carry through. It would be unwise to delay work on other parts of a comprehensive democratic agenda while programs in the priority area were under construction. For these and other reasons, the reader will note that section IV addresses a wide number of possible means of improving the country's democratic performance. In considering this comprehensive menu, the issue of priority should be kept in mind only where it becomes necessary to choose between supporting one or another item: in this case the effort that will address most directly the performance of central governmental institutions should be given precedence.

A. First Priority

The most important and addressable problem facing the new government is *inexperience* with the working of a democratic parliamentary system and the government with which it must deal. This inexperience characterizes all the major sociopolitical groupings we have identified. For example, while the bureaucracy is experienced in carrying out its functions within an authoritarian milieu, it has had essentially no experience outside this milieu. On the other side, within parliament and government new political leaders know neither how to relate constructively to the other major groupings nor to members of their own parties. After years in the opposition, during which the removal of West Pakistani and/or military leaders, was central to middle class party thinking, and coalition building was only possible on the basis of generalized rhetoric, it is not surprising that the emergent parliamentary and party leadership should not have developed coherent and practical programs appropriate to a government in power.

Strengthening Governmental Institutions. Central to the solution is the creation of training programs that will accelerate the development of democratic experience and relationships that would normally take decades. In part this requires technical training and orientation programs, particularly for new legislators unfamiliar with the issues they face. Because of the limited role for ordinary MPs in Bangladesh's parliamentary system, efforts to train party leaders should be concentrated on the top leadership of the government and the main opposition groupings -- those who will formulate policy and develop legislation. Special emphasis should be placed on educational programs in country or overseas that constructively bring together members of the government and the upper bureaucracy to work on common problems. The development of legislative programs will not be satisfactory and their implementation will be impossible unless the government learns to work more constructively with the other major actors: the bureaucracy (including the judiciary), the military, the opposition parties, and the industrial workers -- and these groups learn in turn to work more constructively with the elected government. Only if these relationships become those of mutual learning and conciliation will the system be able to function satisfactorily. Until this occurs, the brittleness of relationships will threaten the continuation of the present experiment.

B. Secondary Priorities

On the basis of our foregoing analysis we have identified five secondary priorities:

- Maintaining the Integrity of Elections
- Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms
- Protecting Human Rights
- Creating a Stronger Policy Environment
- Developing a more informed and active citizenry

Maintaining the Integrity of Elections is closely related to the primary priority of strengthening governmental institutions. One of the important reasons the current

Bangladesh Government has enjoyed public support during its first year in office has been the general perception that the 1991 elections were free and fair. Subversion of the electoral process was one of the major factors that discredited the previous regimes of both Ershad and Mujib. If the electoral process can be maintained, it should ideally contribute not only to the strengthening of public support for democratic government, but also to the broader linking of the national parties with the rural hinterland, to the progressive education and participation of the citizenry, and to the increased responsiveness of elected officials to their constituents.

Creating a Stronger Policy Environment will also contribute to the strengthening of governmental institutions. In discussing the primary priority we have noted the need to develop the skills and experience of government leaders, parliamentarians, and other national officials. One important way to do so is to broaden the available resources for the making of informed public policy. This includes increasing the availability of expertise to policy-makers through more policy research organizations. It also includes the development of public opinion polling capabilities that will inform the government and the public alike of public perceptions and attitudes.

Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms, like fair elections, is a means to ensure public confidence in governmental institutions. In a poor country like Bangladesh, it is also an important means to preserve scarce public resources by reducing corruption and mismanagement. This may be an exceptionally difficult task to accomplish, given the general lack of governmental accountability throughout Bangladesh's history.

Protecting Human Rights is less directly related to the strengthening of government than to limiting its abuses. This priority is perhaps the most self-evident as an end in itself, but it also has consequences for the broader body politic. To the extent that citizens are deprived of their human and civil rights, they cannot play a positive political role.

Developing a more informed and active citizenry is the most diffuse and long-term of the direct secondary priority actions. Citizen education and involvement are enhanced

by regular and meaningful elections, but they also benefit from the media and from a wide range of NGO activities. In fact, this is the secondary priority action that, through USAID and other donor support of NGOs, has probably received the greatest emphasis through existing aid programs, both in Bangladesh and in many other countries.

In addition to these programs of direct support for democracy, it is important to recognize that many of USAID's programs have indirect positive consequences for democracy in Bangladesh, including those dealing with literacy, family planning, rural electrification, and many more. In the broadest sense, any program that enhances economic development may potentially strengthen democracy, but the connection is sometimes difficult to relate directly to democracy. We encourage the Mission to seek opportunities to build into each of its programs components that will have positive democratic consequences.

IV. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

This section presents an ordering of the assessment team's analysis in terms of the categories outlined in the Asia Bureau's Asia Democracy Program (ADP). The overall categories represented there are voice, choice, governance, redress, and accountability. In presenting the material under these headings in the following pages, we offer a specification of the program items that we have identified, and at the same time an alternative, less prioritized approach to the problem of supporting democracy that offered above in section III. In this sense section IV represents both an expansion of the first three sections and a stand-alone presentation of the group's findings.

A. Voice

1. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Definition of need: NGOs are essential to the development of democratic pluralism. In a situation of widespread poverty and destitution, they can supplement governmental relief and development programs. Smaller and more flexible than governmental agencies, NGOs can also create, field test and modify new development strategies in ways that official organizations find difficult. Collectively, NGOs can be an articulate voice pressing government to fulfill its developmental mandate.

Situation: Bangladesh possesses an exceedingly rich assortments of NGOs. There are some 3,000 NGOs registered, of which about 600 belong to the umbrella organization for rural development, the Association of Development Agencies of

Bangladesh (ADAB). Some of the larger NGOs have memberships running into the hundreds of thousands, while the largest counts well over a million.[1]

In terms of purpose, these organizations cover a wide spectrum, ranging from adult literacy through self-employment to athletics; many promote multiple activities. Some offer services the government has failed to provide (such as health, primary education), while others focus on services the government could not be expected to provide (e.g., handicraft employment). Some are wholly domestic in their sources of direction and funding; others have some foreign elements in their leadership or financial support. A number of international donors, in fact, have come to see NGOs as an "institutional alternative" to the BDG for accelerating rural development. Altogether they provide essential services to 7 to 15 percent of the rural population by various estimates.
Sustainability presents some problems for NGOs, both internationally and locally. The larger ones are virtually all dependent on substantial infusions of foreign funding to keep going, and while some have raised significant portions of their budget domestically (primarily by selling products and services), it will be a long time before they are able to cut their funding ties.

At the village level where the NGOs are active, there are analogous difficulties. Few NGOs have been able to withdraw and set their developmental activities free into a self-sustaining growth path, as Hashemi's (1989) study shows. Here too the ties of dependence to the outside have proven very hard to sever.

Although a number of NGOs originally aimed at promoting social and political change as a part of their agenda, most have subordinated such ambitions and even abandoned them in their struggle to provide essential services in situations of desperate want and in a national political climate that fluctuated between permitting their operation and

[1] This is the Grameen Bank, which might be best described as a semi-NGO, in part governmental and in part non-governmental.

controlling them. In earlier periods, part of their survival strategy lay in building linkages to the government, most notably through ADAB (though some of the larger NGOs had their own connections), a process that became much easier after the establishment of the BDG's NGO Bureau in the late 1980s, at the behest of the World Bank and some of the bilateral donors, including USAID. But these same survival strategies militated against constructing linkages to the political parties. As a result, at the end of the Ershad period, NGOs found themselves essentially isolated from the main currents of Bangladesh politics. Some NGOs have taken up strategies of political advocacy, to be sure, focusing for instance on women's legal rights, but this activity has been pursued without any linkage to the political parties themselves. The consequences of this isolation are that now in an era when politics matters, the NGO community is without a voice at the macro level. Another aspect of the nongovernmental organizational development of the country is the well-developed labor union sector in the urbanized parts of the country. In many areas unions act as impressive pressure groups in defense of their members' interests.

Response: USAID has supported NGOs in Bangladesh through its Private Rural Initiatives Project (PRIP), now operating in its fourth year through its local implementation agency PACT/Bangladesh. Among other things PACT has devoted considerable effort and financial support to NGO umbrella organizations and to "learning groups" of NGOs aiming at pulling together and distilling NGO experience in sectors like adult literacy, women in development and disaster preparedness. USAID has also supported NGOs in the health and family planning field through its Asia Foundation grants.

Recommendation: USAID should consider supporting an umbrella interest group representing the NGO community in the political arena. This is not to say that NGOs should become like a political party or compete with the political parties; rather the NGOs should be able to act collectively as an interest group to keep pressure on the political parties to attend to the needs of their constituencies, which otherwise will tend to get neglected in an elite-dominated polity like that of Bangladesh. NGOs assuming an advocacy role, for example those working for women's or children's

rights, could usefully adopt such an approach. A good analogy in American politics would be the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which has been eminently successful in pressing both parties to aid its constituency while avoiding competition with them or overly close identification with either of them. Considerable thought will be required here both within the NGO community and among donors.

USIS could be of material assistance here; under its AMPART and IVP programs it might be able to send NGO leaders to see how AARP and similar American lobbying organizations operate. Unlike such sectors as the parliamentary secretariat, in which the Commonwealth countries have a comparative experiential advantage, constituency lobbying in a pluralistic political universe is an arena in which the American system truly excels. We should exploit that advantage.

2. Information Media

Definition of need: Modern democracy requires free and pluralistic media of expression if formal democratic processes are to be meaningful. Government unchecked by a free media cannot effectively be held responsible for its actions by the public that it serves. Citizens must know what government is doing, both good and bad.

Situation: During much of the period since its independence, the print media have been censored in a variety of ways. The means have included guidance from the information department, temporary closures, control of newsprint distribution, the granting and withholding of government advertising, and the arrest and intimidation of journalists. In the last year or two the print media in Bangladesh have proliferated rapidly and are now judged to be largely free. Even though much of this development is very recent, it is based on a long history of literate urban culture. Dependence on government advertising remains a problem for many publications.

The broadcast media are completely controlled by the central government, an unfortunate tradition throughout the subcontinent.

Response: Attempts are being made by the current government to regularize its relationship with the print media, although the result seems unlikely to lead to a completely free press in the Western sense. During the recent election the BNP promised to make the broadcast media autonomous from direct government control. On the donor side, USIS and TAF have programs directed toward the training of journalists, and exposing them to experience with journalists from countries with more democratic media.

Recommendations: Current donor efforts such as USAID and USIS projects to train journalists and introduce them to Western media experience and methods should be extended and further developed. Particular attention should be given to again opening up the question of privatizing the broadcast media. USIS might, for example, develop a program in which journalists and individuals from the information ministry are given the opportunity to become more broadly informed about the broadcasting media outside the subcontinent: to increase understanding of alternatives for public NGO broadcasting, they could observe the operation and organization of National Public Radio; for the organization of inexpensive commercial broadcasting in a third world setting, they could observe the proliferation of private stations in the Philippines.

3. Public Opinion Polling

Definition of need: In a modern democracy an important means for governments to know the will of the people is the public opinion poll or survey. The creation and publication of polls both encourage people to form opinions on public issues and makes politicians more attentive to the wishes of their constituents. Their use strengthens governments by increasing their ability to respond to changing popular needs or attitudes and by making governmental actions more accountable to the public. Opinion surveys also provide a necessary basis for judging the state of the

political culture of a country, and to track changes in this culture as a more democratic culture develops. Once developed, a polling capability may offer a valuable resource as the Mission and USAID attempt to find ways to measure the success of their BDP efforts in the future.

Situation: There are reported to be several of organizations and individuals able to undertake scientific survey work in the country. Excellent work has been done, for example, in the area of family planning and nutrition. There appear to be few if any cultural constraints on the success of efforts in this area. However, political opinion polling seems little developed, being confined primarily to pre-election polls conducted by news publications. We are aware of no regularly appearing or generally credited public opinion surveys of either a popular or scientific nature.

Response: USAID has taken a major role in developing a polling or opinion survey capability in the country. However, we know of no plans to extend present efforts in a direction supportive of the democracy initiative.

Recommendations: USAID should investigate the possibility of using presently developed capabilities in this area to make regular and creditable surveys of opinion and attitudes. The scientific surveys should concentrate on developing knowledge of the political culture rather than opinions on the immediate issues of the day. Experts on survey work on sociopolitical or cultural topics might be invited for a short visit to orient Bangladeshi survey methodologists on the special problems in this area. Enough experience with previous surveys exists that relatively small samples and short questionnaires should be adequate. A beginning might be made by introducing relevant questions into surveys that are already regularly conducted for other purposes. Popular surveys relating to issues of current interest to the population should be encouraged rather than directly supported. However, USIS visitor programs or other means might be used to inform people in the media about the methods and commercial possibilities of regular polling.

B. Choice

1. National Elections

Definition of Need: Free and fair elections constitute an essential feature of a democratic system. They serve as a check upon the abuse of governmental power, as a channel of popular participation, and as a key means by which popular preferences are translated into choices of public policies and leaders.

Situation: The people of Bangladesh have participated in provincial and later national elections since 1937, under British, Pakistani, and independent rule, but experience with elections has been both infrequent and unfortunate. Following traditions established in the Pakistan era, interference with either the conduct or the consequences of elections have been more the rule than the exception in independent Bangladesh. Before 1991, only the 1954 East Pakistan provincial election and the 1970 national Pakistan election could be said even to have approached a reasonable standard of freeness and fairness.

Given this legacy, the 1991 elections, widely regarded as free and fair, were not only an important step for the future of Bangladesh's democratic system but have become the centerpiece of the democratic opening that the country now enjoys. The significance of these elections was heightened by the presence of a significant foreign and domestic monitoring effort.[2]

Even though a genuine democratic success, the 1991 poll was not perfect in terms of being free and fair, however. The Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB) found numerous instances of discrimination against the Jatiyo

[2] The most comprehensive monitoring reports the team has seen are those by BAMNA (1991) and the CCHRB (Timm and Gain 1991); the NDI sent a small team for a brief visit (NDIIA 1991).

Party, particularly in terms of media access and campaigning (cf. Timm and Gain 1991: passim). In a sense this may have been understandable, given the disgrace into which the former ruling party and its leader had fallen, but the fact remains that the Jatiyo Party did not have the same chances that were accorded to the other parties in the campaign.

Whether the considerable success of the 1991 parliamentary poll can be replicated in future elections is not certain. The presence of a neutral interim government to conduct the 1991 polls meant that the incumbent regime did not have a direct stake in electoral outcome, and this fact had much to do with the electoral integrity so widely observed.[3]

In sum, it cannot be assumed that an honest and transparent election process has been achieved that will continue to function effectively on its own over the indefinite future.

Response: Through the Asia Foundation, USAID supported the CCHRB's work, which involved some 4000 election observers in the February 1991 poll and probably had more impact on the election process that any other single monitoring effort (in part the CCHRB's effectiveness in 1991 results from its work monitoring the upazila chairman elections in March 1990, also supported by TAF). In addition, USAID supported a limited National Democratic Institute (NDI) election observation team during the February 1991 poll (see NDI 1991). Their visit built upon several previous NDI missions dating back to 1987. Other donors have also supported election monitoring activities.

[3] It is worth noting that the only other national elections widely believed to have been free and fair were those of 1970, which were also held under a neutral caretaker government.

Recommendations:

(1) USAID should continue to support both domestic and foreign election observation teams in future Bangladesh elections. Emphasis should be on the domestic side of this effort, building upon the excellent work done in the 1991 poll by such organizations as the CCHRB and BAMNA. In view of the country's past experience with elections, it will take some time before the public comes to have full confidence in the electoral process; vigilant monitoring shorten this time.

(2) USAID should explore with the Bangladesh Election Commission ways in which technical assistance might help to strengthen that body's ability to conduct and monitor elections. Japan and other international donors have raised the prospect of contributing computer hardware to facilitate the maintenance of current voter registration lists, and it may be that other Commonwealth countries having similar registration systems may be best suited to provide TA.[4] US assistance will remain useful, however, in supporting Election Commission efforts to conduct elections and report results.

(3) The US mission in Bangladesh should avail of every opportunity to reinforce the importance of electoral integrity, emphasizing that elections must both be honest and be perceived to be honest by the public. For example, incumbent regimes often undertake large-scale transfers of officials just prior to elections, a stratagem widely thought to be intended to promote vote fraud by placing pliable or corrupt officers in crucial spots where they could manipulate the electoral process. The US should pursue any dialogue with the BDG that would help discourage such practices, perhaps by placing a moratorium on all bureaucratic transfers between the time an election is called and the votes have been counted.

[4] In Bangladesh registration is done by the government rather than by voters themselves on an individual basis as in the United States.

(4) Appropriate Bangladesh officials should be included on international observer teams for elections in other countries. USIS should consider ways in which AMPART, IVP, Fulbright, and other programs might be supportive, particularly in view of the upcoming US presidential election this year. Although it is probably too late for the primary season already under way in the US, observing presidential primaries would be most instructive, in providing a comparative study in the various election processes used in different state primaries. Because the primaries are conveniently arranged sequentially over several months, a visitor could sample a number of different approaches to election logistics and mechanics within a reasonably short time. Perhaps an IVP effort could be planned for 1996. In addition, trips to observe elections in countries with parliamentary systems might be supported, and perhaps academics specializing in comparative elections could be brought to Bangladesh to participate in seminars/workshops on this topic.

2. Local Elections

Definition of Need: Free and fair elections are important at the local level, just as at the national level. In a system where elites tend to dominate politics even more at local than at national level, regular elections may well be the only way in which citizens can hold their leaders accountable. Local polls also serve as a training ground for national elections, both as instruments of popular control and as schools for learning how to manage campaigns and how to participate in them.

Situation: Local elections date back much further than national polls in Bangladesh or province-wide elections in the British and Pakistan periods. Indeed, elected Union Boards began in the 19th century, though with the franchise restricted to male property holders. Throughout the various periods of authoritarian rule to which the country has been subjected, elections to local bodies were generally allowed and even encouraged, partly as a (generally unsuccessful) device to drain political energy away from higher-level activity. Ayub's Basic Democracies and Ershad's upazila and union parishad elections may be seen in this light.

Interest is often high in local elections, accompanied by considerable violence as contestants vie to take command over the major source of patronage in rural areas. In the 1988 union parishad elections, for example, more than 100 deaths were reported. Running under party labels has generally been prohibited in these polls, ostensibly to insulate the local scene from partisanship (a familiar theme in American municipal elections), though for more than one regime a more likely agenda in holding nonpartisan local elections has been to ensure that whatever winners emerged could be more easily recruited through patronage to the ranks of the party in power and thereby enlarge its own support base in the countryside.

Response: The CCHRB, which monitored the upazila election of 1990 (cf. Timm and Gain 1990), has been assisted in its work by the Asia Foundation, which in turn has been supported though USAID's Civic Participation Project. Otherwise, USAID and the donor community has had little to do with local elections in Bangladesh.

Recommendations: Election monitoring should not be reserved for national elections. Abuses occur at the local level, too, as the CCHRB report cited just above amply demonstrates. USAID should support efforts like that carried out by the CCHRB for the 1990 upazila poll. And the USIS-sponsored travel discussed in connection with national elections should also include attention to local elections.

3. Political Parties

Definition of Need: Political parties in a democratic country serve as the institutional link between the voters and the government. They serve to mobilize participation, to facilitate the choice of political leaders, and to channel popular demands into public policy.

Situation: More than fifty political parties participated in the 1991 elections, but only four emerged with significant representation in the Jatiyo Sangsad (National Parliament): the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), led by Begum Khaleda Zia, now Prime Minister; the Awami League (AL), led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed; the Jatiyo Party (JP), followers of the recently deposed President H. M. Ershad; and finally the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), a religiously oriented party.

The parties are still adjusting to their new roles, including the evolution of a consensus on the "rules of the game" in the new democratic order. What is fair use of governmental power? What is appropriate behavior for an opposition party? These fundamental questions have yet to be decided. Ever since the partition in 1947, parties in power have tended to view any opposition as essentially illegitimate, while parties out of power have tended to see all possible tactics aimed at dislodging those in power as justifiable. Even the extent to which party spokespersons should be allowed to invoke the memories of their past leaders can be a matter of partisan disagreement. As long as such views persist among party leaders, it will be difficult to achieve a national consensus on the appropriate roles and behavior for governing and opposition parties.

Another important aspect of the party situation is that it is not yet a true "system" in the sense of national parties with nationwide constituencies. The BNP, for example won 140 seats in 1991 and went on to form the government, but the bulk of its seats were won in a relatively limited area in the center of the country, with almost no seats in North Bengal and very few in the South and Southwest. The Jamaat-e-Islami won most of its modest group of seats in the West, while the Jatiyo Party took most of its share in the North with a few in the Sylhet area. Only the Awami League took a substantial share of the vote all across the country.[5]

This pattern is not necessarily bad; many advanced democracies have regional centers of strength, as with the Labor Party in Scotland and the Tories in the South and East of England. But in the Bangladesh case, the regional quality of party strength may make it more difficult to build a national party system, for parties enjoying an easy dominance at regional level may have less motivation to develop a comity with others at the national level. At present all the parties are active primarily within Dhaka, but their organizations in rural Bangladesh can be expected to grow as a climate of national political stability provides the environment and future elections provide the incentive. Will these larger party structures coexist in conditions of comity, or will the dysfunctional hostilities that have characterized much of their relationship in the urban areas carry over to their interaction in the countryside?

The campus violence that continues to bedevil and undermine higher education is a third problem, as are some of the strikes recently mounted against the government. Regarding the campus, charges and countercharges proliferate about which party is more responsible for the violence and which is less willing to lower the political temperature by withdrawing from the university scene. The current wave of strikes by schoolteachers and transport owners may or may not be fomented by the

[5] Another way to look at this pattern is to observe that the Awami League finished first or second in 265 of the nation's 300 seats, while the BNP did so in 197, the Jatiyo Party in 62 and the Jamaat in only 48. See the analysis in BAMNA 1991: 63-68).

opposition to undermine the government, but so long as people widely believe this to be the case, civil discourse between the parties will be that much harder to achieve.

A fourth and last point here is that the parties tend to be undemocratic internally, with little or no involvement of the rank and file in selection of either leaders or policy positions. Once an MP is elected, he or she finds little to do except show up for parliamentary votes.

Response: The United States has thus far not played any role with regard to this need. The Parliament itself has made progress in following Commonwealth practices with its Question Hour, Calling Attention procedures and committee system, all of which allow opposition MPs a chance to participate meaningfully as individuals. In addition, the committee system facilitates party comity by providing a structured environment in which MPs of the different parties work together. These measures should help induce a sense of the "rules of the game" between the parties at the macro level. But given the past history of party antagonism in Bangladesh, such gains will not be easy.

Recommendations: The US should continue to avoid any activities which could be interpreted as supportive of one party over others. At the same time, USAID and USIS should consider ways in which they might encourage dialogue among political party leaders, academics, journalists, and other intellectuals concerning these issues. Developing the dialogue between the military, the upper civil service, and civilian party leaders would be especially helpful. Seminars, worldnets, visiting speakers, and possibly travel of key individuals to conferences outside the country might be appropriate, perhaps in coordination with other donors. For example, a multi-party group of parliamentarians could visit Australia and Canada as well as the United States to observe how political parties relate to each other in different settings. The US mission should also consider encouraging organizations such as NDI or NRI that have worked successfully with parties in other countries to submit proposals. The possibility of inviting support by the German party foundations should also be explored.

The USIS library might establish a "democracy collection" of perhaps 400 titles. So that these could be circulated widely through the USIS outreach program, there should be multiple copies of the most important works. USIS could also translate pertinent books to be distributed commercially and presented to political figures.

C. Governance

1. Legislature and Government

Definition of Need: In a democracy, the primary role of a legislature is to translate into policy and law the will of the electorate. For parliamentary systems this typically means a government (that is, a cabinet or council of ministers) chosen by the parliament and responsible to it. The government then manages the affairs of the nation, subject to the legislation passed by the parliament, which in turn participates in the legislative process by deliberation and passage of laws. It also holds Government accountable through processes of questioning and debate.

Situation: Bangladesh reestablished parliamentary government with the passage of the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution in September, 1991. An unusual, indeed possibly unique, feature of the Bangladesh Parliament, the unicameral Jatiyo Sangsad (National Assembly), is the provision that members who vote against their party will automatically lose their seats. Although this provision minimizes the risk of vote-buying and floor-crossing, problems which have plagued other South Asian democracies, it also reduces the incentive for a majority government to consult with the parliament, or even with members of its own parliamentary party.

Practices developed during long periods of authoritarian Presidential rule have also served to keep Parliament weak. Foremost among these is the ability of the government to take action by Presidential Decree without prior parliamentary consultation.

Additional difficulties arise from: (a) the inexperience of both ministers and other parliamentarians; (b) the reluctance of the Government to subject themselves or their plans to debate; (c) the tendency of the opposition to oppose for the sake of opposition; (d) uncertainties concerning appropriate procedures resulting in part from the absence of institutional conventions or traditions; and (e) some fairly sharp differences

between the two largest parties on major symbolic issues (although there are seemingly few differences on substantive program issues).

Response: Under the USAID-supported Civic Participation Project, the Asia Foundation has assisted the Parliament by sending three MPs (including the present Speaker) to a seminar on comparative legislative systems in the US. It has also conducted a needs assessment for the Parliament in fall 1991 (Lindley 1991). The UK High Commission is actively considering providing assistance to the parliament in a number of areas, particularly orientation programs.

Recommendations: USAID should encourage and support programs that strengthen legislative committees, enhance legislative drafting capabilities, establish research and information services, and provide study seminars for members. Where possible, efforts should be targeted specifically toward responsible members of the government and opposition parties in preference to legislative backbenchers, who at present play a minor role. In addition, USIS should seek to support this endeavor through such activities as the International Visitor Program (IVP), seminars, visiting AMPART and Fulbright lecturers, worldnets and the USIS Library.

2. Bureaucracy

Definition of need: Once laws are enacted, a democratic system needs a capable administration to implement them. Any political system that endures must have a bureaucracy[6] endowed with sufficient skill and authority to carry out this task. Government servants must know how to carry out their assigned tasks, and they must have the power to do so. An additional requirement for a democratic polity is that its

[6] Following the practice in the subcontinent, the terms "bureaucracy" and "government servants" will be used to denote the entire BDG establishment covering classes I to IV, while "civil service" will refer only to the "gazetted" cadres like the Bangladesh Administrative Service, Bangladesh Forestry Service, etc.

bureaucracy be accountable to the public through direction from the elected political leadership.

Situation: In the British period, reforms beginning in the late 17th century under Lord Cornwallis eventually created a bureaucracy renowned for its ability at managing the Raj in the subcontinent. Its mandate was quite limited, confined as it was to the threefold objectives of law, order and revenue, but under the "steel frame" provided by the Indian Civil Service, it performed these tasks well. After partition, the high quality of the service at its upper levels carried over into the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP).

During the Pakistan and Bangladesh periods, however, several changes occurred, many of them synergistically reinforcing each other and all of them diminishing significantly the capacity of the bureaucracy. First, its mandate was vastly expanded to include the whole development arena in addition to its older tasks. Secondly, the burden was compounded by a statist vision of centralized command and control that insisted on locating most of the development enterprise within the public sector, particularly its infrastructural, industrial, financial and foreign trade components. Third, not only did inefficiencies and waste in these activities seriously compromise economic performance, but corruption found ample opportunity to flourish and proliferate at all levels. The result of these second and third trends has been the "soft state" in which state assertions of omnipotence are combined with ineffectiveness at implementation, as so well documented by Myrdal more than two decades ago (1968).

Fourth, since 1972 the bureaucracy has been opened up to lateral transfer and more egalitarianism between the civil service cadres, in order to recruit staff to manage its increased responsibilities as well as to lessen what many felt was the unhealthy domination of the erstwhile CSP. Fifth, various governments, especially the Ershad regime, found it politically expedient to promote public sector employment and to satisfy public sector wage demands without regard to their effect on the government's ability to finance them. Finally, over the years of military rule and authoritarianism, the bureaucracy became accustomed to operating in a situation where it had only to

please those in charge of government at the topmost levels without any accountability to the larger public. It had, in many ways, become autonomous.

All these trends produced a bureaucracy not very well suited to a democratic polity, in which an elected government is expected to determine policy and the bureaucracy is supposed to implement it. Symptomatic of the problems is the recent attempt by the government to give ministers both authority and responsibility for their departments, a move that has been stoutly resisted by the civil service, thus far successfully. Bureaucratic resistance to downsizing and privatizing the parastatals is another example.

Response: Past foreign assistance programs, including those supported by the United States, have attempted to strengthen the bureaucracy by making it more efficient, largely through upgrading its training. The Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center at Savar is an example of this approach. While much of this aid has achieved these goals, some of it has unfortunately also exacerbated the trends noted above. More recently, some of the assistance provided by USAID has sought to make administration more efficient by privatizing some of its activities, most notably its fertilizer project focusing on the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation's distribution structure.

Toward the end of the Ershad period, USAID sponsored a high-level Public Administration Efficiency Study (PAES) (GPRB 1989), which recommended major reforms that would attempt to counteract the trends mentioned above. It offered major recommendations for strengthening the audit system, combatting overcentralization, upgrading supervision through training and management support, improving management information and monitoring systems, simplifying operating procedures, enhancing performance incentives. Unfortunately, even these modified ideas were given no consideration in the waning days of the Ershad era; in fact, the report itself was never even officially released by the BDG.

Recommendations: The PAES should be used as a beginning point to discuss public administration reform with the BDG. Most of its recommendations would hold good in the democratic era, and other donors as well as the United States should draw the attention of the BDG to them. But it would also be a good time to start a new effort to promote public administration reform by re-examining the old PAES themes and adding at least two new ones: (a) include the focus on corruption that had originally been a part of the PAES before the watering down (cf. PAES 1989); and (b) incorporate a concern for accountability to the public. Administrative probity was a low priority for the BDG in the Ershad period, but now corruption is clearly an eminently suitable topic for public discourse, particularly in view of the Prime Minister's frequently voiced interest in eliminating it. It is crucial to move with dispatch on this matter, before the linkages and networks characterizing the Ershad period can completely reestablish and reassert themselves under the new order. Accountability was examined in the PAES, but the focus was strictly internal; the idea of a bureaucracy answerable to the public also found a low priority in the Ershad era, but like corruption it is today a vital public concern.

As elsewhere, establishing and maintaining administrative probity will be a difficult task in Bangladesh. The US should contemplate supporting such an effort with technical assistance for including administrative ethics components in the training provided by the BPATC and other institutes for the various BCS cadres.

3. Security Services.

Definition of need: Security services comprise the military forces, the police, and such auxiliary forces as the Bangladesh Defense Rifles and the Ansars. Their functions in all political systems are to protect the realm from without and to secure life and property within. Democracy makes the extra demand that the security services help to preserve personal and political liberty and basic human rights. And it demands further that in the process of securing order the security services cannot be an instrument for denying personal rights.

Situation: Even in the best of times and under the best of regimes, security forces can be troublesome to the public weal while they are protecting it. Police forces in the United States and other Western countries have experienced problems with corruption and have too often been abusive of human rights and dignity. Amid the conditions of economic scarcity, low public sector wages and often nonexistent accountability that have characterized police work in Bangladesh, it is scarcely surprising that abuses have been all too common in the past.

The military has developed in a context of military control over the country either directly or indirectly for the greater part of its history. The long period of Ayub Khan's rule (1958-69) and military governance in the Zia and Ershad eras are best known, but there have been shorter periods of military control during both the Pakistan and Bangladesh eras as well. Particularly during the longer periods of military dominance under Ayub and Ershad the military became accustomed to ample budgets, extensive perquisites, and a direct hand in managing the civilian affairs of the country through military postings to civil service positions in the bureaucracy. In important ways this latter aspect served the interests of those at the top; to help maintain control General Ershad for instance was able to play army officers off against civil servants.

Response: USAID has been barred from supporting the police; however, other countries have provided or are planning to provide assistance. The American International Military Education and Training (IMET) program has supported sending military officers to take courses in the United States at institutions such as the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The British have had rather more involvement here, however, providing the teaching staff to the Bangladesh Staff College for more than a decade and a half.

Recommendations: Improvement in the efficiency, neutrality and human rights consciousness of the police is a major need. Since the United States evidently will be unable to offer assistance in this regard, the Mission should make appropriate efforts to encourage the attention of others (such as the current and planned efforts of the

UK) to this need. Military assistance through the IMET program should be continued and expanded, with special attention to issues of human rights and democracy. This will help enlarge the world view of participating Bangladesh officers, acquainting them inter alia with how the American military establishment relates to civilian control and to the civilian society in which it is situated.

4. Local Government

Definition of need: The local level is where average citizens are most likely to be able to influence and affect the actions of their government on a day-to-day basis; it is where participation is most likely to be meaningful and public accountability most likely to be a reality. From the central government viewpoint, the local level is where there must be citizen input if government is to find out what to do: Even in a country as relatively homogeneous as Bangladesh, there is sufficient areal variation that the center cannot establish workable "one size fits all" approaches to planning or implementing its national development program. Only some kind of democratic decentralization can do these things, and Bangladesh is now committed to such an approach through the recent 12th Amendment to its Constitution (GPRB 1991).

One additional function served by democratic local government is to provide a school in pluralistic politics for future leaders at the macro level; lessons mastered here will carry over into later political leadership, for good or ill. This is true whether the "here" is village, urban municipality or university campus, though to the extent that Bangladesh can remain a stable democracy, rural voters will increasingly make their numbers felt in politics, so that their influence in the system comes gradually to approximate more nearly their proportion of the population. In other words, while urban elites have been largely dominant since 1947, the longer democratic politics lasts the larger the role that the countryside with its 85 percent of the population will come to play. And if rural-based leaders begin their political education in local pluralistic systems, the country as a whole will be much better served than if they

acquire their learning in the elite-dominated village arenas that have traditionally been the rule in Bangladesh. Local governance matters.

Situation: Each successive regime in Bangladesh has followed the path of its predecessor in scrapping the local government structure it found in place and substituting for it a new and different scheme, which it then regards as the centerpiece of its rural development policy. The BNP government has done the same by abolishing the upazila parishad structure late last year. Because General Ershad had made the upazila parishads the key element in his rural strategy, the new government felt it necessary to eliminate the system and start over. Various rumors presently circulate as to what the new local government structure will look like. Resurrection of Ziaur Rahman's gram sarkar scheme, concentration on the union parishad, and a new focus on wards are all being mentioned in this regard. A commission is currently studying this issue, and is expected to release its conclusions sometime within the next several months. Meanwhile the BDG has set into place two structures relating to local government, both involving MPs, and reports itself working on a third.[7]

Clearly the government is very much concerned with local government. But where things will go with the new bodies it has already created and what their linkages will be with the still newer bodies to emerge from the currently deliberating commission are not clear. Past regimes have seen local government largely as a way of furnishing patronage in order to secure their rural political support base, and the new one may well be moving in a similar direction.

[7] The Parliament's 46 Standing Committees have an oversight role enabling MPs to serve their constituencies, and a new "district review committee" will apparently meet monthly, be chaired by a minister, include all MPs from the district and focus on local activities like Food for Work. The third scheme is a new zila parishad, or district-level council, mentioned recently in the press.

Motive is arguably not the major problem here, however. What matters is outcome. So long as elected local governments are set up with universal suffrage, honest elections and freedom to organize and participate in politics (in other words, so long as pluralistic politics obtains at the local level), people from all classes, stations and sexes can play a role and exercise influence. But this does not happen at once; it takes years -- even decades-- to occur to a significant extent; people must come to understand their local government and involve themselves in it. The major problem with local government in Bangladesh is that this time has never been allowed to transpire, as each successive government foreclosed the structure set up by its predecessor. The challenge, then, is not the exact nature of the democratic system to be set up (assuming it meets the criteria specified earlier in this paragraph) but rather the need to make it endure.[8]

Response: USAID has supported local government at various times in the past, as enthusiasm for participatory development has waxed and waned. In the Pakistan era, the United States assisted the Village-AID program in the 1950s and the community development initiatives of the 1960s. More recently in the 1980s, USAID supported the Feeder Roads Maintenance and Improvement Program, which included a concerted effort to involve upazila and union parishads in local road maintenance. And of course the CARE program over the last decade and more has included an intimate relationship with local governmental units, through the Title III Bridges and Culverts Program and the much larger Food for Work Program. Other donors, notably the World Food Program and the Nordic agencies, have worked along similar lines in recent years. Lastly, the local participation focus in several of the USAID-sponsored Flood Action Plan (FAP) studies currently under way also involve local governments.

Recommendations: A new democratic dispensation and a new government in Bangladesh offer a fresh chance to promote democratic local government. Such an

[8] For an extension of this argument, see Blair (1992).

effort should proceed along two lines. First, USAID should seriously consider a local government support project that could draw on the vast American experience with local pluralism to provide advice and assistance. The need here is not so much for funding as for technical assistance (which could be provided perhaps as a stand-alone project or included as part of an ongoing intermediary-administered project like the present TAF effort) to aid a center like the National Institute of Comilla or Bogra. These institutions are vital to a healthy local government system in Bangladesh, but were allowed to languish in the Ershad era. Modest USAID support could go a long way here. Assistance for bringing American local government experts for workshop/lecture tours or "short courses" would certainly be useful, as would USIS IV efforts to send key BDG personnel for short visits to the US and third countries like Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and India.

Second, USAID should continue to support efforts to increase democratic participation in FFW, the FAP studies (as well as the outcome of the whole FAP itself) and other local-level activities, with special attention to enlarging participation in the planning aspect of these efforts.

D. Redress

1. Judiciary

Definition of Need: The judiciary in a democratic system serves not only to resolve legal disputes but to protect human rights and civil liberties, to preserve and interpret the Constitution, and to guard against abuses by other branches of government.

Situation: The judiciary has perhaps the highest popular respect of any political institution in Bangladesh. Despite extended periods of autocratic rule, at least the higher courts have managed to maintain considerable independence and credibility. Consequently, judges have frequently been entrusted with important caretaker roles. Supreme Court Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed served as president in the interim government which managed the transition to democracy in 1989-1990. Judges also serve as members of the Election Commission. The weaknesses of the court system include (1) a large backlog of cases, resulting from both slow procedures and a high degree of litigiousness in the society; (2) poor reporting of decisions; (3) either a reluctance or an inability to deal with cases of governmental maladministration.

Response: The Asia Foundation has been working with the judicial system on a variety of fronts. A computer was provided to the Supreme Court but technical expertise has apparently been lacking to utilize it. USAID has introduced in some of its programs means of processing large numbers of disputes efficiently and effectively without reference to the courts.

Recommendations: (1) Continue support for work with the judiciary, particularly in the streamlining of procedures, training of judges, and related technical assistance; (2) Encourage NGOs that already work in rural areas to develop more mechanisms of dispute resolution, such as arbitration, mediation, conciliation, that reduce pressure on court backlog. (3) Design USIS worldnet interactives for members of the judiciary and the bar.

2. Human Rights

Definition of need: Respect for basic human rights is an expected aspect of modern democracy. As detailed in the annual reports to Congress of the United States State Department, these include respect for the integrity of the person (freedom from torture, arbitrary arrest, or extrajudicial killing), respect for civil liberties (including freedom of speech, right to peaceful assembly and association, freedom of religion and of movement), respect for political rights (to change government through fair elections), and freedom from discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, language, or social status. As mandated by law, observance of these rights must influence American relations with Bangladesh, particularly in regard to foreign aid and trade.

Situation: The condition of human rights has in the last year changed for the better in many regards. However, problems remain. While extrajudicial killing and torture may not be major problems currently, mistreatment of people of low status by the police continues to be common, and trial for such abuses rare. Rights to detain persons for unlimited periods continue on the books, although currently little practiced. The struggle with the insurgent Shanti Bahini movement in the Chittagong Hills leads to violations on both sides. The right of changing government has recently been expressed fairly on several levels, and for the time being is secure. Freedom of the press is general. Although there is no official religious discrimination, Hindus are subject to unfair social and political treatment. Women continue to be denied equality. The situation of women abandoned by their husbands is one that the society has been particularly unable to address effectively. Unions are well organized in the urban sector; however, rural workers are not allowed to organize in the unindustrialized agricultural sector where conditions of work and remuneration are largely outside government control.

Response: The International Donor community has supported a wide variety of Bangladeshi NGOs supporting human rights, and international organizations have

directly and through the cooperation of local groups brought the to the world's attention many of the denials of human rights that have occurred in the past.

Recommendations: The continuing efforts of these groups, as well as international reporting (including most significantly that of the State Department) should continue to be supported. In respect to the particular position of women, efforts should continue to be made to include support for the improvement of the condition of women in all Mission activities, as in the WID program of USAID. Consideration might also be given to encouraging the development of women's organization committed to the support of women's causes, either through the law or more generally. USIS could present seminars and worldnet interactives on human rights issues.

E. Accountability

This theme in the Asia Democracy Program in many ways functions as a precis of the program as a whole. Accountability is a kind of one-word condensation statement of what democracy is all about: making government responsive to the citizenry. The ultimate accounting takes place in a democracy when voters render a summary judgment on their government at election time, but elections by themselves are not enough. Further mechanisms are required as well to ensure an enduring democracy. Here they are divided into the formal mechanisms of direct accountability that are designed to keep officials honest and those of indirect accountability that serve to keep the government doing what the public wants.

1. Direct Accountability

Definition of Need: Governmental officials need to be held accountable for their actions. Otherwise, corruption, irresponsibility, and lack of direction dissipate the popular will and make democratic government ineffective. Absence of accountability, particularly in the form of widely-recognized corruption, also undermines public confidence in democratic government. Officials may be made directly accountable through accounting and reporting procedures, oversight by investigative commissions, and other mechanisms.

Situation: The *Public Administration Efficiency Study* noted Bangladesh's "failure to institutionalize parliamentary control over the executive branch of the government." "As a result," it concluded, "the accountability of the public service has suffered." (GPRB 1989, I: 9). Long periods of autocratic government have established patterns of direct executive interference in administration which are hard to change. The difficulties of establishing bureaucratic accountability to Government are further compounded by the relative inexperience of the new ministers.

It is also taking some time to define specific boundaries of responsibility between ministers and upper-level bureaucrats. Civil servants recognize the responsibility of ministers for policy, but complain that the latter are really much more interested in *administration*, as for example deciding who gets posted where or which electoral constituency is to get more benefits from a government development project. The bureaucrats insist that if they are to be saddled with *financial* responsibility for the operation of their ministries, they should also have the administrative responsibility as well. If ministers want administrative responsibility, argue the bureaucrats, they should also be willing to accept financial responsibility.

Corruption appears to be pervasive at nearly all levels. By many accounts, former President Ershad established record levels of venality, but much of the corruption is simply petty rent-seeking which collectively constitutes a heavy burden on both the economy and administrative efficiency. Some of this corruption could be countered through an Ombudsman office, which is provided for in the Constitution (Article 77). Although legislation was passed in 1979 to create such an office, implementation failed to take place.

Response: The *Public Administration Efficiency Study* (1989) recommended a number of actions, but as noted earlier in the discussion on bureaucracy, it has yet to be officially released by the BDG, much less acted upon. The Asia Foundation in its need's assessment (Lindley 1991) and at least one donor country have suggested a number of activities to strengthen the operation of the Bangladesh parliament and help to establish clearer lines of administrative accountability.

Recommendations: The BDG should be encouraged to undertake a new effort to undertake public administration reform, specifically to develop in cooperation with the United States and other donors proposals for such reform as well as ways to implement them. Secondly, the UK and other parliamentary countries should be encouraged to work with the Bangladesh Government to clarify lines of ministerial/secretarial responsibility. In this regard, USIS should contemplate and IVP effort to send small combined teams of MPs and senior civil servants to the US

and other countries to observe how their counterparts elsewhere relate to each other. Third, institutions which train public administrators, such as BPATC and Dhaka University's Department of Public Administration, should be encouraged to incorporate units on accountability, ethics, and related aspects of bureaucratic responsibility into their curricula. Fourth. the Government of Bangladesh should be encouraged to give practical effect to the Prime Minister's anti-corruption statements by carrying through with the creation of an Ombudsman office. Assistance from (or travel to) countries which have similar officials (such as Pakistan) would be instructive.

2. Indirect Accountability

Definition of need: While such institutions as elections, parliamentary standing committees, and bureaucratic Rules of Business are essential for sustaining accountability, equally important are the indirect mechanisms that reveal governmental shortcomings and bring pressure on government to correct them. Chief among these mechanisms are a responsible press working under conditions of guaranteed free speech and a strong structure of pluralist democracy at all levels. The press's major role is to shed the light, and pluralism's primary function is to provide the heat to keep the system honest.

Situation: Like its predecessors, the Ershad regime placed significant restrictions on press freedom, though it should be said that compared to most authoritarian governments, it was reasonably tolerant. The Special Powers Act was employed to put pressure on publishers and journalists, journals were at times shut down, and certain topics such as the military were placed beyond the pale of acceptable journalistic comment or analysis. Otherwise the print media were, subject to some ebb and flow that went with declarations of martial law and regime changes, more or less free to report what they wished. The broadcast media, on the other hand, functioned almost exclusively as a sycophantic publicity engine to promote an official government line.

Open pluralism as an instrument of accountability has had a much more checkered history over the decades. This has been true in some periods because the government in power saw any tolerance of the rights to assemble, mobilize public opinion and press grievances as virtually surrendering to the highly volatile "politics of the streets" that can threaten basic public order and even the regime itself. Even well-meaning governments have found it difficult to draw a line between healthy pluralism and possible political chaos.

Unfortunately for the political history of the country, the major players have in many ways been unable to make such a distinction. Given the long experience of authoritarian control and fraudulent elections, opposition political parties have found little scope for being a "loyal opposition" which would oppose government policy while sharing a common understanding of "rules of the game." The only way they saw to effect a change of government was agitational politics to bring it down, an approach that worked in 1969 and 1990, though it failed at other times, as in 1987-88. Other potentially agitational players in the system -- industrial workers, the lower bureaucracy and student groups -- essentially adopted a two-option approach to politics, whereby they would refrain from agitation if bought off with wage settlements and job security for the workers and government servants, or with campus power and perquisites for the students, but they would help the opposition parties destabilize the polity if the regime resisted their demands.

Pluralism is also important at the local level if the government and its officials are to be kept honest and effective in promoting rural development. Parents must have some way to demand that the village schoolmaster actually teach classes, that the dispensary in fact dispense medical care, or the upazila livestock officer really conduct periodic checks for anthrax. Just as at the national level, periodic elections and parliamentary standing committees are not enough. Other and more accessible channels must be available if local officials are to be accountable to those they are supposed to serve.

Creating a healthy pluralism, in which parties, interest groups and citizens at all levels press in their different (and often conflicting) ways to keep government honest, is a daunting task. Parties and trade unions do not unlearn their experience and change directions overnight, nor do villagers accustomed since time immemorial to their place at the receiving end of local elite domination suddenly assume effective roles as guardians of the public weal. All these things take both time and a stable political context, in which people can learn and practice the new skills they will need.

Response: In the short term, the USG has had some effect acting in concert with other diplomatic missions to press the BDG to allow greater press freedom, a more open pluralistic political process, more extensive access for outside groups such as Amnesty International. Over the longer term, cause and effect are considerably more subtle, but it is reasonable to assert that the various USIS programs over the years sponsoring a two-way stream of visitors between the US and Bangladesh have had a cumulative effect in creating an understanding of the indirect democratic accountability that exists in the United States. An IVP visitor who followed the recent public uproar about Congressional salary increases during his stay in the United States, or a Fulbright scholar who attended Parent-Teachers Association meetings where her child attended primary school would learn much that could have an effect in Bangladesh. In its support for the Private Rural Initiatives Project, USAID has contributed to similar long-term impacts on accountability.

Recommendations: Building pluralism accountability can best be seen as a second-order outcome of other activities. It cannot be measured as a short-term project output. The best way to move toward it is to: (a) continue "increased political participation" as one of USAID's sub-goals in its CDSS, as well as to maintain "increased voice and choice" as one of its program objectives; and (b) include democratic pluralism as a cross-cutting theme like WID, environmental impact and sustainability that would infuse and inform all the projects in the mission's portfolio.

V. IMPLEMENTATION SUGGESTIONS

A. Institutional Framework

The foregoing recommendations have been made with full realization that AID, USIS, and the Embassy have limited staff for the implementation of the suggested programs. For this reason it will be necessary for these agencies to employ intermediaries with strong management systems and institutional interests that are compatible with the report's priorities. In addition to the utilization of those organizations with which the Bangladesh Mission already has experience this will require the development of additional relationships with both resident and overseas NGOs whose program interests coincide with the assessment's strategic elements.

B. The Role of Embassy Personnel in Implementation

In addition to AID and USIS personnel, Embassy personnel should be involved with the effort at all stages from program and project identification to implementation and subsequent evaluation. Embassy personnel can contribute directly to the effort in three ways:

(1) Provide the country team with continually updated political analyses that can be used as the basis for specific interventions.

(2) Provide analyses of how Bangladesh compares with other states undergoing democratic development, thereby providing a basis for tracking its movement toward sustainable democracy.

(3) Participate in the monitoring of project-level activities. This effort should help to provide theoretical linkages between what is being done at the project level and the bigger picture.

More generally, Embassy personnel can help to explain American efforts to counterparts and report back problems that the operating agencies may not have realized were developing. The Embassy will, of course, play a major part in deciding on the reactions the United States should make to any major changes in political direction that might occur during the development period.

The Embassy's consistent and visible support for democratic development, and for the democratic elements in the country, will provide the necessary context for any successful democratic development program.

C. Performance Indicators

The question of adequate indicators for democratic development is a complex topic that the Mission may need to explore in some depth. For this exploration, we hope the following sketch provides a helpful starting point.

(1) The indicator system should be developed on three levels so that the lower levels of the system (levels two and three) potentially feed into the first level. The first level should be based on the listing of strategic elements in Part IV, together with the definitions and descriptions of the current situation that accompany these. Lower levels of the indicator system should relate each activity (or subarea within an element) and activity component to one or more of the specific elements identified at level one.

For example, under C1 (Legislature and Government), the current condition of the legislature is a first level concern. The questions generated to describe its condition would range from those relating to its effectiveness as a deliberative body to its freedom to operate as an independent body. On the second level, one might place an activity to increase the knowledge that legislators have of the problems the country faces. On the third level, one might specify a component of this activity such as the establishment of research and information services or study seminars.

(2) On each level, the Mission should develop a baseline account of the situation at the beginning of each year. (The State Department's human rights reporting process would be a helpful starting point for a first level analysis in many areas.) Each year the accounts should be rewritten. Obviously, below the first level those areas can be omitted in which activities or components have not been developed. In our example, on the second level, the Mission should annually assess the apparent ability of legislators to deal knowledgeably with national issues. On the third level, it should consider the availability of research services and their usage or the number of study seminars that took place and their attendance.

(3) The performance assessors should then for each element, activity, or component compare the current year's account with that of the previous year. If there has been an improvement, the item should be given a plus, if deterioration, then a minus, if, on balance, little change has occurred, then a 0. (Initially, third level analyses will almost always show pluses, but this will not necessarily be true in later years.)

(4) The assessors should then consider the patterns of pluses and minuses. A positive balance on the first level (more pluses than minuses) could be seen as a measure of success for the democratic development effort as a whole, if all elements are to be equally weighted (which may make sense as an initial assumption). However, intervening political and economic events could easily overwhelm the effects of the democratic development effort. One would assume that positive scores at lower levels in a particular area would be reflected at higher levels for this area. In the short term this may be too much to expect, but over the long term a failure of scores to "add up" in this manner should lead to rethinking the effort.

The authors realize that the foregoing sketch does not differ greatly from current USAID practice in other development areas, but it may help in adapting this new area to the general development effort.

Figure 2

OUTLINE: STRATEGIC ELEMENTS/COMPONENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Primary Objective: Strengthen Governmental Institutions

Secondary Objectives:
- Develop Informed and Active Citizenry
- Maintain Integrity of Elections
- Create Stronger Policy Environment
- Protect Human Rights
- Strengthen Accountability

A. Voice

1. Non-Governmental Organizations

- •Umbrella interest group
- •AMPARTs and other visiting speakers
- •IVP and other orientation programs

2. Information Media

- •Journalist Training
- •Study Tours

3. Opinion Polling

- •Expand Capabilities

B. Choice

1. National Elections

- •Election Observation
- •Strengthening Election Commission
- •Inclusion of Bangladeshis on International Observer Teams
- •Visiting Speakers and Study Tours

2. Local Elections

- •Election Monitoring
- •Visiting Speakers and Study Tours
- •Policy Research

3. Political Parties

- •Encouraging Dialogue
- •Visiting Speakers and Study Tours
- •Policy Research

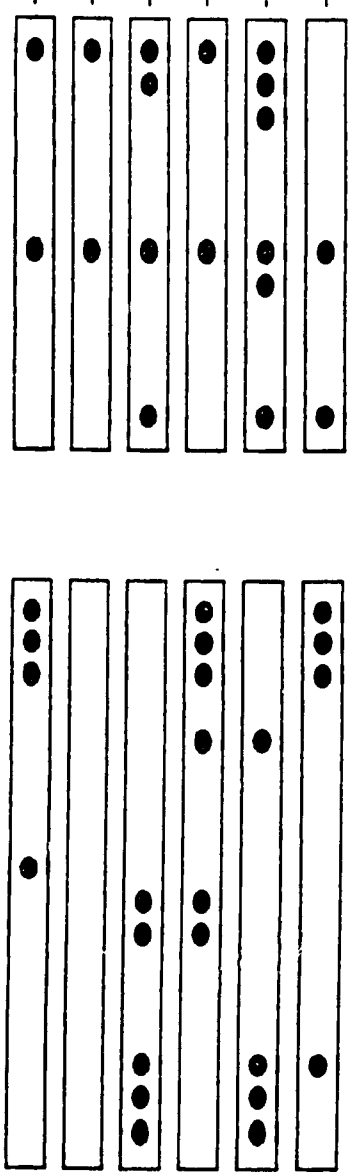


Figure 2 (Continued)

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	Strengthen Governmental Institutions	Develop Informed and Active Citizenry	Maintain Integrity of Elections	Create Stronger Policy Environment	Protect Human Rights	Strengthen Accountability
C. Governance						
1. Legislature and Government						
•Strengthen Parliamentary Committee System	●		●			●
•Member Orientation	●		●			●
•Technical Support			●			●
•Policy Assistance			●			●
2. Bureaucracy						
•Encourage Consideration of PAES Report	●		●			●
•Visiting Speakers and Study Tours			●			●
3. Security Services						
•IMET	●	●				●
4. Local Government						
•Local Government Support Project	●	●			●	●
•Encourage Consistency and Continuity			●		●	●
D. Redress						
1. Judiciary						
•Technical Assistance	●	●	●		●	●
•Visiting Speakers and Study Tours			●			●
•Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms		●	●			●
2. Human Rights						
•Support of Reporting Efforts		●	●		●	
•Emphasis on Women's Rights		●			●	

Figure 2 (Continued)

OUTLINE: STRATEGIC ELEMENTS/COMPONENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Primary Objective: Strengthen Governmental Institutions

Secondary Objectives:
- Develop Informed and Active Citizenry
- Maintain Integrity of Elections
- Create Stronger Policy Environment
- Protect Human Rights
- Strengthen Accountability

E. Accountability

1. Direct Accountability

•Strengthening Government-Bureaucracy Links	●					●
•Implement PAEF Recommendations	●		●		●	●
•Ethics Training	●		●			●
•Create Ombudsman Office	●	●	●			●
2. Indirect Accountability						
•Maintain and Expand Press Freedom	●	●	●	●	●	●
•Policy Research		●			●	●

VI. DEMOCRACY AND THE MISSION'S BROADER DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In USAID policy, democracy as a independent policy goal is a recent innovation. However, democratic concerns have long been integrated in various ways into USAID development programs as well as the strategies and programs of other institutions within the overseas missions of the United States, such as the United States Information Agency. Promoting democracy, long a central concern of United States foreign policy, became a higher priority in the 1980s.

From this broader perspective it is important to examine briefly the democratic aspects of the work of USAID/Bangladesh as it relates to the effort to support democratic objectives.

In the most general sense, the entire USAID program supports democratic objectives. The prospects for democracy are clearly brighter to the extent that a country is prosperous and its citizens literate and healthy. Probably as important for democratic stability as the absolute levels of such progress is steady, upward movement in the political, social, and economic indicators, particularly to the extent that they represent distributed improvement. All USAID efforts are directed toward these goals. As we have pointed out in the foregoing sections of this report, stabilized and improving performance in socioeconomic indicators are of critical importance if the present opening for democracy in Bangladesh is to be maintained.

Beyond these general remarks, one should not underestimate the extent to which the specific objectives of the USAID development strategy (CDSS) dovetail with the objectives of the specific BDP initiatives suggested in foregoing sections. The mandated consideration of the special need to enhance the status and opportunities of women in all AID efforts directly fits the demand for greater equality and more respect for human rights that is an inescapable aspect of modern democracy. Efforts to aid Bangladesh in its struggle against overpopulation have the additional benefit of freeing many women

for more active involvement outside the home. The effort to support development at the grassroots level through channeling support through NGOs both increases the control over resources of the very poor and coincidentally strengthens the organizational pluralism that has historically been such an important aspect of democratic development.

We have discussed this effort in some detail in our discussions above of NGOs as an aspect of *voice* and in the discussion of local government. An example of empowerment that comes as a byproduct to other projects is USAID support for rural electrification cooperatives that both bring reliable power to poorer areas and give villagers useful experience in managing the interface between their villages and the outer world. More directly, USAID has promoted democratization on the national level through support for election monitoring and civic participation. USIS programs include education for democracy as at least an equal concern in many programs, particularly those directed toward the improvement of journalism.

In recent years, much of the USAID effort has been directed toward freeing Bangladesh's economy from the numbing effects of overregulation and inefficient state-owned industry. The objective of strengthening the market economy has had primarily economic objectives. Yet through providing more opportunity to individuals, both as consumers and producers, this effort can also be seen as making a direct contribution to making the country's populace freer and more capable of managing their own affairs, and thereby more capable of participating effectively in a democratic system.

As the Mission moves toward developing an integrated approach to support for democracy, this concern will become more explicitly integrated into the overall Mission effort. For USAID/Bangladesh this might lead to incorporating, at least informally, a requirement that the impact of new projects or proposals on the democratic condition of the country be considered before approval, in a manner analogous to that now mandated for environmental and gender concerns. It may also be useful to consider ways in which USAID might suggest for its own initiatives and those of counterpart institutions that hearings or public consultations be held before projects are implemented. We understand that in some cases such procedures are already in mind for eliciting

responses from those who will be most affected by a project, for example in regard to flood control. Perhaps the approach could be extended, where appropriate.

ACRONYMS

AARP	American Association of Retired Persons
ADP	Asian Democracy Program
AL	Awami League
AMPART	American Participants (USIS program)
BAMNA	Bangladesh Mukto Nirbachan Andolon (Free Election Movement)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BDG	Bangladesh Government
BDP	Bangladesh Democracy Program (USAID)
BFUJ	Bangladesh Federated Union of Journalists
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BNP	Bangladesh National Party
BPATC	Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BSEHR	Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights
BUET	Bangladesh University for Engineering Technology
CCHRB	Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh
CDSS	Country Development Strategy Statement (USAID)
CMLA	Chief Martial Law Administrator
CSB	Civil Service of Bangladesh
CSP	Civil Service of Pakistan
DCCI	Dhaka Chamber of Commerce, Incorporated
ERD	External Resources Division (BDG Planning Commission)
FAP	Flood Action Plan
FFW	Food for Work
GPRB	Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
IMET	International Military Education and Training Program
USG	United States Government
IVP	International Visitors Program (USIS)
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
JP	Jatiyo Party
MP	Member of Parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute of International Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRI	National Republican Institute
PACT	Private Agencies Collaborating Together (NGO umbrella group agency)
PAES	Public Administration Efficiency Study
PRIP	Private Rural Initiatives Project (USAID/Dhaka)
SKOP	Sramik Karmachari Oikkiyo Parishad (Workers-Employees United Council)
TAF	The Asia Foundation

UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
USIS	United States Information Service
WID	Women in Development

PERSONS CONSULTED

In Washington, D.C.

Bjornlund, Eric C.	National Democratic Institute
Borden, Betty	The Asia Foundation
Brandon, John	The Asia Foundation
Countryman, Illona	USAID
Forbes, Phyllis	USAID
Fredrick, David	USAID
Giere, Gina	National Democratic Institute
Jones, Bill	USIA
McMahon, Ned	National Democratic Institute
Painter, Flora	Coopers & Lybrand
Robinson, Charlene	Coopers & Lybrand
Silver, Arthur	USAID
Wallach, Ken	National Democratic Institute
Walther, Kathi	National Republican Institute
Weierbach, Cornelia	State Department
Whitaker, Richard	USAID
Wong, Melissa	Coopers & Lybrand

In Bangladesh

United States Government Officials

Ahmed, Ziauddin	USAID/OEE
Dorschner, Jon P.	Embassy, Second Secretary
Dunn, James	Embassy/DAO
Garzon, Jose	USAID/PRO
Hahn, Zachary	USAID/PDE
Kilgour, Mary C.	Director, USAID
Lehman, Chuck	USAID/OPH
Lunstead, Jeff	Embassy/POL
McNaull, Mike	Embassy/ECON
Milam, William	Ambassador
Mudge, James L.	USAID/OEE
Peppers, Ray	Director, USIS
Purvis, Malcolm	Deputy Director, USAID
Rashid, Raka	USAID/PDE
Smith, Herb	USAID/PDE
Young, Frank	USAID/PRO

Bangladesh Government Officials

Ahmed, Tofeal	Member of Parliament (Awami League)
Ali, Akhter	Additional Secretary, Ministry of Jute
Haq, K. M. Ejazul	Joint Secretary, ERD
Hossain, Mosharraf	Director, Administration, BPATC
Huda, Nazmul, Barrister	Minister of Information
Islam, Kazi M. Aminul	Deputy Director, BPATC
Khan, A. M. Zahiruddin	Minister of Planning
Latif, Brig. Zahid	Chairman, Rural Electrification Board
Menon, Rashid Khan	Member of Parliament
Munzur-i-Mowla, Quazi Md.	Rector, BPATC
Razzak, Abdur	Speaker, National Parliament
Rouf, Justice M.A.	Chief Election Commissioner
Siddiqui, Dr. Kamal	Additional Secretary, Prime Minister's Secretariat
Zakaria, S.M.	Joint Secretary, Election Commission

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Officials

Ahmed, Salehuddin	Director, Programs, BRAC
Bloem, Martin W.	Country Director, HKI
Brand, Ed	CARE
Costa, Rosaline	CCHRB
Evans, Bill	The Asia Foundation
Fernando, Nihan	The Asia Foundation
Hodgdon, Jonathan D.	CARE
Holloway, Richard J.V.	PRIP/PACT
Huda, Sigma	BSEHR
Offenheiser, Raymond C.	Representative, Ford Foundation
Shahjahan, Mohammed	BSEHR
Timm, Rev. Richard W.	CCHRB
Yunus, Dr. Mohammad K.	Chairman, Grameen Bank

Others

Ahmed, Moudud	Former Vice President (Jatiyo Party)
Ahmed, Qazi Jalaluddin	Former Defense Secretary
Boone, Peter	U.K. High Commission
Chowdhury, Badrul Haider	Former Chief Justice
Chowdhury, Gias Kamal	President, BFUJ
Dirkx, Johann	Netherlands Embassy
Findlayson, George	DCM/UK High Commission
Hosein, Moinul, Barrister	Publisher, New Nation, Ittefaq

Hossain, Dr. Kamal	Awami League
Hussain, S. Zakir	Secretary, DCCI
Kamal, Fazal	Editor, Dhaka Courier
Karim, Mohammad Enayet	Director, CDR,B
Khan, Enayatullah	Editor, Holiday (Weekly)
Khan, M. Murshed	MCCI
Khan, Moh. Mohabbat	Professor of Public Administration, Dhaka University
Maniruzzaman, Talukdar	Professor of Political Science, Dhaka University
Miah, Md. Ismail Hussain	Vice President, DCCI
Miah, Prof. Moniruzzaman	Vice-Chancellor, Dhaka University
Nielsen, Knut K.	Danish Embassy
Rahman, Atiaur	Senior Research Fellow, BIDS
Rahman, K.F.	Former Presidential Advisor
Rahman, Mahbubur	President, DCCI
Shajahan, Prof. Md.	Vice Chancellor, BUET
Shelly, Mizanur Rahman	Chairman, CDR,B
Svendsen, Mats	Swedish Embassy
Young, Patricia	Canadian High Commission
Yunus, M.	DCCI

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