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**INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING FOR  
CIVIC PARTICIPATION PROJECT**

**MID-TERM EVALUATION**

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# INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION PROJECT MID-TERM EVALUATION

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

The purposes of the evaluation are to enable The Asia Foundation (TAF) and the United States Agency for International Development's Mission to Bangladesh (USAID/Bangladesh) to:

1. Assess the progress and impact of the project in relation to its original purpose of strengthening democratic institutions in Bangladesh and its planned outputs;
2. Assess actual and potential impact of the project on USAID/Bangladesh's revised strategic objective of increased accountability of democratic government through strengthening the formal and informal communications between the citizens of Bangladesh and government institutions; and
3. Recommend realignments of project initiatives as necessary to better achieve the project purpose and USAID/Bangladesh's strategic objective related to increasing accountability of democratic government.

The Scope of Work for this mid-term evaluation required a review of three of four components of the Institutional Strengthening for Civic Participation (ISCP) Project -- strengthening Parliamentary policy formulation and review, strengthening the elections administration and process, and developing the media. The judiciary/legal aid program was evaluated separately in September 1993 and is outside the scope of this mid-term evaluation.

### Background

The ICSP Project began in late 1988 as a key contributor to the USAID's then program objective of increasing political participation to achieve economic growth and poverty alleviation. In 1989, USAID/Bangladesh entered into a cooperative agreement with The Asia Foundation (TAF) with the stated goal of strengthening organizations and institutions that encourage civic participation in the development of Bangladesh. At the time, Bangladesh was under *de facto* military rule, and the project was designed in this context. The project's purpose was to strengthen broad public support for representative government by building up the democratic institutions of Parliament, the Election Commission, the media, and the judiciary and law. By early 1991 military rule had been ousted and the nation returned to democratic governance through free and

open Parliamentary elections. Both USAID/Bangladesh and TAF revised their strategies, and Project was subsequently revised to reflect the changed environment.

### **Project Description**

The ISCP Project's focus is to provide support for systems of formal and informal communications between citizens of Bangladesh and governmental organizations. The Project is organized as (1) a Public Accountability Program consisting of building up the democratic institutions of Parliament, the Election Commission, and the media and (2) a Judiciary/Legal Aid Program. This evaluation is only concerned with the Public Accountability Program.

As revised formally in June, 1992, the goal of the Public Accountability Program is to strengthen broad public support for representative government by strengthening Parliament and institutions that promote public scrutiny of government policies and actions. Each component and its objective is as follows:

**Parliament** -- The objective is to strengthen Parliament's institutional capacity to oversee executive branch ministries and divisions. The Project's plans consist of:

- Member orientation courses
- Strengthening institutional capacity
- Trained technical staff

**Elections** -- The objective is to foster public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process by professionalizing the Election Commission and modernizing its systems and procedures for preparing and maintaining electoral rolls. The Project's plans consist of:

- Support for the institutional development of the Bangladesh Election Commission
- Voter education and research through NGOs

**Media** -- The objective is to strengthen the reporting and writing skills of rural and Dhaka-based journalists. The Project's plans consist of:

- Education and in-service training
- Specialized skills development workshops for mid-level and senior reporters

### **General Findings**

**The Legislature:** The Parliamentary Development Project has been a mixture of progress and delays. The Government took over a year to approve the program of activities, and the activities with the Parliamentary Secretariat have moved slowly, due to bureaucratic inertia and to the failure of the Parliament to pass the legislation necessary to establish an autonomous Secretariat. A law to make the

Secretariat autonomous of the Government has been in process for over two years. A recommendation of the evaluation is that TAF should continue only minimal, highly targeted assistance to the Parliamentary Secretariat until its autonomy is established and additional permanent staff are recruited. On the other hand, the Centre for Analysis and Choice (CAC) has successfully demonstrated that the private sector can play a useful role in providing services to the Parliament. CAC has organized training seminars for Members of Parliament and has established a legislative drafting unit and a Member information service. A second recommendation is that TAF should continue to work with CAC and other NGOs to expand the involvement of private sector organizations in the parliamentary development program. Overall the program has not yet achieved its objectives, but sufficient progress has been made to justify expanded efforts with CAC and to warrant some optimism for future activities with the Secretariat.

**Elections:** Bangladesh demonstrated its commitment to and ability to carry out free and fair elections by successfully holding Parliamentary elections in 1991, shortly after the fall of the Ershad government. The Election Commission is led by competent, dedicated civil servants who clearly have an interest in assuring that future elections are carried out with integrity and efficiency. A pilot project to computerize the national electoral roll is somewhat behind schedule but is also progressing in an encouraging manner. Voter education activities have been successful and a study of voter behavior has provided useful information for future programming. TAF's comprehensive and long term approach to elections assistance is paying dividends, and the program should be continued beyond the current project period. In order to assist the institutional development of the Election Commission, the evaluation recommends that TAF should assess the potential benefits of establishing an institutional linkage between the Commission and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

**The Media:** With the fall of the Ershad regime and the advent of Parliamentary government, restrictions on the print media were significantly relaxed although not entirely eliminated. The Government retains a monopoly on television and radio, but the new freedoms led to an explosion in the number of newspapers in both the English and Bangla languages from perhaps less than 100 in 1990 to estimates between 500 and 1,000 today. This proliferation has allowed more opinion across a broader range with few restrictions to be available to the reading public. At the same time it has created more of a demand for journalists than can be satisfied with qualified personnel. A loss of quality of writing is bemoaned by most editors and publishers, but the press freedoms are broadly appreciated. The vestiges of Government control over the print media are present in the Government's placement of advertisements in favored papers and in the monopoly the Government maintains over the sale of newsprint. These factors lead to a subtle self censorship by some journalists. The evaluation recommends that USAID/Bangladesh should make a formal recommendation to the Government of Bangladesh that the quota system for the sale and import of newsprint be abolished.

The TAF media development program has trained a large number of journalists in important topics (environment, Parliamentary reporting, family planning, et. al.) and is attempting, with more limited success to date, to upgrade the teaching of journalism at Dhaka University. TAF has conscientiously assessed the strengths and weaknesses of its media program, and future assistance to this vital sector is clearly warranted.

### **Project Management**

USAID/Bangladesh has allowed TAF considerable flexibility in implementation of the project, to the extent that changing conditions and new opportunities can be accommodated with little difficulty. For example, the original 1989 Cooperative Agreement did not specify quantified outputs and rigid measurements of objectives. It is not clear from the record whether this was the result of a conscious decision or rather a lack of baseline data and experience with programming in democracy strengthening. However, the benefit of this approach was borne out in 1990 with the abrupt change of government and the opportunity for much more effective programming to be seized. This led to a 1992 revision of the project that was appropriate to the new situation, but again allowed the flexibility that has proven to be necessary (e.g. with the slow movement on the Parliamentary Secretariat component). For its part TAF has consistently demonstrated its excellent relations with counterparts in both the Government and private sectors, as well as its commitment to genuine democratic development rather than to its forms or appearance. TAF considers its efforts in this sector as integrated and has commendably taken a long range view of progress. Both USAID and TAF deserve credit for recognizing that progress in the development of democracy in Bangladesh will not be linear and for having built into the project the flexibility appropriate to the situation.

### **Future Programming**

USAID/Bangladesh and TAF should continue assistance in all three of the project components covered in this evaluation. Assistance should also be initiated in public opinion polling as currently planned. In addition TAF and USAID should explore new programming in the fields of local government development, anti-corruption and civil-military relations.

## II. ACRONYMS

AMIC	Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre
CAC	Centre For Analysis and Choice
CDS	Center for Development Services
CCHRB	Coordinating Council of Human Rights in Bangladesh
DU/DMCJ	Dhaka University Department of Mass Communication and Journalism
ISCP	Institutional Strengthening for Civic Participation
MARC	Multidisciplinary Action Research Centre
MLAA	Madaripur Legal Aid Association
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PDP	Parliamentary Development Program
PIB	Press Institute of Bangladesh
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TAPP	Technical Assistance Project Proforma
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID/Bangladesh	United States Agency for International Development Mission to Bangladesh

### III. INTRODUCTION

#### A. BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

In 1989, USAID/Bangladesh entered into a cooperative agreement with The Asia Foundation (TAF) with the intent to strengthen organizations and institutions that encourage civic participation in the development of Bangladesh. At the time, Bangladesh was under *de facto* military rule, and the project was designed in this context. The project's purpose was to strengthen broad public support for representative government by building up the democratic institutions of Parliament, the Election Commission, the media, and the judiciary and law.

By April 1991, significant political change had occurred in Bangladesh, with the end of military rule and the subsequent return to democracy through free and open Parliamentary elections. This proved a good beginning of the process of building democratic institutions in Bangladesh, but more work in the area was needed. In addition, the shift toward democracy is seen by USAID and TAF as a way to influence public policy that will, in turn, contribute to obtaining the long-term USAID goal of improved economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Despite the progress made, difficulties remained in the strengthening of democratic institutions in Bangladesh. TAF and USAID considered the low level of development, lack of a tradition of democratic government, and cultural values inconsistent with democracy as serious limitations to the near term democratization of Bangladesh. Given this situation and the lessons learned from the first few years of the ISCP Project, TAF and USAID revised the Project June 1992, as described below.

The Scope of Work for this mid-term evaluation requires a review of three of four sections of the ISCP Project -- strengthening Parliamentary policy formulation and review, strengthening the elections administration and process, and developing the media. The judiciary/legal aid program was evaluated separately in September 1993 and is outside the scope of this mid-term evaluation.

#### B. GENERAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The ISCP Project's focus is to provide support for systems of formal and informal communications between citizens of Bangladesh and governmental organizations. The Project is based on the premise that a democratically-elected government is more likely to maintain political stability and build political consensus on national economic and social goals such as investments in education, health, infrastructure, rural development, limitation of urban subsidies, and stimulation of export-oriented industries.

The Project, as revised in June 1992, is organized as (1) a Public Accountability Program consisting of building up the democratic institutions of Parliament, the Election Commission, the media; and (2) a Judiciary/Legal Aid Program. As this evaluation is only concerned with the Public Accountability Program, this section limits its description to that portion of the ISCP Project.

The goal of the Public Accountability Program is to strengthen broad public support for representative government by strengthening Parliament and institutions that promote public scrutiny of government policies and actions. Each component and its objective is as follows:

**Parliament** -- The objective is to strengthen Parliament's institutional capacity to oversee executive branch ministries and divisions. Parliament provides opposition parties with a legitimate forum to present their opposing viewpoints and competing demands, thereby enabling political conflict to be managed institutionally rather than on the streets. Unfortunately, Parliament's power relative to the Executive branch is weak. The Project seeks to overcome this weakness by providing Members of Parliament with the tools to expand their participation in governance.

The Project's plans consist of:

Member orientation courses

TAF assists the Parliament's Secretariat in planning and conducting Member orientation courses on parliamentary rules and procedures, the planning and budget process, Member privileges, and the authority and responsibilities of standing committees. Resource persons from other Commonwealth Parliaments and the U.S. Congress are included to advise Bangladeshi parliamentary leaders, members, and staff. In addition, seminars are held that cover such substantive issues as environment, population and the economy. The purpose of these exchanges and other activities is to encourage Members to more clearly define their authority and responsibility and to strengthen mechanisms to monitor the activities of ministries and divisions.

Active Participation of All Members

TAF works with both Government and opposition party Members to develop attitudes that are supportive of democratic institutions and processes, so that they are more inclined to engage in significant debates, battles if necessary, using parliamentary rules and procedures to advance their agendas.

Strengthening institutional capacity

TAF supports the creation of a Member Liaison Section, a Legislative Drafting Section, and a Documentation Section in the Secretariat that can provide basic secretarial services to Members and Committees, draft private member bills, and attend to the publications and distribution of parliamentary proceeding and debates. The goal is to provide Members with

essential services and build demand for more sophisticated ones. Future plans call for enabling the Secretariat to provide library-based research and documentation, specialized Member seminars on sectoral issues, and technical assistance to key committees.

#### Trained Technical Staff

The Project calls for the expansion of staff (54 new posts over 3 years), and TAF will assist in the training of Secretariat staff to work on the implementation of parliamentary development.

**Elections** -- The objective is to foster public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process by professionalizing the Election Commission and modernizing its systems and procedures for preparing and maintaining electoral rolls.

The Project's plans consist of:

#### Bangladesh Election Commission

In 1991 TAF provided travel grants that enabled the Joint Secretary and the Deputy Election Commissioner for Chittagong Division to study the election administration laws of Pakistan, India, Nepal, and the Philippines. TAF plans call for improving overall management of electoral roll preparation, simplifying rules and procedures for enrolling voters, and developing a pilot project to computerize electoral rolls. TAF plans also call for follow-up technical assistance that will lead to the preparation of an institutional development plan.

#### Voter Education

TAF provided a Foundation grant to the Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA) for a 3 part voter education project consisting of 1) education of voter rights in advance of the 1991 Parliamentary election, 2) training MLAA staff in election monitoring, and 3) developing and publishing non-formal educational materials on the country's new parliamentary form of government for distribution in Madaripur.

#### Coordinating Council of Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB).

TAF provided a Foundation grant to CCHRB (an umbrella organization of 31 indigenous NGOs), who played an active role in observing the February 1991 Parliamentary elections. The CCHRB's widespread activities contributed significantly to the public's recognition that the election was free and fair, and also focused attention on problems with the electoral rolls. TAF supports follow-up CCHRB activities in terms of creating and staffing election monitoring cells with the approval of the Bangladesh Election Commission.

**Media** -- The objective is to strengthen the reporting and writing skills of rural and Dhaka-based journalists so that the media continues to have and expand its freedom

and the resources necessary to effectively expose government policies and actions to public scrutiny and to engage the citizenry in public policy issues.

The Project's plans consist of:

#### Education and In-service Training

TAF has provided grants to the Dhaka University Department of Mass Communication and Journalism (DMCJ), the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB), and the Centre for Development Services (CDS). TAF cites as significant grants to DMCJ that provide for the expansion and modernization of libraries; internships for journalism students at newspapers, news agencies, and radio and television stations in Bangladesh; preparation and publication of four textbooks; and a Media Center to train students in desktop publishing, photojournalism, and documentary video production.

TAF grants to PIB are put into training students in reporting and writing skills.

TAF has subcontracted with the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) to provide specialized skills development workshops for mid-level and senior reporters. In addition, workshops on legislative and environmental reporting were conducted by local institutions.

### C. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation is meant to assess the results to date of the ISCP Project as measured against its original purpose and planned outputs, and to recommend revisions and realignments which would better align the project purpose and outputs with the USAID/Bangladesh Mission's current democratic strategic objective. The scope of the evaluation will:

1. Assess project progress in meeting its planned outputs, and assess factors which may have either facilitated or constrained achievement of outputs.
2. Evaluate the degree to which the project has been successful in the following activities: a) enhancing legislative support to strengthen Parliament's capacity to assure more accountable government; b) modernizing the Election Commission's capability to prepare and maintain electoral rolls, and strengthening its managerial capabilities to increase public confidence in the electoral process; and c) providing training and support for the media to ensure greater balance and analytical content in reporting of government policies, party politics, and public policy debates.
3. Assess the effectiveness of project implementation including the roles of USAID/Bangladesh, TAF, and sub-grantees.

4. Assess the degree to which outputs have contributed to achievement of the project's original purpose of strengthening democratic institutions, as well as their actual and/or potential impact on the revised purpose of improving formal and informal communication systems between the people of Bangladesh and their government for enhanced accountability of democratic government.
5. Consider which project interventions have been most successful and which least successful in achieving both the original and revised project objectives. Recommend other interventions which might better support the project's revised purpose and USAID/Bangladesh's strategic objective.

## **IV. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY POLICY FORMATION AND REVIEW**

### **A. OBJECTIVES**

In spite of an atmosphere prevailing in Bangladesh that was not conducive to the growth of democratic institutions, The Asia Foundation in 1989 proposed a four-year program to strengthen organizations and institutions that would encourage civic participation in the developmental process in Bangladesh. Parliament was one of six areas in which a variety of activities was to be undertaken in order to strengthen it as an institution.

The overall objective of this component of the Project was "to improve the capability of the Parliament Secretariat to develop and institutionalize on-going in-service training programs for Members of Parliament, and strengthen the Secretariat's support services." In order to achieve this objective, the project proposed to train the Secretariat staff and enhance the Parliament's legislative drafting capability.

With the ouster of the Ershad government in 1990 and a free and fair election of 1991, a more democratic environment was ushered in. In the context of the changing political dynamics -- especially Bangladesh switching from a presidential system to a parliamentary system through the passage of Twelfth Amendment of the Constitution -- TAF revised its program in 1992 so as to make Project activities more intensive and integrated. Unlike the developed parliamentary democracies of Great Britain and Canada, Bangladesh's Parliament is comparatively weak in checking the concentration of power within the executive. The committee system needs to be developed in order to permit the Parliament to be able to hold the executive accountable. The revised objective is "to strengthen Parliament's institutional capacity to oversee executive branch ministries and divisions."

### **B. ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

TAF's 1989 proposal programming Bangladesh Parliament development was divided into four broad components:

- 1) exchanges -- exchange program with the United States and Asian interparliamentary cooperation and exchange;
- 2) support services -- library development, legislative drafting service;
- 3) professional development -- new Member orientation and education, MP observation of the American legislative process; and
- 4) assessment and evaluation.

Due to the subservient role of the Parliament to the executive under the existing presidential system, during 1989-1990 TAF could not make much headway except to provide the Parliament library with a number of word processors and printers to assist

the automation of the process of documenting the Parliamentary debates. Training was provided to staff assigned to use the equipment. TAF also funded the then Secretary of the Parliament Secretariat on tours of legislative systems in the United States and Thailand. The top officials of the Secretariat are on deputation from the executive branch, and the Secretary has since been replaced. Unfortunately, the experience and information gained the former Secretary has not been utilized to develop the Secretariat's staff.

A genuine opportunity for progress came with the change of form of government in 1991 in which supremacy of the Parliament was established through a constitutional amendment. However, the Parliament was not adequately prepared to assert its supremacy, and the rate of progress has been quite slow. The bureaucratic inertia among the Secretariat officials seems to be a serious handicap in achieving the program objectives. For example Members orientation was arranged only once, and there has been no follow-up by the Secretariat. The only exception is the library whose staff, especially the chief librarian, is enthusiastic in its development. TAF has provided a special collection of books that would assist the Committee System to work.

An observation program comparing the U.S. and Canadian legislative systems by a three-member team including the present Speaker created a positive impact. The Speaker appears to be committed to the development of Parliament's institutional support. At his direction, the Parliament Secretariat requested a comprehensive needs assessment and between December 1991 to January 1992 TAF's Regional Legislative Consultant prepared a Technical Assistance Project Proforma (TAPP) for a Parliamentary Development Project (PDP) and a three-year implementation plan. The Project seeks to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat in giving services to Parliament. Enhanced support services are expected to result in improved policy making and oversight of the government.

The TAPP called for the creation of additional 335 post to fulfill the Secretariat's total manpower needs, 32 positions specifically for the Parliamentary Development Project. According to the first year implementation plan, the following sections were to be set up:

- 1) Manpower Development and Training;
- 2) Legislative Advisory Service Station;
- 3) Research Section;
- 4) Reference and Documentation; and
- 5) Members Liaison Section.

Since 1992 TAF's Parliamentary Development Project has met with some significant progress as well as formidable roadblocks. The government took more than one-year to approve the Parliament's institutional strengthening project. Following approval TAF started working with the Secretariat initiating the first year's activities, but the progress has been slow. At present the Parliament Secretariat is not yet autonomous and is under the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs. The

constitution of Bangladesh requires an independent Secretariat, and a bill separating the Secretariat from the Ministry took two years to receive required government approvals, which were not completed until March, 1994. The bill is now pending Parliamentary approval. In the meantime the Parliament Secretariat has proposed (in May 1993) the recruitment of 204 additional staff. This includes the 32 positions for the Parliamentary Development Project who would serve as committee staff and assist with legislative drafting. In accordance with TAF conditionality, the salaries of the staff will be from the revenue budget of Bangladesh Government. The proposal has been approved by the Establishment Ministry and is sitting at the Finance Ministry. Since it would also need the assent of the President, the process is long and may take a while. As a result the Project cannot get fully underway until the new recruitment is completed. Under the circumstances TAF is working with the Parliament to implement those components which are within the purview of the Parliament Development Project but are not dependent on the new positions.

The Library Development is underway. Procurement of furniture and equipment is complete or in the process. Documentation of proceedings has been quickened. With the help of TAF funded computers, trained people can produce the proceeding in four days, but they are still partially hand written. An off-set printer for exclusive use by the Parliament has also been procured in order to resolve a 5-year backlog of transcripts. The Chief librarian's attendance, which was funded by a Foundation grant, at the second biennial conference of Parliamentary librarians of Asia-Pacific region held in Islamabad, Pakistan went a long way toward developing ideas about documentation and research. An exchange program with Taiwan, Pakistan, India, South Korea, Australia, Japan has already been established. The program will eventually encompass the entire Asia-Pacific region.

The main stumbling block in the way of the Parliamentary Development Project seems to be the non-passage of the bill that would make Secretariat autonomous. Due to the lack of staff, the Manpower Development and Training Services could not get started. With passage of the bill, the Speaker himself could have recruited new staff and gotten things moving. The inertia and lack of dedication on the part of Secretariat's personnel are also major impediments. For example, until the present date the Secretariat has neither been able to schedule any observation programs nor held any seminars for the Members, which it could have arranged with its existing staff. The top positions of the Secretariat are on deputation. They lack a sense of dedication to the institution of the Parliament, and frequent transfers in and out of the Secretariat prevent them from acquiring knowledge and expertise in Parliamentary Affairs. These impediments could have been resolved by now if the Secretariat had become autonomous as planned and a permanent Parliamentary cadre created.

### **The Role of the NGOs**

TAF's objective to strengthen Parliament Secretariat's institutional capacity to assure more accountable government ministries and divisions called for broadening the approach beyond the formal institution. It became obvious that NGOs can act more

quickly and independently than the government in instituting programs to improve Parliamentary process. The apprehensions expressed by opposition Members of Parliament that the Parliament Secretariat would be partisan were taken into consideration, and it was expected that NGOs could bring balance to this issue while also promoting public-private dialogue on issues relevance to policy development and legislative debate.

During FY1992 a Member seminar on fiscal planning and the budgetary process, organized by Centre For Analysis and Choice (CAC), indicated that MPs responded positively to a private sector role in the provision of legislative support services. TAF organized a group consisting of Secretariat officials, Members of Parliament and NGO representatives to participate in a Manila-based Congressional Research and Training Services regional conference. This experience helped convince Secretariat officials that there is a useful role for the private sector in providing services for the Parliament and solidified the resolve of the CAC to fulfill such a role. During FY1993 CAC established a legislative drafting cell and a Member information service. CAC has also organized Member seminars on Political Accountability of Parliament as an Institution and on Political Accountability of a Parliamentarian as an Individual. TAF's own evaluation of the first seminar of CAC went a long way in structuring the subsequent workshops allowing more time for interactions among the MPs, donors and academicians. There is a need, however, for CAC to concentrate more on follow up of its seminars and workshops in a structured manner.

#### **Budget and Expenditures**

Funding for institutional development of Parliament is presently budgeted at \$381,534 over the life of the project. Through December 1993, only \$96,941 had been spent. This is a reflection of the lack of progress in implementing the scheduled activities, especially those related to the Secretariat. The remaining funds to be utilized are \$284,593. This appears to be sufficient to achieve the objectives set by TAF once new recruitment and other Secretariat activities are initiated under the Parliamentary Development Program.

### **C. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Project has not yet been able to achieve the objective set for this component. So far only the Parliamentary Development Program has been approved. None of the support components that would have increased Parliament's institutional capacity are in operation. As a result the committee system is not functioning properly. TAF's activities regarding Parliamentary Development Program have generated significant interest among the MPs, and the bill separating the Secretariat has now been placed in the Parliament. The Asia Foundation can take legitimate pride in creating enough consciousness among the Members to push the bill. However, while TAF should remain engaged with the Parliament, until the bill is passed and the Secretariat

starts to operate independently, the Foundation should provide only minimal assistance to the Secretariat.

Within the purview of the Parliamentary Development Program, TAF can justifiably organize one more Member observation program to a Commonwealth country to help stimulate MPs to consider ways to energize the Parliament. On the other hand, training for the Secretariat staff and the hiring of local consultants (to be assigned to committees, establish an in-house member education program, and design a training program and curriculum for Secretariat staff) should not start until new recruitment is completed. The chief librarian may be sent to attend the conference of Association for the Parliamentary Librarians for the Asia/Pacific in order to get fresh ideas on computer utilization. These ideas could be of significant help when the automation of the library begins.

The evaluation team also recommends that, until such time as the Secretariat achieves autonomy, TAF should place its major emphasis on supporting CAC's Member information seminars and legislative drafting services. CAC's pilot program in public opinion polling should also be supported. Other NGOs such as the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association and Manabik Shahajya Sangstha can be utilized to organize other Member information seminars to improve the informal opportunities for public-private dialogue.

**RECOMMENDATION No. 1:** TAF should continue only minimal, highly targeted assistance to the Parliamentary Secretariat until its autonomy is established and additional permanent staff are recruited.

**RECOMMENDATION No. 2:** TAF should continue to work with the Centre for Analysis and Choice and other NGOs to expand the involvement of private sector organizations in the Parliamentary Development Program.

## V. STRENGTHENING THE ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATION AND PROCESS

### A. OBJECTIVES

Free and fair elections at regular interval are fundamental to the working of constitutional democratic government. Unfortunately Bangladesh has had a very limited exposure to an untainted electoral process. The election process came under severe strains, especially during the nine-year rule of former President Ershad. Massive vote rigging and hijacking of ballot boxes by the government party during the elections eroded peoples' faith in the system itself. The opposition political parties were convinced that there could be no free and fair elections as long as Ershad was in power. It was not possible to work at the institutional level ( i.e. the Election Commission) in this constrained environment. Therefore, in its 1989 proposal The Asia Foundation outlined a number of activities by which the electoral process could be improved. The objective defined in the proposal was "to increase the capacity of NGOs to encourage citizen participation in the electoral process, enhance election safeguards, monitor procedures, publicize and address abuses."

The specific activities to be carried out included:

- A film on voter literacy produced for showing in the cinema halls;
- An international conference on elections;
- A citizens' action group created;
- Voter-literacy materials produced;
- An international election observer team assembled and brought to Bangladesh for a national election.

Before much of this plan of action could be implemented, the Ershad regime was overthrown, creating a more conducive environment to work with the Election Commission. The caretaker government oversaw the 1991 parliamentary elections, which were judged by international and domestic NGO observation teams to be free and fair. These teams noted, however, that the electoral roll was severely defective, a view with which the Election Commission concurred and of which it was already aware. The Election Commission realized that the accuracy of the voter list was an issue that threatened to undermine its credibility and public standing and, by extension, the legitimacy of future elected government. In response to this defect, the Election Commission planned to accept a Japanese offer to provide microcomputers to prepare and update its voter lists. Subsequent discussions with the Foundation convinced the Commission that it should first examine current operations and systems in order to effectively integrate computerization into its electoral administration.

In February/March 1992, with USAID funds, the Foundation supported a consultancy to study the laws and procedures for election administration and preparation of electoral rolls, and to assess the Commission's management systems and feasibility of introducing a computer-based system for maintaining accurate electoral

rolls. The Election Commission adopted the report of the consultants (the Garber/Mostafa report) as a blueprint for its institutional development, including its plans to computerize the electoral rolls.

In the new programming environment and the Garber-Mostafa findings and recommendations, the Foundation concluded that it was now possible to work at the institutional level of the electoral process. In its June 1992 revised proposal to USAID, the Foundation added a new and comprehensive objective that reflected this new opportunity. The revised objective is "to foster public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process by professionalizing the Election Commission and modernizing its systems and procedures for preparing and maintaining electoral rolls."

## **B. ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

With the more open environment after the 1991 elections, TAF was able to work both with the Electoral Commission on institutional development and through NGOs on support activities. TAF with Foundation funds worked with the Coordinating Council for Human Rights (CCHRB) in Bangladesh to organize the observation of Upazila Elections in 1990, and Parliamentary Elections in 1991. CCHRB also received institutional and program support from TAF, and it observed 11 by-elections in 1993. Another NGO, the Centre for Analysis and Choice, received a grant to conduct a study on civic awareness.

Through its support to NGOs with USAID funding, TAF helped develop voter literacy materials. The Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) produced a film on voter literacy which, according to BSEHR, has been viewed by at least a million people. But most of the persons interviewed seemed to be unaware of its existence. A probable explanation could be that the film was shown outside Dhaka and our interviewees were all from Dhaka itself. A wider study could assess its actual impact. A study on voter behavior in Bangladesh during 1990 and 1991 Elections by the Multi-disciplinary Action Research Centre (MARC) has proven to be a useful work in assessing the voting patterns of Bangladeshi voters. The balance of the activities outlined in the 1989 program were, however, not carried out.

The Foundation also used USAID/Bangladesh funds to start work at the institutional level. Based upon its experience in the 1991 election, and the recommendations of CCHRB and international teams that observed the election, the Election Commission was convinced of the need to change laws and procedures. In 1991 the Foundation organized a regional observation program for four senior Election Commission officials that provided an opportunity to study the experience of counterpart institutions in the region, and to assess possible strategies for change.

The Foundation then supported the Garber/Mostafa, which recommended a

number of procedural and administrative changes, including:

- a) preparation of the voter list to a computerized one for accuracy and quick updating;
- b) simplification of systems and procedures;
- c) improved management of the Secretariat;
- d) enhanced support for district offices; and
- e) improved training for Secretariat staff and district election personnel.

The Asia Foundation took the decision, in consultation with the Election Commission, to address the computerization issue as the first initiative. TAF is following an incremental approach. Plans for a research and development unit were already underway before the start of the pilot Electronic Database Management (EDM) project, and the Election Commission is now proceeding with plans for the staff training component. The Commission has submitted a TAPP for the training program and is awaiting government approval of the new initiative. Following the Election Commission's adoption of the Garber-Mostafa report and the decision to focus on the preparation of computerized electoral rolls as the priority initiative, three senior Election Commission officials visited the United States in fall 1993 to study election administration laws and procedures at the municipal, state, and federal levels, and computer applications of election management. This program informed Commission decisions in initiating the pilot EDM project.

The pilot project is now well into implementation. The objectives are 1) preparation of computerized rolls and 2) compilation of election results and other statistics. The pilot is divided into four phases:

- a) software development;
- b) collection and entry of data for rural and urban test wards;
- c) testing and evaluation;
- d) follow-up steps for expansion of the pilot project to district and national levels, by conduct of a project definition study for expansion to district level.

So far the Project has made some encouraging progress. Working with two local computer companies for systems support and utilizing software from the U.S., the data entry from two wards (one urban, one rural) is almost completed. The pilot system is intended to be a working prototype that can be readily adapted for expansion at the district and national levels. The primary concern is that the software developed for the pilot be sophisticated enough to handle the much larger national voter database (50 - 60 million). The major cause of the delay derives from having to adapt the software to the Bangla language.

The Election Commission established a new Election Research and Development Unit in December, 1993. The unit complements the work under the pilot project and addresses other issues contained in the Garber/Mostafa report that are on the EC's agenda. The unit is at present focusing on compilation and analysis of

election data, election law reform and institutional development plans. TAF is interested in the work of the unit, as it is assessing needs and planning a training program for permanent officers of the EC. In another related activity, TAF has provided foundation funds to help the CCHRB develop a now fully operational monitoring cell.

### **The Role of the NGOs**

To date the participation of NGOs in the elections area has largely been related to election observations. Some Bangladeshis appear to believe that NGO involvement in other areas should be limited because the NGOs could inject their own political bias into any activities in voter education. This view seems to rest on the assumption that the largely illiterate electorate of Bangladesh is not capable of recognizing political bias. Based on experience in other countries and on the evaluators' assessment of NGO activity in Bangladesh, this fear seems to be unfounded. The experience of NGO participation in the Parliamentary development component of the present Project suggests that NGOs have been able to provide important services found to be useful and unbiased by both Government and opposition politicians. In addition, NGOs are successfully engaged in the provision of training/education in legal rights, and there is no fundamental difference where political rights are concerned. Finally, the alternative of leaving all voter education to a government institution, no matter how respected, is a dangerous strategy and contrary to the basic ideas of a democratic society.

TAF's experience with CAC, CCHRB and MARC in fields related to civic education has been positive and successful. Their involvement in motivating voter turnout, discussion of issues, teaching the mechanics of the voting process and other elections work is to be encouraged. MARC has submitted a proposal on voter education to TAF that is interesting and warrants serious attention.

### **Budget and Expenditures**

Funding for election assistance is presently budgeted at \$208,856 over the life of the project. Through the end of December, 1993 \$163,785 had been expended. This represents a reasonable rate of expenditure consistent with project activity. The funds remaining to be utilized are \$45,071. This appears to be insufficient to accomplish fully the objective of achieving public confidence in the electoral process as it relates to the Election Commission's responsibilities. Moreover, it does not allow for additional work that should be undertaken, such as voter education and a training institute for elections workers.

## **C. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The chief Election Commissioner and the Staff of the Election Commission Secretariat seem to be highly motivated public servants, enthusiastic about the important work they are doing. They clearly are willing to make every effort to make the pilot project a success. Although the project is behind schedule, TAF should

continue to work closely with the EC to give it further momentum. Assuming the pilot proves to be successful, the EC should be planning to seek other donor assistance for the extension of voter registration beyond the pilot project stage.

TAF should also look into the proposal, submitted by the Election Commission, for an in-house training program for elections officials and voter education. In the meantime the pilot voter education project submitted by MARC should also be reviewed.

A very positive finding is that TAF has viewed its election assistance in an integrated fashion. Rather than seeking merely to improve the voter registration rolls and enhance voter awareness, TAF has attempted to improve the total elections process. Towards that end, TAF has sponsored research on voter behavior and funded election observation teams. TAF is also encouraging proposals from NGOs on voter education on issues of civic importance (e.g. government functions, development topics, important laws). All of these initiatives should be pursued. TAF has voiced its interest in a long term relationship with the Election Commission. Because of TAF's comprehensive approach, such a relationship is to be encouraged.

The only recommendation the evaluation team has for further future assistance, beyond that already planned, is that TAF explore the possibility of involving the International Foundation for Electoral Support (IFES) in a supporting role. IFES is an organization that is specialized in elections assistance. As IFES has a cadre of staff and consultants with a wealth of experience on elections in scores of countries, a small but continuing role could provide a valuable institutional linkage that TAF can not replicate within its time, staff and funding limitations. Relationships and conferences with elections officials of other countries, access to laws and practices used elsewhere, and continuing institutional relations with elections specialists from an international pool are some of the potential benefits.

**RECOMMENDATION No. 3:** TAF should assess the potential benefits of establishing an institutional linkage between the Election Commission and the International Foundation for Electoral Support.

## VI. DEVELOPING THE MEDIA

### A. OBJECTIVES

The 1989 TAF proposal to USAID/Bangladesh defined the objectives of the media component of the project as " to improve the capacity of institutions involved in training journalists to design and implement effective training programs and support substantive discussion of issues related to effective reporting and press freedom." To achieve these objectives, the following outputs were contemplated: Dhaka University Department of Mass Communication and Journalism (DU/DMCJ) staff trained; DU/DMCJ curriculum improved; DU/DMCJ media center established and in operation; Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) library strengthened; PIB training program enhanced and expanded; seminar program involving international participants launched and two seminars completed.

The 1992 revised program plan changed the objective to be " to strengthen the reporting and writing skills of rural and Dhaka-based journalists." The activities to be carried out included continued support for journalism education and in-service training for younger reporters through DU/DMCJ and PIB. In addition, TAF planned to support specialized skills development workshops for mid-level journalists to be carried out by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC).

With the fall of the Ershad regime and the advent of Parliamentary government, restrictions on the print media were relaxed significantly although not entirely eliminated. The new freedoms led to an explosion in the number of newspapers and journals in both the English and Bangla languages. Reliable figures do not exist, but estimates of the number of newspapers have ranged from 500 to over 1,000 today compared with less than 100 in 1990. This proliferation has allowed more opinion across a broader range with few restrictions to be available to the reading public. At the same time it has created more demand for journalists than can be satisfied with qualified personnel. A diminution in the quality of writing and reporting is lamented by most editors and publishers. This is an important issue because poor quality reporting and unethical practices diminish the credibility of the press, thus reducing its effectiveness in aiding the public's scrutiny of government.

While the government has allowed much more freedom to the print media, old habits die hard. Government control of the media is a long established practice, and some vestiges still persist. The authorities of the Special Powers Act permit governmental censorship under certain conditions, and this has a chilling effect on some journalists, although the most repressive provisions of the Act were repealed in 1991. More bothersome to the media are two less obvious means of government involvement in the business of the press that can lead to government influence on editorial content. The first is the placement by the government of a great deal of advertising in the newspapers. For many papers this advertising is the chief source of

revenue. The assignment of advertising by the government is supposed to be on the basis of the circulation of the paper. However, every journalist is able to point out egregious examples of small circulation papers receiving far more than their share as a result of their being more favorably disposed toward the government line. Because of the importance of this revenue to many papers (very few papers, perhaps less than ten, turn a profit), there is a none too subtle pressure to avoid offending the government. Adding insult to injury, the two major government managed papers are said to have extremely low circulation, but they carry large amounts of government advertising.

The second means by which the government can influence editorial opinion is through the sale of newsprint. A government monopoly controls the domestic production and the import of newsprint. The government also controls the sale of newsprint. The sale is based on a quota for each newspaper that is theoretically related to circulation. Again, virtually all journalists can cite cases of papers that are friendly to the government receiving grossly unfair newsprint quotas. This situation not only puts publishers on notice that their quota can be manipulated, it also leads to corruption as publishers with higher quotas than they need sell the excess in what amounts to a black market in newsprint. The issues of government advertising and control of newsprint can lead to a self censorship on the part of some journalists.

The situation with the electronic media is simply that both radio and television are run exclusively by the government. This is part of a common pattern in South Asia, although competition with government stations is now allowed in some countries. In Bangladesh the Ministry of Information shows no sign of permitting private ownership of broadcast media in the foreseeable future. TAF is interested in greater freedom in these media and has included this topic in some of its media training programs.

## **B. ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The media development program started in FY1990 with PIB basic training courses for journalists, a needs assessment to develop a writing workshop on family planning issues, a study tour for one participant, and obligation of funds for DU/DMCJ procurement of the equipment for a media center. Similar types of activities were continued in fiscal years 1991-1993, including commodity assistance to PIB and topical seminars on legislative reporting and environmental issues organized by AMIC. During this period TAF also initiated an internship program for students of DU/DMCJ, wherein a period of three months is spent gaining real life journalism experience through working at a participating newspaper. This is a program that merits being integrated into the curriculum as a course requirement. Also noteworthy was the establishment of a relationship between the DU/DMCJ and the Southern Illinois University Department of Radio and Television.

Unfortunately, the equipment for use in the media center has not yet been received, due to a seemingly endless bureaucratic ineptness over payment or exoneration of import duties and taxes. As the visual medium continues to grow in influence and popularity, more professionalism in its use becomes increasingly important. The public's regard for the quality of the government newscasts is quite low. Once in operation, the media center will be the only practical training facility providing hands on experience with video production. This should help improve the quality and impact of television journalism. Moreover, it is to be hoped that the experience will help increase interest in private sector participation in the broadcast media.

The majority of the current activity in the media development program is the in-service training at the PIB. Over 750 journalists have been trained to date. As the program has matured, the training has become more relevant and better presented. Topics have included investigative reporting, environmental issues, development themes, and Parliamentary reporting. While TAF has been able to include some coverage of ethics in journalism, more is needed. In addition, every training course should include a session on the role of the press in a democracy.

TAF commissioned an impact assessment of PIB training in 1993, the results of which are still in draft form. Preliminary information suggests that the training is considered valuable, journalists have often put to use the information gained in training, and the results are enduring. As examples, more than 50% of the reporters are writing on topics in which they received training, and there has been lively reaction (both favorable and adverse) to editorials that have been written on subjects covered in the courses. Almost 90% of the trainees polled reported that their knowledge and work skills had been improved by the training.

The results of the impact assessment suggest the utility of a follow-up program for maintaining contact with the graduates of the training programs. The follow-up program could include specific activities designed to fit into a long-range evaluation of the training provided. Moreover, the number of graduates of training courses has reached a point where it may be productive to form some sort of an "alumni association." Such an association could be a means not only for participants to keep in touch with each other, but might also further the aims of the program with regard to journalistic ethics and extending the understanding of the role of the press in a democracy.

### **Budget and Expenditures**

Funding for the media component of the ISCP project is presently budgeted at \$553,189 for the life of the project. Through December, 1993 expenditures were \$395,769. This represents a reasonable rate of expenditure consistent with the level of program activity. The remaining balance of \$157,420 will not be adequate to cover the level of program activity that should be maintained until the current planned end of project in order to make significant progress toward the project objectives.

## C. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The press in Bangladesh today is quite free as compared with the pre-1991 era. The print media have demonstrated that there are few limits on what can be reported. The proliferation of newspapers suggests that almost anyone with the wherewithal can open and operate a paper. Within the print media the major problems appear to be a lack of good quality journalism and the vestigial attempts at government control. TAF is directly addressing the quality problem through the training programs at the PIB and the upgrading of journalism education at the university. The problem of the manipulation of government advertising expenditures will likely solve itself over time as the better quality journals attract more readership and survive in the marketplace. The issue of government control of the distribution of newsprint is more problematic and is the only serious threat to press freedom now in place. TAF needs to work with USAID and others toward the elimination of the government monopoly on newsprint. This is an issue related to other elements of the policy dialogue between USAID and the Government of Bangladesh, and it should, therefore, be taken up by USAID. With regard to the electronic media, the issue of privatization is a long term one and should be a continuing part of the agenda of the U.S. Mission.

**RECOMMENDATION No. 4:** USAID/Bangladesh should make a formal recommendation to the Government of Bangladesh that the quota system for sale and/or import of newsprint be abolished.

## **VII. PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

### **A. THE ASIA FOUNDATION**

TAF has demonstrated that it has excellent relations with counterparts in both the Government and private sectors. TAF has also shown its commitment to genuine democratic development rather than to forms or appearance. TAF considers its efforts in this sector as integrated and has commendably taken a long range view of progress. This is evident in their assistance in elections, where a comprehensive approach is producing not only a promising means of computerizing the voter registration rolls but is also providing useful information on voter behavior and civic education. The integration of efforts is also evidenced by TAF often financing initial work in democracy strengthening with their core Foundation funds, or using such funds to complement those of USAID.

In addition, although TAF/Bangladesh has received funding from USAID/Washington for a WIP program, TAF has managed the activity as an integral part of its overall democracy program.

TAF's ability and interest in involving private sector organizations in tandem with government institutions is also an example of practical approaches to problem solving. Moreover, the TAF approach reflects their belief that a vibrant private sector will help ensure the long term survival of democracy in Bangladesh, as it contributes to a more pluralistic society.

TAF has also demonstrated a willingness to curtail activities that do not have a good prognosis for successful implementation. This was seen in their reducing the level of effort with the Parliamentary Secretariat when sufficient counterpart activity was not forthcoming.

### **B. USAID**

USAID/Bangladesh has allowed TAF considerable flexibility in implementation of the project, to the extent that changing conditions and new opportunities can be accommodated with little difficulty. For example, the original 1989 Cooperative Agreement did not specify quantified outputs and rigid measurements of objectives. It is not clear from the record whether this was the result of a conscious decision or rather a lack of baseline data and experience with programming in democracy strengthening. However, the benefit of this approach was borne out in 1990 with the abrupt change of government and the opportunity for much more effective programming to be seized. This led to a 1992 revision of the project that was appropriate to the new situation, but again allowed the flexibility that has proven to be necessary (e.g. with the slow movement on the Parliamentary Secretariat component).

USAID is currently engaged in an effort to describe more clearly how their programming in the democracy area relates to their overall program goals and objectives. The Mission is doing a commendable job of involving TAF in the definition of the indicators of project progress and the setting of numerical targets, an exercise that is often carried out as an arcane art that is difficult to relate to real life project implementation. The evaluation team notes that the TAF project implementation personnel are not only consulted in this process but actively participating and contributing. This can only make the USAID effort more accurate and useful to the need to report on results. Because the USAID effort to define goals, objectives and indicators for its activities related to democratic governance is still in process, the evaluation team did not attempt to assess Project results relative to the still evolving benchmarks.

## VIII. FUTURE PROGRAMMING

### ICSP Program

USAID/Bangladesh and TAF should continue assistance in all three of the project components covered in this evaluation. These areas are vital to achievement of the strategic objective of increased accountability of democratic government. The evaluation team recommends that the continued assistance be modified to include the following:

**RECOMMENDATION No. 1:** TAF should continue only minimal, highly targeted assistance to the Parliamentary Secretariat until its autonomy is established and additional permanent staff are recruited.

**RECOMMENDATION No. 2:** TAF should continue to work with the Centre for Analysis and Choice (CAC) and other NGOs to expand the involvement of private sector organizations in the Parliamentary Development Program.

**RECOMMENDATION No. 3:** TAF should assess the potential benefits of establishing an institutional linkage between the Election Commission and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

**RECOMMENDATION No. 4:** USAID/Bangladesh should make a formal recommendation to the Government of Bangladesh that the quota system for sale and/or import of newsprint be abolished.

In addition, TAF's new initiative in public opinion polling addresses a serious gap in the efforts to strengthen democracy in Bangladesh. There is a great need for information about voters' understanding of issues and election procedures, about the public's understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, about the people's knowledge of public policy issues. A representative democracy cannot reflect the wishes of the citizens if those wishes are not known. In a country of widespread illiteracy and poverty, of the few reliable means of determining the public's interests is through opinion polling. The TAF initiative on this subject should begin as soon as possible.

### Additional Programming

Both USAID/Bangladesh and TAF should consider, as part of an expanded program of support for strengthening democracy, three additional areas of assistance:

#### 1. Local government

Local government programming was included in the TAF ISCP project, but has been discontinued primarily as a result of the Bangladesh government's lack of support in the establishment of a new system of local government. However,

decentralization and devolution of central government authority are vital elements in any strategy to increase accountability of democratic government. USAID/Bangladesh and TAF should continue to explore with the Bangladesh government and appropriate NGOs and citizens groups potential new local government structures.

## **2. Anti-corruption**

The TAF ISCP program to date has addressed the subject of accountability of government as a cross cutting theme. This theme as appeared in their activities in journalism, legal services, and Parliamentary development. The evaluation team found the subject of corruption to be on the minds of a majority of the persons interviewed. There is clearly a great deal of interest and concern about this topic. The subject can be approached in a number of non-confrontational ways. These include convening multi-country regional workshops, activities to tighten financial accountability, and initiating work with a single, lead government agency, such as the auditor general.

Because the perception of widespread public corruption undermines the efforts to attain accountability of government, anti-corruption is a topic that must be addressed. USAID/Bangladesh and TAF should explore the possibility of additional, more direct programming on this subject.

## **3. Civil-military relations**

Bangladesh is less than four years out of a de facto military government. The defense budget is not scrutinized in public. The media do not report on military matters. Nor is there any public debate on issues of national defense strategies. Civilian control of the military is an important aspect of a true democracy, and USAID/Bangladesh should consider a strategy for addressing these issues with the Bangladesh government. The strategy could explore a number of proven techniques for addressing these issues in a non-threatening and collaborative manner between civilian and military entities.

## **Budgetary Considerations**

As noted in previous sections, two of three areas evaluated will likely not be able to achieve project objectives with the level of funding currently programmed. Assistance to elections and the media will require additional funds before the current project completion date. Moreover, any additional program suggestions that may be initiated will require supplemental funding. Given the USAID program budget cycle, funding discussions between TAF and USAID/Bangladesh need to be initiated promptly.

## **IX. APPENDICES**

### **A. EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK**

SCOPE OF WORK  
INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION PROJECT  
MID-TERM EVALUATION

1. Activity Identification

The activity to be evaluated is the Bangladesh Institutional Strengthening for Civic Participation Project (ISCP Project, 388-0079) implemented under a Cooperative Agreement between USAID/Bangladesh and The Asia Foundation (TAF).

2. Purposes of the Evaluation

The purposes of the evaluation are to enable TAF and USAID to:

assess the progress and impact of the project in relation to its original purpose of strengthening democratic institutions in Bangladesh, and its planned outputs;

assess actual and potential impact of the project on USAID/Bangladesh's revised strategic objective of increased accountability of democratic government through strengthening the formal and informal communications between the citizens of Bangladesh and government institutions; and

recommend re-alignments of project initiatives as necessary to better achieve the project purpose and the Mission's strategic objective related to increasing accountability of democratic government.

3. Background

The ISCP Project began in late 1988 as a key contributor to achieving USAID/Bangladesh's then program strategic objective of increasing political participation to achieve the Mission goal of economic growth and poverty alleviation. Since the project began, two significant changes impacting on project direction and expected achievements occurred. In 1991 military rule was ousted, and the nation returned to democracy through free and open Parliamentary elections. In 1992 and 1993 USAID/Bangladesh -- in response to the political changes and improving macroeconomic trends -- revised its strategic approach. The Mission identified poverty reduction as its goal, and enhanced popular access to institutions of democratic governance as one of three subgoals which contribute to goal achievement.

The assumption underlying the Mission's democratic governance sub-goal is that effective representative government would shift decisions about the allocation of public resources in favor of the poor. For example, a democratically elected government would favor increased investments in primary education and preventive health care over those in university education and curative health care.

The Mission's strategic objective under the subgoal is increased accountability of democratic government in two areas of policy making -- the budgetary process and the parliamentary process. Through its PL 480 Title III program the Mission encourages budgetary discipline and improved quality of public, donor-assisted development investment. Through the ISCP Project and other activities the Mission aims to improve the performance and accountability of Parliament, and to engender improvements in the broader democratic environment by supporting the integrity of the election process, improving the capabilities of the press, strengthening NGOs, establishing public opinion polling as a channel of communication between the public and government, and supporting full protection of human rights.

The ISCP Project's purpose, as originally conceived, was to strengthen broad public support for representative government by strengthening the democratic institutions of Parliament, the Election Commission, and media, and the judiciary and law. (The judiciary and law program will not be a direct focus of the mid-term evaluation. Given the current status of work with the formal institutions of justice, TAF has downgraded its focus on this area. Furthermore, in August 1993, TAF conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the second element of its law program -- legal aid and human rights in Bangladesh -- to review progress in promoting legal aid and alternative methods of dispute resolution.)

As circumstances and Mission strategic thinking have evolved, the ISCP Project has evolved somewhat to focus on support of the second program outcome of the strategic objective: strengthened systems of formal and informal communications between citizens of Bangladesh and governmental institutions.

#### 4. Statement of Work

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess results to date of the ISCP Project as measured against its original purpose and planned outputs, and to recommend revisions and refocussing which would better align project purpose and outputs with the Mission's current democratic strategic objective. Specifically, the evaluation shall:

- \* Assess project progress in meeting its planned outputs, and assess factors which may have either facilitated or constrained achievement of outputs.

- \* Evaluate the degree to which the project has been successful in the following activities: (1) enhancing legislative support to strengthen Parliament's capacity to assure more accountable government; (2) modernizing the Election Commission's capability to prepare and maintain electoral rolls, and strengthening its managerial capabilities to increase public confidence in the electoral process; (3) providing training and support for the press to ensure greater balance and analytical content in reporting of government policies, party

politics and public policy debates; and (4) improving legal aid services and promoting legal aid and alternative dispute resolution to increase the efficiency and accessibility of the justice system.

\* Assess the effectiveness of project implementation including the roles of USAID, TAF, and subgrantees.

\* Assess the degree to which outputs have contributed to achievement of the project's original purpose of strengthening democratic institutions, as well as their actual and/or potential impact on a revised purpose of improving formal and informal communication systems between Bangladeshis and their government for enhanced accountability of democratic government.

\* Consider which project interventions have been most successful and which least successful in achieving both the original and revised project objectives. Recommend other interventions which might better support the project's revised purpose and USAID/Bangladesh's strategic objective.

## 5. Methodology

The Evaluation Team shall be responsible for determining an appropriate evaluation methodology of suitable analytic rigor. USAID and TAF suggest that the approach include the following:

-Review of project documents including: Cooperative Agreement and amendments; project proposals, workplans and reports; August 1993 evaluation of the legal aid program; letters of agreement and substantive reports of USAID-funded subgrantees; U.S. Mission Democracy Assessment, UNDP report and other democracy background papers; Asia Foundation's annual budget submissions FY89 - 94; and external evaluations of USAID-funded sub-grantee programs.

-Interviews with TAF Representative, Assistant Representative, and relevant program officers; USAID officers, including the Director, the Program Officer and the Civic Participation Project Officer; U.S. Embassy officials including the Political Officer; Sub-grantee organizations including Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat, Centre for Analysis and Choice (CAC), Bangladesh Election Commission, Press Institute of Bangladesh, Dhaka University Department of Mass Communication and Journalism (DMCJ), Centre for Development Services (CDS), Development Features (Devfeature), and others as appropriate; Members of Parliament; newspaper editors and publishers; opinion leaders; university Professors of Government; and official of other donor organizations (e.g. Ford Foundation, British High Commission) engaged in democracy activities.

## 6. Qualifications of Evaluation Team

The two-person team shall consist of an Expatriate and a Bangladeshi. Each Evaluator should have experience in designing, implementing and/or evaluating programs aimed at strengthening democratic systems and institutions in emerging democracies. For the Expatriate Evaluator experience in developing countries and Asia is desirable. Some experience in the areas addressed by the ISCP Project would be an advantage. Both team members should have strong evaluation skills and experience, and excellent writing skills in English.

## 7. Level of Effort

The Evaluation should begin in Bangladesh on or about November 14, 1993, and last four weeks. It is suggested that the first 3 to 4 work days in Bangladesh be used for preparation -- completing background reading, preliminary interviews and setting up a workplan and interview schedule. The Expatriate Evaluator will be authorized an additional 5 work days in the U. S. for preparing the final report. In addition the Expatriate Evaluator will be authorized 4 paid days for travel from the U. S. A six-day work week is authorized.

<u>Expatriate Evaluator</u>	
Paid travel	4 days
Evaluation in Bangladesh	24 days
Report finalization	<u>5 days</u>
subtotal	33 days
<u>Bangladeshi Evaluator</u>	24 days
Total	57 days

## 8. Reporting Requirements

Report Format: The evaluation report will contain the following sections:

- Executive Summary 3 - 5 pages
- Statement of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations (Findings and Conclusions should be succinct, with the topic identified by a short sub-heading related to the areas of investigation identified in the statement of work. Recommendations should correspond to the major findings, be prioritized, and specify who or what agency should take the recommended action. Recommendations may be provided for the long and short term.
- Body of the Report: should provide the evidence and analysis to support the findings, conclusions. It should not exceed 40 pages.
- Appendices: should include at least the following:
  - The Evaluation Scope of Work
  - A description of the methodology used to obtain and analyze the information
  - Selective presentations of supplementary qualitative information (if appropriate)
  - Bibliography of documents consulted

- List of people/agencies interviewed
- Resumes of the evaluators
- Completed sections of the AID Evaluation Summary: Section H, "Evaluation Abstract", and Section J, "Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations:."

Submission of Report: The Evaluation Team shall submit a workplan on the fifth work day after the start of the evaluation in Dhaka for approval by USAID and TAF. An outline of the report shall be provided to USAID and TAF after approximately 10 working days.

Ten copies of the draft report shall be presented to USAID and TAF for comments prior to the Evaluation Team's final debriefing. USAID and TAF will provide comments on the report within 10 working days of receipt of the draft document. The Expatriate Evaluator will have an additional 5 work days to finalize the report in the U.S. TAF will ensure that 10 copies of the final version of the report are sent to USAID by courier and an additional 40 are sent by pouch as soon as the report is finished.

Team Meetings and Debriefings: The USAID Project Officer for Civic Participation will arrange a briefing with appropriate USAID staff on the first day of the evaluation. The purpose of this meeting will be to brief the Evaluator on the project, its purposes, its key components, and to discuss key evaluation issues, concerns and needs. Thereafter, the evaluation team will meet with the Project Officer weekly to discuss progress of the evaluation.

The evaluation team will also meet with TAF staff on the first day. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss key evaluation issues, concerns and needs.

Formal debriefings shall be conducted with USAID, TAF and others as determined by USAID and TAF prior to the evaluation completion.

## 9. Logistics

Asia Foundation will assist the evaluators in organizing the logistics of the evaluation. This includes identifying lodging, office space, computer rental, secretarial support and transportation as needed. TAF and USAID will assist the team in scheduling interviews and appointments.

## **B. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

The Evaluation Team's approach included the following:

- 1) Review of project documents: Cooperative Agreement and amendments; project proposals, workplans, and reports; August 1993 evaluation of the legal aid program; letters of agreement and substantive reports of USAID-funded sub-grantees; USAID Mission/Bangladesh *Democracy Assessment*, UNDP report and other democracy background papers; The Asia Foundation's annual budget submissions FY89-94; and external evaluations of USAID-funded sub-grantee programs.
  
- 2) Interviews with The Asia Foundation Representative, Assistant Representatives, and relevant program officers; USAID officers, including the Program Officer and the Civic Participation Project Officer; U.S. Embassy officials including the Political Officer; sub-grantee organizations including the Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat, Centre for Analysis and Choice, Bangladesh Election Commission, Press Institute of Bangladesh, Dhaka University Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Development Features; Members of Parliament; newspaper editors and publishers; opinion leaders; university professors of political science and government.

## C. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

M.M. Khan, & A.K. Ahmad, "Governance in Bangladesh: A Overview," paper presented in a conference on The Economy of Bangladesh, organized by The Asian Development Bank in collaboration with the Academy for Planning and Development, Ministry of Planning held at Dhaka from September 15-16, 1993.

U.S. Department of State, Bangladesh, 1993 Country Report on Human Rights Practices.

U.S. Agency for International Development, Strategies for Sustainable Development, January 1944.

Multi-disciplinary Action Research Centre, Promoting Informed Citizen Participation in the Electoral Process in Bangladesh: Pilot Voter Education Project, April 1993.

Bangladesh Manobadhikar Samnnoy Parisad (BMSP), Observation Report of the Fifth General Pourshava Elections, January 30, 1993.

Jane Ann Lindley, CAC Seminar on Fiscal Planning and Budget Process: Evaluation and Recommendations, December 27, 1992.

Annual and Semi-annual TAF Civic Participation Progress Reports, October 1, 1991-March 31, 1992, April-September, 1993.

The Asia Foundation, Revised Civic Participation Program Plan, June 1992.

Parliament Secretariat (Jatiya Sangsad), Technical Assistance Project Proforma Proposal: Parliamentary Development Project, December 7, 1992.

Jane Ann Lindley, Parliamentary Development Project: Revised Implementation Plan, prepared for the Parliament, November 25, 1992.

Ralph C. Heikkila, Electorate Database Management System Pilot Project: Software Development, October 1993.

Monowar Hossain, A Study on Voter Behavior in Bangladesh during 1990 and 1991 Elections, Multi-disciplinary Action Research Centre, July 1992.

Marie Garber, & Md. Mostafa, Enrolling Voters in Bangladesh: An Assessment and Suggestions for Change, A Report to The Asia Foundation, March 1992.

Talukdar Maniruzzaman, "The Fall of Military Dictator: 1991 Elections and the Prospect of Civilian Rule in Bangladesh," Pacific Affairs, Vol. 65, No. 2, Summer 1992.

Ed Glaesar, Mid-Term Evaluation of PRIP, USAID/DHAKA and PACT, December 13, 1992.

Abu Nasr, & Md. Gaziul Hoque, Mass-Media-And-Regulations in Bangladesh, Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC), 1992.

TAF, Needs Assessment of the Press Institute of Bangladesh, January 1991.

A proposal for the Institutional Strengthening of Civic Participation in Bangladesh, April 1989.

Syed Mahboob Alam Chowdhury, & Saleem Samad, Impact Assessment of Press Institute of Bangladesh Training Courses, A Study Commissioned by The Asia Foundation, March 1992.

Bangladesh Manobadhikar Sommonoy Parisad-BMSP, Observation Report of the Fifth General Pourshava Elections, January 30, 1994.

Steven Golub, Evaluation of Asia Foundation Legal Service/Human Rights Programming in Bangladesh, September 1993.

## **D. LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED**

### **Parliament of Bangladesh**

Sajeda Chowdhury, Member, AL  
Amir Khasru Chowdhury, Member, BNP  
Kazi Tauhid Hasan, Chief Librarian  
Abul Hashem, Secretary, Secretariat  
Syed Naosher Hossain Kazi, Chief Reporter  
Ziaur Rahman Khan, Member, BNP  
Abdur Razzaque, Member, AL  
Mohammed Abdus Shahid, Joint Secretary, Secretariat

### **Government of Bangladesh**

Nazmul Huda, Minister of Information  
Moin Khan, Member of Parliament, State Minister for Planning  
Justice Abdur Rouf, Chief Election Commissioner  
S. M. Zakaria, Joint Secretary, Election Commission

### **Media**

Malifuz Anam, The Daily Star  
Tawhidul Anwar, Director General, Press Institute of Bangladesh  
Moinul Hossain, Ittefaq  
Enayetullah Khan, Dhaka Courier  
Enayetullah Khan, Holiday  
Shafiq Rehman, Jai Jai Din  
Matiur Rahman, Bhorer Kagoj  
Saleem Samad, Development Features  
Arafin Siddique, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism,  
Dhaka University

### **Non Governmental Organizations**

Centre for Analysis and Choice  
Fazal Kamal, Executive Director  
Zulfiqar Ahmed, Board Member  
Parveen Anam, Women in Politics Program Director  
Nazim Kamran Choudhury, Director, Publications and Publicity

Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh; Mizanur Rahman Shelley,  
Director

Multidisciplinary Action Research Centre; Manowar Hossain, Executive  
Director

**USAID/Bangladesh**

Karl Schwartz, Program Officer  
Jan Rockliffe-King, Evaluation Specialist  
Frank Young, Deputy Director

**U.S. Embassy, Dhaka**

Jeffrey Lunstead, Political Counselor  
James Cole, Political Officer  
Robert Hilton, Press Attache, USIS

**The Asia Foundation/Dhaka**

Nick Langton, Representative  
Kim Hunter, Assistant Representative  
Kim McQuay, Assistant Representative  
Nawshad Ahmed, Program Officer

## **E. RESUMES OF THE EVALUATORS**

**WILLIAM P. SCHOUX**  
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**SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94123**  
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**INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING**

1992-present

**USAID/Dominican Republic**

Prepared analyses and recommendations for senior USAID management decisions on projects involving microenterprise development, university agricultural education and worker rights. Prepared implementation plans for rapid initiation of a new international trade enhancement project.

**Institute for Contemporary Studies, San Francisco, California**

A continuing consulting relationship to provide advice and assistance on the design of ICS strategy and programs that empower people to participate more directly in the management of development projects. Activities have included development of a network of indigenous non-governmental organizations interested in self-governance, liaison with US-based development organizations (e.g. The Asia Foundation, The InterAmerican Foundation, A.I.D.), and preparation of training materials, workplans and program budgets.

**Thunder and Associates, Alexandria, Virginia**

On behalf of the U.S. Agency for International Development, conducted an assessment of the status of democratic institutions and processes in Guyana and prepared recommendations for a U.S. Government democracy strengthening assistance program.

**META Inc., Arlington, Virginia**

Prepared profiles of the economic and political situation in each of fifteen Latin American countries as part of a marketing strategy for Litton Industries.

**A.I.D. EXPERIENCE**

**Director, Office of Democratic Initiatives**

1990-1992

**Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, Washington, D.C.**

-- Directed and managed efforts to support and strengthen democratic development in the hemisphere. This included assuring the provision of: adequate and timely support of free and fair elections in El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti and Paraguay; policy guidance and technical assistance for the preparation of projects to strengthen the administration of justice in Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, and El Salvador; technical and policy support for the development of broad-based democracy strengthening projects in Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Panama.

**Director, Office of Democratic Initiatives, LAC (Continued)**

-- As a member of the task force appointed by the Administrator of A.I.D., served as the primary drafter of the world-wide "Democracy Initiative" issued December, 1990.

-- Organized and managed workshops on democracy and governance for all A.I.D. personnel working on democracy initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean.

-- Developed regional support projects to assist overseas A.I.D. offices in legislative development, local and municipal government, news media strengthening and civil-military relations.

-- Managed an office of nine personnel and a diverse portfolio of projects with an annual budget of \$25 million.

**Director, Task Force on Humanitarian Assistance in Central America, Honduras** 1988-1989

-- Directed an emergency humanitarian assistance program that provided food, clothing, medical care, and other necessities to more than 60,000 people.

-- Managed an organization of over 180 personnel with an annual budget of \$54 million.

**Deputy Director, Regional Office for Central American Programs (ROCAP), Guatemala** 1986-1988

-- Managed the day-to-day operations of an A.I.D. office with a \$250 million portfolio and a staff of 45 personnel.

-- Designed a five-year strategy for ROCAP relevant to U.S. objectives and Central American realities.

-- Negotiated extensively with senior Central American officials, including Vice Presidents.

**Deputy Director, USAID/Sri Lanka** 1982-1986

-- Managed the day-to-day operations of an office with a portfolio of \$300 million and a staff of over 100 personnel.

-- Guided the development of new projects in irrigation systems management, water supply and sanitation, diversified agricultural research and housing finance.

**Other A.I.D. Experience**

1966-1982

Various positions in Washington, Panama, Paraguay, and Vietnam.

Particular experience with projects in:

Agriculture & Rural Development

International Training Programs

Private Enterprise Promotion

Private, Voluntary Organizations

Primary Education

Rural Health Systems

PL 480 Food Assistance

**EDUCATION**

**National War College, Washington, D.C.**

A one-year, graduate-level program of study in national security strategy.

**Occidental College, Los Angeles, California**

Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science

**LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Fluency in Spanish.

Familiarity with Vietnamese and Sinhala.

## VITAE

### DILARA CHOUDHURY

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#### Address in Bangladesh

Dhanmondhi Residential Area  
Road No. 13/1, House No. 28, #A-1  
Dhaka, Bangladesh  
Telephone: 816600

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Date of Birth: January 1, 1944

Nationality: Bangladeshi

Marital Status: Married with two sons

Husband: Professor G. W. Choudhury Ph.D.

Adjunct Professor of International Relations

Columbia University

New York

U.S.A.

### SPECIALIZATION IN SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS

Obtained M.Sc with distinction in South Asian Area Studies from University of London in 1972

Ph.D. in Asian Government and Politics from Dhaka University in 1993

Visiting Scholar in Southern Asian Institute at Columbia University in 1989 and in 1990

### PUBLICATIONS

#### A. Books

(1) Bangladesh and South Asian International System, London: Scorpion Publishing Ltd, 1992

(2) Constitutional Development in Bangladesh, Karachi: Oxford University Press, (will be out by the summer of 1994)

B. Articles: Contributed a large number of articles on South Asian International Affairs and Government and Politics in professional journals both in Bangladesh and abroad; regular contributor to Dhaka Courier and Holiday (Dhaka)

## **TRAVEL**

Traveled extensively in Asian countries including China, India, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand and in Europe, North America including U.S.A. and Canada

## **CONFERENCES**

Participated in many international conferences, the latest one in Shanghai, P.R.C. on "China's policy towards South Asia in post-cold war era"

## **OTHER ACADEMIC ASSIGNMENTS**

Member of USAID sponsored Bangladesh Democracy Assessment Team and co-author of the Report

Team leader and co-author of the Report on Women in Politics in Bangladesh: Scope, Nature and Limitation, sponsored by CIDA (Canadian AID)

Prepared the Report on Needs Assessment, Women in Politics for The Asia Foundation

Executive Editor, Asian Studies, Department of Government and Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka

## **MEMBER OF THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Joint Secretary General, Bangladesh Federation of University Women

Member, Board of Governors, Public Administration Training Center Savar, Bangladesh

**F. USAID EVALUATION SUMMARY, SECTIONS H AND J**

## A.I.D. EVALUATION SUMMARY

### PART I

#### H. Evaluation Abstract

The project has the goal of strengthening broad public support for representative government by strengthening the legislature and institutions, both public and private, that promote scrutiny of government policies and actions. This mid-term evaluation was conducted to assess progress to date and recommend realignments of project activities as necessary. The project comprises four components, one of which (a Judicial /Legal Aid Program) was evaluated separately in 1993. The three components covered by the evaluation are: strengthening Parliament's institutional capacity to oversee executive branch ministries and divisions; fostering public confidence in the integrity of electoral process; strengthening the reporting and writing skills of journalists.

The direct support of Parliament has been plagued by delays, most notably the failure of the government and the Parliament to make the legislature autonomous. On the other hand, and NGO has successfully provided support services in the form of seminars for Members and legislative drafting assistance. Elections assistance has made encouraging progress. A pilot project to computerize voter rolls has promising results for national replication. The management of the Election Commission is competent and dedicated. NGOs have been active in election observation and are now getting involved in voter education. The media program has trained a significant number (over 800) journalists and university level education in journalism has improved. There has been no activity in electronic media, as they are operated solely by the government.

Significant conclusions and lessons learned include:

The project is making important contributions to the development of democratic institutions and processes in the more receptive environment of post-1991 Bangladesh.

The Parliament has been slow to assert its constitutional autonomy due to bureaucratic inertia in the unfamiliar atmosphere of opportunity, thereby failing to take advantage of much of the available assistance.

The print media has flourished since 1991 but needs to become more responsible in order not to lose credibility and thereby fail to perform adequately its watch dog role.

Flexible project management by both USAID/Bangladesh and TAF has permitted the project to adapt positively to changing conditions and new opportunities.

## A.I.D. EVALUATION SUMMARY

### PART II.

#### J. Summary of Evaluation Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

##### 1. Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

The purposes of the evaluation are to enable The Asia Foundation (TAF) and the United States Agency for International Development's Mission to Bangladesh (USAID/Bangladesh) to:

1. Assess the progress and impact of the project in relation to its original purpose of strengthening democratic institutions in Bangladesh and its planned outputs;
2. Assess actual and potential impact of the project on USAID/Bangladesh's revised strategic objective of increased accountability of democratic government through strengthening the formal and informal communications between the citizens of Bangladesh and government institutions; and
3. Recommend realignments of project initiatives as necessary to better achieve the project purpose and USAID/Bangladesh's strategic objective related to increasing accountability of democratic government.

The Scope of Work for this mid-term evaluation required a review of three of four components of the Institutional Strengthening for Civic Participation (ISCP) Project -- strengthening Parliamentary policy formulation and review, strengthening the elections administration and process, and developing the media. The judiciary/legal aid program was evaluated separately in September 1993 and is outside the scope of this mid-term evaluation.

##### 2. Project Description

The ISCP Project's focus is to provide support for systems of formal and informal communications between citizens of Bangladesh and governmental organizations. The Project is organized as (1) a Public Accountability Program consisting of building up the democratic institutions of Parliament, the Election Commission, and the media and (2) a Judiciary/Legal Aid Program. This evaluation is only concerned with the Public Accountability Program.

As revised formally in June, 1992, the goal of the Public Accountability Program is to strengthen broad public support for representative government by

strengthening Parliament and institutions that promote public scrutiny of government policies and actions. Each component and its objective is as follows:

**Parliament** -- The objective is to strengthen Parliament's institutional capacity to oversee executive branch ministries and divisions. The Project's plans consist of member orientation courses, strengthening institutional capacity, and trained technical staff.

**Elections** -- The objective is to foster public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process by professionalizing the Election Commission and modernizing its systems and procedures for preparing and maintaining electoral rolls. The Project's plans consist of support for the institutional development of the Bangladesh Election Commission, and voter education and research through NGOs.

**Media** -- The objective is to strengthen the reporting and writing skills of rural and Dhaka-based journalists. The Project's plans consist of education and in-service training, and specialized skills development workshops for mid-level and senior reporters

### 3. Findings and Conclusions

**The Legislature:** The Parliamentary Development Project has been a mixture of progress and delays. The Government took over a year to approve the program of activities, and the activities with the Parliamentary Secretariat have moved slowly, due to bureaucratic inertia and to the failure of the Parliament to pass the legislation necessary to establish an autonomous Secretariat. A law to make the Secretariat autonomous of the Government has been in process for over two years. On the other hand, the Centre for Analysis and Choice (CAC) has successfully demonstrated that the private sector can play a useful role in providing services to the Parliament. CAC has organized training seminars for Members of Parliament and has established a legislative drafting unit and a Member information service. Overall the program has not yet achieved its objectives, but sufficient progress has been made to justify expanded efforts with CAC and to warrant some optimism for future activities with the Secretariat.

**Elections:** Bangladesh demonstrated its commitment to and ability to carry out free and fair elections by successfully holding Parliamentary elections in 1991, shortly after the fall of the Ershad government. The Election Commission is led by competent, dedicated civil servants who clearly have an interest in assuring that future elections are carried out with integrity and efficiency. A pilot project to computerize the national electoral roll is somewhat behind schedule but is also progressing in an encouraging manner. Voter education activities have been successful and a study of voter behavior has provided useful information for future programming. A linkage between the Commission and the International Foundation for Electoral Support may be beneficial to the Commission's institutional development. TAF's comprehensive and long term

approach to elections assistance is paying dividends, and the program should be continued beyond the current project period.

**The Media:** With the fall of the Ershad regime and the advent of Parliamentary government, restrictions on the print media were significantly relaxed although not entirely eliminated. The Government retains a monopoly on television and radio, but the new freedoms led to an explosion in the number of newspapers in both the English and Bangla languages from perhaps less than 100 in 1990 to estimates between 500 and 1,000 today. This proliferation has allowed more opinion across a broader range with few restrictions to be available to the reading public. At the same time it has created more of a demand for journalists than can be satisfied with qualified personnel. A loss of quality of writing is bemoaned by most editors and publishers, but the press freedoms are broadly appreciated. The vestiges of Government control over the print media are present in the Government's placement of advertisements in favored papers and in the monopoly the Government maintains over the sale of newsprint. These factors lead to a subtle self censorship by some journalists.

The TAF media development program has trained a large number of journalists in important topics (environment, Parliamentary reporting, family planning, et. al.) and is attempting, with more limited success to date, to upgrade the teaching of journalism at Dhaka University. TAF has conscientiously assessed the strengths and weaknesses of its media program, and future assistance to this vital sector is clearly warranted.

#### 4. Project Management

USAID/Bangladesh has allowed TAF considerable flexibility in implementation of the project, to the extent that changing conditions and new opportunities can be accommodated with little difficulty. For example, the original 1989 Cooperative Agreement did not specify quantified outputs and rigid measurements of objectives. It is not clear from the record whether this was the result of a conscious decision or rather a lack of baseline data and experience with programming in democracy strengthening. However, the benefit of this approach was borne out in 1990 with the abrupt change of government and the opportunity for much more effective programming to be seized. This led to a 1992 revision of the project that was appropriate to the new situation, but again allowed the flexibility that has proven to be necessary (e.g. with the slow movement on the Parliamentary Secretariat component). For its part TAF has consistently demonstrated its excellent relations with counterparts in both the Government and private sectors, as well as its commitment to genuine democratic development rather than to its forms or appearance. TAF considers its efforts in this sector as integrated and has commendably taken a long range view of progress. Both USAID and TAF deserve credit for recognizing that progress in the development of democracy in Bangladesh will not be linear and for having built into the project the flexibility appropriate to the situation.

## **5. Future Programming**

USAID/Bangladesh and TAF should continue assistance in all three of the project components covered in this evaluation. Assistance should also be initiated in public opinion polling as currently planned. In addition TAF and USAID should explore new programming in the fields of local government development, anti-corruption and civil-military relations.

## **6. Principal Recommendations**

A. TAF should continue only minimal, highly targeted assistance to the Parliamentary Secretariat until its autonomy is established and additional permanent staff are recruited.

B. TAF should continue to work with the Centre for Analysis and Choice and other NGOs to expand the involvement of private sector organizations in the Parliamentary Development Program.

C. TAF should assess the potential benefits of establishing an institutional linkage between the Election Commission and the International Foundation for Electoral Support.

D. USAID/Bangladesh should make a formal recommendation to the Government of Bangladesh that the quota system for sale and/or import of newsprint be abolished.

## **7. Lessons Learned**

A. Democracy strengthening projects are, by their nature, long term, and short term results can be difficult to define or perceive. Project designers should be prepared to utilize a rolling design approach, in which targets and indicators are refined over time as the project evolves in implementation.

B. Private sector organizations can play useful, important roles in providing services and training to a legislature. NGOs and universities should be considered when legislative development projects are being designed so that unnecessary functions and staff are not assumed to be required in-house.

C. A flexible approach to project management may be required in democracy strengthening projects. As circumstances change, sometimes abruptly and dramatically, implementation of some elements of a project must be curtailed or slowed, while others can be expanded or accelerated. Opportunities for additional programming occur that project managers need to identify and accommodate through adjustment of implementation plans.

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